



ALL-Ready – The European Agroecology  
Living Lab and Research Infrastructure Network

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# Workshop Report Conceptual Framework

26.04.2021 14:00-16:00 online

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# 1. Background

The European Commission, together with the Member States, is preparing a partnership under Horizon Europe entitled: *Accelerating farming systems transition: agroecology living labs and research infrastructures*. As part of the preparation, the Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), ALL-Ready, has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 101000349. ALL-Ready aims to prepare a framework for a future European network of Living Labs (LL) and Research Infrastructures (IR) that will enable the transition towards agroecology throughout Europe. Based on the premise that agroecology can strengthen the sustainability and resilience of farming systems, the project will contribute to addressing the multiple challenges that they are facing today including climate change, loss of biodiversity, dwindling resources, degradation of soil and water quality. In ALL-Ready, we are setting up a co-creative and iterative process with many different stakeholders to prepare the partnership and pilot this European Network of Living Labs (LLs) and Research infrastructures (RIs) that will enable the transition towards agroecology throughout Europe. This co-creative process starts with defining a common framework on agro-ecological transition as a basis for the further preparation of the network.

# 2. Objectives of the Workshop

The objective of the workshop was to build and get feedback on the draft of a conceptual framework which has been drawn from a literature review and two brainstorming sessions within the consortium. Input from the participants during this workshop will make it more robust, complete and supported by the agro-ecological research community. More concretely, the aim was to **validate and refine the activities, the values, the competences and the policy incentives that characterize or are necessary for agroecological transition**.

## 3. Outcomes of the workshop

### 3.1 Activities characterising agro-ecological transition

Based on the slides of the presentation of the conceptual framework, Figure 1 represents the “activities” that are necessary for agroecological transition. During the workshop this figure was further discussed and enriched by the participants using the MURAL programme.

