



PRESS RELEASE
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Run-up to COP26: Farmers and communities from 75 countries gather at global summit to show how farming can fix the climate crisis

THOUSANDS of farmers and activists across six continents will come together at the Oxford Real Farming Conference (ORFC Global) on 7th January to show that small-scale farming can fix the climate and ecological crisis.

ORFC Global delegates, including representatives of indigenous communities from the Amazon to Alaska, are pushing for food, farming and nature to be at the top of the COP26 agenda in Glasgow this November.

Farmers around the world who practice climate-friendly methods, including agroecology, will share their success stories over the course of the seven-day global conference.

Colin Tudge, Oxford Real Farming Conference co-founder, said:

“Agriculture in its present form is both a cause and a victim of all that is wrong with the world – from social injustice and political unrest to mass extinction and climate change. It is treated as “a business like any other” and required above all to compete for profit in the global market.

“What we need is *real* farming - based on the principles of agroecology and food sovereignty. ORFC Global will bring together farmers, food producers, activists, policy makers, academics and many others from around the world who are already showing how things could, and must, be very different.

“The ORFC is part of what is becoming a vital global movement -- to restore agriculture to the centre of the world stage and to ensure that it operates in the best interests of all humanity and of the natural world.”

Elizabeth Mpofu, small-scale organic farmer, coordinator of the global farmers’ movement La Via Campesina and co-founder of the African Women Collaborative for Healthy Food Systems is one of 500 speakers at ORFC Global. She said:

“Small-scale agroecological farmers around the world, the majority of them women, are producing food and resources for their communities while reducing CO₂ emissions from agriculture. It’s as simple as that. Agroecology is the way forward. It’s a climate-friendly farming system.”

Jyoti Fernandes, smallholder and coordinator of The Landworkers’ Alliance which represents farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers in the UK, said:

“We are in a climate and ecological emergency, but we already have the solutions. Agroecology reduces carbon emissions, sequesters carbon and increases biodiversity. On top of this, small-scale farms using local supply chains reduce transport, waste, packaging and refrigeration.

“And by growing food locally, we are cutting out the need for imports of crops that may have been grown on land cleared of forests. Leaders need to wake up to the facts quickly and set targets for a transition to agroecology.”

The call from farmers comes in the face of multiple global threats. The climate crisis, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, economic inequality and poverty continue to be caused and exacerbated by industrial farming, with huge monocultures devoid of workers relying on chemical inputs and geared to global markets. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the weaknesses of global food systems.

The conference will host sessions put together with partners in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, England, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, USA, Wales and Zimbabwe.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Contact:

Sarah Buckingham, Communications Coordinator
Oxford Real Farming Conference (ORFC) & Real Farming Trust
sarah@realfarming.org +44 7543 090731

Press pass requests (online access to whole conference): sarah@realfarming.org

Spokespeople and case studies available

[Photos](#)

Oxford Real Farming Conference Global: 7-13 January 2021 orfc.org.uk [@ORFC](https://twitter.com/ORFC)

The conference has grown swiftly from its beginnings in January 2010, when 80 people gathered in Oxford for a half-day event. It has since become the unofficial gathering of the UK real food and farming movement. In January 2021 the event will be online and global, with thousands of farmers and food activists expected to attend over seven days. The conference will host [500 speakers](#). [Full programme](#)

Farming, nitrogen and climate at ORFC Global

Speakers at the Oxford Real Farming Conference will showcase solutions to the climate crisis and discuss the need for urgent action on [nitrogen in farming](#), to keep global warming below 1.5C. Agroecological approaches to farming keep nutrients in the soil, removing reliance on synthetic fertilisers.

How agroecology helps

Agroecology promotes healthy soil that holds carbon. Artificial fertilisers that release oxides of nitrogen into the atmosphere should not be needed. There are more trees on farms (agroforestry) to take up CO₂. And well-managed pasture-fed livestock are at least carbon neutral, because methane output is countered by the increase in soil carbon.

Real Farming Trust [@realfarming](#)

Probably best known for running the Oxford Real Farming Conference, the Real Farming Trust supports a new generation of farmers who care about providing good food for everyone, forever, without cruelty or injustice and without adversely affecting other people or the biosphere.

Agroecology

Read more about [agroecology](#) on the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Agroecology website.

ORFC Global case studies: Farming to fix the climate crisis

The [full seven-day ORFC Global 2021 programme](#).

