

Potential of Agroecology in Ensuring Food Security and Building Resilience amongst Women in Kenya

Mary Nyasimi, PhD

Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation for a Sustainable Africa, Nairobi, Kenya



Introduction

Women in western Kenya face several challenges such as scarce land and water resources, declining soil productivity, high pest and disease incidences, changing climatic conditions, and limited access to resources. Agroecology comprises of a set of principles and practices that enhances the resilience and sustainability of food and farming systems while preserving social integrity. It is one of the most promising holistic approach amongst smallholder women farmers that can contribute to achieving sustainable development goals 2, 5, 10 and 13.

Aim & Objective

The aim of this study was to explore the policy potential of agroecology to meet the needs of women farmers in Kenya. Objective was to assess which agriculture and climate change related policies and strategies can be mobilized to support women-led agroecology practices in Kenya.

Methodologies

This study was conducted in Western Kenya. The study used qualitative research methods: literature review of policy documents, 62 semi-structured interviews and six focus group discussions.



Results

- There is no agroecology policy in Kenya
- Review of 75 Agriculture and natural resource policies indicate that the term “agroecology” is not mentioned. However, policies mention two to three agroecology principles
- About 15 food security and climate resilient innovations led by women are based on agroecological principles such as increasing crop & livestock diversity, using drought resistant crops, growing fast maturing crops and goats and chickens, using organic fertilisers & building new relationships with social & business networks (SDG 2, 5, 10 and 13).
- Organic composting & Agroforestry are the most popular agroecology practice practiced by women to; improve soil structure; increase soil water holding capacity; increase nutrient retention and nutrient availability which helps improve crop resistance to disease and, improve nutrition and incomes (SDG 2 & 13).
- 78% of the women differentiate risk by mixing food crops that have different growth periods and purposes, while 95% work towards maintaining a buffer against all sorts of risk, providing nutritious food, earning income and maintaining farm biodiversity (SDG 2, 10 & 13).
- 100% of the women interviewed are incorporating traditional farming knowledge and expertise
- 100% of the women interviewed are supporting each other to incorporate agroecology principles in light of climate change.

Conclusion

- Kenya is currently formulating its agriculture policy, thus presents a great opportunity to re-evaluate the policy to ensure that agroecology is included
- Agroecology can boost women’s production and achieve food and nutrition security for their households.
- Agroecology has the potential to build women's resilience and sustainability, by reducing vulnerability to climate shocks and ensuring access to nutritious and affordable foods.
- Agroecology guidelines are needed to inform different stakeholders, especially policy makers to enable scaling up of agroecology principles.



Acknowledgement

My sincere gratitude to the Women of Kaplong sub-location, western Kenya.