



CONCEPT NOTE:

**1ST NATIONAL AGROECOLOGY ACTORS SYMPOSIUM
(NAAS) IN UGANDA**

Theme: *'Advancing multi stakeholder responsiveness towards
scaling-up of agroecology in Uganda'*

DATES: 30TH TO 31ST MAY 2019

Venue: Silver Spring Hotel, Bugolobi, Kampala

1.0 ABOUT PELUM UGANDA

Since 1995, Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Uganda has been working to improve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and the sustainability of rural communities, through the fostering of ecological land use management. We share skills and knowledge about good practices and techniques, through a broad network of likeminded organisations; undertake research and demonstration projects; and advocate for policies that better support small-scale farmers. PELUM Uganda is part of a 12-country-strong association of civil society organisations in eastern, central and southern Africa.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Global agriculture is challenged by a combination of climate change, biodiversity loss, and the growing demand for food, feed, fibre and energy¹ required to meet the needs of a population currently estimated at 7.4 billion and growing at a rate of 1.13% per year on static natural resources. Conventional agriculture has been appreciated for increasing yields which is necessary to feed a growing population, though this increase has come at a high cost to the environment which in turn threatens the sustainability of these gains. Conventional agriculture is a major driver of environmental degradation and climate change, contributing between 19% and 29% of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions²

Agroecology has been defined as the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable Agroecosystems and food systems. It appreciates the complex interactions, both within the agroecosystems as with other environmental and socio-economic components. Agroecology enhances sustainability of a farming system and puts into consideration the relationship between agriculture, culture and society. Diversified agroecological systems have been proven to be more resilient to the changing climate.³ This is key, especially for smallholder farmers, who are the major producers and yet the most vulnerable to climate change effects. Several studies have demonstrated that diversified traditional farming systems centred on agro biodiversity exhibit higher productivity than conventional agricultural methods under changing conditions.⁴

Uganda's economy is largely dependent on agriculture as its mainstay. The sector remains critical to Uganda's economy, in that it employs approximately 69% of the labour force, 77% of who are women, and 63% are youth, mostly residing in the rural areas.⁵ Better still; the agricultural sector is the biggest earner of export revenues with US\$1.82bn realized in 2015-contributing to 26% of GDP in 2015⁶. This demonstrates the potential of the sector to transform the economy of Uganda.

Despite the agriculture sector having been singled out as one of the growth sectors in the NDP II and a strategic sector for the achievement of Vision 2040. The sector performance in terms of production and productivity has been greatly affected due to a number of challenges including: land degradation,

¹Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiatives.,2015. How to feed nine billion within the planet's boundaries; The need for an agroecological approach. Policy brief

²Aguilera, E., Lassaletta, L., Gattinger, A., Gimeno, B.S., 2013. Managing soil carbon for climate change mitigation and adaptation in Mediterranean cropping systems: A meta-analysis. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment* 168, 25–36. doi:10.1016/j. agee.2013.02.003

³Tengö, M., Belfrage, 2004. Local management practices for dealing with change and uncertainty - a cross-scale comparison of cases in Sweden and Tanzania. *Ecology and Society*.

⁴Mijatović, D., Van Oudenhoven, F., Eyzaguirre, P., Hodgkin, T., 2013. The role of agricultural biodiversity in strengthening resilience to climate change: towards an analytical framework. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 11, 95–107. doi:10.1080/14735903.2012.691221

⁵The Ministerial Policy Statement 2016/17

⁶Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Statistical Abstract

climate change, low adoption of technological innovations particularly amongst women farmers despite being the majority of agricultural labor force; poor management of pests and diseases; a weak agricultural extension system, with limited access especially among women; dependency on rain-fed agriculture; poor post-harvest handling techniques; inadequate bulking and storage facilities, limited market information and capacity of the primary producers to meet the standards required in export markets among other challenges.

Furthermore, Uganda has one of the world's fastest growing populations, with a growth rate of 3.3% per year. The population is expected to hit the 50 million mark by 2023, with the majority of the population still living in rural areas and directly deriving their livelihoods from agriculture. This puts great pressure on the agricultural sector to meet the food and fibre needs of the growing population, without depleting the natural resources. To this regard, agroecology is increasingly appreciated as a more sustainable solution to the complex challenges faced today.

