



**Agroecology Creates A Food System
That Protects, Sustains And Restores
The Diversity Of Life On Earth**

What we grow and eat sustains our bodies. It enlivens our culture. It strengthens our communities. It defines, perhaps more than anything else, what we are – as human beings. And yet, the food system is broken. Consumers no longer trust what they eat. Many farmers are struggling with poverty. Malnourishment and obesity are blighting lives even where – on the surface – everything seems okay. And, millions of people around the world continue to go hungry, day after day. What’s more, the profit-driven, chemical-intensive, industrial scale model of agriculture, which large parts of the world have subscribed to, is an enormous threat to the planet. The most positive, life-sustaining human endeavour – the growing and eating of food – has been turned into a threat, with serious consequences for people and the planet. Another way is possible. There is a better alternative.

Ecological farming combines modern science and innovation with respect for nature and biodiversity. It ensures healthy farming and healthy food. It protects the soil, the water and the climate. It does not contaminate the environment with chemical inputs or use genetically engineered crops. And, it places people and farmers - consumers and producers, rather than the corporations who control our food now - at its very heart. Ecological farming methods can help reverse the trend of declining soil fertility and land degradation that many farmers in developing countries are facing. Problems such as soil erosion, acidification and organic matter depletion can benefit from agroecological practices that nurture soil fertility and biodiversity.

It considers soil as a living, essential, component of farming. The nutrients that plants need can come from three main sources and contribute to overall soil health:

1. minerals naturally occurring in farm soils, due to their geological history,
2. organic sources that are brought back to farming soils (manure from animals, residues from crops, composted waste from domestic sources)
3. biological nitrogen fixation, from fixation of N₂ from the air, via legumes or other plants or microorganisms with this capacity.

This way of farming as a key ingredient of a wider new Ecological Food System. It is inextricably linked to rural and urban food consumption and waste, human health and human rights, equality in resource distribution, and many other elements of food production and consumption. Significant progress has been made over the last few decades such as the “organic movement”, the “locavore movement”, and “food sovereignty” which challenge the damaging mainstream industrial agriculture model. This new movement is gaining significant international support and momentum. Meanwhile, academics and international institutions keep adding evidence to a growing body of scientific research on agroecology. If we work together, we can create a food system that protects, sustains and restores the diversity of life on Earth – at the same time respecting ecological limits. It is a vision of sustainability, equity and food sovereignty in which safe and healthy food is grown to meet fundamental human needs, and where control over food and farming rests with local communities, rather than transnational corporations. Together, we can return our food to what it was always meant to be: a source of life – for all people on the planet.

Soil Lovers say: Food For Life Food Is Life.

Ref: Reyes Tirado, Greenpeace Research Laboratories, University of Exeter