

CEFROHT ON AGROECOLOGY, LAW, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS IN UGANDA AND EAST AFRICA:

A POLICY BRIEF

**CENTER FOR FOOD AND
ADEQUATE LIVING RIGHTS.**

Plot 66-67 Kiriwawanvu Lane, Gayaza-Kalagi Road,
Wakiso District, Uganda.

Email: info@cefroht.org

Tel: +256 414 660813

Web: www.cefroht.org



Executive summary

Agriculture is a very critical sector to Uganda's economy. It contributes to over 22% of Uganda's gross domestic product.¹ Despite this, Uganda still faces challenges of income and food insecurity, unsafe food, environmental degradation and malnutrition.²

In new priority program called the **Agro-industrialisation programme: Uganda** aims to increase commercialization of agricultural production and agro processing to increase export, labour productivity, jobs, and the proportion of households that are food secure.

Critical to note is that, Uganda is currently facing **Severe reduction in the forest cover as well as wetland degradation and encroachment**. The forest cover in Uganda has reduced from 20% in 1986/87 to 9.5% in FY17/18 while wetland cover was reduced from 13% to 10.9% over the same period. And Approximately 46% of Uganda's soils are degraded and 10% is much degraded.³

The implication is increased vulnerabilities and disparities in incomes as well as loss of livelihood to the population and reduction in GDP growth rates. The continued environmental degradation, loss of forest cover and wetlands is impacting negatively on Uganda's tourism, agriculture, among others; therefore, needs to be addressed urgently.

Uganda is also facing challenges of growing Non-Communicable Diseases and one of the contributors is consumption of unsafe foods contaminated by carcinogenic agro-chemicals.⁴ Uganda's agricultural sector is also presently facing climate change issues manifesting as long dry spells and erratic rainfall patterns- all affecting agricultural productivity.⁵

To counter these issues, this brief proposes the promotion of agroecology and the integration of the 'PANTHER'-Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Transparency, Human Dignity, Empowerment and Rule of Law as principles of human rights into Uganda's agrifood system.

1 UBOS, Quarterly Gross Domestic product 2020/21, available at https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/03_2021QGDP_Press_release_Q2_2020-21.pdf

2 Daily Monitor, Hunger kills 900 in Karamoja-leaders, available at <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/hunger-kills-900-in-karamoja-leaders-3891186>

3 Zakayo Muyaka, Priorities for Sustainable Soil Management in Uganda, A Presentation at the African Soil Partnership. (retrieved from www.fao.org)

4 Global Health Science and Practice, Curbing the Rise of Noncommunicable Diseases in Uganda: Perspectives of Policy Actors available at <https://www.ghspjournal.org/content/9/1/149#:~:text=NCDs%20are%20also%20the%20principal,disability%2Dadjusted%20life%20years%20globally.&text=Four%20modifiable%20behavioral%20risk%20factors,of%20all%20NCD%20deaths%20worldwide.>

5 USAID, Climate change and Agricultural Infrastructure in Uganda, July 2014 available at https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/Uganda%2520CC%2520and%2520Infrastructure%2520Overview_CLEARED.pdf

What is agroecology?

As a science, agroecology involves understanding how the agroecosystems and food systems relate. As a practice, it enhances the resilience and sustainability of food and farming systems while preserving social integrity.⁶ As a movement, agroecology focuses on the practicality and the innovative ways of agriculture and its relationship with society and nature. Relatedly, agroecology is the integration of research, education, action and change that brings sustainability to all parts of the food systems.⁷ Therefore, agroecology seeks ways to improve agricultural systems by harnessing natural processes, creating beneficial biological interactions and synergies amongst the components of agroecosystems through minimizing synthetic and toxic external inputs⁸.

Agroecology is therefore central in enhancing the right to adequate food and ensuring food justice, climate justice and economic justice. However, for this to be fully realized, the legal framework must embrace the human rights principles and should be enforced.

Therefore, all farmers and stakeholders must participate in laws formulation not only at national but local government level. Rule of law must be at the center of agrifood systems to promote resilient and sustainable food systems.

