

eMag on Climate Action in Africa

**#3 Ensuring local food security
and sustainable resource
management**

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Agroecology: Reconciling traditional and new practices

Méline Assè Wassa Sama, Climate Chance

Méline Assè Wassa Sama, Project Officer on Climate Action in Africa at Climate Chance, examines the oppositions and possible convergences between traditional practices and the new approaches of agroecology.

What is the context on the continent?

In 2021, 278 million people were affected by hunger. To face the challenge of food security, it is necessary to transform agriculture, a sector that represents 23% of GDP and employs 65% of the population. This ambition often leads to a focus on new exogenous approaches to the detriment of traditional practices.

“Africa is full of traditional practices that could be useful in changing the agricultural paradigm on the continent but they are either unknown or disappearing.”

What are traditional practices?

Traditional practices are ancestral techniques and know-how held by local or indigenous populations. For example, in the Sahel, Fulani pastoralists use a calendar that distinguishes five seasons and allows them to better understand and anticipate climate-related risks in order to shape breeding techniques. In Burkina Faso, "zai", a technique promoted by Yacouba Sawadogo, restores soil fertility and improves yields. Finally, we realize that many people have know-how adapted to the environment, but are often sidelined in favor of exogenous techniques. This is accentuated by the influence of international policies.

Do these new practices take into account local knowledge?

Since colonial times, policies and programs for soil and forest conservation have promoted external practices that ignore local aspects and exclude indigenous peoples. In addition, for a long time, exogenous (transgenic) seeds have been promoted, requiring the purchase of new seeds for each crop, whereas traditional seeds could be saved. This led to the abandonment of traditional seed practices.

Can we imagine an agroecological model that brings together traditional and new approaches?

A proverb says that to reconcile, one should not bring a knife that cuts but rather a needle that sews. Agroecology is an approach that takes into account local dynamics, local actors and integrates social and environmental needs to ensure sustainable agriculture. This model defends food sovereignty and the rights of farmers. The advantages are:

- The inclusion of local actors and the showcasing of traditional practices. ([Read the analysis of the Synthesis Report by Sector 2022 on agroecology in Durban](#))
- The inclusion of all social strata, in particular women
- The development of small farmers through the sharing of knowledge, practices and traditional varieties adapted to local contexts.

Agroecology still has a long way to go. The initiatives presented in this eMag show that there are already great things being done in this direction.

For more information on the [Africa Observatory](#), please contact Méline Assè Wassa Sama : melaine.sama@climate-chance.org

Read the Note "[Sustainable Agriculture in Africa: Reconciling traditional practices and new approaches](#)"



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Sustainable local development and agroforestry

Marie-Ange Kalenga, Independent Expert

Marie-Ange Kalenga, Specialist in Natural Resources, Climate and Environmental Governance, explains the advantages and conditions of a beneficial agroecology for local and indigenous populations.

What is agroforestry?

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations defines agroforestry as a land use system that combines forest management with crop or livestock production. It is an approach used in the promotion of agroecology. It is not a new idea, as it has been practiced for decades by forest communities in West and Central Africa but also in South East Asia. The goal is to reconcile tree preservation, food production and ecosystem services. Agroforestry is currently experiencing a resurgence of interest as the international community mobilizes to fight deforestation, biodiversity loss and climate change.

What are the benefits of agroforestry models?

Agroforestry enables forest communities and small-scale farmers to avoid deforestation for cultivation, preserve soils, improve crop yields and enhance the resilience of smallholder farmers' livelihoods.

Various initiatives and programs led by international institutions, international and local NGOs promote this model, but the support provided and its replication depend on the political and economic context. Unfortunately, too many agro-ecological initiatives prioritize economic issues over social issues. This is why environmental NGOs such as Fern propose a rights-based approach that fully realizes the ecosystem potential.



Agroforestry that only considers short-term economic issues does not allow communities to benefit from positive social and economic spin-offs.

Can agroforestry be an alternative to agricultural models responsible for deforestation?

Agroforestry is a way to overcome the slash-and-burn agriculture model that dominates Central Africa and contributes to deforestation. However, this should not be blamed on the "small" farmers who need land to cultivate and do not have the necessary means of production to avoid clearing land. The approach based on local knowledge but adapted with new techniques is therefore very important to preserve the forest, including for export.

What are the founding principles of agroforestry?

Environmental NGOs advocate basing agroforestry on:

- Equality and gender mainstreaming to include women,
- Land security and tree ownership to establish sustainable agroforestry in a context of pressure on resources,
- Participatory governance,
- Ensuring that benefits are distributed equitably,
- The long-term guarantee of a socio-ecological approach that takes into account both social and ecological aspects.

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Special segment by Afrik 21



From One Forest Summit to the Three Forest Basins Summit

Boris Ngounou, Afrik 21

Afrik 21 journalist Boris Ngounou, who is specialised in sustainable development in Africa, shares the latest news on the preservation of biodiversity and forests, and keeps us up to date on the upcoming international events.



The International Day of Forests just took place, what are the most important conclusions we can draw from this year's edition?

The International Day of Forests took place on the 21st of March. The theme of this 2023 edition was Forests and Health as humankind is heavily dependent on forests in terms of health; but also for food, energy and shelter.

There is a very close link between forests and humans, as many communities also need forests to generate revenues. This is why the international community is getting more and more involved in the preserving and protecting forests.

What about the One Forest Summit held on the 1st and 2nd March?

This Summit led by France and Gabon managed to gather many relevant stakeholders. During the event, the Libreville Plan was created. It has an approach based on the Paris Agreement and intends to be an instrument to enable countries to preserve and protect their forests.

One of the initiatives that came out of the One Forest Summit was conservation partnerships, with the objective of helping countries that are an example when it comes to the preservation of forests. ([Read the article on the ambitions of the Libreville Plan](#)).

