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“Can agroecological farming feed the world?
Farmers’ and academia’s views”

The link between agroecology and adoption of soil erosion control in local discourses

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Abstract

Agroecological approaches have been recommended for providing context-specific solutions since they consort the socioeconomic and ecological constraints among farming communities. This study is the first attempt to conceptualise Agroecology in the context of the challenge with the adoption of soil erosion control measures. Through a qualitative design (using interviews and focus group discussions), we explore a case of smallholder farmers producing *Coffea arabica* on the Rwenzori mountain highlands in Uganda. Here, adoption of soil erosion control measures remains a challenge despite the increasing efforts through conventional agricultural advisory services. We contrast the elements of Agroecology with the discourses among the actor to identify if it would provide a panacea for sustainable adoption of soil erosion control measures. Our results indicate that sustainable soil erosion control can be hitched on the Agroecology elements broadly categorised under; (1) participatory development of appropriate (efficient, diverse and recyclable) soil erosion control measures, (2) clear roles for the different actors to concurrently implement soil erosion control processes (synergies, resilience and respect for culture and food traditions) (3) Strategies for enabling sustainable adoption of soil erosion control measures (co-creation and sharing of knowledge, human and social values, responsible governance, circular and solidarity economy).

Despite farmers, cultural, religious and farmer institutions hitching the sustainability of soil erosion control on an Agroecological approach, government extension advisers are locked-in a top-bottom approach that results into short lived adoption. We recommend that (1) Agroecology elements be seriously considered in designing soil erosion control initiatives (2) government extension advisers be trained on Agroecology to appropriately respond to context specific constraints to sustainable adoption (3) cultural and religious leaders should implement a reward and punitive system for adopters and non-adopters respectively.

Keywords: Agroecological elements, *Coffea arabica*, discourse analysis, Rwenzori, smallholder farmer, soil erosion, sustainable adoption

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