

Social learning to amplify agro-ecology

Using documentation for social learning, three female farmer leaders, a journalist and representatives from non-governmental organisations across West Africa gathered together in May 2013 to analyse strategies to upscale sustainable farming.

Faced with hunger and climate change, farmers in West Africa are experimenting with ways to let the vegetation on their soils regenerate, and with the cultivation of traditional, drought-resistant crops and seeds. Local organisations support farmer-to-farmer learning and involve decision makers and traditional authorities in the process.



Photo: Janneke Bruil

Sharing these strategies allowed participants to learn from each other and to sharpen their own analysis. One participant said: “We learned a lot from each other. We really need to include this type of analysis in our documentation so we can share lessons with others.” Another agreed: “Our dream has long been to break the language barrier between English and French speaking West Africa and to be able to work together. Through the exchanges I saw the areas of our work that we can strengthen. We are now really connected and we will work together to achieve results.”

Looking to the future, plans were made to continue cross-country learning. In Mali, Sahel ECO aims to start raising farmers’ awareness about the benefits of green manure, learning from the practice in Ghana. CIKOD is planning a visit to Burkina Faso to learn more about the local soil and water conservation techniques which they might start implementing with communities in northern Ghana. In turn, ANSD is very interested in the roadshow for policy makers that took place in Mali.

Farming Matters will continue to report on the progress and insights gained through this West African learning initiative. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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Documented strategies

The Rural Women Farmers Association of Ghana Ghana is convincing rural women to reduce the use of toxic pesticides on vegetables, which are making families sick.

Sahel Eco from Mali organised a visit to see farmer-led efforts to regenerate trees on farmland, an initiative that helped to increase food production and re-green the landscape.

Association Nourir Sans Detruir (ANSO) from Burkina Faso is supporting farmer leaders to teach other farmers about successful experimentation with soil and water conservation and diversification of crops on their own farms.

The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD) helped farmers adopt traditional seed varieties in response to climate change.