

Transitioning to AGROECOLOGY

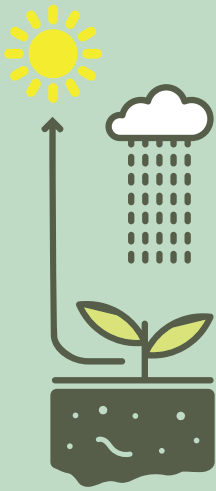
NUTRITION & HEALTH
ECONOMY
ENVIRONMENT
SOCIETY
CULTURE

Agroecology
is both a science
and a movement.



As a **science**, agroecology entails the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of agricultural systems. Based on the interactions between plants, animals, soils and climate, agroecology seeks to optimize the productivity, sustainability and resilience of agroecosystems; promote positive ecological interactions; minimize or eliminate the use of external inputs; conserve natural resources through efficient usage and recycling; and enhance the functional biodiversity of farming systems.

As a **movement**, agroecology has expanded from being solely a set of agricultural practices, to being a principles-based approach to agricultural development, one grounded on equitable and just food systems, that valorize traditional, local knowledge and culture, and preserve the natural environment.



Mada is committed to supporting smallholder farmers in Akkar transition to agroecology. Through material and technical support, **Mada** focuses on minimizing risks for the farmer, maximizing yield, and showcasing the various benefits of agroecology: nutritional, economic, environmental, social and cultural. This factsheet is the fourth in a series to be developed under the project *Wielding Agroecology to Transition Agriculture for Development (WATAD)*—under the Shabake II project supported by the Agence Française de Développement – AFD and the Centre de Crise et De Soutien and implemented by the French Public Agency for International Technical Cooperation - Expertise France. Under this project, **Mada** is building the individual and collective capacities of smallholder farmers in Akkar to transition to agroecology, and fostering the enabling environment for agroecology to prosper.

Agroecology & Society

Agroecology as a social movement puts the wishes and needs of producers and consumers at the heart of the food system. It views food as a fundamental human right, and builds the autonomy of farming communities, while awakening environmental consciousness, care for the wellbeing of future generations, and reshaping the way modern humans interact with nature. Agroecology opposes the linear view of inputs and outputs of conventional agriculture, and views production as a complex social and ecological web. As such, agroecology contributes to dignified, inclusive, and collaborative societies:

1 Dignity and Wellbeing

Agroecology challenges the notion that constant economic growth necessarily improves living conditions and wellbeing. More so, agroecology promotes care for other communities, often in other regions or countries, and does not build one community's wellbeing and dignity at the expense of another. By focusing on production for local consumption as opposed to high value crops with potential for export, it seeks to ensure decent livelihoods for all farmers, not only those with export capacities, while also meeting local food demand. Indirectly, this benefits farming communities in other countries, by decreasing competition with imports.

2 Equity and Justice

Agroecology emphasizes participatory approaches to decision-making, where farmers, consumers, and other stakeholders have a voice in shaping policies and practices. In Lebanon, conventional agriculture has largely contributed to social inequalities. Women play a largely invisible role, with less access to productive resources and limited decision-making. Refugees are largely excluded and exploited, and face abusive or non-existent work contracts, unsafe workplace settings, inequitable pay scales, discriminatory recruitment, and absence of work guarantees. While such structural inequalities require larger reforms, agroecology has the potential to (a) shift social relations, showcasing

the contributions of all groups; and (b) place resources under the control of producers, regardless of gender and social status.

3 Solidarity

Agroecology follows a bottom-up approach to development, where solutions emerge from the grassroots level rather than being imposed from above. It recognizes the value of both traditional/local knowledge and scientific expertise. By integrating these knowledge systems, agroecology ensures that farming practices are both scientifically sound and culturally appropriate. It promotes the participation of community members, counting on their knowledge, while also engaging the scientific community, technicians, public servants, among others. Such collaboration is not possible in linear systems where farmers rely on input suppliers and service providers that can exploit asymmetries in information.

4 Collaboration and Participation

By shortening distribution chains and bringing producers and consumers closer, agroecology nurtures the understanding that risks, resources, and benefits are shared among them, which serves to build connections and foster positive interactions – ultimately resulting in increased solidarity. Solidarity is also expressed in the sharing of knowledge, inputs, and collective bargaining.