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## Agroecology and Innovation Panel and Discussion Event Report

4 April 2018 | 19.00 – 21.00 | Ristorante Orazio, Rome, Italy

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### Highlights from the Event

Agroecology is the study of the relation of agriculture and the environment. It involves the integrated local application of sustainable agriculture. It applies ecological principles in order to design and manage agro-ecosystems in more sustainable and **innovation** is a vital part of its success.



In the context of the FAO's 2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium on Agroecology, held on 3-5 April in Rome, Italy, the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN) hosted an Agroecology Panel and Discussion. The moderated panel and discussion focused on opportunities to link agricultural technologies and innovation in a manner that delivers on the full potential of agroecology to contribute to a world without hunger and malnutrition.

The event was moderated by **Mr. Donald Moore**, Chair of the IAFN & CEO of the Global Dairy Platform and the Dairy Sustainability Framework. Mr. Moore shared perspectives on agroecology from a dairy perspective, including the example of Yahara Pride Farms, an innovative, farmer-led conservation partnership to preserve soil and water quality through manure and management practices. Yahara Pride Farms also implements a cost-sharing program that enables farmers to test innovative technologies with minimum financial risk.

On the panel were **Robert Hunter**, Executive Director of CropLife International; **Yvonne Hartz-Pitre**, Director of Communications and Public Affairs at the International Fertilizer Association; and **Samir Pandit**, Director of Rta Technologies, which creates products that connect smallholder grape farmers in India to markets, and knowledge. Mr. Hunter who shared insights on CropLife's work in advocating for innovative technologies that promote plant health, protect crops, and advance sustainable agriculture. Ms. Harz-Pitre stressed the importance of a broad, inclusive definition of agroecology that does not put it at odds with other agricultural systems. Mr. Pandit presented a case study regarding smallholder farmers in India's grape growing region that uses mobile phones and audio messages in the local language to share agroecological practices.

### Attendance

The event was attended by over 50 invitees, including Ambassadors to the Rome-Based Agencies, members of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), private sector actors, and others, representing every region of the world and a diverse cross-section of the RBAs.

## IAFN's Key Principles on Agroecology

- 1. Reducing the footprint of agriculture on the environment per unit of output is a goal shared by farmers, consumers, national and local government, academics, business and civil society.**

A diverse suite of best practices, integrated solutions, techniques, and technologies is needed to minimize agriculture's ecological footprint. Agroecology can be used as a scientific and analytical tool that demonstrates the impacts of different practices on both long-term productivity and the local environment. Agroecological and other innovative approaches can advance agriculture in the face of growing environmental challenges.

- 2. Agroecology applies to all types of farms and farming systems in all countries.**

Understanding the interaction between agriculture and the environment requires increased attention to the influence, at a local level, of what constitutes 'climate smart' and sustainable agriculture practices. Social and economic dimensions are of equal importance to ensure that agroecological considerations are implemented sustainably. Agroecology and productivity aren't mutually exclusive. Modern farming and breeding, precision agriculture, and social media are increasingly integrated into agroecology. Agroecological considerations are core to Integrated Pest Management (IPM).



- 3. Enabling of people and capacity building of institutions is essential to advancing agroecological systems.**

An ecological environment includes the farm families that live and interact with it; informed, well-trained people in well-functioning institutions are essential for making choices based on agroecological considerations.

## Conclusions

Mr. Moore's moderation of the panel, the panelists' comments, and contributions made by audience members led the group to consider the diverse and far-reaching ways in which agroecology in its most inclusive form can create a world free from hunger and malnutrition. Throughout the event, guests were encouraged to consider agroecology's practical effects on, and perception by, farmers and producers at all levels of the agri-food chain. Many of these actors may implement agroecological practices as part of good resource stewardship without identifying with any one technical definition of agroecology.