Farmers' learning and understanding:

An inventory of selected Sufosec learning models and tools for Agroecology

Synthesis product of Phase 1 of the Agroecological Learning Journey

by the Sufosec Alliance members and partners

April 2022

Outline

1. Introduction

1.1. Why this inventory?

As part of a joint learning journey of the agroecological learning group of the Sufosec Alliance, in November 2021, over 100 participants came together in online workshops in three different languages to share their models for learning on agroecological practices. The present inventory is the result of this exchange process, and aims to present a selection of approaches practised by the Sufosec Alliance members and partners.

Across the different approaches, this documentation intends to identify common hindering and success factors for successful learning on agroecological practices. It shows that the crucial starting point of all learning is the knowledge of farmers. By that, it provides food and agricultural specialists and extensionists with the language and knowledge on how to build on farmers' knowledge, how to work best with farmers to extend and further co-create knowledge, understanding and joint activities.

1.2. An overview of the Sufosec Alliance

The learning journey and inventory has been designed by the Sufosec Alliance, which is the Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems and Empowered Communities between six Swiss non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Aqua Alimenta, Fastenaktion, Skat Foundation, SWISSAID, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, and Vivamos Mejor. The Alliance implements a joint programme 2021-2024 that is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented in partnership with NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) in 27 countries.

Building on each member's strength, the Alliance focuses on activities related to sustainable food systems and empowering communities (Figure 1). Strengthening nutritional security through service provision, shorter supply chains, local agroecological production, climate change adaptation, and participatory research are at the core of the Alliance.

Sufosec member organisations pool resources to create and share knowledge, and to explore and use synergies both in Switzerland and in the programme countries. To facilitate this process, Sufosec comprises different learning groups around the key topics of the Alliance: agroecology, local ownership, and the triple humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
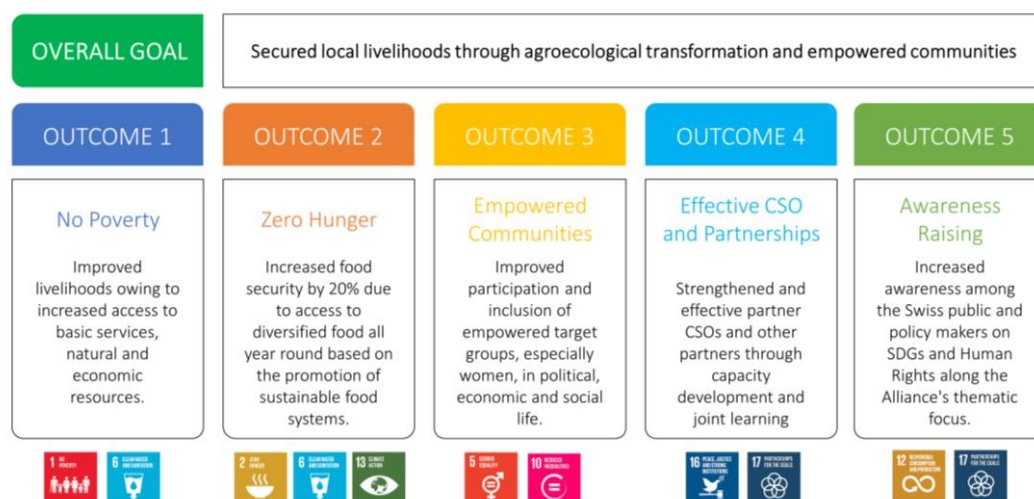

Figure 1 - Overall goal and outcomes of the Sufosec Alliance.

1.3. The Agroecology Learning Group and Learning Journey of the Sufosec Alliance

Agroecology, as part of the transformation process towards sustainable food systems and as a co-response to climate change, is a very knowledge-intensive field. The Agroecology Learning Group of the Sufosec Alliance collects and synthesises knowledge and experiences across different organisations and countries. The goal is to make this knowledge available to Sufosec members, partners and external actors, and hence improve future programme interventions. With this, Sufosec contributes to the upscaling of agroecological methods and positions itself as a credible actor in the field of sustainable food systems and agroecology.

The activities of the Agroecology Learning Group include a four-year Learning Journey (2021 – 2024), to gain insights on agroecology approaches and good practices. The iterative and agile learning process aims to facilitate exchange and co-create knowledge on promising practices, by involving actors from different regions/language groups and enabling the farmers' adoption of agroecology.

Based on the Theory of Change (ToC) developed for the Agroecological Learning Journey, an annual series of virtual exchanges is foreseen in three phases (Figure 2). An annual synthesis product presents the main messages of each phase, focusing on promising practices, critical factors and tools. A final synthesis will be released in 2024, presenting the overall outcomes of all phases.

The learning journey is designed in three phases:

- **2021 - Farmers' learning and understanding:** How should learning models and tools for co-creation of knowledge be designed to successfully enhance agroecological practices?

