

Bimonthly Updates

Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium Bimonthly Newsletter



AFRICAN CHEFS GATHERING AND POLICY CONVENING ON AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS

23RD - 25TH JULY 2025 - ADDIS ABABA ETHIOPIA

"TO FOOD IS AFRICAN CHEFS AND CONSCIOUSLY BE TASTING FOOD POTENTIAL BRINGING FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEM"



**My Food
is African**

**My Food is
Ethiopian**

Welcome to the Fifth Issue

ESFSAC Insights

Welcome to the fifth edition of the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) bimonthly Newsletter. This issue 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)**



Nourishing Roots, Growing Futures

Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium

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Message from ESFSAC's Executive Director

Welcome to the Fifth Edition of the ESFSAC Newsletter!

Dear readers,

It brings me great joy to welcome you to the fifth edition of our newsletter!. Each edition is a step forward in our shared journey toward building a just, resilient, and sustainable food systems for Ethiopia, the continent of Africa and beyond.

At ESFSAC, we believe that agroecology is not only a science and a practice — it is the future. It is a movement rooted in the wisdom of farmers, the power of communities, and the urgent need to restore harmony between people and the planet. This generation — your generation — is the driving force of the envisaged food systems transformation. The recently concluded UN Food Systems Summit+4 held in Addis Ababa also emphasized Agroecology as the path way to sustainable food systems and the engagement of youth and women as key change agents.

Across the globe, we are witnessing inspiring efforts: farmers adopting climate-resilient practices, youth leading food justice campaigns, and communities reclaiming food sovereignty. These are not isolated moments — they are signals of a deep and lasting shift. We also welcome you to the Second Africa Climate Justice event to take place here in Addis Ababa

We are grateful for your continued feedback, partnership and the way you share our newsletter across your networks. Your engagement helps amplify this movement and keeps the conversation growing. There is much more to share. Stay connected, stay inspired and together, let's nourish the future.

Warm regards,

Bayush Tsegaye (PhD), Executive Director, ESFSAC

African Chefs' Gathering and Policy Convening on African Food Systems



From July 23 to 25, 2025 the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) through its 'My Food is African' campaign hosted the first **African Chefs' Gathering and Policy Convening on African Food Systems**. This powerful gathering took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where African chefs', culinary professionals, civil society leaders, farmers, policymakers and various stakeholders from 23 countries participated.

Celebration of African dishes are not just celebrations of cultures but also that of our heritage, identity and sovereignty. The convening highlighted the importance of celebrating Africa's vibrant culinary heritage while assessing existing food and agriculture policies. It identified key gaps and contradictions that hinder food sovereignty and marginalize traditional food systems.

The ultimate goal? To ensure African food systems are integrated into regional and national policies fostering sustainability and cultural preservation.

"African food systems are not only a legacy but a future"

The gathering concluded with a powerful declaration that aims to pave way for policies to be inclusive of various stakeholders, as well as put into consideration the significance that our heritage, culture and ancestral knowledge have in building sustainable food systems. The declarations are as follows:

1. **Celebrating our heritage**
2. **Acknowledging our challenges**
3. **Recognising our opportunities**
4. **Commitments and calls to action**
5. **A living declaration**

For deeper insights into the declaration of the First African Chefs' Gathering and Policy Convening on African Food Systems, [read more.](#)



Participants of African Chefs' Gathering and Policy Convening on African Food Systems

The **2nd UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4)** took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, marking the first time this global gathering has been held on African soil, Co-hosted by the governments of Ethiopia and Italy. The summit hosted a broad range of stakeholders including heads of state, ministers, scientists, producers, youth, indigenous people and civil society representatives from around the world.

The summit kicked off by welcoming H.E. Amina J. Mohammed, H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, H.E. Giorgia Meloni, and H.E. Kashim Shettima, where the opening ceremony highlighted Africa's central role in transforming food systems. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed showcased the country's progress in food self-sufficiency, including ending wheat imports and increasing vegetation cover through the Green Legacy Initiative. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni emphasized public-private partnerships, such as agro-industrial projects in Algeria and Tunisia, as models for sustainable development. The summit stressed the importance of youth and women inclusion in food system decisions.

