SUSTAINABLE NUTRITION STARTS LOCALLY

Global Nutrition Report 2024



Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems and **Empowered Communities**

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Alliance organisations

Fastenaktion, SWISSAID, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse, Vivamos Mejor, Aqua Alimenta, Skat Foundation

Partner organisations

Around 300 civil society organisations in the Global South

Support

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Contact

Alliance Sufosec Lorystrasse 6a c/o SWISSAID 3008 Bern, Switzerland www.sufosec.ch

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GREETING





Sabine Maier Co-Chair Sufosec

Markus Allemann Co-Chair Sufosec

Agroecology reduces hunger. Development cooperation works!

This is not a claim, but a fact supported by data, as you can see from this report. In 2020, the six NGOs Fastenaktion, SWISSAID, Vivamos Mejor, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse, Aqua Alimenta and Skat Foundation joined forces to form Alliance Sufosec. Our aim is to provide more people with even more effective assistance in achieving food security.

From the outset, we have taken on the challenge of scientifically monitoring the impact of our agroecological projects. As an individual organisation, the effort would have been too great – and the amount of data too small. As an alliance, we regularly receive important pointers as to what works and what needs to be improved through the two-yearly nutritional reports. Four years after the founding of the alliance, the second nutrition report is now available. At the end of the first programme period, the methodologically uniform data collection and the scientifically substantiated analysis of data from 28 countries show positive results with political relevance: with its second nutrition report, Sufosec provides not only anecdotal success stories of individual projects, but also material for parliamentary debates on savings. We show how hunger has been reduced in the most vulnerable regions of the world despite adverse circumstances (COVID-19, inflation, war, the climate crisis).

Anyone who has doubts about whether taxpayers' money is being used wisely will find a clear answer: yes! Anyone convinced that development cooperation is pointless can think again: development cooperation works!



Christian Frutiger, Deputy Director, Ambassador Head of Thematic Cooperation Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

In recent years, progress in the global fight against hunger and malnutrition has slowed. Millions of people, especiallyin the most vulnerable regions, continue to suffer from food insecurity and insufficient access to healthy food. This situationhas been exacerbated by various crises such as conflicts, climate change, pandemics and growing economic inequalities. The world today faces unprecedented challenges when it comes to meeting the food needs of a growing population while protecting the environment and natural resources.

In the face of these challenges, our global commitment is in greater demand than ever: agroecology and nutrition must be placed at the centre of policies and strategies for sustainable development. Promoting healthy, resilient and sustainable food systems based on agroecological practices is a priority to address the challenges of hunger and malnutrition while preserving biodiversity and ecosystems. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is actively involved in partnerships at national, regional and global level. These collaborationsare crucial for coordinating our actions, exchanging knowhow and supporting local initiatives to strengthen food security.

With this in mind, the SDC also supports Alliance Sufosec. Together we can promote sustainable food systems and build a future in which everyone has access to adequate and balanced nutrition.

AGROECOLOGY

Nelson Valle, maize and bean producer, Jucuapa Centro Community, Nicaragua

SUSTAINABLE NUTRITION STARTS LOCALLY

The world has a hunger problem

In 2024, we are experiencing a global food crisis of unprecedented urgency and complexity. Despite technological advances and increasing food production, more than 735 million people are starving. The world is farfrom eliminating hunger. Around 30% of the world's population are affected by malnutrition or hunger (1).

In its latest report, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) projects a minimal reduction in this figure by 2030. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2, to eradicate hunger, is moving further out of reach. This alarming situation calls for a profound rethink and determined and coordinated action at global, national and local level (1).

Hunger is not simply a lack of food. Hunger is a symptom of deep-seated structural global injustices, exacerbated by climate change, conflict and economic insecurity. It is not an isolated problem. Rather, this crisis is the result of a flawed global food system. The needs of the poorest and most vulnerable in the Global South are ignored (2, 3).

The core objective of Alliance Sufosec is to end hunger and malnutrition and reduce poverty. One of the ways it aims to do so is by strengthening local food systems through agroecology. It promotes diverse local agriculture and tests modern, adapted cultivation methods. At the same time, it focuses on strengthening social networks and communities, particularly through the promotion of women's cooperatives, selfhelp groups and educational programmes.

With over 300 partner organisations in 28 countries, the alliance reaches more than 135,000 smallholder households. This sees Sufosec make a lasting contribution to the fight against hunger and malnutrition (4).

735 million people are suffering from hunger 2635 million people are malnourished 1900 million people are obese

70%

of water consumption is for agriculture



Global conflicts

50% of starving or malnourished people are smallholder

farmers in the Global South



Global challenges for food security in 2024

The world is facing a series of profound and interrelated crises that challenge the right to food:

1. The climate and biodiversity crisis

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to global food security. Extreme weather events such as droughts and floods destroy crops and affect food production in already fragile regions. The global depletion of resources and the pollution of the environment are leading to a massive loss of species and biodiversity. At the same time, this deepens the gap between rich and poor (1, 5-7).

2. Conflict and fragility

Conflict and political instability disrupt food supplies, displace millions of people and destroy their ability to be self-sufficient. They also affect local markets, lead to price volatility and make it difficult for smallholder farmers to grow and sell their products safely. Increased insecurity encourages violence, exacerbates poverty and increases dependence on external aid (8, 9).

3. The violation of human rights

Authoritarian and autocratic regimes restrict civil society's freedom and threaten human rights ('shrinking spaces for civil society'). Democratic progress is at risk in many countries of the South (10).

