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WELCOME

A happy 2023 to and from the Community of Practice on Agroecology in Europe and Central Asia Bilim. We hope for a promising year in front of our region's [agroecology schools](#) and small producers' organisations. 2022 had many fruits of our sustained collaborations, including the in-person spring training in Italy for over 20 CoP members in May, and the September launch of [BILIM.network](#) digital platform for multi-lingual communication of our member organisations. In less than 6 months over 60 delegates from our network will gather again for the Agroecology Forum in beautiful Bursa, in Turkey. While we continue exchanges via [Thursday Dialogues](#) and on Bilim, 2023 will also see the final version of the Agroecology Schools Toolkit. We hope you enjoy the quarterly bundle of news from our region!

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"Peasant farming is constantly evolving, and agroecology interprets this continuous search for innovation. Without peasant farming and its particular characteristics, such as respect for fundamental rights, knowledge and a sense of community, there is no future for farmers or for humanity itself" - Schola Campesina

exchanges for the Community of Practice on Agroecology in Europe and Central Asia (ECA). Built on 11 Pillars of the [Nyéléni Declaration on Agroecology](#), BILIM is also the name of the Community of Practice, which promotes horizontal knowledge sharing and political capacity building at the national and regional level. The network supports coordinated advocacy work for agroecology, the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) and supports the emergence of young agroecology schools.

AGROECOLOGY STORIES: series of interviews where we present inspiring stories, people and unique organisations from Europe and Central Asia who work for agroecology development in their regions. You can read the first two interviews below. You will find them as well on the Bilim platform translated in 20 native languages of members of BILIM community.

Restoring peasants' dignity - an interview by Paulina Jeziorek

"Our strength is in diversity, taste, flavour, quality, tradition and hospitality. That is why agroecology is so important for us." - says Elene Shatberasvili from Elkana Association from Georgia in an interview with Paulina Jeziorek from Agro-perma-lab Foundation from Poland. Read [full article](#).

Moldovan seeds of change - an interview by Barbara Kurek

What are green libraries and seed banks in practice? How can we connect academic knowledge and agricultural practices? Be sure to read the interview with the Executive Director of the [Gradina Moldovei](#) (Garden of Moldova), Ana Benoliel Coutinho. Read [full article](#)



"Farmers' livelihood is dependent on land. You cannot talk about agroecology from a romantic place, nor only in ecological terms. You need to address it in economic terms. Agroecology Schools prove that agroecology is economically viable" - Chukki Nanjundaswamy, Amrita Bhoomi

AGROECOLOGY SCHOOLS' TOOLKIT: THURSDAY DIALOGUES IN 2023

FULL PROGRAMME [HERE](#) / НА РУССКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ [ЗДЕСЬ](#)

AGROECOLOGY SCHOOLS have become strategic spaces of social movements for scaling up agroecology, strengthening the work for food sovereignty and engaging people, especially youth, in agroecology. An Agroecology School is a self-organised safe space where farmers share knowledge and wisdom on a peer-to-peer principle. The School's methodology is rooted in years of experience of the work done by [La via Campesina](#) in the methodology *campesino-a-campesino*. Agroecology Schools bridge the gap between practical and theoretical knowledge, as well as technical and political skills. They are holistic and empowering, including two-way learning processes between policy makers, researchers and farmers to build strategic networks with peasant knowledge at the heart of food system transformation.

JOIN US! Our dialogue [series](#) is for anyone with the interest to advance Agroecology in their organisation, community and region: facilitators, coordinators, educators, policy makers, academics and activists. The events are part of the project *Sharing knowledge for a stronger agroecology movement in ECA*. We hope you enjoy the stories shared and wish you a fruitful dialogue.

WHEN: THURSDAYS 10-11AM CET

PAST EVENTS:

JANUARY 2023: AGROECOLOGY SCHOOLS

JAN 12th – **How Agroecology Schools strengthen farming communities in India** / Chukki Nanjundaswamy – [Amrita Bhoomi](#), India [WATCH](#)

JAN 19th – **Schools Without Walls: Agroecology Schools For Community Learning, Dialog and Research** / Joanna Bojczewska, [AgroPermaLab](#), Poland [WATCH](#)

JAN 26th – **Rural Women's and Yout'sh Role in Agroecology** / Elizabeth Mpofu – former General Coordinator of [La Via Campesina](#), small-scale organic farmer, Zimbabwe [WATCH](#)



