TARASA25

TARASA25 Conference Summary report

25-27 November 2025

Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

Organizers:

Co-organizers:

In Collaboration with:

Funded by:

ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Full Form
AC	Agricultural Cooperative
ACF	Alliance of Champions
AE	Agroecology
AEF	Agroecology Fund
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AFA	Asian Farmers' Association
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use
AHP	Analytic Hierarchy Process
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALiSEA	Agroecology Learning Alliance in South East Asia
AMAF	ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry
APAARI	Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
APCNF	Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming
APN	Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research
APP	Agroecology Promotion Programme
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AsiaDHRRA	Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia
ASSET	Agroecology and Safe Food System Transitions (Project)
ASWGC	ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Crops
BAIF	Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation
BRC	Bio-Resource Center
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CASIC	Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Intensification Consortium (Cambodia)
CAT	Consortium for Agroecological Transformations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDE	Centre for Development and Environment
CEPP	Center for Education Policy and Practice
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CHC	Custom Hiring Center
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CIRAD	Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement
CMNF	Community Managed Natural Farming
CNPI	Composite Nature Positive Index
COP	Conference of the Parties
COSTEA	Scientific and Technical Committee for Agricultural Water
CRP	Community Resource Person
CSAM	Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTM	Certification Trademark
DEA	Data Envelopment Analysis
DeSIRA	Development for Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture
DLAM	Department of Land Administration and Management (Lao PDR)
DOSMEP	Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DST	Decision Support Tool
ECOLAND	Ecosystem Services and Land Use Research Center
EE	Economic Efficiency
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAST	Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation

FFEM	Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (French Facility for Global Environment)
FO	Farmer Organization
FSC	Forage-Silage-Compost
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDA	General Directorate of Agriculture
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GRET	Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques
HimRRA	Himachal Pradesh Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network
HLPE	High-Level Panel of Experts
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
ICRAF	World Agroforestry
ICS	Internal Control System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IPSARD	Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
LFN	Lao Farmer Network
LICA	Lao Facilitated Initiative on Agroecology for ASEAN
LL	Living Lab
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Cambodia)
MDD-W	Minimum Dietary Diversity Score for Women
MET	Multi-Environment Trials
MFI	Microfinance Institutions
MRV	Measurement, Reporting, and Verification
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
N2O	Nitrous Oxide
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (Lao PDR)
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAP-FST	National Action Plan for Food Systems Transformation
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NFV	Natural Farming Village
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIAS	National Institute of Animal Science
NIASM	National Institute of Abiotic Stress Management
NMA	Nutrition in Mountain Agro-Ecosystems
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan (Lao PDR)
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PGS	Participatory Guarantee Systems
PMUAC	Preah Vihear Meanchey Union of Agricultural Cooperative
PPP	Public Private Partnership
QGP	Quality Grain Production
RA	Regenerative Agriculture
RAI	Responsible Agricultural Investment
ReCAMA	Regional Council of Agricultural Machinery Associations in Asia and the Pacific
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SeqCOI	Sequence/Carbon Decision Support Tool (Specific to context)
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMS	Sustainable Management Services
SOC	Soil Organic Carbon
SOM	Soil Organic Matter
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
SWG	Sector Working Group
TAPE	Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (FAO)
TARASA	Transitioning Towards Agroecology and Regenerative Agriculture: A Contribution to Food Systems Transformation
TICAF	Team Europe flagship program (in Lao PDR)
TN UAF	Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry
TPP	Transformational Partnership Platform
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN FSH	UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
UNFSS	UN Food Systems Summit

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In 2023, building on the various efforts of different institutions in the region and globally, the Cambodian Conservation Agriculture and Sustainable Intensification Consortium (CASIC) successfully organized the TARASA23 event in Cambodia in October 2023. It brought together more than 200 participants from 16 different countries to share experiences and discuss **transitioning pathways towards agroecology and regenerative agriculture** as a contribution to **food systems transformations in Asia and the Pacific**. The event and national consultation in the Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia were a key milestone in the design of the **ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology transitions** that was approved by the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture during the 46th ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) Summit in October 2024.

Recognizing the need for inclusive multi-stakeholders' engagement and long -term collaboration, a second edition of TARASA event has been organized in 2025 in Lao PDR from 25 to 27 November bringing together a broad diversity of stakeholders. It was hosted by the LICA (Lao Facilitated Initiative on Agroecology for ASEAN) and the **Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Environment** and was co-organised by CASIC, CIRAD, GRET, Agroecology coalition FAO, UNESCAP and CSAM, Agroecology TPP, ISA project and Swisscontact, in collaboration with AFA, ALiSEA, APAARI and AsiaDHRRA. The objectives of **TARASA25** were:

- Share and learn from various global, regional, and local initiatives in the region on agroecology, regenerative agriculture and other sustainable transformative approaches, and discuss how such efforts can further contribute towards agricultural and food systems transformations**.**
- Raise further awareness and support implementation of the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions**.**
- Take stock of progress, and characterize remaining knowledge and implementation gaps regarding the different leverage points identified in the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions**.**
- Share and exchanges on possible Public Private Partnership (PPP) road map in implementation of agroecology and agroecology financing scheme.
- Explore opportunities and discuss collectively the ways forwards for enhanced collaboration and partnership in the Asia Pacific region to promote food systems transformation through agroecology and regenerative agriculture**.**

ASSET project

Aiming at transforming food and agricultural systems in Southeast Asia into more sustainable, safer and inclusive systems, through harnessing the potential of Agroecology with a large coalition of partners, **ASSET project** has been supporting since 2021 the strengthening and enlargement of the **Agroecology Learning alliance in South East Asia (ALiSEA**) network, action research and knowledge production in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam, and policy dialogues on Agroecology at multiple levels (from local to regional). For ASSET project ending early 2026, TARASA25 has been a major opportunity to share ASSET project achievements and lessons learnt.

ASSET project is coordinated by GRET and CIRAD and funded by AFD, EU and FFEM

The TARASA25 conference was designed and organized in the framework of the **Agroecology and Safe Food System Transitions in South-East Asia (ASSET) Project** activities.

This report presents the summary of presentations and discussions which took place during the main event from 25 to 27 November 2025.

1.2. Pre-conference - 24 November 2025

TARASA25 has been preceded by a pre-conference of one day entitled "*Policy dialogue: continue moving forward the implementation of the ASEAN Policy Guidelines for Agroecological Transitions (AET)".* This preconference ,organized and facilitated by the ASSET project Policy Dialogue Team, aimed at (i) integrating the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on AET into national policies and action plans to advance sustainable and resilient food systems; (ii) leveraging the LICA Action Plan to strengthen alignment, coordination, and collaboration between public and private actors and enhance regional cooperation; and (iii) expanding multi-stakeholder agroecology coalitions to raise awareness and accelerate the implementation of agroecological policies and actions across the region. Around 135 participants attended this preconference day.

ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions

These guidelines offer voluntary support to ASEAN member states and bodies, particularly the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Crops (ASWGC) and the LICA, to scale up agroecology. It identifies seven key leverage points: (1) planning, (2) working with farmers, (3) markets and value chains, (4) capacity building and knowledge sharing, (5) multi-stakeholder engagement, (6) research, and (7) financing. Guidelines under these entry points provide orientations and concrete ways based on which countries can set policy interventions adapted to their national contexts and priorities.

Download summary report of the pre-conference day

2. TARASA25 main conference - 25 to 27 November 2025

2.1. Agenda

Detailed agenda is accessible online: Agenda – TARASA25

2.2. Participants

About 245 participants (47% women) attended (See Participant list online), from 23 different countries mainly from Asia and the Pacific and representing more than 110 governmental and non-governmental organizations including policy makers, donors and funding institutions, public and private institutions working in the fields of research, education, extension, farmers and farmer's organizations, CSOs and other private sector representatives.

2.3. The Innovation fair – 25-27 November 2025

From 25 to 27 November, TARASA25 also welcomed an exhibition of agroecology materials and products, showcasing works and activities of 24 representatives of farmers, cooperatives, private sector, CSO, researchers, policy makers and development agencies from Lao PDR and the sub region.

3. TARASA25 - Day 1 – 25 November 2025

3.1. Welcoming Remarks

By H.E. Dr. Saynakhone Inthavong, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, Lao PDR

Key Messages:

- Welcomed delegates, ambassadors, development partners, and regional representatives to the International Workshop on Agroecology and Regenerative Agricultural Systems (TARASA25).
- Highlighted urgent challenges affecting food systems, including climate change impacts, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity, particularly for rural farming communities.
- Emphasized that these challenges also provide opportunities for meaningful transformation through agroecology.
- Noted the alignment of the workshop with the development of Lao PDR's 10th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030) and upcoming sectoral strategies for agriculture, forestry, natural resources, and environment.
- Reaffirmed Lao PDR's leadership role in ASEAN through LICA, and noted the achievement of adopting the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions (2024).
- Underlined the workshop's role in advancing implementation, promoting cooperation, strengthening financing mechanisms, and scaling agroecology across the region.
- Expressed appreciation to France, the EU, FAO, UN-ESCAP, FFEM, and all stakeholders for their long-standing collaboration.

Key Messages: By H.E. Madame Bénédicte Deschamps, Ambassador of France to Lao PDR

Key Messages:

- Welcomed participants to the second edition of the TARASA symposium, expressing gratitude to the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, the Lao Facilitated Initiative on Agroecology for ASEAN, and ASSET project partners (GRET, CIRAD, FAO, UN-ESCAP) for organizing.
- Highlighted the escalation of challenges in 2025, including recurrent climate disasters, soil collapse, and biodiversity loss, which have deepened inequalities and exposed the fragility of current food systems.
- Identified agroecology as the "only credible response" to these crises, noting its ability to combine productivity with sustainability and climate resilience.
- Emphasized the global momentum of the movement, citing the Agroecology Coalition which now unites over 50 countries, including Lao PDR, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia.
- Detailed France's 20-year leadership in the sector, noting the investment of over €30 million in the region since 2004 and a global commitment of €2 billion (2022–2024) for food system transformation.
- Presented the ASSET Project (co-funded by AFD, FFEM, and the EU) as a symbol of "Team Europe's" commitment to supporting Southeast Asian communities in this transition.
- Celebrated the 2024 endorsement of the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecological Transition as a historic regional milestone achieved through collective effort.
- Called for accelerated action to integrate agroecological practices and research into national and regional policy frameworks to ensure sustainable solutions for future challenges.

By H.E. Mr. Mark Gallagher, Ambassador of the European Union to Lao PDR

Key Messages:

- Welcomed delegates to TARASA 25, emphasizing the shared global necessity of building resilient, environmentally sound food systems.
- Commended the Lao Government for its strong leadership in promoting agroecology to support smallholder farmers, strengthen food security, and guide the transition toward circular food systems.
- Highlighted the alignment of the EU Global Gateway and the Team Europe Strategy for Lao PDR (2021–2027) with national priorities, focusing on inclusive green growth.
- Detailed the pivotal role of the ASSET Project (funded by the EU, AFD, and FFEM) in strengthening the ALiSEA network and facilitating the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions through LICA.
- Noted that TARASA25 serves to connect farmers, researchers, and the private sector to translate policy commitments into practical solutions like diversified cropping, agroforestry, and digital-market tools.
- Stressed that agroecology is essential for Lao PDR's green-growth path, specifically for improving soil health, biodiversity, and climate resilience while reducing chemical dependency.
- Cited the Team Europe flagship program (TICAF) as a key mechanism supporting the transition by integrating agroecology into coffee and tea value chains with support from the EU, France, and Germany.
- Concluded with a personal note acknowledging the "energy and buzz" of the event and encouraged international participants to explore and appreciate Lao PDR during their stay.

By Mrs. Kyung-Mee Kim, FAO Representative to Lao PDR

Key Messages

- Opened by welcoming dignitaries and partners on behalf of FAO as a co-organizer, emphasizing that TARASA25 is remarkably well-timed given the current state of regional food systems.
- Provided context on the "crossroads" facing Asia-Pacific agriculture, noting that while smallholder farmers are the backbone of the region, they face food insecurity, climate disasters, soil degradation, and limited access to technology.
- Identified Agroecology not as a "niche" or experimental concept, but as a globally recognized strategic pathway grounded in ecological principles that restore soil, enhance biodiversity, and reduce dependency on external inputs.
- Highlighted the specific relevance to Lao PDR, noting that the country stands to gain enormously from these approaches due to its rich agrobiodiversity and vibrant farming heritage.
- detailed FAO's global and regional support, specifically the development of the "10 Elements of Agroecology" and the support for the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions (approved in 2024), which offer practical orientation across 7 key leverage points.
- Showcased specific tools like TAPE (Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation), noting that Lao PDR was a pilot country in 2020, and explaining how this tool measures soil health, biodiversity, and socioeconomic impacts to help design better policy and mobilize finance.
- Concluded by framing the event as a "co-creation process" rather than just a conference, urging participants to develop collective recommendations, and reaffirmed FAO's full commitment to supporting Lao PDR and ASEAN in building resilient food systems.

By Ms. Lin Yang, Deputy Executive Secretary of UN-ESCAP

Key Messages:

● Opened by thanking the Lao Government and LICA for hosting, and acknowledged the vital collaboration of ASSET partners (GRET, CIRAD, FAO) supported by the EU and AFD.

● Provided context on the Asia-Pacific region being at a "crossroads," facing interconnected challenges such as fiscal pressure, debt vulnerability, trade fragmentation, and climate disasters causing nearly $1 trillion in annual losses.

● Highlighted the "critical nexus" of agrifood systems, noting they are responsible for over 30% of global emissions and 80% of biodiversity loss, while simultaneously suffering 60% of disaster-related losses.

- Identified agroecology and regenerative agriculture as transformative pathways to restore ecosystems, lower climate risk, and empower rural communities.
- Celebrated recent policy victories, including the adoption of ASEAN Regional Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions and the endorsement of the LICA Strategy Action Plan (2026–2030).
- Showcased the work of ESCAP's Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM), specifically the Regional Initiative on Integrated Straw Management, which combats crop burning and improves soil health.
- Praised the conference pouch (made from straw) as a tangible example of economic and social innovation in crop residue management.
- Concluded by reaffirming UN-ESCAP's readiness to work with partners to accelerate the transition toward food systems that nourish people, sustain nature, and secure a fair, resilient future.

3.2. Opening Remarks

By Mr. Virana Sonenasinh, Director General, Department of Land Administration and Management, Lao PDR

Key Messages:

- Declared the TARASA 25 International Workshop officially open, welcoming over 220 participants from 24 countries and over 100 organizations.
- Framed the workshop not just as a policy forum, but as a working platform to translate regional ambitions into concrete actions, data systems, and land use plans.
- Highlighted the Department's role in leading LICA, reinforcing Lao PDR's commitment to placing farmers and local knowledge at the center of development.
- Focused on the transition from endorsement to implementation of the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions, specifically translating its seven leverage points into national and local actions.
- Celebrated the diversity of the event, noting significant female leadership (52% of speakers/moderators are women) and broad representation from public institutions (55%), NGOs, and civil society, despite limited private sector presence in the main program.
- Outlined 6 key objectives for the workshop:
  1. Share knowledge on global and regional initiatives.
  2. Support implementation of ASEAN guidelines to strengthen national policies.
  3. Identify gaps in knowledge and capacity to prioritize future investment.
  4. Discuss financing and partnerships, leveraging the innovation fair to engage the private sector.
  5. Enhance regional collaboration across the Asia-Pacific.
  6. Consolidate LICA's role as the central regional platform for coordination and monitoring.
- Expressed gratitude to partners including CASIC, ASSET Project, CIRAD, FAO, ESCAP, and Swisscontact for their vital support in strengthening the regional agroecology movement.

