



Agroecology for Europe (AE4EU)

Towards the development of agroecology in Europe

Deliverable report D6.2 – Framework for a European network of agroecological LLs and RIs

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Executive summary

From early 2022, AE4EU partners embarked on a journey to create a European network in which many agroecology-related networks and associations were invited to participate in co-creating a common purpose and approach to help accelerate agroecological transformations in agriculture and the wider food systems. The journey began by first clarifying the purpose and scope of the network in order for it to be something that would originate from, and cater to, the needs of agroecological grassroots and farmer (representative) groups, and networks—where the energy and motivation for leading agroecological transformation is strongest—although their potential is not always harnessed as innovations and networks are fragmented. In becoming more connected to other major processes related to agroecological transitions in Europe (such as the current EU partnership on agroecology), their contribution and capacity to accelerate agroecological transformations in Europe will be strengthened.

To this end, a process of developing a European agroecology network of networks (NofN) was started. AE4EU partners first sketched contours of a framework to guide this development and then approached agroecological grassroots/farmer (representative) groups and networks at both the European level and country level to ask for feedback and invite them to join the journey of co-creating the network of networks. Since Spring 2022, around 30 representative groups and networks have indicated their interest in actively participating in the co-creation process or at least stay connected to its further development. The initial outlines of the framework as developed by AE4EU partners have gone through two rounds of interactive fine-tuning with participants. Key points of departure for the network were:

- 1) Support the collaboration and coordination of efforts aimed at transitioning to agroecology, allowing a space where everyone can communicate to avoid duplication of efforts and create synergies;
- 2) Connect the ideas, needs, interests, etc. of farmer groups and grassroots movements, and co-create the NofN with them (that is where we think AE4EU can in particular be complementary/contributing);
- 3) Seek to be complementary to existing projects and networks and connect to what is going on in e.g. the EU agroecology partnership process and the sister CSA project ALL-Ready;
- 4) Support agroecological transformations of European agriculture as well as of wider food systems by expanding agroecology as a practice, as well as by influencing, inspiring, informing mainstream agriculture and food systems.

The first ideas on the added value/role of the NofN, considering that it should add value to the capacity that is already there, were: 1) Coordination: connecting networks and tuning of activities; 2) Knowledge exchange – inspiration; 3) Connecting farmers, research, NGO’s, youth and citizens, education and training; 4) Enhance visibility of agroecology practices through e.g., lobbying, research based on farmers’ needs; 5) Benefit from increased interest in and funding for agroecology such as in relation to the EU agroecology partnership, and 6) Connecting agroecology to food systems perspectives and programmes.

From January 2023, what was initially called the NofN entered a new phase as it was launched (after a process of fine-tuning orientations with stakeholders) as the European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF) on January 26th, 2023. A conscious choice was made to connect this initiative to the contribution it is envisioned to make in relation to food system transformations.

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The launch event was attended by over 40 stakeholders representing a range of networks and initiatives from across Europe and was inspired by motivational presentations that represented perspectives on agroecology as science, practice, and movements from different parts of Europe. See Annex 2 for the programme with speakers.

This new phase of the NofN as ENAF also meant the start of a gradual handover process from AE4EU partners to those stakeholders who would become the founding members of a more formally established ENAF with a formal governance structure and formal membership. At the time that this deliverable was finished, this was still in process. The nearby future of ENAF will be shaped by three European agroecological networks and three national agroecological networks that represent Southern, Eastern, and Northwestern Europe. At the Agroecology Europe Forum 2023 (<https://www.agroecology-europe.org/agroecology-europe-forum-2023/>) the formal handover of ENAF from AE4EU to the founding members will take place, which will include a presentation of its governance and membership structure. From then on, it will be possible for the first time to become member of ENAF.

1. Introduction

The work under task 5.3 and task 6.1 of AE4EU have become rather intertwined since 2021. This, because AE4EU has sought to complement the work and developments done in relation to the EU partnership on agroecology and the earlier interactions with stakeholders of the sister project of ALL Ready¹, rather than to double up on what was already being covered. It meant that AE4EU developed two lines of contribution to enhancing opportunities for agroecological transformations of farming and food systems in Europe: 1) a course of action (roadmap) that would take more advantage of the capacities, motivations, and energies of grassroots agroecological movements and associations (which is currently not well represented in other EU-level initiatives) and, 2) a (co-created) network of agroecological networks and associations spanning across all parts of Europe, which has become the European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF) that is currently in the process of formal establishment. Both lines of contribution, however, are closely connected. In this deliverable, we focus on the second line of contribution, which is on how ENAF came into being, how it has tentatively been orientated and how it is meant to be taken into the future by a group of co-founders, and what it is meant to contribute to agroecological transformations of farming and food systems in Europe. In deliverable 5.5², we focus on that first line of contribution, which corresponds to the course of action framed as a complementary road map for agroecology in Europe. ENAF features in that roadmap perspective, but it is there only a part of a bigger picture of opportunities for strengthening opportunities for agroecological transformations of farming and food systems.

The focus of both tasks is what we have rephrased as “a European network for Agroecological transformation of agriculture and the food systems”. In other words, an architecture, an ecosystem, or a constellation with multiple functions, including Living Labs (LLs) and Research Infrastructures (RIs), that is ready and effective to support the agroecological transformation of agriculture and food systems. The architecture of this network needs to be such that it is, amongst others, strategic and appropriate. Leading to key questions to address such as “What characteristics of the network would provide the best way to see such transformation take place?” and “How does it cater desirably for context specific conditions, interests, and preferences?”.

¹ <https://www.all-ready-project.eu/>

² <https://zenodo.org/communities/ae4eu/?page=1&size=20>

Introduction

The establishment of ENAF benefits from the various strands of work undertaken by the different AE4EU work packages as we will discuss later.

The AE4EU project acknowledges that there is a whole range of agroecology initiatives across Europe (both in research and in practice) but that there is a lack of progress in the further uptake and upscaling of these initiatives. The establishment of ENAF is meant to give a boost to such scaling processes. The main strategy to achieve this is not by doing something ‘completely new’ but by seeking to improve the efficacy and effectiveness of the variety of existing initiatives by improving the interaction and joint learning between them. We see this as an attempt to build a new network that connects a wide variety of existing networks.

In this document, we present the history, orientation and tentative setup of ENAF. In order to do so, in chapter 2 we present the methodological approach and stakeholder engagement strategy for the co-creation process towards what is now known as ENAF. In chapter 3, we present the principles and approach which guided the direction in which that co-creation was orientated. In chapter 4, we further elaborate on the formation and co-creation process. Chapter 5 presents initial outlines of what was known as NoN at the time, which was the stepping stone toward the formation of ENAF. Chapter 6 presents the current state of affairs regarding ENAF and what are anticipated next steps, which is the conclusion of this report.

This document is also meant as guidance as ENAF enters a new phase after AE4EU finishes because it presents the various thoughts and ideas shared and discussed during the initial stages of NofN and then later during and shortly after the launch of ENAF.

2. Methodology and stakeholder involvement

The following methodology and stakeholder involvement process followed since late 2021. It was considered essential that agroecology practitioners and researchers across Europe feel committed to and engaged with this new network. Consequently, to support the development of ownership among agroecological networks and associations in Europe, it was decided to engage these actors early in the process and several of them have already been invited to take part in the various activities that will be carried out in the AE4EU project. This chapter elaborates on the interactive processes that were part of ENAF’s history up till late 2023.

2.1. Methodology followed in the co-creation process of ENAF

The following presents the methodology that guided the co-creation process of ENAF. The steps discussed are not neatly distinguished and have a certain level of overlap (Figure 2). They were also not preconceived as steps to be taken, but were defined in retrospect as the methodology gradually evolved and was adapted from time to time to stay in line with the envisaged principles for the stakeholder engagement process.

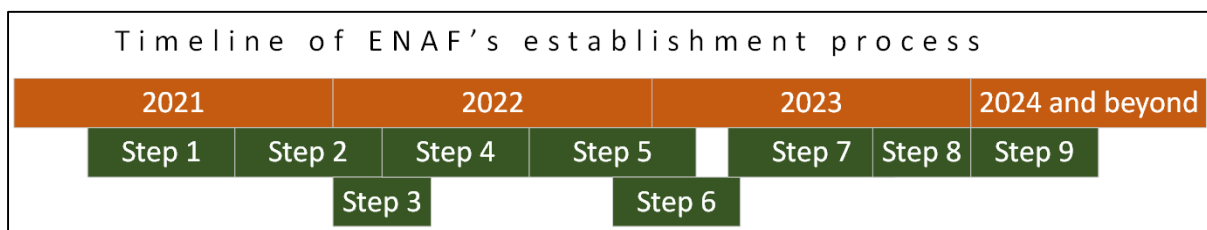


Figure 2: Summary of the steps on a roadmap and EU agroecology strategy building timeline

The steps were guided by three points of departure:

- ENAF will accept workable difference in specific approaches to agroecology so as not to be kept busy by, e.g., definition matters. This will allow for engaging with a broader set of stakeholders.
- This is about a network of networks (Figure 4), in other words, not a network of organisations in general so as to prevent competing with existing networks but rather enhance their capacity by forging connections and exchange, and future collaboration.
- ENAF will develop an appropriate outward connectivity with relevant actors at European level to position it appropriately in relation to initiatives such as the EU agroecology partnership development processes, the EU

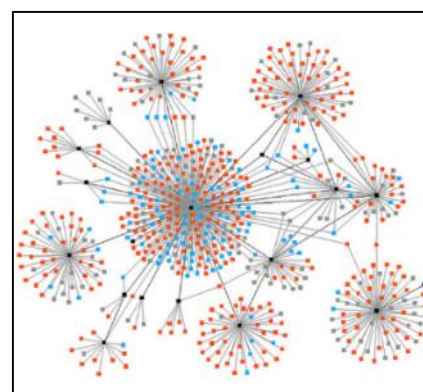


Figure 4: Towards not just a network, but a network of networks

Methodology and stakeholder involvement

partnership on sustainable food systems, and other relevant EU initiatives (e.g. the Soil Mission). This is to seek to contribute appropriately to these EU programmes, in particular the one on agroecology. Also, and specifically, it will fine-tune developments with the ALL-Ready project, ideally involving them throughout the ENAF co-creation process (they already participated in different meetings). At the same time, ENAF will not limit itself to these connections, but will also develop appropriate further connectivity with agroecology related initiatives and actors.

What the nine steps involved

Step 1: Exploration by the AE4EU core team of ways in which agroecological transitions in agriculture and the wider food systems in Europe could take place and what would need to be taken into account.

Step 2: Based on that exploration, design of a process to build a European network on agroecology that will help accelerate the transitions to sustainable agriculture and food systems. This was done in consultation with the wider team of AE4EU partners.

Step 3: Make a start with that process by approaching the envisaged key partners outside AE4EU to test the appropriateness and attractiveness of the ideas with them and make adjustments where needed and by consulting these key partners identify gaps that limit the transition processes at European level, and specific needs and interests of key partners in building a European network.

Step 4: Implementation of a co-creation process of what came to be referred to as an EU Agroecology NofN (Figure 4) with a group of (at the start) about 30 European organisations and initiatives. This start-up took place in March 2022.

Step 5: Continuation of co-creating the NofN through an organic process in which participants outside AE4EU are invited to take active roles. This includes fine-tuning developments with processes related to the envisaged EU agroecology partnership and the CSA project ALL-Ready (Figure 3).

Step 6: The preparations for and organisation of the launch event for the European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF).

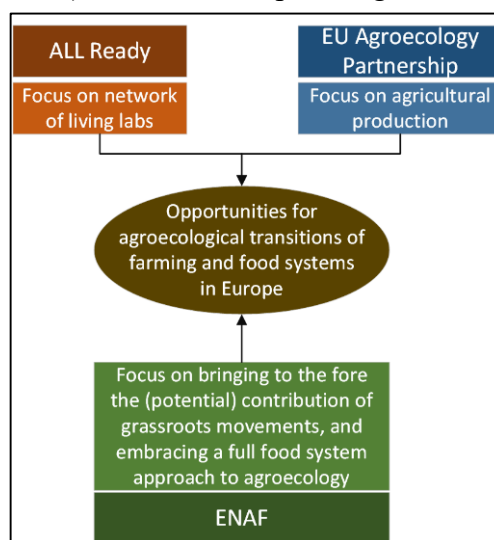


Figure 3: ENAF envisaged as complementary initiative to other Europe-level initiatives on agroecology.

Step 7: The explorations, discussions and negotiations related to the envisaged handover of ENAF to a group of founding members.

Step 8: The actual handover of ENAF from AE4EU to those networks and associations that will take it into the future.

Step 9: The start of ENAF after AE4EU has handed over all responsibilities to the founding members.

2.2. Stakeholder engagement strategy

After initial explorations of what an appropriate roadmap may look like, a range of stakeholders were approached (in different countries as well as European-level representative organisations). Figure 5 illustrates the process of engaging stakeholders (from now on participants) in the process of co-creating what was first called NofN and now ENAF.