"Families, communities, collectives, organizations and movements are the fertile soil in which agroecology flourishes. Collective self-organization and action are what make it possible to scale-up agroecology, build local food systems, and challenge corporate control of our food system"

- Nyeleni Declaration 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAININGS:

JANUARY 29th, 2023 at 3-5 PM (Bucharest time) Basics of Botany for saving vegetable seeds

Online seminar „Basics of Botany for saving vegetable seeds“, with Klara Hrda, botanist, founder of [Seminkovna seed libraries](#) in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The seminar is organised in the framework of the project ["United by seeds: launch of Czech-Moldovan seed libraries in Moldova"](#). This is the first of the series of seminars on the topic of seed libraries. [Registration link here](#).

JULY 10-13, 2023 International Forum of the ECA Agroecology network – BILIM Bursa, Turkey

The Forum is the annual in-person meeting of the Community of Practice dedicated to knowledge sharing between the CoP members and the local organisations within the agroecology approach. We want to spread our agroecology experiences across the region. We use the UNDROP as a fundamental tool to protect and promote agroecology approaches of family farmers. The forum will take place In Turkey, in the Municipality of Nilüfer of Bursa Metropolitan area - an extraordinary agroecology experience led by the joint efforts of local authorities and the local CSO network. [Announcement](#). Training [documents](#).

PAST EVENTS:

MAY 2022: Meeting of the Community of practice on Agroecology in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia

In spring 2022 [Schola Campesina](#) welcomed the meeting of the Community of practice on Agroecology in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region: farmers' organisations and networks, researchers and activists from 15 different countries. Read in full [here](#).

SEPT 13th, 2023: Launch of BILIM.network - Digital Tool for Agroecology

[BILIM](#) is the first interregional digital platform focused entirely on Agroecology. Bilim means Knowledge in Turkish and some other Central Asian languages. The platform allows sharing knowledge in a way organised around 11 pillars of Nyeleni Declaration of Agroecology (2015).

Practices for sustainable and inclusive policy and programming support for rural women as well as achieving Agenda 2030 in Central Asia, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, Türkiye and Western Balkans were their main topics. See the [Concept note and Agenda](#) Watch [video recording](#)

NOV 15th, 2022: Regional workshop on Permaculture and Community Seed Production for ECA Region

The workshop aimed to promote permaculture development in Europe and Central Asia as part of the Regional Technical Platform on Green Agriculture. See the [video recording](#). Workshop [concept note](#) / [RU](#). See also [Presentation](#) on Kyrgyz Seed Network.

NOV 17th, 2022: Agroecology Schools Toolkit: presentation and dialogue on new manual

In order to strengthen the work of Agroecology Schools, ECA CoP has been working on developing a manual to assist starting up new training and learning initiatives in agroecology. The project is supported by Agroecology Fund and RITA Programme. The manual will be published later in 2023.

NOV 29th, 2022: Experience sharing with Dr Olena Motuzenko on gastro-tourism

Academia, civil society and local communities – united to keep knowledge alive. Dr Olena Motuzenko shared her experience and story about the recently launched [Atlas of 85 Ukrainian products of cultural value at Terra Madre](#) and the process and participatory methodology behind this work. See the [video recording](#), read the [programme note](#).

NOV 29th - 30th, 2022: FAO Regional Webinar on the legal framework for emerging biotechnologies

The purpose of the project is to raise awareness of the potential impact of emerging biotechnologies and genetically modified organisms in the region and the need for an adequate policy framework with a specific focus on genetically modified seeds. See the [Concept note](#)



“Our vision is to rebuild, defend, energise, exchange and transfer peasant farming knowledge from generation to generation. This knowledge is the heritage of food producers, and also of their communities and like-minded academics – all on an equal footing” – Schola Campesina

GEORGIA - Elkana: Geographic Indication to promote unique tastes and culturally driven economy

In an interview with DevelopmentAid, Ia Ebralidze from [Elkana](#) shared the organization’s experience in exploring the potential of Geographic Identification (GI) for sustainable food value chains and the preservation of Georgian culture. [Read full article](#) by [Ana Benoliel Coutinho](#). Elkana also held in December 2022 agroecology meetings with our farmers and participated in a celebration of the mountain day with a presentation of mountain products. See [article](#).