- **2022 - Farmers' application of promising practices:** What are critical factors and reasons for farmers to apply agroecological practices sustainably in the long term?

- **2023 - Enabling environment:** Which supporting elements and mechanisms should be in place for sustainable implementation of agroecological practices at scale?
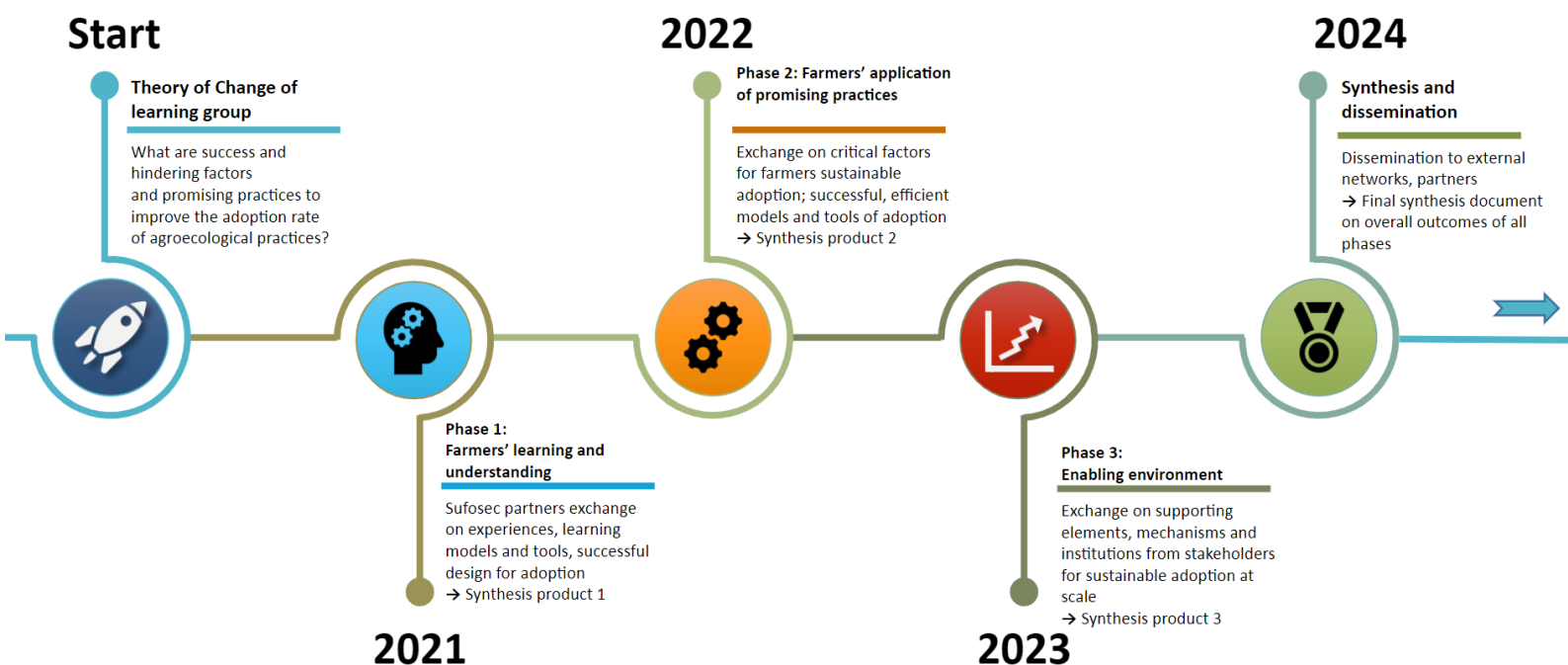

Figure 2 - Phases of the Agroecological Learning Journey of the Sufosec Alliance.

1.4.   How did the co-creation process work?

The co-creation process consisted of 5 interrelated steps: (i) Participatory workshops with the Sufosec partners; (ii) Compilation of the draft inventory by the agroecological core group; (iii) Consulting process with partners; (iv) Final editing by the core group; and (v) Sharing of the final product with partners and networks.

The online workshops with partners took place in November 2021. In total, 3 editions were carried out - one in each language (EN, FR and SP) - comprising 122 registrants from 24 countries and 98 attendees (FR: 36, EN: 33, SP: 29). Each workshop included a case study from Alliance members or partner organisations.

Based on the inputs gathered in the workshops, the core group compiled the draft synthesis report. Next, the draft report was sent to partners for expert consultation, over a period of 2 weeks. After the consultation period, the final compilation and editing of the inventory report was completed by the core group. The final product will be shared with all Sufosec Alliance partners, SDC's Agricultural and Food Systems network as well as with other agroecological partnering networks.