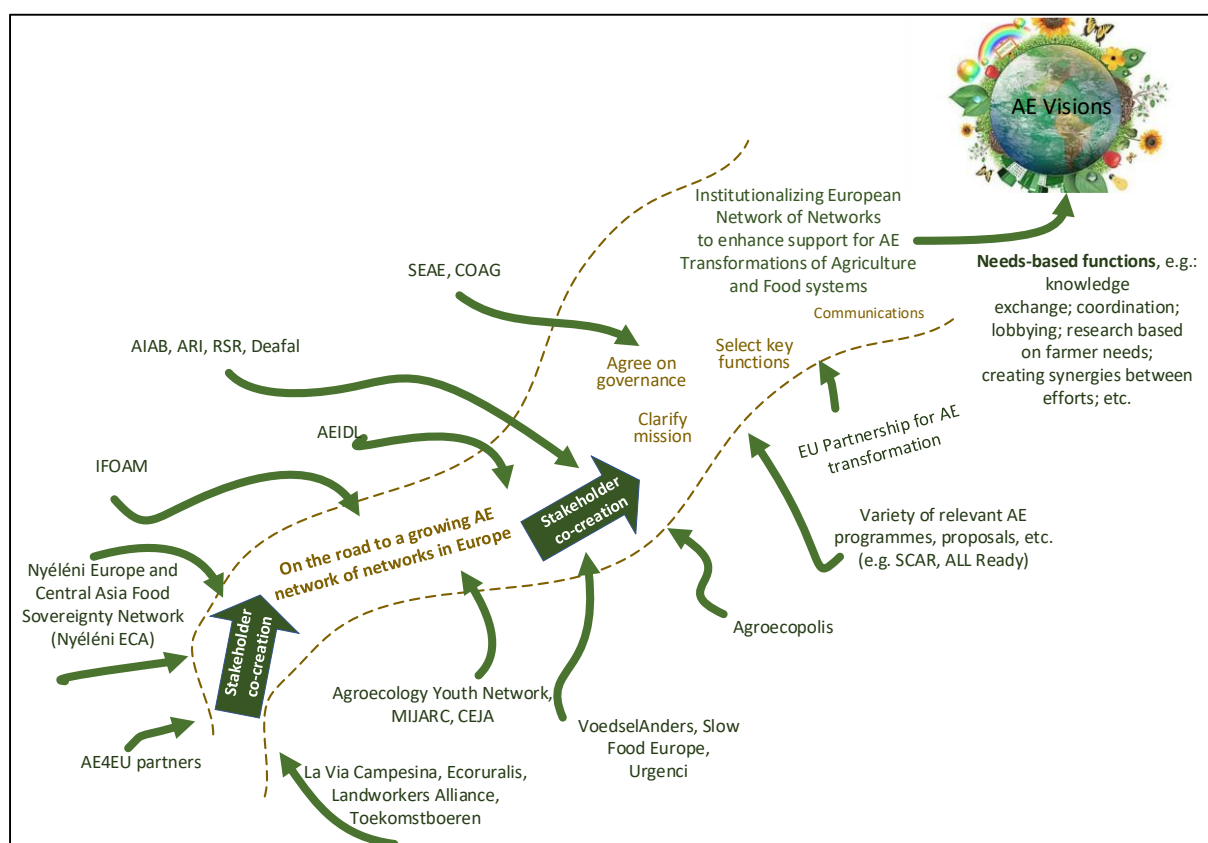


Figure 5: Participating groups work together on the road to growing an agroecology network of networks in Europe.

The stakeholder engagement strategy towards the establishment of ENAF involved five phases.

1. December 2021-January 2022: Exploration as AE4EU partners what type of stakeholders would be appropriate to test the general idea of the NofN with, and based

on that decide who to invite for a first ‘testing the waters’ meeting to receive feedback on whether or not to proceed with this idea. The general idea is to ‘cast the net wide’, but clearly link, at least in the first stages, to representatives of networks who embrace the range of agroecological principles at a practical level and in particular link to grassroots/farmer organisation representatives.

2. February-March 2022: Contact selected stakeholders, get their feedback through individual and informal talks, and have the first ‘testing the waters’ meeting. To include meeting with ALL-Ready to check how they feel about the idea and how they view complementarity between what they do and what AE4EU is doing.
3. April-November 2022: Seeing NofN grow organically, inviting initial participants to suggest who else to invite, and keep doing so to ensure that – although NofN will have a particular orientation and nature of interaction – it remains sufficiently open to gradually also include participants from different countries and different sectors (notably to include value chain actors). As NofN contours become clearer in terms of descriptions regarding how it will function, who is to be part of it, etc., the initial stakeholder engagement approach will be revisited in discussion with initial participants.
4. November-February 2023: Preparations for the launch of the European Network for Agroecological Food systems as follow-up on the NofN co-creation processes. This involved the circulation of a draft starting document and receiving feedback on it, and the organisation of the launch event on January 26th, 2023. During the launch event, stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide further advice on appropriate next steps for ENAF.
5. February-November 2023: After the successful launch of ENAF, the difficult process of seeking founding members to take ENAF into the future beyond the lifespan of the AE4EU project. It was key to first find such founding members before further developing the contours of ENAF in terms of governance, membership structure, etc. so that they would be in the driver’s seat. Since it was soon identified that it would be a group of founding members that would take ENAF into the future (as it was considered inappropriate that only one member would take the lead), it also involved the facilitation of a process of relationship building and ‘getting on the same page’ as co-founders. This is expected to be firmly established by the time the formal handover of ENAF from AE4EU to its founding members is planned for at the Agroecology Europe Forum in Hungary in November 2023.



3. Towards a European network on agroecology – principles and approaches (step 1-3)

In this chapter, we summarise a number of initial framework ideas for the network that we developed interactively with AE4EU partners. In chapter 4, we will then describe how we built on this to further develop the framework dimensions with wider participants in the ENAF co-creation process.

3.1. Strategically positioning ENAF

Our reference point for the aspired future state of the European network for agroecological transformation of agriculture and food systems will be an integrated perspective of agroecology as food system approach. To allow Europe to benefit from the full breadth of what agroecology has to offer, in terms of science, practice, and movement.

To achieve this, we are interested in any move in that direction, including certain conventional farmers who are only just starting to apply some of the agroecology principles and practices. The network will need to be able to cater to this. Supporting conventional farmers, for example, will require a different approach than is needed for supporting organic farms or supporting movements in specific agroecological territories. Furthermore, it will also need to be able to cater to differences between (countries) situations ranging from differences in soils and climates to differences in culture, history, and local preferences. There are various ways in which this can be illustrated. One is through a multi-level perspective (Figure 6).

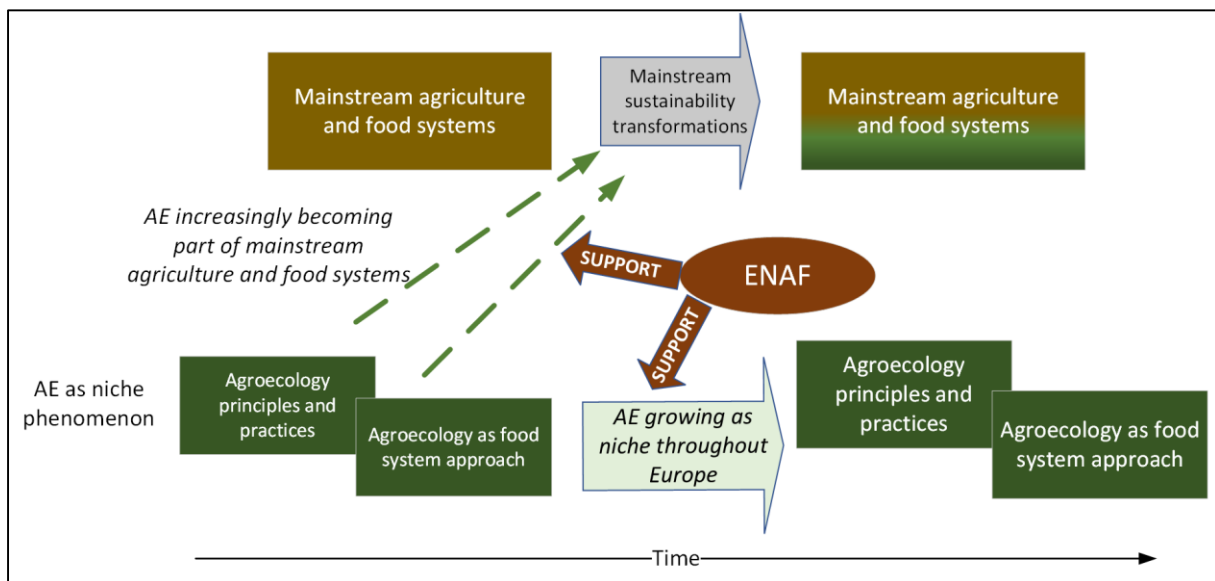


Figure 6: The intended contribution of ENAF in a multi-level perspective (MLP) on sustainability transitions



Towards a European network on agroecology – principles and approaches (step 1-3)

This figure illustrates the intended role of ENAF in both helping agroecology (as science, practice, and movement) grow as a niche, and, supported by agroecology as a growing niche, in increasingly influencing and reshaping mainstream farming and food systems in Europe.

The network could be set up in many different ways. We chose to apply a particular orientation which sets it apart from similar initiatives. Figure 7 illustrates the complementary role of ENAF in relation to other European initiatives related to agroecology. Many of these initiatives merely seek to *adapt* current farming systems (agriculture focus), and are not orientated towards a *transformative* food systems perspectives, which ENAF is.

An overarching European **network** to support agroecological transformations of agriculture and food systems needs to consist of diverse actors involved in agricultural and food systems, such as representatives of national and European farmers organisations, researchers, officials at ministries of agriculture, supply chains and processing, representatives of small-scale food producers organisations, movements, and national agroecology networks and other related civil society stakeholders. We chose to focus on farmers organisations, including agroecological farmers organisations as well as organisations interested in agroecological transformations.

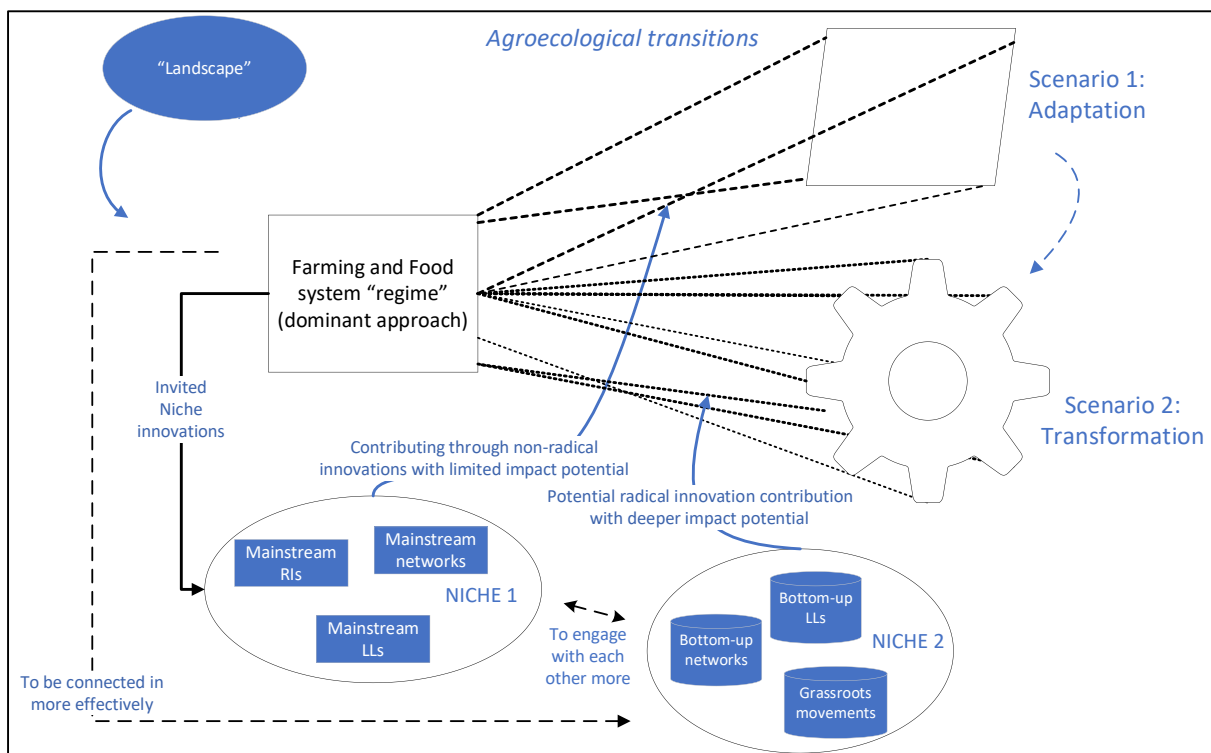


Figure 7: ENAF is orientated towards enabling agroecological transformations, not mere adaptations of current mainstream farming and food systems

Essentially, this figure is meant to illustrate that there are different approaches to agroecological transitions around. Often, it is interpreted as only pertaining to agricultural

Towards a European network on agroecology – principles and approaches (step 1-3)

production, without addressing the food system as a whole, and pertaining to more *adaptation* than *transformation*. ENAF takes the whole food system into account (hence “for agroecological food systems”) and is meant to contribute not merely to adaptation, but to transformation of farming and food systems in Europe.

There are already many great examples of agroecology, at the farm level, at the level of farmer-citizen collaborations, and at the level of agroecology territories/landscapes (see Wezel et al. 2023). They have a potential of inspiring change in other places but they also have a dynamic of their own which may remain more of a niche-level endeavour or a constellation of niches. Much can be won by strengthening such niche-level dynamics. At the same time, we would like to see agroecology principles becoming guiding principles, even in conventional agriculture. This is more of a regime-level dynamic. It may not go (quickly) as deep into agroecology as niche dynamics do, but it does contribute to agroecology becoming more defining for agriculture and food systems at large.

This approach is in line with Anderson et al. (2019) who suggest that agroecological transformation reflects not one grand theory of change, but a recognition of a co-evolutionary and adaptive approach that involves, “multiple transformations that will intersect, overlap, and conflict in unpredictable ways”.³

The European network will engage with such dynamics. In terms of time frames, this network is meant to become fully functional and effective within the next few years. It is meant to contribute to seeing visions of European agriculture and food systems being transformed through agroecology principles and practices increasingly becoming a reality as we move closer to 2030 and beyond.