By Dr. Thatheva Saphangthong, Deputy Director General of the Department of Land Administration and Management (DLAM), Lao PDR; LICA Regional Coordinator; AE Coalition Steering Committee Member

Key Messages:

- Opened by welcoming dignitaries and participants on behalf of LICA, emphasizing the event's guiding spirit of "learning, solidarity, and action" to transform food systems.
- Traced the evolution of LICA since its initiation by Lao PDR in 2018, noting its growth from a focus on conservation agriculture into a broad regional forum that bridges governments, research institutions, farmers, and civil society.
- Celebrated significant policy milestones, specifically the adoption of the ASEAN Policy Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions in 2024 and the recent endorsement of the LICA Strategic Action Plan (2026–2030) at the 47th AMAF in the Philippines.
- Acknowledged the ASSET project as a vital source of learning, citing it as a strong example of participatory research and policy engagement that helps identify practical pathways for scaling up agroecology.
- Outlined three core priorities for LICA's future work:
    - Learning Faster and Together: Amplifying farmer-led innovation and evidence-based outcomes.
    - Aligning Policy and Practice: Moving from "paper to practice" through country-level roadmaps and multi-stakeholder mechanisms.
    - Mobilizing Resources and Partnerships: Developing financing models and public-private support to aid smallholder transitions.
- Concluded by reminding the audience that their work is fundamentally about people (farmers, women, youth, and indigenous communities) and encouraged active collaboration over the next three days to make agroecology a "living reality" across Southeast Asia.

By H.E. Ms. YOEU Asikin, Under Secretary of State, Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) & Vice Chair of CASIC Steering Committee

Download presentation: TARASA23- Key Achievements in Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture.

Key Messages:

- Opened by expressing profound honor to address the workshop on behalf of Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and CASIC, thanking the Lao Government and LICA for hosting the second edition of this platform following the first TARASA in Siem Reap (2023).
- Framed the transition to sustainable food systems not just as a choice but as an "existential imperative," driven by the alarming pace of soil deterioration and the unsustainability of costly, input-heavy conventional agriculture.
- Highlighted CASIC's role as a vital national mechanism that coordinates across four integrated pillars - policy, research, marketing, and service delivery - to drive demand for conservation agriculture machinery and crop diversification.
- Called for a paradigm shift from "quantitative abundance" to "qualitative abundance," focusing on true sustainability and sovereign nutrition, while explicitly identifying Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a critical enabler for precise, nature-aligned decision-making.
- Proposed 3 strategic recommendations to accelerate regional progress:
    - Launch collaborative projects: Initiate multi-country projects immediately through networks like ALiSEA.
    - Prioritize awareness: Focus on youth education through school demonstration plots linked to local food systems.
    - Sustain current systems: Provide robust financial support to national coordination mechanisms like CASIC.

- Showcased Cambodia’s practical contributions, specifically citing the MetKasekor extension model and financial incentives through the ASSET project as a proven roadmap for implementation.
- Concluded with a strong commitment that CASIC is willing to adopt the ASEAN Policy Guidelines into its Phase 2 Roadmap, urging all stakeholders to transform these guidelines from a visionary document into a "tangible working reality" for farmers across the region.

3.3. Setting the scene Session

Moderated by Oliver Oliveiros (Agroecology Coalition)	

Across the three presentations, a common message emerged: transforming food systems is no longer optional but urgent in the face of a growing "poly-crisis" of climate change, biodiversity loss, and economic instability. ***Ms. Lim Li Ching***, ***IPES-Food*** **(**How Agroecology can contribute to transforming our food systems) highlighted the limits of the dominant industrial agriculture model—highly dependent on volatile global supply chains and increasingly unable to guarantee food security—and called for a paradigm shift toward agroecological systems that prioritize diversity, resilience, soil health, and farmer livelihoods. Evidence shows that agroecology can match conventional yields while delivering social and environmental benefits, but scaling it requires tackling entrenched political and economic lock-ins through coherent public policy reform.

This transition is already underway in practice. In **Andhra Pradesh, *Ms. Swati Renduchintala, CMNF*** **(**Support to innovations large-scale adoption: the case of Andhra Pradesh Community managed Natural Farming, India;), emphasized one of the world's largest agroecology programs which has engaged over one million farmers, demonstrating that large-scale change is achievable when communities lead implementation, women's groups drive peer learning, and governments create an enabling environment through sustained institutional support. The experience illustrates that agroecology can move beyond pilots to systemic transformation.

Finally, ***Mr. Francois-Xavier Duporge, AFD,*** (Current development of financing landscape and opportunities for agroecology) addressed the financial dimension, committing €1.7 billion in 2024 to agriculture, rural development, and biodiversity, and introducing **AGREENFI** to connect global climate finance with smallholders through local banks. With grant funding declining, the session stressed the need for agroecology initiatives to demonstrate commercial viability and strong business cases to attract private capital. Together, the three perspectives—policy reform, community-led scaling, and innovative finance—outline a coherent pathway for mainstreaming agroecology and accelerating food systems transformation.

By Ms. Lim Li Ching, IPES-Food How Agroecology can contribute to transforming our food systems	
By Ms. Swati Renduchintala, CMNF Support to innovations large-scale adoption: the case of Andhra Pradesh Community managed Natural Farming, India;	
By Mr. Francois-Xavier Duporge, AFD Current development of financing landscape and opportunities for agroecology.	

Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderator

Setting the scene – Q&A

Question 1: What does a viable financing model for agroecological transitions in smaller countries look like, especially in contexts where smallholders require direct access to credit but governance and banking linkages remain weak?

François-Xavier Duporge, AFD: A viable financing model involves development banks working through local intermediaries such as banks, microfinance institutions (MFIs), and cooperatives, rather than lending directly to thousands of farmers. AFD's AGREENFI model supports this approach by offering credit lines and guarantees, which reduces the perceived risk for local banks. Agroecology is fundamentally profitable due to reduced input costs, but this profitability remains poorly documented and is therefore poorly understood by financial institutions. Additionally, while NGOs and researchers often communicate with farmers in agronomic terms, banks require financial metrics. Translating evidence into cash flow, return on investment, and default-rate data is essential to make financing models viable. Agroecology is fundamentally profitable due to reduced input costs, but this remains poorly documented and therefore poorly understood by financial institutions.

Question 2: How can AFD and partners collaborate to develop stronger, financially viable investment cases for agroecology? and what kind of joint work is needed to build such evidence?

François-Xavier Duporge, AFD: AFD and partners can collaborate by generating robust evidence on profitability, risk profiles, yield stability, and resilience during and after the agroecological transition, which banks need to justify lending. The collaboration should focus on building joint datasets and implementing pilot projects that demonstrate both agronomic benefits and financial viability. Presenting a portfolio of agroecological farmers with strong repayment performance would further incentivize banks to scale up lending.

Question 3: Are APCNF farmers mainly subsistence-oriented or connected to markets? Do markets reward agroecological products (pesticide-free, input-free), and are farmers able to capture price premiums?

Swati Renduchintala, CMNF: Most APCNF farmers are small and marginal landholders with fragmented plots of 2–4 acres. The programme currently focuses on production and self-consumption rather than market integration, due to low aggregated volumes. Large buyers, such as PepsiCo, have shown interest, but APCNF prioritizes strengthening local circular economies before engaging large corporations to avoid early capture of value chains. Certification is costly and unsuitable for smallholders; therefore, APCNF promotes Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) and Verified Sourcing Areas, which certify areas rather than individual farmers.

Question 4: How does APCNF replicate its model in countries that do not have Andhra Pradesh's strong social capital built over two decades, for example in Zambia or Sri Lanka?

Swati Renduchintala, CMNF: APCNF's international pilots use Champion Farmers from Andhra Pradesh to train local communities in Zambia and Sri Lanka. Each pilot begins with 5–10 lead farmers who establish demonstration plots and help build local social capital. The aim is full localization so that within one year, Zambia and Sri Lanka operate their own natural farming models independently, without ongoing reliance on APCNF.

Question 6: What training do Farmer Champions in APCNF provide, and do farmers already possess traditional knowledge aligned with agroecological practices?

Swati Renduchintala, CMNF: APCNF training focuses on natural farming principles, soil health, diversified cropping, local inputs, and ecological pest management. Farmers are highly innovative; for example, they replace unavailable cow dung with buffalo dung or use ripe fruit instead of molasses. Many traditional practices already align with agroecology, and farmers adapt and localize practices based on their specific contexts.

Question 7: Considering the challenges of integrated rice–fish or rice–prawn systems due to high initial investment (USD 2,000–3,000), how long do farmers need support before becoming self-sustaining, and how long does the agroecological transition period typically last?

Lim Li Ching, IPES-Food: Transition periods typically last 3–5 years, depending on the context. During this phase, farmers require public policy support, technical assistance, and financial incentives. Once the systems mature, farmers can operate independently, as seen in Andhra Pradesh. While agroecological principles are universal, practices are context-dependent and rely heavily on farmers' own knowledge and innovation

3.4. Learning from Global Initiatives Session

Moderated by Pierre Ferrand (FAO)	
The presentations collectively highlight the urgent need and multifaceted pathways for transforming global food systems through agroecology and regenerative approaches. ***Mr. Oliver Oliveiros, Agroecology Coalition*** **(**Transforming Food Systems through Agroecology**)** emphasized that current food systems drive greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, and social inequities, with "power asymmetries" and entrenched practices as the main barriers. Agroecology—defined as a science, practice, and social movement guided by HLPE Principles and FAO Elements—offers a systemic solution. The **Agroecology Coalition**, uniting over 50 governments and 360 organizations, aims to accelerate this transition by co-creating knowledge, fostering investment, advocating policy, developing markets, and strengthening multi-level collaboration. Building on this, ***Ms. Tara Shyam*** presented **Regen10**'s strategy (Connecting Local Action to Global Transformation) to harmonize global actors around regenerative agriculture. By establishing a shared outcomes framework, creating a unified narrative, and tailoring approaches to local contexts (e.g., Brazil and Kenya), Regen10 provides a "common compass" for action. The framework emphasizes practical metrics for farm and landscape-level outcomes, while recognizing economic realities such as the 6-to-9-year payback period for farmers, highlighting the need for targeted financial and policy support during transitions. Finally, *Mrs.* ***Céline Papin, COSTEA*** **(**Agroecological reengineering of irrigated systems) illustrated the role of infrastructure in enabling agroecology, focusing on irrigation systems. Large-scale irrigation, while crucial for food security, often locks in monocultures and inefficiencies. COSTEA's 2025–2027 strategy, funded by AFD, proposes flexible, demand-driven water systems that integrate crop diversification, agroforestry, and energy-efficient technologies. Pilot studies in Cambodia and Senegal will inform a methodological guide for authorities and donors, reinforcing the global dialogue on aligning infrastructure with agroecological transitions, to be further explored at the 2026 International Congress in Marseille. **These presentations emphasize that transforming food systems requires integrated approaches spanning policy, practice, finance, and infrastructure—rooted in collaboration, evidence, and local adaptation.**	
By Mr. Oliver Oliveros, Agroecology Coalition Transforming Food Systems through Agroecology	
By Mrs. Tara Shyam Connecting Local Action to Global Transformation	
By Céline Papin, COSTEA Agroecological reengineering of irrigated systems	
Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderator	

Learning from Global Initiatives– Q&A

Question 1: What is the scale and application of the irrigation systems presented in Cambodia and Senegal, and does the team provide design only or also investment support? Which crops (rice, cash crops, etc.) are these irrigation models suitable for?

Céline Papin, COSTEA: The case studies in Cambodia and Senegal will focus on small areas of approximately 500 hectares due to budget and project design constraints. The goal is to develop multiple agroecologist

scenarios that are evaluated on technical, economic, and environmental criteria, including investment needs. These scenarios will be co-developed with ministries and local stakeholders. COSTEA's objective is to create a scalable guide applicable across countries, even beyond Cambodia, for example in Vietnam through AFD-funded rehabilitation. Results from these case studies will be shared at the next TARASA meeting.

Question 2: Considering that Laos invests heavily in large, concrete irrigation schemes for rice, which are slow and costly, what types and scales of irrigation technologies are suitable for Laos? Why are technologies like Toyo tubes unused? What irrigation recommendations could support agroecology and home-garden systems?

Céline Papin, COSTEA: COSTEA's guide aims to present the full set of feasible irrigation options, tailored to local contexts. Many rehabilitation programs globally replicate outdated designs that focus solely on maximizing production. Future irrigation must integrate soil fertility, biodiversity, water conservation, and diversified cropping systems. COSTEA works with specialized companies and can provide further technical exchange through its platform

Question 3: Why is irrigation often underemphasized in agroecology discussions, and how can smallholders, particularly in Cambodia, improve irrigation access?

Oliver Oliveros, Agroecology Coalition: Agroecology's 13 principles are universal, but their application is context-specific. Agriculture has historically focused on land-based systems, yet agroecology fully applies to aquaculture, freshwater systems, coastal zones, pastoralism, forestry, and integrated landscapes. Examples include mangrove agroecology systems in Senegal, showing that water-based systems are part of agroecology. The relevance of irrigation depends on the local ecology and farming systems.

Céline Papin, COSTEA: Irrigation and agroecology are rarely studied together in the literature, which is why COSTEA is organizing a dedicated international congress. With 40 percent of global food produced on irrigated land, transitioning large-scale irrigation systems toward agroecology is essential. The aim is to better understand how irrigation can complement rather than contradict agroecological transitions.

Question 4: Could you provide an overview of financial mechanisms mobilized for agroecological transitions? Are current mechanisms mainly carbon finance (offsetting/insetting)? Are biodiversity payments, ESG-linked schemes, or other outcome-based models emerging?

Tara Shyam, Regen10: Regen10 is still in the early stages of developing financing models. The current focus is on costing frameworks and advocacy for transition financing. The organization aims to integrate costing and landscape frameworks to explore suitable financial stacks for different contexts, which will vary by region, for example between East Africa and Brazil. Regen10 is collaborating with partners such as TIFS (Transformational Investing in Food Systems) to deepen work on financing, and more detailed mechanisms will be available by the next TARASA.

Question 5: Does Regen10 support work related to forest restoration, agroforestry, and ecosystem recovery, particularly in contexts like Vietnam with high deforestation?

Tara Shyam, Regen10: Regen10 works closely with 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People, which supports landscape partnerships globally. Outcomes on biodiversity and agroforestry are integrated into its framework. Current work focuses on contextualization at the landscape level, while detailed mechanisms are still under development.

3.6. Learning from Regional Initiatives Session

Moderated by Dr Thatheva (LICA DLAM/MAE)	
The ***ASSET Project*** presented by ***Ms. Marie Christine Lebret, GRET*** and ***Dr. Estelle Bienabe CIRAD*** (Agroecology and Safe Food System Transition- ASSET- Project), demonstrated a holistic, territory-based approach, using "living laboratories" in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Myanmar to co-create solutions with farmers and authorities. By combining participatory methods, policy engagement, and knowledge exchange via the expanded **ALiSEA** network, ASSET advances practical, evidence-based pathways for safer, inclusive, and sustainable food systems. Complementing this, ***Mrs. Esther Penunia, Asian Farmers' Association*** (AFA) tackled the demographic challenge of an aging rural workforce by engaging youth in agriculture (Empowering Young Farmers for Agroecology). Through institutionalized participation, training in agroecological practices, and innovative financing and engagement platforms, young farmers are becoming leaders in sustainable food systems, demonstrating that meaningful work, adequate resources, and social recognition are key to attracting the next generation. Finally, ***Dr. Yutong Li, CSAM- UNESCAP*** (CSAM Regional Initiatives - Driving Sustainable and Conservation Agriculture) showcased the role of sustainable mechanization in driving circular and climate-smart practices. Initiatives like the **Integrated Management of Straw Residue** replace harmful crop burning with multi-use applications—fertilizer, fodder, biogas—improving soil health, reducing CO_2 emissions, and increasing farmers' income. CSAM's approach integrates technology, policy, and community engagement, including women's empowerment, and has been recognized internationally as a "Good Practice." **Together, these presentations emphasize that transforming food systems requires integrated approaches linking agroecological innovation, youth empowerment, circular resource management, and multi-level collaboration to build resilient, inclusive, and sustainable landscapes.**	
By Dr. Estelle Bienabe, CIRAD and Mrs. Marie Christine Lebret, GRET Agroecology and Safe Food System Transition- ASSET- Project	
By Ms. Esther Penunia, AFA Empowering Young Farmers for Agroecology	
By Dr. Yutong Li, CSAM-UNESCAP CSAM Regional Initiatives - Driving Sustainable and Conservation Agriculture	
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Learning from Regional Initiatives Q&A Session

Question 1: How was the reduction in soil organic carbon (SOC) measured over only three years (2018–2021)?