4. Economic uncertainties

Economic upheaval, exacerbated by the war of aggression against Ukraine and the dynamism of globalised markets, is driving up the prices of basic foodstuffs, energy and fertilisers (9, 11, 12). This affects the poorest households and exacerbates food insecurity. In addition, food losses and wastage, inefficient eating habits such as high meat consumption and the use of the best soils for meat production (13, 14) further exacerbate the situation. These challenges make it clear that the international community must fundamentally rethink the current global food system. This requires an approach that goes beyond short-term solutions and focuses on long-term resilience and sustainability.

Solution approach for agroecology

Sustainable cultivation methods for a secure future

Against the backdrop of the global food crisis and the rapidly advancing climate crisis, agroecology offers comprehensive and scientifically sound solutions (15–17). These run the gamut from the fields of smallholder farmers to the plates of consumers (18), covering the environmental, social and economic aspects of food production, with the aim of creating a sustainable food system (19).

Agroecology is guided by 13 principles and based on five stages of transformation development (Fig. 2). The aim is more resilient and sustainable food systems (20).

Agroecology pursues practices that strengthen both food security and the social and economic independence of farmers. At the same time, it protects biodiversity and the environment. It thus stands in stark contrast to intensive, industrial agriculture. This is mainly based on monocultures, chemical fertilisers and pesticides as well as high-grade mechanisation (21).

Environmental aspects play an important role in agroecological agriculture in the field. For example, the cultivation of different crops in the same field during different seasons helps to maintain the nutrient content of the soil. The simultaneous cultivation of several crops reduces pests and thus the risk of crop failure (20). And the protection of natural resources, such as water sources and forests, makes a decisive contribution to sustainable management.



'Rural households can grow healthier products in sufficient quantities using agroecological methods. At the same time, we train women in particular to process these foods for the local market. This gives them an additional income.'

Mariam Natacha Compaoré, co-coordinator of the Burkina Faso national programme, Fastenaktion



Spheres of influence of agroecology

Fig. 1: Sufosec understands agroecology and its HLPE principles as an interplay between practice, science and social movement (scheme adapted from Nature Food, Vol 5, pp. 539–541, 2024).

For people and markets

At **local level**, the establishment of community seed banks is one way of securing traditional and local seed varieties. This reduces the one-sided dependence on expensive hybrid or genetically modified seeds. The active participation of women in decision-making processes and agricultural production is important here. They play a key role in the cultivation and processing of food, and often have specific knowledge of local seed varieties and their cultivation.

Economically, agroecology strengthens the independence and economic basis of smallholder farmers. It relies on circular and solidarity-based markets as well as short supply chains, for example through direct selling from the farm, fixed sales markets and price guarantees. These approaches create networks in which producers and consumers know each other and agree fair prices. When vendors sell their own products, a wider range of vegetables, pulses and cereals generally also leads to higher yields on local markets. Although agroecological practices are more labour intensive, they significantly reduce production costs through the use of natural fertilisers such as compost and green manure and biological pest control. This helps smallholder farmers to become less dependent on external suppliers and fluctuating world market prices. It also improves the health of farmers and ecosystems. Pesticides cause 385 million poisonings and up to 10,000 deaths amongst agricultural workers every year (22).

Agroecology is also a **social movement**. Countless grassroots organisations of small farmers and many of the Sufosec partner organisations are committed to a fair agricultural and food policy around the world. One example is La Vía Campesina, an international movement made up of millions of small farmers, agricultural workers, fishers, indigenous people and landless people from all over the world. The movement is looking for practical ways to sustainably transform agriculture, while at the same time focusing on issues



Fig. 2: The five stages of the agroecological transition to sustainable food systems and the 13 associated principles.

of social justice and sustainable development, from the production of food right through to distribution, processing and consumption.

This sees agroecology act as a driver of the transformation of food systems towards greater sustainability. The social dimension strengthens local communities and promotes social justice, especially for women (23).

Equality and empowerment

Women are often the main actors in food production. They often have less access to land, credit and education. Agroecological approaches promote gender equality and actively involve women in decision-making processes. In some cases, women also contribute their local knowledge in the cultivation of plants, in the establishment of seed banks or in the training of agroecological practices. In doing so, they strengthen their economic independence and contribute to the greater resilience of their families. Recognising and strengthening women's rights is key to the success of agroecological approaches.

Many scientific and farming institutions in Switzerland attach great importance to the agroecological transformation of food systems. This includes the Swiss government, which supports agroecological restructuring (24, 25).

ALLIANCE SUFOSEC

Broad-based agroecological expertise

Promoting and accelerating agroecological change towards inclusive and sustainable food systems and the sustainable use of natural resources are key concerns of Alliance Sufosec. It brings together the different specialist, geographical and developmental expertise of Fastenaktion, SWISSAID, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse, Vivamos Mejor, Aqua Alimenta and Skat Foundation in the field of agroecology (4).

The six organisations share the conviction and experience that smallholder farms operating according to agroecological principles will become stronger and more independent, while increasing their food security. The alliance has helped farmers to introduce agroecological methods in smallholder farms in 28 countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In most projects, this has led to a demonstrable improvement in food security. The successful projects show that agroecological approaches are not only ecologically, but also socially and economically sustainable.

Scientific support

The alliance works closely with scientific institutions. These include the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern, ETH Zurich and similar institutions in the Global South. Scientific monitoring examines the effectiveness of agroecological practices.

BENEFITS OF AGRICULTURAL ECOLOGY

Sustainability

Agroecological practices such as crop rotation, agroforestry, the integration of agriculture and livestock farming and the sustainable use of natural resources improve soil fertility and promote biodiversity. They also make agricultural systems more resilient to the impacts of climate change. This leads to sustainable yield increases and improved food security for the population.