1.5.   Who is this inventory for?

The target audiences of this inventory include:

- Primarily **Sufosec members and local partners**: all alliance members, coordination/country offices/focal points, and partner organisations.
- **SDC's Agriculture and Food Security Network** (SDC A+FS) **and other external stakeholders and partners**, including Agroecology Works, World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) and others.
- **Practitioners** in the field of agriculture and agroecology.
- **Learning and co-creation of knowledge** initiatives.

2.   Learning for agroecology

2.1.   Co-creation of knowledge and learning for Agroecology

As agroecology is a very knowledge-intensive and context-specific field, it means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach for agricultural challenges and solutions. The adoption of agroecological practices by farmers is still an issue, especially due to the way that knowledge is generated and shared. Top-down models of technology have had limited success, and it has become clear that agricultural innovations respond better to local challenges when they are co-created through participatory processes. Co-creation and sharing of knowledge is formulated as one of the 10 elements of agroecology according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)[1], and of the 13 agroecological principles of the High Level Panel of Experts[2].

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[1] Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (2022): Co-creation and sharing of knowledge: agricultural innovations respond better to local challenges when they are co-created through participatory processes. Available here.
[2] High Level Panel of Experts (2019): Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. Available here.

Co-creation and sharing of knowledge:

- Plays a central role in the process of developing and implementing innovations to address challenges.
- Brings together different stakeholders to learn and improve agroecological practices.
- Puts farmers' knowledge needs and knowledge in the centre and builds on them.
- Blends traditional and indigenous knowledge, producers' and traders' practical knowledge, and scientific knowledge.
- Can include both formal and non-formal learning, analog extension and e-extension.

2.2.   Challenges in learning for Agroecology

Many challenges in learning for agroecology remain. During the participatory workshops in November 2021, the participants were invited to brainstorm on the most urgent ones. Some of the challenges commonly listed were:

- Lack of access to knowledge and evidence
- Need of examples and successful demonstration of agroecological practices

The full results of the brainstorming process on agroecological learning challenges is shown below (Figure 3):

Figure 3 - Participant inputs on the most urgent challenges in learning for agroecology (English, French and Spanish workshops).

3. Inventory of applied Agroecology learning models and tools by Sufosec Alliance partners

3.1. Overview of discussed learning models

In the spirit of joint participatory learning and co-creation of knowledge, interested staff of the Coordination Offices, direct partners' staff working with farmers on agroecology, and farmers were invited to join the workshops. The idea was for them to provide key questions and success stories that could be shared in the online workshops. In 2021, the focus was on partners' experiences and approaches in working with farmers on agroecological practices.

❖ **Which learning approaches, models and tools have been working for Sufosec partners or not? How do they need to be designed to enhance agroecological practices?**

To approach this question, the participatory workshops in November 2021 engaged the participants in several collective intelligence exercises. They were invited to record the most promising approaches, models and tools for farmers' learning and understanding at the field level. An overview of these inputs is presented below (Figure 4). In the next step, specific approaches were selected to be discussed in more detail (section 3.2.).
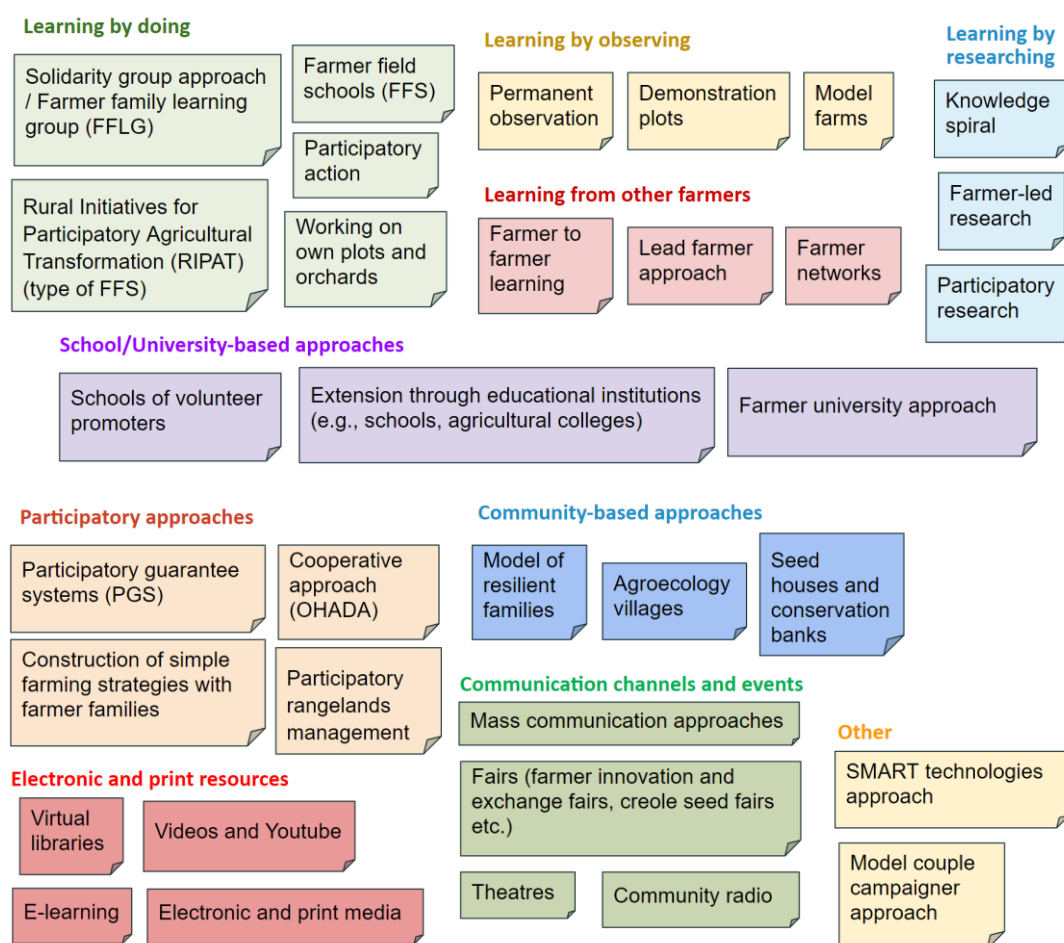
Figure 4 - Outputs of the collective intelligence exercise on the most promising approaches, models and tools for farmers' learning and understanding at the field level (results comprise inputs from the three workshops in November 2021).

