

Factsheet Nº 6

From conventional to agroecological weed management

INTRODUCTION

A farmer walks through their fields, trying different ways to manage weeds. At first, they rely on machines and sprayings with chemicals to keep the soil clean of weeds and crops growing. This is the **conventional** way, which is fast and effective, but dependent on external inputs. Looking for alternatives, they begin to change. Animals are brought in the farming system to graze, helping manage weeds over time. This is the **organic** approach, where natural processes start to play a bigger role. Next, the farmer combines different tools, careful use of inputs, new techniques, and observation. Technology helps identify weeds early, while solutions like mulching are added to protect the soil. This is **integrated** management, a balance between control and sustainability. Finally, the farmer moves toward **agroecology**. The field and the presence of weeds is no longer seen as a problem to fix, but as a living system. Diverse plants grow together, soil is covered, and nature helps regulate itself. Weeds are no longer just enemies as they become part of a more resilient and balanced ecosystem. Cover crops, intercropping and other practices are flourishing.

TIP
DIVERSIFY
how you manage weeds

FIGURE 1. From left to right (up+down): mechanical weeding + spraying herbicides → grazing + natural herbicides → hot foam + site-specific weed management → cover crops + diversification
(cc: Alexandros Tataridas, Nikos Antonopoulos, Leonardo Sulas)

