

Women-led Agroecological Innovations for Climate Resilience: Evidence from the AgrEcoMed Project

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Context

- ❖ **Need for transformative pathways** towards sustainability of agri-food systems, due to climate change, biodiversity loss, socio-economic pressures (Geels, 2018; De Shutter, 2012)
- ❖ **Agroecological practices** emerged as **potential response** to the ongoing environmental and social crises affecting agri-food systems, which require transformations in production models and territorial relationships (Patel & Moore, 2017; Servigne, 2014; Calame, 2016; Geels, 2018)
- ❖ **Women empowerment** in agriculture key priority for enhancing global food security, agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability (FAO, 2023; Doss, 2017)
- ❖ Closing gender gaps in access to resources/opportunities
- ❖ Women as agents of innovation and transformation in sustainable agricultural practices (Caporali et al., 2010; Bocci, 2024)

Context

- ❖ **AgrEcoMed PRIMA** transnational cooperation project: developing innovative agroecological approaches to tackle climate change in the Mediterranean region
- ❖ task 5.3 "Gender equality through the analysis of good practices of women's ecological transition» addresses gender issues and young farmers
- ❖ Contribution of women and young-led agroecological initiatives to climate resilience and sustainable rural development



Agroecology as transformative paradigm

- Promoting changes affecting agri-food systems, rural economies and communities (production sphere and territories)
- Fostering climate resilience and territorial regeneration (Altieri, 2018; Wezel et al., 2020)
- Integrating multiple food-systems dimensions – ecological, economic, social, cultural, ethical, political (Bocchi, 2018; Wezel et al., 2009; Knickel et al., 2018)

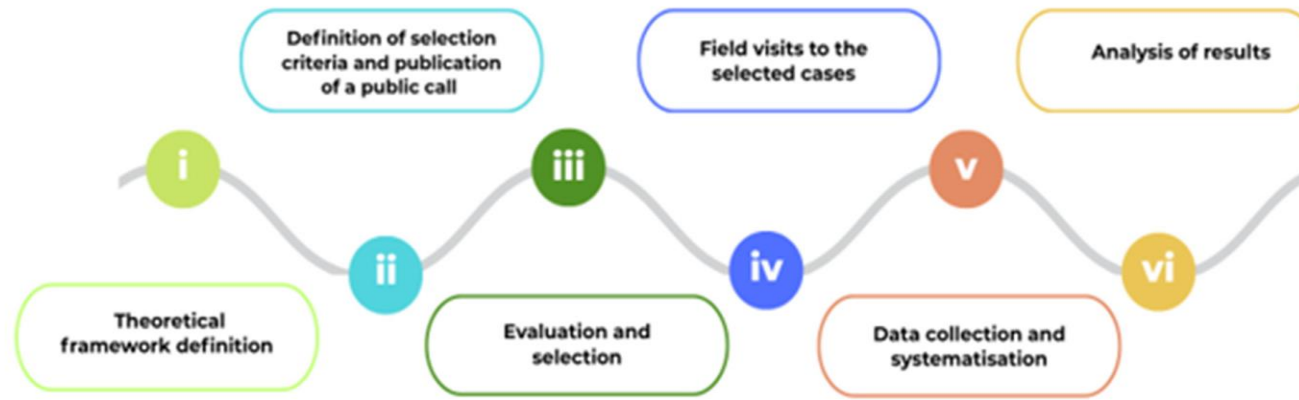
Multidimensional concept: science, set of practices, social movement (Wezel et al., 2009)



Agroecological transition demands the adoption of a **systemic approach** that integrates ecological, economic, and social dimensions

Methodology

- Research question: investigating women and young farmers role in driving agroecological transition addressing multiple dimensions, drawing on evidence from AgrEcoMed
- Analysis based on qualitative case study of 24 Italian agroecological initiatives led by women and young farmers



Ascani, Zanetti et al., 2026

Identification of selected cases:
structured selection process (literature review, stakeholders engagement, methodological document, call for good practices)



Multidimensional analytical framework
reflecting agroecological principles and transition dynamics (Berger-Schmitt, 2000; HLPE, 2019)

Analysis

- 24 selected agroecological practices: 18 women, 16 young farmers (men and women), average UAA of farms 39,5 ha, 4 cooperatives, arable cropping main production orientation, concentration in central-southern Italy
- Each practice undergone the following analysis:
 - a) **4 analytical dimensions** deriving from selection criteria
 - b) **13 Principles of Agroecology – 3 operational Axes:** (High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, 2019)
- **Empirical basis** for insights on the role of gender in agroecological transition towards climate-resilient agricultural systems