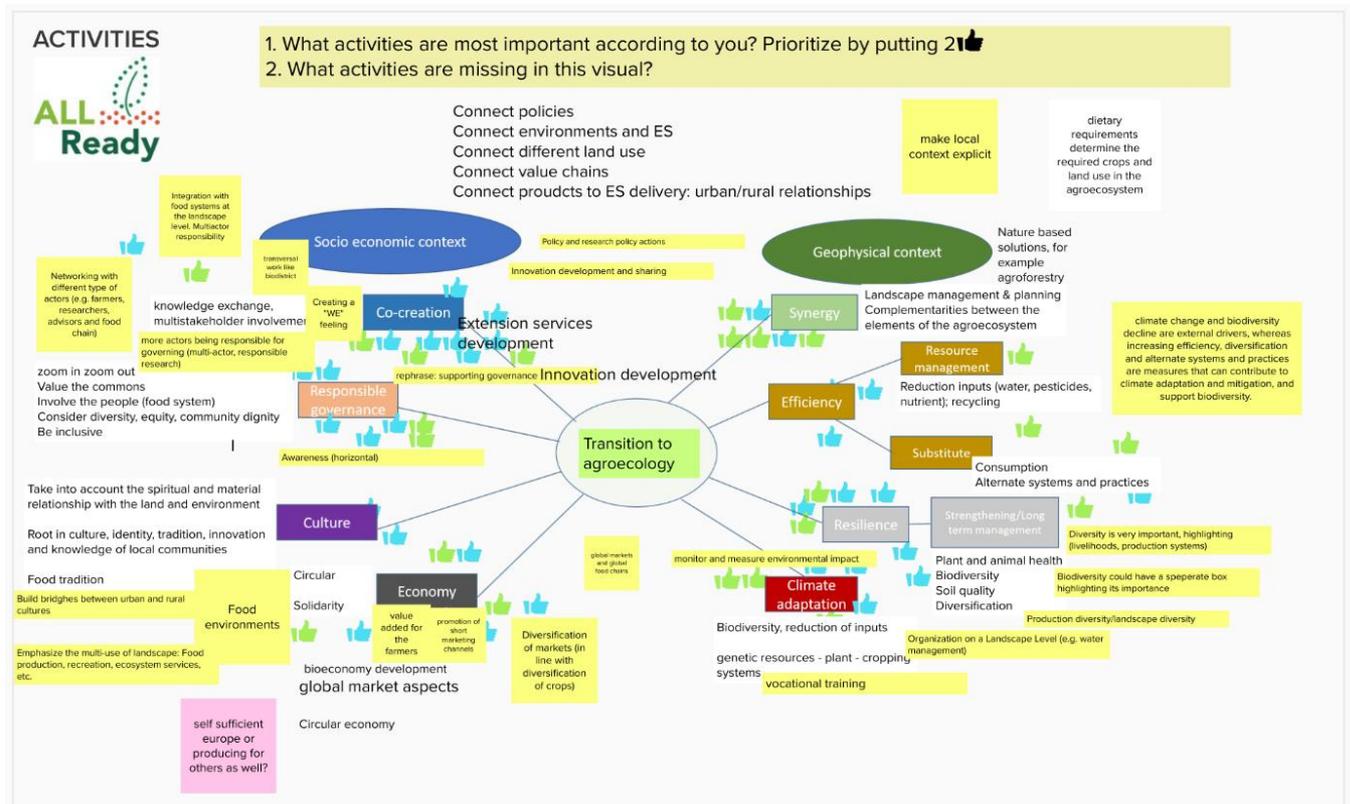


Figure 1 Image from MURAL exercise on activities

#### 3.1.1 Clarifying questions

In general, the ‘clarifying questions’ are aimed at further specifying some of the concepts. According to the participants, certain concepts are difficult to distinguish from one another. Second, some of the concepts are perceived as too abstract. More specifically, following concepts needed further specification:

- What does « economy » exactly mean here?
- What is included in « co-creation »?
- Maybe « responsible governance » should be rephrased to « supportive governance »?

### 3.1.2 What is missing in the draft framework about activities?

#### DIVERSITY:

- Currently, it is included in the Resilience and Climate adaptation elements. However participants suggested it should have a more prominent, highlighted role besides the other activity elements as it was deemed very important by the participants.
- Diversity should entail biodiversity, product/production/market/livelihood/landscape diversity, it may be a cross-cutting element.
- Diversity should be encouraged at all levels of an agroecological system, it could appear in a way to connect social-economic and geophysical context.

#### MONITORING AND MEASUREMENT:

- Monitoring and measuring the reduction of the environmental impact through an agroecological transition could be a specific activity. It could be monitoring of the impact on biodiversity, resource use, soil health, etc.

#### OTHER POSSIBLE NEW ELEMENTS:

- **Food/Food environment** should be more prominent as new element or within the culture element as to build bridges between urban and rural cultures. Also, dietary requirements determine the required crops and land use in the agroecosystem.
- **Policy and research policy actions along with innovation development** should be added as well, or they should be more highlighted in the co-creation element.
- **Awareness raising** could be added as a horizontal activity between the themes, as it's related to all of the elements. It can be part of the education element if it's necessary to connect to one.
- **Locality** should be made more explicit, even as a new or cross-cutting element. The activities at the moment might not take into account the geophysical context. It would be useful to stress that there is not only one agroecology and one kind of co-creation across Europe, but there are different solutions, different forms due to local characteristics.
- In the co-creation element, **networking with different types of actors** (e.g. farmers, researchers, advisors and food chain) should be added.



