



Himalayan  
Agroecology  
Initiative



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## Himalayan Agroecology Initiative: Pioneering Sustainable Food Systems in the Himalayas

*Bonn/Hamburg/Delhi/Kathmandu/Thimphu, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024:* In a landmark effort to scale up sustainable agriculture in the Himalayan region, a multi-stakeholder consortium, the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative (HAI), has been set up aimed at strengthening the resilience of farmers in India, Bhutan and Nepal against the climate crisis.

This multi-stakeholder initiative, backed by the global think tank World Future Council and IFOAM – Organics International, a global network of organic farmers, processors, retailers, academics and researchers, will enhance biodiversity, support sustainable agricultural practices and foster durable value chains.

The HAI partners will develop comprehensive country roadmaps for the three countries through a series of consultations, culminating in a national consultation in the respective capitals later this year. The final roadmaps will be rolled out at an international conference in 2025.

*"Establishing agroecology and sustainable food systems has been the core spirit of IFOAM – Organics International, which we are excited to upscale with the World Future Council and our partners in the Himalayas to establish food systems that are resilient to climate change and beneficial to smallholders' livelihoods,"* said Ravi R. Prasad, Executive Director of IFOAM – Organics International.

The initiative focusses on collaborative planning and stakeholder engagement, underscores its potential to significantly impact the region's agricultural landscape. Indeed, the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative aims to create a flagship for expansion of sustainable food systems.

### A Blueprint for Global Sustainability

*"To safeguard life on Earth, we urgently need to steer our food systems away from unhealthy and unsustainable practices. Our commitment with IFOAM, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative builds the foundation for a more integrated, participatory and holistic approach for coordinated action across government and clear policy interventions to co-create food systems that strike a balance between human nutrition enhancement, rural development, and environment conservation,"* emphasized Alexandra Wandel, Executive Director of the World Future Council.

The Himalayan Agroecology Initiative is not just a regional effort; it is a blueprint for sustainable agriculture that has the potential to influence global practices. Ulaş Demirag, IFAD Representative and Country Director, India, said, *"Sustainable food systems and natural farming are increasingly at the forefront of India's national development goals. We welcome this collaborative opportunity to strengthen Himalayan food systems, which play a significant role in overall food security in the region."*

By leveraging the strengths of its diverse partners and focusing on empowering national stakeholders, the HAI is poised to make a lasting impact on the landscape for future generations.





## Uniting Forces for a Sustainable Future

Since its official launch in May 2024, the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative has mobilized a diverse network of partners, including prominent organizations such as the Alliance of Bioversity International - CIAT, UNDP India, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) in Nepal, and the Tarayana Foundation in Bhutan. These entities bring extensive expertise in agricultural research, sustainable development, and community empowerment, ensuring that the initiative is rooted in both global best practices and local knowledge.

**India:** In India, the Alliance of Bioversity International – CIAT, in consortium with UNDP India, leads the charge. Their combined experience in biodiversity, environmental management, and nutritional security positions them as pivotal players in driving this initiative until December 2026.

**Nepal:** LI-BIRD, renowned for its participatory research methodologies and focus on climate adaptation through community resilience building, agrobiodiversity conservation, and sustainable natural resource management, spearheads the initiative on agroecology. Their involvement is set to continue until April 2025, ensuring a strong foundation for agroecological practices and policy.

**Bhutan:** The Tarayana Foundation, which is dedicated to grassroots development and improving the lives of marginalized communities, is the key partner. Their efforts until April 2025 will focus on how to better mainstream sustainable agriculture into national policies and into community development.

All partners are now busily and closely cooperating with respective governments and key stakeholders in the technical and advisory committees to develop, to finalize and endorse the roadmaps including through participatory consultation processes.

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## Notes to the editors

### The Himalayan Agroecology Initiative

The Himalayan Agroecology Initiative is a strategic endeavour that works closely with governments and with the support of a broad group of stakeholders, to support the emergence of multi-stakeholder processes that develop, build capacities and facilitate the implementation of agroecological food systems roadmaps. Its main aim is to improve livelihoods and sustainability in India, Nepal and Bhutan, and to empower farmers, farmer producer organizations and other key stakeholders so they better benefit of public policies, including those that support organic and natural agriculture, food processing and consumption. Together with the World Future Council and IFOAM – Organics International, renowned organizations are paving the way for this ambitious undertaking at the national level, 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. A high-level conference launching the roadmaps and with envisaged participation of ministers from the three countries is envisioned to be held in early 2025 in Delhi, India. This timely effort contributes to the German-Indian 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.

