



ileia

2013



agri
cultures
NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT



Photo: Ray Magagula

Summary

Upscaling agro-ecological approaches is the need of the hour

ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network have a historic role to play in the International Year of Family Farming. In several ways, the year 2013 was a year of preparation towards this major opportunity to strategically position our magazines, documentation work, advocacy and network.

Agriculture is at the centre of several crises: the food crisis, economic crisis, environmental and climate crisis. The dominant model of agriculture has created a state of disconnectedness between producers and consumers, between practices and nature and between global actors and local producers. However, agriculture has the potential to be part of the solution. Over the past 29 years, members of our network have mobilised and shared relevant practical experiences which illustrate that sustainable small-scale family farming presents a model of agriculture which is spreading every day and which has great potential to feed at least half the world's population in a sustainable manner. For this to happen, it is essential that knowledge on sustainable family farming be nurtured, shared and scaled up. Contrary to what many believe, feeding the world in the year 2050 is not just a matter of the private sector taking charge and fixing the problem, or of exporting the Dutch intensive agriculture model (as was recently proposed by the head of Wageningen University). Addressing the food question begins by acknowledging the crucial contribution of 400 million small-scale farm families (roughly 1.5 billion people) around the world, and by appreciating the proven effectiveness of many agroecological methods. The need of the hour is a massive upscaling of agroecological approaches and a global policy environment that supports such approaches.

Today, ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network enjoy the recognition of, among others, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, and the Chairman of the Commission on Food Security, Dr Yaya Olaniran, for their role in the up-scaling of sustainable family farming practices around the world. With their support we hope to strengthen our role as knowledge catalyst and bridge builder – between practical experience-based knowledge, formal science and policy – in the years to come.

**Edith van Walsum, director of ILEIA, secretariat of the AgriCultures Network
July 2014**



Amplified AgriCultures Network strategy

Our knowledge building and sharing work in 2013 shows that the time is now ripe to play an active and visible role in the mainstreaming of agroecology and family farming. Our amplified strategy has five key results areas: *global and regional knowledge sharing, documentation, agricultural education, policy advocacy and network strengthening.*

More than before, we give importance to advocacy and to networking and bridge building with other actors around the world. As AgriCultures Network, we continuously share knowledge and experience and we collaborate in advocacy. The AgriCultures Network positions itself more strongly in global debates than it did in the past. In 2013 a governance group was formed with the mandate to propose governance mechanisms to the network and to oversee their implementation. This will help the network to function effectively as a global player.

1. Knowledge sharing and magazines

What we did

All seven members of the AgriCultures Network developed four magazines around the following themes in 2013:

- 1 **System of Rice Intensification**
- 2 **New markets, new values**
- 3 **Education for change**
- 4 **Family farming: a way of life**

This last issue coincided with the start of the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) and presented a theme overview 'Ten qualities of family farming' that has been widely shared, quoted and translated. We have continued with the transition towards digital magazines, a process that began in 2012. We have begun developing an integrated outreach strategy that will help strengthen overall visibility. In the articles in *Farming Matters*, we have made effort to emphasize more the political context and the significance of the field experiences that we present.

Visit [Agriculturas](#), [Agridape](#), [Farming Matters](#), [LEISA China](#), [LEISA India](#) and [LEISA revista de agroecología](#).

What we achieved

In 2013, *Farming Matters* alone reached 440,000 readers. Most of our readers (96%) now access the magazine online. We saw a 21% increase in friends and followers through social media. The total outreach of the six regional editions is roughly the same as that of *Farming Matters*, which brings us to an overall estimat-

“Farming Matters brings practical solutions to current crises of climate change, food insecurity and environmental degradation”

(Readers' survey 2013)

ed outreach of around 900,000. Our magazines have become increasingly recognised as an informative resource on current issues related to family farming and agroecology. Testament to this are the positive reviews and feedback received from readers and authors as well as the results from the readers' surveys conducted at the beginning of 2014.

