



## Himalayan Consultations Shape the Future of Sustainable Food Systems

15 October 2024. As the world celebrates [World Food Day](#) on 16<sup>th</sup> October, the [Himalayan Agroecology Initiative \(HAI\)](#) has gained significant insights for promoting sustainable food systems in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) through a series of critical consultations aimed at developing agroecology roadmaps for Bhutan, India, and Nepal. This initiative seeks to align with this year's World Food Day theme by fostering food systems that prioritize availability, access, and affordability for a better life and future. HAI is positioning agroecology as a solution to the interlinked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity.



In recent months, consultations across four Indian Himalayan states — Nagaland, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh — were bringing together diverse stakeholders, including government representatives, agricultural experts, academics, the private sector, and civil society. The discussions centered on how agroecology provides a comprehensive, multifaceted response to the region's challenges and how to shape integrated policy frameworks addressing the interconnectedness of biodiversity, climate action, and socio-economic development. As part of the roadmap development process, these consultations offered critical insights into regional priorities, challenges, opportunities, and explored ways to promote agroecological practices and value chains that can benefit local communities.

The Himalayan region, with its unique ecosystems and traditional farming systems, serves as a living model of agroecology. The consultations also underscored the need for greater collaboration between India, Nepal, and Bhutan to share lessons learned, particularly in the realm of policy. Such cooperation would considerably enhance respective actions to strengthen farming communities practicing resilient and sustainable agriculture, and accelerate the shift of others, reinforcing territorial markets and local food systems, and supporting Himalayan economies, thus addressing food security and environmental sustainability in the region.

World Food Day 2024 is a powerful reminder that food systems must become sustainable and resilient to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The Himalayan Agroecology Initiative is at the forefront of this transformation, with its efforts to develop agroecology roadmaps paving the way for a sustainable future in the Himalayas and beyond.

### Main Takeaways from Stakeholder Consultations in India

**[Meghalaya Consultation \(September 17<sup>th</sup>\)](#):** The consultation in Shillong emphasized the critical role of agroecology in addressing socio-cultural and ecological crises. Stakeholders from government, academia, NGOs, and industry discussed the need for location-specific strategies to improve livelihoods, preserve biodiversity, address land degradation and secure food. Key points included the importance of multistakeholder collaboration, knowledge sharing, and aligning policy, research, and farmer training to advance sustainable agriculture and value chains in Meghalaya.



**Nagaland Consultation (September 19<sup>th</sup>):** In Kohima, stakeholders highlighted agroecology's role in building sustainable food systems and improving farmers' livelihoods in the face of environmental challenges. Key discussions included soil biodiversity, natural resource management, agroecological practices like Jhum cultivation, community involvement and how to better link smallholder farmers to markets. The consultation offered timely insights for the state's agriculture policy, with the government expressing strong support for developing a sustainable agriculture roadmap.

**Himachal Pradesh Consultation (September 24<sup>th</sup>):** Over 75 participants gathered in Shimla to discuss aligning current policies and practices with sustainable food systems. The workshop focused on safeguarding natural resources, reducing pesticide use, addressing environmental challenges and the lack of infrastructure and policies that link smallholder farmers to markets. Participants called for stronger laws on pesticide control, a shift to natural farming, and the need for integrated policy frameworks, in particular better alignment of agricultural policies with environmental sustainability to protect future generations and farming communities.

**Uttarakhand Consultation (September 26<sup>th</sup>):** The consultation in Dehradun, with 98 participants, focused on conserving agricultural biodiversity and improving farmers' livelihoods. Discussions covered challenges such as soil erosion, market access, and rising production costs. Participants stressed the need to empower women and youth as central actors in agroecological transformations and for enhanced agricultural policies, especially in processing and marketing hill-based products, while addressing migration, fallow land, and threats to local agrobiodiversity from changing food habits and environmental degradation.

## Next Steps

The insights gathered from these state consultations in India will soon be shared with the Indian Technical Committee, responsible for drafting the country's agroecology roadmap. A national consultation is planned for early 2025. Meanwhile, in Nepal after a first meeting by the National Consultative Group, consultations will take place at the provincial level (focusing on Karnali and Gandaki) in the last week of October - first week of November, and in Bhutan the consultations at the district level (focusing on Chukha, Dagana, and Tsirang) are also soon to be scheduled, with national discussions to follow, further extending the initiative's influence across the Himalayan region. As the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative gains momentum, its efforts are playing a key role in advancing global sustainable food systems and tackling food insecurity.

## How Can You Use This Information?

You can utilize these findings to better understand the key issues and challenges in promoting agroecology and apply them to your work in sustainable agriculture, policy development, or advocacy. Sharing these insights with your networks can help raise awareness and encourage engagement in agroecological practices, benefiting both local and global food systems.

To spread the word about the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative, you can utilize several resources: visit our [Trello Communication Board](#) for tools and updates, explore the concise [Project Pager that outlines the initiative](#), and check the websites of the [World Future Council](#) and [IFOAM – Organics International](#) for more detailed information on the project. These tools will help you engage your networks and promote awareness of sustainable agricultural practices in the region.



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#### ABOUT THE HIMALAYAN AGROECOLOGY INITIATIVE (HAI):

The Himalayan Agroecology Initiative (HAI) is a strategic effort aimed at fostering sustainable food systems in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Working closely with governments and a broad range of stakeholders, the initiative focuses on developing agroecology roadmaps that empower farmers and key players to better benefit from public policies, including those supporting organic agriculture, food processing, marketing and consumption. It is planned to launch these roadmaps at a high-level conference in 2025. Together with the World Future Council and IFOAM – Organics International, renowned organizations are paving the way for this ambitious undertaking, including the Alliance of Bioversity International-CIAT and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in India, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) in Nepal and the Tarayana Foundation in Bhutan. This initiative contributes to the Indo-German Lighthouse Initiative for Agroecology and Sustainable Resource Management and is funded by the Special Initiative Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which both are core partners.