Social justice

Agroecology promotes social justice and strengthens the resilience of communities. In doing so, it incorporates local knowledge systems. Women and young people take an active part in decision-making processes. This strengthens social cohesion and improves living conditions.

Economic stability

Agroecological systems often help smallholder farmers to earn a higher income and lead to greater economic stability. In regions with poor access to food, they become more resilient to global crises.



Fig. 3: Sufosec and its partner organisations are committed to fighting hunger and building a strong civil society in 28 countries.

Promoting networks and collaboration

The alliance promotes collaboration between farmers, scientists, non-governmental organisations and political decision-makers. Knowledge can be exchanged and innovative solutions to the global challenges of food security can be developed together.

Urgency and options for action

Given the immense challenges,we urgently need to act. Governments, international organisations and civil society should take joint measures with the aim of promoting agroecology as a key element of a sustainable food system. This requires long-term commitment and financing to make agroecological projects successful. We also need political framework conditions that promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Fighting hunger together

The global challenges of food security in 2024 require a profound overhaul of our food systems. Hidden costs of today's global food systems in excess of USD 10 trillion a year threaten our health, the environment and our social systems. Agroecology provides a comprehensive and sustainable approach to addressing these challenges (1).

Alliance Sufosec and its partners promote agroecological farming methods and work with farmers in the Global South. In doing so, they are making an important contribution to fighting world hunger. The alliance and its partners implement an integrated and community-oriented approach. Together, they make a decisive contribution to a sustainable and fair future.

SUFOSEC HOUSEHOLD STUDY

Irene Wangoi, poultry farmer, Kenya

AGROECOLOGY AS A DRIVER FOR CHANGE

Sufosec household study

As Alliance Sufosec, the six Swiss development organisations Fastenaktion, SWISSAID, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse, Vivamos Mejor, Aqua Alimenta and Skat Foundation have been campaigning for sustainable food systems worldwide since 2020. Together with over 300 partner organisations in 28 countries, they are working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The joint programme aims to combat global hunger, sustainably improve food security and strengthen socially marginalised communities. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is supporting Sufosec financially with a programme contribution.

Household surveys in 19 countries

Since 2021, Sufosec has been conducting household surveys at a total of 62 project sites in 19 countries. Teams from the partner organisations involved visitaround 10,000 smallholder farmers on site every year. They ask them about their food situation and the use of agroecological farming methods. This gives the alliance a precise tool for evaluating the impact of projects. It can also paint a picture of the food situation in the project regions. The last survey in 2023 involved a sample of almost 10,000 smallholder households in 15 countries. Projected, the study covers more than 125,000 households. These include projects with settled or semi-settled pastoralists and indigenous minorities. The majority of the projects are located in rural areas, with three of the 37 project areas located on the outskirts of urban areas.

Growing understanding of agroecology

The latest survey in 2023 shows that 43% of farms also introduced another agroecological farming method in the survey year. Most often, farmers sow their own local seeds instead of purchased hybrid seeds, cultivate the soil with alternating crop rotation or diversify their cultivation with different crops. In addition, 10% of smallholder farms used exclusively organic pesticides for the first time, as opposed to chemicals.

Not all agroecological methods are suitable for every smallholder. For example, erosion protection strips and terracing are useful primarily in hilly or mountainous terrain. Sustainable pasture management is particularly important for livestock farmers. However, there are agroecological methods that are applicable to most farms. These include crop rotation and crop diversification.

	2021	2022	2023	Total
Number of project locations	42	38	37	62
Number of countries	17	17	15	19
Number of households surveyed	14,556	10,733	9,908	35,197
People faced with food insecurity in % (according to FIES)	72%	65%	57%	
New farms with agroecological methods	52,649	38,724	41,931	133,304

Household study 2021–2023

Table 1: Key data for the Sufosec household study 2021–2023



Farms are increasingly switching to agroecological methods

Fig. 4: Proportion of households using agroecological methods. The use of locally adapted seeds was the most common agroecological method in Alliance Sufosec projects in 2023.

Thanks to the efforts of Sufosec in collaboration with local partner organisations, the understanding of agroecology in smallholder farmers is growing. Its on-site training is pivotal in the year-on-year increase in farms opting to integrate agroecological methods into their farming practice. The positive experiences of neighbouring farms in the region that are already using agroecological methods also play an important role.

The smallholder farmers involved in the projects are convinced by the agroecological approach. The 2023 household survey reveals, strikingly, that farms with experience of agroecological cultivation methods are expanding their operations with additional methods. In just 24 months between 2021 and 2023, the average number of methods applied per smallholder increased from four to ten (see Fig. 6).

Transformation takes time

The regeneration of leached soils takes a long time, and land management is tied to seasonal cycles. Smallholder farmers can only adapt their fields to new cultivation methods gradually. Building up local knowledge or a local seed bank also takes time and experience. Agroecological transformation therefore always requires consistency and perseverance.

This is also confirmed by scientific studies. Many smallholder farmers depended on seed and pesticide manufacturers for years and worked with monocultures. They are initially sceptical about the agroecological approach. In addition, systemic constraints often make the transition more difficult. These include government requirements or institutional framework conditions (26–31).

However, one very pleasing result of the Sufosec household study reveals that farms that already operate agroecologically are increasingly relying on such cultivation methods. This is a clear sign that farmers recognise the benefits of agroecology. As a result, they are converting their farms step by step.

Groups of agroecological farming methods



Fig. 5: Alliance Sufosec promotes 18 agroecological methods. They are divided into four agroecological categories.

