

Agroecology, Nepal's Answer to Climate Change

The answer to addressing climate impact is to regenerate the most important ecosystem of all: the soil

By [Zachary Barton](#)

Asia-Pacific Research, November 24, 2021

[Nepali Times](#) 21 November 2021

Region: [South Asia](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website” drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Visit and follow us on Instagram at [@crg_globalresearch](#).

As a farmer and educator living in Nepal, I was not part of the dialogue at the [UN climate summit \(COP26\)](#) that just concluded in Glasgow. None of us here were.

And as world leaders, climate scientists, and corporate lobbyists return to their respective countries from Glasgow, here in the [mountains of eastern Nepal](#) I myself wonder what, if anything, they have accomplished in terms of real change. And what the implications will be for 'the rest of us'.

I wonder if these state bureaucrats and business representatives are the right people to look to for guidance and innovation to address the climate catastrophe. Which voices are clearly represented at the table? And which are conspicuously absent?

The Nepali delegation has already [returned home setting itself ambitious targets](#) and timebound pledges to achieve them. Nepalis have to cope with the impact of climate change, for which farmers here were not responsible. Yet, we are asked to implement solutions that, similarly, come from afar.



Agriculture is part of the Himalayan landscape. How we manage land will determine how resilient we can be to climate change.

This is not to say [reforestation](#), [net-zero carbon emissions](#), and providing some level of protection and support for vulnerable populations are not important. In fact, they are precisely what Nepal (and all other countries) should be working towards to minimise the impact of climate change. The real questions are: How? Who should get it done? And on

what scale?

Solutions at conferences such as COP26 invariably tend to lean towards high-tech possibilities, international policy agreements, and large-scale restructuring. There is, however, another approach: small-scale, local, and grassroots [agriculture](#).

While local regenerative agriculture is rarely discussed at the high table, such an approach may prove to be much more in line with Nepali culture and economy. A home-grown solution that returns political agency and [innovation to local people](#) on the ground.



Almost Heaven Farms permaculture research and development centre.



Healthy soil grows healthy plants which leads to healthy humans and communities. It is the basis of all civilization and life on earth.

Agriculture has become something of a dirty word for climate activists, and with some justification. It is estimated that agriculture accounts for roughly 23% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. That makes it comparable to big industry, transportation and electricity production, which means it *significantly* contributes to climate change.

But not all 'agriculture' is equal. [Regenerative agriculture](#) has the potential to sequester carbon from the atmosphere and redistribute it to soils where it could have various positive impacts. Unlike many other industries, agriculture has the potential to transition from being a Big Problem to a Big Solution.

How we relate to land today is our most egregious lapse in judgement. Whether it is [razing jungles](#) for timber, draining precious wetlands, overfishing sacred waters, or converting grasslands to large-scale, chemical-based agriculture, we seem to have forgotten the most basic natural law: reciprocity. We cannot extract and drill and harvest and mine with no thought of giving back.

Fortunately, there is a way to approach agriculture that maintains a [reciprocal relationship with the local ecosystem](#). Agroecology, to put it simply, is a farming that incorporates the principles of ecology so that agriculture becomes a means of giving back.

A local jungle is a source of natural foods, medicines, fibres and energy sources, but instead of automatically clearing and putting it to the plough, we must recognise that it also cleans and conserves water, soils, regulates temperature, and provides a habitat for other living beings. And, to circle back to climate concerns, importantly, that jungles capture carbon.

Managing land, under the auspices of [agroecology](#), entails revitalising a different kind of relationship with the soil. It starts with understanding the principles of ecology and how nature works. Diversity, recycling, systems thinking, interconnectivity, and that the sun is the ultimate source of energy are just a few.



Almost Heaven Farms is a full-fledged permaculture training and design firm focusing on developing



An integrated growing system including tea gardens, vegetable production and forest.

What does that look like on a farm? A diversity of plants being grown together in what is known as a polyculture, animals moving across the landscape as happens in nature.

Let's start with the soil. We put a man on the moon 62 years ago, but we still know nothing about the world below our feet, the soil in which all life comes from. Through over ploughing, mono-cropping and the use of chemical fertilisers we have effectively killed all the life in the soil, from beneficial microbes to worms and all other life which presides there.

In killing the soil, we released massive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere and compromised its ability to capture the carbon back. And in this dead soil, we grow plants which are chronically sick and are not able to ward off pests and disease. Plants are completely dependent on chemicals for their survival. We then eat these sick plants which give us [little nutrition](#), and we become sick ourselves.

So, while others look to the sky for solutions, let us take a glance down at the most important ecosystem of all, the soil below our feet. If farmers in Nepal can step up and lead the change, the politicians will come stumbling after.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, @crg_globalresearch. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Zachary Barton is a permaculture designer, activist and teacher who has been living in Nepal since 2003. He established Almost Heaven Farm in 2013, where he researches, demonstrates and trains local farmers and international visitors in permaculture design, earth-based building and ecological restoration.

Featured image: Agriculture is one of the largest contributors to climate change but can also be one of the most significant solutions. All photos: ZACHARY BARTON

The original source of this article is [Nepali Times](#)
Copyright © [Zachary Barton](#), [Nepali Times](#), 2021

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Zachary Barton](#)

for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. Asia-Pacific Research grants permission to cross-post Asia-Pacific Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Asia-Pacific Research article. For publication of Asia-Pacific Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: editors@asia-pacificresearch.com

www.asia-pacificresearch.com contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: editors@asia-pacificresearch.com