Dr. Yutong Li, CSAM UNESCAP: SOC data came from 1-hectare pilot plots under the Laixi Project in collaboration with China Agricultural University. A monitoring team collected and weighed all straw residues annually, comparing carbon emissions under burning versus non-burning practices. Laboratory measurements confirmed a significant reduction in CO_2 emissions after three years. Based on these positive results, the project expanded to Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal, Indonesia, and now Thailand and Lao PDR. The Lao PDR project, in partnership with Savannakhet University, began in April and will require 1–2 years before SOC evaluation.

Question 2: Can SOC claims be validly extrapolated, given new research linking SOC changes to biodiversity, crop cycles, and management practices?

Dr. Yutong Li, CSAM UNESCAP: The SOC measurements were carefully monitored in pilot plots and laboratory-verified, providing a strong evidence base. While SOC dynamics can vary due to biodiversity, crop cycles, and management, the initial positive results justify cautious extrapolation. Expansion to other countries includes local adaptation and monitoring to validate outcomes.

Question 3: Where is the project being implemented in Lao PDR?

Dr. Yutong Li, CSAM UNESCAP: The project is implemented in partnership with Savannakhet University, Lao PDR.

Question 4: Will ASSET continue beyond 2026, and will opportunities expand to other ASEAN countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, or Malaysia?

Dr. Estelle Bienabe, CIRAD: There is no new ASSET project phase planned at present. However, ASSET built strong foundations, and work will continue through networks such as ALiSEA, ASEAN Policy guidelines on Agroecology Transitions teams, and partner institutions including AFA and the ASEAN Climate Resilience Network. CIRAD and partners remain active in the region, focusing on strengthening country-level engagement, expanding learning across ASEAN, and building on early-stage momentum from ASSET activities. The intention is to ensure achievements evolve through partnerships and regional platforms rather than disappear.

Question 5: Can digitalization support agroecology differently, beyond the typical applications in conventional precision agriculture?

Dr. Yutong Li, CSAM UNESCAP: Digitalization, precision agriculture, and AI are increasingly integrated to support agricultural modernization. These tools can reduce chemical inputs, improve cost efficiency, save labor, and increase farm resilience. The focus is on smallholder-suited technologies that enhance soil protection, improve yields, and strengthen long-term sustainability. Digital tools do not contradict agroecology; they can be adapted to improve resource efficiency and enable better management of agroecological systems.

Question 6: Regarding "Agroecological Territorial Integration" in ASSET's presentation, has ASSET derived key lessons, and does the approach incorporate customary tenure, indigenous peoples, or is it primarily an area-based or technical concept?

Dr. Estelle Bienabe, CIRAD: Territorial work under ASSET is still early-stage and varies by country. The approach has not yet fully integrated community-based or customary tenure perspectives. Work so far includes: understanding local assets, village characteristics, and community priorities; linking markets and value chains based on territorial identity; analyzing circular economy and resource flows beyond the farm level; and engaging with Verified Sourcing Areas (SourceUp) to explore implications of global commodities entering territories. Future work aims to deepen territorial approaches across ASEAN through collaboration and comparative learning.

3.7. Learning from Key Events in 2025 Session

Moderated by Dr. Melanie Blanchard	
Mr. Pierre Ferrand, FAO, traced how Food and Agriculture Organization progressively institutionalized agroecology between 2014 and 2024 (A decade of support to agroecology at FAO). What began as dialogue and regional experimentation has evolved into a structured global agenda, supported by the "10 Elements of Agroecology," the TAPE assessment tool, and a strategy centered on knowledge aggregation, evidence building, policy engagement, and embedding agroecology within biodiversity and climate conventions. Agroecology is no longer peripheral—it is framed as a core pathway for sustainable food systems. ***Mrs. Rathana Peou Norbert-Munns, UN FSH,*** positioned this shift within the broader political landscape of the United Nations Food Systems Summit process (Global, Regional, and National Food Systems Agenda, UNFSS +4,). While agrifood experts emphasize long-term risks such as climate change and hunger, global agendas often prioritize shorter-term societal concerns, creating fragmented responses. The growing role of the Food Systems Coordination Hub and nationally led pathways illustrates increasing institutional ownership, but the key challenge remains breaking sectoral silos and fostering systemic collaboration that simultaneously addresses environmental, economic, and social goals. ***Ms. Bui My Binh, Vietnam Agriculture COP30 negotiator***, highlighted a similar paradox in climate negotiations (COP 30's Agriculture Highlights): strong momentum in side initiatives contrasted with weak formal commitments. At COP 30-related discussions, initiatives and declarations elevated agrifood systems as solutions, yet official negotiation texts avoided explicitly naming agriculture or smallholders. This disconnect risks limiting access to climate finance for farmers. The call to action was clear—food systems must be explicitly integrated into formal decisions, with upcoming technical negotiations serving as critical entry points. Finally, ***Prof. Fergus Sinclair, Agroecology TPP,*** *presented the* Take away messages from Agroecology TPP Forum, in **Hanoi** which translated these global debates into an operational roadmap. Taken together, the four contributions converge on a single message: Agroecology and food systems transformation have moved from advocacy spaces into mainstream global governance, yet political recognition, financing, and implementation still lag behind ambition. Impact depends on closing the gap between recognition and implementation.	
By Pierre Ferrand, FAO A decade of support to agroecology at FAO	
By Mrs. Rathana Peou Norbert-Munns, UN FSH Global, Regional, and National Food Systems Agenda, UNFSS +4,	
By Ms. Bui My Binh, Vietnam Agriculture COP30 negotiator COP 30's Agriculture Highlights	
By Fergus Sinclair, Agroecology TPP Take away messages from Agroecology TPP Forum,	
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Learning from Key Events in 2025 Q&A Session

Question 1: Given the controversies surrounding carbon and biodiversity markets including past scandals, the risk of land conflicts for indigenous people, the scientific lack of available land to meet government pledges, and the instability of carbon prices. How can we ensure the quality of finance so that it truly delivers impact without displacing communities or failing to provide a stable income for farmers?

Fergus Sinclair, Agroecology TPP: This is a very good point. We cannot sell farmers "down the river" because of unscrupulous aspects of these markets. The issue is that we need to organize these markets in ways that do not undermine indigenous people or result in land grabbing; obviously, safeguards are needed to ensure that doesn't happen. We also need to be clear that a lot of the carbon market has been around forests. It is quite different if we are looking at carbon markets around farms—land that is already being farmed. If you are storing more carbon on the farm through trees in agroforestry or increased soil carbon because of less extractive farming methods, then this ecosystem service provision is positive rather than antagonistic to local people's interests. However, safeguards are vital because, as seen in Kenya (Chomba et al., 2016; 2017), once you put a value on carbon, it can create incentives for processes that harm local people such as absentee landlords returning to using land and thereby displacing people using the erstwhile abandoned land (squatters, charcoal makers etc.). We should ensure that farmers are not exploited; they should get appropriate revenue for good practices that benefit society.

Dr. Dao The Anh, ALiSEA Representative: Regarding rice in Vietnam, we have a lot of rice, and it emits a lot of methane. The solution is low-carbon rice, but the challenge is that the cost of MRV (Measurement, Reporting, and Verification) to access the carbon market is extremely high because we have many small farms. However, we are working on low-carbon practices like alternative wetting and drying. If we use these good practices, we can export this rice at a 20% higher price. Society will accept responsible agricultural products. Vietnam is currently the first country I know of testing these agroecological practices in rice fields with small farms. While access to the carbon credit market is still far off due to high technology costs, the market value of the low-carbon product itself is a strong direction.

Mrs. Rathana Peou Norbert-Munns, UN FSH: Regarding financing and investments, we need to be very careful. We are looking at smallholder farmers, different ecosystems, and different sectors. We cannot compare a seed fund of $5,000 to an extra-large Green Climate Fund proposal. We have to emphasize the "S" in plural mechanisms. There are different types of finance mechanisms that need to match the different types of needs. It should not be driven only by the public sector; we need to look at the banks and insurance entities that have a history of doing this. Finally, we must look at current incentives in the region. We need to identify which ones are working and which are just wasting money, otherwise, even with more finance, we won't achieve the desired impact.

3.8. Open Discussion with Panelists Day 1

The open discussion brought together perspectives from **Dr. Mélanie Blanchard**, **CIRAD**, **Mr. Pierre Ferrand, FAO**, and **Mr. Oliver Oliveros**, **Agroecology Coalition**, converging on a shared conclusion: agroecology now has strong global legitimacy, but scaling it requires systemic change in science, policy, and finance.

Panelists agreed that agroecology is widely recognized as essential for delivering climate resilience, biodiversity restoration, and food security, yet agriculture—especially family farmers—remains underrepresented in formal policy frameworks. Keeping smallholders visible in national and international agendas therefore demands continued advocacy and coalition-building.

A central theme was rethinking how change happens in practice. Transitions must be farmer-centered, grounded in local realities, and supported by closer collaboration between research, education, extension, and communities. Innovation should be co-designed rather than transferred, recognizing farmers as primary innovators. Scaling requires not only replicating projects (“scale out”) but embedding institutional, cultural, and governance change (“scale deep”), backed by coherent policies and multi-level coordination.

On governance and implementation, speakers stressed that policies must both dismantle structural barriers that favour industrial agriculture and actively enable smallholders—particularly women and youth.

Effective frameworks combine top-down direction with bottom-up ownership, ensuring durability beyond political cycles and strengthening the social organization behind technical investments.

Financing emerged as a critical bottleneck. Beyond mobilizing more funds, the quality and alignment of finance matter: resources must fit smallholder realities and support long-term transitions. Participants emphasized repurposing existing public subsidies that currently undermine agroecology and increasing domestic resource mobilization, rather than relying solely on external donors. Broadening the pool of financial actors and building stronger coalitions were seen as essential to sustain momentum.

Overall, the discussion underscored that the question is no longer why agroecology matters, but how to operationalize it at scale through collaboration, policy coherence, farmer-led innovation, and smarter, better-targeted finance.

4. TARASA25 main event - Day 2 – 26 November 2025

4.1. Parallel Session 1 – Part 1: Technologies, innovations & development, and practice changes

Moderated by Ms. Irish Baguilat AFA	

Mr. Vongvilay Vongkhamsao, NAFRI presented an initiative of silvopastoral systems implemented in Northern Laos by **NAFRI** and the **Alliance of Bioversity-CIAT** combining trees, forage, and livestock. Using a co-design methodology that blends indigenous knowledge with digital tools and **Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)**, the project has restored ecosystems and improved household incomes, though challenges remain in sourcing native seeds and protecting seedlings.

In Myanmar, ***Ms. Yadanar Win, GRET*** highlighted the results of the **ALIVE-FNS project** led by **GRET** which supported paddy farmers in the Delta and Chin State regions to adopt **Quality Grain Production (QGP)** methods, including high-quality seeds, reduced chemical fertilizers supplemented with compost, and indigenous bio-inputs. Across 51 demonstration plots, these interventions lowered production costs by 37%, increased yields and milling quality, and improved gross margins by 51%, highlighting the economic and environmental benefits of agroecology for vulnerable smallholders.

Dr. Trung Nguyen, NIAS presented the **Forage-Silage-Compost (FSC) circular economy model** implemented in Northwestern Vietnam by **CIRAD** and **NIAS** in the framework of **ASSET project**. By intercropping forage, converting cassava by-products into silage, and transforming manure into compost, households increased livestock and forage production while reducing reliance on chemical fertilizers, cutting costs, and mitigating environmental impacts.

Complementing these field interventions, ***Mr. Powell Mponela, CIMMYT*** introduced the **Living Labs for Co-generation of Innovations**, led by multi-institutional consortia, and providing **place-based, multi-actor platforms** to co-create agroecological innovations. Inspired by user-centered design and agricultural "Mother-Baby" trials, Living Labs integrate local knowledge, scientific research, and policy frameworks, using tools like **ME4ALL** models and **Agent-Based Modeling** to foster socially inclusive, scalable, and institutionalized transitions.

These initiatives demonstrate that effective agroecological transformation requires coordinated ecological, economic, and governance strategies, grounded in local knowledge, digital innovation, and participatory co-design.

Advancing Agroecology in Northern Laos: Sustainable Silvopastoral Interventions and Incentive Mechanisms for Food System Transformation, ***By Mr. Vongvilay Vongkhamsao, NAFRI***		*Agro-ecology transition in action for the Myanmar Paddy smallholder producers*, ***By Ms. Yadanar Win, GRET***	
Enhancing agroecology and circular economy through increased crop-livestock integration in Northwestern Vietnam, ***By Dr. Trung Nguyen, NIAS***		*Living labs for co-generation of innovations in a changing world as a foundation for agroecology transitions*, ***By Mr. Powell Mponela, CIMMYT***	

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Parallel Session 1 – Part 1: Technologies, innovations & development, and practice changes - Q&A Session

Question 1: Regarding the contracting approach with those communities, could you tell us a bit more about how that works and what goes into those contracts?

Mr. Vongvilay Vongkhamsao, NAFRI: We have individual contracts between the project and our selected farmers. In the contract, we include the number of tree species, the number of seedlings, and the design of the living fences that local people propose to join our activity. The contract also details the planting systems, such as planting spacing and tree species. It also outlines how to share benefits, such as covering labor costs at the end of the year. For example, last year we provided labor costs for things like barbed wire steel. Additionally, there are activities regarding maintaining trees on pasture land. We have a requirement that they need to preserve trees on their pasture land over 100 trees per hectare, which meets our forestry law (over 20% forest cover per hectare). If they meet our requirements, they get the benefits. If not, they pay for the trees (e.g. LAK 50,000 per tree).

Question 2: Who is buying the rice from those farmers? Is it large-scale rice mills? If so, is there potential for that rice mill to actively source from agroecological production and invest in that style of production to support scaling?

Ms. Yadanar Win, GRET: In the community, traders and millers are buying the rice. We conduct inter-professional meetings to engage buyers and producers. We identify the producers' interests and satisfaction with agroecological quality grain production, as well as the buyers' interests and satisfaction. Based on these workshops, buyers show their interest and are impressed by the products. They are willing to pay a higher price for this quality product, but they want a commitment from the producers. They cannot buy small amounts; they propose massive, collective production for the same variety with the same practices. During the project period, we found our common interests and goals, but we need to move forward to strengthen farmers to produce collectively and have the same approach.

Question 3: The project pays or contracts with the farmer regarding payment for ecosystem services. What happens after the project finishes? will the government, the community, or a group of farmers take over this system?

Mr. Vongvilay Vongkhamsao, NAFRI: This is a pilot project, so we need to make evidence for policy makers to design how to develop appropriate mechanisms in the local context. We already have regulations and decrees on payment points. I think we can have strong support from the government or carbon credit companies to continue contributing to pay local people who intend to join this mechanism.

Question 4: How do you plan to do post-monitoring or evaluation of organic rice yields to ensure farmers don't stop producing due to low yields and stagnant prices in the long term?

Ms. Yadanar Win, GRET: Although the specific project period has ended, farmers have continued agroecological practices out of necessity. Due to the economic crisis, farmers can no longer afford expensive imported chemical inputs. Therefore, they have become self-reliant, producing their own inputs on-farm and selling them to one another, which sustains the practice without external project funding.