KYRGYZSTAN - Agency for Development Initiatives: Farmers’ shop in capital for access to market

The Agency of Development Initiatives has been helping to restore the lost connection between producers and consumers by enabling fresh produce from the local Kyrgyz farmers to be delivered to the residents of the capital, Bishkek, thus responding to the needs of both sides. An interview with [Madina Sadirdinova](#) and Aida Jamangulova (Seed Network [Dyikan Muras](#)) sheds light on the development of collaboration with female producers and capital-based consumers in Bishkek. Read [full article](#).

KYRGYZSTAN - Nomadic pastoralism in Kyrgyzstan: preserving traditions and food culture

In an exclusive interview with DevelopmentAid, Akylbek Rakaev, the Director of the [Nomadic Livestock](#)

pastoralism to better serve the needs of local people. Read the [article](#). NLKDF organised in July 2022 "Nomadic Livestock Keeper Mobile Agroecology School" at Sussamyr summer camp.

KAZAKHSTAN - Jer-Ana Astana: 'Cow on a balcony' – a business opportunity for rural women

Gulmayra Baymakova, the head of Jer-Ana Astana NGO and a recently appointed expert on development in rural areas and the development of rural entrepreneurship in the Akmola region in Kazakhstan, shared her experience of how linking urban consumers with rural women who manage household plots can contribute to higher employment in rural areas as well as increased incomes for female producers. Read [full article](#) / RU [Корова на балконе \(2019\)](#).

MOLDOVA - Gradina Molodovei: United by seeds and Czech-Moldovan seed libraries

Gradina Moldovei has started the project "United by seeds: launching of Czech-Moldovan seed libraries in Moldova". The first stage was a visit to the Czech Republic to get acquainted with the seed libraries Iniciativa Semínkovna, which are a superior form of organization that is based largely on the social dimension of seed preservation. More info on a [Gradina Moldovei website](#) Read the [article in English](#)

UKRAINE - Eco Action: Online session Agroecology 101 for Ukraine green recovery

On December 22nd, 2022, Eco Action, together with the BILIM Community of Practice for Agroecology organised an online session for Ukrainian organisations on agroecology. The term 'Agroecology' appears more and more often during discussions of the post-war green recovery of agriculture in Ukraine as many stakeholders start to use it to describe one of the possible ways for more sustainable development. See [concept note](#) and [UNDROP presentation](#).

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA - ALICA Foundation

The ALICA Foundation is a formalized initiative for a community seed bank, agrobiodiversity and agroecology founded in 2021. The main activities include: on farm conservation, promotion of sustainable production and use of genetic resources; lobbying for farmers seeds and farmer's rights; promotion the traditional knowledge and practices; training and information exchange; participation in selection/breeding programs. Foundation is one of the founders and member of [Balkan Seed Network](#) and has recently signed an agreement with the Grassroot Institute (Canada) on general Partnership for Summer Field School (Hybrid) - [FSc MER 2023 Mountain Ecosystem and Resource Management](#) held from 10 - 19 September 2023 (see below).

ITALY - Schola Campesina: Bridging generations through knowledge sharing

Schola Campesina has been working on several projects concerning strengthening of inter-regional collaboration on agroecology. Among them is the new guidebook: "Bringing Generations in Agroecology through knowledge sharing", the result of the cooperation of 6 organisations from Poland, Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy and Switzerland active in the field of agroecology, implementing training, and other kinds of knowledge transfer activities. See guidebook [PDF](#).

KOSOVO - Women's Association STINA from Kosovo region

Women's association "Stina" was launched in February 2016. Stina's trainings in the field of agriculture and rural development focus on horticulture, artisanal products, as well as medicinal-aromatic plants in particular, traditional foods and preservation of agricultural products. [Read more](#).

POLAND - Agro-Perma-Lab: Polish Declaration on Agroecology nearing completion

The civil society consultation process on the [Polish Declaration \(Statement\) on Agroecology](#) has been initiated during pilot [Agroecology School training in 2019](#) and continued between 2020-2022 facilitated by the [Living Earth Coalition](#). The declaration is an attempt to defend the complex vision of transformation of agri-food systems as defined by Nyeleni Declaration, which takes into account their social, ecological, economic and political aspects. Agro-Perma-Lab has also contributed to researching agroecological transition worldwide by [testing TAPE tool](#).

ROMANIA - Eco-Ruralis: Agroecology for Europe mapping project

An interview with Attila Szocs, the President of EcoRuralis and coordination committee member of ECVC, a peasant farmer in Romania, explains why food producers must be at the centre of the new international partnership AE4EU Agroecology for Europe mapping project to contribute to the food system transformation. Watch [video](#).

