Synthesis of the informal conversation entitled "*The Agroecology approach: Grassroots Innovations Lead to Resilient Food Systems" (Rome, 17th Oct. 2025)*

Working document

Rationale for organizing the informal discussion

Evidence increasingly shows that a key driver of resilience in food systems lies in **how we value and support local knowledge**, on-farm experimentation, and grassroots innovation. The HLPE report on *Building resilient food systems* (2025) stresses that recognizing and promoting grassroots innovations contributes to equitable transformative resilience. Similarly, a recent FAO report titled *Transforming food and agriculture through a systems approach* (2025) underlines that grounded voices and lived experiences must be treated as an integral part of the knowledge system if we are to identify equitable solutions to food system challenges.

The evidence is clear. Agroecological **grassroots innovations decentralize power** in society and in food systems. Across the world, communities are reclaiming the ability—rooted in their culture—to feed themselves and create locally adapted technical solutions, strengthening their autonomy and sovereignty. Grassroots innovations are increasingly documented for their capacity to adequately address local problems, including by the Grassroots Innovations Assembly for Agroecology. Local innovations—nourishing local food systems and vice versa—**must be recognized by public policies** and institutions, and promoted and funded for their multiple benefits at multiple scales. Funding scarcity is no longer a robust argument to justify the lack of public support (Pimbert, 2025).

The alarming crises of our times are closely linked to the concentration of power, data, research, agricultural inputs, finance and technologies. Resilience and sustainability of territories depend on transforming food systems so that communities, with their culture, seeds, knowledge and capacity to innovate return to the center. In short: **agroecology**.

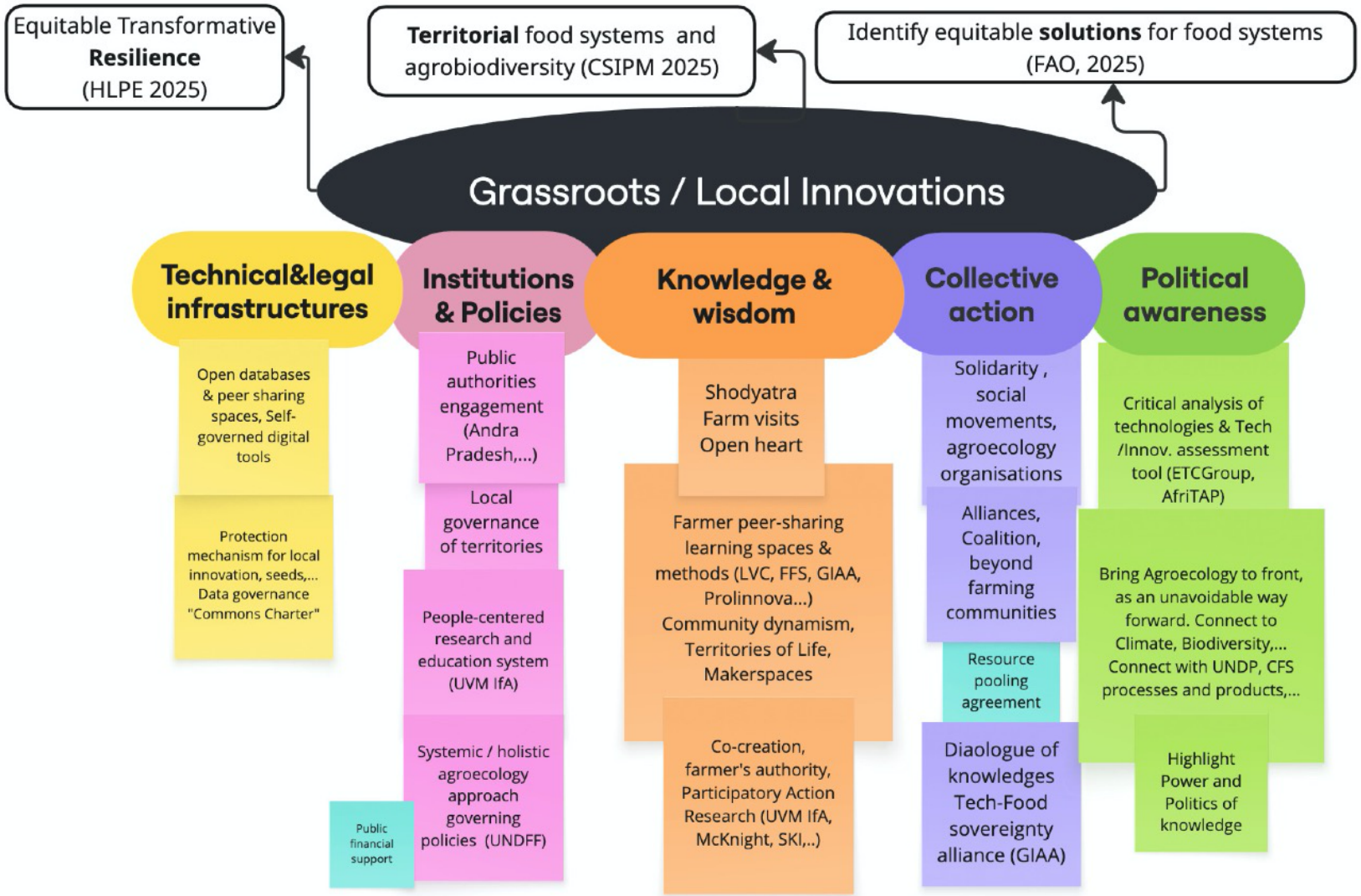
While many academics, governments, and institutions share this analysis, the dominant agricultural innovation narrative remains tied to a rush toward corporate-driven technologies, presented as the only serious solutions to today's urgent challenges.