Question 5: How do you convince farmers to use digital tools, given that it might be difficult for them?

Mr. Vongvilay Vongkhamsao, NAFRI: It is indeed a challenge, especially with older farmers. During the project, staff members provide hands-on assistance to help them use the tools. However, it is uncertain if they will continue using them after the project ends; local district agriculture officers may need to step in to assist with continued monitoring.

Question 6: How do farmers manage their seeds for future seasons? Do they use seeds from their own cultivation or buy new ones?

Ms. Yadanar Win, GRET: The project focuses on agroecological practices for resilience rather than strict organic certification. Because external inputs are too expensive, farmers have moved toward producing their own seeds and inputs, which they use for themselves or sell to other farmers within the community

4.2. Parallel Session 1 - Part 2: Technologies, innovations & development, and practice changes

Moderated by Dr Pascal Lienhard	

Ms. Thi Huong Giang Do, CIRAD introduced **the territorial branding** approach piloted in **Moc Chau, Vietnam** inside **ASSET project**, as a tool to support agroecological development. By supporting the co-creation of a "Moc Chau" Certification Trademark through participatory action research, farmers, cooperatives, tourism operators, and local authorities align local products with national food system policies. This approach leverages unique regional identities to improve market access, retain economic value locally, and strengthen synergies between sustainable agriculture and tourism, drawing inspiration from models like Italy's Bio-Districts.

Mr. Khamboua Keovilay, PAFO XKG, presented how **tea-based agroforestry systems in Xieng Khouang (ASSET project), Laos,** can enhance ecosystem services and rural livelihoods. Optimal spacing and species selection for shade trees—such as *Mak-Ken* (Zanthoxylum rhetsa)—balances productivity, soil protection, and crop quality. These findings emphasize the importance of locally tailored management practices to replace unsustainable slash-and-burn farming while supporting ecological and economic resilience.

Mr. Powell Mponela, CIMMYT promoted studies by **CIMMYT** on **upland mechanization** in Northern Laos which advocate for **scale-appropriate agricultural machinery**. Lightweight two-wheel tractors and specialized attachments, designed for steep terrain, enable no-till planting and residue management consistent with CA principles. This context-sensitive mechanization supports soil health, biodiversity, and labor efficiency, illustrating that technological adoption must consider the "3 Rs": Right Tool, Right User, Right Conditions.

Finally, ***Dr. Vira Leng, GDA, MAFF*** shared the research in **cassava-based systems in Cambodia** (**ASSET project**) which quantifies the **climate mitigation potential of CA**, showing that improved soil management increases soil organic carbon by 0.7–1.0 tons per hectare annually and boosts yields by 18%, while N_2O emissions remain low. This confirms that CA practices can deliver simultaneous benefits for **food security, soil health, and climate mitigation**.

Together, these studies illustrate a **cohesive vision for agroecology in Southeast Asia**, where participatory governance, territorial identity, locally adapted technology, and ecological intensification converge to transform food systems sustainably, equitably, and climate-resiliently.

Learning from Piloting Territorial Branding for Agroecological Transitions in Vietnam, ***by Ms. Thi Huong Giang Do and Estelle Bienabe CIRAD***		*Quantification of Ecosystem Services in Tea-Based Agroforestry Systems in Northern Laos*, ***by Mr. Khamboua Keovilay, PAFO XKG***	
Scale-appropriate agricultural machinery for advancing regenerative and agroecological farming across ASEAN, ***by Mr. Powell Mponela, CIMMYT***		*Do N_2O emissions undermine the climate benefits of soil organic C sequestration in long-term cassava-based conservation agriculture in Cambodia?* ***by Dr. Vira Leng, GDA, MAFF***	

Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderator

Parallel session 1 – Part 2: Technologies, innovations & development, and practice changes - Q&A Session

Question 1: How can geographical indications and territorial branding work together to add value, and what is the role of storytelling in this approach?
Ms. Do Thi Huong Giang, CIRAD: While Geographical Indication is traditionally product-based, the approach in Europe over the last decade has shifted toward "territorialization." This involves creating "bundles" of products and services such as combining agriculture with tourism where the reputation of a specific product builds the reputation of the entire territory, and vice versa.
Question 2: Regarding lightweight machinery, is there a strategy to engage with designers and suppliers to manufacture these tools locally so that farmers can easily adopt them and scale up?
Mr. Powell Mponela, CIMMYT: Drawing from lessons in Nepal, previous government subsidies for existing, often non-functional machinery were unsuccessful. The new strategy focuses on supporting mechanics to become service providers who offer both the machinery and the labor to farmers and cooperatives. While manufacturing is not yet done locally in Nepal, the focus is on a service-provision model to ensure access.
Question 3: What is the link between machinery use and carbon emission mitigation in Conservation Agriculture?
Dr. Vira Leng, GDA: Research confirms that Conservation Agriculture improves crop productivity and soil organic carbon sequestration, but access to specific machinery is the main barrier. The cost difference is significant. A no-till planter costs roughly $12,000 compared to $1,500 for conventional tillage equipment. To solve this, the project is working with partners (such as Swisscontact and USAID) and the private sector to manufacture prototypes locally to reduce costs and establish local service providers.

4.3. Parallel Session 2 - Part 1: Approaches to evaluation and metrics

Moderated by Mr. Fergus Sinclair, AE TPP	

This research led by ***Dr. Myriam ADAM, CIRAD*** and **GDA** examines grain yield variability in rice systems in Preah Vihear Province, Cambodia, showing that performance depends on the interaction between genotype, ecosystem, and management (G × E × M). It demonstrates that generic varietal recommendations are ineffective and that key environmental drivers—particularly water availability and soil fertility—must guide site-specific decisions. The study advocates matching rice varieties to specific field conditions and leveraging local varietal diversity, combining field data with farmer participation to support resilient and inclusive agroecological transitions.

Ms. Shweta Sharma, Jawaharlal Nehru University presented a doctoral study using the FAO TAPE framework, to assess the potential of indigenous agrosilvopastoral systems (from Kerala, India) in climate change mitigation and food system transformation. It revealed that while these systems exhibit high environmental integrity—zero pesticide use and rich biodiversity—they also face challenges regarding economic resilience and governance (ex: land tenure security). The presentation concluded that the TAPE methodology requires contextual tailoring to accurately capture local socioeconomic nuances, such as gender wage disparities.

Dr. Jean-Christophe Castella, IRD presented a study for agroecological transition performed in the framework of **ASSEt project** in Xiengkhuang (Northern Laos), based on literature reviews, focus groups, and a survey of 545 households. Using the 13 agroecological principles, the study shows that land access is the key driver of performance and identifies three farmer profiles, from diversified high-performing systems to vulnerable monocultures. The main finding is a "performance gap": strong traditional assets (biodiversity, social cohesion) contrast with weak technical practices (in soil health and input reduction). The study calls for differentiated strategies that build on local strengths while addressing technical deficiencies linked to boom crops.

Dr. Lampheuy Kaensombath presented the outcome evaluation methodology adopted by the **ASSET project** at regional level. Evaluation team harvested outcomes involving 96 key informants, and success were confirmed in three primary pillars: widespread adoption of agroecological (AE) practices, the institutional maturation of the ALiSEA network, and the formal integration of AE into national policy frameworks. However, it also concluded that a critical "performance gap" remains regarding market systems and as well as a need to overcome the project "pilot syndrome".

The four evaluations show that agroecological transitions are advancing but remain uneven and context-specific. Across countries and scales, performance depends on the interaction between ecological conditions, technical practices, farmers'involvement and socio-economic factors such as land access and governance.

Disentangling the causes of grain yield variability in rice cropping systems in Preah Vihear Province, Cambodia, **by Dr. Myriam ADAM, CIRAD**		*AE in Action: Measuring Agroecological Performance and Multidimensional Sustainability of Agrosilvopastoral Farming Systems of Indigenous Communities in Kerala, India using FAO's TAPE* **by Ms. Shweta Sharma, Doctoral Researcher, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India**	
Analyzing pathways to agroecological change in Northern Laos, **by Dr. Jean-Christophe Castella, IRD**		*Outcome Harvesting in the ASSET Project* **by Dr. Lampheuy Kaensombath, ASSET**	

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Parallel Session 2 - Part 1: Approaches to evaluation and metrics- Q&A Session

Question 1: How do you analyze the complexity in indigenous communities where income is stagnant or decreasing, yet the government advocates for cash crop monocultures which the community wants for economic gain?

Shweta Sharma, Jawaharlal Nehru University (India): We need to understand that integrated systems, particularly agroforestry, are economical in themselves. Income does not solely come from crop yield; there is diversified income from timber, fodder, and other sources. We must convince the government of the value of these diversified income sources. While farmers have cultivated millets for ages, they adopt monocultures

primarily for economic reasons. If we provide processing and value-addition technologies—such as organizing Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) to make products like cookies and laddus—farmers can achieve higher economic returns. Additionally, certification for pesticide-free agroecological products can command higher prices.

Question 2: What is the connection between "boom crops" (like cassava, cashew, and rubber) and agroecology, especially considering the private sector is increasingly involved in ESG standards and carbon markets?

Jean-Christophe Castella, IRD: There is nothing inherently wrong with crops like cassava or maize; the same crop can be managed under different paradigms. The "boom crop" paradigm relies on intensification, while agroecology relies on biological and social diversity. The challenge is managing the whole system to maintain crop combinations supported by diverse households. Currently, mechanisms like carbon credits work well for the boom crop paradigm but do not yet work as well for the agroecology paradigm. We must question how to sustain diversity once specific projects end.

Question 3: What do farmers directly gain from the exercise of measuring agroecological performance (metrics), and does it help address the business case for agroecology regarding price premiums, finance, or land security?

Shweta Sharma, Jawaharlal Nehru University (India): It is important to gather evidence for agroecology to influence policy. However, the final step of the TAPE assessment involves discussing results with farmers to elucidate how their system is performing and how they can shift practices. While we faced time constraints in this specific study, the broader goal is to contribute to informed policymaking, shifting the government from a top-down to a bottom-up approach that includes tribal communities.

Jean-Christophe Castella, IRD: While metrics are often too aggregated to advise individual farmers, they serve two purposes. First, they can facilitate future certification or labelling of agroecological landscapes. Second, they allow us to map where agroecology actually exists. After 20 years of work, we still lack a clear map of agroecological farms in Southeast Asia compared to organic farms, which are tracked via certification volumes.

Question 4: Did you look at Soil Organic Carbon indicators during your research, given that Cambodian soils are often carbon-poor?

Myriam Adam, CIRAD: We analyzed carbon content and found it followed the same trend as nitrogen content. However, this was a three-year experiment. It is difficult to see significant improvements in Soil Organic Carbon due to green manure in the mid-term; it requires a longer timeframe to observe changes.

Question 5: How does market demand influence the adoption of agroecological varieties versus commercial crops?

Myriam Adam, CIRAD: Market demand is a crucial factor. Farmers grow what the market and government request. In our participatory evaluation, the top criteria for farmers were productivity and the homogeneity of the grain and field, as these are what the market requires.

Question 6: Regarding the transition in Northern Laos, is it possible to intercrop maize within high-level coffee plantations?

Lampheuy Kaensombath, ASSET: In the Xiengkhuang flagship site, the approach is not necessarily mixing maize into coffee. Rather, it is a shift from maize monoculture to diversification. Farmers are replacing maize land with coffee and tea. Initially, they may mix these with legumes or cover crops. For example, they cultivate bananas mixed with coffee, or tea mixed with fruit trees. It is a transition toward a diversified system.

Question 7: Considering uplands are often less agroecological, what are the policy implications? Can you also provide a concrete example of how to " build on strengths to address weaknesses" and what the incentives are for smallholders?

Jean-Christophe Castella, IRD: We have learned that all actors, including policymakers, have conflicting agendas. The solution lies in creating "adaptive spaces" or forums where actors can combine forces to discuss the future of their specific area holistically.

Concrete Example: In Nan Province (Thailand), actors created a forum not just for a specific crop, but to ask, "How do we want to live here?" This allows them to address interconnected issues like floods, climate change, and burning (PM 2.5) together.

Incentive: The incentive is not just financial but social and environmental resilience. The big challenge today is creating these spaces where people can communicate, reveal their agendas, and translate decisions into real policy and action.

Question 8: Given that rice is a staple and millet alone cannot meet all nutritional requirements, how do you address the finding that nutritional density in food is decreasing?

Shweta Sharma, Jawaharlal Nehru University (India): You are correct that millets alone cannot solve the problem of nutritional security and that rice remains a staple. We are advocating for diversified diets. While millets are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice, we do not aim to remove rice entirely from the plates of Indians, but rather to diversify the diet to combat the reduction in nutritional density.

4.4. Parallel Session 2 - Part 2: Approaches to evaluation and metrics

Moderated by Dr. Dao The Anh, DP Malica, ALiSEA BoM	

Dr. Mansi Tripathi, IWMI, presented the CNPI (Composite Nature Positive Index), developed under CGIAR's Multifunctional Landscapes initiative. The tool measures "Nature Positive" performance at landscape level across six dimensions—land, soil, water, biodiversity, socio-economics, and circularity—using 16 standardized indicators. A pilot in Maharashtra demonstrated its capacity to quantify the impact of concrete interventions (e.g., biochar, biogas), offering a scalable, data-driven approach to track systemic change.

Mrs. Sandhya Kumar, CIFOR-ICRAF, introduced a Meta-framework for Holistic System Assessment designed to overcome static, farm-centric research models. Built on eight design principles and a 10-step iterative process, the framework emphasizes co-design, multidimensionality, and actionable feedback to stakeholders. Its application—from measuring women's agency in India to translating Vietnam's national food policy goals into provincial indicators—illustrates how assessment tools can bridge science, equity, and governance.

At the national scale, ***Ms. Pham Thi Mai Huong, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT,*** presented the ASEAN food systems assessment using the Transect Food Systems Profile compared Traditional (Cambodia), Mixed (Vietnam), and Modern (Philippines) typologies. The analysis shows that modernization improves infrastructure but brings rising obesity and ultra-processed food consumption, while traditional systems face market access and affordability constraints. Crucially, increased production does not automatically ensure food security, highlighting persistent distribution inefficiencies and the need for systemic—not purely productivity-driven—reforms.

Finally, ***Ms. Dany Meas, ECOLAND,*** presented a study, based on data from 415 Cambodian farms, examining the relationship between agroecological performance and economic efficiency using Data Envelopment Analysis. While conventional farms show higher short-term efficiency due to chemical inputs, agroecological farms demonstrate wide internal variability. The findings suggest that improving agroecological efficiency through benchmarking and peer learning—rather than reverting to conventional models—is key to aligning long-term environmental resilience with economic viability.

Across scales—from farm to landscape to national food systems—the four presentations converge on one key message: **agroecological transition requires multidimensional, systemic assessment frameworks to guide effective transformation**. Together, they underscore that transforming food systems requires better metrics, contextualized evidence, and long-term perspectives that reconcile nature-positive outcomes with farmer livelihoods.

Advancing Regenerative Agriculture through Metrics: The Composite Nature Positive Index (CNPI) Methodological Framework by ***Ms. Mansi Tripathi, IWMI***		*Holistic System Assessment to Support Agroecological Transitions in Asia* by ***Ms. Sandhya Kumar, CIFOR-ICRAF***	
Initiating the food systems transformation through national food systems assessment: case studies of countries under food systems transformation transect in ASEAN by ***Ms. Pham Thi Mai Huong, Alliance Bioversity and CIAT***		*Investigating Agroecology Performance for Economic Efficiency Among Household Farming in Cambodia* by ***Ms. Dany Meas, ECOLAND***	

Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderator

Parallel Session 2-Part 2: Approaches to evaluation and metrics - Q&A Session

Question 1: How can we measure the real economic costs of non-agroecological systems (e.g., environmental damage, health impacts, and input subsidies) to allow for a fair comparison between conventional and agroecological systems?

