

## REVIEWERS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES OF THE AUTHORS

### COMMENTS TO THE AUTHORS – Authors response (blue written)

#### Editor Landbauforschung

We will accept your manuscript incorporating major revisions based on the wide-ranging comments of the reviewers. As you see both reviewers want a more critical vision and give examples of where your position should be more focused explaining the connection between sustainable local diets and agroecology. We strongly encourage you to present your own opinion more courageously, especially to dispel the serious objections expressed by Reviewer #2.

Please follow strictly the instructions for authors. The revised version of your manuscript will be evaluated again by the Chief editor and, if necessary, by the reviewers.

**((Editor: Some comments of the two reviewers weren't mentioned in the responses of the authors – see here for completion. For all other comments see below in the responses of authors.))**

#### Reviewer # 1:

##### Short summary of the aim of the paper, its main findings and conclusions

The paper aims to establish a link between sustainable diets and policy initiatives to support the transition to agroecological food systems. It emphasises the central role of localism over globalism, and interconnectedness between food system actors only being feasible in a localised system, and uses examples such as CSAs, Mediterranean Diets, Participatory Certification Systems and Cuban agroecology to illustrate possible policies.

##### Short check of the need for tables and figures, and the adequacy of the references

None in paper – not essential

##### Short check if title, highlights and abstract are matching the scope given for the specific issue of Landbauforschung

Yes, as a position paper, though abstract very brief and lacks some detail

##### Recommendation

Major revisions needed

#### Reviewer # 2:

##### Recommendation

I would recommend rejecting the manuscript.

## REVISION – RESPONSES OF AUTHORS

### @ Reviewer #1:

Dear Reviewer,

Regarding the article “Local sustainable diets as a driver for transition to agroecological food systems”, we transcript and respond below each of your comments:

*Given the title of the paper, I would have hoped for a more critical exploration of the definitions of local, sustainable, transition and agroecological. For example:*

*Is local more sustainable or agroecological if it means growing crops in sub-optimal climates with more inputs? In geographically peripheral regions, do climate constraints limit diets and their nutritional value if not supplemented from elsewhere?*

RESP. We completely agree with the necessity of consider those questions. Therefore, we have incorporated to our position paper, right after the definition of local diets, a reflection on whether they are always sustainable. “But, are local diets always sustainable? Local food production might not be occurring with a low environmental impact or, if it does, the outcome might not be enough to feed the entire population, for instance in areas with severe climatic constraints. Taken together, therefore, we emphasize the concept of “local sustainable diets”. We argue that local diets also need to be sustainable and vice versa, so that what is sustainable is also accessible.” (lines 45 to 50).

*What does transition to agroecology involve, institutionally and in practice, and how does diet really contribute? (Line 47, for example, talks about agroecology supporting traditional diets, which is the reverse of the title.*

RESP. Based on your comment, we have incorporated the concept of Agroecology Transition (AET) as a central concept in our position paper. From line 58 to 67 we describe the concept of AET (“a process of systemic transformation consisting in the ecologisation of agriculture and food”) and its main characteristics (ample, long-term, multidimensional and multi actor) according to the specialized literature. The inclusion of the concept of AET has been very useful to in reorganizing the paper, including reframing the central argument of the paper, which is that local sustainable diets includes elements with the potential to drive food systems through the long term process of an AET. However, we still argue that the confluences between local diets, sustainable diets and agroecology are key drivers for the AET.

*If sustainable diets are inextricably linked with sustainable food systems, (line 22) what are the causal links and are they reciprocal? Sustainable food systems may be essential for diets to be sustainable, but is the reverse true?*

RESP. We think those questions are very relevant and we have included them and its respective discussion in the position as follows: “But, are sustainable diets inextricably linked to sustainable food systems? What are the cause and effect relationships between sustainable diets and sustainable food systems and, are they reciprocal? Diet has a direct impact on consumers’ food choices that conditions which foods are transformed and produced, and thus, distributed throughout the food supply for consumer purchase. But this is a two-way process, as food production conditions food product transformation and distribution, which subsequently affects the food supply and hence, what consumers can choose from to be part of their diet (Meybeck and Gitz, 2017). Therefore, a sustainable diet will, ideally, enhance a sustainable food system through consumer choices, as production and distribution will have an incentive to adapt and supply sustainable foods. However, consumers can only implement a sustainable diet if the food production and distribution provide them with both economically and physically accessible sustainable food options” (lines 27 to 38).

