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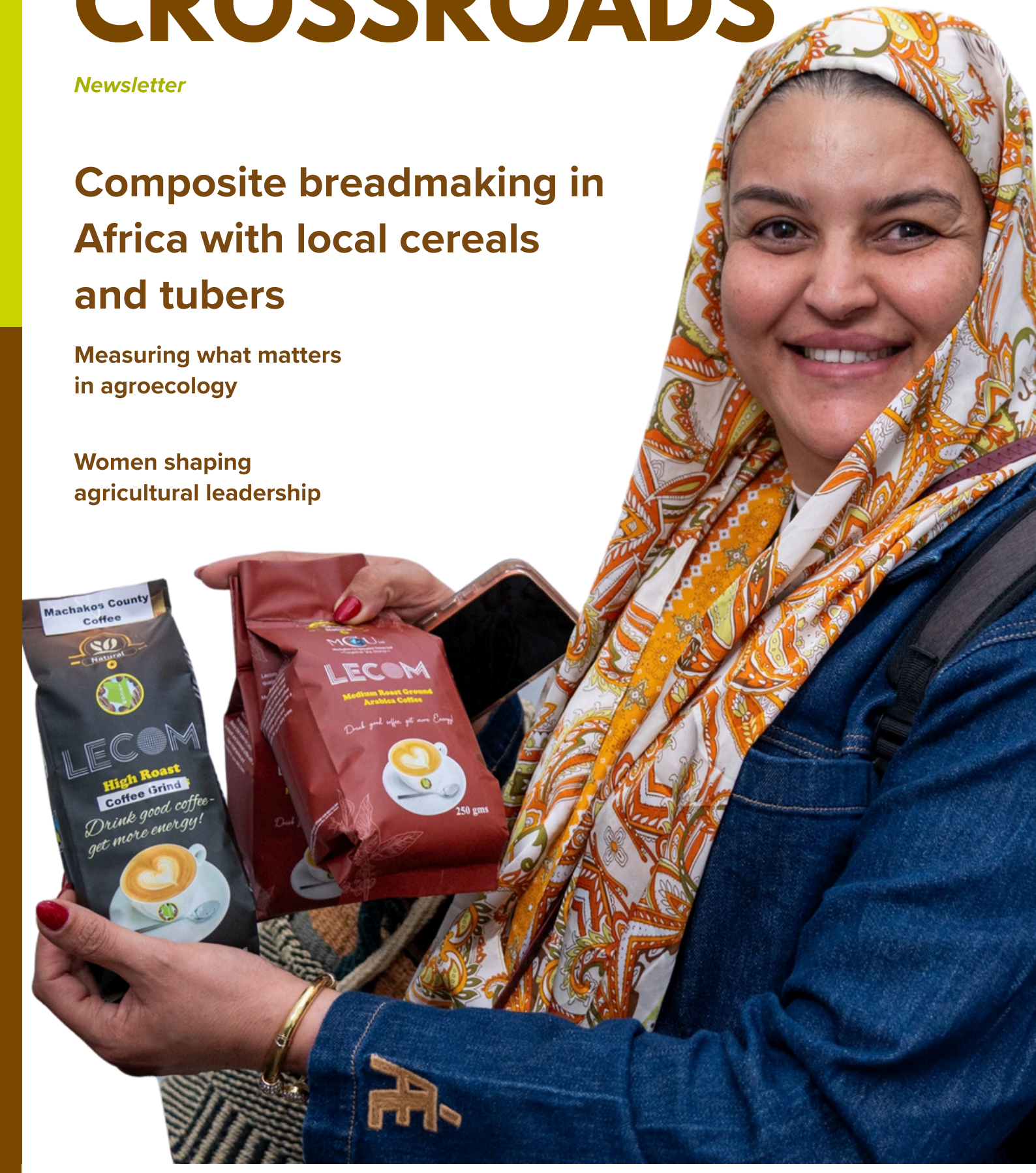
# CROSSROADS

*Newsletter*

## Composite breadmaking in Africa with local cereals and tubers

### Measuring what matters in agroecology

### Women shaping agricultural leadership




Rim Ferchichi, Secretary General of UMNAGRI, visiting a Machakos coffee roastery during AgriCord's Annual Event in Kenya, 2026.

# Editorial

Making bread from locally produced cereals and tubers, sounds easy? It might be more complicated than simply coming up with a new recipe, even though that is also needed. Farmers, flour processors and bakeries need reliable supplies, consistent quality and sufficient markets for the finished product. In this issue, we discover how farmers' organisations, agri-agencies and a diverse range of partners in West and Central Africa work to structure this value chain.

