

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)****Forty-first Session****Budapest, Hungary, 1-2 October 2019****Agroecological food system: an innovative approach to plant health****Organized by the Civil Society Organizations****Side Event 3****Tuesday, 1 October 2019****12:00 – 13:00 hours****Plenary room****Background/objective**

The Side Event aims at raising awareness and facilitating a discussion on the sustainable food systems based on agroecology and address agroecology as an innovative approach to plant health. The event will bring together speakers from smallholders, civil society, academia and FAO in the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) 41<sup>st</sup> session and will serve as a knowledge sharing platform to exchange on relevant approaches, experiences, lessons learned and good practices along with strategies at regional level. The Side Event is organized by the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Movement in Europe and Central Asia (Nyéléni ECA).

Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Movement in Europe and Central Asia (Nyéléni ECA) is a political and social alliance of grassroots, community based movements and organizations, representing small-scale food producers: peasants/small farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, small-scale fisher people, agriculture and food workers; and supporting constituencies, such as urban poor; rural and urban women's and youth organisations; consumers, environmental, justice, solidarity, human rights organizations; community-based food movements, which politically respect the 6 principles of Food Sovereignty as agreed at the First Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Forum and sign up to the Nyéléni Europe Declaration from 2011.

Small-scale food producers, who are right-holders and the most affected by agriculture and food-related policies and unsustainable food systems believe that true roots of agroecology lie in the ecological rationale of indigenous and peasant agriculture. For agroecologists, a starting point in the development of new agricultural systems is the very systems that traditional farmers have developed and/or inherited throughout centuries. Such complex farming systems, adapted to the local conditions, have helped small farmers to sustainably manage harsh environments and meet their subsistence needs without depending on mechanization, chemical fertilizers, pesticides or other technologies of modern agricultural science. Guided by an intricate knowledge of nature, traditional farmers have nurtured biologically and genetically diverse smallholder farms with a robustness and built-in resilience necessary to adjust to rapidly changing climates, pests and diseases, and more recently to globalization, technological penetration and other modern trends. Researchers have shown that the use of within-field crop genetic diversity reduces disease severity, and this method has been used commercially in some crops.

It is also needed to develop such strategies not only to enhance the ecological resilience of farming systems but also enhance social resilience (the ability of groups or communities to adapt to external social, political, or environmental stresses), which must go hand in hand with ecological resilience to achieve sustainability. To be resilient, rural societies must have the ability to buffer disturbance with agro-ecological methods adopted and disseminated through self-organisation and collective action.

The vulnerability of farming communities depends on the development of the natural and social capital that gives small-scale farmers and their systems resilience<sup>[SEP]</sup> against climatic (and other) shocks. This adaptive capacity resides in a set of social and agro-ecological conditions that influence the ability of individuals<sup>[SEP]</sup> or groups, and their farms, to respond to climate change in a resilient manner.

*\* The text is based on the book "AGROECOLOGY SCIENCE AND POLITICS" by Peter Rosset and Miguel Altieri, 2017. Published by Fernwood Publishing and Practical Action Publishing*

#### Key messages/expected outcomes

- Plant health has to be dealt with a systemic approach. The approach based on intensive use of only chemical pesticide has clearly failed. The global food production system is broken as we are destroying the very base of agriculture with unsustainable practices.
- Sustainable food systems based on agroecology are the basic strategy to assure a healthy environment for the plant and this also guarantees healthy and nutritious food for all. Agroecological practices encourages synergism so that the agro ecosystem may sponsor its own soil fertility, natural pest regulation, and crop productivity.
- Agroecological methods are more resilient to the impacts of climate change and have a high mitigation potential.
- A systemic approach enables small-scale food producers to improve plant health, while reducing costs, and the pressure on environment and improve overall well-being of the smallholders. This approach can enhance the opportunity to find innovative solution based on the different knowledge of food producers and also with the contribution of the researchers.
- A Governance model with full participation of all the actors involved is key to finding resilient solutions in the events of outbreaks of pests.

**Language:** The Side Event will be in English and Russian.

#### Provisional Agenda

**Moderator: Judith Hitchman, Urgenci**

#### Speakers:

12:00 - 12:05 - Introduction of speakers and side event content (Judith Hitchman, Urgenci)

**12:05 - 12:15 - FAO REU:** Agroecology, the ten elements approach in plant health (Carolina Starr)

**12:15 - 12:25 - European Agroecology Knowledge Exchange Network (EAKEN):** sharing experience to build Agroecology in ECA: a systemic approach to plant health (Elisa D'Aloisio, ARI/ECVC)

**12:25-12:35 - Academia: Wageningen University -** New approach on sustainable plant health strategies (Heitor Mancini Teixeira)

**12:35 - 12:45 - Andrea Ferrante, Schola Campesina:** The case of Xylella fastidiosa outbreak's and a new governance model to address emergency

12:45 - 13:00 - Q&A and closure