

2023 International Symposium of
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**Scaling up Agroecology from the Policies to Practices:
Emerging Policies and Contradictions in the Global North**

**Presentation 1: Emerging Policies and Contradictions in EU: a fair, healthy and
environmentally-friendly food system by 2030**

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Abstract: In the context of the European Green Deal, the Biodiversity Strategy seeks to halt biodiversity loss by 2030, and the Farm to Fork Strategy aims to facilitate a transition towards a sustainable food system. The latter involves moving from a linear understanding of the food system to a more circular view, with ecological targets such as having 25% of EU agricultural land under organic farming and halving the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 2030. The policy innovation, however, is also seen in the integration of goals on health and a fair distribution of benefits along supply chains. After the publication of the Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity strategies in May 2020, several debates emerged. Two controversies had stronger involvement of scholars:

1. **Food as a commodity, common good, or human right?** The Farm-to-Fork strategy did not follow the guidance of the EU's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, which suggested that a more sustainable food system requires "moving from food as a commodity to food as more of a common good." Drawing on [SAPEA \(2020\)](#) and [Jackson et al. \(2021\)](#), I will discuss how different framings of food shape food policy development, arguing that the Farm to Fork strategy is locked into a "food-as-commodity" framing. Framings of "food as a human right" or "food as a common good" gained some attention with inflation and rising food prices. Public authorities intervene in markets and civil society organisations seek to help people facing soaring food prices.
2. **Food security by lowering or increasing ecological ambition?** IFOAM Organics Europe and nature conservation organisations were delighted to see that many of the points they had advocated for were included in the strategies and associated action plans. In 2022 however, greening priorities were questioned when the armed conflict in Ukraine disrupted food supply chains and caused turbulences in international markets. With the argument of safeguarding food security, the [EU Commission](#) allowed member states to temporarily derogate from greening obligations (e.g., allowing production on ecological focus areas previously set aside for biodiversity). [A group of scientists](#) and civil society organisations, in contrast, called for a

comprehensive agroecological change to also ensure food security. They cautioned against undermining agroecological practices and argued for prioritizing grain for food over livestock feed and biofuel production. These debates show the difficulties in reforming Common Agricultural Policy in wartime.

The new legislation on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which came into force on 1 January 2023, should pave the way for a fairer and greener agricultural policy. The European Land Owner organisation, producer, pesticides and food industry organisations raised major concerns regarding CAP alignment towards the strategies. The national strategic plans for the implementation of CAP 2023-27 show much heterogeneity in ambition and tools, not all of them are in line with the farm-to-fork strategy. The future will show whether the CAP can be the key leverage in reaching the ambitions of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies.

Biography: [Marianne Penker](#) is a Professor of Rural Sociology and Rural Development at the BOKU Institute of Sustainable Economic Development. She is an internationally recognized expert in the governance of food and cultural landscapes. She co-authored the State-of-Knowledge Report "A Sustainable Food System for the European Union" for SAPEA (Science Advice for Policy by European Academies), which informed the Scientific Opinion of the European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors and the EU Farm to Fork Strategy. She presented the report's key findings to the European Parliament. She also serves as a member of the Scientific Council of AREPO (Association of European Regions for Products of Origin) and chairs the Austrian UNESCO Man & Biosphere National Committee at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Presentation 2: Emerging Policies and Contradictions in the US:

The Organic Label as a Agroecological Policy Lever

Nina F. Ichikawa

Berkeley Food Institute, University of California

Abstract: Agroecology has gained important traction internationally among producers, researchers, and policymakers. Its environmental benefits have only become more pronounced as a tool to mitigate the effects of climate change and even help reverse it. However, the concept remains largely foreign in American policymaking, for a number of reasons. One is cultural, as chemical-intensive agriculture has been established as the American “norm” and systems and institutions are slow to pivot to the different demands of agroecological agriculture. Another is political, as political systems have excluded agroecology advocates for decades. For example, the USDA’s research strategy titled “The US Agriculture Innovation Agenda,” was released scarcely a week before the end of the Trump administration and while it lists a number of organic advocacy organizations as “engaged stakeholders,” their recommendations for either organic or agroecology were not included in the final agenda. The report’s release was overshadowed by then-Undersecretary Hutchins’ decision to dismantle a number of USDA internal research agencies and his own

background as a retired executive at Dow-Dupont. Furthermore, the central premise of the Agenda is to “increase American agricultural production by 40 percent,” a goal which has no consensus among American farmers, consumers, researchers, or environmentalists.