3.2. Initial working principles & premises for the network

The following principles and premises were identified in the early stages of this WP, and were later revisited when engaging with broader (beyond AE4EU) participants in the network of networks.

1. Thinking in terms of a NofN_ rather than in terms of one grand, centrally governed, network. Seeking to enhance smart connectivity (see Figure 8). This will involve establishing connectivity at European level, at

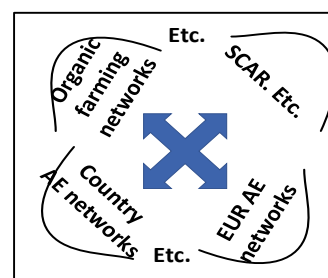


Figure 8: Illustrating the idea of establishing smart connectivity in a European agroecology network of networks.

³ Anderson, et al. (2019).

Towards a European network on agroecology – principles and approaches (step 1-3)

national/local level, and on the interfaces of different levels (mutually strengthening). Enabling/facilitating connections of networks (can be also sub-level collaboration of only some already existing networks) will be a key for achieving this. An overarching network could support existing networks in acquiring new EU funds for agroecological transformations.

- In taking the network of networks forward, we consider agroecology as an integrated food system approach (Figure 9). This means it will be important to be informed about developments of the SCAR sustainable food systems partnership proposal and to include territory/landscape level expressions of agroecology principles.

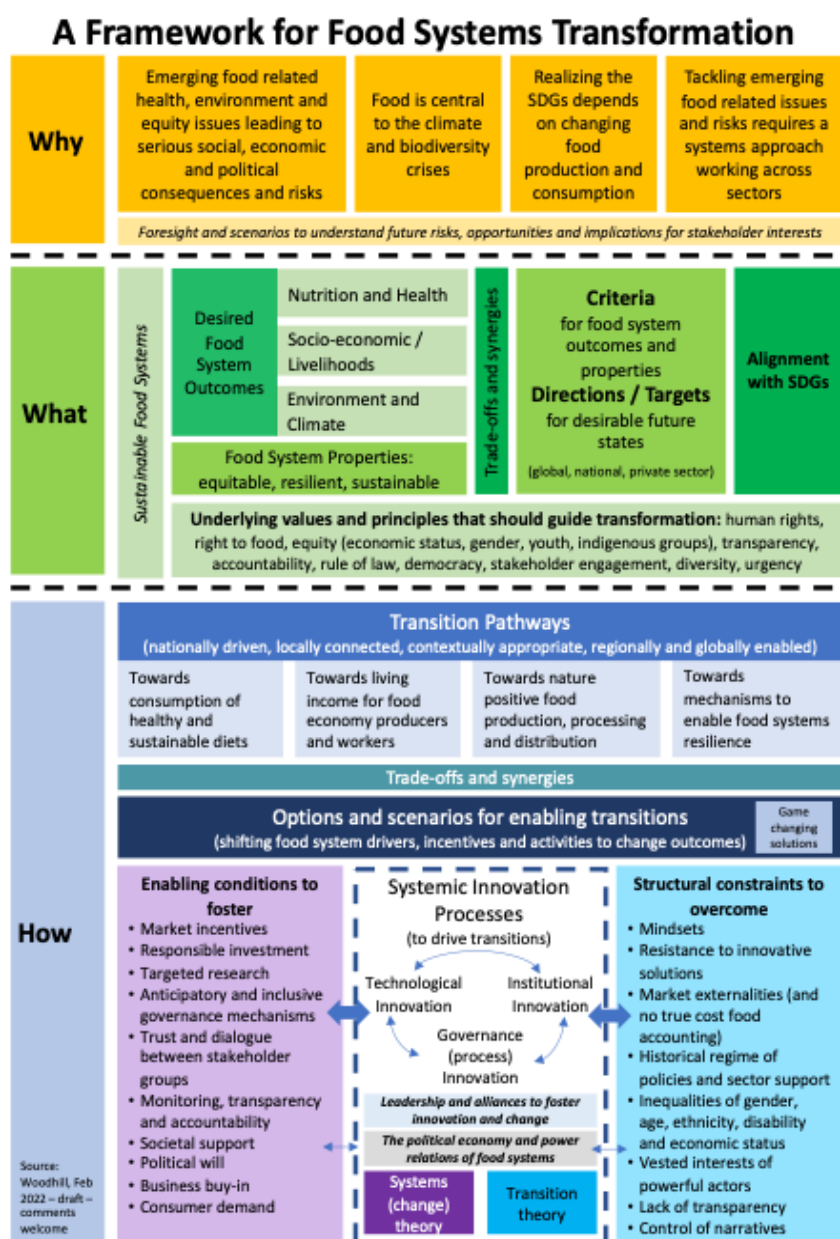


Figure 9: A food systems approach to agroecology as ENAF stands for, pertains to all elements of a food system perspective. Source illustration: Woodhill, J. , 2023

3. The SCAR agroecology proposal and other agroecology related policy endeavours need to be taken on board and connected to, but we will not limit ourselves to the focus and scope of that. That includes not limiting the scope to (project-type) LLs and RIs in terms of what the network will encompass, and taking a broader perspective towards all entities that can play a role in the agroecological transformation of European agriculture and the food systems.
4. Specifically involve existing (bottom up) organised agroecology networks at European and national level networks such as Agroecology Europe⁴, Via Campesina Europe⁵, Urgenci⁶ and ARC⁷, in exploring and defining the contents of steps to be taken, besides other key representatives from research and policy circles. This may be framed as informing the vision from both the ‘bottom up’ and the ‘top down’, without compromising the bottom-up perspectives in the integration, as well as using/linking to existing support structures at EU level such as thematic groups of EIP-Agri.
5. Agroecology principles (Figure 10) not only need to inform visions, but also need to guide the very processes of defining visions, pathways, i.e. how this is done, who is involved, etc. This also means that the structure and tasks of the overarching network will be developed together with stakeholders and specific farmer representatives and not more or less fixed beforehand by researchers. It also means an appropriate focus on scaling the application of agroecology principles, not on scaling the applications of standard agroecology practices (so-called ‘solutions’). E.g. intercropping is a great practice, but it is most of all the principles underpinning the practices of intercropping that need to be applied more widely, not necessarily intercropping as such. It includes appropriately catering to needs to contextualise (e.g. in different countries/regions, different types of actors), shying away from scaling silver bullets and one-size-fits-all approaches, but also thinking in terms of scaling diversity. In other words, scaling the application of agroecology principles and not of agroecological (standard) ‘solutions’.
6. The network will be tuned to supporting the full range of farmers from agroecology aficionados to conventional farmers taking first/small steps in relation to agroecology. In other words, anyone who wants to take steps in the expressing agroecology principles more in their practices. The network will not only be about supporting farmers though. Many other actors (e.g. in value chain, policy, etc.) have

⁴ <https://www.agroecology-europe.org/>

⁵ <https://www.eurovia.org/>

⁶ <https://urgenci.net/>

⁷ <https://agroecologyresearchaction.org/>

Towards a European network on agroecology – principles and approaches (step 1-3)

a role to play as well in making agroecology-based agriculture and food systems possible. The network needs to connect to them as well.

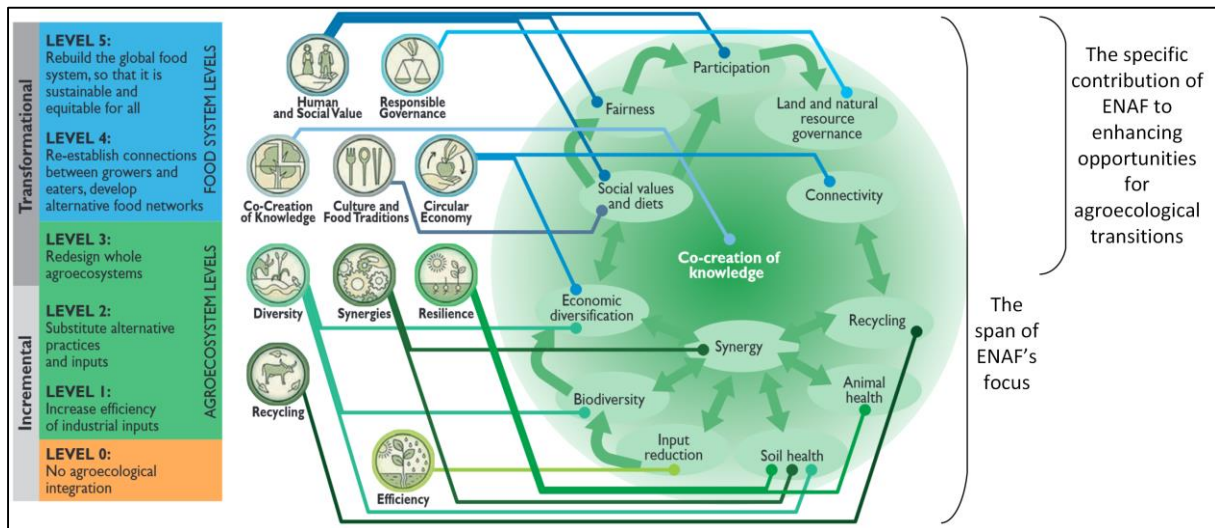


Figure 10: The five levels of food systems transformation and related elements and principles of agroecology. Source: Agropolis International, 2021 (who partly adapted material from Wezel et al. 2020).

Building on shared concepts in agroecology

A NofN will need common ground for envisaged participants in it, so that they can be in it together. What is agroecology? Several definitions have been proposed and a variety of properties are being discussed and proposed. Many things related to agroecology are a point for discussion. However, there are also a number of things to which most people actively involved in agroecological practice and theory would agree upon. Among this are notably the 13 agroecology principles (HLPE, 2019), the 10 elements designed by the FAO, the five levels of transition to sustainable food systems (Gliessman, 2007), as well the Nyéléni Declaration⁸ which focuses on food sovereignty (see Figure 5). It will be important to activate such principles and premises in the network of network setup and functioning. It is also a value of the network, that these things can be discussed and agroecology can be made more concrete for the wider public.

The NofN is not meant to become some grand scheme, but something more along the lines of relating to a ‘mosaic’ of connected agroecology networks and representative organisation in which there is room for diversity whilst all subscribing to a set of core principles and premises.

⁸ <https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>

Cross-level and cross-sector connectivity

Realities between European countries are diverse, and also within these countries there is variation. Hence, the realities in which agroecological transitions are meant to take place, are diverse. This relates to different types of diversity: social/gender diversity, cultural diversity, climate and soil diversity, sector diversity, etc. Existing networks already represent such different focus areas. The NofN will need to go further than that by bridging such diversities, which will be challenging. In its development, it will therefore need to connect to a variety of perspectives, from both local, country, and European-level, from men and women, youth (in particular) and older people, from a range of food system actors, from both the “agroecology converted” and from conventional farming. However, in connecting to actors in conventional farming, ENAF will remain rooted in an integrated approach based on core values and principles of agroecology.

3.3. Potential differentiation in terms of spheres of influence

It may be appropriate to differentiate between different ‘audiences’ and participants in orientating the NofN. The core of the network could consist of the initiators, who are the grassroots/farmer (representative) networks at European and country level who are already involved (see Deliverable 5.3 for a brief indication of who they are). They would form the momentum that provides the continuing energy and motivation for agroecological transformations. The NofN would then first of all cater to their needs, or, rather, enhance their capacities (including connections) to be able to play a pivotal role in European transformations to agroecology.

The second sphere would be stakeholders interested in agroecology principles and practices, but with some reservations as regards some parts of it. Living labs and collaborative research efforts could be a key way of harnessing the potential for agroecological transformations emerging in that group of stakeholders.

Thirdly, there is the sphere of some stakeholders of conventional agriculture which is largely resistant to seriously transforming its practices. Rather than giving up on them, it will be critical to entice them to consider, at an appropriate scale, the application of some of the agroecology principles. This may work best by offering them opportunities to see how this works out in practice. It will require appropriate communication which is not judgemental, but rather inviting and attractive to their needs and challenges. This perspective is illustrated in Figure 11.

