

Union of Concerned Scientists: 'USDA does not invest sufficiently in agroecology'

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Our entrenched industrial agriculture system has spawned a host of problems. Practices like monoculture (planting the same crops in the same fields year after year) and frequent tillage degrade soil health. Excess fertilizer runoff produces [toxic algal blooms and aquatic dead zones](#). Herbicide overuse has led to [an epidemic of "superweeds,"](#) and intensive pesticide use has raised concerns about environmental and human health impacts.

In short, our food production system is unsustainable.

Studies have confirmed that [agroecological farms can succeed](#). But more research is needed and farmers who want to adopt agroecological approaches need education and technical assistance to make the transition. Recognizing this need, a growing number of scientists have [added their voices to a statement](#) calling for increased public investment in agroecological research.

Providing research, education, and technical support for advances in agriculture has long been a key part of the USDA's mission. It's particularly important for the USDA to support innovations that serve the interests of farmers and the public, but are unlikely to attract private-sector funding. Because one of the key components of agroecology is reducing farmers' dependence on goods and services sold by private industry (such as fertilizers and pesticides), agroecology falls squarely into this category.

But a [2015 analysis by UCS and partners](#) shows that the USDA is missing the boat when it comes to investing in agroecological research and education. The study found that only 15 percent of external USDA grants go to projects that include agroecology, and only 4 percent to projects that could be considered transformative.

Read full, original post: [Counting on Agroecology: Why We Should Invest More in the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture \(2015\)](#)