

Bimonthly Updates

Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium Bimonthly Newsletter



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Welcome to the Fourth Issue

ESFSAC Insights

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) bimonthly Newsletter. This newsletter shares updates on key initiatives, events, and Ethiopia’s role in sustainable agriculture and agroecology, with a focus on women and youth empowerment, global climate and sustainable food system discussions. Stay tuned for insights into our progress and upcoming opportunities to get involved.



Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems
and Agroecology Consortium
(ESFSAC)



2nd Eastern Africa Agroecology Conference EAAC 2025

Harnessing the Potential of Agroecology in Transforming and Sustaining Resilient Agri-Food Systems

East Africa Takes a leap towards sustainable food system with Agroecology

The second East Africa conference on Agroecology organized by Biovision African Trust was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 25 to 28 March, 2025.

The conference highlighted by Humundi, showcased the regions growing commitment to sustainable food systems. It brought together farmers, researchers, policy makers and various organizations working to advance the movement towards sustainable agriculture and agroecological practices. The conference confirmed that there is an increasing attraction towards Agroecology.

Success stories from Kenya and Uganda demonstrated that agroecological methods like **crop diversification** and **organic soil management**, not only doubled yield but also helped restore degraded land. Cognizant of this, policy makers were urged to redirect agricultural subsidies towards these agroecological practices.

This transformative movement also discussed the role of women and young people in the agroecological transition.

With discussions on regional collaboration and green financing, the conference marked a significant step towards scaling agroecology across Eastern Africa.

At the end of the conference a declaration of call to action was adopted, which focused on five priorities. It addressed various organizations and stakeholders.

Event Highlights

- **The amplification of peasant voices** Particularly of those women and young people.
- **The growing importance of research** to demonstrate the viability, profitability and capacity of agroecology to feed the world.
- **Regional policy advancements** with Kenya and Tanzania having already adopted national strategies for agroecology, while Uganda is at an advanced stage of approval.

Here is Humundi’s full report for deeper insights into the conference: [Read More.](#)



EAAC 2025 Panelists



The Food and Land Use Coalition

Less Talk, More Action: COP30 Must Deliver on Food, Nature & Climate

This is a powerful message shared by the Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) on May 16, 2025, calling for bold and urgent action ahead of COP30 in Belém, Brazil. With food systems now recognized as central to addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and hunger, the time for symbolic gestures is over. With unmatched biodiversity and a major agricultural economy, Brazil brings lived experience from tackling hunger and deforestation to advancing sustainable farming. Brazil's leadership presents a once in a generation opportunity to shift global food systems toward sustainability, justice, and resilience. FOLU emphasizes that this COP must move from declarations to delivery—mobilizing finance, strengthening national food system strategies, and empowering farmers and indigenous communities to lead the way.

FOLU's Call to Action: Align, Invest, and Transform

FOLU outlines five key priorities: fully implement national food strategies; align them with climate goals; unlock and redirect billions in finance; prioritize food system adaptation; and scale successful models of regenerative agriculture, especially across Latin America. Above all COP30 must break the silos separating climate, nutrition, poverty and biodiversity agendas. It's a moment to unify action and prove that food systems can be the foundation of a just, nature-positive, and climate-resilient future. The message is clear: let Belém be the turning point where talk ends and transformation begins.

[Read more...](#)



Youth at the Heart of Africa's Food Future

In Zimbabwe, during the South African Development Communities (SADC) Youth Dialogue on “Advancing Youth Inclusion in Africa’s Agricultural Policy and Investment Frameworks” held in May 2025, Dr. Tshilidzi Madzivhandila, Chief Executive Officer of the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), delivered a powerful message: youth are not just participants but key architects of Africa’s agricultural transformation. With over 60% of the SADC region’s population being under 35, youth inclusion is no longer optional, it’s essential. Dr. Tshilidzi emphasized the need to co-create policies with youth, not just for them, highlighting FANRPAN’s ongoing work to institutionalize youth participation through strategies like the African Agribusiness Youth Strategy.