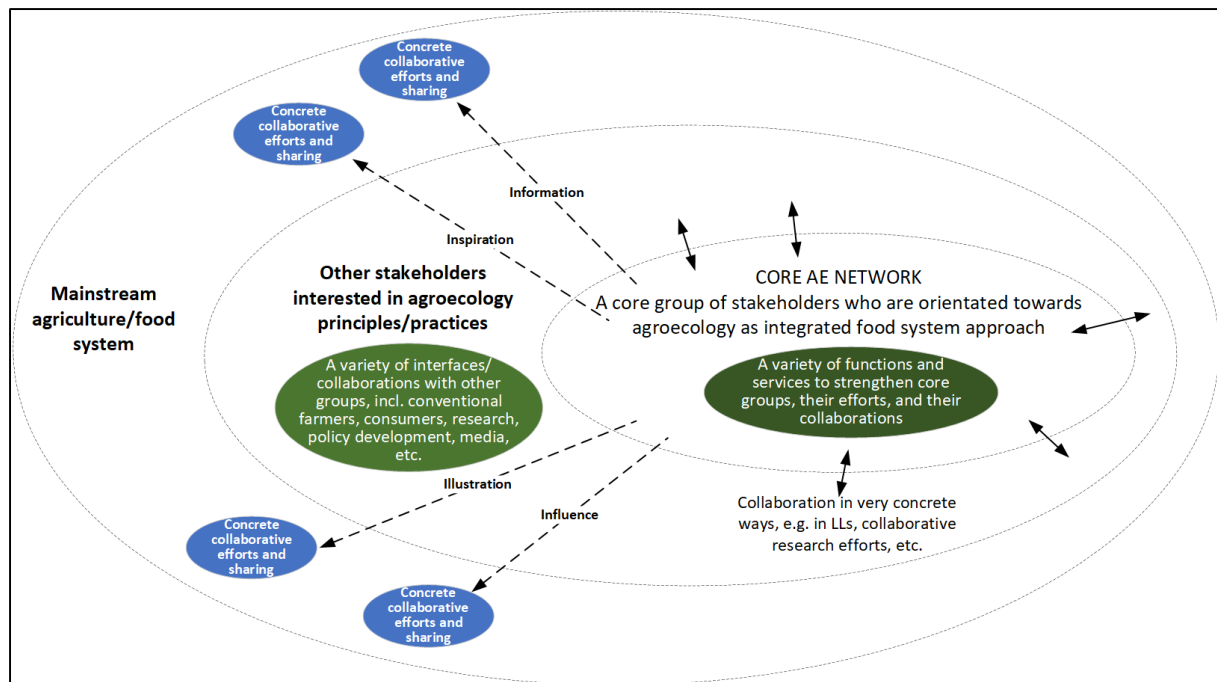


Figure 11: Differentiated potential roles of the network of networks

3.4. Agroecology as a family of approaches on sustainable farming and food

There is a great deal of activity at the national and European level regarding transitions to agroecology, both related to agriculture and to wider food systems. A variety of different groups and initiatives approach this from different, often complementary, angles. This involves grassroots movements and farmer organisations, research institutions, policy makers, private sector, and many more. Some articulate their approach as agroecology in so many words, and others articulate their approach along the lines of e.g. organic farming, agroforestry, regenerative farming etc. (see e.g. Vermunt et al. (2021) for a comparison of the approaches).

Agroecology may be presented as an umbrella for a range of approaches related to sustainable agriculture, not as an additional name. The process of co-creating the NofN may be a good opportunity to present it in this way.

Thinking in terms of family as analogy, “Agroecology” would then be the last/family name in terms of a food systems approach, and, for example, “organic farming” is one of the many first names. The “last name” indicates what the approaches have in common, or, rather, what they all connect to, and the first name indicates its specific own identity. Agroecology is about a food systems approach, and organic farming covers a particular dimension of that approach (but not the entire food system).

Towards a European network on agroecology – principles and approaches (step 1-3)

A particular farm may involve a combination of different approaches, e.g. by being focused on both nature-inclusiveness, organic production, and being community-supported.

In this way, it may help to make clearer how “agroecology” adds value to all the other existing concepts such as organic farming. As the Saying goes "It helps to see the trees as well as the forest". In other words, it helps to communicate better to wider audiences what the various approaches have in common, how they complement each other, and how together they represent specific expressions of a bigger picture of sustainable food systems (Figure 12). It

also emphasizes how agroecology is not about a one-size-fits-all approach, but about contextualized and customized approaches which share a common ground and overarching approach (the family name) and are motivated by similar aspired futures. So agroecology as an overarching concept of a range of specific approaches that each put an emphasis on particular dimensions, but together are complementary in spanning the width of agroecology as food system approach. ENAF may be a suitable vehicle for this (Figure 13).

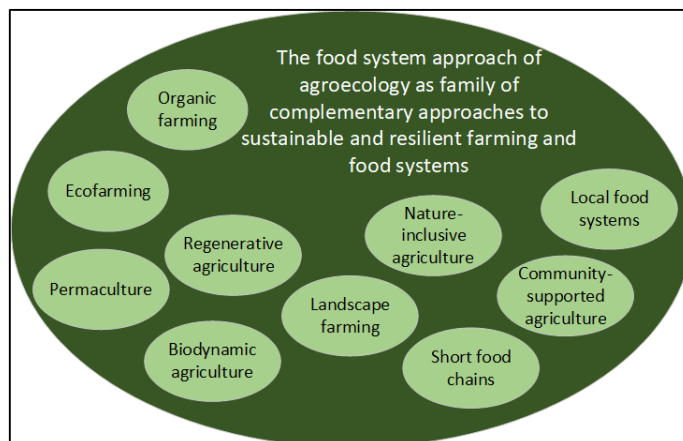


Figure 12: Agroecology as a family of complementary approaches (also see Tittone et al. 2022).



Towards a European network on agroecology – principles and approaches (step 1-3)

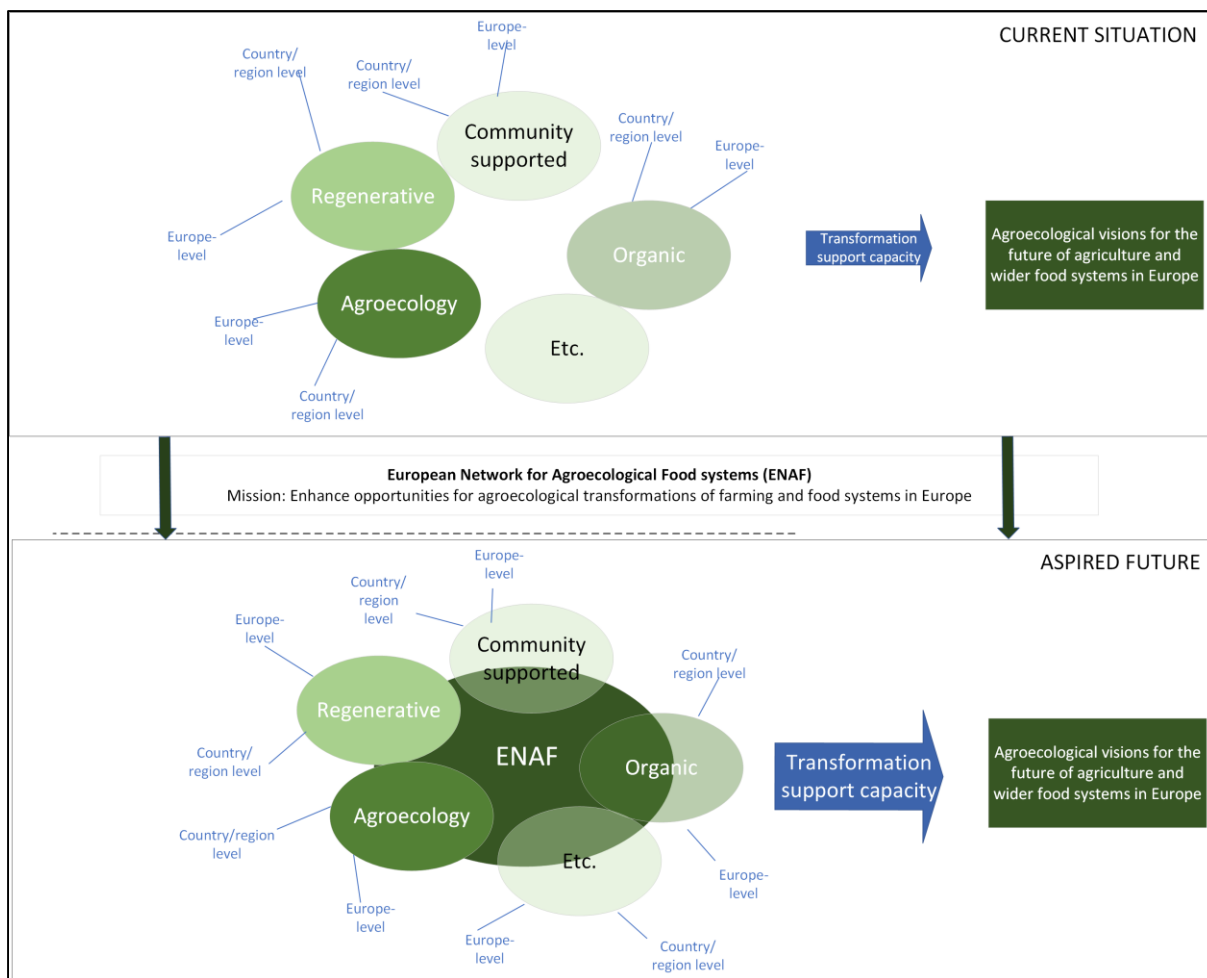


Figure 13: Illustrating ENAF’s mission to enhance opportunities for agroecological transformations of farming and food systems

4. The formation and co-creation process of ENAF (step 4-5)

“A network’s potential to initiate change is linked to the mix and relationships of actors and their respective professional ties; networks can bring together countries, political levels, and disciplines, overcome boundaries and implement change with “the right people at the right time.” Vogel and Reiners, 2022.

In the process of interacting with participants in the co-creation process of the network of networks, we refined a number of key considerations which we describe in the following.

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4.1. Stakeholder perspectives on what should inform ENAF’s orientation

They provided their initial views on what a roadmap and the NofN that it should help establish, should link to. We summarise these in the following.

In terms of challenges and concerns, the following was suggested:

- There is a disconnect between bottom up initiatives and top down policies/funding;
- Influencing mainstream agriculture through agroecology, remains challenging;
- There is a disconnect between a focus on agriculture production and wider food system perspective;
- There are different views on agroecology and there is the risk of “green washing” because it is used for many different approaches;
- There is limited visibility and capacity and coordination regarding efforts to see the application of agroecological principles and practices go to scale;
- There are different organisational cultures – e.g. younger generations do this differently, and they communicate through media that older generations not always do;
- Too much in terms of programmes on agroecology is in the hands of researchers and policy makers;
- There is a need for training and education on agroecology.

In terms of ambition, ENAF should be set up in such a way that it would:

- Strengthen agroecological transformative capacity in Europe;
- Depart from a holistic approach: agroecology as food system approach;
- Be based on Nyeleni declaration and elements/principles of agroecology by FAO/HLPE;

The formation and co-creation process of ENAF (step 4-5)

- Be based on and linking existing “bottom up” networks as core;
- Link farmers-research-NGO’s-citizens-policies;
- Increase visibility of agroecology application and transformation efforts; Increase capacity and coordination of efforts related to agroecological transformations.

Figure 14 illustrates aspects to be considered in relation to an appropriate network governance setup, which is not the same as organisational governance.

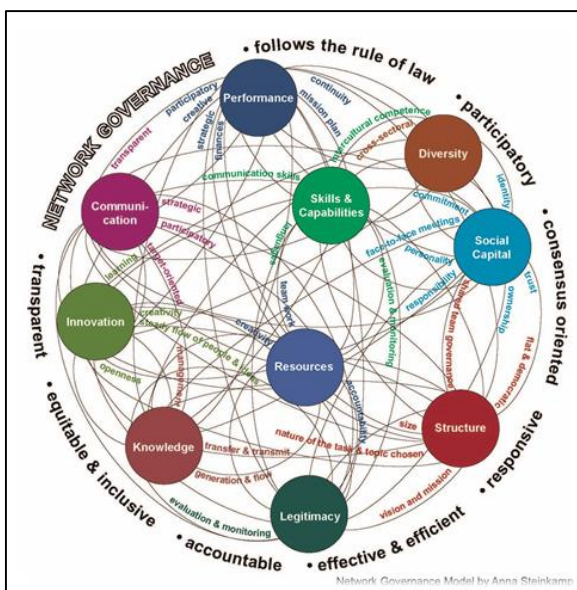


Figure 14: Source: Network Governance Model by Anna Steinkamp

4.2. Translating stakeholder perspectives into a mission for ENAF

Key points of departure for the network were:

- Support the collaboration and coordination of efforts aimed at transitioning to agroecology;
- Connect the ideas, needs, interests, etc. of farmer groups and grassroots movements, and co-create the NofN with them (that is where we think AE4EU can in particular be complementary/contributing);
- Be complementary to existing projects and networks and connect to what is going on in e.g. the agroecology partnership process and ALL-Ready;
- Support agroecological transformations of European agriculture as well as of wider food systems through
 - expanding agroecology as a practice, as well as
 - influencing, inspiring, informing mainstream agriculture and food systems.

First ideas on the potential value/role of network of networks, considering that it should add value to capacity that is already there:

- Coordination: connecting networks and tuning of activities
- Knowledge exchange – Inspiration
- Connecting farmers, research, NGO’s, youth and citizens, education and training
- Enhance visibility of agroecology practices

The formation and co-creation process of ENAF (step 4-5)

- Lobbying
- Research based on farmers’ needs
- Benefit from increased interest in and funding for agroecology e.g. Partnerships
- Connecting agroecology and food system (in programs-partnerships and concrete activities)

4.3. Elaborating on framework dimensions

In exploring framework dimensions, the following key questions were explored

- How do we collaborate and connect with the EU partnerships on Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems?
- What is an appropriate definition of the core mission and related objectives?
- What would be an appropriate governance and organisation setup?
- What are to be key roles that the network would seek to play?
- How to ensure that agroecology remains high on the agenda within Farm-to-Fork also with social and ecological challenges such as the war in Ukraine?

Through an interactive workshop with participants in the co-creation process these aspects of the framework were further explored. The following describes initial thoughts expressed (Table 2).

