

## It's time for the EU to fully transition towards Agroecology!

The spread of industrial agriculture aimed at increasing yields is closely linked to the use of synthetic chemicals, genetics and technology, and promotes the spread of monoculture with inevitable consequences on water and soil consumption and impoverishment of fertility levels.

Soil with less than 2% organic matter, often the case in countries where intensive agriculture is dominant, meaning a high use of chemicals and mechanization, is impoverished, lacking structure and degraded. Half of all European countries have a low content of organic matter in their soil, primarily those in southern Europe, but also some parts of the United Kingdom and Germany<sup>1</sup>. No chemical fertilizer can compensate for this shortfall.

The loss of soil biodiversity jeopardizes the functions of the soil ecosystem. Only agroecological practices, which limit monocultures and the use of synthetic chemical products, avoid deep ploughing, rotate crops and introduce green manure, can preserve or regenerate soil fertility.

The EU needs a dedicated legally binding framework to protect European soils from the threats posed by land grabs, soil degradation and contamination. And as outlined in the Biodiversity Strategy, “farmers play a vital role in preserving biodiversity.”

### The Soil Strategy must:

- **Identify agroecology as the tool to achieve large part of its objectives.**

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The transition to agroecological food systems should take inspiration from the Ten Elements of Agroecology and the 13 Agroecological Principles of the FAO and of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security.<sup>2</sup>

- **Acknowledge the role that agroecological smallholder farmers play in maintaining healthy soils and their potential in ensuring the transition of the wider farming community to sustainable soil management.**

Likewise, it must acknowledge the role that local communities (bringing together farmers, food artisans and consumers, as e.g. in the case of Community Supported Agriculture initiatives) play in supporting healthy and fair food systems. Institutions must link their support to those who concretely engage in regenerative practices.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.iass-potsdam.de/sites/default/files/files/soilatlas2015\\_web\\_english.pdf](https://www.iass-potsdam.de/sites/default/files/files/soilatlas2015_web_english.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://foodpolicycoalition.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Policy-paper\\_mainstreaming-agroecology-in-EU-policies.pdf](https://foodpolicycoalition.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Policy-paper_mainstreaming-agroecology-in-EU-policies.pdf)