



## Editorial

### Agroecology and small scale farming as a new development paradigm



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After a period of about three decades, in which agriculture and rural development in many countries of the Global South were neglected by development politics, a notable change is taking place during the last ten years. With the dramatic increase in food prices as a result of the food shortage in 2007/2008 and the protests in a number of countries, agriculture and nutrition have gained enormous interest in national and international politics as well as in private businesses. As a result the G8 Governments in 2009 created the so called "L'Aquila-Initiative" and agreed to provide 20 billion US\$ for a worldwide food security programme. The "New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition" was founded in 2012 and should mobilise additional investments from the private sector. However, in which direction would these activities develop and what has become of them by now?

In 2008 the "Global Report: Agriculture at a Crossroads" was presented as a result of several years of research and discussions of more than 400 experts from 110 countries. The report suggested a bottom-up approach for the development of an economically and ecologically sustainable and socially just agriculture. It stated agroecological methods should be supported to further develop such agricultural practices. The report pointed out that agricultural research and the dissemination of know-how and technologies should be related to indigenous knowledge of smallholder farmers and the local realities. This would not only enhance soil fertility and soil protection, but would also offer greater potential for increased soil productivity. Methods like the "System of Rice Intensification" have demonstrated this at the level of practical agricultural production.

The report clearly stresses that agricultural policy should be initiated and being carried out by small scale farmers, or even landless farmers, who are despite their marginalisation the biggest investors in food production in the Global South. Instead of "business as usual" a new approach to development is urgently needed, which no longer serves the interests of multinational corporations and industries, but is orientated on the needs of small scale farmers production and marketing realities. Not only the total amount of food produced is important but also who produces it, in which manner and for whom. The key element is the explicit acknowledgement of a "human right for food".

Governments of 58 States have signed the "Global Report" and therefore support the suggested change of the present agricultural policy. Unfortunately, a number of important countries have not signed the report and this is reflected in the activities of the "New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition", which was presented by Barack Obama at the G8 summit in 2012, which is dominated politically by the rich countries and economically by North American and European multinational companies in the agricultural and food business. Among those are Cargill, the world's biggest grain trader from the USA, Monsanto, which dominates the market for genetically modified crops/seeds, and also some European companies like Yara, Bayer Crop Science, Syngenta and AGCO. These activities are derived from the L'Aquila-Initiative of the G8 Governments in 2009, which was aiming for a significant improvement of food security in Africa south of the Sahara through a substantial increase in government funding. Signatories of the "Global Report" have become rather silent about this initiative, whereas the New Alliance is very actively aiming for direct and close cooperation between Governments in Africa and the private economic sector.

Pivotal for the New Alliance are co-operative agreements, in which, until now, ten African states have obliged themselves to alter the conditions for investments in favour of private commercial investments in agriculture in their countries. Part of those government measures are linked to the access to land: investors gain ownership over hundreds of thousands hectares of land in Tanzania, Mozam-

bique, Nigeria and Malawi. In these countries the regulations in the seed sector are strengthened in such a way, that farmers will have difficulties to continue their traditional practice of exchange or sell seeds they have produced themselves. Conditions for investments are being improved through tax reliefs or simplification of licensing procedures for new companies. It is frequently claimed that this will lead to an "African Initiative", because a vast number of companies involved are registered in African countries, however these are all internationally operating bodies of the private sector or they are financed with foreign money. Combined with the removal of trade barriers all of this is favouring export orientated businesses in agriculture and the food industry. As an incentive for African governments to join the New Alliance the donor states offer development aid in form of direct funds or aid through governmental developing agencies.

Common to all of these initiatives is the closer growing link between development policy and industry. Pivotal to all of this is the industrial agricultural model: global, export orientated added value chains, business models aiming for the market orientated farmers (so called "farmers with potential") and the opening for new markets for machinery, fertilisers, pesticides and seeds, including genetically modified plants. This is clearly stated in the U.S. Government's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative "Feed the Future": seven of the ten fastest growing economies worldwide are based in Africa and the profit margins of foreign investments are greater here than in any other developing region. Businesses in Africa are profitable. Here exists a growing potential for trade and agriculture. Not very much different is the initiative of the "German Food Partnership" (GFP), if one reads the statement of Bayer Crop Science, founder member of the GFP: "New products increase the visibility of Bayer Crop Science in Africa." We are making approximately 20% of our yearly total turnover with new products, which we have brought onto the market in 2013, in Africa and we are aiming to increase this to 90% by 2020." GFP as the "Initiative of the Commerce" claims to be more than just a common task by the companies to open new market opportunities and to increase the economic success through increased efficiency and eco-

conomic development implementing innovative business models. "Secure Nutrition" is the programmatic title of this partnership of companies, business associations and organisations for the German development cooperation. According to them the aim is the establishment of a sustainable agriculture (whatever they understand by this!) in developing countries and emerging economies. If one looks at the actors involved one can hardly believe that GFP is aiming for the benefit of small scale farmers and a decentralised food supply and food security system in Africa. These actors are:

- Bayer Crop Science, BASF, the Europlant Group and Syngenta as part of the global market leaders for seeds and agrochemicals.
- K+S Kali and the Norwegian company Yara are among the worldwide leading suppliers of fertilizers.
- VDMA (Association of the German industry for machinery and plant engineering), LEMKEN and the German branch of the worldwide operating concern AGCO are providing agricultural equipment.
- Amatheon Agri has just obtained 34.000 hectares in Zambia and represents a company for large scale monoculture cropping systems.
- Global food trade companies like Metro and Mars are also involved.

Partners in the foundation of GFP were also the German state development organisations GIZ (association for development - co-operation) and DEG (German investment and development association), which since some time already are operating as business companies in the area of consulting and development. The German Ministry for Development Co-operation functions as patron of GFP and also finances a significant part of GFP's projects and pays for the GFP secretariat, which is based within GIZ. It becomes obvious that the German companies are interested in this initiative because it offers access to new markets for seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and machinery and in addition also allows access to agricultural products

as well as on processing and marketing processes. The Ministry argues that all of this is based on an "analysis for the need of development policy", however the results of this analysis has never been published. It is also impossible to obtain financial figures about the commitment of the companies in the form of money, non-cash benefits or advisory activities in the various projects. The Ministry argues that business secrets must be respected and they claim that the sum for the company's involvement would be twice or three times higher than that of the Ministry. So much of this is not convincing information from the Ministry.

However, where is the added value for development policies in all of these activities? Who is actually concerned with the cultural dimension of all of these new mainly economically orientated projects? From the point of real development it is not acceptable to measure success in terms of an increase in agricultural production and a narrowly defined economic benefit only. In contrast, the improvement of the local food security, poverty reduction in rural areas, an increase in income on a broad level and an ecological sustainability are the parameters to measure real success in development. It is also important to include cultural aspects of agricultural production, food preparation and nutrition. Therefore, a set of criteria is needed to justify the spending of public money for development projects and to differentiate those clearly from the purely economic support activities. The former UN-rapporteur for the right for food, Olivier De Schutter, has pointed out repeatedly, that increased production and market orientation alone are not sufficient to secure the right for food. Furthermore he sees great dangers with capital intensive and low labour requiring production models in countries with high unemployment, as he points out in his report about Malawi. This demonstrates how problematic the close co-operation with businesses and the suggested additional value for development policies is.

This leads to the request that appropriate instruments for monitoring, evaluation and judgement are necessary and need to be developed to measure the success of the new partnerships. Unfortunately, judgement and valuation are difficult,

because of a general lack of transparency in all of these projects and processes. Media, parliaments and civil society involved in development policies are therefore not in a position to act as partners in furthering development policies, because it is impossible for them to demand, to control and to judge the fulfillment of the political promises and goals. Since governments are increasingly relying on national and globally acting companies, they are losing to a large extent the power of agenda setting and also giving up the responsibility in many areas of concern. Thus, the freedom of governments in decision making in development politics is limited to the support of marginalised rural groups, because an increasing portion of the public funds go into the support of so called "inclusive business models" for the "farming with potential". Furthermore, the politically supported growing influence of the agricultural industry and their hunger for resources endanger the chances for development for a vast group of farmers and rural populations, who are not fitting these business models, and therefore,

will be increasing poverty and marginalisation, combined with devastating cultural loss. However, these are the groups without a strong lobby, they have no voice, hardly any economic resources and play no role in agenda setting or decision making. These are the people in need of support from development programmes and policies, which are independent from vested interests of companies.

We are glad to publish our Volume 2 Issue 2 of the "Future of Food: Journal on Food, Agriculture and Society", on the theme of "Agroecology, Small Scale Farmers and Regional Development". The selected research papers presented in this volume will provide further critical insight of the thematic area in regional and global perspectives. Furthermore, this edition is enriched with book and film reviews that bring a critical outlook of the thematic issues and a report and analysis section with senior scientists' and practitioners' views.