RUSSIA - explore articles shared by members of BILIM network

The articles focus on the cultivation of berries and agroecological prospects in Russia. Explore 1) [Article](#) from

TURKEY - EKODER: introducing the host of International Agroecology Forum in Bursa 2023

Arca Atay, the president of EKODER (Ecological Life Association), vice president of [NILKOOP](#) (Nilüfer Agricultural Development Cooperative), will be the main host of the 2023 Agroecology Forum of ECA CoP in Bursa, Turkey. Arca is involved locally in the activities of four organisations related to ecology, agriculture, seeds and food. EKODER dates back to 1996; the establishment of the Organic Agriculture Unit in the Faculty of Agriculture at Bursa Uludağ University. [Read more](#) about EKODER's experience.



"Agroecology is political; it requires us to challenge and transform structures of power in society. We need to put the control of seeds, biodiversity, land and territories, waters, knowledge, culture and the commons in the hands of the peoples who feed the world" - Nyeleni Declaration 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS:**FEB-MARCH 2023: Online course and public events on "The Tactics for agroecological transition – (re)claiming land, labour, and livelihoods"**

This course is a co-learning process for collectives who can share and elaborate tools and tactics for agroecological struggle. Bringing together different collective agents of agricultural transition and radical rural transformation – from migrant land workers to farming collectives and ecological and community platforms. 2 public events on zoom include: 1st Feb and 9th Mar, 19.30-21.00 CET. Register [HERE](#).

SEPT 10th-19th, 2023: Summer Field School (Hybrid) on Mountain Ecosystems & Resource Management

Hybrid course for future leaders on regional mountain ecology, sustainable development, local livelihoods and linking world's climate by integrating principles of biologically inspired solutions. Join the discussion of the current scenario of mountain areas and future directions of mountain sustainability discourse and action. See [details](#)

PAST EVENTS:**NOV 15th-16h, 2022: Public Forum "Towards rebuilding Ukraine", Kyiv (hybrid)**

Two-day Public Forum «Small Peasant Farms and Farming Households in Wartime and Post-War Reconstruction of Ukraine: Political Dialogue» was organised on the initiative of civil society and with the participation of FAO REU. CoP partners [Eco Action](#) (Ukraine) and [EcoRuralis](#) (Romania) took part in one of the sessions. See [full programme](#) and [report](#) from the forum.

NOV 22nd, 2022 TAPE - FAO Webinar Report from TAPE

Webinar report: "How far are we in the agroecological transition?" The webinar highlighted how the growing community of practice for TAPE (see: [Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation \(TAPE\)](#)) is generating a multitude of evidence and insights, thereby contributing to the further development and application of this tool. See the [Concept note](#) See the [video recording](#)

NOV 28th & 29th, 2022: Training Peasants Rights - Implementation of UNDROP in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2nd workshop: DEC 19th - 20th, 2022)

working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). See [full programme](#). Download [The UNDROP Introductory Booklet](#) by LVC.

DEC 7th, 2022 Webinar: International dimensions of the future EU seeds marketing reform

Considering existing obligations in the EU Treaties of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), and the rights recognized by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and People Living in Rural Areas (UNDROP), the [event](#) built on a concrete case of seed policy advocacy from the African Continent. Read up on the impacts of the EU Seed Legislation [in this paper](#) issued by the ActAllianceEu.

JAN 12th, 2023: The International Policy Process on data for food security and nutrition (of the CFS) started.

Recently initiated policy process on the issue of “Data collection and analysis tools for food security and nutrition” (OEWG) is critical for the general trend of agriculture supported by the UN and the recognition of family farming and agroecology as a solution for food security and nutrition. The Civil Society and Indigenous People Mechanism (CSIPM)’s contribution is available [here](#). Follow [here](#).

JAN 19th-21st, 2023: 9th International Congress of Agroecology in Sevilla, Spain

The Agroecosystems History Laboratory of Pablo de Olivine University together with the think tank Alimenta announced the IX International Congress of Agroecology. The [congress](#) took place in Seville (Spain) in January 2023 and focused on Agroecology-Based Local Food Systems.



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SUPPORT: The newsletters are a part of the inter-regional project “Sharing knowledge for stronger Agroecology Movement in ECA” co-funded by [Agroecology Fund: Collaboratives](#) and [RITA: Co-Financing](#).

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The views here presented represent diverse perspectives and regions, with different local languages.

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UPCOMING NEWSLETTERS: April 2023, July 2023

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