Table 2: Tentative thoughts shared by participants in relation to key aspects of ENAF (at the time it was still known as NofN)

<p>1. Appropriately connecting to EU partnerships</p> <p><i>Background information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership is in the preparation phase. • EU agroecology partnership focuses on first 3 “Gliessman” levels of agroecology. • Food partnership explicitly mentions to focus on levels 4 and 5 of agroecology. Citizen engagement in re-oriented food systems is one of the themes. <p><i>First thoughts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is research and innovation. There will be research calls focusing on research infrastructures and Living Labs. • Research infrastructures are more research oriented focusing on datasets, long term experiments etc. Living labs seem to be the best and easiest entry point to connect to. • From the mapping exercise in WP1 of AE4EU, we see that it is difficult to find and identify LLs especially self-defined LLs. • We have the impression that many existing LL are not visible yet

- All Ready provided an overview of LL

Proposal for concrete actions

- Connect to both EU Partnerships (agroecology and sustainable food systems); indicate that Agroecology is the linkage between both partnerships and we identify innovative approaches integrating all 5 levels of agroecology.
- Identify LLs; describe network of LLs and show case them and connect them to the Partnerships
- Ask NGO's to identify interesting LLs and share knowledge
- Put on the agenda: Inclusiveness of agroecology practices: that agroecology is not only for the rich
- Put on the agenda: Representation of agroecology farmers: that agroecology farmers should have a position in future actions

2. Appropriate mission, ambition and objectives

Challenges for agroecology adoption

To identify potential objectives for the NofN we first discussed a number of challenges for stimulating the wider adoption of agroecology principles. These included:

- **Assessment:** How to assess and identify good and well-functioning agroecology practices, i.e. practices that are ecologically sound, effectively produce food and provide a good livelihood for the farmer.
- **Linking 'agroecology frontrunners' and 'mainstream farmers':**
- **Knowledge transfer:** transfer knowledge on good agroecology practices from frontrunner farmers to mainstream farmers.
- **Promotion and demonstration:** create (better) visibility of good agroecology practices for the wider farming community
- **Ambition:** Agroecology has the ambition of a 'holistic' approach, addressing both the production and consumption side of food. Widespread use of agroecology principles therefore not only requires farmers to do things differently but requires wider societal change.
- **Ambivalent role of policy:** policies certainly play a role, both in stimulating or impeding agroecology uptake, but that role is not always clear and varies across EU member states.

Challenges for agroecology movements and networks

Given the challenges above, we identified several challenges that agroecology-oriented organisations face, including:

- The overall ambition is enormous, including overall societal change. Specific organisations can only address a small subset of the issues at stake.
- This is a challenge in terms of ‘knowledge’ (groups have only limited overview of what’s at stake) and ‘capacity’ (groups can only target a limited set of activities).
- The dynamic of change is not always well understood and it is not always clear what the levers are that make farmers change. Neither is it always clear how to assess the outcomes of change, i.e. how we can measure what constitute good agroecology practices. We are in need of an ‘operational toolbox’ that helps to assess this.
- Many organisations and networks have complimentary objectives and work on comparable things. This is useful since many developments have a local basis but also represents duplication of (parts of) activities. This in part represents a loss of efforts which is a shame given limited capacities of most groups.
- Groups across Europe can certainly learn more from each other but there are also limits to that due to differences in local circumstances. It is not always clear what is ‘general’ and what is ‘local’ in the dynamic and what groups can learn from each other.

Ambitions and objectives for the NofN

Given the two types of challenges above, the NofN could seek to address the following objectives:

- Address overarching knowledge issues that are relevant to various agroecology networks;
- Provide a platform to coordinate activities between various individual networks
- Provide a platform to coordinate interaction with policy-makers at the EU level (lobbying?)
- Combine efforts from various networks to develop an ‘operational toolbox to assess good agroecology practices’ as mentioned above.
- Provide a platform to coordinate linking with the EC partnerships for agroecology and sustainable food systems that are currently in the making. A strong NofN could provide a better basis to interact with those responsible for programs and funding within the framework of those platforms. One concrete activity, that would also be in the interest to these platforms, would be to develop an ‘operational toolbox’ as mentioned above.

3. Organisational setup and governance questions

One of the things shared from this group was that it is important that if NofN is about connecting networks, it is not about connecting individual organisations, and that further mapping of agroecology networks may be needed. And that it would be good to see how the different participants in NofN are connected with each other through various networks.

There was also the thought that NofN should not try to move to a strongly institutionalized form that would require all kinds of governance arrangements, but rather (at least initially) focus on strengthening social relationships, trust, synergies, etc.

4. Appropriate key roles and functions

It was difficult to think about roles and functions without also considering things like appropriate mission and governance. Because they are interdependent topics.

A variety of roles and functions can be considered but at least it should support country-level agroecology networks in e.g. the following ways:

- Provide access to knowledge, information, experiences, research outputs, which, amongst others, can help networks in their lobby/advocacy efforts at country level, but also to provide new ideas and concrete examples of opportunities.
- Pull together research ideas from farmers across Europe and bundle this towards relevant research topics to be followed up at European level (e.g. in project that link to the new EU partnerships).
- Organise exchange opportunities between country networks. In this way, they can learn from each other, also in very practical ways. E.g. UK experiences with farm fairs may provide useful ideas for organizing similar (adjusted to Polish context) events in Poland. It also serves to encourage each other and consider how networks can mutually support each other.
- Help connect these networks to Europe-level (funding) opportunities, and/or collaborative efforts at European level.
- Provide a kind of think tank/knowledge hub function to help address concrete questions/challenges from different networks. E.g. in Poland those interested in agroecology often reside in cities. How to connect people on the countryside more? Other countries and/or European organisations could help find ways forward. This can also be about how enhance cooperation between farmers.
- Meeting live once a year as representatives from various networks could be one of the things to be organized.

We only scratched the surface of exploring appropriate roles and functions of NofN, but there appeared to be plenty of scope for adding value to roles and functions that are already performed by existing groups/organisations/platforms.

5. Appropriately positioning in current developments

Food sovereignty and food autonomy gains attraction but with what definition? Worrying and optimistic. In situation of war, ecology is first put aside.

“It is difficult to import agrochemicals, this is also an opportunity for change. All inputs become more expensive. Price fertilizers very high because of fossil fuels. Also a lot of feed for livestock

coming from Ukraine. Now is the chance to promote agroecology, it can reduce dependency on external inputs.” It is also important to increase own seed base.

The following thoughts we mentioned in one of the meetings:

“Agroecology is a peacemaking tool. Agroecology doesn’t demand resources from elsewhere, breaks with neo-colonialism, extractivism.”

“Also explain why food becomes expensive, to include consumer, citizen perspective.”

“This requires reconceptualization of what is happening. This is a consequences of the current dominant system.”

“Concrete 1st action: input welcome on Paper on behalf of Agroecology Europe about changing situation in relation to war in Ukraine.”

4.4. Bringing in key insights from across AE4EU Work Packages

The establishment of ENAF could and can benefit from what various strands of work of the different work packages of AE4EU brought to the table.

WP1 provides key insights on what is happening across Europe in terms of agroecological endeavours, both LLs and RIs, and wider agroecological organisations and initiatives. This is meant to feed directly into the exploration of what the network of networks should encompass. WP2 provides key insights on the topic of living labs and their specific nature in comparison to other initiatives, as well as on research infrastructures. The NofN will need to link appropriately to these, and the insights will therefore inform the way in which activities will be set up. WP3 explores funding schemes and sources for agroecology. This will provide crucial insights for the NofN, especially in terms of opportunities for diversifying funding so that it can develop into truly continuous effort as European agroecology LLs. This is crucial since participants in the co-creation process have already indicated that relationships (building) will need to be at the heart of the network of networks, which means long-term engagement opportunities. WP4 gathers insights from country-level LLs which also deal with questions of developing as an agroecology network, but then at the country level. Such insights will inform e.g. ideas on governance of the network of networks. Furthermore, WP4 works on a European agroecology knowledge and practice exchange hub, which aligns closely to the NofN. This European agroecology exchange hub and the NofN will not be developed as two separate endeavours, but rather as being mutually supportive/complementary. WP5 helps to better understand policy dynamics in relation to agroecology in Europe. Though the NofN is meant to be built from the bottom up, it will be essential to connect appropriately and effectively to policy dynamics at Europe level, notably the development of the partnerships on agroecology and on sustainable food systems.

The formation and co-creation process of ENAF (step 4-5)

The various contributions and insights from the AE4EU work packages is presented as a synthesis in more detail in Deliverable 5.5.

4.5. Launching ENAF

On January 26th, the European Network for Agroecological Food Systems (ENAF), in the company of more than 40 esteemed colleagues and fellow associations.

A commitment was shared to activate the combined potential and capabilities of existing national and European networks to be able to contribute more effectively across sectors to agroecological transformations of farming and food systems in Europe, in a way that is bottom-up, transdisciplinary, and embraces all agroecological elements and principles.

The day began with the inspirational words of Professor Pablo Tittone who spoke of bringing agroecology from the niche to the mainstream, sharing with us experiences from Argentina. It included examples of collaboration between municipalities and local farmers which altered the food system in such a way where farmers received 60% of profits, which made it possible to not only sustain agroecological practices, but also to sell agroecological food at a price that is affordable for all. Today this model involves 22,334 families out of the 31,393 family farms that are established in Argentina.

Pablo also stressed that the transition needs to be just, with no farmers left behind or we risk a feedback loop that returns to conventional agriculture. This message was shared by the consortium within group discussions, as farmer involvement is seen to be of utmost importance in the future of ENAF, although the network is made up of associations, rather than individuals.

The event continued with Attila Szocs and Jesse Donham of AE Europe, who shared a conversation on the importance of more active involvement with Eastern European farmers. Within Eastern Europe there are over 10 million farmers, most of them peasant farmers who keep agroecology alive, making them vital components of any transition.

Attila stated that “through agroecology, we unite” and nothing could show this more than through the collaborations that have begun amongst Eastern European countries in response to the war in Ukraine. While Member States in the EU have used this moment to strip back environmental policy, such a crisis is showing the importance of food sovereignty and agroecology, since it is local peasant farmers that have stayed behind to feed the population when industrial agriculture left.

Klarien Kligen of the Dutch federation of agroecological farmers stressed the importance of creating a movement. She presented how the grassroot agroecological farmers’ organisations

The formation and co-creation process of ENAF (step 4-5)

joined forces and established the Dutch agroecological federation and how this expanded to the AE network with active participation of farmers, researchers and NGO's. This were important conditions to be recognised by policy makers and influence policies.

Finally, the Agroecology Europe Hub was presented as a key component of ENAF – a tool to connect agroecological farmers, researchers, students, policy-makers and funders by sharing content, information, news, stories, courses and living labs. This is meant to create connections all across Europe to guide the agroecological transition.

While ENAF was launched by AE4EU, its further establishment will take place through a co-creative process and related activities will be handed over to another founding member (yet to be identified) by the end of 2023. This process will be guided by two working groups which are open to any network representative that is interested.

More details on ENAF, its next steps, opportunities for joining, and outputs from the launch can be found on: <https://www.ae4eu.eu/european-network-for-agroecological-food-systems/>

See Annex 2 for a brief report on key insights that emerged through the launch event.

5. The initial outlines of co-created framework for ENAF (step 6-7)

5.1. General overview

In 2023, outlines for the framework have been in development as they emerge out of the interactive co-creation process with stakeholders. They relate to the following aspects of ENAF (and presented in the way they together shape ENAF in Figure 15):

1. Specifying and agree on various aspects of the ENAF in light of what would be most appropriate and effective for accelerating agroecological transformations of agriculture and wider food systems in Europe.

- a. Appropriate governance and organisational setup
- b. Appropriate focus on core roles and functions
- c. Appropriate connectivity to other initiatives and networks (notably the EU partnership development processes).

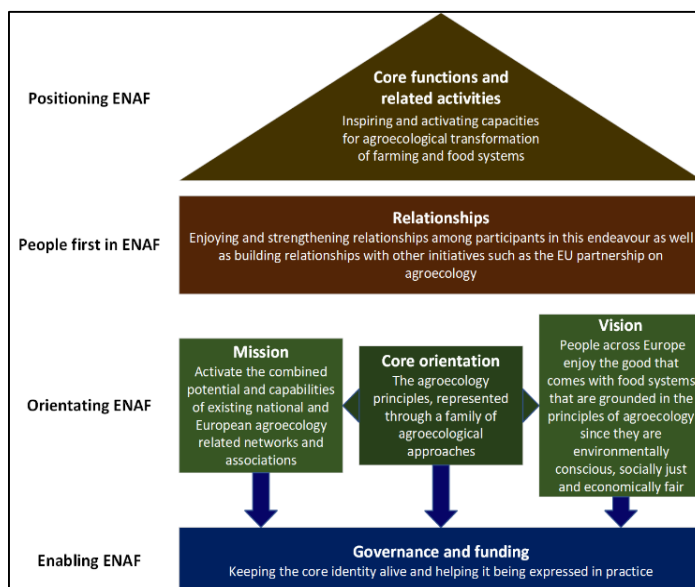


Figure 15: Building blocks in establishing ENAF

2. Identifying funding sources in line with ambitions of ENAF. This is not just about funding in general, but in line with its core purpose and principles for operation.
3. Identify who will host ENAF as well as what would be an appropriate governance structure for a long-term continuing effort.
4. Throughout the above processes, make optimal use of insights gather by the various work packages of AE4EU as well as from the collaboration with ALL-Ready.

This is based on an initial orientation of ENAF that was developed as part of the launch of ENAF in January 2023.

The initial outlines of co-created framework for ENAF (step 6-7)

5.2. ENAF essentials

Background

This document emerged from an interactive and co-creative process that took place in 2022 to create a ‘network of networks’ (NofN) to support agroecological transformations of European food systems (Figure 16). This was initiated by the Agroecology for Europe (AE4EU) project. Various networks and groups from across Europe participated in the initial meetings and workshops and it was widely recognised that NofN could play a key role in realising the potential of agroecology across Europe.