In the countdown to 2030, the Secretary General passed a call to continue to grow our momentum and to amplify our investment around:

- Urgent delivery in complex settings
- Dialogue, policy and coordination
- Finance and investment
- Integration
- Science, AI and new technologies
- Intergenerational collaboration

Delivering closing remarks at the UN Food Systems Summit +4, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed praised the growing momentum behind food systems transformation. She also warned that with just five years left to 2030, “hunger and malnutrition persist. Climate shocks, conflict, debt, and inequality are widening the cracks in our food systems”.

The summit created a stage for two days of high level discussions aimed at turning commitments into action. Key priorities include mobilizing \$400 billion annually for food systems, integrating climate adaptation into agriculture and ensuring marginalized groups - especially women and smallholder farmers have a seat at the table.

“The future of food is the future of humanity”

For better insights into the Deputy Secretary General closing remarks, [read more](#).



Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed addressing the closing plenary of UNFSS+4

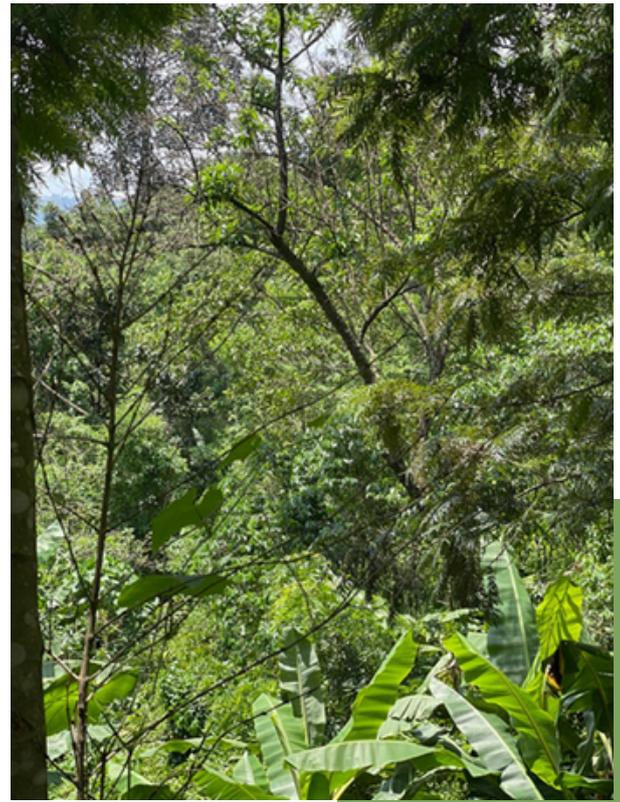
A Land Where Trees Mean Everything

In the southern highlands of Ethiopia, near the town of Dilla, lies a land where trees are more than green vegetation - they are part of life itself. Gedeo is a place shared by the Gedeo people and the Guji Oromo community. It is an area where the land is always green, the air is refreshing and lively, the forest speaks in an inaudible voice that has echoed across generations.

Trees in Gedeo are deeply revered, each with a name, story and lineage - they are not cut haphazardly but rather honored and cared for. Trees planted by ancestors still stand tall providing shade, food and diverse ecosystem services like soil conservation, moisture retention and aesthetic value while offering a cool and refreshing breeze to the home environment.

Farming in Gedeo has been and is still being practiced in harmony with the forest ecosystem, not against it. Various plants, spices, herbs grow side by side or in complex associations under the shade of tall indigenous trees. Water flows from clean springs, animals graze freely, and the soil remains rich and alive. These systems reflect centuries of knowledge where farming coexists with nature rather than exploiting it.

As a principle, the Gedeo people do not destroy what gives them life. From the home gardens, families harvest nearly everything they need for survival. The things they buy are salt and cooking oil, everything else grows within the embrace of the forest ecosystem.



The Gedeo agroforestry system is more than a farming method; it is a way of life built on balance, renewal and sustainability. By protecting trees and planting rather than destroying, the community has fostered resilience against climate change and soil degradation. This synergistic farming is an African indigenous wisdom that predates modern sustainability movements, climate solutions or regenerative agriculture.