However, there was some controversy around the Summit when several NGOs expressed their frustration as they felt that the Summit did not tackle the big issues or introduced large projects that can have an impact on deforestation.

“The greatest challenge for forests in Africa is to reconcile the protection of the forest and the economic development of the countries

Now we are seeing deforestation projects in the equatorial forest in Cameroon and also in Congo. This is particularly concerning as the forest in Congo is one of the three great basins. Its preservation is vital for global warming, and it was not mentioned during the One Forest Summit. ([Read the article on the role of the Congo Basin at the One Forest Summit](#)).

We hope that this will be addressed in the Summit of the Three Great Basins which will take place in June 2023 in Brazzaville ([Read the article on the summit of the three large forest basins](#)).

More articles to read on the website: <https://www.afrik21.africa/en/>



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Developing the honey value chain to conserve the forest

Wirsiy Emmanuel Binyuy, Cameroon Gender & Environment Watch (CAMGEW)

Wirsiy Emmanuel Binyuy, Team Leader of **CAMGEW** presents an agroforestry project that implements a gender-based approach and highlights women's economic independence through their participation in productive activities, such as bee farming, and access to microfinancing.



Why is bee farming at the heart of the project?

We use the bees as a meeting point between people and nature. The main value of the forest is found in the medicinal plants, and especially the honey. Women are very involved in reforestation projects as the forest is their main source of income. Also, apiculture is essential to prevent fires. The forest where we operate (Kilum-Ijim), has suffered damage due to fires.

Now, the people have beehives inside the forest. These beehives equal honey, which equals money. The community members are more active in the protection of the forest because they see it as a way to earn their living.

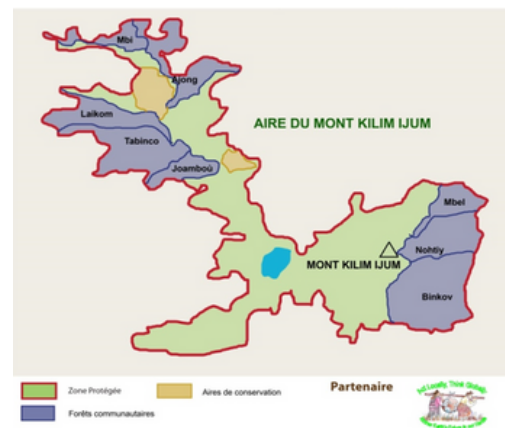
We also work in a community where the main problem was human-elephant conflict. We know that elephants do not like bees, so we trained the members of the community in bee farming. They placed mini-hives around their communities in order to scare elephants away.

[Read more about the project on our Cartography!](#)
Contact : camgew@gmail.com

What is the role of women in this project?

“Bee farming is seen as a masculine activity and we needed to find a way to include women in the process.”

We started encouraging women to take part in the project. When training the women, we gave them two hives, and just one to men. In terms of management, we organise cooperatives in which women participate. At least one third of the members of every cooperative are women. We then give them priority for certain activities, and we have a microfinance project in the Kilum-Ijim forest that is exclusively for women.



How do you promote agroforestry?

The Kilum-Ijim area, where the forest is, is the second highest mountainous area of Cameroon. This area is very steep, and is often victim to erosion and landslides. We came up with a method to start combining plants that can preserve the soil, provide food and prevent landslides. We explained to the community members how they can manage the landscape in a way that makes the soil fertility remain intact and is able to retain water so that they are able to guarantee food production.



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Agroecology, food security and conflict prevention in Niger

**Mahamadou Sanoussi Hassane,
FUSCN-Mooriben**

Mahamadou Sanoussi Hassane, Director of the Fédération des Unions de Sociétés Coopératives du Niger Mooriben presents agro-ecology projects for food security and conflict management.



What is your organisation's main mission?

Mooriben has over 57,000 members, 63% of whom are women. Our organization seeks to build by 2025 a sustainable, diversified and autonomous professional family agriculture. We promote the respect of the environment while producing more.

How to prevent and manage conflicts of access to shared resources?

We create frameworks with all the actors: herders, pastoralists, producers, government technical services, village chiefs, etc. The problems are discussed in meetings, particularly on the eve of the agricultural campaigns, in the middle of the season and then at the end, in particular to decide collectively on the dates for access to the land.

Which agroecology projects are supported by your organisation?

First, we are strengthening the capacity of actors on different subjects: training in traditional practices of soil conservation and fertilization with organic and local products, training of women in production techniques and processing of agricultural products (flour, groundnut processing).

To promote agroecological practices, we are conducting actions to reconstitute household livestock to enable them to produce the organic fiber used in their onion farms. This technique allows onions to be preserved for up to six months, whereas the use of chemical fertilizers can lead to the loss of 50% of the production after only one month. Thus, the productivity and income of farmers increase. Cereal banks allow grain to be stored for six months and sold during the lean season, which helps to strengthen the resilience of the population to drought.

Finally, women farmers are trained in the production of forestry plans that are used to reforest and protect fields against floods and wind. This also allows the production of firewood and drilling for animals.

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Watch the replay of the eMag #3



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Upcoming Events

Join us once a month on Thursdays from 3:00 to 4:15 PM CEST for a themed virtual meeting on climate change adaptation and mitigation in Africa, followed by an e-magazine to read through.



eMag #4
April 20

Financing for Loss and Damages and Adaptation

[Click here to register](#)



eMag #5
May 25

Sustainable Mobility and Transport

[Click here to register](#)



eMag #6
June 22

Circular Economy and Waste Management

[Click here to register](#)



eMag #7
July 20

Sustainable Urban Planning and Habitat

[Click here to register](#)



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