



Transition and Invest in Agroecology for a Just Planet

A STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY 2023

The planet earth is facing numerous emergencies connected to steady degradations, extinctions and erosion of genetic diversity, climate emergencies born out of un-sustainable production systems and policies i.e. energy production from non-renewable resources, monoculture systems for profit maximization, genetic engineering and fragile ecosystem destruction among others which calls humanity to urgently take action.

22nd April was designated as an International Mother Earth Day by the UN General Assembly in 2009 through a resolution A/RES/63/278. The Day reminds the nations the collective responsibility ahead, as called for in the 1992 Rio Declaration and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially goals 14 and 15. This is a build up towards the promotion of harmony with nature and the Earth, to achieve a just balance among the economic, social, and environmental needs of the present and future generations where all people including small-scale farmers and the planet are at the center of government and institutional policy, community building and civic action. In so doing, a task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, reducing disparities in standards of living and meeting the needs of the majority will be realized especially the youth and women small-scale farmers.

Whether it's the effects of climate change or deforestation, our planet is facing some of the biggest challenges our generation has ever known. On this Earth Day, Small-scale farmers from over 54 districts in Uganda join the rest of the world to commemorate this day under the theme **"invest in our planet"** as a reminder that the Earth and its ecosystems provide us with life and sustenance but to also critically task government and partners to transition and invest in agroecology as a sustainable production system.

"Unlike industrial agriculture, we strongly believe that agroecology can cool the earth"

Irene Nakijoba, Small-scale farmer leader.

Small-scale farmers stand firm in acknowledging and tasking governments to respond to the need to deal with planetary emergencies in a holistic and inclusive manner, recognizing the links between **"soil health and integrated water management, including the optimal use of nutrients, organic fertilizers and enhanced manure management, as important elements of climate-resilient, fragile ecosystems protection, sustainable food production systems that can heal the planet."**

These are elements that are core of agroecology and the 13 principles of agroecology as adopted by FAO Member states in December 2019 during the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

In our efforts to protect the earth, ESAFF Uganda has had several interventions geared towards building capacities of small-scale farmers to practice sustainable production and resilience building using a more holistic community-led approach like Climate Resilient Agriculture Model. Farming communities through the Model are being empowered to take a lead role in building their own resilience and opportunities, analyze their own vulnerabilities, and systematically plan and execute their resilience building path at the farm, household and community levels given the fact that ESAFF Uganda believes that there is no short

cut to building community sustainability. Over the years, ESAFF Uganda has been part of policy development and influencing processes for sustainable production systems. ESAFF Uganda further initiated the Agroecology Clubs in learning institutions and Community Agroecology Schools in the different communities. The Agroecology School for Journalists and Communicators is also contributing to creating a movement to favorably communicate agroecology.

ESAFF Uganda believes that the investments in agroecology is a powerful device for solving major challenges that the current agricultural and food systems face such as erosion of biodiversity, land degradation, loss of soil-carbon, environmental pollution and water scarcity, food and nutrition security; the fight against poverty and social inequalities; climate adaptation and mitigation, including, but not limited to enhancing carbon sequestrations below and above soil. It is without doubt that the transition of food systems to agroecology is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The government of Uganda and other African government should allocate 10 percent of their national budget to supporting the transition to Agroecology by supporting policy formulation and building community structures for agroecology.

"We are at a crossroad right now. This is the time to turn away from unsustainable production systems, policies and urgently transiting to agroecology and a high time our government invested in agroecology as a pathway in recognizing the rights of Mother Earth".

Christine Nabwami, Small-scale farmer Leader.

Small-scale farmers further call for the organization of agroecology in-session workshops that will connect conversations, planning and implementation issues on climate, biodiversity, land and soil health, water and food systems at the global, regional and country levels. The explicit inclusion of agroecology in conferences' action on agriculture and food security can catalyze national policy processes, which can further boost the transformative power of agroecology by reducing costs of establishment, increase access to markets, improve communication, knowledge management, and investment.

"To protect the earth, we need to fix our food system and transition to clean energy. Small-scale farmers have already started taking actions towards this, everyone must be mobilized."

Beatrice Katsigazi, Small-scale farmer Leader.

Government should also focus on the domestication and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) which responds to the multiple forms of discrimination faced by peasants and other people working in rural areas.

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ABOUT ESAFF UGANDA

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) was formed in an effort to create a Forum to bring together small-scale farmers into a social movement to influence favourable agriculture policies and practices at global, continental, regional, national and local levels. ESAFF Uganda is the largest small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda. ESAFF Uganda works to enhance the SSFs ability to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in development processes. ESAFF Uganda currently has a membership of 12,543 farmer groups with 384,056 individual small-scale farmers of which 67 per cent are women in 54 districts. ESAFF Uganda is also part of a bigger network of small-scale farmers in 15 other countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.



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