What we learned

We see a potential for significant growth in the coming years. A readers' survey carried out in January 2014 provided positive feedback. The magazines are widely read and widely shared. Our readers are putting *Farming Matters* and other magazines to work in different ways. Development field workers use information from the magazine to further share within rural communities, to try out approaches or technologies or to use as content for training. Researchers use information as inspiration for research while decision makers and activists use *Farming Matters* to stimulate discussions within their organisation or with other stakeholders.



2. Documentation and systematisation

What we did

During 2013 various AgriCultures Network members engaged in a variety of documentation processes, notably IED Afrique, AS-PTA and ILEIA. We were requested to start systematisation trajectories with IFAD, IDRC, Procasur and Groundswell International. Similar documentation processes are fully integrated into the approach for building agroecological knowledge by and within the AgriCultures Network. This is an area of work where there is much collaboration and exchange between AgriCultures Network partners.

What we achieved

We have contributed to the capitalisation and dissemination of lessons learned from a number of rural development and agricultural initiatives. One outcome has been the greater analytical capacity of field workers and farmers around the world (especially in Africa and Brazil), of which a growing number are women. They gave the feedback that the processes also empowered them because they realised how much they actually knew and learnt in the field.

We also developed several concrete products as output from capacity building workshops, which often served as input into our magazines. The processes generated articles published in *Farming Matters*, a se-

ries of farmer portraits in Brazil and two special editions of *Agridape* magazine. The IFAD workshops led to two booklets featuring the documented stories.

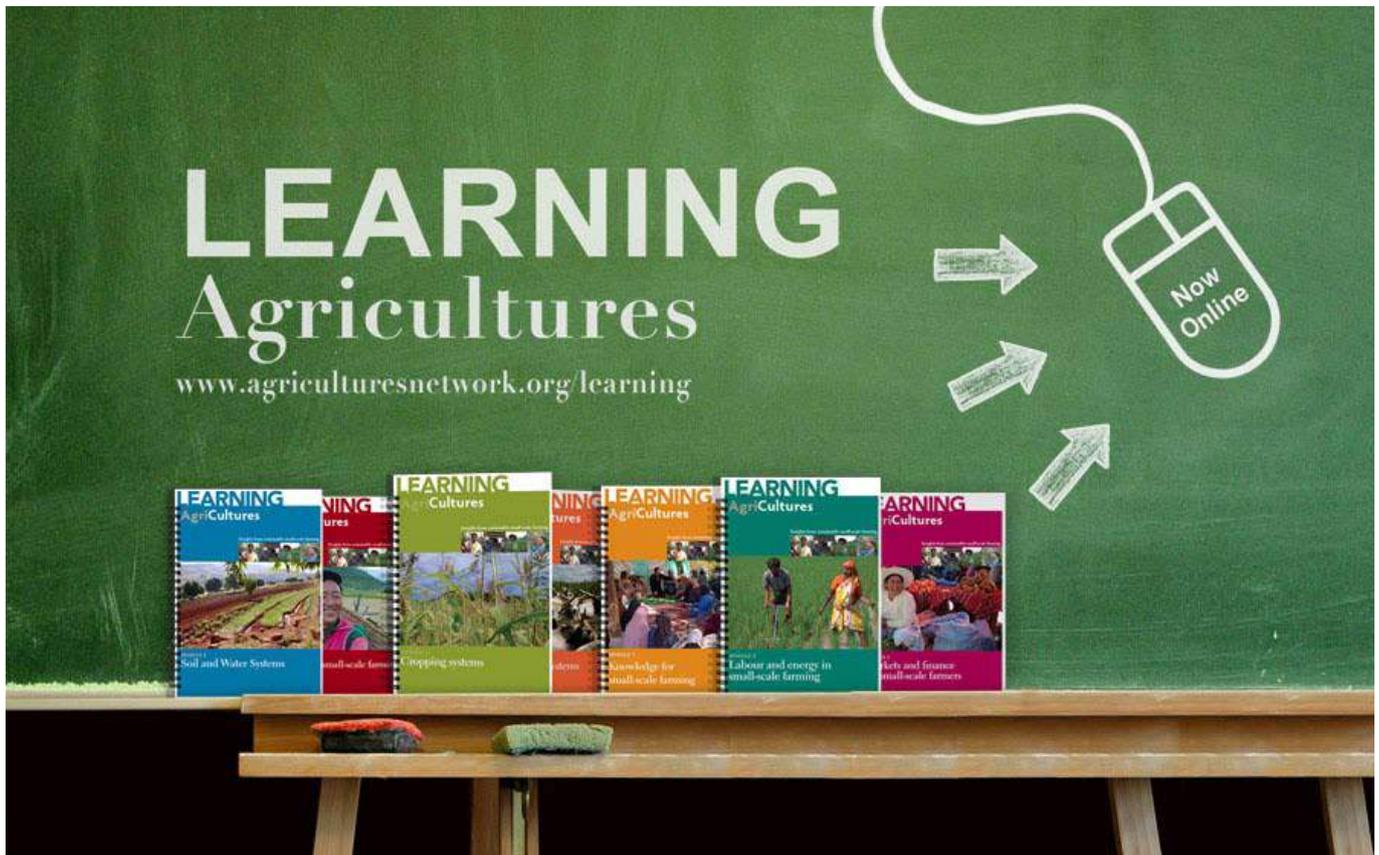
We are increasingly recognised for our expertise in documentation and systematisation, especially by the IFAD offices in Africa but also with other organizations around the world. With our combination of documentation, systematisation, writing and editing expertise, we have carved out a valuable niche.