3.1 Scaling up Agroecology Initiative

During the 2nd international agroecology symposium organised in April 2018 by UN FAO in Rome, Italy, there was a launch of the **scale up agroecology initiative** with a strong call from dialogue to action. This is regarded as a counter measure to the high input and output focused conventional agriculture which has proved unsustainable and insufficient to eradicate hunger and poverty especially in the most vulnerable parts of the world where there is most need. The chairperson's summary sets out 5 Key actions for scaling up agroecology;

1. Strengthen the central role of family farmers and their organizations in safeguarding, utilizing and accessing natural resources
2. Foster experience and knowledge sharing, collaborative research and innovations
3. Promote markets for agroecological based products for health, nutrition and Sustainability
4. Review institutional, policy, legal and financial frameworks to promote agroecological transitions for sustainable food systems
5. Take agroecology to scale through integrated and participatory territorial processes

There was a strong call for various stakeholders ranging from National governments, civil society organisations, UN Organisations, funding agencies, consumers, family farmers and private sector to undertake deliberate and strategic actions to further support the scaling up agroecology initiative.

3.2 National level actions for scaling up agroecology initiative

Several categories of stakeholders ranging from national and international NGOs, academia, private and public sector are undertaking various initiatives geared towards promotion of agroecology in Uganda. These efforts are however scattered and not well coordinated which limits their effectiveness towards wide up scaling of agroecology in Uganda. In order to ensure that the country's specific strategies are agreed upon by stakeholders, PELUM Uganda in collaboration with its member organisations and other partners organized four regional agroecology actors symposiums in December 2018 (Northern- Gulu district on 6th December, Western - Fort Portal on 6th December, Eastern- Mbale district on 11th December and Central regions- Wakiso district on 12th December) that provided a multi actor platform for regional specific learning, experience sharing and dialogue on agroecology in Uganda. The symposiums brought together small-scale farmers, civil society organisations, private sector, academia, research institutions, development partners, media, members of parliament, ministries, agencies and departments to discuss pertinent multi-sectoral and regional specific issues for the scaling up of agroecology in Uganda. These issues would further be synthesised and discussed at a national level platform to inform the development for a national strategy for scaling up agroecology. It's against this background that PELUM Uganda in collaboration with its partners have organized the 1st National Agroecology Actors Symposium (NAAS 1), scheduled for 30th and 31st May 2019 in Kampala, Uganda.

3.0 ABOUT THE 1ST NATIONAL AGROECOLOGY ACTORS SYMPOSIUM (NAAS)

PELUM Uganda is organising a 2-day National Agroecology Actors Symposium (NAAS 1) as the first of its kind in the country. The event, which will be held from 30th to 31st May at Silver springs Hotel in Bugolobi, Kampala will bring together various stakeholders ranging from farmers, private sector, research and academia, government institutions, non-government organisations, international organisations, media and the general public. The event aims at facilitating collective learning (experience sharing), marketing, and dialogue on agroecology towards a process for development of a robust and inclusive national strategy/ roadmap for scaling up of Agroecology in Uganda. The event will also lead to formulation of a National Agroecology Actors platform to facilitate knowledge sharing, networking and joint action.

The event is in the spirit of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) led initiative of **Scaling up Agroecology** that was launched during the **2nd International Agroecology Symposium** held in April 2018 at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy. The event is also a build of 4 regional (sub national) agroecology actors symposiums organised by PELUM Uganda members in December 2018 (Northern-Gulu district on 6th December Organised by ESAFF Uganda; Western - Fort Portal on 6th December organized by SATNET, Eastern- Mbale district on 11th December organized by EADEN and Central region- Wakiso district on 12th December organized by Kulika Uganda) with financial support from Trocaire. The event will also be a build up to the **Eastern Africa Conference on Agroecology and ecological organic trade** organised by Bio vision Africa Trust and IFOAM in Nairobi, Kenya **from 25th to 27th June 2019**.

