

Transforming Ecosystems through Rights-based Resilience and Agroecology (TERRA – Manifesto)

# TERRA

**Manifesto**

Coordinated By FIDEP Foundation, In Collaboration with Regional and Local Partners



FIDEP Foundation | [www.fidepfoundation.org](http://www.fidepfoundation.org) | Email: [Fidepfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:Fidepfoundation@gmail.com)

# TERRA.Manifesto

## Transforming Ecosystems through Rights-based Resilience and Agroecology (TERRA – Manifesto)

As ground-level partners, FIDEP Foundation stands with communities across Africa where the interconnections between ecosystems, rights, resilience, and agroecology are recognised as the foundation of sustainable futures. We recognize that decisions made today will determine whether communities thrive or face increasing vulnerability to climate shocks, market volatility, and social marginalization. Agroecology is not an abstract ideal; it is a practical pathway to resilient, just, and inclusive food systems. TERRA – Manifesto presents a clear vision for transforming how societies grow, share, and govern food. It draws on empirical evidence, economic modeling, and lived experience to offer actionable strategies for international development institutions, governments, and funders.

### A Global-South Call for Action:

- a. We call on communities and ground-level implementation partners to lead the transition through collective action, knowledge exchange, and agroecological practice, ensuring that transformation is rooted in local realities.
- b. We call on policy leadership and governance actors, including local governments and decentralised authorities, to embed agroecology into national and regional frameworks, secure land and resource rights, and align policies across agriculture, climate, biodiversity, and water systems.
- c. We call on the finance and investment ecosystem to deploy catalytic and patient capital that supports regenerative value chains, ecosystem restoration, and inclusive rural economies, moving beyond extractive investment models.
- d. We call on CSOs, movement, and social transformation actors to amplify community voices, defend civic space, mobilise collective action, and reshape societal values toward ecological stewardship and justice.
- e. We call on bilateral agencies and technical support partners to reorient development finance and cooperation toward community-led, nature-based infrastructure, while strengthening civic space engagement and long-term institutional capacity.
- f. We call on academic institutions, progressive think tanks and research institutions to generate policy-relevant evidence, integrate knowledge systems, and develop inclusive technologies that support farmer-led innovation and decision-making.



## About FIDEP Foundation

FIDEP Foundation is a Ghana-based NGO that focuses on environmental justice, sustainable development, and human rights. We work to empower local communities and to support evidence-based decision making from the grassroots to national and regional levels. Our trans-regional partnership approach helps us work on large projects that focus on climate change, resource management, and environmental protection. These connections, also allows us to share knowledge and implement solutions that address Africa's environmental challenges.

### Contact:

FIDEP Foundation,  
[www.fidepfoundation.org](http://www.fidepfoundation.org)  
Email: [hello.fidep@gmail.com](mailto:hello.fidep@gmail.com)



# The Framework for Systemic Realignment

## Ecology, Rights and Resilient Food Futures

### 1. A Progressive Vision for Resilient and Systems Change

Food systems can no longer be understood as a set of production processes. They are complex social, ecological, and economic systems, where decisions on land, seeds, and markets ripple across communities and ecosystems. Communities hold knowledge, genetic diversity, and practices that have sustained human nutrition for centuries. Protecting and empowering these communities strengthens the resilience of entire regions.

Evidence demonstrates that smallholder-managed agroecosystems maintain higher levels of crop diversity than large-scale monocultures. Agroecological practices improve soil health, water retention, and ecosystem services while enhancing climate resilience. Modeling of diversified systems shows potential gains in yield stability and nutrition security across varied climatic zones. These outcomes are particularly critical in regions where women and youth carry disproportionate responsibility for food production yet face systemic barriers to land, finance, and decision-making.

### 2. Agrobiodiversity as a Public Good

Genetic diversity is the foundation of resilient food systems. Local crop varieties, livestock breeds, and wild relatives of domesticated species safeguard communities against climate shocks, pest outbreaks, and dietary deficiencies. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture identifies farmers as custodians of this diversity. Policy frameworks that restrict seed saving or centralize ownership of plant genetic resources threaten both ecological stability and local food sovereignty.

Investments in community-led seed banks and participatory breeding programs yield measurable returns. Studies in East Africa and Southeast Asia demonstrate a 15–25 percent increase in household dietary diversity when local seeds are preserved and adapted by farmers. Beyond nutrition, preserving seed diversity strengthens local economies, fosters innovation, and reduces reliance on imported or industrial seeds.

### 3. Traditional Knowledge and Knowledge Pluralism

Communities generate knowledge through centuries of interaction with land, water, and climate. This knowledge is dynamic and adaptive, not static. Participatory research shows that integrating Indigenous and farmer knowledge with scientific methods improves both productivity and ecosystem resilience. Programs in Latin America that applied this model reduced soil erosion by 30 percent while increasing crop yields by 10–15 percent in challenging landscapes.

Governance of knowledge must be ethical. Communities must control access to their resources and knowledge. Free, prior, and informed consent ensures that engagement respects rights and safeguards intellectual sovereignty. Research agendas should amplify rather than appropriate local knowledge.



