



The University of Vermont

## Institute for Agroecology

# SEEDING JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

### Our global food system is in crisis

Industrial agriculture is one of the leading causes of climate change and health inequity around the world. Agroecology offers the potential to regenerate the environment, cool the planet, and provide good, healthy food for all.

The [UVM Institute for Agroecology \(IFA\)](#) is seeding more equitable and sustainable food systems. IFA uses a systems approach that addresses the root causes of problems in the food system. We challenge the status quo by centering equity, participation and social transformation in our work. Through research, learning, action, and connecting across geographies, the IFA mobilizes knowledge to support agroecology research, practice and movements.

## What Is Agroecology?

**“Agroecology”** is a way of understanding and designing food systems using social, ecological, and political principles to regenerate nature and create a more just society. It is rooted in indigenous practices and ancestral knowledge, which are combined with scientific knowledge to address the current food crisis. Agroecology is not only about changing farming techniques, but is also about transforming policy, science, cultures, and economies to bring about more just food systems.



## Why IFA?

Globally, the acceptance and applications of agroecology are growing, but there is a need to amplify its presence in the United States. As a land-grant university with an established track record in food systems research, UVM is well positioned to establish a globally connected Institute rooted in the Northeastern United States. Drawing from experience at home and abroad, the IFA will work with local, national, and international partners to deepen our understanding of agroecology and expand its application.



## What We Do

**The IFA will support transition towards agroecology through five strategies:**



**Research:** Undertake critical, trans-disciplinary and participatory action research to uncover new ideas and strategies for redesigning food systems.



**Convene:** Bring together collaborators within and outside of academia to cross-pollinate ideas and relationships across local, national, and international networks.



**Amplify:** Develop creative communication and advocacy strategies to influence policy, narratives, hearts, and minds.



**Cultivate:** Prepare the next generation of agroecologists through undergraduate, graduate, community-based, and professional learning programs.



**Activate:** Support local economic, ecological, social, and cultural processes to grow agroecology on the ground in Vermont and around the globe.

## How We Work

As an academic institute and center for action and learning, our work is grounded in a participatory action research approach. That means that we do research with and for farmers, Indigenous people, movements and communities who are driving just transitions in food systems. We invite students, partners and funders to join our work growing the field of agroecology.



# Our Programs



## Agroecology Learning Programs and Fellowships

We will create high-impact learning opportunities for undergraduate students including fellowship programs, international placements, and contributions to community agroecology projects in Vermont and beyond.



## Agroecology Support Program

The Institute will provide support through advice, training, co-learning and research design to NGOs, donors, governments, and other actors seeking to bring transformative agroecology into their work.



## Agroecology Summits and Gatherings

The Institute will host high-profile regional, national, and international summits of leading agroecologists including social movements, scientists, funders, farmers, and a range of institutions.



## Participatory Action Research for Agroecology Transitions

UVM faculty and students will use Participatory Action Research processes to support agroecological transitions in Vermont and beyond.



## Global Agroecology Leaders Program

We will bring together annual cohorts of diverse agroecologists to build leadership and capacity in organizing, networking, research and engagement.



## International Network for Agroecology Transformations

We will work together with our partners in an international network to develop learning programs, joint research, and faculty and student exchanges to amplify transformative agroecology on the global stage.



## Online Agroecology Resource Platform

The Institute will build a curated global online knowledge source for web-based resources, case studies, videos, research, evidence, and other materials that support and inspire agroecological transformations.



## Advancing Agroecology in the USA

Working with partners across the country, we will explore the potential for agroecology in the United States through learning and research networks, by acting in solidarity with grassroots organizing efforts, and by pursuing opportunities for policymaking and advocacy.



## Our Approach

The Institute builds on a decade of work on agroecology at UVM and is fueled by an international network, community of practice and a strong basis of support at home in Vermont. The Institute is co-directed by Martha Caswell, Colin Anderson and Ernesto Méndez and is driven by a core team whose complementary expertise and commitment provide a solid foundation to advance the mission of the institute. The Institute will be guided by a diverse advisory board made up of agroecology and food systems leaders from across the globe.

## Our Values

We have three key pillars for our work at the IFA

1. **We are working toward an ecologically sound and socially just food system** by prioritizing long-term, systems-level work rather than quick fixes.
2. **We focus on Participatory Action Research approaches**, working on close partnerships with impacted communities, farmers and other local stakeholders.
3. **We center equity in everything that we do**, recognizing that if we are not actively working against exploitative land and labor relations, gender and racial inequality and colonial patterns of extraction between the global North and South, we become complicit in these patterns of oppression.

**HELP US SEED JUST AND  
SUSTAINABLE  
FOOD SYSTEMS.**

Join us at  
[UVM Institute for Agroecology \(IFA\)](#)



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