Agroecology in the US has also had a geographic disadvantage: seminal definitions for agroecology in the US emerged out of California (Gliessman, 1990) and the first state law governing the implementation of agroecological practices was passed in California (California Organic Food Act, 1979), 4500 km and three time zones from Washington, DC. A timeline of a review paper on organic and sustainable agriculture in California (Etienne, 2012) mentions “agroecology” 12 times, an indication of how interwoven the three concepts has been. Yet only one term (organic) was enshrined in federal law, with the establishment of the Organic Foods Production Act in 1990. Considering their intertwined evolution, this was a watershed moment for agroecology, while the meaning of organic continues to be contested and considered with each quarterly open meeting of the National Organic Standards Board. While these challenges have led to repeated efforts to create third-party standards that better reflect the goals and ideals of agroecology (biodynamic, regenerative, “beyond organic,” etc.), organic remains a key policy tool to scale up agroecology in the Global North, including in the US. Organic trade equivalency agreements between the US and EU (2012) and US and Japan (2013) have the potential to undermine the agroecological origins of organic by preferring large-scale industrial operations, to amplify and strengthen an international movement for sustainable agriculture, both, or neither. Either way, the standardization of organic across the Global North represents a political opportunity for agroecology, in all its regional diversity.

Biography: Nina F. Ichikawa is the Executive Director at the Berkeley Food Institute, an interdisciplinary research hub at the University of California at Berkeley. She launched the Institute’s policy program, creating a model for students and faculty working on food systems at UC Berkeley to learn about and engage with local, state, and federal policy.

She previously served in the office of US Senator Daniel K. Inouye and with the US Department of Agriculture’s “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” Initiative in Washington, DC. In 2011, she was named a Food and Community Fellow by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. She was the founding Food and Agriculture editor for Hyphen magazine, and has contributed to the New York Times, Civil Eats, Grist, Al Jazeera America, NBCNews.com, and Rafu Shimpo. Her writing was featured in *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* (NYU Press: 2013).

Following research on sustainable food systems in Japan and Mexico, Nina received a BA in Interdisciplinary Studies/Food Policy from UC Berkeley and a MA in International Relations/Food Policy from Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo.

Presentation 3: Emerging Policies and Contradictions in Japan: Pathways to Agroecology within the Framework of a Production-oriented Agricultural Policy

ISHII Keiichi

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Abstract: In May 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries launched the Strategy for Sustainable Food Systems in Japan. Numerical targets indicated were: 50% reduction in pesticide use (risk equivalent), 30% reduction in chemical fertilizer use, and 25% or more of organic farming area under arable land area by 2050. Such ambitious targets have surprised many people involved in the Japanese agricultural sector. These targets are similar to those of the Farm-to-Fork Strategy in the European Union (EU); however, while the year of completion is 2030 in the EU, 2050 does not appear to be imminent. In this presentation, I will focus on the context behind this difference in comparison with the EU countries.

First, Japan has a mountainous terrain with narrow plains, and suitable land for agricultural production is in intense competition with urban usage. As a result, higher land productivity is required for agricultural production, and a high-input production system has been developed. In addition, after World War II, the food self-sufficiency ratio steadily declined due to the westernization of the diet, rise in currency values, and liberalization of agricultural trade. Since the enactment of the Basic Law on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas in 1999, improving food self-sufficiency has been a flagship policy goal that is yet to be achieved. It can be said that the pursuit of high yields remains normative in Japanese agriculture.

Second, a traditional consumer-supported agricultural scheme has set a high standard for agricultural protection. Direct payments are limited to converted crops from overproduced rice, such as wheat and soybeans, and have no additional environmental conditionality. Budgetary spending on environmental payments is extremely small. Direct payments play a less important role in providing incentives to farmers to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

Third, the 2050 targets rely on technological progress based on eco-efficiency and input substitution, not on the redesign of the agricultural system. Techniques and farming practices that result in reduced yields are difficult to accept.

While such productivist agricultural policies have been dominant, the purchasing power of consumers who should support organic farming and other environmentally sustainable agriculture is low, as represented by the rise in the Engel coefficient in recent years. The driving force towards the shift to agroecology comes mainly from the promotion of agricultural exports to meet overseas demand and the pressure from international fora, such as the UN Food System Summit, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, to achieve corresponding goals and outcomes.

Biography: Keiichi ISHII is a Professor at the Graduate School of Agricultural Science, Tohoku University. After finishing his study in the Graduate School of Agriculture at Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, he worked as a researcher for the Policy Research

Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. During this time, in 1994-1995, he studied at the Department of Economics and Sociology of the National Research Institute of Agricultural Sciences, INRA (Dijon Center, France) as a French government grant holder. His specialty is rural economics, particularly the comparative study of agriculture and rural policies. He has recently worked on research that would help design systems for the development of organic agriculture in Japan by analyzing the processes of promoting organic farming, technology diffusion, and innovation, based on EU and French agricultural policies.