What are the Grassroots innovations?

The 15 organizations of the Grassroots Innovation Assembly for Agroecology (GIAA), during its first gathering in Italy, in October 2023, identified the following collective understanding of grassroots innovations (GIAA, 2023).

- Our innovations grow from ancestral knowledge.
- Our innovations solve real problems.
- Our innovations come from the grassroots and are tested in the grassroots.
- Our innovations encompass the complexity of agroecology, including the social, political and ecological dimensions.
- Community governance and feedback systems determine the success of our innovations.

Synthesis of the Rome discussion - 17/10/2025



(Oct. 2025) Synthesis made out of the Rome informal disucssion and GIAA past reflections.
By the Grassroots Innovations Assembly for Agroecology (GIAA) & Schola Campesina

Elements to mainstream grassroots innovations in policies

🎯 **Transform formal research and education and advance co-creation,** by centering food producers as an essential source of knowledge in formal curricula and as agents of research processes (Participatory Action Research). Mainstreaming this approach within the formal research and education systems will encourage public policies to consider grassroots innovations as an indispensable source of solutions, to be put into dialogue with other knowledge sources, in order to rebuild territorial food systems.

🎯 Push the process of **grassroots knowledge recognition** within the United Nations, institutions and Governments, supported by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) (Article 26), the HLPE report on resilient food systems, the CSIPM vision documents and the FAO report on *Transforming food and agriculture through a systems approach* (2025).

🎯 **Center local authorities** as essential agents for building supportive agroecology policies and for encouraging grassroots innovations. Public extension services are also strategic hubs for advancing the agroecology approach and the recognition of locally-developed and farmer-led techniques and solutions.

🎯 Develop awareness of the **political economy** of innovations and technologies, and develop an innovation/technology assessment framework for agroecology. The African Technology Assessment Platform (AfriTAP), the ETC Group, and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) conducted a PanAfrican convening on the future of biodigital technologies in food and agriculture and published a Declaration.

🎯 Agroecology is a **holistic approach** overarching all sectoral policies.
The United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF 2019-2028) and the Civil Society and Indigenous People Mechanism for the Committee on world Food Security (CSIPM) promote a **holistic** agroecology approach for rural and urban development at national and international policy levels. In this framework, local and indigenous knowledge and wisdom are central sources of innovation, recognized as valid, enriched by external expertise, and supported by public policies.

🎯 **Develop an agroecology narrative on innovations,** stressing that a great deal of innovations are developed by grassroots actors as part of their daily life, they are made adequate to their contexts, and take many forms—*technical (practices and tools), institutional, organisational, digital, and economic*. Rural communities have always developed their own solutions, risk-adaptation strategies, tools, practices, and seeds, rooted in local and Indigenous knowledge and enhancing their livelihoods, resilience, and autonomy.

This anchored knowledge has always been shared through traditional and informal means. The Grassroots Innovations Assembly for Agroecology (GIAA) is developing as a space

where this knowledge can circulate across countries and continents and be accumulated as evidence.

The following concepts help make this reality visible: Agroecology schools (La Vía Campesina), Participatory Innovation Development and Documentation (Prolinnova), Farmer-led Research (McKnight Foundation), Farmer Field Schools (FAO), and Farmer-led Experimentation (HIC and the Kenyan Peasants League in Kenya, REJEPPAT in Togo, EcoRural in Ecuador, etc.). UNDROP recognizes the right to maintain, express, control, protect, and develop traditional and local knowledge, such as ways of life, methods of production or technology, and customs and traditions (*Article 26*).

Next steps

Continue the discussion and coordinate our efforts to mainstream the narrative on grassroots innovations for Agroecology in multiple spaces and in all relevant forum. This email thread is now active and can welcome the future exchanges on this topic.

Photo credit : Colin Anderson

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