Despite systemic barriers like limited access to land, finance, and decision-making spaces, young Africans possess energy, creativity, and local insights that are vital to transforming agri-food systems. AGRA, FANRPAN, and regional leaders are harmonizing policy frameworks under initiatives such as, Youth Employment From Food and Agriculture (YEFFA) and the Kampala Declaration, ensuring that agriculture becomes the driver for youth employment and inclusive growth. As Dr. Rachel Mkandawire noted, embedding youth across the entire food value chain isn’t just a development goal—it’s a strategy for securing Africa’s sustainable future. Inclusion must go beyond participation, it must translate into voice, leadership and ownership.

[Read more...](#)



Dr. Tshilidzi Madzivhandila, addressing participants.



Konso The Land of Indigenous Knowledge

Konso community are known for transforming rugged, semi-arid landscapes into productive terraced farmlands. These time tested methods are deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge, are transferred down from generation to generation through oral traditions and rituals. Women and youth play their own roles, women actively engage in planting, mulching and fodder collection, while the youth assist the grown ups and help maintain waterways and terraces. The basis for its success is its communal approach that interlinks their practice of caring for nature within their cultural identity.

Konso's practice is climate resilient and supports sustainable agriculture. Every family member knows its role and everyday they are mindful of their land and future generation. They live by one truth: "if we don't care for the land today, there is no tomorrow".

Now or Never: Embracing Indigenous Solutions for Food and Land

Indigenous knowledge is our legacy, timeless, rooted in generations of lived experience, and a compass for the future. It is now or never: we must honor and make use of the wisdom our elders have passed down to us. Food sovereignty is not a matter of debate, it is our right and our responsibility. For decades, communities across Africa have practiced sustainable food production, land management, and ecosystem conservation without needing external inputs. Their wisdom deeply integrated into the rhythms of nature guides practices that nourish both people and the planet. Let us appreciate what we have, and boldly scale up and invigorate the knowledge systems that have shaped our resilience.

A powerful example lies in the Konso people of southern Ethiopia, whose indigenous terracing system is a UNESCO-recognized heritage. These intricate stone terraces protect the land from erosion, retain water and enable farming in otherwise arid conditions. Passed down through generations, this practice is not just about agriculture it's about identity, sustainability, and inter-generational cooperation. In Konso, the knowledge of land protection goes beyond survival, it reflects a worldview that sees land as a sacred trust. As we face the pressing challenges of climate change and food insecurity, we must recognize and uplift such indigenous knowledge systems as vital solutions for a just and sustainable future.



Empowering women: Champions of agrobiodiversity conservation and sustainable food systems



The Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium hosted a transformative national workshop on April 2025 titled **“Empowering Women: Champions of Agrobiodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Food Systems.”** Held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and supported by the Agroecology Fund. The event united government representatives, women leaders, researchers and youth advocates to elevate women’s roles in agroecology. Dr. Bayush Tsegaye, ESFSAC’s Executive Director, opened the workshop by stressing that women are not just participants but primary actors in food system transformation, urging systemic recognition of their contributions, from seed conservation to climate resilience. Hon. Alemitu Abebe, a Parliamentarian, echoed this, calling for policies to address women’s burden (productive work, family care, and community roles) and advocating for gender-inclusive land access, finance and leadership opportunities. The sessions highlighted women’s indigenous knowledge in biodiversity preservation, with a focus on integrating their expertise into national agricultural policies.

The workshop’s sessions delved into actionable solutions. Aynalem Ashebir, Executive Director of Agri-Service Ethiopia, shared her groundbreaking journey as the organization’s first female leader, challenging systemic biases and breaking the barrier. Selam Wondimu, a young entrepreneur, outlined barriers women face in agribusiness, including limited access to venture capital (<3% globally) and societal expectations, urged reforms like simplified business registration and male allyship. Technical presentations, such as Askale Aderaw’s broadened insights on conservation agriculture and Blen Mezgebu’s data on women’s 70% contribution to food production, reinforced the need for gender-responsive extension services and equitable resource distribution. A dynamic panel discussion featuring Hon. Alemitu, Bekelech Tola (private sector), and Hana Yeshitila (researcher) pushed for legal reforms against gender-based violence, increase women-led research funding and promoting inter-generational knowledge transfer.