What we learned

It has become clear that capturing new knowledge in a tangible output is a crucial aspect of documentation and systematisation. For the participants of the workshops it is important to see their learning reflected in a document. For the concerned organisations, the products have proven to be a practical way to 'showcase' their work. We have also learned that it is essential to document strategies for upscaling and spreading new knowledge, rather than just documenting actual agricultural practices. While historically, our experience is in producing written materials, we are increasingly experimenting with other types of media for communication. For example, rural radio is one of the tools used by ETC Andes. Video and theatre performances are other ways in which we have, often successfully, communicated the outcomes of systematisation processes.



3. Education



What we did

We have seen a growing interest in agroecology from students and academics. At the same time, agroecology receives little recognition in the mainstream curricula of universities. We have worked to make the 'alternative' perspective on global agriculture heard more loudly in various academic spaces, also in Wageningen, and connected with critical researchers and students.

ETC Andes reported from the international conference of the Latin American Academic Society (SOCLA) in Lima in September 2013 and recorded and disseminated many of the presentations on video. ILEIA organised a two-day course on agroecology and food sovereignty for food activists in collaboration with the Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN). We also gave a presentation at the annual Agroecology Day organised by critical students at the Swedish Agricultural University (SLU).

Finally, we developed an online version of the *Learning Agricultures* teachers' module series. It provides a systems-thinking approach to agricultural production within different contexts, in which a theoretical part with many

examples from around the world is combined with a variety of educational resources, like articles, videos, photos, and games. It is now available at no cost in html format (www.agriculturesnetwork.org/learning).

What we achieved

AgriCultures Network members have also worked closely with progressive academics and students and we continued to strengthen these ties in 2013. We notice that academics call upon us regularly and vice versa. The *Learning Agricultures* series has become popular: in the three months following the launch of the online version there were 13,545 page views on this section of the website, of which 8970 were unique. In August 2013, we conducted an online *Learning Agricultures* users' survey. On the whole, the series has been used mostly by private institutions, including not-for-profit companies. It has been used to train extension staff, farmers, university and vocational students. Many users appreciate the practical information and guidelines within the modules, and find the series easy to use. The majority of users have recommended the modules to colleagues, students or partner organisations.

4. Policy advocacy



What we did

AgriCultures Network members were active in policy advocacy leading up to the International Year of Family Farming, in their respective countries. AME's efforts in India led to a national committee to strengthen the IYFF movement, including highly reputed civil society organisations and others. In August, IED Afrique hosted a major seminar on family farming with AgriCultures Network members and parliamentarians, ministry representatives, farmer leaders and others. It followed a parliamentary visit to an agroforestry site. It was followed by the start of the IYFF coordination committee in Senegal. Similarly, ILEIA organised several debates at Wageningen university, most of them in collaboration with Otherwise, which focused on agroecology and family farming, and got more rooted in the farmer and food movements in the Netherlands. Throughout the year, AS-PTA participated in a national committee that pushed for a new agroecology policy, and advocated for better regulations for family farmers e.g. on seeds.

