Call for Papers – *Cahiers Agricultures* Thematic issue

Agricultural Training Systems Worldwide and the Challenge of Agroecology

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Abstracts should be sent to: cahiers.agric@cirad.fr

Submissions will be reviewed on a rolling basis upon receipt, without waiting for the final deadline.

This call for papers aims to analyze the evolution of agricultural education and training curricula around the world—in both the Global North and South—within the context of the growing prominence of policies promoting the "agroecological transition." It invites contributions from a range of disciplines that address, in this historical framework, the processes by which agroecology is defined, embedded, and appropriated within educational programs. The call seeks to explore how curricula are designed and implemented according to national or local interpretations of agroecology, how teaching staff engage with these programs, and how learners receive and make sense of them.

In response to increasing awareness of environmental challenges in agriculture, public policies are reorienting agricultural education towards adaptation to climate change and the reduction of pesticide use, integrating emerging agronomic knowledge and innovative practices.

In France, for instance, the national programs "Enseigner à produire autrement" ("Teaching How to Produce Differently")—key instruments of the agroecological transition policy (Gaborieau, 2019)—have progressively introduced in agricultural high schools pedagogical approaches encouraging reduced pesticide use through scientific experimentation conducted on school-owned farms (Benet Rivière, 2024). This movement—whose effects can be ambivalent with regard to the questioning of dominant agricultural models—relies on broad participation: beyond students in initial training, farmers and technicians are also involved. This process of "ecologization" (Christen & Leroux, 2017) aligns with the broader international development of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (Barthes & Lange, 2024).

Agroecology training programs are characterized by considerable diversity across and within countries, involving various ministries (rural development, agriculture, research, fisheries, forestry, etc.). In some national contexts, however, these programs remain limited. Beyond differences in state intervention, other actors contribute to curriculum design and implementation—training centers, universities, research institutes, professional organizations, and civil society groups. Local initiatives, the variety of conceptualizations of agroecology, and the diversity of program levels and contents all contribute to this heterogeneity.

In many tropical regions of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, the expansion of agroecology occurs in conjunction with public policy reforms aiming to strengthen national training systems as a whole. Moreover, this expansion—intertwined with agricultural development policies and the orientations of international and regional organizations (FAO, ECOWAS, etc.)—tends to promote the reconnection between agriculture and food systems, though the means to achieve this reconnection vary widely.

The analysis of training systems accompanying agroecological transformations toward more sustainable agriculture can be structured around four main criteria:

• the national and local contexts that enable or hinder agroecological development;

• the various (and sometimes conflicting) conceptions of agroecology and the related curricular contents;

• the levels of education concerned (initial training, higher education, adult or continuing education);

• the pedagogical and organizational adaptations required (e.g. flipped classrooms), and the links between training and research initiatives in agroecology.

Contributions may focus on one or several of the following thematic axes, which interrelate these criteria (context, concepts and contents, levels of training, pedagogical methods, and research linkages). Proposals that go beyond these axes are also welcome.

Axis 1 – Designing Agroecology Curricula

This first axis invites analyses of how training programs and curricular frameworks are designed to address the challenges of the agroecological transition (Métral et al., 2016). It encourages studies of how diverse conceptions of agroecology—scientific, political, social—are translated into curricular content. The multiplicity of definitions and principles (HLPE 2019; FAO 2020; Wezel et al. 2020) often gives rise to tensions, but may also open space for plural perspectives and knowledge frameworks.

Contributors may examine how agronomic teaching integrates new knowledge about agroecological innovations emerging from research, professional, and civil society actors. Analyses may focus on the reorientation of agricultural training programs and the controversies surrounding them, through case studies of curriculum evolution or pedagogical devices (project-based learning, action research, co-construction with local stakeholders, etc.).

The aim is to understand how these curricula incorporate the challenges of the agroecological transition—biodiversity conservation, food sovereignty, energy transition—and how the selection of agroecological knowledge is made within training institutions (Jankowski, 2014). Comparative approaches may reveal national differences shaped by institutional reforms and

public policies (Silva, Lamine & Brandenburg, 2019), as well as tensions between the drive toward curriculum standardization and local adaptation.

Contributions may also question the place of farmers' knowledge within official curricula (Jankowski, 2014; Allali, 2021), and the roles played by various actors—international organizations, social movements, NGOs, private companies, and agri-industrial actors. Finally, this axis invites reflection on curriculum governance: Who defines the orientations? Which forms of knowledge are legitimized or marginalized? Which actors participate in, or are excluded from, these decision-making processes?

Axis 2 – Adoption and Appropriation of Agroecological Knowledge by Teaching Staff

This second axis examines how educators, trainers, advisors, and internship supervisors appropriate and translate agroecological frameworks into their pedagogical or professional practices (Gaborieau & Peltier, 2024). The goal is to understand how these actors—positioned at the interface between institutional prescriptions and local realities—contribute to the concrete implementation of the agroecological transition.

Contributions may analyze the variety of appropriation dynamics: partial or selective adoption, reinterpretation, subversion, or resistance to contents perceived as distant from professional realities. They may also explore the tensions faced by trainers between institutional expectations, material constraints, students' demands, and their relationships with agricultural stakeholders.

Particular attention can be given to continuing education programs and professional development dynamics: How do trainers acquire new competences in agroecology? What spaces of exchange and knowledge circulation (seminars, pedagogical networks, professional groups, union or associative training) foster or hinder these processes?

This axis also encourages reflection on how personal trajectories, professional identities, and field experiences shape trainers' own conceptions of agroecology. Finally, it invites discussion of the place of pedagogical innovation and the capacity of teaching staff to become active agents of the agroecological transition (Cayré, 2013).

Axis 3 – Learners' Reception of Agroecological Knowledge

This third axis focuses on how learners—students, trainees, farmers in conversion, and adults in continuing education—receive, interpret, and appropriate (or resist) agroecological knowledge (Christen, 2017). It seeks to understand how these new contents, which carry the potential for profound transformations in agricultural practices, resonate with learners' social trajectories (Sahuc, 2017), professional representations, and life projects.

Contributions may explore diverse forms of reception: enthusiastic engagement, partial adoption, resistance, indifference, or rejection (Benet Rivière, Guétat-Bernard, Domen, Frison & Rasplus, 2024). These responses may depend on social and professional origins, gender norms, relationships to the agricultural world, levels of environmental awareness, involvement in activist or union networks, and material training conditions.

Analyses may also focus on local contexts and collective dynamics shaping these receptions: How do learners integrate agroecological knowledge into their practices? How is knowledge constructed and circulated within agroecology training (Compagnone, Lamine & Dupré, 2018)? What tensions arise between institutional knowledge and experiential or peasant knowledge

(David, 2019)? To what extent do these training programs reshape professional identities and conceptions of agricultural work?

Finally, this axis invites comparative analyses of how different groups—students, engineering school trainees, established farmers, or agricultural technicians—respond to agroecology training. Studying these receptions helps illuminate the social, cultural, and professional conditions that foster or constrain the appropriation of agroecology as a transformative horizon.

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