UK & EUROPE

- *Farming for Change*, a new report due to launch at ORFC Global (Thursday 7 January) by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, shows how moving to agroecology across the UK can work for climate, nature and people.
- George Young, an agroecological farmer and Ambassador for the Beaver Trust, will discuss [how beavers can be introduced onto farms](#) and play a key part in meeting future climate challenges.
- Food systems must change radically to prevent climate and ecological breakdown. Charles Secret, Vicki Hird and Dave Goulson join a panel at ORFC Global on Friday 8 January, to discuss how the [CEE Bill could lay out a pathway in the UK to deal with the climate and ecological emergency](#).
- Farmers from across the UK will come together at ORFC Global to share their work towards [achieving net zero, or sub-zero, with nature-friendly methods](#).
- In Scotland farmers are working with scientists and NGOs on [how to keep global warming to 1.5C](#).
- Wales was the first country in the world to adopt a legal mechanism to deliver on Sustainable Development Goals, including action on climate change and biodiversity, through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. ORFC Global will host discussions on [how to change the behaviour of governments and institutions](#), to encourage more long-term thinking.
- Growing more trees on farms can provide shade for crops and livestock. Speakers from the UK, Spain and the US will talk about [the role of trees in a hotter climate](#). [Trees also have a role to play in healthy soil](#) which is vital for 'future-proofing' farms in the face of climate change.

AFRICA

- In the Masvingo province of central Zimbabwe, [500 small-scale farms have turned arid, degraded land into rich, abundant food forests](#) by farming agroecologically. Farmers learn from other farmers about seed-saving, protecting biodiversity and looking at nurturing whole landscapes, while integrating their traditional seasonal ceremonies and rituals.
- In the Sahel, West Africa, 16 countries face the dual crisis of climate change and land degradation. Yet [farmers are overcoming these problems by working with nature to regenerate the soil and improve food security](#). Their inspiring testimonies show how human determination, innovation, and collective action have brought hope to one of the most ecologically fragile, crisis prone areas in Africa.
- Jennifer Amejja (Uganda), Edna Kaptoyo (Kenya) and Rita Uwaka (Nigeria) work with [indigenous women farmers who are protectors of community forests](#). These women are especially threatened by climate change and biodiversity destruction, but they are working to restore ecosystems, strengthen traditional food systems and pass indigenous knowledge to future generations, in the face of the climate crisis. They grow nutritious food, use and protect medicinal plants, exchange seed and support the local economy.
- The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is working to [get agroecology integrated into the climate policies of 12 African countries](#). At ORFC they will share stories from Togo, Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria.

ASIA

- Millions of farmers across the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh (population: 54 million) have adopted climate-resilient [Community Managed Natural Farming](#) backed by the government's department of agriculture. It is an agroecological method grounded in farmers learning from each other. They now have fertile soil, better yields, more biodiversity, reduced costs and achieve higher prices for produce.
- Sikkim in northeast India was the [first state in the world to become 100% organic](#) in 2015. Farmers learning from other farmers has been crucial. Noticeable effects have been the strengthening of communities, and the empowerment of women.
- Thousands of [Japanese farmers are practising natural agriculture](#), a climate-resilient method which restores land, water and soil, protects nature and promotes seed saving.
- [Indonesian farmers](#) in Java have learnt to live with climate change by becoming 'rainfall observers'. They have adapted their farming methods in response to El Niño and La Niña – altering crop patterns, managing drainage and improving soil health in rice farming.

LATIN AMERICA

- The IALAs (Instituto Agroecológico Latinoamericano, or Latin American Institute of Agroecology) [train young people in agroecology](#) in order to protect indigenous culture, ensure food sovereignty and farm in a way that will avert a climate disaster. They have schools in Paraguay, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Chile.
- In Brazil, indigenous communities have always taken care of nature. [Benki Piyãko has practised agroforestry for 30 years](#). This system constantly regenerates soil and promotes biodiversity.
- [Rogelio Simbaña and his daughter Michel](#) of the Kitu-Kara Nation (Ecuador) started a small organic garden which eventually grew into two interconnected farms over the course of 20 years. They share their journey to climate-friendly, agroecological farming at ORFC Global.

UNITED STATES

- Rowen White is a farmer, indigenous seedkeeper and leader with the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance who has become accustomed to packing her family's belongings ready to evacuate their home as a result of [California's wildfires](#). Rowen shares her story of farming resilience on the front lines of climate change.
- [Regenerative ranchers Doniga Markegard \(California\) and Will Harris \(Georgia\)](#) promote a way of farming that keeps carbon in the ground, revives nature and produces nutrient-dense food.
- [Designing vineyards to mimic healthy ecosystems has created resilience in the face of climate change](#) at Paicines Ranch in California. Holistically designed vineyards use solar energy. Soils remain covered and tillage is eliminated; biodiversity and soil carbon increase as a result.

AUSTRALIA

- Two best-selling Australian authors, Charles Massy and Bruce Pascoe, join us at ORFC Global to discuss the [similarities between the indigenous farming practices of Australian First Nations people and regenerative agriculture techniques](#).