

ACTIVITY REPORT FOR THE 1ST NATIONAL AGROECOLOGY ACTORS SYMPOSIUM (NAAS) IN UGANDA

Introduction

The symposium theme: *‘Advancing multi stakeholder responsiveness towards scaling-up of agro-ecology in Uganda’*

It was held from 30th to 31st May 2019 at Silver Springs Hotel, Bugolobi, Kampala

Organized by PELUM Uganda

PELUM Uganda is organising a 2-day National Agroecology Actors Symposium (NAAS 1) as the first of its kind in the country. The event was held from 30th to 31st May at Silver Springs Hotel in Bugolobi, Kampala. It was Moderated by Charles Odontho, NBS. It brought 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 aimed 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 also led 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 Biovision Africa Trust and IFOAM in Nairobi, Kenya **from 18th to 21st June 2019.**

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

- 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.
- Launch of the National Agroecology Actors Platform by PS MAAIF
- Launch of the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative phase 2 by PS MAAIF
- Research dissemination by BvAT, Kenya

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.

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.

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

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

SYMPOSIUM ACTIVITIES

- **Plenary sessions:** These will be both on the first and second day of the symposium and will include opening remarks, a high level panel discussion, keynote presentation on agroecology from a local to global context, panel presentations and discussions on thematic agroecological issues, a mini press conference. There will also be feedback sessions from break away sessions, launching of the national agroecology actors platform/initiative, launch of the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative phase 2
- **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 farmers, private sector 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).
- **Research dissemination:** 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.

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;

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. – Mr. Clovis Kabaseke, Dr. Mwalimu Msheshe, Dr. sekand joseph

Moderated by UMU

Call to action

Set up demonstration units – climate smart villages

AE curriculum at lower levels

Set standards for AE inputs

Strengthen conservation and restoration of biodiversity (gene, seed banks)

PAR and farmer led research

Documentation and validation of indigenous knowledge.

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 land and seeds. This not only threatens their livelihoods but the entire food supply system that is largely dependent on them. This theme 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.

Call to action

Strengthen regulatory system

Consumer awareness

Value addition initiatives

Agro – input enterprises

Disseminate research results

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.

Call to action

AE market development at all levels

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.

Call to action

More money for awareness

Seed banks at regional level

Policy formulation

Ae focused research

Agroecology and climate resilience

This session will provide a platform for various stakeholders to share and learn about the potential of Agroecology to build resilience of agricultural systems. Selected research studies will be shared, and strategies for scaling up agroecology for climate resilience will be generated

Call to action

Incorporate AE into day -2 day activities / life

Domesticate AE

Markets for AE

Tease out existing gaps

Include youths in AE

AE Curriculum at all levels

Financial support

Mainstreaming Agroecology in Agricultural extension Services

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.

Call to action

Document successful AE practices

Set guidelines and standards on AE messages

Capacity building for all AOs in AE practices and principles

Integrate ICT in extension

Provide more support for farmers to make more money – markets,

PARTICIPANTS

The NAAS 1 will be attended by 250 stakeholders that will include; Civil Society organizations, Private Sector, Academia, Research institutions, International agro ecology experts, Development partners, media, members of parliament, ministries, departments and agencies and farmers.

Objectives

Outcomes

Actionable areas

Theme

Activities

Thematic areas

LESSONS learnt

Agro ecology is key to sustainable development

It is simple for farmers to adopt

Promotes co-existence, protects organisms, biodiversity conservation

Promotes posterity = future livelihoods

Natural remedy better than inorganic inputs for our health

Agro ecology can feed the increasing population more sustainably, with minimal harm to the environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

URDT / ARU need to scale up agro ecology in all its institutions

Strengthen PAR research and evidence documentation of successful agro ecological practices

Set up agro ecology demo

Set up a seed bank / botanical garden for endangered species of plants / crops

Value addition to AE products

Enhance awareness creation on AE using radio, TV FFLG and 2-GA