

Himalayan Agroecology Initiative gets going!

Recently the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative has gained momentum. Through close collaboration with governments in the region and with support from a broad group of stakeholders called the Agroecology Himalaya Task Force, the World Future Council (WFC) and IFOAM – Organics International (IFOAM-OI) together with the Alliance Bioversity International-CIAT, UNDP India and LI-BIRD facilitate the development of a roadmap for sustainable food systems with a specific emphasis on India, Nepal and Bhutan. In January 2024, the initiative's core team met for the first time in person and started to engage with key stakeholders. This multi-stakeholder initiative, of which the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) are both core and financing partners, focuses on strengthening the capacities of farmers, farmer producer organizations and other key players so that they can improve the resilience of their livelihoods and better benefit from government policies that support sustainable agriculture such as organic and natural farming.



Successful start on 29-30th January 2024

At the kick off workshop, held at the UN House in New Delhi, on January 29th-30th, 2024, the initiative's core team met for the first time in person. This two-day event brought together the collaborating organizations from Bhutan, India and Nepal as well as WFC and IFOAM. Attendees included thus Ingrid Fritsche from the WFC, Gábor Figeczky and Xhona Hysa from IFOAM-OI, Dr Jai Rana, Dr Prem Mathur, Sonal Paroda-



Dsouza, Sarika Mittra, Ruchi Pant and Parth Joshi from the Alliance Bioversity International - CIAT and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India, Bharat Bhandari and Santosh Shrestha from the Nepali NGO LI-BIRD - Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, as well as a Mani Prasad Nirola from UNDP Bhutan (latter only virtually). With interventions from Ulaş Han Demirag, Elisabeth Steinmayr, Francesco Ajena and Aditi Gupta from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) India as well as Liesa Nieskens from the Deutsche

Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the discussions centred on the common roadmap approach, structure and content, stakeholder engagement processes, as well as timetable, aiming to secure maximum of impact and clarifying on the common way forward.



Project Team meeting at the UN India headquarters in New Delhi

Worthwhile stakeholder encounters

Impetus for the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative was increased thanks to meetings with key stakeholders, including Indian and Nepali government officials, such as for instance the joint secretaries and commissioners of agriculture and horticulture from the Indian Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW) and the Nepali Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD), the director of the National Centre for Organic and Natural Farming (NCONF) and representatives from the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), and as well as academic leaders from distinguished institutions such as the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC), who all play pivotal roles in shaping agricultural policies and strategies. These engagements contributed valuable insights, built support for the roadmap initiative and provided a fruitful platform for exchange on its processes and

timeline. With big pleasure the core team also met Christoph von Stechow from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Elisabeth Richter from the German Embassy in New Delhi.



Meeting of Bioversity-UNDP India-WFC-IFOAM team with Yogita Rana, Joint Secretary Agriculture, from the Indian Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW)



Meeting of UNDP India-WFC-IFOAM team with Priya Ranjan, Joint Secretary Horticulture, from the Indian Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW)

Meeting of LIBIRD-WFC-IFOAM team with Sabnam Shivakoti, Joint Secretary from the Nepalese Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD)



Meeting of LIBIRD-WFC-IFOAM team with Dr Ram Krishna Shrestha, Joint Secretary from the Nepalese Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD)



Moreover, focused discussions with Delhi-based members of the Agroecology Himalaya Task Force – WFC and IFOAM-OI thank again to the Development Alternatives Group and our Founding Councillor [Dr Ashok Khosla](#) for hosting us so generously –, and other civil society organizations such as the India Climate Collaborative and the Consortium for Agroecological Transformations (CAT), Access Development Services, Food Future Foundation, International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture (ICCOA), Welthungerhilfe India, Integrated Mountain Initiative, Navdanya, People’s Science Institute, the National Farmers Group Federation (NFGF), ForestAction Nepal, Welthungerhilfe (WHH Nepal) and DanChurchAid (DCA), all renowned for their involvement and advocacy for sustainable food systems, highly enriched the way forward. In Nepal, meetings with the German Embassy in Kathmandu and IFAD Nepal rounded off our visit.

Meeting of Delhi-based members of the Agroecology Himalaya Task Force at the headquarters of the Development Alternatives Group



We also took the opportunity to learn more about the impressive work of the Navdanya Biodiversity Farm of our Founding Councillor [Vandana Shiva](#) that is located close to Dehradun, Uttarakhand (India).



Meeting of WFC and IFOAM team with Vandana Shiva and her team at the Navdanya Biodiversity Farm



The Seed Bank – the heart of the Navdanya Biodiversity Farm

Fertile soil for the way forward

“We have experienced a strong appetite for change from many food system actors and numerous organizations and government officials we met with. Many of them are working hard to make changes happen. However, several not minor hurdles will have to be overcome. Above all, full collaboration of and amongst all stakeholders is needed so that these relevant, long term and future-oriented changes can be brought about and sustained. The Himalayan Agroecology Initiative will enhance collaboration between key actors at different levels and focus on policy acupuncture points that are able to support and accelerate the transformation towards agroecology-based food systems,” Ingrid Fritsche, Project Manager – Scaling up Agroecology, World Future Council

In that sense we found very fertile soil and the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative is extremely timely. It is foreseen that by the end of 2024 draft roadmaps in Bhutan, India and Nepal have been developed in a participatory manner, and presented and discussed at a high-level consultation conference. An international launch is foreseen in early 2025 and thereafter the facilitation of the implementation is taken forward.

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