### 3.2.2 What is missing in the draft framework about values?

Values and pillars for policy incentives:

- **Production system issues** are missing: importance of the nutrient cycle and agro-ecological intensification
- **Data access and data rights**: it needs to be clarified who has access to data and who can use it.
- Importance of **evidence-based decision support systems**: to have knowledge about what is working and what is not.
- Global footprint: we shouldn't limit our scope to Europe
- **Diversification in terms of diet and production system**, it is important both at the policy level as for activities
- Policy incentives should promote relocalisation of flows, into a more **systemic** approach.
- **Food security**: very important that the system and transformation can feed the world, to secure enough food.
- **Care** (for people, nature, .. as a key value) and reproduction (rather than destruction) one of the key values of agroecology
- We should **not only focus on food**: agroecology shouldn't be centered on food. It's also about landscape, horizontal approach, other ecosystem services. A food systems approach might be too narrow.
- **Food sovereignty**: give the right to produce food in an ecological way to people

Values and pillars for activities:

- Scaling up to **landscape and regional levels** : we should take into account higher levels than farm/plot levels. Things like yield gaps between organic farming and industrial farming can be overcome through scaling approaches (for example circular flows into agroecological territories).
- Systemic research, modeling, monitoring needs to be added : if we aren't approaching **agroecology as a system**, agroecological transition will not work.
- Multi-disciplinarity of knowledge would fit better under co-creation of knowledge under activities than under policy incentives.
- Add efficacy and reduce the emphasis on the efficiency concept : **efficacy = the capability of a process to reach the scope**, to get the result, is not necessarily the ratio of performance and resources used. If you only focus on efficiency, you risk to end up with Jevons paradox= the higher efficiency, the more resources are used. Effectiveness is linked to it but better than efficiency : the right task is being done to achieve the goal.
- Working with **nature and ecosystem services** should be underpinning everything
- **Trade-offs** need to be taken into account, not everything can work together, we will have to make choices.

### 3.3 Policy incentives characterising agro-ecological transition

Based on the slides of the presentation of the conceptual framework, Figure 3 represents the “policy incentives” that are necessary for agroecological transition. During the workshop this figure was further discussed and enriched by the participants using the MURAL programme.