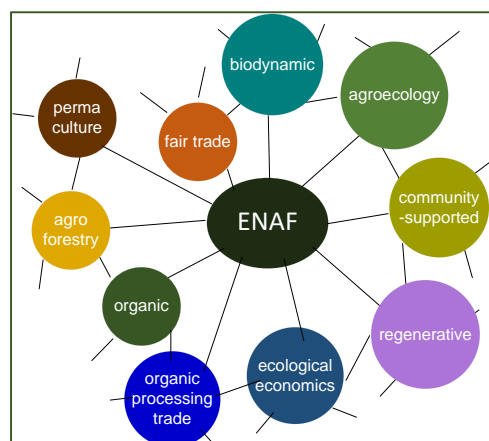


Figure 16: ENAF as bridging network of networks

To achieve this, a long-term initiative going beyond the project’s lifetime was desirable. Three working groups have to date shared proposals regarding the way in which the NofN could be orientated and the activities it could support. These have been summarised in this document and are endorsed by the majority of representatives that joined the NofN in 2022. This network has been named the European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF).

Mission

To activate the combined potential and capabilities of existing national and European agroecology related networks and associations to be able to contribute more effectively across sectors to agroecological transformations of agricultural and food systems in Europe.

Purpose and value proposition

ENAF remains a ‘network of networks’ in the sense that it focuses not on connecting individual organisations, but on connecting existing networks and umbrella organisations. It seeks to complement what networks are doing by creating synergies and supporting shared efforts so that the efficacy of their work is enhanced. This includes creating opportunities for a stronger, combined voice and influence in relation to policy and research agendas. Additionally, it allows ideas to spread more rapidly across national boundaries, thus supporting local innovation.

Orientation

ENAF understands agroecology as an integrated food system approach that pays due attention to both its social, economic, and environmental aspects. The vision of ENAF is to see people across Europe enjoying all the good that comes with food systems that are grounded in the



The initial outlines of co-created framework for ENAF (step 6-7)

principles of agroecology⁹ (Figure 17) since they are environmentally conscious, socially just and economically fair. ENAF respects each participating network’s own focus and orientation, such as ‘organic’, ‘biodynamic’, ‘regenerative’, ‘community-supported’. It focuses on the common ground that these approaches share where exchange can benefit each other.

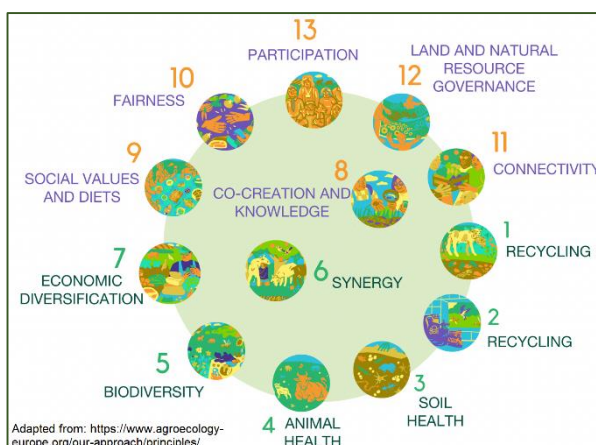


Figure 17: ENAF seeks to support the activation of the 13 agroecological principles

ENAF acknowledges the tendency for top-down guidance on sustainability transitions in agriculture and food in Europe, and seeks to balance this by being orientated towards the interests and ideas coming from grassroots and farmer organisations, both in the North, South, East and West of Europe. By this, ENAF recognises and supports the centrality, knowledge and advocating voice of agroecological food producers all over Europe. The European diversity in agroecology – from peasant farming to regenerative practices and community partnerships – are recognised as strong bedrocks for a holistic transformation of the European food systems. This orientation will also be reflected in how ENAF is governed.

Aims and activities

ENAF focuses on the following aims: (Figure 18)

- Support knowledge and information exchange between networks
- Supporting communication and connectivity among networks
- Supporting the efforts of relevant EU partnership programmes
- Highlighting and influencing policy and research agendas at national and European level
- Supporting collaborative efforts in the form of living labs, research, etc.
- Help coordinate the efforts of participating networks
- Developing mutual engagement and commitment to help each other

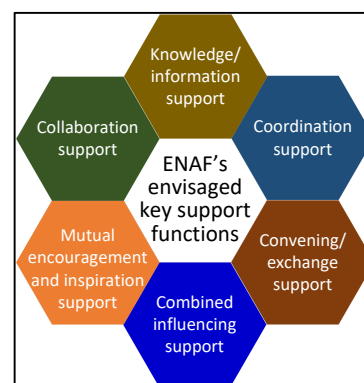


Figure 18: Envisaged support functions of ENAF

For more details see Annex 1.

Membership

⁹ HLPE, 2019

The initial outlines of co-created framework for ENAF (step 6-7)

The membership of ENAF will be divided between members and friends. The primary difference being that members have been formally accepted into the network and have voting rights, whereas friends are interested in the goals of ENAF but for various reasons are not members but supporting partners who more closely follow the development and activities of the Network. Networks interested in becoming a member can indicate their interest in joining. This membership will be provisional until the completion of the statutory document (anticipated 2024). See annex 1 for further explanation of options for joining ENAF.

Members of ENAF are Europe based, active in (promoting) the systematic application of agroecological principles, define themselves as a network or association and thus represent a larger number of stakeholder organisations, in agreement with the code of conduct of this network (still in process of being defined), and accepted as a member by the other members of the network. **Friends** of ENAF are interested in ENAF’s mission and value proposition.

Governance and organisation

ENAF will be governed by its member organizations. A steering committee of three European networks on agroecology and three national networks representing different corners of Europe will take up the daily organization of ENAF. Each organization will allocate some staff time to operationalise ENAF’s aims. At this point in time, the governing structure of ENAF has not been strictly determined and will be more clearly defined by the members of the network during the course of 2024. It may have a board made up of 6 networks that will guide the network for one or two years. After that period new national networks may be voted in and established. Until further defined, ENAF will be governed by the founding members of the network.

Funding

Currently, AE4EU is able to fund the start-up phase of ENAF. This is, however, temporary. By the end of 2023, a new funding structure (to perform ENAF’s envisaged functions) and leading partners will need to be established. ENAF will seek to secure funding sources that are conducive to safeguarding its identity as described in the purpose and orientation.

Anticipated future and related milestones

This document is meant to provide the foundations and initial aims of the network. A statutory document detailing its governance, funding, and focus will be further developed interactively with ENAF participants over the course of 2023.

The initial outlines of co-created framework for ENAF (step 6-7)

In November 2023, ENAF will have its first live meeting as a part of AEEU's Agroecology Forum. During this meeting, the host organisation(s) that will take ENAF into 2024 will be made known.

See Annex 4 for an initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF that was circulated among stakeholders as part of the launch event of January 2023.

6. Conclusion: Looking forward and looking back

6.1. Current and next steps for ENAF (step 8-9)

Following the successful launch of ENAF, the network has continued in its development through various milestones (see Figure 19) with the intention to handover network leadership at the end of 2023. The first activity was meetings with co-founders. Various parties came forward with the desire to be co-founders of the network. After meetings with these potential co-founders the three most suitable: La Via Campesina, Slow food and Agroecology Europe began working together to give the network more form and explore how agroecologists can work together. This resulted in the governance being expanded to include three national networks to ensure that the grass roots connection remained strong. Following this decision a number of meetings took place with interested national networks and currently Agroecology network Nederland and Eco Ruralis (Romania) are now active in this role.

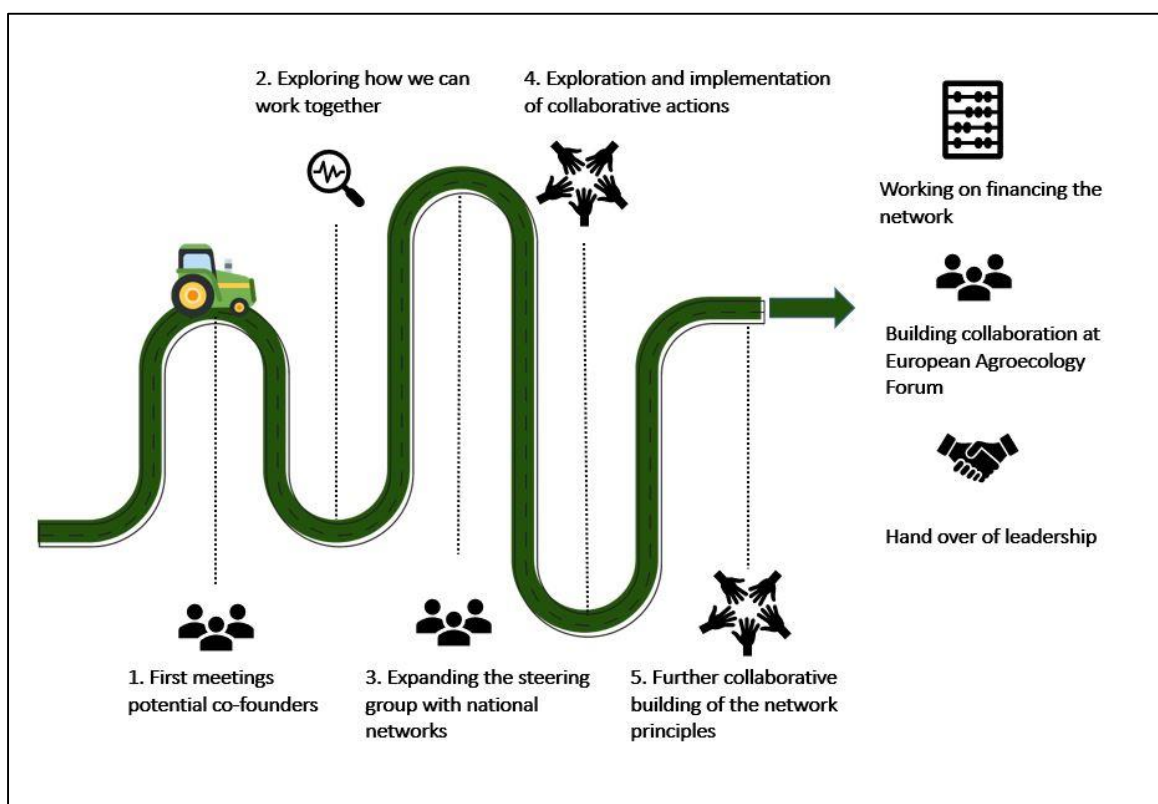


Figure 19: Overview of activities to further develop ENAF during 2023

We are currently in talks with a third national network to complete the governing group. Simultaneously we have been exploring and implementing collaborative actions to see how the network can work together and showing the value of this in practice. This began with a number of brainstorm sessions on relevant collaborative topics. The first key collaboration is on how the new genetically modified seed legislation could seriously harm the growing

Conclusion: Looking forward and looking back

agroecology movement. This meeting is planned for October 5th, 2023. Box 1 shares the related announcement that marks a new phase for ENAF, and which is illustrative for how the founding members intend to take it forward.

Building upon the positive experiences thus far AE4EU representatives together with founders are working on finalising the principles of the network and looking towards the future. This includes exploring funding opportunities to take the network forward over the coming two years, the official handover of leadership to the co-founders and also building relationships at the European Agroecology Forum. The key challenge is ultimately time and funding. Many of the organisations have only limited financial capacity and much of their

work is project based. Despite the organisations clearly seeing the added value of the network activities is still difficult to ensure the financial capacity to take part. Consequently working on financing is one of the priorities for ENAF. There are two sides to this: funding sources that allow ENAF to secure its core identity and orientation (core funding) and funding that allows ENAF to carry out a variety of activities. Diversity of funding sources aligns well with the agroecological principle of diversity, and will be important for the resilience of ENAF both in terms of securing its core identity and orientation, and in terms of being able to perform roles and carry out activities that matter in relation to its mission and vision. Annex 5 is a policy brief on ENAF that is used as one of the ways to approach potential funders.

Box 1: Announcement of first internal event of ENAF

The Horizon 2020 Project, Agroecology for Europe (AE4EU) launched ENAF: the European Network for Agroecological Food Systems in January 2023, along with more than 40 esteemed colleagues and fellow associations in order to create a ‘network of networks’ to support agroecological transformations of European food systems.

This online event will be the very first internal event of the ENAF. The main aim of this internal online event is to create an opportunity to exchange for ENAF members and a space to strengthen members’ collaboration within the Network. Secondly, this online event will offer an opportunity to discuss policies currently at the forefront on the EU political agenda (but with implications well beyond the borders of the EU) which will enormously impact food systems and farmers: pesticides, potential deregulation of new GMOs and seed marketing reform.

6.2. ENAF’s history in a nutshell

Reflecting on the history of ENAF, we see a process that really grew organically. There was no preconceived idea of something like ENAF when AE4EU started to initiate conversations with stakeholders who all acknowledged that there are missing links in current ways in which agroecology tends to be approached from higher policy levels in Europe (more on this in Deliverable 5.5 that will be published later this year). In a metaphor: ENAF was not started

Conclusion: Looking forward and looking back

as the planting of a plant/tree, but sown as a seed with all risks of not germinating or not taking root.

A first get-together of AE4EU partners and these stakeholders took place in March 2022 and tentatively these convened stakeholders were referred to as the Network of networks (NofN) on agroecology. A month later it was decided to get serious on this and to enter a phase of co-creating a more formal version of the NofN. It meant that AE4EU had to find a way of both taking the lead in organising next steps to keep the process moving forward and of staying in this together as variety of stakeholders in creating space for them to co-inform the direction in which ENAF (then still called NofN) would be taken. That was challenging, but resulted in a well-visited launch of ENAF (in January 2023) with more clearly (though still draft) defined identifiers of what ENAF would stand for and would be about. The next challenging period came after that launch of ENAF. AE4EU would not continue beyond 2023, so if AE4EU was not going to be taking ENAF further than the end of 2023 anyway, it would be critical that already from early 2023 those who would be doing so would take ownership of the next steps of establishing ENAF. It was a relief when representatives of a few larger networks indicated their interest in being founding members. This, because, as indicated before, this was a rather organic process and it depended totally on whether or not potential co-founders would see a true potential in ENAF and a role for themselves in further establishing it. The rest of its (just starting) history has been described in earlier parts of this report.

