



# Policy Brief

## Agroecology Extension in Uganda

### Executive Summary

July 2025

Agroecology transition remains a challenge in Uganda despite the numerous benefits attributed to it. Many challenges impede transition and full-scale adoption of Agroecological practices in Ugandan small-scale farming systems. There has been concerted effort in promoting its practice in the communities by various agencies as highlighted in this policy brief. Further action points to actualizing its implementation are discussed.

#### Context

Extreme weather events continue to ravage the globe leaving the mass populations helpless due to the destruction and impacts caused by climate change. A growing number of farmers, civil society organizations and governments consider agroecology as part of the broader strategic approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation. In many attempts to solve climate change related challenges, agroecology farming principles (Figure 1) and practices including Agroforestry, organic matter management, livestock, crop diversification, inter-cropping, contouring, preservation of indigenous seeds and

making bio-fertilizers & bio-stimulants and crop integration have been promoted among other practices. In addition to preserving indigenous seeds that are adapted to the local environment and provide greater resistance to pests and diseases, these agroecological activities also increase the biodiversity of the agro-eco system.



Figure 1: Agroecology principles (Source: Agroecology Coalition, 2023)



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Despite the well documented benefits of agroecological practices, Ugandan smallholder farmers have not fully embraced these approaches in large numbers. Regardless of the importance globally, agroecology transition faces many challenges including: extension, a conventional agricultural knowledge system, commercial interests, regulatory issues, research funding, training, organization and communication. In Uganda, the major challenges of agroecology were found to be: constraints at the farmer level, a traditional agricultural system, competing and intertwined commercial and governmental agendas, and related ideologies and discourses. Agroecology extension has been identified as one of the pillars of agroecology transition.

## Importance of extension services in promoting agroecology

By empowering farmers, encouraging local knowledge and community involvement, and easing the shift to sustainable farming methods, extension plays a critical role in agroecology, ultimately fostering resilient ecosystems and food security

 Extension agents have the ability to scale up agroecology principles and act as multipliers of an agroecological strategy

 Social network research shows that farmers who participate in training sessions or development initiatives are more likely to embrace sound agroecological practices

 Extension empowers farmers and promotes local knowledge through: recognizing and valuing local knowledge, supporting farmer experimentation, promoting participatory approaches and strengthening farmer networks.

 Extension contributes to food security and resilient eco systems through: improving soil health,

enhancing biodiversity, reducing environmental impact and promoting community resilience.

 Extension facilitates transition to sustainable practices by bridging science and practice, promoting farmer learning, disseminating knowledge and technology and demonstrating feasibility.

## Involvement of extension agencies in agroecology

In Uganda, agroecological innovations /principles are mostly promoted by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as opposed to government extension services that mostly promote conventional agriculture, leaving farmers with contradicting priorities on whether to go agroecology or remain in conventional farming. Some of these organizations promote only agroecological innovations where as some promote both agroecological and conventional agriculture. There are also agroecology farmer Associations that enhance transitions in communities. They act as farmer learning platforms that help farmers learn modern agroecological innovations to support farming. It is pertinent to review the current extension system for inclusion of agroecology in farmer training sessions to ensure more robust agroecosystems in Uganda. There are projects that support agroecology. These projects are hosted either by organizations or institutions and some of these have demonstration sites to enhance farmer learning (figure 2 &3).



Figure 2: AER Project meeting on promotion and dissemination of Agroecology



## Policy recommendations for institutionalizing agroecology among extension agencies in Uganda

- ☞ Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries is advocating for mainstreaming Agroecology in the extension system as this will promote the practices and enhance a resilient agroecology farming system.
- ☞ The Uganda National Agroecology Strategy is being compiled and will be published for public consideration and use to further promote agroecological practices and innovations in Uganda.
- ☞ Most of the interventions being promoted are to aid the practice of Agroecological activities in Uganda.
- ☞ A study is being conducted in Uganda to establish factors that affect institutionalization of agroecology in the country.
- ☞ The end result of this study will highlight the necessary action points for actualizing implementation of agroecology in the broader population of the country.
- ☞ It is also expected to map out and document the different agroecology extension agencies to enhance further developments in the sector.



Figure 3: Visiting MMU agroecology farm

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### ABOUT THIS POLICY BRIEF

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