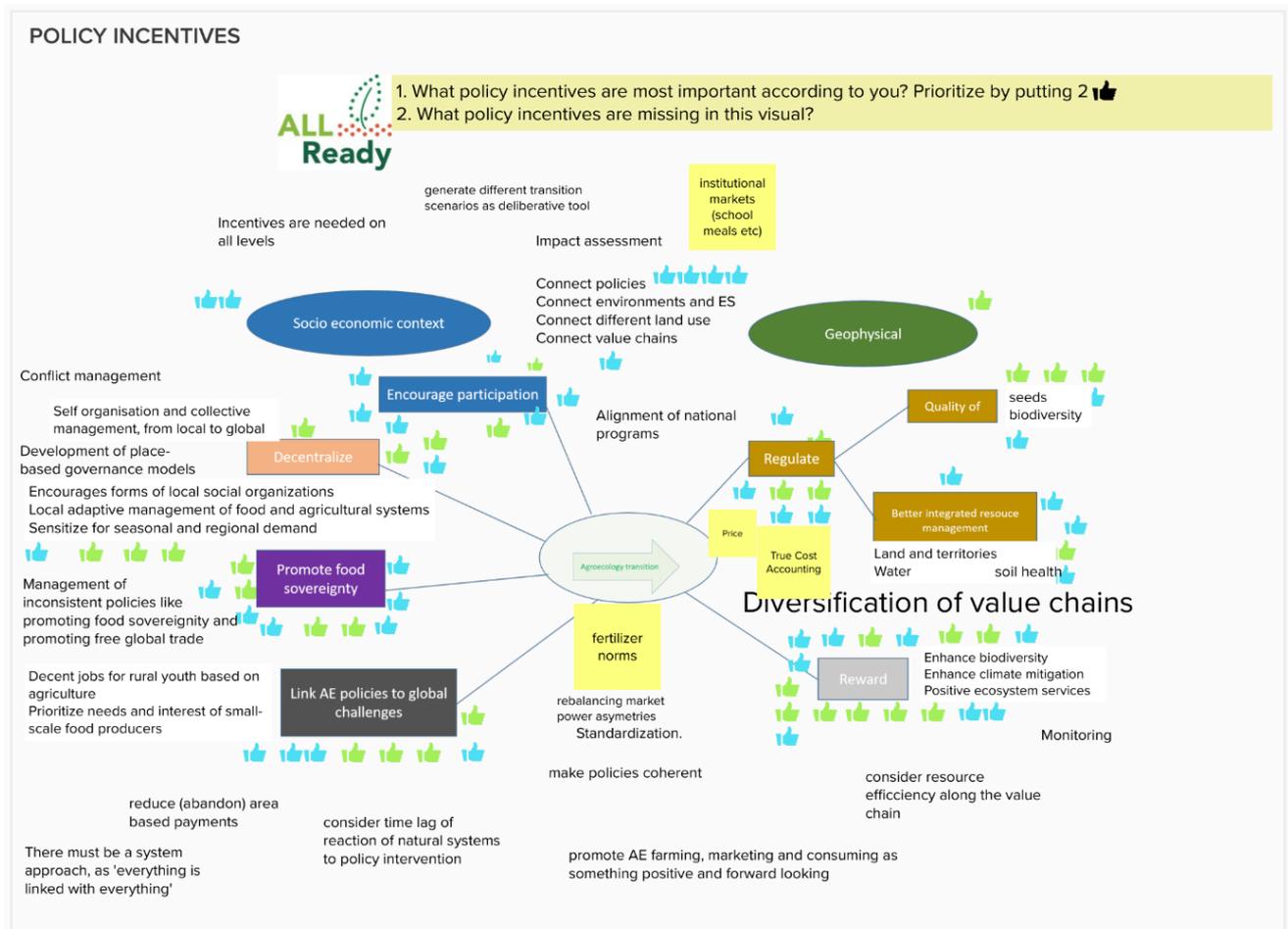


Figure 3 Image from MURAL exercise on policy incentives

#### 3.3.1 Clarifying questions

Some participants were unsure about the meaning of certain concepts. There was a question about the scale and the geographical focus of the discussion.

#### 3.3.2 What is missing in the draft framework about policy incentives?

##### RESEARCH & EDUCATION

- We need to allow for **experimental possibilities with unauthorised inputs or measures** – if we want innovation, innovative measures need to be used, such as products not yet authorised, e.g. low risk fertilisers or new breeds (experimental space with low regulation).

- We need to think about how we finance research on innovative agroecology; and criteria for an educational framework (**school curricula**) could be a policy incentive.
- We need to revise assessment criteria that affect career paths: **reward researchers that reach out to farmers and use co-creation**. Publication output requirements could be reduced if you can include more input from farmers, which can affect the careers of scientists heavily.
- **Policies need to be coherent** - we first need to look at where the inconsistencies are and this involves many different sectors, going **beyond the agricultural sector**.
- **Municipalities are potential** and major **partners** in this game, cfr. Example in Denmark; often they don't have the right conditions, but many municipalities start to open up and realize they have the possibility to combine climate and biodiversity strategy with local farmers – by buying their food products, to help convert to environmentally friendly production systems.

## MARKET

- **Integrate actors across the whole food chain**: understand their struggles with policy and make them understand the importance of ecological principles that may clash with commercial logic of scaling up. We need to think about what kind of incentives can stimulate participation from rest of the supply chain?
- Question is whether these actors are willing to participate? Participants do think so. Example of supermarkets selling local products with no packaging. When actors start using these strategies, others will follow suit because consumers are asking for change.
- Policies should focus on diversifying the whole value chain.
- develop criteria to encourage private investments into agro-ecological infrastructure to develop food chains about AE products
- Focus on marketing, promotion and labelling (different in EU countries)
- Look at the **whole food system**: how is the food sold ? how does the food come into the cities ? Access to the market.
- We need to incentivise economically with (good) prices, internalize externalities of production systems, via true **cost accounting**.
- Focus on a **cooperative** approach at the governance level, to share knowledge + experience and to aggregate the supply