3.2. Selected learning models and tools by Alliance partners

This section presents a synthesis for each of the learning models and tools that were selected by the Alliance partners. As not all collected approaches could be discussed in detail during the workshops, the facilitators selected those learning models that seemed most relevant to the context of the partners. The selection was based on investigations carried out by the Alliance as well as on the insights collected during the three workshops in November 2021. An overview of the selected models and tools is shown in the following section.

The models were divided into five categories: (i) Learning by observing; (ii) Learning by doing; (iii) Learning by researching; (iv) Learning from other farmers; and (v) Mass learning tools. It is important to highlight that these tools can be combined and that they should be adapted to fit into the local context and needs of the farmers/ communities. They should be designed as a systematic and systemic approach, which takes all dimensions of sustainability (socio-cultural, economic, environmental, institutional) as well as the available resources of farmers into account. As the models are often adjusted to fit into the specific context, it should be noted that many learning models have similar approaches, but emphasise a specific aspect. It is often the case that they are interrelated; therefore, a sharp line is sometimes difficult to draw.

3.2.1. Learning by observing

Learning by observing is a critical part in farmers' understanding of agroecological practices. The three approaches highlighted during the workshops were i) Permanent observation, ii) Model farms and iii) Demonstration plots. The combining element of the approaches is that the farmer has the opportunity to observe the hands-on application of agroecological practices and thus the

Learning by observing

| Permanent observation | Demonstration plots | Model farms |

potential results they can bring. As demonstration plots are one of the most commonly used practices, the workshop participants looked at it in more detail, discussing advantages and disadvantages as well as hindering and success factors.

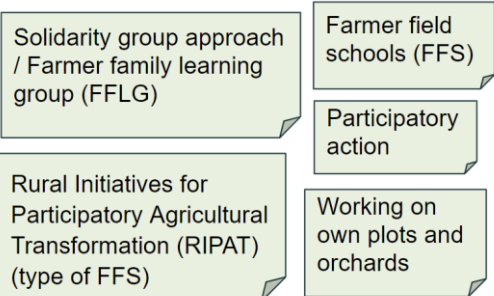| Learning model	Demonstration Plots
Description	Plots for practical demonstration of techniques and exchanges, which can be farmers' fields or other locations (e.g., research or showcase centres initiated by projects) with a showcase purpose to convince and arouse curiosity.
Advantages	- Is accessible to all - Is convincing when successful - Arouses the curiosity of farmers - Allows to correct mistakes on the spot - Farmers do not need to carry out extensive research on their own

Disadvantages	• Can be challenging to create a sense of ownership by the farmers • Is less useful if there are different climatic conditions between showcase site and own farm
Critical success factors	• Good visibility and planning • Good control of the practices / techniques demonstrated • Relevant and accessible experiences • Ownership of local actors • Use of appropriate tools to overcome literacy limitations • Studies / analyses of cultural, social and economic contexts before implementation (to ensure the right approach is chosen for each region)
Hindering factors	• Distance of demonstration plots from villages • Land tenure problem • Low literacy / low ability to record information
Group verdict on appropriateness	• Inputs and materials must be locally available, and accessible to small-scale producers • Techniques showcased must meet the local needs of farmers and must be easily replicable at home