Sandhya Kumar, CIFOR-ICRAF: In the use cases where we have applied our framework so far, this has been less of a priority for the stakeholders involved. However, I know of many studies concurrently trying to identify these hidden costs. There is significant movement around repurposing existing subsidies in national governments. For example, we are seeing efforts around school meal programs and public procurement for nutrition as a means to encourage a shift toward agroecological practices. I envision more evidence will take this into account in the future. In our process, we ask stakeholders what their priorities are. Hopefully, this allows for a holistic assessment design that factors in these trade-offs—for instance, determining if a stakeholder is acceptable with a slight drop in yield if it results in significant health or nutrition outcomes. This requires longitudinal studies rather than one-off assessments.

Question 2: Given the high complexity of agricultural and livestock systems, to what extent is it genuinely possible to measure these systems through indices?

Dany Meas, ECOLAND: The scope depends on the specific research and literature review. We found that seeing the long-term impact of agroecology on economic efficiency could take around 20 years. For example, with soil health, if we practice agroecology, we improve the soil, but we cannot see the results within a single year; it is a long-term achievement. Once soil health improves, we can reduce chemical fertilizer inputs, which is one step toward sustainable agriculture. Regarding the scope of measurement, our study depended on the specific scoring method used (CiT score), identifying performance based on that score.

Sandhya Kumar, CIFOR-ICRAF: I agree. I don't know how much of this specific data is of value directly to the farmer. The process is intended to help program implementers understand if the program is having the claimed benefits, and if not, to probe further. Regarding paradigms, there is a lot of value in methods other than quantitative data collection. Qualitative approaches can better tell the story and narrative of why experiences are so drastic within the same program setting. We can definitely have a more in-depth conversation about how to present these case studies effectively.

Question 3: Why were capture fisheries not included in the analysis of farm economic efficiency, given that they are a key component of agroecological consumption in Cambodia?

Dany Meas, ECOLAND: We could not include this because of the limitations of the evaluation tool used. Our study depends on the TAP (Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation) tool. In the TAP study, it does not provide information specific to capture fisheries. Therefore, we could not determine if it is part of the agroecology scope for this specific tool; we would need to adapt the questionnaire to include it.

Question 4: Regarding CNPI, do you analyze the correlation between the six components to see if they are linked, or do you analyze them individually?

Mansi Tripathi, IWMI: At this stage, because we are dealing with a living system and not a controlled environment, we have assumed that individual indicators are independent of each other. However, looking at correlations is definitely part of the sensitivity analysis we plan to do. We will check if individual pillars or sub-indicators have major correlations. If major correlations are found, we may drop certain indicators. Currently, we consider them independent.

Question 5: What are the recommendations for measuring women's empowerment across ecological landscapes, given that it is difficult to measure? I want to know your recommendations for measuring women's empowerment across agroecological landscapes. It is measuring the immeasurable. What do you propose?

Sandhya Kumar, CIFOR-ICRAF: My suggestion is to see what fits the specific context. There was a paper published last year titled "How do women's metrics measure up?" which applied five different composite indices to a single sample in Kenya. They found the empowerment outcomes did not match at all between the indices. If you rely on just one set of indicators, you might conclude a group is empowered, whereas another set might suggest the opposite. We started with a working definition of agency from traditional literature, but we tried to understand what is actually pressing for women farmers in the specific state we studied. Is it tenure? Is it access to financial decision-making? You must identify the specific impediments to the uptake of natural farming practices in that context rather than relying on a single number.

Question 6: In the CNPI index, are all criteria given the same weight. Why were different weights not assigned based on importance?

Mansi Tripathi, IWMI: As mentioned in the presentation, at this stage we considered equal weights. However, we are definitely going to implement an AHP. We likely won't use Principal Component Analysis (PCA) because it is very data-intensive. Instead, we will go for AHP, in which we will consider experts and farmers working in the study area to give weightage to individual indicators. That is the plan down the line.

Question 7: How can we bridge the gap between the data scientists require (statistics, replication) and the evidence farmers trust (neighbouring success), and how can we publish alternative qualitative findings?

Devinder Sadhana (India): We are informing farmers, but the evidence scientists need and the evidence farmers need are completely different. Farmers don't care for replication or statistics; if it works for a neighbour, it is fine. I recently looked at data from 400 rice farmers; despite statistical variances, we found 50-60 farmers getting 30-40% higher yields. How do we develop a framework to document this when scientific journals reject it due to statistical paradigms? Social scientists and production scientists often work in two separate boxes.

4.5. Parallel Session 3 - Part 1: Supporting skills development and knowledge sharing

Moderated by ***Dr. François Enten, GRET***

See introduction of the session

Mr. Pat Sovan, GRET/ALiSEA, presented the **ALiSEA network** which operates at regional level as a multi-stakeholder coalition across Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand. With more than 200 members, ALiSEA addresses structural bottlenecks in agroecology—limited documented evidence, fragmented knowledge systems, and language barriers—through a four-pillar strategy: capacity building, small grant support for innovation, co-creation of knowledge, and wide dissemination via its Knowledge Hub. By strengthening training impact monitoring and introducing peer review mechanisms, ALiSEA is consolidating its role as a regional knowledge broker and capacity builder.

Dr. Krishna P. Paudel, Sujata, highlighted how the **CEPP pilot project** in Haku (Rasuwa District, Nepal) embedded agroecology at the **education and community interface**, within formal school systems to build long-term resilience. By integrating agroecological principles into curricula, establishing school nurseries and kitchen gardens, and promoting home gardening as experiential learning, schools become hubs for two-way knowledge exchange between students and households. This model bridges the gap between education and sustainability while simultaneously improving nutrition, environmental awareness, and community cohesion.

At the **village scale, the HimRRA initiative** presented by ***Dr. Devinder Kumar Sadana, ILSI*** shows how territorial transformation can occur through an "area approach" in Himachal Pradesh, India. Rather than targeting individual farmers, the project mobilized entire communities, leveraging Women Self-Help Groups, Community Resource Persons, and Bio-Resource Centers to support local input production and seed sovereignty. With seven of ten villages surpassing the 60% adoption threshold—and some reaching 100% adoption—the model demonstrates strong scalability. Importantly, successful villages now function as autonomous diffusion hubs, extending natural farming practices to neighbouring communities without continued external funding.

Finally, at the territorial planning and policy level, the SeqCOI digital Decision Support Tool presented by Mr. Phy Chhin, GDA/MAFF provides a quantitative dimension to agroecological transitions. By calculating greenhouse gas balances using Tier 2 soil data, SeqCOI enables accurate comparisons of land-use scenarios, as illustrated in Northern Cambodia under the ASSET project. The tool clearly shows how deforestation for cassava leads to major carbon losses, while agroforestry systems such as cashew orchards can generate carbon sequestration and negative GHG balances. By making complex climate data accessible to non-experts and policymakers, SeqCOI strengthens evidence-based territorial governance.

The four presentations collectively illustrate how agroecological transitions can be accelerated through **multi-level learning systems, community mobilization, and evidence-based decision tools**, spanning Southeast Asia and South Asia.

ALiSEA: Engaging members in sustainability journey and widespread adoption of agroecology by ***Mr. Pat Sovann, GRET/ALiSEA***		*Integrating learning and resilience - Lessons from Nepal* by ***Dr. Krishna P Paudel, Sujata***	
Developing Natural Farming Villages through a Network of Farmers in Himachal, India by ***Dr. Devinder Kumar Sadana, ILSI***		*SeqCOI, a Decision Support Tool for calculating and mapping GHG balances study case in northern Cambodia* by *Mr. Phy Chhin, GDA*	

Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderator

Parallel Session 3 – Part 1: Supporting skills development and knowledge sharing- Q&A Session

Question 1: Is there a possibility of building community networks in the long run? What plans and strategies do you have for mobilizing resources to support this work? Many knowledge-related interventions tend to start strong but eventually fade out. However, with ASSET now moving forward in ASEAN, which networks do you see as playing a key role in connecting programs and projects?

Mr. Pat Sovann, GRET/ALiSEA: ALiSEA is not implemented in the field. How we maintain or produce knowledge products focuses on a participatory, collaborative approach. We really need the members to join the network, contribute to the network together to produce and document field experiences, successful experiences for sharing. At the regional level, ALiSEA has already created a platform that can store all the knowledge products and allow open access for all agroecology communities that want to learn or benefit from the knowledge products. I would like to say collaborative collaboration, participate in the network. That's the way that we focus on to work with the members and also partners as well to maintain the knowledge and extend the knowledge widely.

Question 2: I would like to ask Mr. Phy Chhin about the app. I previously conducted a land-use change study in Myanmar, focusing on one state, and I faced significant challenges due to limited internet access. At times, I couldn't continue my work when I was offline. For this app, is offline access supported, or is an internet connection required at all times?

Mr. Phy Chhin, GDA: This tool needs internet access to perform calculations. Without the internet, it cannot be used.

Question 3: Can we also compare greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over different time intervals for example, 10-year or 5-year periods based on land-use change?

Mr. Phy Chhin, GDA: Regarding the second question about making comparisons: The SeqCOI tool can generate scenario-based predictions for example, over a 20-year period. However, if we want to compare different time intervals, we can calculate the year-by-year averages and use those values to perform the comparison

Question 4: Can we calculate emissions on an area-by-area basis? For example, in some plots we cultivate rice, while in others we cultivate pulses. Is it possible to estimate emissions for each individual plot?

Mr. Phy Chhin, GDA: Of course. Since land use is represented by polygons, your defined land-use boundaries. You can calculate emissions for each specific area.

4.6. Parallel Session 3 – Part 2: Supporting skills development and knowledge sharing

*Moderated by **Mr. Teki Vishy, Apaari***	

Dr. Albrecht Ehrensperger, CDE, highlighted the chronic failure of digital knowledge platforms, which often become inactive "data graveyards" due to short-term funding, unclear objectives, and static content. Using the Pha Khao Lao agrobiodiversity platform in Laos as a successful example, he proposed a strategy fostering 1/ scientific rigor (structured, credible database); 2/ Emotional storytelling (recipes, cultural narratives) and 3/ Relatable champions to inspire behaviour change. Digital tools must be embedded in hybrid outreach and anchored within permanent institutions. Long-term sustainability requires moving beyond fragmented project funding toward systemic financing mechanisms such as basket funds. He also warned that the rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence will fundamentally reshape how knowledge is accessed, requiring platforms to evolve beyond traditional graphic interfaces.

In Myanmar, where political instability, climate shocks, and migration intensify rural fragility, **the Forest Dialogue** initiative presented by ***Mrs. Mony, Paung Myat Myar (PMM)*** demonstrates that agroecological transition is also a process of *systemic healing*. Centered on women farmers, the initiative combines technical agroecology with emotional empowerment and community rebuilding. Rather than focusing solely on production techniques, **Forest Dialogue** fosters open conversations, strengthens the "moral economy," and supports women-led social enterprises. The initiative shows that agroecology thrives when social trust, dignity, and local solidarity are restored—mirroring the resilience of a forest ecosystem.

Dr. Ho Ngoc Son from Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry addressed scaling Nature-based Solutions among ethnic minority communities in Northern Vietnam, recognizing that while indigenous knowledge is deep and context-specific, accelerating climate change requires complementary scientific tools. Through a co-design process involving universities, communities, and enterprises, the project promotes: **Food Forests** that mimic natural ecosystems for biodiversity and food security; Farmer-to-farmer training systems and Partnerships with climate-friendly enterprises (e.g., AGRITAGE) to ensure market access. A central message is that agroecology must be **economically viable and institutionally embedded**. Scaling depends not only on ecological performance but also on integration into university curricula, extension systems, and value chains.

Dr. Raphaele Ducrot, CIRAD, presented **AgroCreaLab**, a Cambodian pilot approach that reimagines agroecology education through Challenge-Based Learning. Bringing together students from agronomy, engineering, computer science, and visual arts, the initiative fostered transdisciplinary collaboration to address real agricultural challenges. Students co-developed seven innovative solutions, including digital peer-to-peer knowledge applications and technological tools for rice quality certification. The pilot demonstrated: The value of interdisciplinary collaboration, the importance of integrating digitalization and entrepreneurship and the need to align academic institutions with agroecological transformation as well as the urgency of preparing a new generation capable of navigating complexity and bridging science, technology, and rural realities.

The four presentations collectively explore how agroecological transitions can be sustained and scaled by combining **digital innovation, emotional resilience, Indigenous knowledge, institutional anchoring, and youth-driven creativity**. Together, they demonstrate that technical solutions alone are insufficient; transformation requires integrated socio-technical ecosystems.

Knowledge, Narratives, and Networks: The Pha Khao Lao Approach to Raising Awareness on Agrobiodiversity by ***Dr. Albrecht Ehrensperger, CDE***		*Scaling Nature-Based Solutions and Indigenous Knowledge for Agroecological Transition and Resilient Livelihoods in Northern Vietnam* by ***Dr. Ho Ngoc Son, TN UAF***	
Reclaiming Wisdom, restoring balance: agroecology transition and resilient livelihoods through "the forest dialogue" by ***Mrs. Mony, PMM***		*Transforming Agroecology Training for Youth: Digital Approaches and Interdisciplinary Engagement in Cambodia* by ***Dr. Raphaëlle Ducrot, CIRAD***	

Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderator

Parallel Session 3 – Part 2: Supporting skills development and knowledge sharing- Q&A Session

Question 1: You mentioned the phrase "strategic institutional anchoring." I'd be interested to hear more about what you mean by that and what implications you see particularly in the university sector where I belong.

Dr. Albrecht Ehrensperger, CDE: "Strategic institutional anchoring" means positioning initiatives close to relevant processes, such as policy development. For example, Pha Khao Lao was invited to discussions on Laos' National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan because it is a key biodiversity information platform. This alignment illustrates institutional anchoring. For Pha Khao Lao, one option is transferring the platform to NAFRI (National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute). This would require technical capacity building and would not solve funding challenges, but remains under consideration. Another option is creating a multi-tiered institutional network, where members contribute skills, coordinate platform activities, and help raise funds to ensure sustainability.

Comment 1: I (*Wayne Nelles*) especially appreciated the section on reshaping agroecology within curricula and higher education institutions. Pierre and I recently drafted a policy brief on this very issue, integrating agroecology into higher education in ASEAN. Your point is well taken and could serve as a strategic entry point for future work in the region.

Comment from Audience Participant: It is encouraging to see this ground-level academic challenge. Universities naturally have their own programs, but when we began postgraduate work (MSc and PhD), there was little expertise in transdisciplinary approaches. NGOs often hold valuable expertise, yet when they wish to guide students, universities typically ask, *"In which discipline?"* Without a PhD in a recognized discipline, one is not eligible to supervise. There are some exceptions such as agronomy, economics, and extension but overall, unless universities establish dedicated agroecology divisions, it remains difficult to generate high-quality student research with a clear agroecology focus.

Question 2: Can you elaborate more on the role of youth in collating traditional knowledge in your organization? Do the master's students involved in your work earn academic credits for these projects?

Dr. Ho Ngoc Son, TN UAF: Regarding youth, we often hear concerns about the erosion of indigenous knowledge, as many young people are not interested in this topic. Living far from rural areas and farming activities, they are disconnected from these traditions. The only way forward is to support them, work with them, and encourage their involvement. As a university professor, I engage students directly through research topics and supervision. I see this as a shared learning process. Together with my team, we train students to collect indigenous knowledge, helping them understand its value. This experience can spark passion and motivate them to engage more deeply in the future. While I cannot be certain they will continue in this field, I believe it is my responsibility as an educator to inspire and spread appreciation for indigenous knowledge among the youth.

Question 3: I have a question related to Albrecht's and Mony's presentations. I felt left with fundamental questions after Albrecht's talk, and then Mony presented about the "Forest Dialogue." It sounded like exactly what we need, a forest dialogue, because there are often too many talks but we don't actually get into a dialogue to address important questions. My question is: When do we create that space together where we can actually dialogue?