## AKIS

- AKIS is limited to farmers but **should also address other actors** - processors, traders, other actors **in the value chain**.
- **AKIS and who controls the knowledge play a role** in rebalancing market asymmetries and the bargaining capacity of farmers. In long, globalized chains, the information is controlled by big companies, upstream and downstream. We need to **add new value** to the site specific knowledge, **to farmers with co-creation of new agro-ecological site specific solutions**. Living Labs are important to provide us from data to feed models, to monitor and understand, and advise and foster this transition - also the other way around empowering them.

### 3.4 Competences characterising agro-ecological transition

Based on the slides of the presentation of the conceptual framework, Figure 4 represents the “competences” that are necessary for agroecological transition. During the workshop this figure was further discussed and enriched by the participants using the MURAL programme.

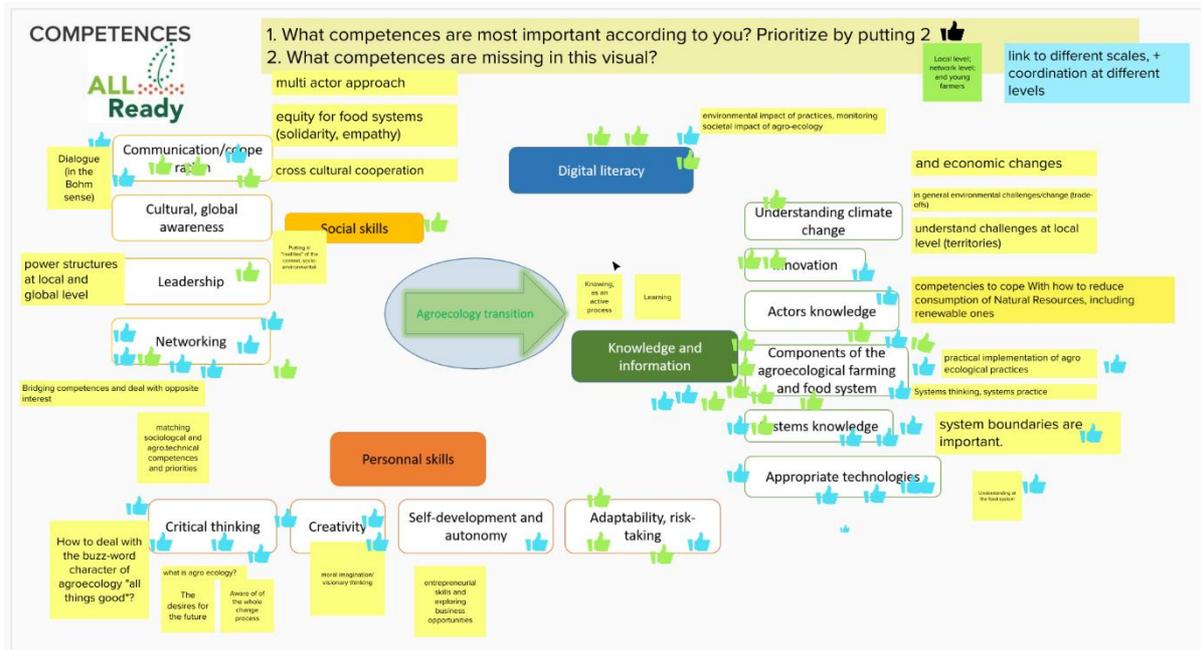


Figure 4 Image from MURAL exercise on competences

#### 3.4.1 Clarifying questions

Participants had difficulties to distinguish between certain concepts. Other clarifying questions were related to **the scale** we are working on. They remarked that

- it is a challenge to merge all these competences into one model (integrating multiple levels) and that it would help to discuss how these different scalar levels influence transition without losing the focus on the **coordination across these scalar levels**.
- Competencies need to be built through coordination with all the actors. If we really want a transition – a big systemic change is necessary, then we need to talk about real sustainability. We can't go on with the current lifestyle and consumption (food and more). **Everyone needs to be inspired and get practical knowledge to change their lifestyle. Not just farming systems but also consumption.**
- efforts need to go where they are most urgently needed and indicated that **farm level** is maybe where they are most needed. But it is needed to build institutions around the farmers, to help farmers get local solutions to global problems.