<https://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/scaling-up-agroecology-himalayas-project/> & <https://www.ifoam.bio/scaling-agroecology-himalayas-towards-common-roadmap>

### The World Future Council

At the World Future Council, we are committed to a healthy planet with just and peaceful societies now and in the future. Therefore, we identify, develop, examine, highlight and disseminate effective, future-just solutions and transformative pathways to current challenges that humanity is facing and celebrate the most critical with our unique Future Policy Award every two years. Our Council consists of 50 outstanding global change makers from civil society, science, politics and business. It determines the agenda of our work. The Council members meet annually at the World Future Forum to discuss the most pressing challenges and to exchange about solutions to them. Jakob von Uexkull, the founder of the Alternative Nobel Prize, founded the World Future Council in 2007.

[www.worldfuturecouncil.org](http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org)

### IFOAM-Organics International

Our world's food and farming systems currently face multiple challenges. The way we produce and consume food can either alleviate or exacerbate these conditions. IFOAM - Organics International wants to be a part of the solution. Through our work, we build capacity to facilitate the transition of farmers to organic agriculture, raise awareness of the need for sustainable production and consumption, and advocate for a policy environment conducive to agro-ecological farming practices and sustainable development. Together with our members in over 100 countries and territories as well as regional bodies and sector platforms, we are leading change, organically!

<https://www.ifoam.bio/>

### International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

IFAD is an international financial institution and a United Nations specialized agency. Based in Rome – the United Nations food and agriculture hub – IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, we have provided more than US\$24 billion in grants and low-interest loans to fund projects in developing countries.

<http://www.ifad.org>

### German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Within the German federal government, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is responsible for German development policy. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and the Paris Climate Agreement form the framework for our actions. Our focus is on fighting poverty and hunger, and a commitment to healthy people in a healthy environment. The BMZ sees itself as a transformative ministry working to support the worldwide transformation to a sustainable, climate-compatible and nature-friendly way of doing business whilst at the same time strengthening peace, freedom and human rights. To this end, we coordinate our bilateral cooperation with our partner countries worldwide and promote strong multilateralism based on the SDGs. In respectful cooperation with one another, we want to change structures in those partner countries and globally in ways that make a better life possible for everyone.

<https://www.bmz.de/en>

### Alliance of Bioversity International – CIAT

Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and malnutrition. These four interconnected global crises have put at stake the wellbeing of our planet for years. Fuelled by COVID-19, their impact on agriculture, landscapes, biodiversity, and humans is now stronger than ever. Reversing this negative trend is a challenge, but also an opportunity for bold choices and integrated solutions. Established in





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2019, the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) was created to address these four crises, maximizing impact for change at key points in the food system.

<https://alliancebioversityciat.org/>

#### **UNDP India - United Nations Development Programme**

UNDP has worked in India since 1951 in almost all areas of human development, from systems and institutional strengthening to inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods, as well as sustainable energy, environment and resilience. UNDP's programmes continue to fully integrate a global vision for catalytic change with India's national priorities.

<https://www.undp.org/india>

#### **Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD)**

Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) is a non-profit making, non-governmental organisation established in 1995 in Pokhara, Nepal and registered with the District Administrative Office of Kaski (Regd. No. 217/052/053) and affiliated with the Social Welfare Council (Regd. No. 3394). LI-BIRD is committed to capitalising on local initiatives for sustainable management of natural resources for improving the livelihoods of rural poor and marginalised farmers, especially women. LI-BIRD has been a pioneer organisation in strengthening participatory methodologies for research and development in agriculture, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management with a focus on environmental, gender and social safeguards.

<https://libird.org/#>

#### **Tarayana Foundation**

Tarayana focuses on working in remote, rural villages to bring about holistic community growth and development by serving vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. Since its establishment, Tarayana on sought to bridge the gaps between larger national initiatives and local grassroots requirements. Tarayana Foundation with its focus on grassroots development lends itself well to serving the small and remote communities, one community at a time. The incremental cost of reaching the benefits of development is particularly challenging for remote and isolated communities and the Foundation has sought to overcome this via social mobilization and empowerment of local communities to take charge of development initiatives in their own localities.

<https://www.tarayanafoundation.org/>