ESFSAC declared this workshop the first in a sustained initiative. The collective message was clear, empowering women in agroecology is not optional but foundational for Ethiopia’s food sovereignty and climate resilience.

“Empowering women is empowering society”

Breaking the barrier



Participants and collaborators of “Empowering women: champions of agrobiodiversity conservation and sustainable food systems” Workshop

Building Seed Sovereignty

“Seed is life”

From May 13-15, 2025 a transformative gathering held in Entebbe, Uganda, hosted over 50 passionate individuals from 22 African countries working towards shaping the future of seed systems in Africa.

The workshop was jointly organized by Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), Association for Plant Breeding for the Benefit of Society (APBREBES) and the African Center for Biodiversity (ACBio). The workshop addressed various topics regarding seed systems and tackled the urgent need to reform Plant Variety Protection (PVP) laws.

Event Highlights

- Reclaiming seeds, reclaiming power
- Seed laws that protect not punish small scale farmers
- Strength in solidarity
- A new path for Africa's seed

The workshop emphasized the vital role of smallholder farmers as custodians of seed diversity. They criticized how the UPOV 1991 stripped farmers of their right to save, reuse, sell and exchange seeds. Farmers and policy makers shared strategies to resist harmful trade agreements and promote farmer managed seed systems.

Legal experts, policy makers and farmer representatives highlighted the contradictions between these right-based instruments particularly, UNDROP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants) and Article 9 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) both of which affirm farmers' rights to seed and industrial PVP models. This led to the calling of shift towards African led solutions that promote seed sovereignty, food justice and climate resilience.

The workshop beyond sparking this transformative movement, it served as a platform for cross-regional collaboration.

In a powerful closing reflection, participants agreed to establish an inclusive legal framework that paves a new path for Africa's seed systems.

With solidarity and determination the movement for seed sovereignty is growing louder. This workshop reaffirmed that **Africa's seed future must be rooted in justice, biodiversity, and self-determination.**

SEED LAWS MUST SERVE THE PEOPLE, NOT CORPORATIONS. SEED IS SOVEREIGNTY.



Participants of workshop on Plant Variety Protection in Uganda

Taste of Traditional Food

Exploring Nutrition through Culture

Korsset Drôo Bil Helba

(Crumbled sorghum galette with fenugreek)

The crumbled sorghum galette with fenugreek is a dish traditionally offered to breastfeeding women and served during the olive harvest season. This simple, nourishing, and energizing dish has been made since the 1950s, particularly in regions known for growing local sorghum or "Beldi," such as Cap Bon or Dakhlet el Maouin—notably the regions of Korba, Kélibia, and Haouaria, respectively.

Its preparation is almost ritualistic, using primarily sorghum flour and fenugreek, mixed with water and cooked on the sides of a traditional clay oven (tabouna) or on a clay plate (tajine). The mixture is cut into cubes while still hot and crumbled by hand once cooled (or cooled using a manual mill). It is then enhanced with a bit of sugar or honey and scented with geranium water a healthy delight to enjoy without moderation.



Preparation:

- ✦ Mix sorghum, flour, fenugreek, a pinch of salt, and baking powder by hand. Gradually add water until a uniform dough forms (not too smooth).
- ✦ Grease a tray or baking sheet and spread the dough to a thickness of about 1.5 cm.
- ✦ Bake at 180°C for 45 minutes (preheated oven). Remove from oven and crumble the galette while still warm. Drizzle with geranium water (optional) and mix thoroughly by hand while adding olive oil (optional: add sugar or honey to taste).



