



**Inputs Submitted by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)  
to the Standing Committee on Finance on accelerating climate action and resilience  
through financing for sustainable food systems and agriculture,  
towards 2025 Forum of the Standing Committee on Finance of the UNFCCC**

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy ([IATP](#)) thanks the Standing Committee on Finance ([SCF](#)) for this [opportunity](#) to submit input on its 2025 Forum on accelerating climate action and resilience through financing for sustainable food systems and agriculture.

We note that the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF), was established to assist the [UNFCCC-COP](#) in exercising its functions in relation to the Financial Mechanism of the Convention, and that involves not only mobilization of financial resources but also improving coherence and coordination in the delivery of climate change financing. Given your emphasis also on measurement, reporting and verification of support provided to developing country Parties in particular, we wish to draw your attention to the importance of generating coordinated responses to multiple crises, in the specific context of developing countries, with special attention to the least developed countries ([LDCs](#)).

To this end, we request you to consider a new subtheme for the 2025 forum: Resolving the debt crisis that cripples LDC's ability to invest in resilient food systems and agriculture with a focus on agroecological transitions.

Crucially, investment in agroecological food systems can address multiple crises simultaneously, including strengthening adaptive capacity in the face of climate change; tempering high inflation, reducing demands on foreign exchange in the face of a new debt crisis, and reducing poverty and hunger. LDCs are among the countries worst affected by these crises, while having the least capacity to confront them successfully. countries. Indeed, climate finance for food systems must not be decoupled from this transformation and restructuring.

There are 5 points we wish to underline:

1. Many proposals for climate financing linked to sustainable food systems and agriculture continue to rely on the assumptions that drove the Green Revolution (albeit with some welcome additional attention to the need to improve the efficiency of input use). These assumptions ignore the socio-economic and health harms caused by the Green Revolution.

2. Most climate financing proposals focus on *foreign investments* in food systems transformations in developing countries. Their authors wrongly assume that poor countries and their communities do not have the resources, whether the money or the knowledge, to invest in themselves. Nor do these proposals acknowledge the structural economic barriers developing countries face in international markets, including the ongoing misery of unresolved debt crises and unfair terms of trade. If left unaddressed, these structural barriers will undermine any proposed climate solution for food systems transformation.
3. Agroecology has been recognized as offering multiple benefits.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, it remains under-financed<sup>2</sup> across the world.
4. We need new indicators of “development.” Instead of seeing a large share of GDP coming from primary sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, or forests, as impoverishing, economists should understand they are indicative of wealth. Not wealth to be extracted, but wealth to be protected and nurtured. These resources are the basis of sustainable food system transformations.
5. Recommend governments redirect subsidies away from GHG intensive agriculture and food imports, and direct public support instead to agroecological practices, including support for farmers’ organizations and investments in mutual learning opportunities to learn from and disseminate farmers’ local knowledge. This support should be tracked and assessed by using the [Agroecology finance assessment tool](#) developed by the [Agroecology Coalition](#)<sup>3</sup>, a mechanism for countries and organizations to collaborate on food systems transformation<sup>4</sup> through agroecology to address multiple crises simultaneously.

## Why LDCs?

Today, [44 countries](#) have the dubious honor of LDC status; together, they are home to [more than half of world’s extremely poor](#) (those living on less than \$1.90 per day). Unsurprisingly, food security is a priority concern for these countries, and in 2023 and our organization, IATP, was at [UN LDC-5 in Qatar](#) with partners from organizations who work in close to half all LDCs, calling for a halt to agricultural development that destroys biodiversity, fosters dependence

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iatp.org/agroecology-takes-center-stage-global-agenda-transforming-agriculture-and-food-systems>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cidse.org/2020/09/30/new-data-reveals-massive-gap-in-public-funds-towards-agroecology/>

<sup>3</sup> The Coalition’s work is guided by the [13 principles](#) of Agroecology defined by the High-Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) of the UN Committee on World Food Security (UN-CFS) that are aligned with the [10 Elements](#) of Agroecology adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)’s Council in December 2019. IATP is a member of Agroecology Coalition.

