

An agro-ecological transition is crucial to tackle future climate challenges

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Abstract

Agriculture and food systems have received relatively little attention in the climate debates until the adoption of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture at COP23 in December 2017 in Bonn. This, despite the fact that global food systems generate one-third of all human-caused GHG emissions, with agriculture, forestry, and other land use changes contributing as much as 25%, and livestock contributing significantly to GHG emissions. Agriculture is, and will be further impacted by climate change in the decades to come, potentially compromising food security. The Paris Agreement emission reduction targets can only be achieved with the contribution of the agriculture and food sectors, which hold major potential for climate mitigation as well as adaptation. The challenge is to reduce those emissions while meeting unprecedented demand for food, reducing diet-related diseases and securing the livelihoods of the agricultural producers on whom all food production is ultimately reliant. This will require a major transformation, away from high-carbon, high-input agriculture to diversified agroecological production systems. Such systems have the potential not only to keep carbon in the soil and reduce GHG emissions, but also to regenerate ecosystems, provide nutritious foods to local populations, and provide decent livelihoods for small-scale farmers - thereby contributing to as many as 12 of the 17 sustainable development goals. Such transformation requires a food system approach from production to consumption, involving all relevant sectors and actors and developing a coherent food policy framework in order to minimize trade-offs and to create synergies among them. After years of neglect, it is urgent to harness the potential of agriculture and food systems in addressing the climate challenge.

Biography:

Emile Frison is a Member of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. A Belgian national, he spent his entire career in international agricultural research for development, including six years in Africa in Nigeria and Mauritania. In 2003, he became Director General of Bioversity International and developed a strategy entitled "Diversity for Well-being" focusing on the contribution of agricultural biodiversity to the nutritional quality of diets and to the sustainability, resilience and productivity of smallholder

agriculture. Since 2013, he focuses his energy on supporting efforts to transition to sustainable food systems. He is the Lead Author of the IPES-Food report "From uniformity to diversity: a paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems" and is the Chair of the Board of Directors of Eco-agriculture Partners



Speaker Publications:

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