Scaling Up Agroecological Approaches

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ABSTRACT

Many scientific studies and empirical experiences around the world have shown that peasant and family farm-based agroecological approaches are superior to industrial agriculture in terms of production of healthy food for local populations (food sovereignty), enhancement of rural livelihoods and cultures, resilience to climate change and other shocks, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, lower production costs, stewardship of productive resources and rural biodiversity (‘Mother Earth’), relative autonomy and lower external dependence for farm families, etc. Yet the challenge remains of how to bring agroecology to scale, so that more and more families practice it over larger territories.

Agroecology is a science, a set of farming practices and a social movement. Scaling up of agroecology, both through public institutions; what has been called vertical scaling up, and horizontally, among more farmers or larger territories, is being carried out by various sectors – the science of agroecology, public policies, markets, pedagogical methodologies. The range of actors is wide — there are scientists, activists, consumers, peasants’ organisations, government officials, religious leaders, and NGOs among others, and experiences and strategies vary.

While this chapter gives an overview of the different approaches to scaling up in literature, it is written from the perspective of agroecology as a social movement, specifically from the experience of rural social movements. Their experience indicates that the degree of organisation and the extent to which horizontal social methodologies based on farmer protagonism are employed to collectively construct social processes, social organisations and social movements are the key in bringing agroecology to scale. Pedagogical processes like Campesino-a-Campesino (“farmer-to-farmer”) and peasant agroecology schools run by peasant organisations themselves are useful examples of these principles.

KEYWORDS
Peasant Movements, La Vía Campesina, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Agroecology, Farmer Protagonism, Farm-Based Agroecological Approaches

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing call for the scaling up of agroecology from intergovernmental bodies like the FAO, UNEP, UNCTAD, from social movements like La Vía Campesina, and from a growing number of scientists, and civil society organisations (Altieri and Nicholls 2008; De Schutter 2010; Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2012; Varghese and Hansen-Kuhn 2013; Parmentier 2014). The need to reorient the food system, especially in
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social processes, prove that these methodologies are the key factors in “massifying” and bringing agroecology to scale.

ENDNOTES

2. The group is financed by the National Council of Science and Technology (abbreviated as CONACYT in Spanish) and coordinated by Dr. Helda Morales from El Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Mexico.

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