3.2.2. Learning by doing

Approaches that foster learning by doing provide farmers a space to test, validate and adapt agroecological practices. These approaches can either be accompanied by technical support, e.g by an agricultural extension agent, or be directly implemented on the farmers' own plots and orchards. Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are the most frequently used learning model to promote good agricultural practices. Systematic research reviews show that there is strong evidence that Farmer Field Schools have a positive

Learning by doing

Solidarity group approach / Farmer family learning group (FFLG)

Rural Initiatives for Participatory Agricultural Transformation (RIPAT) (type of FFS)

Farmer field schools (FFS)

Participatory action

Working on own plots and orchards

impact on food and nutrition security through higher income, increased plant/crop production as well as positive outcomes on the human weight and health status at birth of children[3]. There are many varieties of this learning model that emphasise different aspects, e.g. having a focus on solidarity, on families or on transformation.

[3] Moore, N, Lane, C, Storhaug, I, Franich, A, Rolker, H, Furgeson, J, Sparling, T and Snilstveit, B. 2021. *The effects of food systems interventions on food security and nutrition outcomes in low- and middle-income countries, 3ie Evidence Gap Map Report 16*. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). Available here and evidence gap map available here.

Learning model	Farmer Field Schools (FFS)
Description	Co-learning approach that provides space for groups of farmers to test, validate and adapt agroecological and business practices along the whole cultivation cycle. It is based on the real needs of farmers and takes place directly on the field, facilitated by very attentive coaches. This methodology combines research and education, and values inherited wisdom and intergenerational knowledge transfer.
Advantages	• Creates centres where agroecological knowledge is produced, collected and developed • Co-constructs innovations and production network • Forms the beginning of implementation systems • Shares resources (seeds, tools etc.) • Can group various agroecological practices together to demonstrate their differences • Integrates economical aspects of production into the demonstrations • Empowers farmers to share knowledge and take responsibility • Allows farmers to speak in their language and to build trust among each other • Supports active participation / learning and systems of mutual help • Recognises wisdom inherited between generations • Allows farmers and actors to monitor and evaluate practices in a cyclical process to further improve practices
Disadvantages	• May not reflect real conditions of farmers (impairs replication in the field) • Is often designed as a centralised model that sometimes is geographically distant from where farmers and communities reside • Can pose a challenge for female farmers to participate (distance and time away from home) • Can cause a higher risk of animal disease transmission between farms in FFS with livestock, if learners do not respect the barrier measures during visits (e.g. foot baths)
Critical success factors	• Adequate social mobilisation and acceptance of farmers to the concept (requires a common understanding of farmers/ community as well as farmers who are willing to learn and share knowledge) • Comprehensive needs assessment before implementation and adaptation of practices to each context / situation • Concrete results and technologies / practices that are replicable and adoptable by farmers (can be identified in a participatory approach) • Incorporation of both scientific and ancestral knowledge • Activities are implemented considering the agricultural calendar • Transparency on land issues and crop yield distribution • Clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of members (groups, facilitators, partners)

	- Good relationship between group and facilitator is key (selection of a farmer with high motivation to manage the FFS) - Involvement of multipliers - Relationship with government and line departments to leverage resources for the farmers - Process should not become a time burden to farmers - Provision of snacks / funds to compensate farmers - Accompaniment and monitoring that involves farmers (e.g. identify "farmer practices" and monitor a few producers to enable comparison with dominant practices in the area)
Hindering factors	- Farmers face risks in adapting to / testing new techniques (fear of losing resources) - Poor exchange of knowledge leading to lack of conceptual understanding by the involved actors - Lack of FFS standardisation does not enable comparison and requires more resources (at the same time, standardisation could prevent exchange and context-specific and appropriate initiatives) - Poor diagnosis of the selected sites in relation to the cultivation history and soil conditions - High expectations of farmers to implement activities in the FFS can lead to disappointment and reduce motivation, if expectations are not met - Limited literacy skills of some farmers (which compromise the uptake) - Authorities and farmers with more power may underestimate FFS, which influences and demotivates other farmers to visit and learn from FFS - Involvement of multiple actors complicates coordination - Limited training of technicians can lead to poor decisions, in those cases e.g. a rapid replacement of technicians or facilitating farmers would be needed - Limited resources in terms of equipment and tools - Land tenure of the FFS can be problem - Financial sustainability is difficult as investments are required, financial means are lacking, and the level of government investment in agricultural innovation is low
Group verdict on appropriateness	- It is a widely used and proven concept. It is an appropriate learning model if it is adapted to the local context and should be accompanied by other complementary learning methodologies.
Useful links to background and learning materials	- [FFS for small-scale livestock farmers (FAO)](#)

