

## New UN report

# Eco-farming can double food production

Small-scale farmers can double food production within 10 years in at-risk regions by using ecological methods, a new UN report shows. Based on an extensive review of the recent scientific literature, the study calls for a fundamental shift towards agroecology as a way to boost food production and improve the situation of the poorest.

"To feed 9 billion people in 2050, we urgently need to adopt the most efficient farming techniques available," says Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and author of the report. "Today's scientific evidence demonstrates that agroecological methods outperform the use of chemical fertilizers in boosting food production where the hungry live - especially in unfavorable environments."

Agroecology applies ecological science to the design of agricultural systems can help put an end to the food crisis and address the challenges of climate change and poverty. It enhances the productivity of soils and protects the crops against pests by relying on the natural environment such as beneficial trees, plants, animals and insects.

"To date, agroecological projects have shown an average crop yield increase of 80% in 57 developing countries, with an average increase of 116% for all African projects," De Schutter says. "Recent projects conducted in 20 African countries demonstrated a doubling of crop yields over a period of 3-10 years."

"Conventional farming relies on expensive inputs, fuels climate change and is not resilient to climatic shocks. It simply is not the best choice anymore today," De Schutter stressed that "A large segment of the scientific community now acknowledges the positive impacts of agroecology on food production, poverty alleviation and climate change mitigation - and this is what is needed in a world of limited resources.

The report points out that projects in Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh recorded up to 92% reductions in insecticide use for rice, leading to important savings



for poor farmers. "Knowledge came to replace pesticides and fertilizers. This was a winning bet and comparable results abound in other tropical countries."

"The approach is also gaining ground in developed countries. However, despite its impressive potential in realizing the Right to Food for all, agroecology is still insufficiently backed by ambitious public policies."

"We won't solve hunger and stop climate change with industrial farming on large plantations. The solution lies in supporting small-scale farmers' knowledge and experimentation, and in raising the incomes of smallholders so as to contribute to rural development." We can see a doubling of food production within 5 to 10 years in some regions where the hungry live," De Schutter says. "Whether or not we will succeed this transition will depend on our ability to learn faster from innovations. We need to go fast if we want to avoid repeated food and climate disasters in the 21st century." ■

The report 'Agro-ecology and the right to food' is available in English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Russian at [www.srfood.org](http://www.srfood.org)