Returning to the metaphor of ENAF being sown as a seed rather than planted as a plant/tree: It took some time for it to germinate and take root. However, as we know from e.g. the practice of agroforestry, a tree that is planted (particularly if it is already a bit bigger) can have great difficulties getting established, amongst others because its roots are disturbed. A seed, however, once it does germinate and take root tends to be less vulnerable and after a slow start picks up speed soon as its roots are well connected to the soil. In the metaphor, the soil stands for the grassroots/farmer organisations that ENAF seeks to be firmly rooted in. This gives confidence that ENAF will not wither but will become further established and bear fruit along the lines of its mission and vision.

Conclusion: Looking forward and looking back

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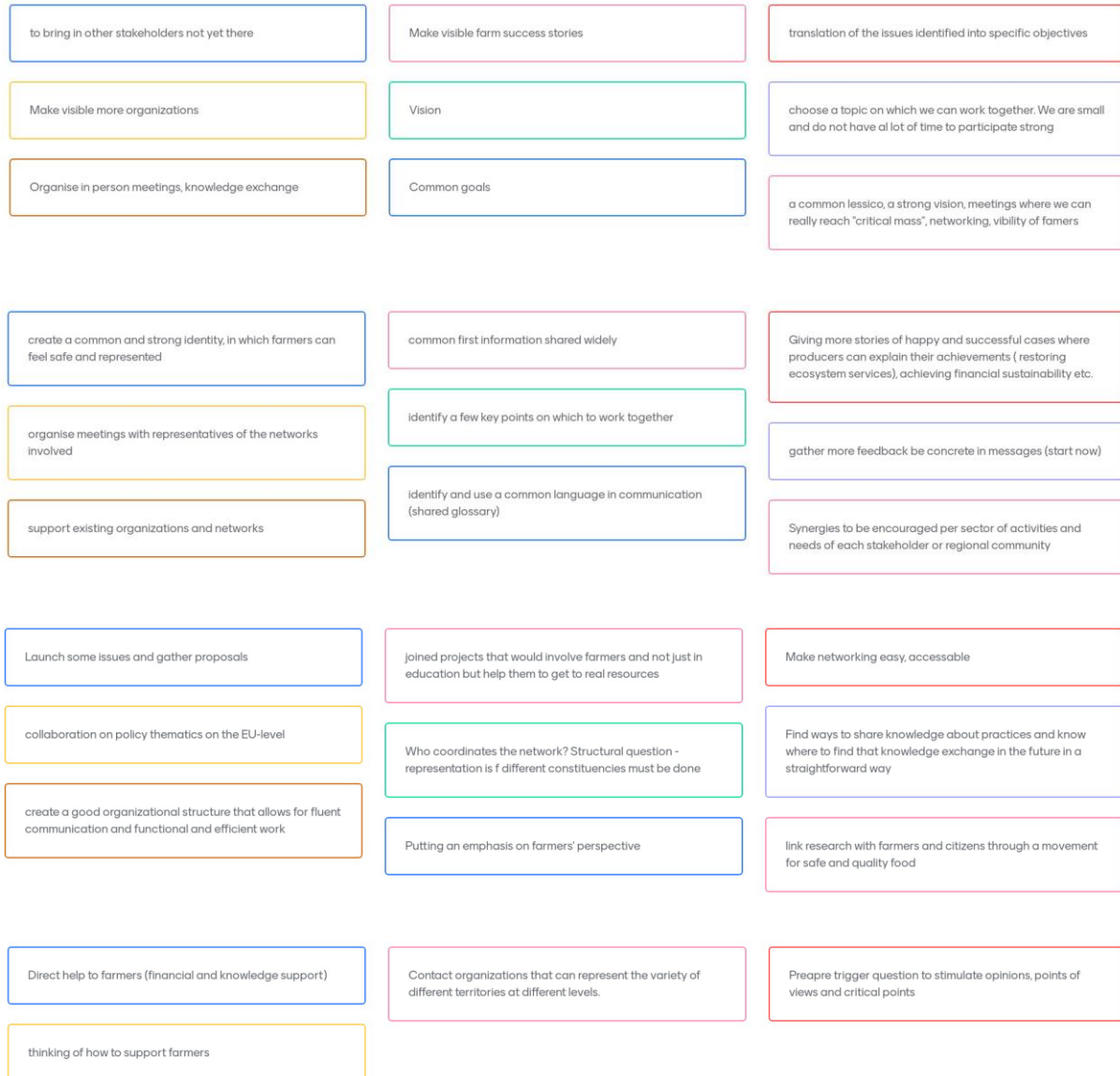
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Annex 1: Priorities for co-creating ENAF

Ideas on priorities for co-creating the European agroecology network of networks as expressed during stakeholder meeting.



Annex 2: Programme of the launch of ENAF in January 2023

Launch of the European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF)

January 26th, 15:00-17:30 – Online meeting

Purpose:

After an exploratory time as the so-called Network of networks (NofN) in 2022, mark the beginning of a shared ambition to legally establish ENAF through a co-creative process by the end of 2023.

Programme:

15:00	Welcome by Alexander Wezel (ISARA, France)
15:05	Presentation of the essence of what ENAF intends to be and do, by Seerp Wigboldus (WUR, Netherlands)
15:15	Presentation by Pablo Tittonell (University of Groningen, Netherlands) on taking agroecology to the next level in Europe
15:30	Artistic expressions
15:35	ENAF and East-West conversations on agroecology and its potential to transform our food systems by Attila Szocs (Ecoruralis, Romania) and Jesse Donham (AEEU, Brussels)
15:45	Presentation by Klarien Kligen (Dutch Agroecology Federation): reflections on experiences of the establishment of the Dutch national agroecological federation and network and other alliances for AE transformation living lab
16:00	Brief BREAK
16:05	Interactive session with breakout rooms allowing participants to bring in thoughts and ideas and ask further questions
16:30	Shifting gear
16:33	Sharing from the different breakout rooms
16:45	News on the development of the Agroecology Knowledge Hub by Paola Migliorini, Alice Fasso, and Natalia Rastorgueva (UNISG, Italy)
16:50	Next steps of ENAF and options for joining by Seerp Wigboldus
16:55	Open floor for direct feedback
17:10	Closing by Attila Szocs

Annex 3: Key guidance emerging from the launch of ENAF

The following is a synthesis of key take-away messages shared by participants in interactions during the launch of ENAF. All presentations and recorded conversations can be accessed in the News section of the AE4EU website (<https://www.ae4eu.eu/>).

- It is important to **make concrete** what exactly ENAF will be doing and working on. The general idea is widely accepted, but it became clear that there is a need for further specificity on the operational focus and what this means for core activities. Therefore, this will be a priority during the next steps of ENAF, and will be done with those who join a co-founders.
- The intention to **make (peasant) farmers and their ideas, knowledge, and interests central** in ENAF is central, but it will be important to translate this into ways in which this is operationalised so that it will not merely remain a strategic orientation. To this end, it will also be important to attract more farmer groups to ENAF and ask them to play a key role within the network.
- There is a desire to **connect to all parts of Europe** and to pay particular attention to building connections with Eastern Europe, and ask representatives from these countries to take active roles in ENAF.
- The chosen orientation on food systems and on the agroecological principles/elements is accepted, and it will be important to notably contribute to **just transitions**, embracing a focus on food justice and food ethics.
- Three **EU partnership programmes** (Horizon Europe) are relevant to connect to: Biodiversa+, Sustainable Food Systems, and Accelerating Agroecological Transitions. It will be good to explore connections, particularly in terms of bringing in (peasant) farmer voices and participation.
- ENAF can **build on experiences** of groups like Let'sLiberateDiversity!, ENoLL and others in connecting (to) farmer groups across Europe.
- Regarding the **future governance** of ENAF, there were some pieces of advice:
 - o To ensure that the setup of membership is clear (er than it is now), including how this translates into decision making processes.
 - o To pay particular attention to balancing diversity in the roles of various groups in the composition of the working groups (e.g. gender, type of actor, etc.).
- Regarding ENAF's future **communication** strategy:
 - o setup common terminology that integrates the diverse visions of members and creates a common ground;
 - o recognises the role of AE in the European agricultural transition from the very beginning (agreement between the different participating networks);
 - o address language issue (how to exploit the contents, involve different actors considering the various cultural backgrounds). It is very relevant at the territorial scale.

Annex 4: Initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF

Background

The aim of the present document is to update and formalise the basic tenets of ENAF including the:

- charter to present its vision, mission, values, aims and principles of action
- membership terms and conditions
- internal rules.

Please note that the contents of this document are a provisional **proposal** which will be discussed and altered during the next few months with all members of ENAF. Once approved, it is to be agreed upon by all current ENAF members. All organisations that would like to join ENAF in the future will also have to fully agree to its contents as part of the application process.

In its current state, it only provides a rough indication of the kind of Statutory Document that will formalise ENAF as a network of networks.

Preamble:

Agroecology is a science, movement and practice that takes a unique approach in the development of sustainable food systems. It offers a great deal of potential in developing balance between social, ecological and economic goals. However it remains a niche within Europe and action is required to strengthen its presence.

To achieve this, a number of networks have come together with the belief that a collaborative network would be valuable for exchange and in support of agroecological transitions in relation to agriculture and food in Europe. This network brings together different networks sharing similar goals and visions.

The network is still in the process of taking form and is an informal network based on trust, mutual commitment, collective agreement and development. This document outlines our charter which expresses our long-term vision and values, and presents our mission, aims and principles of action. It offers a reference to all member organisations that take part in the Network or are interesting in participating. In this document we share our internal rules of governance, manner of collaboration and membership terms and procedures. The intention is that core members are working within the principles outlined in the networks charter and abide by the rules of membership.

Charter

Vision

We envision a future in which people across Europe enjoy all the good that comes with food systems that are grounded in the principles of agroecology since they are environmentally conscious, socially just and economically fair.

Mission

Annex 4: Initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF

ENAF's mission is to create opportunities for activating the combined potential and capabilities of existing national and European networks to be able to contribute more effectively across sectors to agroecological transformations of agricultural and food systems in Europe.

Values / principles

ENAF is a 'network of networks' in the sense that it focuses not on connecting individual organisations, but on connecting networks and associations who in turn represent individual organisations and groups. It seeks to complement what networks are doing by creating synergies and supporting shared efforts so that the efficacy of their work is enhanced. This includes creating opportunities for a stronger, combined voice, and influence in relation to policy and research agendas. Additionally, it allows ideas to spread more rapidly across national boundaries, thus supporting innovation and adoption.

ENAF understands agroecology as an integrated food system approach which pays due attention to both its social, economic, and environmental aspects.

ENAF respects each participating network's own focus and orientation, such as 'organic', 'biodynamic', 'regenerative', 'community-supported', and 'living labs', while focusing on the common ground that these specific approaches share.

ENAF acknowledges the tendency for top-down guidance on sustainability transitions in agriculture and food in Europe, and seeks to balance this by being principally orientated towards the interests and ideas coming from grassroots and farmer organisations, both in the North, South, East and West of Europe. This orientation must be reflected in how ENAF is governed. By this, ENAF recognises and supports the centrality, knowledge and advocating voice of agroecological food producers all over Europe. The European diversity in agroecology – from peasant farming to regenerative practices and community partnerships – are recognised as strong bedrocks for a holistic transformation of the European food systems.

Aims

- Support the connectivity between different networks
- Help connect these networks to Europe-level (funding) opportunities, and/or collaborative projects at the European level.
- Support collaboration between networks
 - To combine efforts from various networks to develop an 'operational toolbox to assess/rank good AE practices' (Discuss)
- Provide a platform to coordinate activities between various networks
- Provide a platform to coordinate the representation of agroecology
 - Interaction with policy-makers at the EU level (such as lobbying and advocacy)
 - Linking with the EC partnerships for AE and food that are currently in the making.

A strong NofN could provide a better basis to interact with those responsible for

Annex 4: Initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF

programs and funding within the framework of those platforms. One concrete activity, that would also be in the interest to these platforms, would be to develop an ‘operational toolbox’ as mentioned above.

- Support communication and exchange opportunities between country networks so they can learn from one another
- Creating opportunities to encourage each other across different countries, and consider how networks can mutually support and inspire each other.
- Pull together research ideas from farmers across Europe and bundle this towards relevant research topics to be followed up at European level (e.g. in project that link to the new EU partnerships).
- Address overarching knowledge issues that are relevant to various AE networks (at the network level);
- Develop perspective on how to strengthen agroecology within Europe

Membership terms and conditions

Eligibility

The network is open to all networks and umbrella organisations that are working along the lines of agroecological principles and intend to contribute to its wider application across Europe through participatory engagement. However, each party will need to be formally accepted into the network by existing members - if necessary, through a majority vote. Thus, membership is not automatic. Membership within ENAF will not require a fee.

The membership of ENAF will be divided between members and followers. The primary difference being that members have been formally accepted into the network and have voting rights, whereas followers are interested in the goals of ENAF but for various reasons are not members. At times, guests may also be invited to consult or advise for a meeting or two but that fit neither the criteria of ‘member’ or ‘follower’.

Members of ENAF are:

- European based
- active in (promoting) the systematic application of agroecological principles,
- define themselves as a network or association and thus represent a larger number of stakeholders
- in agreement with the code of conduct of this network (still in process of being defined)
- accepted as a member by the other members of the network

Followers of ENAF are:

- Interested are interested in ENAF’s mission and value proposition.