#### 4. Community Rights and Democratic Governance

Secure access to land, water, and natural resources drives long-term ecological and economic resilience. Evidence across Africa, Asia, and Latin America shows that communities with recognized land tenure invest significantly more in soil conservation, reforestation, and agroecological practices. Economic modeling indicates that tenure security can increase farm investment by 20–35 percent, while also reducing conflict over resources.

Democratic governance and active civic space amplify these outcomes. Communities participating in local councils, farmer cooperatives, and multi-stakeholder platforms achieve better nutritional, environmental, and economic outcomes. Conversely, the erosion of civic space undermines accountability, diminishes public trust, and exposes ecosystems and communities to unsustainable commercial pressures.

#### 5. Gender Justice and Youth Engagement

Women produce 60–70 percent of food in many rural economies yet have unequal access to land, credit, and training. Empowering women through targeted policies—secure land tenure, access to financial services, and leadership roles in cooperatives—improves household nutrition and economic resilience. Models in South Asia show that women’s leadership in agroecological projects increases crop diversification by 20–25 percent and household income by up to 15 percent.

Youth engagement introduces innovation and continuity in local food systems. Engaging young people in agroecology expands knowledge transfer, strengthens innovation networks, and reduces urban migration pressures.

Civic spaces amplify inclusion. Open, protected spaces for communities, social movements, and local NGOs allow dialogue, accountability, and experimentation. Shrinking civic space undermines innovation, reduces equitable participation, and exposes communities to environmental and economic risk. Progressive policy frameworks must prioritize GESI and protect civic space as foundational to agroecological transformation.

#### 6. Economic and Market Integration

Agroecology must link ecological practice with economic opportunity. Strengthening local markets, supporting value chains that reward biodiversity, and integrating community enterprises into policy frameworks are essential. Research from FAO and the World Bank demonstrates that community-controlled value chains retain 50–70 percent more income locally compared to export-oriented models. Market access is a tool for empowerment, not a path to dependency.

Public finance should prioritize ecological outcomes and community resilience. Redirecting subsidies toward diversified systems produces measurable environmental and social returns. Investments in ecosystem services, soil fertility, and community seed systems are economically efficient while delivering public goods that industrial agriculture often neglects.



## 7. National and Regional Policy Alignment

Agroecology must be integrated into national development, climate, and biodiversity strategies. Policies should recognize and protect community land, resource rights, and knowledge systems. Regional coordination enhances cross-border resilience, strengthens market linkages, and facilitates learning networks.

Multi-level governance is essential. Local participation informs national planning, while regional collaboration aligns standards, investment priorities, and policy coherence. Policies should remove structural barriers that inhibit women, youth, and marginalized groups from fully participating in agroecological transitions.

## 8. Strategic Pathways for Policy and Investment

1. Embed agroecology within national development, climate, and biodiversity strategies.
2. Recognize and protect community rights over land, seeds, and resources.
3. Support farmer-led and Indigenous knowledge systems through funding and policy mechanisms.
4. Strengthen multi-level governance and inclusive platforms for decision-making.
5. Invest in monitoring and adaptive learning frameworks that track ecological, social, and economic outcomes.
6. Promote gender and youth inclusion as structural components of agroecological policy and practice.

## 9. Progressive Civic Spaces

Agroecology thrives where civic space is open. Communities, social movements, and local NGOs must operate freely, engage in policy dialogue, and influence governance without fear of repression. Progressive civic spaces enable experimentation, accountability, and systemic change. International institutions, donors, and policymakers have a strategic role in strengthening these spaces, ensuring that communities lead transitions rather than merely comply with externally designed programs.



FIDEP Foundation | [www.fidepfoundation.org](http://www.fidepfoundation.org) | Email: [Fidepfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:Fidepfoundation@gmail.com)

# A Collective Call for Action

## **Progressive Networks and Coalitions (AFSA and Allied Platforms)**

We call on regional and continental networks to amplify collective advocacy for agroecology, civic space, and climate justice, ensuring that community voices shape policy at all levels. Strengthened coordination across movements can accelerate systemic change and position Africa as a global leader in just and regenerative transitions.

## **Local Governments and Decentralised Authorities**

We call on local governments to integrate agroecology and water stewardship into district planning, land use management, and community development strategies. Proximity to communities uniquely positions decentralised authorities to facilitate participatory governance and context-specific solutions.

## **Bilateral Partners, Embassies, and Development Agencies**

We invite bilateral partners and diplomatic missions to champion agroecology and water-secure food systems as strategic pillars of cooperation, aligning financing, technical support, and policy dialogue with locally led, nature-based solutions. By investing in country-level demonstration models and protecting civic space, you can help catalyse scalable transitions that deliver measurable outcomes for resilience, equity, and ecological integrity.

## **Multilateral Development Banks (World Bank, AfDB)**

We call on multilateral development banks to realign large-scale financing toward agroecological transitions, embedding water security, ecosystem restoration, and community governance into core investment frameworks. Moving beyond infrastructure-heavy models to blended, nature-based systems financing will be critical to achieving long-term resilience and equity.