In addition to these national activities, the network staged an effective and coordinated international presence at the global scientific UNCCD conference in Germany in April. The AgriCultures Network was actively engaged at the conference, with the presence of members from India, Senegal and the Netherlands. Bara Gueye of IED Afrique participated in a panel discussion about the Africa Regreening Initiative, we screened a new documentary about agroforestry in Senegal and hosted a special session entitled 'From agroecological practice to policy: bridging the gap in dryland management', accompanied by a paper with the same title, which is also published in an [academic journal](#). Around 80 people participated in the side event and picked up our paper. We also coordinated a civil society statement emphasising the need for scientists to work together with dryland communities in research initiatives.

What we achieved

There are various outcomes of our activities but the most important political achievement was realised in Brazil. On 17 October 2013, the Brazilian government launched a National Plan on Agroecology and Organic Production. AS-PTA was one of the main advocates for and architects of this plan and continues to participate in the committee that advises on the implementation of the various aspects of the plan.

What we learned

We realised once more that the power of our network lies foremost in the local and national context, and in our access to lessons from the field. Our partnerships with family farmer organisations and grassroots NGOs are important to retain this strength and continue to be connected with the realities of family farmers.

5. Strengthening the AgriCultures Network



What we did

We are in a process to further democratize decision making within the AgriCultures Network. In 2013 a governance group was formed with the mandate to propose and oversee the implementation of agreed strategies for the network. It has representation of all regions and currently consists of KVS Prasad (AME, India), Paulo Petersen (AS-PTA, Brazil), Bara Gueye (IED Afrique, Senegal) and Edith van Walsum (ILEIA, Netherlands).

In addition, collaboration within the network has broadened. Where earlier the magazine tended to be the central concern, the scope is now widening. The magazines are rather becoming an instrument in a larger collective learning and sharing process that seeks to connect horizontal knowledge sharing with experience-based, bottom-up advocacy. In the future, thematic articles in the magazines will also be more widely used as a basis for conference papers and policy briefs. We also re-affirmed our commitment as a network to be strongly connected with other networks.

A visit to Ethiopia in July 2013 gave us good entry points for collaboration with several Ethiopian organizations, which can possibly turn into a new member of

the AN. We will follow up on this exploration in 2014. We also saw our collaboration with Groundswell International taking off. This is a new and so far informal partnership with an organisation with a shared vision and a strongly complementary focus to that of the AgriCultures Network.

What we achieved

The AgriCultures Network has been gaining strength in the past few years. We are now seeing the fruits of more than ten years of global partnership. Network members are each taking more and more responsibility for the network as a whole and recognise that its strength contributes to its own and vice versa. While the AgriCultures Network is broadening its horizons, it remains locally rooted. This is what makes it unique.

VIDEO

[Meet the AgriCultures Network](#)

6. ILEIA board and staff 2013

Board

Dr Bram Huijsman (chair)	(from 26-10-2012)
Dr Melanie Peters	(from 08-04-09)
Dr Janice Jiggins	(from 08-04-09)
Dr Moussa Badji	(from 08-04-09)
Dr Alide Roerink	(from 26-10-2012)

Staff

Walsum, van E.M.	Director	(from 2007)
Chavez-Tafur, J.F.	Editor-in-chief	(from 2005-2013)
Bruil, J.	Programme officer	(from 2012)
Eggen, L.	Project assistant	(from 2010)
Merc, U.	Webmaster	(from 2009)
Felipie, L.	Finance assistant	(from 1992)
Leetion, N.M.	Subscriptions officer	(from 2003-2013)
Meurs, M.	HR and finance officer	(from 2013)

Volunteers

Geneviève Lavoie-Mathieu	Canada
Heitor Teixeira	Brazil

www.agriculturesnetwork.org

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ILEIA, the Centre for Learning on Sustainable Agriculture, is a member of the AgriCultures Network, a global network of organisations that build and share knowledge on family farming and agroecology worldwide.