In Gedeo, trees mean everything, they are not just part of the farm setting. They are at the heart of family livelihood. They are the bridge between the ancestors of the past and the unborn. In this land, to plant a tree is to plant life, hope and to protect a forest means to protect the future.

The story of Gedeo carries a powerful message to the world;

Africa holds the answers to restore its soil productivity, soil health, diversity of seeds, conserve the precious multipurpose trees, maintain the integrity and functionality of the agroecosystem and become both food secure and sovereign.



“Rooted in Resilience: Cultivating Knowledge, Advocacy, and Action”

**Organized by ESFSAC & Haramaya University |
June 4–5, 2025 | Haramaya, Ethiopia**

The Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC), in partnership with Haramaya University, organized a two-day intensive Agroecology Awareness and Advocacy Training Workshop. The event convened over 40 participants including government officials, academia, civil society representatives, researchers, youth organizations, and women leaders to deepen their understanding of agroecology and explore pathways for scaling sustainable food systems in Ethiopia.

Workshop Objectives

- **Build a shared understanding of agroecology concepts and its relevance to Ethiopia’s food security.**
- **Showcase innovations in agroecology research and education.**
- **Facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue for policy engagement and collaboration.**
- **Identify practical strategies for expanding agroecological practices at farm, landscape, and institutional levels.**

Dr. Bayush Tsegaye from ESFSAC, kicked off the session with a comprehensive overview of agroecology as a science, practice, and social movement. The session emphasized the need for ecological approaches that are community-driven, culturally appropriate, and rooted in local knowledge systems.

Ms. Lensa Girma from ESFSAC highlighted in her presentation the critical roles youth and women play in advancing agroecology, sharing experiences from initiatives like YALTA that empower young entrepreneurs to lead in agroecology-based enterprises.

Mr. Arbo Feyissa and Teferi Tadesse from Haramaya University followed by showcasing pioneering MSc programs in Agroecology and practical research hubs, setting an example for integrating agroecology into Ethiopia’s academic and research agendas.

The event concluded with identifying action plans focusing on strengthening policy advocacy, enhancing capacity building programs, supporting community-level initiatives, and improving financing mechanisms for youth and women agripreneurs.



CONFRONTING GMOS

WHAT CAN AFRICA LEARN FROM MEXICO'S BOLD MOVE TO RESTRICT GM MAIZE AND GLYPHOSATE?



Mexican scientists Dr. María Elena Álvarez-Buylla Roces and Erica L. Hagman Aguilar presented alarming evidence linking GM maize and glyphosate to serious health and environmental risks. Their research found transgenes in 90% of tortillas and glyphosate residue in 30%, with studies connecting these to cancer, intensive effects on fertility, learning ability and even on the immune system among other critical health risks. This scientific overview shows Mexico's landmark decision to reject GM maize approval, prioritizing public health and biocultural heritage over corporate agribusiness interests.

Mexico's legal stance, **rooted in precautionary principle** as a scientific mandate offers a model for Africa. This scientific movement emphasizes the need to ban GM maize and glyphosate to protect food sovereignty, it cited risks to human health biodiversity and farmers' rights, a move supported by a CONAHCYT dossier reviewing 1200+ studies. Africa facing similar pressures to adopt GM seeds and pesticides can learn from Mexico's evidence based approach to policy, which rejects GM seeds, pesticides or other inputs until independent safety assessments prove harmlessness.

This move emphasizes the need for:



- Evidence-based advocacy
- Precautionary principle as a scientific mandate
- Global solidarity
- Prioritization of human and environmental health
- Defending science

Key insights:

- GM crops and glyphosate are hazardous and a danger to human and environmental health.
- Corporates claim that GM maize have higher yields but there are data that shows conventional maize often outperform GM varieties.
- Protecting indigenous crops, safeguards both cultural identity, maintains nutritional value and they are organic and they are better for human health as well as the environment.

Mexico's bold move highlights that food sovereignty requires **rejecting** modified inputs and other **advancements that prioritize profit over the well being of people**. Africa can follow Mexico's lead in defending public health, ecological balance and farmers' rights.