Difficulty: 2/5

Preparation Time: 15 min

Cooking Time: 45 min

Ingredients:

- 500 g sorghum flour
- 150 g barley flour or, if unavailable, regular flour
- 1 tablespoon fenugreek powder (or more, to taste)
- ½ packet baking powder (around 6 g)
- A pinch of salt
- 3 tablespoons geranium hydrosol (to taste)
- 150 ml olive oil
- One glass of water (as needed, depending on flour absorption)

Optional / for decoration:

- Dried figs
- Dates
- Raisins
- Nuts

Serving and Decoration:

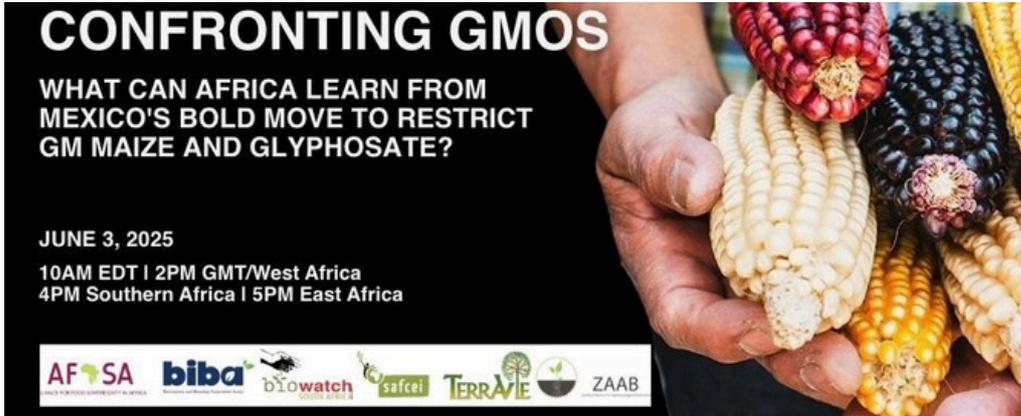
1. Wash and chop the dried figs and dates.
2. Mix the chopped dates, figs, and raisins with the crumbled and oiled galette.
3. Serve in a bowl or individual dishes, garnished with nuts.

In our next issue of the newsletter, we will be showcasing another delicious cultural dish. If you have a favorite traditional recipe from anywhere in Africa that you would like to share, we would be thrilled to feature it.

UPCOMING EVENT

Get ready for a series of exciting upcoming events that will bring together experts, policy makers, and stakeholders to advance sustainable food systems.

- **Event Title:** Webinar on confronting GMOS, what can Africa learn from Mexico's bold move to restrict GM maize and glyphosate?
Date of Event: 3rd June, 2025.



- **Event Title:** World Food Safety Day organized by World Health Organization.
Date of Event: 7th June, 2025.
- **Event Title:** The Alliance for Food Sovereignty Africa (AFSA) is organizing a unique continental event in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It will host around 100 people including chefs, policy-makers, government technical people, civil society organizations and private sector.
Date of Event: 23 - 25 July, 2025.
- **Event Title:** The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS+4) conference will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Date of Event: 27 - 29 July, 2025.

◆ Specially on our next issue newsletter we will be featuring an exciting interview with Dr. Million Belay. ◆

We are excited to invite you to be featured in our upcoming issue of ESFSAC Insights, in our July issue. If you have any projects, achievements, or announcements you'd like to share, please send us your content by mid-July. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your work. For submissions or inquiries, feel free to contact us or email your content to: contact.esfac@gmail.com / natnaelbirhanu14@gmail.com / lensagirma146@gmail.com . We look forward to featuring your highlights.



Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC)

Ethiopia founding Members

- MELCA Ethiopia
- Land for Life Ethiopia
- PELUM Ethiopia
- Enhanced Rural Self-Help Association
- Pesticide Action Nexus Ethiopia
- Agri Service Ethiopia
- CST Ethiopia

General Assembly Members

- Home Grown vision
- PHE Ethiopia
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