The NAAS will include several activities prior, during and after the symposiums. These include;

- A caravan of smallholder farmers from all the regions of Uganda with roadside stop over events aimed at creating awareness on agroecology and amplifying the voice of smallholder farmers for a call to action on scaling up of agroecology.
- A media conference on agroecology and the scaling initiative to facilitate and enable accurate and informed reporting on agroecology and the symposium.
- Plenary sessions with keynote presentations and providing feedback from breakaway sessions.
- Thematic focused breakaway sessions to facilitate in-depth discussion by relevant actors on key issues.
- Exhibitions, posters and market place events to facilitate networking, trade and information sharing on agroecology.
- Declaration and petition of smallholder family farmers on scaling up agroecology
- Launch of FAO scaling up agroecology initiative
- Formulation of National Agroecology Actors Platform

The NAAS 1 will be managed by an organising committee comprised of PELUM secretariat staff and representatives from other key agroecology actors in Uganda. The event will be open to all that express interest before the set date and entrance will be free of charge.

4.0 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The overall objective of the NAAS 1 is to facilitate multistakeholder platform for further understanding of agroecology, dialogue on pertinent national context specific agroecological issues and initiate a process for development of an inclusive strategy for scaling up of agroecology in Uganda.

4.1 Specific Objectives

1. To provide a multi actor platform for learning, experience and knowledge sharing, harmonization of understanding and dialogue on agroecology in Uganda.
2. To initiate the process and generate key input towards the development of a national strategy for scaling up of agroecology in Uganda.
3. To establish a national agroecology actors platform for continuous learning, experience sharing, influencing engagements and multi stakeholder co-creation for the scaling up of agroecology in Uganda
4. To disseminate and discuss various agroecology related research findings

4.2 Expected outputs

- A clear roadmap for developing the National Strategy for scaling up Agroecology in Uganda including key input for the strategy from the stakeholders
- A National Agroecology Actors Platform (NAAP) formulated and operationalized
- A deeper, harmonised understanding and appreciation of agroecology by the different stakeholders.
- A petition and declaration of smallholder farmers on scaling up agroecology
- At least 2 agroecology related research findings disseminated and discussed

5.0 SYMPOSIUM ACTIVITIES

5.1 Pre event

- A caravan of smallholder farmers from all the regions of Uganda with roadside stop over events aimed at creating awareness on agroecology and amplifying the voice of smallholder farmers for a call to action on scaling up of agroecology.
- A media conference on agroecology and the scaling initiative to facilitate to enable accurate and informed reporting on agroecology and the symposium.

5.2 Symposium activities

- **Plenary sessions:** These will be both on the first and second day of the symposium and will include opening remarks, keynote presentation on agroecology from a local to global context, panel presentations and discussions on thematic agroecological issues. There will also be feedback sessions from break away sessions, launching of scaling up agroecology initiative, launching of the national agroecology actors initiative, smallholder farmers petition on agroecology and closing remarks from the chief guest.
- **Thematic focused breakaway sessions:** these will be held on the first day to enable more in depth thematic discussions by the specific stakeholders and interest groups on key issues and strategies to put forward for the scaling up of Agroecology in Uganda. Thematic areas will include; Agroecological research and knowledge in to use, securing resource rights (land water, seed etc) for smallholder farmers, developing responsive agroecological markets and sustainable consumption, improving agroecological financing, streamlining agroecology and climate resilience/ integrated risk management in public and private extension systems/ single spine and responsive policy frameworks for scaling up of agroecology in Uganda.
- **Exhibitions, posters and market place events:** these will be both on the first and second day of the symposium to facilitate networking, trade and information sharing on agroecology. A call for posters to showcase best practices in agroecology will be made and space provided to selected posters to be showcased at the symposium. Smallholder and other stakeholders will also be provided with exhibition space upon prior expression of interest (at least 2 weeks from the date of the event).

6.0 THEMATIC AREAS FOR THE SYMPOSIUM

The following thematic areas will be the core focus for the NAAS to facilitate in-depth discussion among the key agroecology actors with interest, experience and specialised knowledge in the particular areas. Brief write up/ concept will be developed by the selected session leads to further guide the discussion to generate the expected outputs. The thematic areas include;

6.1 Harnessing agroecology research and knowledge to inform, policy and practice

This session will provide a platform for researchers, academia, agroecology practitioners to discuss and generate critical issues for further strengthening of research knowledge management to inform policy and practice. An analysis of agroecology related research will be conducted by PELUM Uganda prior to the event to inform the discussions and proposed follow up actions.