Nutritional variety for all

The Sufosec Household Study investigates the impact of agroecological practices on the food situation of smallholder families. Together with its local partners, the alliance uses the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) for this. This scale was developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It charts subjective experiences and perceptions of food insecurity. It also enables a comparative assessment of the food situation of households (32).

Eight specific questions are used to determine the extent to which households have experienced difficulties in obtaining adequate food supplies over the past 12 months. The interviews take place on site, if possible with the woman in charge of the household. The answers are recorded directly with mobile devices. As it is not possible to interview all households in all projects, statistically representative samples are taken for each project. These random checks allow us to draw sound conclusions about the food situation of the 125,000 or so households involved in the project.

Increase in agroecological farming methods



Number of cultivation methods per farm

Fig. 6: Between 2021 and 2023, Sufosec made a substantial contribution to the spread of agroecology: the households surveyed now use more than twice as many sustainable methods as in 2021.



Sufosec programmes are improving food supply

Fig. 7: Sufosec has successfully contributed to the reduction of food insecurity in nine of the 17 project areas studied. Food insecurity has increased in six project areas due to drought, flooding or violent conflict.

Malnutrition and hunger

Alliance Sufosec and its partners work primarily in regions where many people suffer from malnutrition and hunger. As a result, the median of food insecurity is often significantly higher than the FAO regional averages. These figures illustrate the serious plight of the households with which Sufosec works.

Food security from 2021 to 2023

The results show a differentiated picture: in 9 out of 17 project regions, the food situation improved significantly – in some cases by more than 60%. At the same time, there were also regions in which the situation did not change or even deteriorated significantly. Overall, average food insecurity in the 17 project regions fell from 72% in 2021 to 62% after 24 months in 2023, representing an improvement of around 15% (Fig. 7).

Regional differences

The regional differences observed are mainly attributable to the climate and political crisis situation. In 2023, 58% of the households surveyed were exposed to political crises or climate-related disasters: droughts in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia led to massive crop failures. Millions of people suffered from food shortages, and more than 3 million animals died. Conflicts and political instability, such as gang crime in Haiti or coups d'état in West Africa, also had an impact on the food situation. Global economic shocks led to exceptionally high inflation, especially in food prices, and to a massive rise in the cost of essential agricultural goods. This led to a significant loss of income.

Two sample projects



One Health: In Kenya, partner organisations vaccinated 91,000 animals. Animal health plays an important role in food security.

Isiolo project, Kenya

In Kenya, years of severe drought between 2017 and 2022 led to conflicts over pastures and water sources. It wasn't until 2023 that the situation eased thanks to sufficient rainfall during the rainy season. A project in Isiolo County provided nomadic and semi-settled live-stock farmers support with feed production, livestock breeding and veterinary care. As part of the project, they selected the agroecological practices best suited to their needs.

The improved climatic conditions and the project had a positive impact on their food security. Malnutrition and hunger fell from 73% in 2021 to 16% in 2023. This is due both to the end of the drought and to the impact of the project. Around 91,000 animals were dewormed and vaccinated This improved the health of the herds and increased milk production.



Sufosec is promoting the integration of agriculture and livestock in $\mbox{Chad}.$

Guéra project, Chad

When people and their local food systems suffer from political insecurity and are also affected by severe weather events, the impact on the food situation can be dire.

According to the World Food Programme in Chad, millions of people are affected by a serious and worsening food crisis. Under these conditions, agroecology can only have a limited impact.

Despite major efforts in an agroecological project in the Guéra region, food insecurity increased from 74% to 92% between 2021 and 2023. Under these conditions, medium to long-term agroecology must be combined with short-term humanitarian measures.

Agroecology promotes food security

Statistical analysis of the household study

The Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern has produced an informative accompanying study on the Sufosec programme. The previously unpublished data show the impact of agroecological methods within the Sufosec program on food security using descriptive statistical and regression models (Tschopp M., 2024, unpublished). The study examines 400 projects of the six Sufosec member organisations between 2021 and 2023.

The statistical analysis confirms how successful the spread of agroecological cultivation methods have been thanks to Sufosec projects during this period. The representative data show that a projected more than 133,000 households in the project regions are now using agroecological farming methods. This statement is based on a survey of around 10,000 households, representative of each project participated in per year (see table, p. 19). Many smallholder farmers seem to quickly recognise the benefits of agroecology for their food situation and are increasingly implementing it on their farms.

On average, malnutrition in project households fell significantly by 10% between 2021 and 2023 (measured with FIES). 57% of all projects were able to contribute to this improvement in the food situation. The application of agroecology also had an effect on hunger (severe food insecurity): hunger decreased significantly in 13 out of 23 projects. On average, the effect is 2%.

Diversity leads to food security

Analysis of the data revealed other interesting statistical observations. For every new agroecological farming practice adopted, the probability of being food insecure decreases by 5%.

The results also show that a combination of practices from the different groups (input reduction, biodiversity, synergy with livestock, soil health) has a reinforcing effect on food security. Smallholder farmers using practices from at least three of the groups are 20% less likely to be undernourished and 34% less likely to be hungry.

Combining several methods increases the impact and provides better protection for smallholder farmers.



'Our farmers and students have gained valuable insights into climate-adapted agricultural practices, organic farming methods and modern technologies. This promotes a sustainable agriculture and improves nutritional and food security.'

Ibrahim Kabelo, Merti Integrated Development Programme, Kenya, partner organisation of Véterinaires Sans Frontières Suisse



'Alliance Sufosec has enabled us to strengthen relationships with other organisations in Colombia. This allows us to share our experiences and tackle challenges together.'