Guests are:

Annex 4: Initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF

- Consultants of some sort that come in to advise on specific topics for a limited amount of meetings but that are not actively involved in the network.
 - For example: a European policy maker

More specifically, members are more formally engaged, actively participate in the direction and activities, and have the opportunity to be involved within the governance of the network. Followers of the network are those interested in agroecology, but are not yet practicing it.

Members may focus on a specific aspect of agroecology or have differing approaches in its development however, in general, their activities should conform with the agroecology principles. No limit has been set on the number of members that can be part of the network to date.

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Member rights and obligations

It is within the rights of members to:

- A. attend and participate in any general meeting, thereby participating in all decision-making and agenda setting
- B. participate in any activities proposed by ENAF
- C. elect the board
- D. receive transparent access to any reports including financial ones, if applicable
- E. submit proposals within meetings or to the board
- F. have access to any online platform that allows the members to communicate and share data, such as an internet site or the AE4EU Hub
- G. access to any information gathered by the association, such as the list of members

Obligations of members:

- A. Through their admission into ENAF, all members agree to abide by all statutes and bylaws, as well as any other rules or procedures that may be adopted (with the approval of members).

Application

[to be elaborated]

Definition of Network

[to be elaborated]

Governance

Decision making

At this point in time, the governing structure of ENAF has not been strictly determined and will be more clearly defined by the members of the network during the course of 2023.

The **provisional suggestion** is to have a board made up of 3 networks that will govern the network for one year. After one year a new board will be voted in and established. Until further defined, ENAF

Annex 4: Initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF

will be governed by AE4EU and the other founding members of the network. Additionally, an advisory group will be established in 2023 including members, followers and guests to give input into the developments relevant to the network.

It is of outmost importance to the founding members for transparency to be part of every step of the process both within the organisation and to the public.

Potential Organisational Structure:

1. Coordination team in whatever form and size to ensure the possibility of operationalising ENAF's purposes and objectives. Tentatively, it is foreseen that this will be hosted by one of the participating network and may include one or two dedicated staff (employed or voluntary).
2. Board or Steering Committee: representatives of at least 3 member organisations, generally elected by all the members of the network to steer for an agreed length of time. The board exercises the responsibilities entrusted to them by the other members, such as facilitating and administering strategies and controlling finances, if any. The board is required to provide all other members with periodical reports on the activities of ENAF.
 - a. Tasks and powers of the board:
 - i. to conduct the activities of ENAF on behalf of other members
 - ii. to promote, coordinate, implement and advise on all of ENAFs activities
 - iii. to make expenditures as budgeted by the members
 - iv. to establish committees and working groups
 - v. to appoint and dismiss members of the staff (if staff will be hired)
 - vi. to propose the exclusion of a member to the general assembly
 - vii. to submit proposals to the general assembly and report on the activities of ENAF
 - viii. to examine proposals made by members at the general assembly, or on other occasions, concerning the policy and activities of ENAF
 - ix. to prepare annually the financial report and present it to the General Assembly, if applicable.
 - b. Each member of the board will serve for one year and cannot be re-elected until at least one term (year) has passed
 - c. Election process:
 - i. A call for candidates shall be sent to all members
 - ii. Members may run for this position by submitting their candidacy by the deadline set by the current Board
 - iii. The candidates with the highest number of votes shall be elected
 - iv. In the event of a tie vote, all these candidates shall be placed in a run-off election. In the run-off election, the candidate with the highest number of votes shall be elected

Annex 4: Initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF

3. Working group: a smaller faction of the larger group of members that organise activities in a specific area of interest.
 - a. Participation in a working group is open to all members.
 - b. The Board may decide to allocate an operating budget to the working group.
4. General Assembly: an official meeting with all members of ENAF that occurs at least once a year where the members can vote on actions and define the strategy for the upcoming months.
 - a. Within these assemblies, any of the following activities may take place:
 - i. Receive and discuss annual reports of activities and finances
 - ii. Determine a budget for the upcoming year and review the budget for the year that has passed
 - iii. Delegate responsibilities to any members, but especially the board
 - iv. Discuss, approve or disapprove of the decisions and work of the board
 - v. Suspend and/or remove members of the board if there is cause to do so
 - vi. Elect members of the Board through a majority vote
 - b. Invitations to meetings shall be sent to all voting members within plenty of time to the date of the meeting
 - c. A member who is unable to attend the meeting may vote electronically
 - d. A report of the general meeting is to be sent to all members

Voting

- A. Voting shall be done by an absolute majority of valid votes cast either in person or by electronic means.
- B. When shall voting take place? A vote shall take place at any official meeting (or only at general assembly?)
- C. All member shall have one vote, except for members acting as proxies on behalf of another member, in which case they shall have two votes. Each member may not accept more than one proxy.
- D. In the event of a tie vote?

Funding

Currently, AE4EU is able to fund the start-up phase of ENAF, this is however temporary.

By the end of 2023, or preferably earlier, a new funding structures (to perform ENAF's envisaged functions) and leading partners will need to be established. *ENAF will seek to secure funding sources that are conducive to safeguarding its identity as described in the purpose and orientation.* This may mean that core funding will help safeguard that ENAF's values, principles and orientation, while additional funding will be secured for e.g. specific collaborative efforts.

Once funding is obtained:

Annex 4: Initial sketch of a Statutory Document for the ENAF

- Any funds shall be used exclusively for the promotion of the purpose of the ENAF.
- Funds donated for specific purposes may not be used for other purposes without the express permission of the donor.

Intellectual rights

[to be elaborated]

Amendment to the Statute

- A. Any member entitled to vote may submit a proposal to amend the Statutes.
- B. The Board may propose amendments to the Statutes.
- C. Amendments to the Statute will be discussed at an official meeting where all members have been invited.
- D. The Statute may only be amended by at least a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes validly cast.

Strategic plan

ENAF will be officially launched on the 26th of January 2023. This will begin a series of webinars to exchange and connect on the topic of agroecology. In November 2023, ENAF will have its first live meeting as a part of the Agroecology Europe Forum 2023. During this meeting, the host organisation for ENAF (which will begin from January 2024) will be made known, and a refined and elaborated starting document.

Introduction

The global food system is flawed. Not only is it not delivering healthy and nutritious food but it is also a key contributor to environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, malnutrition, rural poverty and climate change, to name a few. Agroecology has gained momentum within scientific, academic and political spaces as an alternative and holistic approach that incorporates considerations that go beyond the farm gate and can be applied at the field, farm, regional, national and whole food system level.

In order to strengthen the processes and mechanisms related to an agroecological transformation of farming and food systems, the AE4EU project envisioned a platform where networks and associations could come together to pool knowledge and resources, and to provide mutual encouragement and support to enhance the potential impact on advancing the application of agroecological principles. After a year of deliberation amongst the project and various other networks and groups from across Europe, the European Network for Agroecological Food Systems (ENAF) was founded as a network of networks on 26 January 2023.

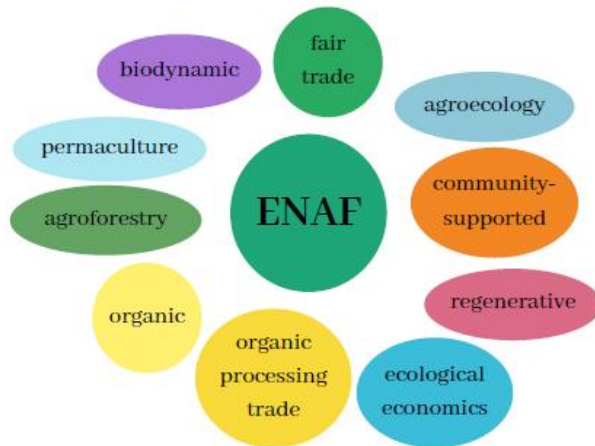
Growing from common ground

The network was founded as a way for various networks to have a platform for exchange on both practice and policy in order for farmer and civil society networks to learn from one another across borders. Coming together creates a common voice from the values shared across networks toward a common vision. By sharing resources and information, grassroots organisations normally on the periphery of decision-making processes in agriculture can have more impact on research and policy agendas.

ENAF's mission is "to activate the combined potential and capabilities of existing national and European networks to be able to contribute more effectively across sectors to agroecological transformations of agricultural and food systems in Europe." Its aim is to create a body that will be guided by voices from the bottom up and bring to the fore the voices of small-scale farmer organisations from all corners of Europe. This in itself is its added value, as agroecology has historically been more present in Western Europe and less in Eastern Europe. This larger range of perspectives will create a more democratic, unbiased perspective, that will allow everyone to be part of agroecological transitions in their own contextualized way. The strength of agroecology is its ability to create a system that is not one-size-fits-all. The food system transitions must create room to follow small-scale, agroecological, local pathways.

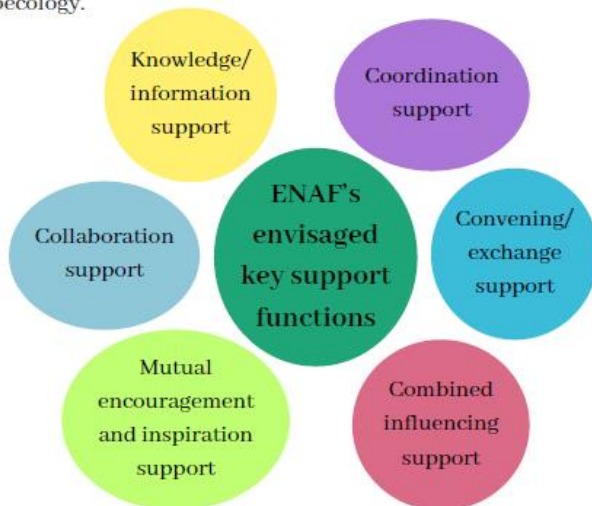
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ENAF focuses on connecting existing networks, associations, and umbrella organisations, not individuals or individual organisations, with the aim of complementing what the networks already work on while increasing synergies and supporting a shared effort to enhance the efficacy of their work. This includes creating opportunities for a stronger, combined voice and influence in relation to policy and research agendas. Additionally, it allows ideas to spread more rapidly across national boundaries, thus supporting local innovation.

ENAF is rooted in an understanding of agroecology as an integrated food system approach that gives equal value to social, economic, and environmental dimensions. The vision of ENAF is to see people across Europe enjoy all the good that comes with food systems grounded in the principles of agroecology, since they are environmentally conscious, socially just, and economically fair. While all of the various members and co-founders of ENAF orientate themselves in different ways, for example identifying as organic, biodynamic, regenerative, or community-supported, they focus on the common ground and converge around agroecology.



Governing the network of networks

ENAF's governance follows the principles of decentralization, democratization and responsibility, the values we want to see in the food system of the future. While the network was founded by a handful of organisations, the governance of the network will occur in rotation, with an equal balance of larger, Europe-wide networks and associations and smaller national networks. This is to ensure that the network continues to focus on the bottom up and not create another EU-focused organization or academic space.

ENAF was founded by three international organisations, Agroecology Europe, Slow Food, and La Via Campesina, and two national ones, Ecoruralis (Romania) and Agroecologie Network (Netherlands). The governance positions for national networks are envisioned to rotate. Any organisation can join as long as they contribute in some way to a nature-centred transition in agriculture.

Membership will be divided between members and followers. Members are formally accepted into the network and have voting rights, whereas followers are interested in the goals of ENAF but for various reasons are not members.

In this early stage, ENAF is finalising a governance strategy. Its diverse member networks are identifying points of agreement and common ground, centring around a bottom-up approach and nature-based solutions. Other approaches and practices, for instance climate farming or organic certifications, will require more discussion and debate to arrive at a shared position. ENAF's two-pronged external strategy will envision how this ecosystem can open up to the world, influencing the EU agenda while strengthening bottom-up approaches. These codified internal and external strategies will solidify the structure and mission of a newly founded entity, consolidating lessons learned, synergies, and expertise from the AE4EU project before it spins off at the project's end. To discuss all of these and outline the next steps and priorities, the network will meet for the first time in person at the Agroecology Europe Forum in November 2023, in Hungary.

To summarize, the uniqueness of ENAF is that it brings together European and national agroecological bodies that represent agroecological farmers. Therewith, it becomes a valuable partner for the European Partnership on Accelerating farming systems transition: agroecology living labs and research infrastructures. ENAF will contribute to essential tasks of the European partnership on Agroecology, such as building a research infrastructure of farmer-led knowledge production and sharing knowledge on agroecology across Europe. A European network of networks that supports farmer innovation on agroecology will accelerate the transition. Furthermore, the resulting alignment across farmer-led national and European networks on policies that support agroecological practices will ensure significant steps towards sustainable farming and food systems in Europe. This way, ENAF complements multi-actor living labs and research infrastructures mainly steered by scientists. However, the continuity of ENAF requires a substantial effort of founding organisations to allocate sufficient labour hours to ENAF. Previously it was suggested by diverse stakeholders involved in the European Partnership development, that this partnership may provide opportunities for ENAF. Therefore, with this policy brief, we call for a yearly contribution to ENAF by the European partnership on agroecology.



For more information

European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF)
<https://www.ae4eu.eu/european-network-for-agroecological-food-systems/>

European R&I partnership on agroecology living labs and research infrastructures https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/agriculture-forestry-and-rural-areas/ecological-approaches-and-organic-farming/partnership-agroecology_en

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More information about the H2020-Agroecology for Europe project:

www.ae4eu.eu

www.twitter.com/ae4eu_H2020

www.youtube.com/channel/UCOsUVqM8tOhE28Gr2xcp2_w

Additional policy briefs created by AE4EU can be found at:

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