*Where authors cited claim certain benefits or characteristics of sustainable diets etc., what is the evidential or theoretical basis for the claims?*

RESP. The central concepts of our paper (local diets, sustainable diets, agroecology, AET) are broad and still limited practical realization; as a consequence the theoretical discussion is still more developed than evidence. In this new version of our paper we have worked in being much clearer in the definitions of each concept as well as its main implications. For this, we use recent literature from selected top academic sources as well as documents from reference institutions as FAO. In this, for instance in the characteristics of sustainable diets the FAO definition that we quote is accepted by the research.

*Line 18 – my perception is that the research on sustainable diets has been more broadly focused than mainly on climate-related impacts, but the reference cited may provide the relevant supporting evidence.*

RESP. We agree with the comment and we decided to delete that reference in the revised version of our paper to avoid a misunderstanding.

*Line 40 – local diets may also be significantly influenced by climatic constraints a restrictive availability of foods.*

RESP. We agree with the comment and included it in the discussion on the definition of local diets, when we refer their limitations to be sustainable (line 48).

*Line 95 – while the term CSA may have been popularised in the USA, its origins lie in biodynamic initiatives in Europe, some dating from the late 60's and early 70's and its development in the US was also initially linked to biodynamics. While CSAs were developed as a means of supporting small-scale organic and biodynamic farms, I am unclear about the link to sustainable diets.*

RESP. In response to the reviewer's sound comments about CSAs we have made a couple changes to incorporate these comments into the text. First, in our explanation of the CSA model, we have changed the reference from a US-centric approach to a reference regarding the origins of CSAs in Europe as means to support biodynamic agriculture (lines 105 and 106). Furthermore, we have included in the same paragraph a reflection on the link between CSA and sustainable diets: "Taken together, CSA is a way to promote local sustainable diets by bringing farmers and consumers closer together" (lines 110 and 111).

*Likewise the Cuban example – how does this link to sustainable diets?*

RESP. We have made major changes to the paragraph regarding the Cuban MCAC program. First we have better contextualized the MCAC program, as a switch to diets based on local food production due to a period of scarcity. As food scarcity during crisis, such as the Special Period in the case of Cuba, is a threat for food security, we included the Cuban example as an opportunity towards current and future rethinking and rebuilding of the food system. Ideally, that should happen in a more sustainable way in terms of food access; and also, environmentally, for instance through the agroecology practice.

*From Line 119, a common problem with Food based dietary guidelines in different countries is they ignore the question of how or where food is produced, the Brazilian example being more an exception than the rule.*

RESP. We appreciate and agree with the Reviewer's comment. We have rewritten, for the sake of clarify, the section of the text that makes reference to the FDBGs; highlighting the Brazilian experience as a rare example of inclusion of sustainability and food origin considerations in its recommendations (177 to 180).

*For the reasons set out above, I am not sure that the case is well enough made that local, sustainable diets can be drivers for the transition to agroecological food system. While they may be relevant intermediate elements, it is not clear how the Cuban, CSA or PGS examples are driven by or ensure sustainable diets. Some redrafting to make the case more clearly, critically considering the evidence and theory, could help ensure the conclusions are better justified and supported.*

We agree with the Reviewer's comment and, therefore, have dramatically redrafted the paper. As a result, we specifically tried to emphasize how the examples given (e.g. Cuban MCAC program, CSA, PGS) are drivers of an agroecological food system that stem from local food systems.

We take this opportunity to thank you again for your review. We hope we have been able to fully address the comments expressed in it.

