Mobilising Public Domestic Resources for National Agroecology Strategies

Key messages | Expert workshop consultation

As national agroecology policies gain traction across various countries, a critical challenge remains: mobilising domestic public resources to finance their implementation. Ensuring sustained government ownership and alignment with national development priorities requires targeted advocacy and strategic engagement. To support this effort, an expert workshop was held on July 3 and 8, 2025, bringing together 11 participants from diverse institutions. The aim was to explore potential **concrete pathways and strategies for advancing public domestic resource mobilisation in support of sustainable agriculture and food systems**. This document presents a synthesis of the key messages and insights that emerged from those discussions.

A menu of advocacy pathways & strategies

1. **Integrate agroecology in national and subnational food system and development agendas**
2. **Demonstrate Alignment with National Action Linked to International Commitments**
3. **Tap into Existing Resources and Reallocate Strategically**
4. **Create Institutional Leverage and Political Pathways**
5. **Strategic Use of International and Regional Institutions to institutionalize agroecology**
6. **Coalition Building and Alliance**
7. **Framing strategies and narratives for budget buy-in**

1. Integrate agroecology in national and subnational food system and development agendas

- **Institutionalise agroecology in national agricultural and food system policy frameworks and other broader national development plans**, ensuring it is recognized as a core strategy and integrated into budgets. In particular, demonstrate alignments in goals and the relevance of agroecology to larger current political issues.

  National case: In Brazil, political debates on food inflation and the need to build national food reserves have elevated agroecology as a viable solution. Framing it around food security and national autonomy proved effective.

  National case: In Colombia, upcoming land reforms offer a window for advancing agroecological agendas. Linking agroecology to broader fiscal debates—like tax justice—and building alliances with taxation-focused organizations could deepen the budget conversation.

- **Mainstream agroecology within subnational development agendas**: Understand subnational government priorities and embed agroecology into local-level resource flows, especially where decentralization creates openings for integration. Subnational governments are key implementers of NAS interventions

  National case: In Uganda, the Parish Development Model, which includes attached funding, can be leveraged by positioning agroecology. Presenting "*agroecology as a solution to burst the poverty bubble*" and demonstrating concrete social benefits can convince local government.

  National case: in Tanzania, district-level budget tracking shows that local agricultural departments are often more open to agroecology than national institutions reflect.

  Door openers and tips: **Formalise multi-stakeholder platforms at subnational level**, ensuring consistent dialogue and integration of civil society and local government into national strategy implementation.

- **Mobilize a whole-of-government approaches,** which are increasingly emphasized within MEAs discussions: secure buy-in from other connected ministries to ensure integration and funding alignment (notably public health topics for instance).

  National case: In Mexico, agroecology initiatives received funding via the Ministry of Health by framing it as a contributor to healthier diets and reduced chemical exposure.

  Door openers and tips: **Utilise cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms** such as national coordination platforms involving multiple ministries to institutionalize agroecology budgeting responsibilities.

2. Demonstrate Alignment with National Action Linked to International Commitments

- **Leverage ongoing updates of National Implementation Plans under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)**: (e.g. Stockholm Convention, Global Biodiversity Framework) where agroecology can be framed as a response to existing national commitments (e.g., pesticide phase-out). These frameworks include dedicated financial mechanisms and require government budgeting. They can be used to trigger both domestic and international funding synergistically.
  - **Concrete opportunity:** Currently, UNEP supports Eastern and Southern Africa countries in developing National Implementation Plans (NIPs) for MEAs. In those, agroecology should be integrated with clear costing as a priority measure, not just mentioned generally. UNEP's evolving Sustainable Food Systems Strategy now goes beyond environmental framing alone.
  - **Concrete opportunity:** Climate finance for mitigation and adaptation (e.g., municipal-level, or voluntary instrument under the Green Climate Fund (GCF)) can be leveraged with the right framing.
  - **Door openers and tips:** **Engage Focal points for MEAs**—often in environment ministries— who can act as bridges across ministries and help coordinate integrated financing strategies. Show that "*Agroecology is a flexible tool*" that contributes to multiple MEA targets, helping reduce the reporting burden on governments with limited capacity. Funding a workshop gathering different MEA focal points around the topic of synergies and joint reporting mechanisms can be a great door opener for joint resource mobilization.