Ms. Mony, PMM: In Myanmar, the situation is difficult because the law prohibits gatherings of more than five people. Words like "meeting" or "gathering" are sensitive and linked to security concerns, so people are afraid of them. Instead, we frame invitations differently such as for a "ceremony," "cooking together," or "making snacks together." In these settings, we create space informally. People come for the activity, and during it, we begin to talk. That is how we make dialogue possible, and it is the process we use for the Forest Dialogue.

4.7. Parallel Session 4 – Part 1: Market and value chains

Moderated by Ms. Setha Rath, Swisscontact	

The four presentations collectively address a central question: how can agroecology move from fragmented pilot initiatives to economically viable, territorially anchored systems? Across India, Cambodia, and Vietnam, they highlight complementary levers—landscape governance, financial innovation, market access, and farmer organization strengthening.

Ms. Vibhusha Gupta, Consortium for Agroecological Transformations – CAT presented **India's** strategic shift from isolated agroecological interventions to a Landscape-Based Approach, structuring 11 ecological landscapes at the administrative Block level (~50,000 ha) to achieve economies of scale with a Convergence Model combining public schemes, community contributions, and phased blended finance. CAT's analysis shows agroecology to be highly cost-effective compared to infrastructure-heavy models, positioning it as a mainstream rural development strategy delivering environmental restoration, resilient livelihoods, and public value at scale.

In **Cambodia**, the **DeiMeas** ("Golden Soil") pilot (2022–2025) presented by ***Ms. Socheata Sam, Swisscontact,*** addressed financial barriers to agroecological transition, in a context where agriculture generates 17% of national GHG emissions and 42% of farmland is degraded. Working through three pillars—Farmer Transition, Impact Quantification, and Financial Mechanisms—the project engaged 193 farmers over 290 ha annually. The key conclusion: carbon credits alone cannot finance agroecology. Farmers face high upfront risks, requiring integrated solutions combining fair pricing, strong value chain integration, technical support, and complementary financing.

Dr. Michael Bruckert, CIRAD, presented **FAVRI** work results on e-commerce opportunities for agroecology in Vietnam's Son La and Dien Bien provinces. Platforms such as Facebook, Zalo, and TikTok connect producers directly to urban consumers. Sellers range from opportunistic cooperatives to dedicated digital traders. While e-commerce reduces intermediaries and increases value capture, challenges remain—logistics for perishables, price competition, and unequal access. Digitalization alone is insufficient; it must be embedded in territorial branding, collective logistics, and coordinated marketing systems—again reinforcing the landscape-level logic.

Finally, ***Ms. Kim Lan Mas, CIRAD,*** presented contractual dynamics in organic rice value chains in Preah Vihear, Cambodia,. The Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (PMUAC) manages the Internal Control System (ICS) required for certification. Tensions emerged in 2017 when private buyers sought to bypass the Union and take over ICS facilitation. ICS management exceeds the capacities of primary cooperatives alone and delegating it to buyers risks distorting commercial balances and marginalizing second-level farmer organizations. The Union's role extends beyond certification to broader services demanded by farmers.

Overall, across **India, Cambodia**, and **Vietnam**, a coherent framework for scaling agroecology emerges: Scale matters (territorial level approaches) ; Finance must be blended (carbon markets are insufficient) ; Markets must be territorially organized (digital tools needs collective branding and logistic facilities); Farmer Organizations are foundational institutions (certification, contract, and service provision depend on strong cooperatives and unions)

A Scalable Framework for Agroecological Transitions: Insights from India's Landscape-Based Planning Initiative by ***Ms. Vibhusha Gupta CAT***		*E-commerce and Market Transformations for Agroecological Products in Vietnam* by ***Mr. Michael Bruckert, CIRAD***	
Dei Meas; Exploring financial mechanisms for farmers' transition to agroecology by ***Ms. Socheata Sam, Swisscontact***		*Evaluating Contractual Relationships and Certification Processes in Cambodian Organic Rice Value Chains: example of Preah Vihear province* by ***Ms. Kim Lan Mas, CIRAD***	

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Parallel Session 4 – Part 1: Market and value chains- Q&A Session

Question 1: What are the requirements for being a seller on your e-commerce platform? Is there a way to ensure you have only virtuous companies?

Michael Bruckert, CIRAD: Actually, there is no formal requirement because most sellers use social media. If you want to sell rice—from Cambodia, for example—online, you just post it on your Facebook account, a WhatsApp group, or Zalo (in the case of Vietnam). If people have your contact details and know you are selling products, they can access them. This lack of barriers is what worries the government: anyone can enter the business without registration, tax compliance, or quality control. This differs from institutional platforms like Lazada, which require registration for an online booth. While this creates anxiety for the government, it is surprising that consumers rarely report being cheated. This is because most transactions occur between people who already know each other. Due to this interpersonal embeddedness, there is a gap between the anxiety at the political level and the trust found in the system on the user side.

Question 2: I observed that many of the landscapes selected are in indigenous territories where the Green Revolution hasn't really progressed. How was that decision made? Secondly, regarding the financial model (grants first, loans later), who would be the entity engaging with market actors and loans, and how do we ensure they are protected?

Vibhusha Gupta, CAT: Regarding your first question, you are correct. The first three landscapes are tribal areas where the Green Revolution did not reach. We selected them not because they lack agroecology, but because we wanted landscapes with some level of saturation to figure out how to scale up. We are now thinking about how to adapt this process for landscapes with heavy Green Revolution influence, and the eight landscapes selected subsequently are non-tribal with higher input usage. This approach allows us to test the model on "lower hanging fruit" before adapting it to more difficult contexts. Regarding the financial structure, we are looking mostly at Farmer Producer Organizations and self-help groups. If they are well-placed to receive these loans, they will be the entities orchestrating these particular instruments.

Question 3: We discussed yesterday that the "one million low-carbon rice" initiative is suffering from challenges with the MRV (Measurement, Reporting, and Verification) system, which is very expensive for small plots. Has the team thought about how to simplify or reduce the cost of MRV to make it operational at scale?

Socheata Sam, Swisscontact: Internally, we are now running another project for a higher-value commodity: cashew nuts. We want to see the premium for net-zero cashew and are testing an incentive system using a "revolving fund." We are looking for funders to provide capital, which the farmer uses to de-risk the cost of transitioning. After about three years, they repay the risk fund after receiving the premium price for the cashew nuts. We are piloting this to address the cost issues you mentioned.

Question 4: Regarding organic rice value chains in Cambodia, do you see instances where market intermediaries block the upgrading of organic producers or create challenges for them in joining the value chains?

Dr. Raphaëlle Ducrot, CIRAD: What our studies, specifically Kim Lan's study and the CIRAD study, have tried to show is that part of the premium does not always reach the farmers. The complexity of the certification process offers opportunities for some actors to intervene and derail the process. To clarify the structure: there are farmers, farmer organizations, and exporting firms. In this specific chain, there are no other intermediaries between those entities.

Question 5: I recall other case studies where exporters/companies covered the costs for setting up the Internal Control System (ICS). If companies cover these costs, does that solve the issue? Did you look at contextual factors contributing to these challenges?

Kim Lan Mas, CIRAD: While I haven't looked at every case, I think the point applies to this case study as well. Companies often argue that they can reduce costs by taking over the ICS role, meaning they no longer pay the Union (PMUAC) for facilitation. However, my point is that there are hidden costs to this approach. First, second-level farmer organizations (the Union), which are experienced in formal agreements and price negotiation, are excluded from contract farming. Second, farmers who stop going through the Union lose access to other critical services provided by that organization. If we only do a basic economic analysis, these costs don't appear, but they are there.

Dr. Raphaelle Ducrot, CIRAD (Add-on): The most basic issue is that the Agricultural Cooperative (AC) that is directly in contract with the private company often does not have negotiation power. The farmer's price is determined by the negotiation of the base price, not the premium. Therefore, it is the negotiating power of the AC that determines what the farmer pockets at the end.

Question 6: I can see two models here: the e-commerce model and the contract farming model. I would like advice from Michael. Do you see the contract farming model as suitable for agroecology products? Do you have recommendations for transforming from cooperative marketing to an e-commerce model?

Dr. Michael Bruckert, CIRAD: To contrast this with our experience in Vietnam: some cooperatives sell both through contracts to supermarkets and online via social media. We found that most of the volume is sold through contracts because that secures the market for the full year. E-commerce remains a marginal outlet, though some cooperatives prefer it because they can set their own prices and it is more flexible. Contract farming is often unsatisfying for cooperatives because they feel the premium is low and commitment from supermarkets is weak (e.g., orders are placed weekly despite yearly contracts). However, scaling e-commerce is difficult. It is very hard for cooperatives to manage small volumes for many individual buyers. Currently, e-commerce is used more as a tool to promote their brand image rather than a primary tool to access markets and add value at scale.

4.8. Parallel Session 4 – Part 2: Market and value chains

Moderated by Mr. Sayvisene Boulom, NUoL

Dr. Jai C. Rana, Alliance Biodiversity & CIAT presented the **Himalayan Agroecology Initiative (HAI),** a systemic transformation of food systems in **India, Nepal, and**. It shifts from input-intensive agriculture toward holistic, sustainable, and inclusive agroecological models. Through policy reform, investment facilitation, and capacity building, HAI develops participatory national and sub-national roadmaps that define strategic pillars, SMART objectives, concrete actions, financing strategies, and monitoring frameworks. Key priorities include integrated governance, equitable access to natural resources, sustainable diets, fair value chains, gender equity, and inclusion of marginalized groups. Despite challenges such as policy fragmentation and entrenched subsidy regimes, the 2025–2027 phase focuses on operationalizing these roadmaps, strengthening institutions, and consolidating regional learning to enable agroecology to scale sustainably.

In **Siem Reap**, **Cambodia**, the **APICI project** supported a 15-year transition from chemical monocropping to diversified agroecology, coupled with a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). ***Mrs. Elise Perniceni, GRET,*** emphasized that this farmer-led, low-cost certification secured a price premium (+$0.13/kg), stabilized incomes, and reduced migration. However, sustainability challenges remain: voluntary verification fatigue, limited government recognition compared to CamGAP, and weak food safety control beyond the farm gate.

In **Laos**, ***Dr. Thiphavong Boupha***, ***LEI*** highlighted the strategic opportunity to align ASEAN GAP and agroecology principles, which overlap in environmental management, food safety, and labor standards. Harmonization could reduce duplication, strengthen export competitiveness (particularly toward China), and turn voluntary frameworks into drivers of transformation. Key priorities include aligning certification systems (including PGS), strengthening extension services, mobilizing green finance, and investing in laboratory and certification capacity.

Ms. Bharathi Parupalli, CIMMYT, presented a shift from selling machinery to providing mechanization services through Custom Hiring Centers and aggregator-led models. By enabling pay-per-use access, this approach lowers barriers for smallholders while incentivizing regenerative practices (e.g., residue management to prevent burning). Drawing on experience from **Bangladesh**, the model adopts a market-systems approach—strengthening supply chains, training mechanics and entrepreneurs, prioritizing loans over subsidies, and actively including women and youth.

Together, these presentations demonstrate that scaling agroecology requires coordinated action across **policy frameworks, certification systems, market incentives, service delivery models, and inclusive financing**—linking institutional reform with practical, farmer-centered solutions.

Himalayan Agroecology Initiative: Pathways towards agroecological food systems by ***Dr. Jai C. Rana, Alliance Biodiversity & CIAT***		*Results of an Analysis on the Potential for GAP and AE Integration to Promote more RAI and Agrifood Systems in the Mekong* by ***Mr. Thiphavong Boupha, LEI***	
Organizational innovations to boost the availability of safe and healthy vegetable in local markets in Cambodia by ***Ms. Elise Perniceni, GRET***		*Service Model for agricultural machinery -scaling regenerative and agroecological farming across ASEAN* by ***Ms. Bharathi Parupalli, CIMMYT***	

Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderator

Parallel Session 4 – Part 2: Market and value chains- Q&A Session

Question 1: I have a comment regarding the challenge of putting coherence in policy. I am a bit unhappy with the proposition of trying to bring together the Lao GAP with Agroecology (or Agroecology transition). I feel they are two different things: one is practice, and the other is the transformation of a system. I agree with trying for convergence and policy coherence (NDCs, biodiversity, etc.), but we must be careful not to try to put everything together, otherwise, we won't reach coherence but confusion. How do you address the distinction between practice and the process of transformation?

Mr. Thiphavong Boupha, LEI: I may not have made it clear in the presentation, but we do have publications and policy briefs on these strategic recommendations. I don't think we could totally combine everything. We know there are overlapping areas that can be synergized to reduce the workload and resources. Why promote similar frameworks separately? All of them fall under ASEAN guidelines. Even though they are voluntary, some have more commitment or market-driven mechanisms (like food safety). Our analysis, done with the Department of Agriculture, shows that even with similar work, there are different focal points and coordination mechanisms. We are looking for the entry points to reduce this overlap.

Question 2: My question is regarding the PGS system and the way forward for scaling up. First, in your case, is the cooperative an organization designed to make money? (In Laos, cooperatives are for business, associations are non-profit). Second, regarding incentives: when you get certification, you get added value. Have you incorporated a portion of this added value to pay for the certification system? Third, how do you audit the system? Absolute power on a single person can lead to corruption, so how is the auditing system placed?

Ms. Elise Perniceni, GRET: Concerning the agricultural cooperative in Cambodia, they have a law, and indeed they can make money; it is business-related (e.g., selling vegetables or inputs). Regarding incentives and the price for certification: PGS is a peer-to-peer certification. The people certifying are members of the cooperative, inside the organization, not a third party. There are small incentives, such as covering transportation costs for farm visits, but these are calculated on real expenses and agreed upon by the cooperative. Concerning the audit, there are field checks five times per year relying on different people. The Agricultural Cooperative Certification Committee goes three times a year, but staff from the Provincial Department of Agriculture, consumers, and buyers also visit. This ensures the process is transparent, neutral, and free of corruption.

Question 3: I like very much when you talk about incentives and tax exemption. Can you show a practical case? How do you see this practical case being internalized into the policy of the sector or the government?

Mr. Thiphavong Boupha, LEI: This is a tricky question for the Lao government. Even though the new investment promotion law was modified in 2024 with clear incentive mechanisms, the legal frameworks must be effectively implemented on the ground. Currently, we can focus on incentives like access to finance, SME funds, and privileges for producer groups. The government is also adopting the ASEAN taxonomy on green financing. As long as the government clearly identifies the criteria for what is to be incentivized, they can promote it. Currently, we need to focus on the effectiveness of implementing current mechanisms, such as improving "one-stop-shop" services for investors. There is potential to promote agroecology and responsible agricultural investment by integrating these ideas into the upcoming five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plans.

Comment 1 – Dr. Pascal Lienhard, CIRAD: Expressed concern regarding the proposition to bridge the gap between Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and agroecology. He noted that GAP focuses on specific practices, whereas agroecology represents a broader system transformation. He warned that attempting to merge these distinct frameworks might lead to confusion rather than policy coherence.

Comment 2 - Dr. Thipphavong, LEI: Responded that while the concepts cannot be totally combined, there are overlapping areas such as market-driven food safety demands where synergies can be found to reduce workload and resource duplication among government focal points.