Learning model	Solidarity Groups / Farmer Family Learning Groups
Description	Solidarity Groups / Farmer Family Learning Groups are groups of farming households, who jointly define the needs and goals for their own learning and future development. This approach promotes joint learning on leadership and agroecology and can be applied at community or family / household level.
Advantages	- Socially embedded within the community - Fields directly accessible within the community (in the solidarity groups, members rotate between each farmer field to learn on the various topics) - Leadership and decision-making at the community level - Shared workload, which decreases the burden of individual farmers in implementing agroecological techniques - Faster conscientisation through which learners become actively engaged in identifying elements for change - Self-regulated, -paced and -targeted process - Common nurseries (sharing of seeds / seedlings) - Nursery managers selected and paid through external support
Disadvantages	- Limitation on trained community volunteers - Group members are excluded if rules are not followed
Critical success factors	- Trust-based approach - Engaged members - Integration of every farm into the learning sites - Groups define their common values (e.g. joint labour) and the contributions from each member according to their capabilities - Competent community animator available, which is recruited from the community - Works well when there is labour shortage and farmers thus have time to invest in new learning (often youth facing insufficient labour or employment) - Formalisation of groups with by-laws and leaders - Network building (e.g. by eating and working together) - Transfer of power from a central to a lower level, e.g. to the local administration (principle of subsidiarity, devolution)
Hindering factors	- High levels of solidarity required - High time effort to manage those who are not contributing labour - Youth migration to cities due to labour shortages in villages - Government policies / strategies focused on conventional agriculture rather than agroecology
Group verdict on appropriateness	- Requires intensive coaching - The approach still needs further development

3.2.3. Learning by researching

Research-based learning models support farmers and researchers to jointly experiment different agroecological practices. They involve a more systematic review of results than other learning models and thus can create a higher level of trust in the results. They can either be led by farmers or by researchers, involving farmers in a participatory way.

Learning by researching

Knowledge spiral

Farmer-led research

Participatory research

Learning model	Participatory Research
Description	Social research approach in which the community participates in the analysis of the context and in the generation of proposals or solutions. Involves cooperation with universities and research institutes; exchange with farmers; feedback loops; observation sharing with farmers; and mother and baby trials.
Advantages	- Collaboration and knowledge sharing between researchers and farmers in the field - Moments of reflection that allow for backtracking, adjusting and correcting strategies - Ideas and problems of farmers are considered - Consumers are involved (e.g. to give feedback to farmers on products / seeds) - Solutions are developed based on the constant learning of the beneficiaries with other actors - Inclusion of most actors in the decision-making - Local, social, economic and political contexts are analysed in much greater depth
Disadvantages	- Difficult scaling up / out - Communication barriers (research language versus farmer language) - Challenges in combining academic and farmer models
Critical success factors	- Considering the knowledge and concerns of farmers - Process needs to be adapted according to the time availability of the beneficiaries - Participation (involve all actors from start to finish; farmers must bring research closer to them) - Knowing the methodology - Socialisation of experiences (generate spaces for participation and reflection) - Recognising farmers local, non-modified seeds - Accompaniment, recording tools and documentation for monitoring and evaluation - Long-term vision

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Hindering factors	- Availability of land / resources (e.g., water) - Great amount of time required - High percentage of financial investment needed - Traditional practices can prevent replication of practices - Low acceptance by the community can lead to low participation in the process - Possible manipulation of the researcher by the community (e.g. for gaining specific results) - No systematisation of research - Risk of environmental disasters can lead to loss of work and production
Group verdict on appropriateness	Adaptable and replicable model

3.2.4. Learning from other farmers

Peer-to-peer exchange between farmers is an often underestimated learning model, as it promotes knowledge that is already available and appropriate for the local context. As a trust-based approach, learning from concrete experiences of other farmers in the own language may favour the uptake of knowledge.

Learning from other farmers

| Farmer to farmer learning | Lead farmer approach | Farmer networks |
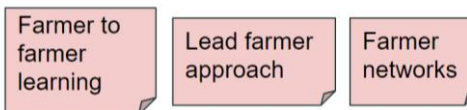
Learning model	Farmer-to-Farmer Approach
Description	In this participatory process for the promotion and improvement of rural production systems, farmers teach from their own practical experience (successes, lessons learned, hindering factors, adjustments etc.). This approach can be seen in two ways: (i) Each farm serves as an agroecological beacon or model farm, where farmers can go to learn, and (ii) Farmer promoters go to teach others on their own farms.
Advantages	- Learning from observation and concrete experiences, in a language that is simple and appropriate to the context - Enhancement and sharing of local knowledge - Techniques adapted and tested on-site - Adoption of strategies without hesitation or reluctance - Multiplier effects of practices - Ease of implementation (not many resources required) - Accessible to a large number of farmers - Proximity and ease of communication between farmers - Consideration of socio-cultural factors