Another topic for this issue is the question of results and impact. We all want them but how should we measure progress? Our colleague Lukas Hadasch attended the CIRAWA Agroecology Conference in Ghana to share learnings from the FORI programme. One of his takeaways from the discussions in Accra was that crop yield alone cannot tell the full story of a diversified farm. Also, when deciding what to monitor, farmers should be part of deciding which evidence is useful to them.

The Forest and Farm Facility's global conference in Bolivia takes us from evidence to influence: producer organisations are calling for a stronger say in decisions about their territories and the investments that affect them.

Finally, we close with Susanne Schulze Bockeloh's inspiring journey from farming to agricultural leadership. A fitting story to celebrate the International Year of Women Farmers.

Together, this issue's stories show what farmers and their organisations can do when they have the means to organise, learn and lead.

Katja Vuori,
CEO, AgriCord

**In this issue**


Composite breadmaking with local crops
3–4

Measuring agroecological progress
5–6

Producer-led transformation
7–8

Susanne Schulze Bockeloh: from farm to policy
9–10

Savoir-faire et links
11

# Composite breadmaking in Africa

## Building value chains around local cereals and tubers

By Chamsyatou Mama Gao (AgriCord) and Fatou Kiné (ASPRODEB)

Experiences from several West and Central African countries illustrate that locally produced cereal and tuber flours can successfully be used in bread and pastries. The challenge now is to build on these pilot initiatives and structure and scale value chains that can ensure sufficient production, reliable supplies, consistent quality and stable markets.

With this goal in mind, ASPRODEB organised a webinar in April 2026 as part of the Farmers' Organisations for Food Systems (FOFS) project, together with regional Farmers' Organisations ROPPA and PROPAC. Participants exchanged experiences and ideas on local cereal and tuber production and the role these crops could play in bread and pastry making. This would also be one way to reduce dependence on imported wheat.



Testing a cake recipe with local cereals in Senegal © ASPRODEB 2025

**Composite breadmaking, which uses flours made from local cereals and tubers, requires more than technical expertise. Composite breadmaking at scale is only possible if the entire value chain works well.**

## Some exisiting experiences

The experiences shared from Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Togo and Senegal show that the necessary skills already exist. In the Central African Republic, cassava is grown throughout the country and eaten in many forms. It is also processed into flour which is suitable for making bread when blended with other flours.

In Togo, sorghum, soy and cassava flours are all used in bread and pastry making. Local flours can account for up to 25% of the flour used in standard bread. An interministerial decree also encourages the use of at least 15% local flour in bread produced in the country.

In Senegal, research and practical pilots have enabled the training of numerous African delegations in flour blending techniques.

## Investing in quality and supply

Producers need to supply enough raw materials of consistent quality. Storage and processing conditions must be sufficient and properly managed. Processors and bakers need suitable equipment, financial support and a reliable supply of ingredients.

Building a stronger supply chain includes supporting farmers' organisations to set up quality control systems to comply with the requirements from processors and bakers. Experiences so far from several countries provide a foundation for close collaboration between farmers' organisations and professional bakery networks.



Composite bread © ASPRODEB 2025

## Opportunities for women and young people

Women and young people play a significant role in production and processing. A more organised value chain could still improve their access to land, finance and equipment. Better coordination between training, financing and institutional support is needed to further strengthen their position in the value chain.

For consumers, quality, taste, texture and appearance remain decisive. To ensure wider use of local flours, training and professional development for bakers is needed. Distribution and proactive marketing with tasting campaigns and attractive advertising are also important to encourage people to try composite breads.

## Next steps

Farmers' organisations can organise supply, document successful experiences and present public authorities with proposals grounded in technical and economic evidence. Advocacy is stronger when it draws on documented pilot initiatives that show the potential effects of composite breadmaking on farm incomes, local markets and the substitution of imported wheat.

The next steps within the FOFS project will focus on documenting good practices, strengthening collaboration between farmers' organisation networks and development actors, and continuing dialogue with public authorities for an enabling environment.

Composite breadmaking has largely untapped potential to stimulate local cereal and tuber production for improved agrobiodiversity, provide more nutritious staple foods, reduce dependence on imported wheat and give family farmers a stronger place in national food markets.

# Measuring what matters: evidence for agroecological transitions

By Lukas Hadasch, AgriCord



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Are we doing a good job with our interventions? If yes, what exactly is their impact? Can farmers tell which practices work and how do they compare? Data and indicators are needed to answer a variety of questions by farmers, researchers, policy makers and development partners. But the default indicators we fall back on in agricultural support programmes often fail to provide data for the things we want to know.

At the CIRAWA Agroecology Conference, held in Accra, Ghana, from 1 to 3 July 2026, researchers gathered to discuss issues in agroecology research. One of the topics reminded us that what we measure influences what we recognise as progress.

