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Agroecology on the school food menu, the seeds of a sustainable transition

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Abstract

In Senegal, food insecurity among children is a real obstacle to school attendance. To counter this, school policies in the most vulnerable areas, such as the Fatick Region, have integrated school canteens to support children's schooling and education. Implemented in at least 11 % of Senegal's elementary schools, these canteens provide pupils with two meals a day. In the Fatick region, the canteens are supplied with local products such as millet, the main staple cereal, and milk. In this way, they provide a real lever for promoting local products and shortening supply chains, in favour of a circular economy. In addition to shortening commercial circuits with school canteens, Fatick's farmers and agropastoralists are already in the agro-ecological transition. In fact, they have co-created a local dynamic for agro-ecological transition (DyTAEL), affiliated to a national multi-actor movement. The DyTAEL, made up of several players including farmers, civil society, politicians and national and international research, has drawn up a vision for an agroecological Fatick by 2035. This ambition has been translated into a multi-year action plan. With a view to operationalizing the action plan, the Senegal agroecological initiative (AEI) team has chosen DyTAEL as its Agroecological Living Landscape (ALL) to support, among other things, the implementation and co-development of profitable agroecological business models that are sensitive to the principles of the circular economy and the development of local food systems. To this end, the B-act Tool is used to assess business models that are supported by a participatory guarantee system (GSP) for compliance with agroecology. In this respect, value chain mapping and analysis has identified and consolidated strong links between school canteens and millet and milk producers. The links are synergistic and mutually beneficial, with positive externalities for the region. For the canteens, supply is stabilised with healthy products. As for producers, they have a secure market, encouraging their efforts to make the transition to agro-ecology. In its ambition to develop an agroecological territory, DyTAEL has the opportunity to introduce agroecology into schools, and to see children already aware of the principles and benefits of agroecology at elementary level.

Keywords: sustainable, agroecology, DyTAEL, school canteens, school food, transition