



AGROECOLOGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY CONFERENCE 28-30 JANUARY 2019

Cape Town, South Africa

"The real solutions to the crises of the climate, malnutrition etc., will not come from conforming to the industrial model. We must transform it and build our own local food systems that create new rural-urban links, based on truly agroecological food production by peasants, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples [and] urban farmers. We see agroecology ... as a means of transforming how we produce and consume food into something better for humanity and our Mother Earth."

Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology at Nyéléni, Mali, 27 February, 2015

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Industrial agriculture is indisputably at a crossroads. Not only is it one of the most environmentally destructive forms of land use, contributing significantly to climate change and unsustainable water consumption, but its use of harmful pesticides and herbicides has led to wide-spread contamination of our soil and water. Its reliance on just a few major staple crops places our food and nutritional security at increasing risk, and the increasing domination of our seed and food systems by just a handful of corporations raises serious concerns about whose interests are being served. A different approach to agriculture is sorely needed to deliver household food security and livelihoods and to produce sufficient nutrition in a rapidly changing climate.

An answer lies in agroecology, practiced successfully by millions of small-scale farmers across the African continent, who rely on a diversity of crop varieties and animal breeds for food and fibre. Far from being a 'backwards' step, agroecology is increasingly recognised as a viable and innovative approach that can be scaled up with adequate policy support. As a science, a practice and a vibrant and growing movement, agroecology presents a way of regenerating relationships between people, food and ecosystems, for reversing the damages of our colonial agricultural past, and for restoring and reclaiming arable land as a productive rather than as an extractive activity. It also presents an opportunity for revaluing our traditional seed and indigenous knowledge systems, for giving hope to our youth, creating economic opportunities and sustainable livelihoods for many, and feeding southern African nations.

THIS CONFERENCE

Against this backdrop, a three-day conference is planned in Cape Town from 28-30 January 2019, to bring together a wide range of contributors to discuss the present state and future possibilities of agroecology in South Africa and beyond. The focus is on South Africa and countries in the region, but contributions are welcomed from other parts of Africa and across the globe. The aim is to move beyond a standard academic conference and to bring together a wide array of inputs, ranging from researchers across the humanities and sciences through to civil society movements, farmers, practitioners, the private sector, policy-makers and those in the creative and performance arts.

A CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

This call seeks expressions of interest by individuals as well as groups for organised sessions, panel discussions, talking circles, performance pieces, storytelling, art works, cooking demonstrations, documentaries and other mediums that will contribute to building a dialogue around growing agroecology in the 21st century. This call will remain open until 31 August 2018. Suggested themes are listed below but additional thematic areas will also be considered.

The expression of interest should follow the following format:

Title
Medium (e.g. paper, artwork etc.)
Names and affiliations of participants (or if not all are known, number of participants)
Concept note/abstract/description (300 words)
Relevance to one or more conference theme (or motivation for an additional theme)
Internet or social media links to related works, if relevant

A call for individually volunteered paper and poster proposals will be opened in August 2018 and will close on **30 September 2018**. A few travel grants exist for African participants, with information about these to follow in the next few weeks.

POSSIBLE CONFERENCE THEMES:

Agroecology and land - decolonising agriculture and land use

Agroecology and practice – what can we learn from existing experiences to help build a cleaner, safer, more nutritious and equitable food future?

Agroecology and science – what have we learned so far? How can science contribute towards growing agroecological landscapes in Southern Africa?

Agroecology in a changing world - agroecology as a way of regenerating soil, ecosystems and building sustainable livelihoods (agroecology as a paradigm shift)

Agroecology, policy and the state - how can agroecology be fostered and supported by governments and international institutions?

Agroecology, seed and agrobiodiversity – threats to agrobiodiversity, seed laws, GM contamination, maintaining and strengthening seed and knowledge systems, seedbanks

Agroecology, democracy and revolution - growing food as activism, social movements, democratic processes and agroecology, and resisting corporate capture

Agroecology and the economy - resilience, local food, alternative economies of food, desirable job creation

Agroecology and education – outdoor classrooms (schools without walls), retraining agricultural extension officers, student wellness, curricular development and university degrees

Agroecology and nutrition – better health and nutritional outcomes through increased agricultural biodiversity and pesticide-free production methods

Agroecology and knowledge – re-skilling farmers, agronomists and extension workers through the promotion of knowledge-intensive, low-input production

Please send your expression/s of interest to: Fahdelah.Hartley@uct.ac.za by **31 August 2018**

For any further questions, please contact Fahdelah Hartley at the email above or **021 650 2866**

The coordinating committee for this conference is the DST/NRF Bio-economy SARCHI Chair at the University of Cape Town; the Seed and Knowledge Initiative; Biowatch South Africa; and the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University. We welcome co-hosts for any suggested themes or activities.