## When one indicator becomes a blind spot

Crop yield is often used as shorthand for success in agricultural programmes. Yet a diversified farm may perform well without maximising the yield of any single crop. Professor Saa Dittoh of the University for Development Studies in Ghana argued that research and monitoring methods designed around monocropping production misrepresent the performance of diversified smallholder systems. Different crops may provide food, income and animal feed at different times of the year. Trees may reduce erosion or improve soil fertility. Local varieties may yield less under ideal conditions but might be more resilient and perform more reliably during droughts. Calling such a farm “less productive” risks missing the point.

This is not an argument for abandoning yield data. It is an argument against asking a single number to represent an entire farming system. Yield and other indicators should be one facet of a broader understanding of productivity, resilience and wellbeing.

The conference presented approaches ranging from FAO’s Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) to soil and household assessments, field measurements, Earth observation and participatory monitoring frameworks. Each makes part of an agroecological transition visible. None captures everything.



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## Better evidence, fewer useful indicators

There is a temptation to respond to this challenge by continually adding indicators. But more data does not necessarily equal better understanding. Monitoring framework is not useful if it is too burdensome to use and maintain. Good monitoring requires thoughtful selection, not accumulation.

The challenge is to identify a limited set of indicators that is credible, locally relevant, feasible to collect and useful to the people producing the data. If farmers and their organisations can measure and interpret how their actions affect their farming systems, monitoring is no longer "administrative theatre" to fulfil donor requirements. It becomes a useful decision-making tool to compare practices, understand trade-offs and decide what to adapt. The same data can also be used to improve advisory services and strengthen evidence-based advocacy.

## Monitoring as shared enquiry

One of the encouraging observations from the CIRAWA conference was that some researchers are actively questioning established measuring methods and developing alternatives. They are important allies in finding the balance between scientific rigour and practical usefulness. Establishing useful monitoring frameworks works best when farmers and their organisations co-shape research questions, methods and interpretation from the beginning.

### What this means for monitoring

- **Look beyond the yield of a single crop.**
- **Select a manageable set of useful indicators.**
- **Involve farmers in defining and interpreting evidence.**

The resulting solutions from such participatory co-research processes reflect real needs, capacities and limitations. They are therefore more likely to bridge the persistent gap between promising research at pilot stage and practices that farmers can adopt in real life. This principle is also central to AgriCord's Farmer-led Research and Innovation programme. Through action-research projects, farmers and their organisations identified practical challenges, tested possible solutions and assessed their usefulness. Joint analysis of monitoring data by farmers', extensionists and researchers supported this process of enquiry.

This is a good moment for AgriCord to draw lessons for the future from CIRAWA, FORI and other programmes at the intersection of agroecology and participatory methodologies. These reflections will inform the next generation of FO support programmes that aim to scale agroecology and co-construction of knowledge approaches. What and how we measure shapes what we recognise as progress. As we work to transform food systems, we must also rethink what progress looks like and how do we know that we are on the right track.

### Further reading

CIRAWA project, case studies and resources

CIRAWA Conference Book of Abstracts

FAO's Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation

Lessons from AgriCord's Farmer-led Research and Innovation programme

# From producer-led solutions to producer-led transformation

By Katja Vuori, AgriCord

AgriCord had the privilege to participate in the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) Global Conference in Santa Cruz de la Sierra and the Chiquitania region of Bolivia. This was a meaningful moment for AgriCord as one of the four core partners of the FFF, together with FAO, IIED and IUCN. Since 2012, this partnership has been strengthening forest and farm producer organisations to increase their ability to shape resilient landscapes, livelihoods and food systems.

The conference brought together producer organisations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, governments, private sector and international partners. The discussions put the voices, experience and solutions of forest and farm producers at the centre. The resulting Chiquitania Declaration is a strong call to move from recognition to action.







## A few messages stand out:

### 1. Producers are part of the solution

They are already delivering practical solutions through agroecology, agroforestry, community forestry, forest landscape restoration, sustainable enterprises and climate-resilient food systems.

### 2. Territorial rights and a real say

Secure land, forest, water and tree rights, respect for Indigenous and traditional knowledge, and meaningful participation in policy and investment decisions are fundamental.

## 3. Finance that reaches producers

The Declaration calls for investment in producer-led financial mechanisms, as well as financial products adapted to farmers' production cycles, cash flows and climate risks. Too often, climate, nature and development finance still does not reach producer organisations in accessible and appropriate forms.

## 4. Invest in strong organisations

Governance, leadership, advocacy, technical services, market access and the capacity to engage in policy processes may sound like "institutional" investments, but they are what enable producer organisations to mobilise resources, deliver services and sustain change over time.

## 5. Women and young people as leaders

The Declaration places particular emphasis on their access to leadership, land, finance, markets, skills, technology and opportunities.