<sup>4</sup> A manual accessible to everyone, [agroecology assessment framework](#), complements the [Agroecology finance assessment tool](#) and provides the framework as a guide for the design of agroecological projects or calls for proposals by giving concrete examples of actions that contribute to implementing each of the 13 principles.

and debt, and instead for investment in [agroecological transitions](#) and food sovereignty that builds climate resilience of the communities and countries.

Our call is driven by a deep understanding of the crisis facing LDCs. Today, there are three categories of criteria for LDC status: one clustered around income per capita (converted into USD, the threshold is an income of \$1,088 or less per person in the country); a second looks at human development indicators, such as health, including infant mortality, and education, including gender parity in education; and a third group looks at economic and environmental vulnerability.

Notably, that third category includes several measures about agriculture. The larger the share of agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing in the country's GDP, the more vulnerable it is considered to be. Other vulnerability indicators include lack of access to the sea, an undiversified export sector, volatile export quantities, unstable agricultural production, a large share of the population living close to sea level in coastal zones, a large share of the population living in drylands and a large share of people in zones where natural disasters are common.

Given the increase in frequency and intensity of climate related natural disasters –droughts, cyclones, floods, tornadoes and wildfires – the share of people in the last category is increasing in countries across the globe. However 93% of the 'most climate vulnerable countries' are those also in, or at risk of, [debt distress](#), according to a 2023 study

In urging the 2025 Forum of SCF to invest in agroecological transitions, we start with the recognition that poverty is multifaceted, as the range of the above indicators suggests. And it is exacerbated by climate change-related weather events. But what is more important for the 2025 Forum to recognize is that, LDCs are not so much "left behind" by the global economy, to use the phrase from the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as they are integrated into world markets on deeply unequal terms.

Those terms reflect patterns of colonial exploitation that date back sometimes hundreds of years, but also new and updated systems of exploitation, including deeply unfair rules around financing – both public and private debt servicing and international trade. Those rules trap LDCs in a vicious cycle of relying on imported food and fertilizer for their food security, creating the need to generate foreign exchange to pay for those imports, which pushes even more land into cash crop production for export at the cost of biodiverse, climate resilient ecosystems. All of this comes with an opportunity cost, taking away resources that could

instead be invested in diverse local food production and distribution systems for lasting domestic food security, reducing risk and exposure on international markets.

Any efforts on accelerating climate action and resilience through financing for sustainable food systems and agriculture, must invest in breaking this vicious cycle that many developing countries are trapped into; and the 2025 Forum on financing climate action towards building resilient food systems must focus on building on the strengths of these countries.

This also means we need to examine the dominant story told about food security agricultural transitions in these countries. Unfortunately, the dominant story told by governments at the [U.N. LDC5](#) was a story of vulnerability, scarcity and lack. The speeches on food security from governments, private sector actors and UN officials assumed lack of supply was the problem, a scarcity explained by lack of technology, fertilizer, energy, credit, transport and storage infrastructure, all contributing to low productivity. That is the story told by Bill Gates and his foundation staff, by the former Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (now simply AGRA), by USAID and myriad U.N. agencies, and by many LDC governments, too.

There is truth to many parts of this story, yet its overall effect is deeply misguided. It presents limited choices, shortchanges diversity, and proposes an industrial model of agriculture based on economics that has a long record of extracting wealth from farms and rural communities. The dominant story misses entirely the natural wealth many LDCs possess, and the knowledge and know-how of their people. It overlooks the failings of industrial agriculture and the achievements of the food systems that do the lion's share of the work to provide food for hundreds of millions of people, despite the lack of investment and attention from government or donors.

Eighty years of green revolution technologies have dramatically increased yields, but hunger persists, and environmental damage has reached alarming levels in many parts of the world.