4.9. Poster session

Moderated by ***Mr. Hoa Tran Quoc, CIRAD***	

All posters are available for download at the following link :

Poster 1: A research-action to experiment integrate native edible herbs cultivation into agroecological farms transition. Case study: ethnic H're villages, Po E commune- Kien Dang, SPERI

Poster 2: Empowering coffee communities through fairtrade and agrotourism - Alex Chitdara, Sahai Lao coffee & Shompoo Travel limited, Luang Prabang

Poster 3: From Grain to Gain: A comparative analysis of incentive mechanisms toward sustainable rice in Cambodia A. Dayet (CIRAD-SENS), J.C. Castella (IRD-SENS), J.C. Diepart (The School for Field Studies

Poster 4: Alliance of Agriculture for Food (AAF) Initiative: An Initiative for Informed Agroecological Policy Change - Sujata Tamang Alliance of Agriculture for Food/ ForestAction Nepal

Poster 5: Agroecology and healthy diets as food systems transformation pathway at sub-national levels: pilot cases in Mekong Delta and Northern Mountainous area of Vietnam - Dao The Anh et al., VAAS, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, NIN, ISPAE, CASRAD, PHANO, IAE

Poster 6: Agroecology and dietary diversity: Evidence from a systematic review and meta-analysis in LMICs, Ky The Hoang et al. Agriculture, Food Systems & Bioeconomy Research Centre, Ryan Institute, University of Galway, Ireland

Poster 7: toward an informational and decision making toolbox for agrifood quality standard and certification - Dr Raphaëlle Ducrot, Estelle Bienabé, Isabelle Vagneron, Alexia Dayet – Cirad, Romain Moussa, Siw Fasting

Poster 8: Wild Food Species: Key Agrobiodiversity Contributors in Multifunctional Landscapes, CDE NAFRI

Poster 9: Diversifying market channels for agroforestry products: the case of Phousan tea (Lao PDR) Stéphane Guéneau, Fue Yang, Lytoua Chialue, Michaël Bruckert CIRAD, National University of Laos

Poster 10: Survey of pests and diseases in the varietal and environmental diversity in organic rice in Cambodia - M. Sester, M. Adam, A. Hardy, S. Sieng, R. Sry, C. Dean, C. Vorn, F. Tivet, R. Kong

Poster 11: Guide for the evaluation of agroecology - A method for assessing its effects and the conditions necessary for its development Presenter: Adrien Trouvadis GRET

Poster 12: Harmonizing Tradition and Progress Harmonizing Tradition and Progress : Conserving Ikalahan agrobiodiversity and promoting sustainable agriculture, NTFP – IIED

Poster 13: Bos Khnor Gene Bank: Cover crops and pulse crops seed preservation for sustainable land use and food security - Sreymom Sieng, Vira Leng (DALRM-GDA), Florent Tivet (CIRAD), Vang Seng (DALRM-GDA)

Poster 14: Banana & coffee: multi species systems designs for more diversified & healthy landscapes in northern Laos: Why Banana and Coffee? H. Tran Quoc, K. Keovilay, S. Sayphoumy, I. Phanthanivong, P. Tixier CIRAD, PAFO Xieng Khouang, ASSET-GREENCUP

5. TARASA25 main event - Day 3 – 27 November 2025

5.1. Session 5: Scaling and Financing Agroecology – Part 1

*Moderated by **Mr. Andrew Bartlett, Seedbed and ASSET consultant***
Participants to round table:

- ***Patrik Olsson**, Deputy Head, SDC Regional, Regional Advisor Food Systems and Water*
- ***Inpone Senekhamty**, EU delegation in Lao PDR*
- ***Palima Sisaykeo**, MSME Promotion Fund, Ministry of Industrial and Commerce, Lao PDR*
- ***Phengkhouane Manivong**, AFD office in Lao PDR*
- ***Dada Bacudo**, ASEAN Green Bond for Sustainable Agriculture*

During this roundtable with public donors, the five participants collectively argue that agroecological transition requires a systemic transformation of financing models, not just increased funding. The central challenge is to align **global commitments**, **donor strategies**, **national mechanisms**, and **innovative financial instruments** so that resources genuinely reach smallholder farmers and support long-term structural change.

At the multilateral level, **Mr. Patrik Olsson (SDC)** stressed that public donors must play a dual role: providing stable financing while using their influence within institutions such as the **International Fund for Agricultural Development** and the Gr**een Climate Fund** to reject projects that fail to deliver direct benefits to farmers. He called for patient, co-created financing models that prevent resources from being absorbed by intermediaries.

The **European Union,** presented by **Mr. Inpone Senekhamty (see presentation)**, has institutionalized this commitment through the **Agroecology Coalition** following the United Nations Food Systems Summit. With €675 million invested globally, including major programs such as DeSIRA and partnerships with CGIAR, the EU promotes knowledge co-creation, scaled investment, and political engagement.

Similarly, **Ms. Phengkhouane Manivong (AFD)** mainstreamed agroecology into broader "nature-positive" portfolios. Between 2022–2024, it financed €2 billion across 76 projects, supporting 800,000 farmers. AFD emphasizes long-term transition and national ownership rather than donor dependency.

At the national level, **Ms. Palima Sisaykeo** presented the **Laos' DOSMEP framework** (a lao MSME promotion fund, see presentation) which demonstrates how global ambitions translate into local support through grants and matching funds for MSMEs in agriculture and food processing—bridging policy with practical enterprise modernization.

Finally, **Mrs. Dada Bacudo (FAO)** highlighted the urgent financing gap in agriculture and the decline of traditional ODA. She presented the **ASEAN Green Bond** for Sustainable Agriculture (see presentation) and emerging opportunities linked to COP30 as pathways to mobilize private capital and climate finance at scale.

Overall, the presentations converge on five priorities:

- Shift from short-term projects to long-term transitions.
- Finance agroecological principles, not just labels.
- Ensure funds reach farmers directly.
- Blend public, private, and innovative financial instruments.
- Align local proposals with global climate and food system commitments.

The key challenge ahead is governance: redesigning financial flows so agroecology becomes a mainstream, structurally funded pathway for food systems transformation.

Q&A Session: Scaling and Financing Agroecology – Part 1

Question 1: How can the sector move beyond "pilot syndrome" to reach scale, and should the focus be on small initiatives or large global programs?

Inpone Senekhamty, EU: Reaching scale remains difficult because agroecology lacks status as a top priority at both global and community levels. Overcoming "pilot syndrome" requires elevating agroecology to a national priority supported by three main pillars: policy facilitation, knowledge exchange, and technical assistance.

Phengkhouane Manivong, AFD: The integration of agroecology into broad policies takes precedence over simple "scaling up" or "scaling out." Due to the complexity of agroecological principles, broadly embedding them proves more effective. The AFD approach involves piloting small projects—testing methods, improving irrigation, or building supply chains—to plant seeds and learn from the subsequent growth over time.

Patrick Olson, SDC: Scaling entails more than just financial input; incentives, knowledge, markets, and governance require equal attention. Climate finance remains largely unused for agroecology. Switzerland, as a donor, actively pushes for these funds to be applied more frequently to agroecology projects.

Question 2: Why is climate finance difficult to access for agroecology, and how can this be addressed?

Dada Bacudo, FAO: Climate finance represents an underutilized sector, yet major funders prioritize measurable outputs, outcomes, and results rather than "agroecology" as a conceptual attraction. Large funds, such as the Green Climate Fund, generally do not release small amounts for pilots (e.g., under $10 million). Accessing these funds requires the aggregation and bundling of small projects to present a scaled-up, interconnected version worthy of large-scale investment.

Question 3: Given that less than 1% of Climate Smart Funds currently reach smallholder farmers, how can financial institutions innovate to cover initial transition costs (like infrastructure) for cooperatives and MSMEs?

Dada Bacudo, FAO: A growing movement advocates for farmer organizations to have direct access to climate finance, leading the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to begin repealing some complex rules. The current focus is on capacitating "direct access entities," such as rural banks, and building the "fiduciary credibility" of farmers' cooperatives. This allows these organizations to speak directly to financial institutions, supported by readiness grants and training from bodies like the Climate Bond Initiative.

Inpone Senekhamty, EU: The most effective innovation for access to finance is practical demonstration rather than written policy or leaflets. Taking governors, ministers, and bank directors to visit successful agroecology sites provides visual proof of production and sales results. Direct exposure to the needs and successes on the ground convinces decision-makers to provide support.

Andrew Bartlett, Seedbed: Practical demonstration is critical. Experience with Farmer Field Schools shows that bringing high-level officials (Presidents, Prime Ministers) into the fields to witness benefits firsthand is the most effective advocacy tool.

Patrick Olsson, SDC: Mechanisms must translate large donor commitments into flexible local funding through territorial approaches, community-managed funds, and partnerships with trusted local organizations. Philanthropy often pilots these flexible methods faster than government donors, as large agencies currently face constraints regarding human resources for managing local-level projects.

Phengkhouane Manivong, AFD: Multiple sources of finance exist, including government funds (like the SME fund), donor projects, and agricultural banks. Since a single project cannot meet every need due to time and scope limitations, the primary role of donors is the facilitation of access to this existing mix of financial tools rather than the direct provision of all needs.

5.2. Session 5: Scaling and Financing Agroecology - Part 2

Moderated by ***Mr. Andrew Bartlett, Seedbed and ASSET consultant***
Participants to round table:
Mr. Cristino Panerio*, Agroecology Fund –Global Advisory based in the Philippines*
Ms. Ashlesha Khadse*, 1000 currents - Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific*
Ms. Haiya Zhang*, Ecom, Sustainability manager for China*
Mr. Alex Rob Millar*, Managing Director, AgDevLao*

Ms. Ashlesha Khadse, Thousand Currents, emphasized a structural imbalance in climate finance: less than 1% reaches communities directly. Agroecological transition requires a fundamental shift toward trust-based philanthropy. **Thousand Currents** raises funds to both educate donors (Donor Academy) and channel flexible, long-term support to Indigenous peoples and peasant organizations. Indonesia's Nusantara Fund—an Indigenous-led mechanism representing 20 million people— is the proof that community-led funds can effectively distribute micro-grants at scale. Her core message: expand the funding base—by mobilizing Asian wealth holders and banks—and simplify funding mechanisms to enable genuine grassroots leadership.

Mr. Cristino Panerio presented the Agroecology Fund (AEF) (**see presentation**) as a structural solution to fragmented philanthropy. Since 2011, AEF has grown from four to over 50 donors, disbursing $41 million through 756 grants across 102 countries. Rather than funding isolated projects, **AEF** supports "collaboratives"—networks of organizations working collectively to rebuild cultures of resource and knowledge sharing eroded during the Green Revolution. The Fund also acts as a learning platform for donors, encouraging them to shift away from industrial agriculture models. AEF applies an Agroecology Investment Tracking Tool aligned with the 13 principles of agroecology, reinforcing integrity and preventing mission drift as funding scales.

Ms. Haiya Zhang of ECOM Agroindustrial Group addressed the operational realities of transforming agricultural systems under climate pressure (**see presentation**). With engagement across one million farmers globally, ECOM occupies a critical "last mile" position between markets and producers. Facing projections that CC could reduce coffee-growing areas by 50% within 50 years—while demand in China surges—ECOM is integrating agroecological practices into supply chains through: Climate-resilient hybrid varieties, Agroforestry promotion, digital tools, Soil regeneration innovations. Private companies play a decisive role in translating regenerative practices into short- and long-term economic gains for farmers.

Mr. Alex Robb-Millar, introduced a new private equity investment company **AgDevLaos**. Expecting to raise $100 million to modernize and strengthen the agribusiness sector in Laos. The fund takes a holistic approach to investment, covering the entire value chain from primary crop production to critical infrastructure such as smart greenhouses, cold storage, logistics, and green energy. The platform's strategic objective is to improve the national balance of trade by increasing Lao exports and reducing imports.

Together, the four presentations illustrate a complementary ecosystem for scaling Agroecology : Grassroots funds re-centering power and decision-making within communities, Pooled philanthropic mechanisms coordinating donor capital and safeguard agroecological integrity at scale, and private sector actors operationalizing agroecology within global supply chains, ensuring market integration and economic viability.

Q&A Session: Scaling and Financing Agroecology – Part 2

Question 1: Given the current global crises of debt and climate change, can agroecology help us navigate these challenges, and what will the landscape look like in five years?

Cristino Panerio, Agroecology Fund: There are two diverging paths for the future: one dominated by AI, robotics, and synthetic food ("farming without farmers"), and another led by people and farmers practicing agroecology. While technology can serve humanity, the future is better if it is driven by a people's movement.

Ashlesha Khadse, Thousand Currents: We must shift our perspective from asking "what communities can do for agroecology" to "what agroecology can do for communities," particularly for marginalized groups like women. Her hope is that in five years, communities will fully own the movement so it continues even after external project funding ends.

Haiya Zhang, ECOM: The "Agro" comes before "Ecology," meaning the industry must first serve farmers to ensure they remain economically viable. Only when farmers are financially resilient can they adapt and apply more ecological practices.

Question 2: Since current philanthropic funding for agroecology represents only a tiny fraction of what is globally required, how can funding mechanisms be sustained and scaled up in the future?

Ashlesha Khadse, Thousand Currents: Ideally, the sector should move away from reliance on philanthropy and toward state support and redirected subsidies. However, philanthropy currently plays a key role in convincing wealth holders including those in Asia to contribute. She also noted that communities themselves are often the primary investors, mobilizing local resources independent of donors.

Cristino Panerio, Agroecology Fund: Funding sources are diversifying beyond philanthropy to include UN multilateral institutions. However, the growth of agroecology depends less on donors and more on social movements lobbying governments to change policies (such as bans on burning crop waste) and to repurpose public funds from industrial agriculture to agroecology.

Question 3: Regarding the 300,000 farmers in ECOM's network, what is their role in governance and decision-making, and how do they share in the risks and benefits of the trade?

Haiya Zhang, ECOM: The relationship is primarily commercial but is governed by strict due diligence requirements regarding agronomy (banned pesticides), environmental protection (waste treatment), and social issues (labor rights). Farmers share in the benefits through financial premiums: those who meet higher sustainability standards receive a "sustainability premium" (e.g., ~$55 USD) on top of the quality market price.

Question 4: How can we move from supporting isolated projects to transforming whole food systems, and what role do governments and banks play in shifting harmful financial flows?

Haya, ECOM: The private sector is increasingly regulated by major financial institutions. Banks like the World Bank and Rabobank now attach strict ESG and due diligence requirements to loans, compelling companies to use funds responsibly rather than for harmful practices.

Cristino Panerio, Agroecology Fund: Success relies on strong people's movements lobbying for legal frameworks. For example, in the Philippines, civil society successfully pushed for a national organic agriculture law, which provided legal cover and government funding for local farmers. Resistance to harmful flows, such as extractive mining, also relies on these broad coalitions involving the church and local government.

Ashlesha Khadse, Thousand Currents: Territorial and landscape approaches are critical for system transformation. A major lever for change is government public procurement—policies that mandate the state to buy food directly from farming communities for schools and hospitals.

5.3. Launching of ALiSEA Knowledge Hub

Moderated by ***Dr. Albrecht Ehrensperger, CDE and Mrs. Thi Thuy Hang Nguyen, GRET***

The **ALiSEA Knowledge Hub** (https://kh.ali-sea.org/) is an open-access online platform that consolidates and shares resources, expertise, and practical information on agroecology in the Mekong Region. It offers a collection of knowledge products, a document library, maps, data visualizations, and a directory of agroecology experts with content available in English and national languages. The **ALiSEA Knowledge Hub** aims to become the leading knowledge resource on agroecology and food systems transformation in Southeast Asia. It seeks to facilitate knowledge-sharing and increase the visibility of local and national experience and insights. By promoting a diverse range of knowledge, the hub aspires to inspire stakeholders and foster networking among all actors interested or involved in agroecology. The **ALiSEA Knowledge.Hub** was developed thanks to the collaboration of CDE, GRET, CIRAD, CIAT and Mediaseeds.

The **ALiSEA knowledge hub** was launched by Mr. Pat Sovan, ALiSEA deputy regional coordinator (Cambodia), Mrs. Thy Thuy Han Nguyen, ALiSEA regional Knowledge manager (Vietnam), Mrs. Sok Chanraksmey DPA and ALiSEA national Secretariat (Cambodia), Mr. Dao The Anh, Phano, ALiSEA national secretariat (Vietnam), Mrs. Mya Dar Li, GRET, ALiSEA technical Assistant (Myanmar), and Mr. Sayvisene Boulom member of ALiSEA Board (Lao PDR).

