



SUMMARY: Strengthening Agroecology Regional Networks Workshop



On January 17th 2023, researchers, members of nonprofits, and farmers gathered at the SFHC Centre for the Strengthening Agroecology Regional Networks Workshop. The workshop was funded by the Agropolis Foundation and the Biovision Foundation. Four presenters shared their work on policies to support agroecological and organic agriculture. This was followed by a panel session focused on how to further support the use of agroecology in Malawi.

Mathilde Retore of CIRAD (France) presented her policy research in Tanzania and Uganda, examining the advancement of organic policy and farmer involvement. During her presentation, she described the current policy framework and the current state of organic agricultural markets in Tanzania and Uganda. She explained the current and future implementations of organic agriculture and how the governments also consider food security, agroecology, and the climate.

Marilyn Kabelere of the National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) described how the organization is pursuing improved livelihoods through the adoption of organic agriculture. This organization

focuses on establishing updated policies engaging with the current local and national government. They have continued to promote the organic bill and increase membership of NAGAMU. Their advocacy strategy promotes decreased reliance on conventional agriculture and more research and education into organic farming.

Paul Chilewa of the Tanzanian Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) gave the next presentation. TOAM is an advocacy movement that promotes sustainable agriculture and organic technology along with the integration of organic products into the current value chain. Mainstreaming organic agriculture aims to address the multiple levels of promoting organic practices

between markets, agro-inputs, and land management. The conservation of the soils, native seeds, and the environment are primary targets for this organization. The organization hopes to develop and implement an organic agriculture curriculum and engage local and national consumers. By focusing on stakeholder involvement, TOAM hopes to spread awareness among farmers and the government. Through new legal frameworks and advocating for more allocations from the National Budget, Paul anticipates more comprehensive change.



The workshop ended with a panel discussion, facilitated by Arlene Alpha (CIRAD) and Rachel Bezner Kerr (SFHC). The discussion focused on how to increase the adoption of agroecological practices in Malawi. The main points of conversation were regarding the barriers to taking up agroecology. Many spoke about their concerns about limited awareness and how oftentimes the practices can be confusing. It is common for NGOs and farmers to not be aware of agroecology, and a lack of coordination has prevented agroecology from growing. The different organizations planned to collaborate more and to focus on teaching the youth and greater investment supporting partnerships between diverse organizations nationally.

