



Introducing the European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF)

January 2023

Background

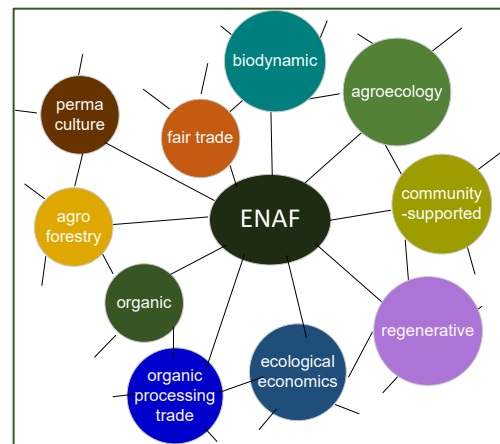
This document emerged from an interactive and co-creative process that took place in 2022 to create a ‘network of networks’ (NofN) to support agroecological transformations of European food systems. This was initiated by the Agroecology for Europe (AE4EU) project. Various networks and groups from across Europe participated in the initial meetings and workshops and it was widely recognised that NofN could play a key role in realising the potential of agroecology across Europe. To achieve this, a long-term initiative going beyond the project’s lifetime was desirable. Three working groups have to date shared proposals regarding the way in which the NofN could be orientated and the activities it could support. These have been summarised in this document and are endorsed by the majority of representatives that joined the NofN in 2022. This network has been named the European Network for Agroecological Food systems (ENAF).

Mission

To activate the combined potential and capabilities of existing national and European networks to be able to contribute more effectively across sectors to agroecological transformations of agricultural and food systems in Europe.

Purpose and value proposition

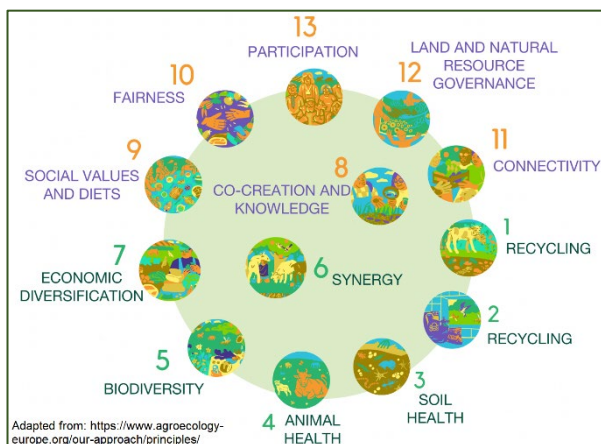
ENAF remains a ‘network of networks’ in the sense that it focuses not on connecting individual organisations, but on connecting existing networks and umbrella organisations. It seeks to complement what networks are doing by creating synergies and supporting shared efforts so that the efficacy of their work is enhanced. This includes creating opportunities for a stronger, combined voice and influence in relation to policy and research agendas. Additionally, it allows ideas to spread more rapidly across national boundaries, thus supporting local innovation.



Orientation

ENAF understands agroecology as an integrated food system approach that pays due attention to both its social, economic, and environmental aspects. The vision of ENAF is to see people across Europe enjoying all the good that comes with food systems that are grounded in the principles of agroecology¹ since they are environmentally conscious, socially just and economically fair. ENAF respects each participating network’s own focus and orientation, such as ‘organic’, ‘biodynamic’, ‘regenerative’, ‘community-supported’. It focuses on the common ground that these approaches share where exchange can benefit each other.

ENAF acknowledges the tendency for top-down guidance on sustainability transitions in agriculture and food in Europe, and seeks to balance this by being orientated towards the interests and ideas coming from grassroots and farmer organisations, both in the North, South, East and West of Europe. By this, ENAF recognises and supports the centrality, knowledge and advocating voice of agroecological food producers all over Europe. The European diversity in



Adapted from: <https://www.agroecology-europe.org/our-approach/principles/>

¹ HLPE, 2019

agroecology – from peasant farming to regenerative practices and community partnerships – are recognised as strong bedrocks for a holistic transformation of the European food systems. This orientation will also be reflected in how ENAF is governed.

Aims and activities

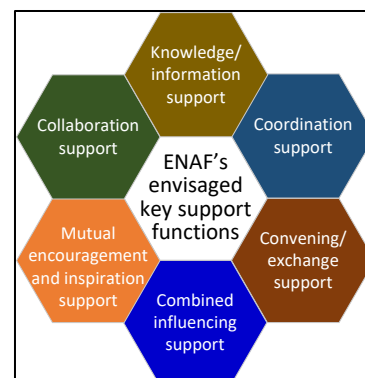
ENAF focuses on the following aims:

- Support knowledge and information exchange between networks
- Supporting communication and connectivity among networks
- Supporting the efforts of relevant EU partnership programmes
- Highlighting and influencing policy and research agendas at national and European level
- Supporting collaborative efforts in the form of living labs, research, etc.
- Help coordinate the efforts of participating networks
- Developing mutual engagement and commitment to help each other

For more on tentative activity areas see annex 1.

Membership

Networks and associations interested in becoming a member can indicate their interest in joining. This membership will be provisional until the completion of the statutory document (anticipated November 2023). Currently there are three options for joining: as co-founder, as participant, and as friend. See annex 1 for further explanation of options for joining ENAF.



Governance and organisation

ENAF will be governed by its members. A small office to operationalise ENAF's aims will be hosted by one of the member networks, possibly rotating every few years. At this point in time, the governing structure of ENAF has not been strictly determined and will be more clearly defined by the members of the network during the course of 2023. It may have a board made up of 3 networks that will guide the network for one or two years. After that period a new board may then be voted in and established. Until further defined, ENAF will be governed by AE4EU and the other founding members of the network. Additionally an advisory group will be established in 2023 including members, followers and invited guests to give input into the developments relevant to the network. However, again, these details will be further established during the course of 2023.