Mariana Córdoba, Country Representative for SWISSAID, Colombia

The introduction of agroecological methods is intensive for smallholder farmers. But once they have embarked on this path, most farms want to continue with it. And according to the statistical analysis, this also has an impact on food security. The longer a farm operates on an agroecological basis, the lower its susceptibility to malnutrition or hunger.

Agroecology as part of the solution

Compared to mechanised agriculture, agroecology is more labour-intensive. This observation is also evident in the data analysis. The larger a household, the more agroecological farming methods are used on a farm. At the same time, the size of the household also has an impact on the food situation. The size of the household also increases the risk of malnutrition and hunger.

The household survey also covers events such as droughts, floods or other exceptional events. Agroecology can also have an impact in exceptional situations. The positive effects of agroecology are maintained even under extreme conditions. However, when political conflicts and natural disasters collide, the positive effects of agroecology are lost.

In summary, the data reveals, strikingly, that Sufosec projects have an impact on various levels. Thanks to good exchange and advice, smallholder farms are ready to rethink their previous cultivation practices and get involved in agroecology. The statistical analysis of the Sufosec household study shows a broad acceptance of agroecological cultivation methods in all project regions of the six Sufosec member organisations. Over the years, experience grows, and the farmers use other methods that are useful and adapted to them. This improves people's nutritional situation. In surveys, they state that they suffer less from malnutrition or even from hunger.

Agroecology works!

Alliance Sufosec can thus demonstrate the effectiveness of agroecology in the fight against malnutrition and hunger in most projects. These results underscore the key role of agroecological agriculture in times of multiple crises. In addition to improving food security, agroecology also contributes to poverty reduction by reducing dependence on seed and fertiliser producers.

However, the data also shows that in regions with high political uncertainty coupled with extreme weather events, agroecology can only help to a limited extent. What is needed here is a combination of nexus approaches consisting of short-term humanitarian aid and long-term project collaboration. The social and political context limits the impact of agroecology.

A key objective of Alliance Sufosec in the coming years will be to gain a better understanding of the specific challenges in fragile contexts. Building on this, the alliance wants to develop solutions that meet these requirements.

ACROECOLOGN ISCAINING IN SIGNIFICANCE

PARIS

Jean Marie Rakotondrahasy and his family, Tsarazaza Mandimby, Madagascar

A CONVERSATION WITH EXPERT JOHANNA JACOBI

As an expert in agroecology, ETH Assistant Professor Johanna Jacobi advises Alliance Sufosec in its activities.

Johanna Jacobi, we are in the midst of a global food crisis. Why has the situation deteriorated dramatically again in the last 10 years?

Since 2014, we have seen an increase in global food insecurity again. The annual State of Global Food Security report shows that 30% of the world's population is affected by moderate to severe food insecurity. This is a massive global problem that affects not only the Global South, but also the North. Inequality and poverty play a central role here, and hunger is often more related to access to food than to its production.

What has caused this increase since 2014?

In the main, large increases in food prices were caused by market mechanisms rather than by actual production problems. Added to this are conflicts, natural disasters and climate change.

To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation?

The pandemic has disrupted supply chains and exacerbated poverty. Many people suddenly lost their jobs and became unable to feed themselves and their families. In countries like Bolivia, where I was conducting research and living at the time, and where curfews and access restrictions were imposed by military measures, those living from day to day had no way to meet their basic needs.

What are the underlying causes of this food crisis?

The key problem lies in the power structures and power differences within global value chains. While the hunger situation has worsened, global grain traders such as ADM, Bunge, Cargill and Dreyfuss have made enormous profits. Power relations play a role in determining who makes decisions, who is influenced and what opportunities the actors concerned have.



Johanna Jacobi, Assistant Professor of Agroecological Transitions at ETH Zurich (centre), with research colleagues

Power is a major obstacle to sustainable development in food systems. We try to shed light on this from a socio-ecological perspective.

What role can agroecology play in this situation?

Agroecology works on different levels. Not only is it a critical science that points out alternatives, but it's also a tried and tested practice that is applied in all parts of the world. The key is to empower local people to build their own food systems and become independent of global markets. This involves the use of local knowledge, the people's own seeds and land. Agroecology promotes diversity, which is more sustainable in the long term.

How does agroecology differ from organic farming?

Agroecology looks at the entire food system beyond production. The aim is to integrate food production, processing and consumption and to bring producers and consumers closer together again. It's all about acting in solidarity and connecting beyond the pure value chain.

Critics say that agroecology is backwardlooking and relies on old concepts. What do you say to that?

We combine ancient knowledge with new research results. There are many innovative approaches, such as syntropic agroforestry, which is currently being researched, e.g. soil quality can be improved by replicating forest structures and soil cover. It's about creating something new from the old and the new: in this case, combining ancient knowledge about agrobiodiversity and the planting of various annual and perennial plants with modern knowledge. You learn from the past in order to move into the future. This is by no means backward-looking; it's a forward-looking approach.

Sufosec works with its partners using agroecological methods. What impact do these activities have?

It shows that agroecology has gained importance as a global movement. There is increasing scientific research and political support for it. From a systemic point of view, it makes sense because agroecology includes the situation of women, children and adolescents, land ownership, seeds and the avoidance of pesticides. It is a holistic approach that is environmentally, socially and economically relevant.

You work in Bolivia. How do farmers there rate the use of agroecological methods?