The message is clear; **implementation of precautionary policies** backed by independent science that produces sufficient evidence are vital for ensuring sustainable food systems.





South Africa's Supreme Court reverses GMO approval due to safety concerns

On October 22, 2024, South Africa's Supreme Court ruled in favor of the African Center for Biodiversity (ACB), **overturning the approval of Monsanto's drought-resistant maize** due to inadequate safety assessments. The court found that the Executive Council of the GMO Act had failed to properly evaluate health and environmental risks, instead they rubber-stamped data from biotech companies without scrutiny or sufficient assessment. This landmark decision exposed a 28 year old pattern of unchecked GMO approvals in South Africa.

The ruling also shed light on apartheid era origins of South Africa's regulatory framework, which centered around controlling black populations through **creating dependency** on white South African agriculture while poisoning and reducing black populations in South Africa and the broader Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Southern Africa countries like Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi and Lesotho heavily import these GMOs from South Africa. This dependence raised troubling questions about whether African leaders were prioritizing corporate interests over public health, especially given the fact that Southern African governments, whose citizens were affected by these past biochemical attacks continue to import food from South Africa that is still heavily controlled and influenced by remnants of the apartheid system.

The court's decision gives hope which sets a crucial precedent, urging greater scrutiny to the safety of GMOs across the region.

For deeper insights into the ruling of South Africa's Supreme Court, [read more](#).



Food Culture : Traditional Dish From Ghana

Cultural Significance and Preparation of Kpekple (Kpokpoi)

Cultural Significance

Kpekple (Kpokpoi) is a Traditional Ghanaian Dish celebrated during the Homowo Festival in Ghana.

Kpekple, also known as Kpokpoi, is a traditional Ghanaian dish that holds deep cultural significance, particularly during the annual Homowo Festival. The term 'Homowo' translates to 'hooting at hunger' and commemorates the Ghanaian people's triumph over famine with a bountiful harvest. Kpekple is central to this celebration, symbolizing resilience, gratitude, and community.

Traditionally, chiefs and elders sprinkle kpekple in homes, streets, and shrines as an offering to ancestors and deities. This act is seen as a way to express thanks and invite continued blessings and protection. Sharing kpekple among family members also reinforces unity, emphasizing togetherness across all ages and social classes.

Kpekple is more than just a dish, it is a **representation of the Ghana identity, cultural heritage, and a connection to ancestral wisdom.**



Traditional Preparation And Serving

1. Base Ingredients: Kpekple is made using fermented or soaked cornmeal, palm nut soup, and smoked fish. Other ingredients include onions, tomatoes, pepper, okra (optional), and salt.

2. Processing the Corn: Corn grains are cleaned, soaked (often overnight), and then milled. Milling should be done soon after soaking to avoid over-fermentation.

3. Steaming: The ground corn is steamed in a traditional clay pot or steamer. Modern alternatives like rice cookers can also be used.

4. Mixing and Pounding: Once steamed, the cornmeal is kneaded or pounded with palm oil, onions, and salt. Optional ingredients such as okra may be added. The mixture can be sieved for a smoother consistency.

5. Serving: Kpekple is typically served hot or cold, accompanied by palm nut soup and smoked or fresh fish. It is eaten communally, especially during Homowo, to reinforce family and social bonds.



Go for recipes that nourish!

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:** The second African Climate Summit (ACS2) will be hosted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at Addis International Convention Center (AICC).
- **Date of Event:** Pre-summit September 5 - 7, 2025 | Summit September 8 - 10, 2025.



AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT 2

8-10 September, 2025
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- **Event Title:** 3rd Nyéléni Global Forum, will be held in Kandy, Sri Lanka.
- **Date of Event:** 6 - 13 September, 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 October's issue of ESFSAC's newsletter. If you have any projects, achievements or announcements you'd like to share, please send us your content by mid-October. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your work. For submissions or inquiries, feel free to contact us or email your content to: contact.esfsac@gmail.com / natnaelbirhanu14@gmail.com / lensagirma146@gmail.com . We look forward to featuring your highlights.



Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC)

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- Land for Life Ethiopia
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