## **Youth Networks and Movements (CYMG and emerging platforms)**

We invite youth networks to lead the next generation of agroecological transformation through innovation, community action, and policy engagement grounded in lived realities. By mobilising knowledge, creativity, and digital tools, young leaders can drive scalable solutions that redefine food systems for resilience, equity, and sustainability.

## **UN Agencies (FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP)**

We call on UN agencies to deepen coordination and elevate agroecology as a cross-cutting framework that connects climate resilience, biodiversity, nutrition, and water security within national and regional programming. Through integrated support to governments and



FIDEP Foundation | [www.fidepfoundation.org](http://www.fidepfoundation.org) | Email: [Fidepfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:Fidepfoundation@gmail.com)

communities, UN systems can accelerate evidence-based transitions while strengthening inclusive governance and long-term institutional capacity.

### **National Governments and Policymakers**

We call on national governments to embed agroecology, water security, and community rights at the core of development, climate, and food system policies. By aligning regulatory frameworks, public finance, and institutional coordination, governments can enable inclusive, resilient, and locally grounded transitions at scale.

### **Farmer Organisations and Cooperatives**

We encourage farmer groups and cooperatives to lead the transition toward diversified, resilient agroecological systems rooted in local knowledge and collective action. Strengthening cooperative structures enhances bargaining power, knowledge exchange, and access to markets and resources.

### **International Development Agencies**

We urge international development agencies to reorient investments toward community-led agroecological systems that deliver co-benefits across food security, climate adaptation, and livelihoods. Prioritising flexible financing, innovation ecosystems, and long-term partnerships will unlock sustainable impact beyond short project cycles.

### **Progressive Think Tanks and Research Institutions**

We encourage progressive think tanks to generate rigorous, policy-relevant evidence that advances agroecology as both a scientific and socio-political transformation pathway. By bridging research, advocacy, and policy engagement, these institutions can shape narratives, influence reforms, and strengthen accountability across food and water systems.

### **Academic Institutions and Training Centres**

We urge universities and training institutions to move beyond theory by embedding agroecology and water systems into applied learning, research, and community engagement. By serving as hubs for innovation and demonstration, academic institutions can bridge knowledge with practice and scale locally tested solutions.

### **Agri-Food Corporations and Value Chain Actors**

We urge agri-food corporations to redesign supply chains around agroecological sourcing, fair pricing, and water stewardship, ensuring that smallholder producers are not excluded from emerging green markets. Corporate leadership must shift from compliance-driven sustainability to transformative partnerships that regenerate ecosystems and local economies.



FIDEP Foundation | [www.fidepfoundation.org](http://www.fidepfoundation.org) | Email: [Fidepfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:Fidepfoundation@gmail.com)

### **Private Sector and Impact Investors**

We urge private sector actors and impact investors to shift from extractive models toward regenerative value chains that prioritise ecological sustainability and community benefit. Strategic investments in agroecological enterprises, water-efficient systems, and local markets can unlock long-term value while advancing social and environmental outcomes.

### **Philanthropic Foundations and Climate Funds**

We invite philanthropic organisations and climate finance mechanisms to provide catalytic, flexible funding that supports community-led innovation and long-term ecosystem restoration. By de-risking early-stage initiatives and prioritising equity, philanthropy can accelerate transformative change where it is most needed.

### **Continental and Regional Policy Bodies (African Union, ECOWAS)**

We call on regional institutions to institutionalise agroecology within continental frameworks on agriculture, climate, and trade, ensuring policy coherence across borders. Regional leadership can unlock scale by harmonising standards, mobilising finance, and amplifying Africa's voice in global food systems governance.

### **Digital and Data Ecosystem Actors (Agri-tech, Climate-tech Platforms)**

We invite digital innovators to co-create tools that support farmer-led agroecology, including climate information services, water monitoring, and market access platforms grounded in local realities. Ethical, inclusive data systems must prioritise accessibility, sovereignty, and real value for communities rather than extractive data models.

### **Faith-Based Institutions and Moral Leadership Platforms**

We call on faith-based organisations to frame agroecology and water stewardship as moral imperatives, mobilising values, behaviour change, and community action at scale. Their deep social reach positions them uniquely to bridge ethics, ecology, and everyday practice in ways policy alone cannot achieve.

### **About FIDEP Foundation**

FIDEP Foundation is a Ghana-based NGO that focuses on environmental justice, sustainable development, and human rights. We work to empower local communities and to support evidence-based decision making from the grassroots to national and regional levels. Our trans-regional partnership approach helps us work on large projects that focus on climate change, resource management, and environmental protection. These connections, also allows us to share knowledge and implement solutions that address Africa's environmental challenges.

### **Contact:**

FIDEP Foundation,  
[www.fidepfoundation.org](http://www.fidepfoundation.org)  
Email: [hello.fidep@gmail.com](mailto:hello.fidep@gmail.com)