This policy brief highlights why there is a need for review of legal and policy frameworks. Although there is already an organic policy, there is need to have a law to regulate this sector and promote agroecology.

Center for Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT) has developed this policy brief with recommendations for different Ministries and CSOs to promote agroecology in Uganda's agriculture sector and hence enhance climate justice, food justice and economic justice.

Law as a tool for agroecology?

Rule of law is central to development and a sustainable ecology is no exception. Adherence to the rule of law is a critical factor in sustainable economic development.⁹ Therefore, advancement of the rule of law is essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, all of which in turn reinforce the rule of law¹⁰.

This policy brief urges that a Human Rights Based Approach must be integrated into agroecology. That's the only way for sustainable outcomes for community's development and individual property security.

In pursuit of the sustainable solution to the critical challenges like income and food insecurity, environmental degradation, raising trends of non-communicable diseases, agroecology must be embraced.

However, citizens must be treated into a culture where agriculture, commerce and business are pursued in accountable legal structures. From a human rights-based approach all laws must have come into place through people's participation, transparent process and duty bearers

6 Ibid

7 Gliessman, S., 2018. Defining Agroecology, Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, 42(6), pp. 599-600, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2018.1432329>

8 Ibid

9 Rule of Law and Economic Development. Available at <http://rolalliance.org/rol-alliance-impact/rule-of-law-economic-development>.

10 Ibid

must be held accountable in case of failure to implement them. Communities must legally be empowered in the agrifood systems and nature rights.

The current Uganda National Development Plan (NDP III) recognizes the dominance of agriculture and prioritizes Agro-industrialization (AGI) as a great opportunity to increase household incomes and improve quality of life.¹¹ Despite the NDPIII including all these goals, it ignores a Human Rights Based Approach to income and food insecurity, unsafe food and environmental degradation and malnutrition.¹²

To cure the foregoing, the practice of agroecology will transform the food systems in Uganda. This is because it ensures food production safety, a clean and healthy environment (e.g., soil, water, and air) for future generations.

Summary of laws critical for agroecology

Recommendations

The following are the policy and legal recommendations from CEFROHT to improve legal and policy framework to promote agroecology.

Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and Ministry of Justice, NEMA and Ministry of Local Government.

1

Pass the National Agroecology Strategy and review the Organic Agriculture policy

2

Review the National Agriculture Policy and the National Development Plan III to include agroecology specific interventions to promote food security, nutrition and achieve the right to adequate food.

3

Provide further support of agricultural extension agents to train and empower workers on organic and agroecology agriculture to adapt to climate change impacts.

4

Create the community seed banks to promote community seed multiplication and sharing among community farmers to promote sustainable seed systems within communities.

11 National Planning Authority, Third National Development Plan (NDP III) 2020/21-2024/25, July 2020, Page 62.

12 ReliefWeb, Uganda Key Message Update: Below-average rainfall likely to impact production and reduce expected improvements in food security, March 2022, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-key-message-update-below-average-rainfall-likely-impact-production-and-reduce> accessed on the 29th August 2022

5

Collaborate with other agencies like Ministry of Health, National Drug Authority and others to ban glyphosate-based herbicides and other synthetic chemicals that are dangerous for humans, plant and environment health.

6

Develop a law to regulate, monitor, test and create standards for organic farming practices and standards within the community.

7

Enact ordinances to provide for favorable structures to establish earth markets to sell agroecology products in an enabling environment for economic inclusion of all agroecology farmers and promote the consumption of healthy foods.

8

Employ more agricultural officers to train community members in agroecology farming methods.

9

Promote agroecology as a financial inclusion and food security tool while implementing the Parish Development Model.

Civil Society Organizations

1

Create public awareness on the benefits of agroecology as a tool to promote climate justice, economic justice and food justice. This should be done using a human rights based approach.

2

Continuously engage duty bearers like the MAAIF, Ministry of Local Government, Directorate of Extension Services, NEMA etc to promote agroecology practices of farming to promote food justice, climate justice and economic justice.

3

Support local communities through trainings, creating community platforms to engage duty bearers etc on agroecology practices.