LDC partners speaking in Doha told a different story: a story of agriculture full of hope and possibility. The stories centered on farmers and communities investing in what they already have, building on their knowledge with new ideas and adaptations learned from other farmers and scientists grappling with similar challenges. Instead of growing export crops to pay for food imports, agroecology values local knowledge, farmers' own seed systems and local capacity. Outside help is welcome, and often needed, but only if it comes in partnership, ready to learn and share knowledge and technology rather than to impose an external solution. Agroecology is about local and democratic control.

**The complex of indicators that define LDCs correlate dependence on agriculture (a high share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in GDP) with vulnerability. Food sovereignty turns this on its head. Access to arable land, livestock and fisheries, and the knowledge of how best to cultivate them, can be a *strength*, not a weakness.**

As the Conference of Parties consider Climate financing, there is a powerful moral case to care for those who are most vulnerable in the social and economic systems that benefit us. But there is also a compelling story of hope and possibility, rather than simply injustice and vulnerability that is flourishing across almost all developing countries. That story is of [agroecology and food sovereignty](#) and of food systems that protect food security while building climate resilience and adaptive capacity.

Agroecology offers an approach to food systems transitions that reduces dependence on imported inputs, such as hybrid seeds and synthetic fertilizers (that contribute to global warming, greenhouse gas emissions). It builds on the local knowledge of farming communities, especially women and food workers, coupled with science; agroecology never loses sight of context and local conditions and uses methodologies that are open to adaptation and change. Crucially, rather than relying on rents paid to seed companies based halfway around the world, whose products require expensive (and proprietarily controlled) inputs, agroecology works on principles like the circular economy, fair wages and minimizing waste. In sum, agroecological transitions offer gender-responsive and cost-effective approaches to strengthening and protecting smallholder-livelihoods while helping countries reach their goals around food and nutrition security as well as climate resilience (NDCs on adaptation and mitigation).

Agroecology offers powerful benefits for [social and ecological indicators](#) that are missed by more limited economic measures, such as income *per capita*. Instead of pursuing efficiency and seeking to squeeze profit all along the value chain by externalizing costs and minimizing the role of labor, agroecology is focused on the well-being of the whole community, including public health and varied, nutritious diets; local distribution and storage infrastructure, not least for disaster-preparedness (including international price shocks); and healthy soils and well managed freshwater supplies to protect the ecosystems and biodiversity that provide adaptive capacity as local conditions change. Locally controlled food systems also protect and promote culture and social ties and are core to Indigenous peoples' [sovereignty](#).

**Financing climate resilience through agroecology for food sovereignty across the world**

Despite its benefits, agroecology remains under-financed across the world. Not surprisingly, it remains under-supported in climate finance frameworks too. Currently, only a small fraction of the global climate finance flows are directed toward sustainable food systems and agroecology.

Agroecological transitions require not only new sources of financing but also will require redirecting current investments that promote unsustainable and polluting practices such as subsidies for fertilizer and over-production of specific crops, as well as restructuring financial architecture in debt ridden countries so that those countries are not beholden to debt servicing at the cost of their citizenry.

To build climate resilience, the whole world must transition to just and sustainable food systems: Rich countries and LDCs alike need to transform how they do agriculture. Agroecological principles offer a pathway to that transformation. For developed country members in the CoP it's a matter of redirecting public financing.

It starts at home, with locally owned and controlled seed systems, and investments in markets that reduce input costs for producers and reduce the demand for energy. Cheap calories on the back of the Green Revolution have come at an enormous cost that the planet cannot afford any longer. Agroecology offers a science-based approach that builds on and works with farmers' knowledge, amplifying rather than displacing context-specific knowledge.

The economic size and political power of the United States gives its government a lot of power in multilateral spaces. As a U.S.-based NGO, IATP is committed to holding the U.S. government accountable for its actions (and inactions) across the world. We want to see public investment directed to an agroecological transitions in the United States, and to encourage that transformation of food systems globally.

Thank you, once again, for this opportunity.

Best wishes,  
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