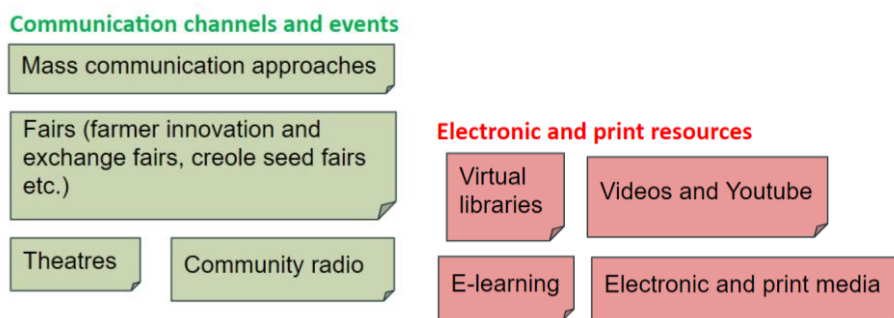|	
Disadvantages	• Continuous need for group motivators (i.e. promoters, facilitators) • Potentially not much innovative input
Critical success factors	• Small-scale experimentation which is recognised by farmers • Creating immediate feedback between farmers • Dedicated model farmers • Training of promoters as a permanent task (school must consider its increasingly autonomous permanence) • In some contexts, it may be necessary to give financial recognition to promoter farmers (especially if they need to move between farms) • Consistency in monitoring the process
Hindering factors	• Distance between families in some areas • Qualification linked to payment • Intimidation and lack of self-confidence (some farmers feel intimidated towards more knowledgeable ones) • Mistrust or antipathy between farmers • Time required for replication (can become a constraint in short projects) • Pressure from government programmes (seek quick results and high production through non-agroecological technologies, without considering if the processes is appropriate to each region and community)
Group verdict on appropriateness	• The farmer-to-farmer methodology is appropriate and applicable for strengthening the agroecological processes. It enables learning from existing practical experiences and replicating in other areas, without forgetting that each place, region, ecosystem and community is different. • The model is appropriate when farmers learn not only agroecological practices but also principles. The latter enable reading the different agroecosystems and adapting the practices to the local contexts. Principles, rather than recipes, should be replicated.

3.2.5. Mass learning tools

Mass learning tools have a large potential to reach many farmers with targeted knowledge, while compromising on in-depth application of practices, as they cannot be demonstrated nor corrected as easy on the spot in the field, like e.g. in farmer-field-schools. Nevertheless, mass learning tools can involve farmer-to-farmer exchange as well as farmer-to-expert exchange. There are a variety of communication channels for distributing knowledge, including theatres, radio, fairs, e-learning, electronic and print media. It needs to be carefully decided which channels are appropriate for the different target groups, taking constraints such as limited (e-)literacy into account.

Learning model	ICT Platforms for Agroecology
Description	Mobile app or web platform that enables farmer-to-farmer and farmer-to-expert audiovisual communication and exchange.
Advantages	• Farmer-to-farmer exchange supported by experts • Links different stakeholders and can reach many users • Quick real-time exchange of information • Messages can be created offline • Voice-recording / pictures • Day-to-day updates to external stakeholders as part of an online monitoring tool
Disadvantages	• Requires extensive project support for initiation, as many small-scale farmers are not familiar with smartphones • Difficulty in reaching the most vulnerable (lack of access to devices, connectivity, phone literacy etc.)
Critical success factors	• Train farmers in agroecology and in using the app (e.g., through a training of trainers) • Financial sustainability aspects: increase the number of partners and users, find ways of co-hosting, foster formats in which farmers carry out the maintenance on their own phones and increasingly pay for their bundles • Access to internet • Cost of response / supervision / quality insurance
Hindering factors	• Affordability (although farmers have shown willingness to buy bundles if the app is useful to them) • Low-quality devices • Access to ICT resources (devices, internet, bundles, etc.) • Does not replace face-to-face interactions

Group verdict on appropriateness	• The platform is appropriate for quick extension service provision to farmers. Through the learning platform, experiences, knowledge and expertise can be shared from farmer to farmer and between farmers and experts.
Useful links to background and learning materials	• Macho Sauti Platform: A sample success story of how challenges in the tomato production were overcome (see problem and solution here).