People are well aware of the risks of intensive farming, for example, involving the use of chemical pesticides, for soil health or for their own health. They'd like to reduce it. However, financial constraints and pressure from neighbours, traders or markets make it difficult in many places to make greater efforts towards the transition to agroecology.

Since the adjustments cannot be made overnight, financial resources are also needed in many places. There are also legal problems. What can you do with a tree planted on state-owned land?



Johanna Jacobi, Assistant Professor of Agroecology Transitions at ETH Zurich

What role does the market power of conventional agricultural companies play in this?

A very big role. Studies show that advice from companies such as Bayer and Syngenta has a strong influence on farmers. This corporate advice often entails conditions that make farmers dependent. It is important to critically examine these connections and understand their impact on agriculture and the food system as a whole.

As a scientist and expert in the field of agroecology, how do you assess the results of Sufosec projects in the household survey?

Most projects are having a positive effect, but not all. This shows that agroecological projects help, but are not enough on their own. Context is key. Food systems are embedded in socio-ecological and economic mechanisms, and we need to consider the whole context in order to properly assess the results.

So agroecology is not the solution to the fundamental problem?

It is an important partial solution, but it remains a challenge, because agroecology often has to work against existing structures and the mainstream. Projects that make progress locally are needed to convince decision-makers of the benefits and success of agroecology. In addition to agroecology, the goal of food sovereignty also requires access to land and other resources and political participation, i.e. a more democratic food system. Sustainability cannot be achieved without social justice.

In the Sufosec projects, the number of agroecological methods has risen. How do you interpret that?

This is a sign of the success of the projects. If one method works, the farmers try others. It is important to proceed step by step. Guidance, support, advice and knowledge are key to success.

Households that combine at least three agroecological practices are better protected against starvation and malnutrition; they are significantly less nutritionally insecure.

Yes, the accompanying study by the University of Bern shows that combining different practices from different areas increases food security by 34%, but it also shows that the poorest people are unable to make this change on their own. They need support.

Food security increases with every additional agroecological method. However, these effects can only be measured in the second year. How do you explain this delay?

This is probably because plants need time to grow and to rebuild soil fertility through organic inputs. It is not uncommon for the changeover to be difficult and time-consuming at the beginning. It is important to understand that ecological and social processes as well as the development of knowledge take time to develop. The results show that agroecological methods have a positive effect, but it takes patience before the effects become visible.

Do the results of Sufosec confirm the potential of agroecology?

Yes, absolutely. But a paradigmshift is needed, and not just at the farmer level. NGO projects make an extremely important contribution, but cannot solve this alone. It is about reaching millions of households and convincing decision-makers that there are no more excuses for not promoting agroecology. You need a change in mindset on a political, social and economic level.

Where are the obstacles?

These are often historical and political reasons. There are existing alliances, and there is a certain need to present quick solutions that are easier to achieve in the short term. Often this is nothing but symptom relief. What we need is a rethink so that agroecology becomes the norm.

What is the recipe for this change?

There are many scientific studies that show that agroecology makes a lot of sense. We need to use this data to convince decision-makers and call for change. There is reason for hope, but we need to keep working on it.

The focus is on change?

Exactly. It is important to understand that these projects often take place in crisis areas. We need to know the context and understand the importance of this work in a global crisis. Agroecology is the path to building the agricultural systems of the future. If we want to survive as humanity, we must operate within planetary boundaries Agroecology takes these limits into account and continuously incorporates new findings.

BIOGRAPHY

Johanna Jacobi is Assistant Professor of Agroecological Transitions at ETH Zurich. She studied geography, biology and social anthropology in Bern and has conducted research on agroecology at UC Berkeley. During her doctorate, she researched the resilience of cacao farms in Bolivia. Later, she focused on agroforestry in Bolivia. Her research focuses on agroecological cultivation methods and power relations in food systemsfrom the perspective of political ecology.

SUFOSEC SAMPLE PROJECTS

Under the umbrella of Alliance Sufosec, projects are underway in 28 countries on three different continents. Detailed information on six agroecological alliance projects that show the diversity and breadth of Alliance Sufosec can be found on the Sufosec website at sufosec.ch/en/projects/ – with images and videos.

GUATEMALA

A balanced diet in the first years of life

Atitlán Highlands, Guatemala

vivamos mejor



NICARAGUA

Food security and a secure income through agroecological land use

Matiguás, Nicaragua

SWISSAID சூ





www.sufosec.ch/en/projects/



5,000 smallholder farming families are setting out on new paths with agroecology.

Odisha, India





KENYA

Greater resilience against drought with agroecology

00 00

lsiolo, Kenya



VÉTÉRINAIRES SANS FRONTIÈRES SUISSE



MADAGASCAR

Enough food for the whole family. Agroecology creates food security.

Antsirabe, Madagascar





ZAMBIA

Self-administered water supply for agriculture and at home

Petauke, Zambia





ORGANISATIONS

Fastenaktion

Ending hunger together

Fastenaktion is a Swiss organisation for international cooperation. Founded in 1961 on the initiative of the Catholic youth movement, we are guided by Christian social ethics, human rights and science. The focus of everything we do is always on people in their dignity, with their rights, abilities and needs.

We are actively working with partner organisations on the ground in Africa, Asia and Latin America to permanently improve the living conditionsof disadvantaged people. We attach importance to long-term partnerships and alliances. We rely on local expertise and structures and, in dialogue with our partner organisations, develop effective approachessuch as agroecology, which strengthens local food systems. We support communities in organising themselves and claiming their fundamental rights in the spirit of helping them to help themselves.