3. Tap into Existing Resources and Reallocate Strategically

- **Start where the money is:** Rather than asking for new money, position agroecology as a strategy that delivers on already-funded national goals, such as food security, nutrition, or climate resilience, and through existing funding mechanism catering to those goals. This increases political feasibility and positions agroecology as cost-effective and "budget-neutral".
  - **Concrete opportunity:** budget for public meals and public procurement offers a concrete entry point. Agroecological sourcing also supports an equity agenda.
- **Advocate for a gradual shift in budget lines**: currently dedicated to unsustainable practices—particularly subsidies for agrochemical inputs — "*just bit by bit moving these amounts out of the national budget to another budget line*" for agroecology.

4. Create Institutional Leverage and Political Pathways

- **Engage political parties and ruling coalitions**: Participants stressed that in many African contexts, ruling political parties ultimately control budget priorities. Agroecology advocates must navigate and engage with these political dynamics to influence fiscal decisions.
  - **National case:** Agroecology gained traction in Zimbabwe when it became politically advantageous during elections. **Macroeconomic issues related to the cost of inputs, trade balance and shortage of cash flow** were amplified by political actors beyond the agroecological community.
  - **Door openers and tips: Identify and align with influential political figures or ruling parties**, especially during **pre-election phases**, when responsiveness to voters is highest.
  - **Door openers and tips:** Mobilize **non-CSO voices** (e.g. community leaders, constituency representatives) who can legitimize agroecology demands in political arenas.
  - **Door openers and tips:** Highlight how **chemical-intensive agriculture benefits foreign companies**, not domestic farmers and the local base—**whereas agroecology benefits farmers**, who are often strong electoral constituencies.
- **Support the establishment of dedicated institutions or departments** for small-scale or ecological farming to ensure consistent and dedicated budget allocation
  - **National case:** In Brazil, the Ministry of Rural Development provided an institutional anchor for smallholder and agroecological approaches, enabling more consistent funding.
- **Influence budget allocation through legal and litigation strategies**, holding governments accountable to continental commitments like the Malabo Declaration (10% budget for agriculture) or on pesticide importation.
- **Standardize costing methodologies for agroecological transitions**, enabling clear budget proposals and more robust planning at national levels. Current cost estimates often **underrepresent real needs**, focusing only on marginal participation costs rather than full implementation.

5. Strategic Use of International and Regional Institutions to institutionalize agroecology

- **Development banks as powerful actors:** "*development banks have more influence than UN agencies*" due to lending power and conditionalities. Engaging internal champions in these banks is vital. Influence priorities and conditionalities in favour of agroecology to leverage governmental co-funding.

Door openers and tips: Target Task Team Leaders (TTLs) at multilateral banks (e.g., World Bank, IFAD) rather than headquarters, especially during early project design stages; these project managers have more practical influence over how funding distribution is implemented.

Concrete opportunity: collaborate with UNEP Finance Initiative's efforts to work with banks and investors to integrate sustainability criteria into lending—potentially influencing support for agroecological projects.

Concrete opportunity: develop an Agroecology-focused investment assessment tool tailored to the needs of development banks. One key challenge is the perception that agroecology is too complex or fragmented for large-scale, fast-disbursing finance. The tool should demonstrate that agroecological programmes can be designed with operational simplicity, scalability, and clear impact metrics—making them compatible with development bank requirements.

- **Secure endorsements from respected international institutions and other credible institutions** to legitimize agroecology to potentially sceptical counterparts in finance ministries. Participants emphasized the importance of having "*the right institution supporting agroecology within the right space*."

  Door openers and tips: UN agencies as legitimizer - publications or policy briefs from UNDP, UNEP, or FAO can add authoritative weight to agroecology messaging. These can shift government positions even if similar messages exist elsewhere. This also helps coordinate messages across institutions.

- **Regional bodies can institutionalize agroecology:** in particular in trade and investment frameworks.

  Concrete opportunity: SADC's regional agricultural policy and investment plans already mention agroecology. Regional actors like COMESA and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) can embed agroecology in trade and investment frameworks, and regional funds (e.g., SADC Regional Agricultural Fund that is yet to be operationalised / funded by member states).

- **Influence the influencers:** Carefully map out the ecosystem of actors that shape government priorities and budget decisions, including both formal partners and informal advisors. Understanding who the government listens to—such as bilateral partners like GIZ or strategic technical allies—can open doors to advancing budget for agroecology through trusted channels.

