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# The French Agro-ecology Plan

## Goals – Process - Results

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# Initial diagnostic

- Both economic and environmental issues are crucial and cannot be dealt with separately
- Ambition for agriculture (no decline) => need for a mobilising perspective
- Much progress has been made through standardisation => important sources of innovation remain in the adaptation to local context and synergies within the agro-ecosystem
- Implication of stakeholders (farmers, research and development, training structures, food chain, etc.) is key



# We know it is possible to combine economic and environmental performances

- Many initiatives in France and throughout the world have already demonstrated the possibility to combine economic and environmental performances
- Rely on innovation and precise knowledge of the functioning of the farm agro-ecosystem
- Need a shift in scale and a social and political support
- Our objective is to shift from the pioneers to the average farmers

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# Agroecology: the key principles

- **Systemic approach:** to take advantage of the positive interactions and synergies at the level of the individual farm as well as in its relationship with the surrounding ecosystem, the region, the agri-food chain, etc.
- Reliance on **positive interactions** in the agricultural ecosystem => conservation and improvement of **natural resources** (soil, water, air) by efficient management of inputs, energy and crops
- Enhancement of **biodiversity and biological regulations** (agroecological infrastructures, diversification of crop rotation, association of crop species...)
- Enhancement of the **economic performance** of the farm
- Enhancement of farm **autonomy**: seek to complete bio- and geochemical cycles (water, nitrogen, etc.)

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# A strong political will

- **Launched in December 2012** by Stéphane Le Foll, Minister of Agriculture

- National Conference "Let's produce differently"
- Integration of 7 existing specific action plans



(pesticides, veterinary antibiotics, organic farming, protein crops, nitrogen management and methanisation, beekeeping, seeds selection)

- Set the **objective of a majority of French farmers having shift to agroecology in 2025**



# A public policy and a collective project

- A threefold public policy:
  - Make explicit an ambitious and mobilising perspective for agriculture => produce more and better with less
  - Organize a collective governance through a steering committee with the main stakeholders of the sector
  - Define and implement a collective and comprehensive action plan (15 chapters; more than 70 actions; for each action: a pilot, a timetable, milestones and monitoring indicators)
- Modification of the other policies from this new perspective => change the supports to farmers to strengthen the incentive for agroecology, change the training, etc.

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# Key features of the agroecology Project

- Systemic thinking: all issues must be dealt with all together => promote agricultural practices which are simultaneously positive for economic, environmental, sanitary and social performances, climate change (mitigation, adaptation)
- Agro-ecology is not a set of practices or recipes: solutions are diverse and must be adapted on a case by case basis
- Efficiency → substitution → reconception => different situations but every farmer is concerned
- Collective dynamic is a key factor to support the transition to agro-ecology
- Deals not only with the farming practices but also the agri-food chain and the rural and territory development

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# Implementation of the action plan: some examples

- Training for farmers: training programmes and educational frameworks are being adapted to include agroecology-related knowledge more effectively
- Mobilisation of research and research & development: use the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) to strengthen innovation and the diffusion of agroecological knowledge and practices
- Mobilisation of Chambers of Agriculture, technical institutes, agricultural and rural associations, to assist farmers in their transition towards to agro-ecology
- On going reform of the farm advisory system

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# Implementation of the action plan: some examples

- Creation of an agroecological assessment tool: after extensive tests (more than 500 farms), this tool will be made freely available at the end of Summer 2015. It allows farmers to measure their practices and performances and compare them with those of other farmers
- Renewal of public support: investment subsidies are geared towards agroecological oriented projects, support for setting up of young farmers is increased for agroecological projects, coupled support for the production of protein crops, etc.

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# Implementation of the action plan: some examples



- Creation of economic and environmental interest groups: new legal tool, allowing grouping of farmers and implementation of a collective project to change practices on the farms
- Modification of seeds evaluation, to better take into account their environmental performance
- Implementation of regular monitoring and evaluation: the results and impact of the action plan are included in an annual report and indicators are used to monitor the progress achieved



# Conclusion

- A mobilising project for the French agriculture
- An original answer to a common question which concerns every country (how to combine economy and environment and produce more and better with less?)
- Seek a change in the mindset (through many actions and through the co-construction with the actors of the sector)
- A long term perspective (a majority of the French farmers in agroecology in 2025) which needs short term achievements

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# Conclusion

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- Success factors :
  - co-construction with all the stakeholders at each level
  - Regional and local dynamics are key points
  - Integration of the entire value-chain, including the agri-food sector
  - Enhancing collective approaches





Agroforestry



Change crops rotations

Pig farming extensification



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cattle breeding

**Thank you  
for your attention!**



Collective training and  
transfer of knowledge

**Use of biomass for  
energy and  
bioeconomy**



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