6.2 Securing resource rights for smallholder farmers

There is a growing concern on the fast rate at which the smallholder farmers are losing their rights to access, utilise and own the key resources for food production such as water and seeds. This not only threatens their livelihoods but the entire food supply system that is largely dependent on them. This theme (could be further sub divided into 2 sub themes; land and seed) will further discuss the key issues affecting resource rights for smallholder farmers, share successful cases leading to the realisation of rights for smallholder farmers and generate key strategies for scaling up such initiatives.

6.3 Developing responsive agroecological markets and sustainable consumption

Smallholder farmers practicing agroecology are equally faced with the challenge of accessing favourable markets, with the exception of the few that have benefitted from organically certified markets with premium prices. The costs of such schemes often make 3rd party certification not affordable to the majority. However several successful smallholder friendly initiatives for circular agroecological market development do exist and these need to be further analysed and strategies for their up scaling developed. This theme will therefore explore such cases and propose strategies for agroecological market development in Uganda.

6.4 Favourable financing mechanisms for scaling up agroecology

One of the key ingredients for scaling up agroecology is availability of funds both from public and private entities to support such initiatives. Currently, agriculture and natural resource management sectors are among the least funded by the national budgets even with support from non-state actors such as funding agencies. This theme will therefore explore the existing gaps and propose strategies for sustainable financing mechanisms as well as the priority areas for financing. A mini analysis of agroecology related public and private sector investment will be conducted by PELUM to guide the discussion.

6.5 Streamlining agroecology and climate resilience in public and private extension systems

One of the major challenges for scaling up agroecology is lack of a coherent mainstreaming strategy for agroecology in public and private sector extension. This is largely due to limited knowledge of agroecology among the extension practitioners since majority are educated under conventional agriculture education systems. The single spine extension system developed by the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) provides such a framework that could be further reviewed and mainstreamed with agroecology. However this is largely not functional and not well understood by many stakeholders. This theme will therefore explore innovative strategies that could guide the mainstreaming of agroecology in public and private extension systems.

6.6 Responsive policy frameworks for scaling up of agroecology

A good understanding of existing national policy frameworks in relation to agroecology is key for informing follow up actions. A study conducted by Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT) on enabling policies for ecological organic agriculture in East Africa will be presented and discussed by policy makers and stakeholders as a basis for generating key actions to creating an enabling policy environment for agroecology.

7.0 EXPECTED PARTICIPANTS

The NAAS 1 will be attended by a wide range of stakeholders that will include; Civil Society organisations, Private Sector, Academia, Research institutions, International agroecology experts, Representatives from PELUM Association Country Chapters and other partners, Development partners, media, members of parliament, ministries, agencies and Departments and farmers.

8.0 PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP

8.1 Participation

Participation to the NAAS shall be by invitation from the organizing committee and PELUM Uganda. An inclusive invitation and mailing list shall be generated in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure that there is adequate representation from all interest group. Invitation letters shall then be sent either by e-mail or physical delivery. The total number of expected participants is 250 people.

8.1 Partnership

PELUM Uganda invites other likeminded institutions to partner in organizing the NAAS. Partnership could be in the following ways;

1. Contribution of financial or other resources (such as media space/airtime, promotional materials, venue facilitation etc) towards the symposium budget
2. Mobilising and facilitating stakeholders (such as farmers, students etc) to participate
3. Join organizing committee and directly undertake roles towards successful organisation of the NAAS on a voluntary basis. These will be identified and contacted by PELUM Uganda.
4. Strategic partnership; use their strategic position to promote the event widely through their circles and add more credibility and co-own the outputs of the event. Potential strategic partners will be identified and engaged by PELUM Uganda secretariat.

Benefits to the partners include; visibility of the organisations through event promotional materials and media coverage, strategic exhibition space to share about their work, providing slots within the event programme and taking lead in relevant thematic areas.

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

See attached