Funding

Currently, AE4EU is able to fund the start-up phase of ENAF. This is, however, temporary. By the end of 2023, a new funding structure (to perform ENAF's envisaged functions) and leading partners will need to be established. ENAF will seek to secure funding sources that are conducive to safeguarding its identity as described in the purpose and orientation.

Anticipated future and related milestones

This document is meant to provide the foundations and initial aims of the network. A statutory document detailing its governance, funding, and focus will be further developed interactively with ENAF participants over the course of 2023. Annex one provides additional information on anticipated activities in 2023.

ENAF will be officially launched on the **26th of January 2023**. This will be followed by various activities, including a series of webinars to exchange and connect on the topic of agroecology. In November 2023, ENAF will have its first live meeting as a part of AEEU's Agroecology Forum. During this meeting, the host organisation(s) that will take ENAF into 2024 will be made known, and a definitive statute (agreed by at least 75% of those who registered as ENAF co-founder) will be presented.

Contact: jessica.donham@agroecology-europe.org or seerp.wigboldus@wur.nl



Annex 1: Activity plan for 2023

ENAF will officially launch in 2023 through a **two-step establishment process** (much like launching a rocket). **Step one** is the formal launch event ('take-off') in January. **The second step** (February-October) is to operationalize ENAF ('enter space') into a functional network with active relationships and interactions that are supported by a host entity.

ENAF will have **two types of core activity areas** in 2023:

1: Facilitating content-related exchange and sharing information and explorations of **potential cross-network collaboration and coordination** among ENAF participants.

Tentative plans:

- Based on the comprehensive mapping of agroecological initiatives (including living labs and research infrastructures) across Europe (which will be presented), interactively determine gaps and opportunities for expanding and enhancing connectivity between such initiatives.
- Based on an exploration of funding sources for agroecological initiatives (including living labs and research infrastructures), interactively determine opportunities for matching good ideas for new initiatives with appropriate funding sources.
- Launch of a dedicated agroecology knowledge hub which will soon be ready, and explaining what it can offer and how it can be further populated with data and information.
- Develop a durable social media network for exchange.

These plans are meant to be refined interactively with those who join ENAF. More on this below.

2: Further collaborative development of ENAF so that it can become legally established by November 2023, after which there can be formal membership.

The following is a preliminary planning for activities to further establish ENAF.

Month in 2023	Subject	Description
January	Launch of ENAF	The network will be launched (take-off moment) in an online webinar
February	Agenda updates and communications	Based on feedback received shortly before, during, and after the launch event, update plans for taking ENAF forward. Start of two working groups (more on this below).
March-April	Relationship building and networking	Creating descriptions of participant networks and associations so that we will not remain anonymous to each other. Build connections with relevant stakeholders outside ENAF to strengthen connectedness and grow the network.
April-August	Finalise draft statutory document	Work towards an agreed statutory document with more detail on how exactly ENAF is going to function and what functions it will provide and how.
April-September	Secure initial funding and identify host (at least for 2024)	Based on identified priority functions and functionalities, look for appropriate funding sources. Find a host that will take ENAF forward after the Agroecology4Europe project phases out.
November	First live ENAF meeting	In conjunction with the Agroecology Forum 2023. ENAF formally and legally established and starting to perform agreed functions. Also announcing where and how ENAF will be hosted.

To guide and support these two activity areas, **two working groups** will start:

ENAF Working Group on Network Governance and relationships (working group 1): This will focus on everything that has to do with further **establishing ENAF**:

- Further develop the way in which ENAF will be set up, governed, legal status etc.
- Find a host or a team of hosts to take ENAF into 2024.
- Find funding to set up and maintain basic functions of ENAF.
- Liaison; e.g. develop and strengthen links with relevant EU partnerships.

ENAF Working Group on Network Actions (working group 2): This will focus on deciding what **initial activities** to focus on as ENAF:

- Informative webinars and exchanges (notably also supported by the AE4EU project during the year 2023).
- Interactively exploring and agreeing on ideas for collaborative efforts.

Working groups are meant as fluid structures that can re-design their activities based on the yearly needs and priorities of the network, but always maintaining a distinct focus: WG 1 – collaborative governance, and WG 2 – collaborative action.

Ways in which to join ENAF

Until ENAF has been fully and legally established (anticipated in November 2023), there cannot be real membership yet. Until then, there are three options for joining ENAF:

- As **co-founder**.
- As **participant**.
- As **friend**.

The following overview describes the implications.

	Co-founder of ENAF	Participant of ENAF	Friend of ENAF
Receive updates about ENAF's next steps and receive invitations to meetings and (public) events	√	√	√
Get the opportunity to provide feedback on statutory documents and other documents in relation to the formal establishment of ENAF.	√	√	
Participate in one or two of the below-mentioned working groups and thus have the opportunity to actively help shape the direction of the establishment of ENAF in 2023 and beyond, in terms of its governance, and in terms of concrete activities. Those who registered as co-founder will receive an invitation to the first meetings of the working groups.	√		

Through this link, you can access the registration form and indicate how you would like to join:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf_Ut9rEaUk5SNSZjziAazpN7uvtNz8iE1uTxqSazCgcCWOGw/viewform

The AE4EU project and its collaborating partners will continue to support the general coordination of all activities and working groups in 2023 in whatever way needed. A dedicated webpage has been set up as part of the AE4EU website (<https://www.ae4eu.eu/>). News and updates will be posted there.