Right to food

In Switzerland and internationally, we identify the causes of poverty and environmental destruction and advocate for binding rules to protect people and the environment. Our aim is to create a political framework that guarantees the right to food and access to secure livelihoods for all. We present solutions and alternatives that enable fair and sustainable production and consumption.

We motivate people in Switzerland to help shape social-ecological change, building on committed networks and ecumenical collaboration. Especially during Lent, we bring our concerns to the Church and the public and encourage a sustainable lifestyle.



A woman from Salavan Province, Laos, fills a rice basket.

We are politically independent and communicate on an equal footing, with transparency and gender and cultural sensitivity. Our vision is a just world without hunger. A world in which the right to food is realised and a life with dignity is assured for all – and where creation in all its diversity is preserved – today and for generations to come.

Alpenquai 4 6002 Lucerne, Switzerland

+41 41 227 59 59 info@fastenaktion.ch www.fastenaktion.ch



SWISSAID

On the ground. Against hunger.

For more than 75 years, SWISSAID has been committed to helping people in need: from 1948 as 'Schweizerische Europahilfe' in war-torn Europe and from the 1960s as SWISSAID in the countries of the South. The aid organisation, which is independent of religion and party politics, is currently active in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Eighty per cent of the approximately 190 employees are local specialists who work with local people to help people help themselves.

Agroecology and equal opportunities

SWISSAID's vision is a world without hunger, in which even the poorest people can lead healthy, dignified and self-determined lives. In the course of this, the aid organisation advocates for an agroecological transition in agriculture. It helps people in the Global South to use diverse and adaptable seeds, to conserve the soil and to market their food independently and profitably. In doing so, SWISSAID is simultaneously strengthening seed diversity and counteracting climate change.

Women play a key role in overcoming hunger in the long term. They are responsible for more than three-quarters of the world's diet yet much more likely to suffer from malnutrition and undernourishment than men. Breaking down outdated gender models, strengthening the rights of women, particularly farmers, and raising awareness amongst men are important building blocks in the SWISSAIDprojects.

Local work, global impact

SWISSAID relies on local expertise and on a sustainable exchange of knowledge that is controlled by the Global South. We support smallholder farmers in finding suitable solutions, networking and, if necessary, making their voice heard at a higher level. International experts are involved in this exchange of knowledge. The coordination offices work closely with local partners to implement projects efficiently. This close collaboration helps SWISSAID to provide quick and uncomplicated assistance in emergency situations.



Aerial view of a field in the Comunidad El Rincón in Terrabona, Nicaragua.

For a solidarity-minded Switzerland

SWISSAID is committed to an open and solidarity-minded Switzerland that supports positive changes in the Global South. It represents the interests of disadvantaged people and countries at the development policy level. SWISSAID informs, raises awareness and works to ensure that Switzerland fulfils its social responsibility in terms of legislation, economic and trade policy and consumer behaviour.

Lorystrasse 6 3008 Bern, Switzerland

+41 31 350 53 53 info@swissaid.ch www.swissaid.ch



Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse

Healthy animals, healthy people, healthy environment

Worldwide, 500 million people living in poverty depend on farm animals for their livelihood. If the animals are not doing well, the very foundations and lives of these people are at risk. Healthy livestock, on the other hand, means food and income. Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse (VSF-Suisse) is committed to helping these people and their animals in East and West Africa.

VSF-Suisse was founded in 1988 by students of veterinary medicine at the University of Bern. The first two projects were implemented in what is now South Sudan in 1996. The same year saw the opening of the office in Bern. Today, VSF-Suisse employs around 150 people in its five country offices in Ethiopia, Kenya (which also covers Somalia), Mali, South Sudan and Togo, as well as 11 at its headquarters. Our on-site teams are led by professional local managersand made up of veterinarians and experts from other specialist areas. Together, they manage an average of 40 to 50 projects a year. VSF-Suisse is a Swiss Solidarity partner and Zewo-certified in Switzerland.

Primary veterinary care

We provide emergency aid in humanitarian crisis situations and carry out medium- and long-term development projects. We are helping to establish basic veterinary medical care by training and equipping local animal health workers, conducting vaccination campaigns and distributing healthy animals to particularly vulnerable population groups. We advise animal owners in the areas of breeding, hygiene and disease prevention, thereby also reducing the consequences of diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

By promoting animal health and productivity we strengthen people's resilience to disasters and create a sustainable improvement in their living conditions. We work closely with the local population and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.



Healthy animals ensure milk supply, near Bamako, Mali.

Environmental protection measures and the sustainable use of natural resources play an important role in all our projects and contribute to conflict reduction. Last but not least, we help people market their products and take advantage of new value chains. By selling animal products, families can earn an income with which they can secure their basic needs and access, for example, to education and health services. By doing so, VSF-Suisse is supporting people on their path to independence and creating sustainable prospects.

Mühlenplatz 15 Postfach 343 3000 Bern 13, Switzerland

+41 31 332 77 65 info@vsf-suisse.org vsf-suisse.org



VÉTÉRINAIRES SANS FRONTIÈRES

Vivamos Mejor

Better living conditions for Latin America and East Africa

As a Swiss aid organisation, Vivamos Mejor helps communities affected by poverty in Latin America and East Africa to improve their living conditions in a self-determined and sustainable manner by temporarily providing them with help to help themselves. We focus on the basic themes of education as well as water and food.

We prepare small children for schooling and young people for working life, and support rural areas in using water, soil and forests sustainably. To this end, we work in a context-specific manner and with competent local partner organisations.