  Door openers and tips: Leverage global platforms with political weight, such as the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty launched by Brazil as a gateway to bilateral and multilateral engagement on agroecology policy.

  Door openers and tips: Respected research institutions can also influence national discourse: for instance, Embrapa (Brazil) and CCARDESA (SADC) act as influential research bodies promoting agroecology. Their credibility can sway

policymakers but might need more support and positioning to exert their full influence on budget.

6. Coalition Building and Alliance

- **Build broad-based coalitions that combine civil society, research institutions, and ministries**, drawing lessons from other successful reform movements such as front-of-pack nutrition labelling.
  - **National case:** in Mexico and other Latin American countries advocacy campaign for front-of-package nutrition labelling was successful. There, philanthropies funded networks of researchers, NGOs, consumer groups, and ministries to coordinate a rapid, strategic advocacy. In Mexico, researchers produced a peer-reviewed paper and powerful communication products in a very short timeframe to support public health legislation. Speed and credibility were critical.
- **Invest in building capacity of frontline organisations on budgeting advocacy**, particularly CSOs and farmer associations, to enable sustained lobbying and agenda-setting. Key capacity strengthening areas concern building alliances, budget assessment, identification of resource opportunities
  - **Concrete opportunity:** develop an advocacy Toolkit on how to shape national budgeting and engage with institutions, ministries and departments in charge of budget.
- **Invest in the consolidation of subnational proof of concept that can be leverage at the national level:** These success cases provide empirical reference points for broader commitments. Also, leverage "role model" countries.
- **Establish regional South-South learning exchanges** (e.g., between Latin America and Africa) on agroecology integration and funding mobilisation.

7. Framing strategies and narratives for budget buy-in

Ministries of Finance and Planning make decisions based not only on cost-effectiveness, but on perceived political relevance, urgency, and alignment with national priorities. If an issue is framed as marginal or niche (as agroecology often is), it's unlikely to rise to the top of the budget list.

Broad framing to mobilize budget support:

- **Frame agroecology as a solution to pressing domestic issues**, in particular focus on food prices (incl. volatility), health risks from pesticides (e.g., in drinking water),

local economies and trade dependency (trade balance and impact on foreign exchange reserves) to gain broader traction.

- **Present agroecology as an agile solution to multisectoral crises**—climate, biodiversity, pollution, food security, disaster risk management (e.g., seed diversity and reserves to cope with disasters) while also offering job creation and economic benefits —thus appealing to diverse ministries beyond agriculture.
- **Avoid using the term "agroecology" when politically sensitive**; instead use broader terms like "transformation of agrifood systems" may help secure cross-sectoral support. Without compromising on agroecological red lines[1], combine elements of agroecology with elements from other approaches to get political buy-in.
- **Frame agroecology as modernised but culturally rooted practices** to counter narratives of it being "*foreign*" or "*anti-modern*". Emphasize that agroecology is not new, but "*a modernization of a cultural practice*," This framing resonates better politically and culturally.
- **Challenge industrial agriculture narratives** with robust data, stories and "*loud*" campaigns—e.g., present agroecology as more productive, economically beneficial, or socially equitable. Counter misinformation from agribusiness actors.
- **Frame agroecology as a cost-saving and risk-reducing investment**: Several participants stressed that agroecology should be framed not just as a cost, but as a means to avoid higher future costs ("*cost of inaction is persuasive to finance ministries*")—such as yield loss, increased health expenditures, ecological degradation.

Concrete actionable tip: Simplify messaging with 1 or 2 powerful statistics and amplify those: convincing Ministries of Finance sometimes requires "just one or two or three indicators/statistics" that are politically powerful. For instance, in Peru, citing that "*traditional markets feed 70% of Peruvians*" or "*the Agroecology national policy of Zimbabwe will impact 2.8 million people*" was enough to gain traction.

Resources:

- Expert workshop presentation
- Webpage on National Agroecology Strategies by Biovision Foundation

[1] Moeller, Nina Isabella, et al. "Measuring agroecology: Introducing a methodological framework and a community of practice approach." *Elem Sci Anth* 11.1 (2023): 00042. https://online.ucpress.edu/elementa/article/11/1/00042/197669/Measuring-agroecology-Introducing-a-methodologicalLink