**@ Reviewer #2:**

Dear Reviewer,

Regarding the article "Local sustainable diets as a driver for transition to agroecological food systems", we transcript and respond below each of your comments:

*The main aim of this paper seems to be, based on the title, to argue for the importance of local diets as an important factor in fostering a wider adoption of agroecological concepts in the global food system. It is to be, in my understanding, a brief outline of an argument backed by scientific evidence. Therefore, it can't go into extensive detail about any portion of the argument. Overall, however, I did not find that the article offered a particularly focused argument.*

RESP. We agree with the Reviewer that in the previous version of the paper our main argument was not clear. Therefore, in the revised version of the paper, we have aimed to make clear from the beginning that our central argument is that local diets, sustainable diets and agroecology all have commonalities that taken together might enhance an agroecology transition. Furthermore, we argue that because the agroecology transition is defined as a long-term, multi-dimension and multi-actor process, local sustainable diets have transition-enhancing elements.

*Though the title seems to indicate a focus on traditional local diets, the paper ranges from CSAs to third party certification of organic practices, to small farmers, to a Mediterranean-style diet, skimming some main points that different researchers have made without effectively tying them together.*

RESP. We have significantly revised the "possible solutions" section to explain in clearer way the selected global examples; especially their context, and characteristics related to our central argument that local sustainable diets and an agroecological perspective may enhance an agroecology transition.

*Diets are quite different things than production and provision networks, for example, and it is unclear how the author sees them as connecting.*

RESP. We have also rewritten the "description of the problem" section. For example, we have now included the following lines (93-168) and deleted others (former 65-117).

*After reading through the paper three times, I am still not entirely clear what the focus is, or what the specific argument is. There are so many different concepts and literatures thrown together here, but none of them are developed enough for us to see the connections that the author wants us to see. Without that, it reads like a disconnected short literature review. But it's not clear what the end argument is (apart from, maybe, supporting more local food production). A position paper like this needs to have a focused, central argument about a controversial position or a recommended course of action, and I don't really see one here.*

RESP. We thank the Reviewer for this important feedback. As a result, we have substantially rewritten our position paper; specifically, in four main ways. First, we present a clear central argument (lines 6-8) that “we propose the promotion of local sustainable diets as containing key drivers that can facilitate the transition process of current industrialized food systems to more agroecological food systems.” Then we have aimed to clarify the concepts that we discuss and their implications. For example, in the case of local diets, we have added the following lines (39-45): “There exists no universal concept of local diet as there are myriad definitions and understandings of the term “local”. In general, a local diet is one that is based on locally produced and sourced foods (Legrand et al., 2020). However, there is no single agreed upon idea of what the distance should be between the farmer and the consumer for considering food as locally grown; some argue 10, 50 or up to 100 miles, others a day’s drive or within a state borders (Whitney and Rolfes, 2019). In our opinion, local diets should be based on foods produced at the lowest distance possible between farmers and consumers”. Third, in the “possible solutions” section of the text we explain in greater detail the global examples provided and their context, implications and lessons related to the central argument. We also revised the short conclusion section in terms of our central argument.

We take this opportunity thank you again for your review. We hope we have been able to fully address all the comments expressed in your important remark.

#### **FINAL ACCEPT**

**Editor/Chief-Editor Landbauforschung**

Landbauforschung: Accepted

We are pleased to inform you that **we've accepted your revised manuscript “Position Paper: Local sustainable diets as a driver for transition to agroecological food systems”**, which you submitted to Landbauforschung – *Journal of Sustainable and Organic Agricultural Systems*. Both reviewers agreed with us that the extensively revised manuscript has significantly improved and that the revisions had been fulfilled.

#### **Editor/Chief editor:**

Thank you very much for the high efforts you’ve made in revising your article. It has significantly improved and is really fine. We and both reviewers appreciate your work. Here are some quotes from their comments:

#### **Reviewer #1:**

“I am happy to accept the (extensively) revised version as you suggest.”

#### **Reviewer #2:**

“I am much happier with this version - it is much more clearly organized around a central argument and more effectively ties the literature surveyed to this argument. I appreciate the significant amount of effort that the author put into the revisions to address the concerns of the reviewers, and I think it is a much stronger paper for those efforts.”