## 6. Producers as strategic partners

Producer organisations cannot do this alone. Governments, development partners, research institutions, private investors, philanthropies and civil society all have roles to play.

But the partnership needs to start from a recognition of producer organisations as actors, leaders and strategic partners, rather than beneficiaries and recipients of programmes.

## From Bolivia to action

Productive forests and climate-responsive food systems will only thrive when the people who live in, manage and depend on these territories can lead the decisions, shape the investments and drive the action. The Chiquitania Declaration gives us a shared framework for turning that principle into concrete action through stronger organisations, better policies, more appropriate finance and long-term partnerships.

After more than a decade, FFF experience provides evidence of what becomes possible when we invest in organised producers and their own capacities to lead change. As the AgriCord alliance, we are committed to taking these lessons further and scaling producer-led solutions.

**About FFF**

The Forest and Farm Facility is a partnership co-managed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and AgriCord. The programme operated in Latin America, Africa and Asia, strengthening regional and global networks of forest and farm producer organisations.

# Susanne Schulze Bockeloh: from farm to policy

By Chamsyatou Mama Gao, AgriCord

Dynamic and candid, Susanne Schulze Bockeloh has dedicated her energy and time to agriculture and to strengthening the voice of farmers for more than four decades. Based in Münster, North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany, she combines practical experience as an arable farmer with national and international-level leadership as Vice President of the German Farmers' Association (DBV) and a member of the Board of the AgriCord alliance.



Susanne Schulze Bockeloh, Farmer - Vice President of the German Farmers' Association (Deutscher Bauernverband – DBV) & AgriCord's Board Member

## From the family farm to advocacy

After an apprenticeship in agriculture, Susanne studied agricultural sciences and worked in extension services before joining the family farm in 1991. Her daily work focused initially on field management and farm administration. Over time, her commitments expanded beyond the farm gate. Being elected for a leadership role within the DBV became a turning point for Susanne's trajectory leading her path towards advocacy and policy dialogues.

## A varied role in agricultural leadership

"*There is no typical working day*," she describes. "*And that is exactly what I value most*." In her role as a Vice President of the DBV, Susanne travels frequently. She participates in committee meetings, engages with policymakers and stakeholders, and contributes to shaping agricultural policy at local and federal levels. Reflecting her strong communication skills, public outreach is a central pillar of her work. Close to her heart is also the work she does for empowering women "agripreneurs" through mentoring programmes and professional networks.

Susanne holds also the position of the Chair of the DBV Women Entrepreneurs' Committee. In that role, Susanne works to increase visibility for women's economic roles. She provides also coaching and encourages women to take on leadership roles both at farm level and at farmers' organizations.

## Women driving change

Women are not only the backbone of agricultural enterprises, but also key drivers of innovation and diversification. "*Women farmers contribute significantly to economic success and social cohesion on farms*," she confirms. Yet challenges remain. In farmers' organisations, women are underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions. Women also face structural barriers related to succession, maternity protection and rural infrastructure.

For Susanne, agriculture is deeply personal. "*Agriculture is the basis of life for all of us and, for me, a matter close to my heart*," she says. Her message to women farmers and decision-makers alike is straightforward: "*Be clear in your messages, seek out supporters, and remain persistent.*"

**"Failing to actively promote women in agriculture would be more than unwise," Susanne stresses. "The International Year of the Woman Farmer is a great opportunity to increase visibility, but its impact must extend beyond 2026."**

# Savoir-faire et links

### SACAU and AgriCord.

**Research, differently:** Rebalancing knowledge and power for agroecological innovation.

Who defines the research we want, and for whom? SACAU and AgriCord draw on their three-part 2025 FORI webinar series to explore how research can rebalance knowledge and power in agroecological innovation.

Read the report ↗

### GFAiR.
### Partner Inclusive Language brief

Practical alternatives to terms such as “beneficiaries”, “capacity building” and “technology transfer”, drawing on practitioners’ experiences to recognise farmers and local organisations as partners, co-creators and knowledge holders.

Read the language brief ↗

### SoilHive: making soil data easier to use.

Find and use soil data for research, farming advice and policy. Now open source, SoilHive can be adapted and hosted locally while organisations retain control of their data.

Explore SoilHive ↗

### SEPOP: Stories of impact

Stories of stronger services, market access, resilience and climate adaptation from Africa and Latin America. SEPOP supported 65 farmers’ organisations in 16 countries between 2020 and 2025. Publication in French.

Read the publication (FR) ↗

### Practical learnings from and for Kenya’s coffee farmers.

NACCU’s Farmer Education Corner offers short videos on coffee husbandry, soil nutrition, agroforestry, biochar and the EU Deforestation Regulation, plus guidance on beekeeping, poultry and mushroom farming to diversify livelihoods.

Explore the videos ↗



Coffee cherries on the tree

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