

## Thematic 3

### How can agro-ecology be better integrated within value chains, with consumers, citizens and territories?

The first two themes focused mainly on changes in production systems that foster the transition towards agro-ecology. This transition must go hand in hand with changes in value chains to encourage, acknowledge and highlight the efforts made by producers to satisfy the changing demands of consumers, citizens and regions.

The success of this transition will rely on strengthening links with consumers, citizens and territorial development actors. Through their choices, they can encourage more ecological production methods or practices that meet their environmental, socio-economic, regional, ethical and health expectations.

Involving value chains in the agro-ecological transition can be considered as a positive contribution to the bio-economy, i.e. the production, mobilisation and valorisation of natural resources, which simultaneously creates value for farming and forestry sectors and helps create new products and new markets, thus providing consumers with alternatives to products derived from fossil fuels. The bio-economy can contribute to the ecological transition whilst keeping the balance between food security, needs for bio-based products and preserving ecosystems.

#### Three workshops will address this theme:

- The first one will be dedicated to the continuum food production – consumption;
- The second one will be devoted to the continuum production – consumption of bio-based non-food products;
- The third one will explore new governance models that facilitate integration with downstream sectors, consumers, citizens and territories.

- **Integrating agro-ecology in downstream sectors: food value chains**

The agro-ecological transition requires operational changes within farms, such as the introduction of new cropping systems involving longer rotations, land use changes, adaptations regarding livestock (new breeds, different products as regards age and conformity, etc.), moving back to mixed production systems that combine crops and livestock, as well as agro-forestry; either at farm or landscape levels. These changes require investments, adaptation periods, evolutions in the products supplied by farms but also in processing industries. They also require the identification of profitable markets for these new products. Agricultural diversification is also a response to changing consumers' demands.

Projects under this workshop will highlight in particular:

- the possibilities of increasing added value, of acknowledging farmers' efforts, and of diversifying farm income sources;
- alternative channels that improve the economic feasibility of the agro-ecological transition;
- market-based approaches that remunerate farmers for their environmental services to society.

- **Integrating agro-ecology with the downstream: non-food value chains**

The bio-economy contributes to the transition to a low-carbon economy (since it is based on renewable carbon rather than on fossil carbon) and can provide farmers with additional income. Creating new value chains to market new crops not only can contribute to the agro-ecological transition, it also calls for the involvement of a new set of stakeholders (research, processing, industry, marketing, construction, etc.): textile fibres, latex, biomaterials, biochemistry, cosmetics, etc. An alternative means to achieving the transition is through the recovery of animal or vegetable by-products.

Agro-ecology aims at closing production cycles, both on farms and at a regional level. It enables the agricultural sector to reduce and recycle both farm and food waste (for example, through methanisation and composting), as well as urban and industrial waste (by recovering organic matter). The agricultural sector therefore forms part of the circular economy and can be a driving force behind new regional dynamics.

Regarding biomass-derived energy, and aside from the energy consumed on site, the recovery of effluents (methanisation, etc.) and biomass (brushwood, hedge cuttings, etc.)

by farms contributes to the development of renewable energy sources and to the efficient and economic use of energy, typically within the local community.

The structuring of all these new channels requires the development of new links between stakeholders.

- **Governance models promoting the integration with citizens and territories, as well with the downstream and with consumers.**

Both agro-ecology and the sustainable management of forests aim at balancing the production of agricultural or forestry marketable goods with environmental services. These environmental services fall within the scope of environmental public or common goods and public sector interventions, which require innovative governance systems and models.

These public interventions may be organised at different levels: European, national, regional or local. They may also involve new stakeholders, such as associations, businesses, agencies, and citizens in innovative governance models.

Multi-stakeholders projects focusing on agro-ecology constitute good examples of good governance, for instance on water management, both from a qualitative (drinking water mainly) as well as a quantitative point of view, or on the preservation and restoration of habitats and biodiversity, or on the fight against climate change and air pollution.

These governance systems may also link public interventions and private approaches, among which labelling, including among others organic farming, high environmental value certification and private brands (green labels).

Furthermore, among the projects on display in this workshop, several involve and/or analyse the effects of public policies in triggering or preventing the shift towards agro-ecological practices in specific places, and provide food for thought on the consistency between, for instance, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, the European environmental legislation, national or regional policies on land-use planning, land tenure, legal right of access to the land, etc.

Finally, projects will also show various ways for rewarding the provision of environmental public goods, such as payments for environmental services (PES) and result-based agro-environmental payments.