#### 3.4.2 What is missing in the draft framework about competences?

- Where do you include knowledge on **'practical implementation of agro ecological practices'**? Under appropriate technologies? Knowledge?

- **Equity for food systems (empathy, solidarity, social justice)** + cross-cultural communication + empowerment (need to understand how it operates in the food system at local and global levels to build a more equitable food system) refers to *Spiller, K., 2020. Towards an equity competency model for sustainable food systems education programs. 762 Elementa, Science of the Anthropocene, 8(1), p.33. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.428>.*
- Knowledge, competences to cope with: 'how to **reduce consumption of natural resources**, including renewable ones'
- Besides global awareness also **local awareness** – embedding solutions at a local level that fit with the challenge and opportunities at the local level. Not just global awareness then – need local perspective. Awareness of the socio-political context in which they act.
- Considering the three types of competences 'knowledge', 'know-how' and 'know how to be', the "**know-how**" is a bit under-represented here. Comes back to practical implementation, for several types of actors.
- **Knowledge on the concept of agroecology (critical thinking)**: How to deal with the buzzword "agroecology" = all things good? We use it in many ways... it's a black box. But it represents all our desires for the future. We need to examine the multiple meanings of this word. Each person puts their own positive content into this term. This might get us into some problems down the road if we aren't as clear as possible about what we mean.
- A bridging competence: the **ability to match the different interests** (matching sociological and agro-technical competences and priorities) Avoid polarization of people.
- **Knowledge on the environmental impact of practices**, monitoring societal impact of agroecology (monitoring)
- **Entrepreneurial/business skills**: farmers should be competent to show impact of their practices; show societal benefits / steward for the environment. Allows farms to use this to explore new business opportunities.
- '**Understanding climate change**'? Add also other environmental changes just as socio-economic change. Climate change is too narrow.

## 4. What are next steps?

- The conceptual framework will be refined, based on the outcomes of this workshop. **A draft mission and vision document will be sent to participants.**
- A **second workshop** will be organised **in Autumn** to make this framework more operational. In order to achieve this aim, a broad group of stakeholders will be involved.
- A **capacity building program** will be developed, prototyped, tested and implemented with a focus on three different aspects related to agroecology:
  1. Transition to Agroecology in general
  2. Living labs and research infrastructures in agroecology
  3. A network of living labs & research infrastructures in Agroecology

Matching the needs of the identified key end-users concerning their skills & competencies, this program will first scope which tools, methods and training materials need to be developed. In a next phase they will be prototyped and tested inside the **pilot network** of ALL-Ready.

The pilot network will serve as a testbed to experiment and give feedback on the tools and recommendations developed in the ALL-Ready project, to assess the needs and expectations of the network and to build cooperation between the different agroecology-focused living labs (LLs), research infrastructures (RIs) and other open innovation arrangements (OIAs) from the 13 partner countries across Europe.

After these first iterations of the capacity building program, an external validation with a wide variety of identified stakeholders will be of high added value for the outcomes of the capacity building program, before implementing it. Therefore, your participation in that phase can be crucial for the success of our approach.

## Annex 1: Workshop agenda

14:00 -14:10	Welcome & Background
14:10 – 14:15	Introduction to the workshop
14:15 – 14:30	Conceptual Framework for AgroEcoLLNet
14:30 – 15:35	2 x 4 parallel discussion sessions
15:35 – 15:40	Gym break
15:40 – 16:00	Feedback & Closing

## Annex 2: List of participants

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## Annex 3: Presentations

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## Annex 4: Other information

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