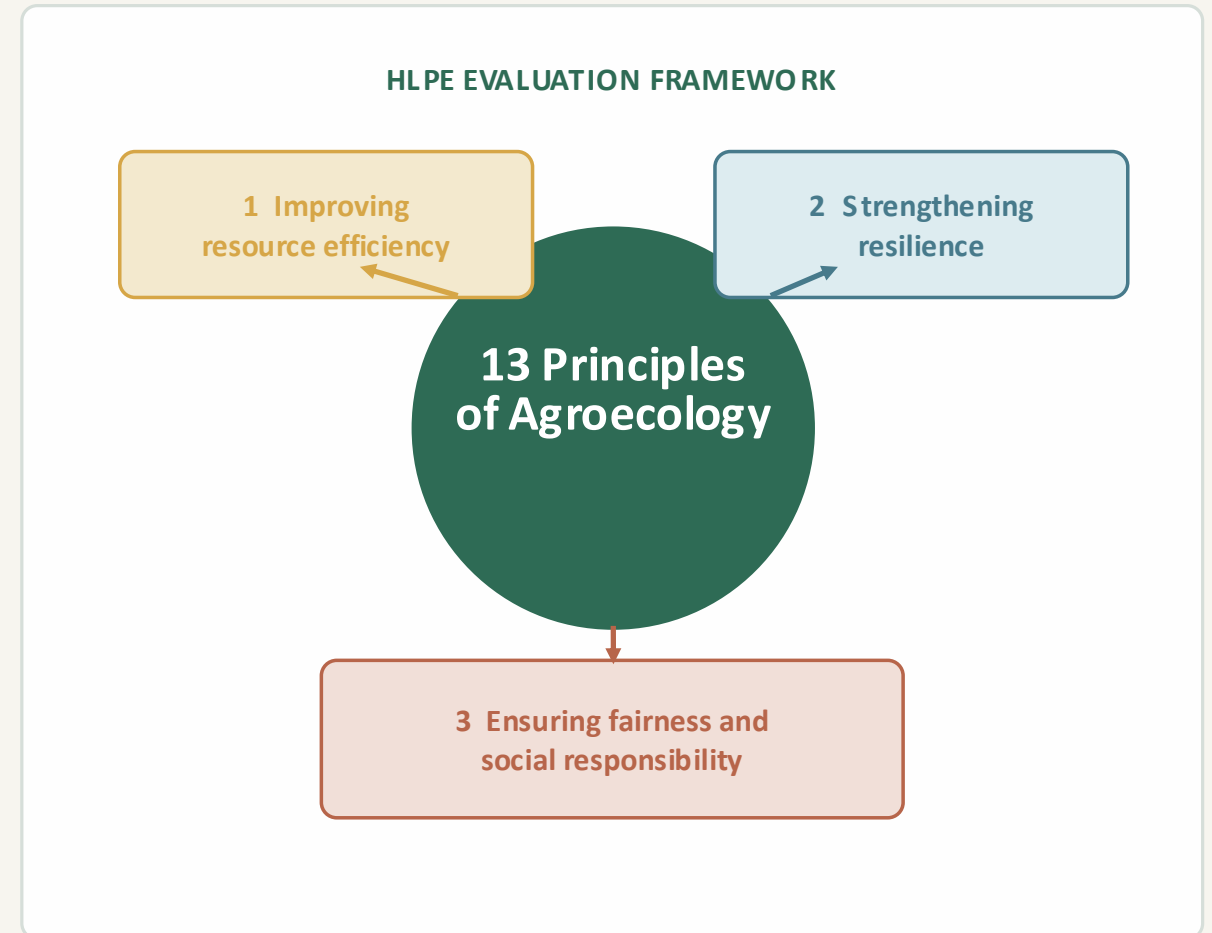
Analytical procedures

From four analytical dimensions to an HLPE-based evaluation framework

4 ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS



QUALITATIVE
CASE
ANALYSIS



Framework: High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE), 2019

Main findings: patterns of agroecology as transformative process

- ❑ Combination farm-level ecological practices (biodiversity enhancement, external inputs reduction, adaptive management of natural resources, etc.) – territorial, relational, multifunctional dynamics (eg. participation in short supply chains) (Anderson et al., 2019; Van der Ploeg et al., 2019; Knickel et al., 2018)
- ❑ Fostering social inclusion, knowledge co-creation, community engagement (Mouratadiou et al., 2024; Iuliano et al., 2021)
- ❑ Relational dimension: building of/participation in local networks, collaboration with research institutions, promotion of participatory approaches → social capital, collective learning processes (Berger-Schmitt, 2000; Knickel et al., 2018; Briamonte et al., 2026)
- ❑ Beyond input-reduction strategies (*weak agroecology*), including characteristics consistent with **strong agroecology**: broad agroecological pathways based on territorial reconfiguration – collective learning – reorganization of relationships between production, consumption, local communities (Wezel et al., 2020; Anderson et al., 2019) - Systemic approach as defining feature of strong agroecology
- ❑ Agroecological principles connect farm-level strategies with broader territorial dynamics: **transition at farm level gives benefits for local areas/communities**

Insights and future research

- Relevance of **agroecology** as environmentally sustainable **farming approach** + **broader** socio-ecological and territorial **transition process**
- **Role of women and young farmers** in fostering multifunctionality, innovation, territorial activation. Agroecological initiatives as local socio-ecological experimentations advancing sustainable innovation



«**Agroecological lighthouses**»: dissemination of knowledge, practices, relational models, enabling broader territorial transition, contributing to the regeneration of local agri-food systems and socio-economic resilience (Calame, 2016; Nicholls and Altieri, 2018)

Insights and future research

➤ Governance and policy:

- **supporting agroecological transition** via: farm level + territorial instruments recognizing multifunctionality and social dimension for scaling up territorial experiences (Briamonte et al., 2026; FAO, 2023)
 - **Networks creation** connecting farms, research, institutions, etc. for enhancing knowledge and territorial governance
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- **CropRotaM PRIMA** project (2026-2029) «Co-Creating Sustainable Agriculture Upscaling Crop Rotation and Biodiversity at the Farm Level through Living Labs and Digital Technologies» will focus on women empowerment via territorial engagement

Thanks for your attention!

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