Sustainable forestry, water and agriculture

With our Water & Food programme, we support local authorities and communities in protecting important water catchments and forest resources in order to maintain water security and biodiversity. Experienced agricultural consultants train farming families in agroecological cultivation so that they can sustainably increase their production and improve their food security without overusing natural resources. This makes them more resilient to climate change. We also assist small producers in joining forces, finding sales channels together and asserting their rights.

Fair development opportunities for children

We have a strong focus on holistic support for young children, so that they have a fair start and can develop to their full potential. This includes combating malnutrition and undernourishment. We improve the availability of nutritious foods by helping families to plant home gardens and store food properly. We also provide practical knowledge about balanced and age-appropriate nutrition. Training for local health staff and hygiene measures in households and preschools further improve nutrition and healthy development.



Martha Castillo from La Masica in northern Honduras is improving her family's food security thanks to the cultivation of cocoa and rambutan in agroforestry systems.

Agile and impact-oriented

Vivamos Mejor has an agile structure and, as a learning organisation, regularly undergoes scientific research into the impact of its work. We have already received the Impact Award from SDC/NADEL twice for this.

Thunstrasse 17 3005 Bern, Switzerland

Zurich office: Ausstellungsstrasse 41 8005 Zurich, Switzerland

+41 31 331 39 29 info@vivamosmejor.ch www.vivamosmejor.ch



Aqua Alimenta

Make it flow, let it grow

Since 1998, here at the Swiss aid organisation Aqua Alimenta, our focus has been on the farmers who produce the lion's share of global food in small fields. With agroecology and smallholder irrigation, we are committed to ensuring that smallholder families can secure their livelihood throughout the year, eat a balanced diet and lead a self-determined life.

Based on common objectives, we work in partnership with locally rooted organisations in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and India. We attach great importance to strengthening our partners in their commitment and skills, as well as their independence and personal responsibility. The way we interact with each other is based on respect and appreciation. We recognise and support the diversity of cultures and people irrespective of their political, religious or ethnic beliefs.

Protection and use of natural resources

It is clear to us that the richness of our natural heritage is a precious commodity that belongs to all human beings. Our commitment to sustainable food systems is therefore inextricably linked to the protection and responsible use of natural resources such as water, soil, air and biodiversity. In this, we are helping to preserve fertile soil and water resources, revive diverse and productive smallholder farming and make farming families more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

We adapt our support to the situation according to the needs and resources of disadvantaged people. They themselves contribute to improving their living conditions by undertaking work of their own. Thanks to participation and involvement, they see themselves as joint stakeholders in the project.



At a Farmer Field School in Kendrapara District, India, a lesson about irrigation takes place.

We ensure that the resources entrusted to us are used with care and systematically review the achieved results and effects of our projects. We report our activities transparently, presenting not only successes, but also difficulties and unavoidable setbacks. We welcome cooperation with like-minded people, not only at an international level, but also in Switzerland, in order to pool strengths, combine expertise and develop synergies. This is how we come closer to our vision of a world free from hunger and poverty – step by step.

Stauffacherstrasse 28 8004 Zurich, Switzerland

+41 43 243 04 70 info@aqua-alimenta.ch www.aqua-alimenta.ch



Skat Foundation

Water, waste management and renewable energies

The Skat Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in St. Gallen. We are committed to a world in which individuals and organisations learn and work together to eradicate poverty and contribute to the development of sustainable, diverse and inclusive societies.

To this end, we have been working with partner organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe since 2002, designing projects with them and supporting them in their implementation. In nine countries around the world, we help them find solutions to the challenges concerning water, waste management and renewable energy caused by poverty and climate change.

We encourage our partners to work with local communities to learn from one another and document and share their successful practices and experiences.

Strengthening knowledge networks

In addition to the implementation of specific projects, we focus our work on establishing, facilitating and strengthening knowledge networks and partnerships. Amongst other things, we run the secretariat of the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN), a network of experts with more than 153,000 members worldwide. We maintain and update a curated library with around 800 publications in three languages and more than 200 recorded webinars on rural water supply issues, such as groundwater, multi-use systems and 'leaveno-one-behind'.

As knowledge mediators, we participate in several long-term research projects such as hands4health, which develops solutions and approaches for handwashing in schools and healthcare facilities (funded by the SDC). We are also part of the REACH project to improve water security for the poor (funded by the UK Government's FCDO) and the Rural Evidence and Learning for Water Project REAL Water (funded



Ivess Banda from Petauke District, Zambia, quenches his thirst directly at the water pump.

by USAID). Our mission in these projects is to support our academic partners in communicating their research results in such a way that professionals, government officials and policy-makers alike can benefit from relevant insights to increase the impact and value of their work.

Benevol Park St. Leonhard-Strasse 45 9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland

+41712270799 info@skat-foundation.ch www.skat-foundation.ch



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Bern, October 2024



'We've provided training in how to use a crop calendar and increased awareness of products that are suitable for the local market. This has significantly improved the financial situation of small-scale farmers.'

Fanilonihoavy Marcello Randriaherisoa, Ecovillage Madagascar, partner organisation of Aqua Alimenta

'Through webinars and training from Sufosec, we have empowered more than 40 farmers to operate in an agroecological manner. One of them has now been named the best farmer in the region.'

Eugenia Kimaro, Southern Highlands Participatory Organization, Tanzania, partner organisation of the Skat Foundation





'Thanks to agroecology, farming families in the Altiplano are defying the increase in extreme weather events, the loss of biodiversity and degraded soils. The families in our projects are firmly convinced that this will improve their health and nutrition.'

Henry Ruiz, agroecology specialist, Vivamos Mejor, Guatemala

ALLIANCE SUFOSEC

Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems and Empowered Communities