

## **Webinar summary**

### **What are the prospects for supporting the deployment of agroecology in public policy in North Africa?**

**26.11.2024**

*This webinar was organized as part of the MEDAE network (MEDiterranean multi-actor network on AgroEcology): <https://www.medae-agroecology.eu/>*

*An introductory speech presented the MEDAE network and the possibilities of joining the network.*

*Then, through three presentations, this webinar analyzed the consideration given to agroecology in North Africa at local (in agricultural practices), national (in public policies) and international (in the Rio international conventions) levels. A discussion period provided an opportunity to exchange views with participants on the prospects for promoting agroecological transition in North Africa.*

#### **Agroecology in national public policies in North African countries**

***Rita Jalkh, post-doctoral researcher and NATAE project manager - CIHEAM IAMM***

This first presentation was based on the conclusions of a cross-sectional analysis of public policies in 5 North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia), carried out as part of the NATAE project. The report is available to read [here](#).

North African countries face many common challenges in terms of food security, land and natural resource degradation, and climate change with exacerbated droughts.

Faced with these challenges, countries are simultaneously aiming for (i) food security, with priority given to increasing and intensifying production (to offset dependence on agricultural imports, particularly cereals); and (ii) exporting high value-added products (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria).

Trapped by climatic and social emergencies, governments are pursuing their established policy of agricultural intensification: subsidizing chemical inputs, opening up new irrigation schemes, growing high-potential crops...

However, some sustainable or resilient agriculture strategies promote the development of organic farming in some cases, as well as the adoption of "sustainable natural resource management" measures which, in most cases, revolve around water-related issues.

But the situation shows that the measures prescribed by these strategies for sustainable agriculture are rarely accompanied by obligations, incentives or support in terms of training or advice for social players. What's more, the financial resources allocated to the implementation of these more environmental strategies are limited.

Overall, the study reveals that public authority representatives have a vague understanding of the notion of agroecology.

### **The place of agroecology in farming practices: the case of Algeria**

***Adel Moulai, teacher-researcher at the University of Laghouat (Algeria) and project coordinator with the El-Argoub Association***

This second presentation focused on a more local scale, analyzing the role of agroecology in farming practices, using the palm groves of Laghouat and Ghardaïa in Algeria as case studies.

Confirming Rita Jalkh's comments, Adel Moulai pointed out that Algeria's agricultural policies in recent years have essentially focused on extending the usable agricultural area, developing strategic crops (mainly cereals), and intensifying production through input subsidies and the opening of new irrigation schemes.

The main challenges facing farmers in the Laghouat and Ghardaïa regions of southern Algeria's Saharan climate are water management, soil fertility and extreme climatic conditions. To overcome these challenges, farmers have adopted a number of agro-ecological practices inspired by ancestral oasis practices (e.g. integration of agriculture and livestock and crop rotation) and also benefiting from technical innovations: integration of aquaculture, use of compost, biofertilizers or biopesticides. In this way, the new palm groves in Laghouat and Ghardaïa act as incubators, testing innovative practices and contributing to the co-creation and dissemination of new practices throughout the region.

Agroecological practices, however, receive little support from public authorities (little technical and financial support, poorly structured supply chains, limited understanding of agroecology). However, they are encouraged by civil society organizations and benefit from farmers' determination to be more resilient in the face of climate change and from their know-how.

### **International frameworks as possible levers for better integration of agroecology into national public policies**

***Manon Albagnac, in charge of monitoring the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - CARI Association***

This third presentation focused on the place of agroecology within international frameworks and their influence at national level.

In the 3 Rio international conventions (Convention on Biodiversity, on Climate Change, and to Combat Desertification), there is a growing interest in the challenges of agriculture and a growing recognition of the potential of agroecology as a sustainable agricultural production method that respects biodiversity and promotes the resilience of populations in the face of drought.

As North African countries are signatories to these conventions, how can they act as a lever to encourage better integration of agroecology into national public policies? The talk will focus on the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), with the UNCCD COP 16 taking place from December 2 to 13 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

At COP 16, civil society and research will have several opportunities to take part in discussions and put forward recommendations to countries on how to integrate the transformation of agricultural and food systems into their policies on sustainable land management and drought resilience. These will include a high-level dialogue on sustainable, resilient and inclusive agrifood systems, a thematic day on agricultural and food systems, and various side events.

The aim of this COP is to review the implementation of the convention following the various discussions and negotiations. The countries of North Africa, having ratified the convention, are then required to implement the political recommendations emerging from the COP, for example via national action plans.

In addition, the recognition of agroecology by international conventions can enable civil society to refer to the decisions and recommendations made at the COPs, and to advocate them at national level.

The COPs also promote dialogue and understanding between countries, and give everyone access to reliable, up-to-date scientific information.

To find out more: read the [summary](#) "Recognition of agroecology in the Rio conventions: a potential for scaling up".

## Conclusion

In conclusion, many local farmers are implementing agroecological practices to meet the challenges they face (availability of water resources, soil fertility, drought). The practices they adopt make farming more sustainable, less impactful on natural resources, and more resilient in the face of change.

However, agroecology is relatively absent from national public policies, and farmers receive little technical or financial support.

Agroecology is increasingly recognized in international conventions, and the COPs can be used to make recommendations for more sustainable food systems. These international frameworks, ratified by North African countries, can influence national public policies and support civil society advocacy.