

Press Release: Belgian Development Cooperation Devotes only 16% of its Agriculture Budget to Supporting Agro-Ecology

A recent UCLouvain report written by Margot Vermeulen and Olivier De Schutter shows that agroecology is not a priority for Belgian development cooperation. **Olivier De Schutter**, professor and UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and former UN special rapporteur on the right to food, explains: "*Although Belgian cooperation invests considerable sums in the agricultural sector of developing countries, little money is devoted to supporting the necessary agroecological transformation of food systems in the South.*"

The study itself speaks of a missed opportunity.

"While there is a growing global consensus on the need to reform food systems to achieve sustainable development goals, we have to conclude that Belgium is lagging behind".

"Alors qu'il existe un consensus mondial croissant sur la nécessité de réformer les systèmes alimentaires pour atteindre les objectifs de développement durable, nous devons conclure que la Belgique est à la traîne" says François Grenade from Iles de Paix, member of the Coalition Against Hunger, a network of 20 Belgian development organisations active in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. "Only 16% of the budget dedicated to agriculture supports agro-ecology. This is far too little. »

The Coalition Against Hunger therefore asks Belgium to thoroughly review its strategy in this sector and to make agro-ecology a priority for agriculture and food security in the countries of the South.

Contact :

NL : Suzy Serneels, Right to Food Policy Officer, Broederlijk Delen, 0484 26 18 24

FR : François Grenade, research and advocacy officer, Iles de Paix, 0474 92 88 15

More information & video campaign : www.yes2agroecology.be

Agroecology is the future of our food systems

There are many major social and environmental challenges related to the way we produce, process and consume food. More than a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions come from food systems, which is also responsible for 80% of biodiversity loss and deforestation. Despite abundant food production, global hunger and malnutrition are increasing. The emergence of epidemics such as the Covid-19 outbreak is linked by scientists to the loss of habitat and biodiversity worldwide. In addition, the pandemic threatens to cause a food crisis, on the one hand by disrupting production and supply chains, and on the other hand by making it impossible

for people whose incomes have fallen to access adequate food.

We urgently need to reform our food systems so that they become more resilient, socially equitable and no longer harm the planet. According to the UCLouvain study, this can be done by supporting an agro-ecological transition of food systems.

Agroecology applies ecological principles to agriculture in order to optimize the interactions between plants, animals, humans and nature, without forgetting social aspects to make the food system sustainable and fair. Agroecology uses locally available resources and knowledge and adapts very well to the reality of family farming in Southern countries. Agroecology contributes to the achievement of many sustainable development objectives. It enables agricultural production to be increased where necessary and contributes to the fight against hunger, malnutrition and poverty in rural areas. It also makes it possible to combat environmental degradation, reduce greenhouse gases and adapt agriculture to climate change.

Missed opportunity of Belgian cooperation

*"Based on the data from the scientific study, we were able to calculate that only 16% of the money dedicated to agriculture goes to projects that prioritize agro-ecological transformation of food systems. 39% of the budget goes to projects that do not support agro-ecology at all. So there is a lot of room for improvement." says **Suzy Serneels** of Broederlijk Delen, a member of the Coalition Against Hunger. She adds: "If you analyse the financial flows according to the actors who carry out the projects, you see that it is mainly NGOs and research institutes that promote agro-ecology (48%). On the other hand, the government and multilateral institutions still mostly support an agricultural model with disastrous social and environmental consequences. "*

"The Coalition Against Hunger demands that at least 1/3 of the cooperation budget dedicated to agriculture should support agro-ecology in 2023", says Francois Grenade from Iles de Paix. "Belgium can and must do better."

The Coalition Against Hunger calls on the government to at least double the share of projects that support the agro-ecological transition of food systems by 2023 and to become a leader in the promotion of agro-ecology at the European and international level.

Download the study https://yes2agroecology.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CRIDHO-WP-2020-3_ODeSchutter_Share-Agroecology-Belgian.pdf