Learning model	Community Radio Stations
Description	Promotion of agroecological practices through community radio stations.
Advantages	• High coverage radius and audience reach • Favourable audience timing • Low-cost (radios are usually inexpensive) • Accessible language and qualified communicators • Message formats (spots, radio campaigns) • Jingle (short music to introduce the message) • Interactive programmes
Disadvantages	• Radio is influenced by access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), like phones or radio stations • Audience may be limited for younger age groups (listening to the radio is more common among older people) • Practices cannot be communicated visually, which can limit the in-depth understanding
Critical success factors	• Quality of resource persons • Coverage / reach of radio • Language of broadcast • Possibility of rebroadcasting • Combining radio with ICT • Cost
Hindering factors	• In some communities, financial resources may be limited to acquire a radio device
Group verdict on appropriateness	• Radio communication is established in the rural environment

Learning model	Theatres
Description	Dissemination and popularisation of different agroecological practices through open-air theatres and sketches in rural areas.
Advantages	• Very accessible in rural areas • Can reach many participants, including young people who are often involved in farming • Promotes social cohesion (everyone gets together) • Message is passed on in the local language • Previous evaluation of this approach has shown that many producers have adopted new practices
Disadvantages	• Reduced participation during extreme weather seasons • In-depth, individual learning of specific agroecological practices is limited
Critical success factors	• Inclusiveness (officials, local elected representatives, authorities, customary dancers etc.) • Preparation (at least 1 month in advance) • Well-defined messages • Relay on local radio stations to advertise theatres and continue to pass on the message • Need to be combined with other methods to follow-up on disseminated messages
Hindering factors	• Some messages may be perceived as sensitive or controversial in rural areas (this is less the case with agroecological practices)
Group verdict on appropriateness	• It can be very appropriate if adjusted to the specific local context, as it can communicate knowledge in a visual and appealing fun way

3.3. Synthesis of successful and hindering factors for farmers' learning and understanding

Based on the review of the inputs on the learning models, the following success and hindering factors common to all models were identified.

Success factors

- Contextualisation to farmers' needs and local realities (incl. analyses of cultural, social and economic contexts before implementation)
- Incorporation of ancestral and local knowledge
- Concrete examples and evidence of success
- Ownership by the farmers and/or community
- Replicability (techniques are easily replicable with local resources available)
- Accessibility (distance from home, time demands, materials required, literacy limitations etc.)
- Acceptability (trust-based approach that is accepted by farmers)
- Clear definition of roles (e.g., groups, facilitators / animators, partners etc.)
- Engaged participants (willing to learn and to share knowledge and experiences)
- Inclusiveness (farmers / families are engaged in all steps of the process)
- Accompaniment and long-term vision
- Informing governmental policies and/or regulations
- Monitoring and evaluation throughout the process (to enable adaptation to specific contexts in a timely manner)

Hindering factors

- Conventional / traditional farmer practices that stand in the way of agroecology
- Risks that farmers face to adapt or test new technologies
- Lack of conceptual understanding
- Land tenure problems
- Availability of resources
- Time limitations
- Limited (e-)literacy
- Financial sustainability
- Lack of governmental support
- Motivating people for agroecology and for assuming animator / facilitator / leader roles

4. Concluding remarks

The Learning Journey of the agroecological learning group brought together over 100 Sufosec Alliance partners to share and discuss their models for learning on agroecological practices. The results of the selected approaches, presented in this inventory, demonstrate that a variety of approaches is used by the partners to foster farmers' learning on agroecological practices.

A common demand of alliance partners for achieving effective learning is that learning models are appropriately applied and adapted to the local needs and contexts. It was also indicated that they should be based on participatory processes, with the involvement of farmers and local stakeholders.

Even though there clearly is not a one-size-fits all approach, the results unveil that the learning models of the Sufosec partners interestingly follow the same joint learning principles: fostering local ownership, inclusiveness, acceptability, accessibility, and sustainability, including a long-term perspective. The clear allocation of roles and resources, monitoring and evaluation as well as taking stakeholder's interests and power relations into account are crucial elements in this regard.

As agroecology is a knowledge-intensive process, investments into co-creative learning processes pose one of the most important aspects to foster agroecological transformative pathways in the long-term. We hope that this inventory, alongside the exchange between Sufosec partners, provides a common basis for food and agricultural specialists and extensionists to shape co-creation processes with farmers, this way fostering agroecological knowledge, understanding and joint activities.

The next two phases of the agroecological learning journey will look at (i) Critical factors and reasons for farmers to apply agroecological practices sustainably in the long term (farmers' application of promising practices) as well as (ii) Supporting elements and mechanisms (enabling environment) that need to be in place to allow a sustainable implementation of agroecological practices at scale. We are looking forward to discussing these important elements with you in the upcoming phases.

5.   Annex

Links to slides of collaborative workshops

The following online slides provide the basis for the creation of this inventory of learning models. The slides include short descriptions, advantages and disadvantages of each model:

- Workshop 1 in English
- Workshop 2 in French
- Workshop 3 in Spanish

Contact

If you would like to join the next phases or receive more information, please contact Sandra Fürst, sandra.fuerst@skat.ch or Rena Salzmann, rena.salzmann@skat-foundation.ch.

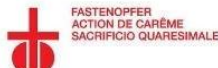**Skat Foundation** - as part of the Agroecological Learning Group of the Sufosec Alliance

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