5.4. Session 6: Public policies – Setting the scene

Moderated by ***Mr. Andrew Bartlett, Seedbed and ASSET consultant***

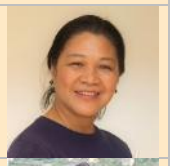
Participants to round table:
Ms. Yi-Ann Chen*, ESCAP*
Mr. Pierre Ferrand*, FAO*
Dr. Thatheva Saphangthong, *DLAM/LICA*

According to **Ms. Yi-Ann Chen from ESCAP** (see Presentation) Agroecology in Asia-Pacific has entered a phase of strong political recognition and structured implementation, driven by alignment between regional policy frameworks, national planning, and organized farmer networks. At the regional level, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific highlighted the need for public policy to correct market failures and de-risk the 3–5 years transition period required for agroecology. With 74% of the world's smallholders located in the region and agri-food systems responsible for major environmental impacts, state intervention and subsidy reform are essential. A major shift within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations confirms this momentum, as its upcoming 2026–2030 Declaration prioritizes sustainable and regenerative agriculture, supported by regional guidelines and cooperation platforms such as LICA.

Dr. Thatheva Saphangthong, representing LICA, emphasized that the progress in agroecology is a collective regional success involving Focal Points from Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand. He highlighted that the workshops and discussions at TARASA25 have empowered these representatives to drive national-level implementation. A major policy milestone was announced for Laos: the agroecological approach has been successfully embedded into the country's upcoming 10th five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), set for endorsement next month. The presentation also underscored the practical application of regional cooperation, specifically through the "Soil Doctor" program supported by FAO linking policy to on-the-ground action and which has scaled significantly, with Thailand boasting over 75,000 Soil Doctors and Laos growing its network to 1,000.

Pierre Ferrand, FAO, (see Presentation) presented the TARASA25 pre-event dialogue results, emphasizing moving from agroecology commitments to concrete implementation. It called for aligning ASEAN regional guidelines with national development plans and integrating agroecology into climate, biodiversity, and food system strategies. Scaling requires coordinated governance (multi-stakeholder platforms), strong farmer participation, and policy coherence across sectors. Education, research engagement, and peer-to-peer learning were highlighted as key enablers. Financing must combine public budgets, subsidy reform, climate and green finance, and responsible private-sector engagement. Finally, robust monitoring systems, clear indicators, and accountability mechanisms are essential to ensure effective and sustained agroecological transitions.

5.5. Session 6: Public policies - Panel 1: Enabling environments for farmers and local food systems (voices)

Moderated by ***Mr. Andrew Bartlett, Seedbed and ASSET consultant***			
Ms. Irish Baguilat, *Asian Farmers' Association (AFA)*		***Ms. Marlene Ramirez,*** *AsiaDHRRA*	
Dr. Dao The Anh*, ALiSEA representative*		***Ms. Nguyen Mai Huong,*** *ISPAE, Deputy Director, RUDEC; LICA focal point*	

Ms. Irish Baguilat (Asian Farmers' Association – AFA) and **Ms. Chintanaphone Keovichith (Lao Farmer Network – LFN)** demonstrated how farmer organizations are shaping agroecology policy from local to global levels. **AFA** engaged in platforms such as the IFAD Farmers' Forum and the Agroecology Coalition, and succeeded with the World Bank-hosted GAFSP to secure direct financing windows for farmer organizations and explicit references to agroecology. She identified three enabling factors: institutional recognition, dedicated financial resources, and strong internal mechanisms to consolidate farmer voices. At national level, **Mrs. Keovichith** showed how **LFN** bridges farmers and government through policy workshops, COP inputs, and participation in Sub-Sector Working Groups, stressing that sustained financial and logistical support is essential for meaningful engagement.

Dr. Dao The Anh (ALiSEA) positioned regional knowledge networks as critical intermediaries between grassroots actors and policymakers in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar. He emphasized ALiSEA's role in translating complex policy into accessible knowledge ("policy realizing"), building knowledge hubs, and fostering participatory action planning, value chain certification, and organizational legitimacy to support agroecology transitions.

Marlene Ramirez, AsiaDHRRA, presented the ASEAN Master Plan on Rural Development (2022–2026) (see Presentation) as a key regional mandate enabling agroecology transitions. She explained how it facilitated the development of **ASEAN Guidelines on Agroecology Transitions** through broad national consultations in 2024, opening space for multi-stakeholder platforms. Looking ahead, she urged CSOs to leverage underutilized mechanisms—Centers of Excellence, an Annual Family Farmers Policy Forum, youth and women capacity building—to secure resources and embed agroecology within food security and climate agendas.

Ms. Nguyen Mai Huong (ISPAE) illustrated how regional guidance translates into national transformation. Since 2022, Vietnam has shifted toward a green, low-carbon, and circular food system through high-level resolutions and the National Action Plan on Food System Transformation. Supported by think tanks such as ISPAE, the country is operationalizing this strategy through cross-sector coordination, large-scale pilots like the 1-million-hectare low-carbon rice project, and research on bio-pesticides and organic fertilizers—aligning national reforms with new ASEAN agroecology guidelines.

Overall, the four presentations show an ecosystem emerging: farmer organizations influence policy and finance; regional networks translate and disseminate knowledge; ASEAN frameworks create political space; and national governments operationalize agroecology through systemic reforms and large-scale pilots.

5.6. Session 6: Public policies - Panel 2: Policy alignment for climate, biodiversity, nutrition, food systems transformation (themes)

Moderated by ***Mr. Andrew Bartlett, Seedbed and ASSET consultant***

Participants to round table:
Ms. Dada Bacudo, *FAO / ASEAN Climate Resilience Network*
Ms. Sahar Brahim, *IFOAM - Organics International*
Mr. Bayarsaikhan Dangaasuren, *Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia*
Ms. Rathana Peou Norbert Munns, *Regional UN Food System Coordination HUB Focal Point-Asia Pacific)*
Dr. Olayvanh Singvilay, *FAO in Lao PDR*

Ms. Dada Bacudo positioned agroecology as the missing convergence point between fragmented global agendas on climate (NDCs, NAPs) and biodiversity. She argued that agroecology must move from a niche concept to the backbone of climate action by being explicitly named in binding policies, clearly tagged in climate finance mechanisms (GCF, GEF), and anchored in territorial implementation. Leveraging UNFCCC processes and ASEAN carbon neutrality guidelines is essential to unlock funding and coherence.

Ms. Sahar Brahim, IFOAM Organics International (See presentation) expanded this perspective by linking agroecology to nutrition and public health. With over 40% of women and children in Southeast Asia facing poor diet diversity, she demonstrated—through the Nutrition in Mountain Agro-Ecosystems project—that agroecological interventions can significantly improve dietary diversity. Through the Agroecology Promotion Programme Policy Lab, IFOAM aims to align agroecology with ASEAN consumer-oriented policies, ensuring measurable nutrition outcomes.

Mr. Bayasgalan, **Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia** presented **Mongolia's experience**, framing agroecology as a climate survival strategy in a country highly vulnerable to desertification and drought. He emphasized that traditional practices such as rotational grazing already function as adaptation mechanisms and called for their formal integration into National Adaptation Plans under the UNFCCC framework, aligning agroecology with COP processes.

Dr. Olayvanh Singvilay, FAO Lao PDR, (See presentation), highlighted the strong operational link between agrobiodiversity and agroecology. As Laos finalizes its NBSAP and National Agrobiodiversity Action Plan under the Kunming-Montreal Framework, implementation is being driven through Farmer Field Schools and practical solutions—bio-pesticides, biological control agents, insect traps, and rainwater harvesting—to reduce chemical dependence and strengthen resilience.

Ms. Rathana Peou Norbert Munns, Regional UN Food System Coordination HUB Focal Point-Asia Pacific) (see Presentation) presented the Convergence Initiative, addressing fragmentation across food systems and climate agendas. Built on three pillars—Governance, Policy, and Implementation—the initiative promotes cross-sector coordination. In Laos, this approach has united agriculture and environment ministries around a shared 2035 vision, leading to a $6.1 billion climate financing appeal, including $1.4 billion earmarked for agroecology.

Overall, the five presentations converge on a common message: agroecology is not a sectoral tool but a systemic solution. It connects climate, biodiversity, nutrition, and rural resilience; requires policy alignment across institutions; demands explicit recognition in finance mechanisms; and must be grounded in locally adapted, practical implementation to achieve scale.

5.7. Session 7: Voices from the Youth

Introduced and Moderated by ***Ms. Tanya Limkhumduang, Mekong Youth Farm Network (Y-Farm)***

Ms. Mimee Phommaly, Young Farmer, Orchard owner*, From a Forest Child to a Fruit Orchard Owner and Youth Agriculture Promoter*
Ms. Phoo Phoo Myint Han, Agronomy student*, Empowering Myanmar's Rice Farmers Through Online Knowledge*
Ms. Parichat Dokkaew, Khong Green *From Factory Engineer to Founder of KHONG GREEN*

Ms. Tanya Limkhumduang, Y-Farm, presented the work of the Mekong Youth Farm Network (Y-Farm), a volunteer-led non-profit spanning Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand. Established eight years ago to counter the decline of sustainable farming caused by globalization, Y-Farm empowers youth to become the future leaders of agriculture. The network employs a "From Farm to Market" strategy, offering internships, supporting startups, promoting agro-ecotourism, and preserving biodiversity through seed banks. Despite having empowered over 800 young people and supporting 41 farms, Y-Farm faces a critical funding gap. She highlighted that donors often overlook youth initiatives due to a perceived lack of immediate impact, forcing the network to rely heavily on volunteers. She concluded by calling for greater collaboration to support agroecology and circular economy practices across the region.

Ms. Mimee Phommaly, young farmer in Lao PDR and member of Y-Farm, shared her family inspiring journey of transforming a modest 1.5-hectare family plot into a thriving 18-hectare agribusiness that now produces 150 tons of fruit annually for distribution across Laos. She has successfully bridged the generational divide by shifting the farm's focus from her parents' quantity-centric approach to a modern model prioritizing quality, digital management, and smart technologies like automatic irrigation. Beyond crop production, Mimee is pioneering integrated farming with 23 plant species and has a strategic vision to develop agro-tourism infrastructure, serving as a powerful role model for youth by proving that sustainable agriculture is a viable and lucrative career path.

Addressing the critical shortage of agricultural extension workers in Myanmar, **Ms. Phoo Phoo Myint Han, young farmer in Myanmar and member of Y-Farm,** presented a youth-led digital initiative designed to connect isolated farmers with climate-resilient agricultural knowledge. Despite initial skepticism regarding the team's youth and gender, the project successfully introduced cost-effective innovations—such as the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and homemade organic inputs—which resulted in documented yield increases of nearly 75% for participating farmers. The initiative's most enduring impact has been the creation of a self-sustaining online peer-to-peer learning community, demonstrating that digital tools can effectively bridge the extension gap and empower farmers to navigate climate challenges and rising input costs.

Ms. Parichat Dokkaew young farmer from Thailand and member of Y-Farm described her major life pivot from a nine-year career as an industrial Quality Engineer to establishing a sustainable community enterprise in her hometown of Ubon Ratchathani. By applying her industrial engineering skills to local agriculture, she professionalized production processes to create "PARICH," a successful organic cashew brand, and founded "Khong Green" to stimulate the local economy. Her work specifically targets the isolation often felt by returning youth; through initiatives like the "Youth Lab" and elder-led workshops, she has built a supportive ecosystem that blends modern marketing skills with traditional wisdom, proving that young professionals can thrive by returning to their roots.

Q&A Session: Voices from the Youth

Question 1: What are your goals for the future?

Mimee (Laos): Aims to achieve financial stability through safe, high-quality food production while using modern technology to reduce labor costs. She plans to develop her farm into a model of biodiversity to teach others.

Phoo Phoo (Myanmar): Plans to pursue a Master's degree and conduct research that supports regenerative agriculture. Her goal is to "do science differently" by staying in touch with farmers to understand their real challenges rather than just following conventional methods.

Parichat (Thailand): Aspires to be a social entrepreneur. She wants to build a sustainable local economy and create a space that makes it easier for other young people to return home without having to start from scratch

Question 2: What are your reflections on this conference? (What did you learn, and what was missing?)

Mimee (Laos):
○ Learned: The importance of technology (to lower high labor costs) and networking (sharing knowledge for success).
○ Missing/Needs: She specifically asked for solutions regarding innovation to reduce plastic use on farms, as this is a major environmental issue for her.

Phoo Phoo (Myanmar):
○Learned: The concept of "doing science differently"—starting research based on the farmer's actual problems as presented in the lessons learned from the Agroecology TPP Annual Forum (see Section 3.7 on page 17).
○Missing/Needs: She wants more youth inclusion in future events. She also emphasized the need to advocate to young consumers that "the food on their plate is their responsibility," encouraging them to buy from organic farmers rather than just supermarkets.

Parichat (Thailand):
○ Learned: The conference helped her see the "big picture" of global and regional policy, which clarified her own vision.
○ Missing/Needs: She suggested that future conferences should include hands-on workshops, specifically expressing interest in food processing (e.g., banana products) and packaging design.

Question 3: What triggered you to return to agriculture and the village?

Mimee (Laos): She saw the economic opportunity in the food market, wanted to take care of her parents, and has a deep love for nature and the forest.

Parichat (Thailand): She wanted to be close to her parents and desired the freedom to "design my life."

Question 4: How did you benefit from the ALiSEA small grant?

Mimee (Laos): The primary benefit was networking. It allowed her to meet other farmers facing the same constraints and sharing similar ideas, which was more valuable than just the funding alone.

6. Closing remarks

By Dr. Thatheva Saphangthong, DLAM/LICA

- The speaker critically observed a disconnect between discussing agroecology and hosting the event in a five-star hotel, suggesting that the next conference (TARASA 2027) should be held "in the field" to better align with the reality of farming.

- The youth session was identified as the most inspiring part of the event, prompting the speaker to emphasize the motto "No farmer, no youth, no food, and no future" and announce plans for a specific youth-focused side event in the coming months.

- No host country has been decided for TARASA 2027 yet, as the speaker emphasized that securing financial support and establishing a secretariat must happen before any ASEAN country can volunteer to accept the administrative burden.

- A direct plea was made to major institutions such as FAO, the Agroecology Coalition, TPP Agroecology, ALiSEA, and the EU to commit resources and leadership to ensure the event continues.

- Stakeholders were asked to reflect on the financing and setup over the holidays and come up with a concrete proposal via the email group by January.

- Engagement from the large-scale private sector was noted as low, with only two representatives present in the room, though they were acknowledged as pioneers.

Annex 1 – Innovation fair – List of exhibitors

No	Organization	No	Organization
1	DLAM / LICA	14	Comma Coffee
2	ASSET	15	CPC Coffee
3	GRET	16	SAHAI Coffee
4	CIRAD	17	Khao Kai Noi Houaphanh Promotion Association-KHPA
5	Tiddin shop	18	SEED
6	Sangthong handicraft cooperative	18	SAEDA
7	CLICK-IN	19	LFA
8	Khounkhao Sold Co., Ltd	20	ECHO Asia
9	Pha Khao Lao	21	BNDA
10	Helvetas	22	PDDA
11	Green Discovery	22	ALiSEA
12	WWF	23	DAEC
13	Green Cup Project	24	Swisscontact

Annex 2 - List of participants:

Download here: List of participants

Annex 3 - Abstracts and biographies

Download the abstracts of presentations and biographies of Speakers and Moderators

Annex 4 – Presentations

Download TARASA25 presentations

Annex 5 – Other resources

Acces to website : https://tarasa25.org/ and other resources