



European Network for Agroecological Food Systems launched

On January 26th, the Horizon 2020 Project, Agroecology for Europe (AE4EU) launched ENAF: the European Network for Agroecological Food Systems, along with more than 40 esteemed colleagues and fellow associations.

We came together to discuss activating the combined potential and capabilities of existing national and European networks to be able to contribute more effectively across sectors to agroecological transformations of farming and food systems in Europe, in a way that is bottom-up, transdisciplinary, and embraces all agroecological elements and principles.

The day began with the inspirational words of Professor Pablo Tittonell who spoke of bringing agroecology from the niche to the mainstream, sharing with us experiences from Argentina. It included examples of collaboration between municipalities and local farmers which altered the food system in such a way where farmers received 60% of profits, which made it possible to not only sustain agroecological practices, but also to sell agroecological food at a price that is affordable for all. Today this model involves 22,334 families out of the 31,393 family farms that are established in Argentina.

Pablo also stressed that the transition needs to be just, with no farmers left behind or we risk a feedback loop that returns to conventional agriculture. This message was shared by the consortium within group discussions, as farmer representation is seen to be of utmost importance in the future of ENAF.

The event continued with Attila Szocs of Eco Ruralis, and Jesse Donham of Agroecology Europe, who shared a conversation on the importance of more activate involvement with Eastern European farmers. Within Eastern Europe there are over 10 million farmers, most of them peasant farmers who keep agroecology alive, making them vital components of any transition.



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Attila stated that “through agroecology, we unite” and nothing could show this more than through the collaborations that have begun amongst Eastern European countries in response to the war in Ukraine. While Member States in the EU have used this moment to strip back environmental policy, such a crisis is showing the importance of food sovereignty and agroecology, since it is local peasant farmers that have stayed behind to feed the population when industrial agriculture left.

Klarien Klingen, of the Dutch Federation of Agroecological Farmers, stressed the importance of creating a movement. She presented her own experience of doing so when various agroecological farming associations joined forces with each other, and with researchers and NGO’s, to create the federation. An important step which allows them to influence policies.

Finally, the Agroecology Europe Hub was presented as a key component of ENAF – a tool to connect agroecological farmers, researchers, students, policy-makers and funders by sharing content, information, news, stories, courses and living labs. This is meant to create connections all across Europe to guide the agroecological transition.

While ENAF was launched by AE4EU, its further establishment will take place through a co-creative process and related activities will be handed over to another founding member (yet to be identified) by the end of 2023. This process will be guided by two working groups which are open to any network representative that is interested.

ENAF seeks to complement what networks are doing by creating synergies and supporting shared efforts so that the efficacy of their work is enhanced. This includes creating opportunities for a stronger, combined voice and influence in relation to policy and research agendas. Additionally, it allows ideas to spread more rapidly across national boundaries, thus supporting local innovation.

ENAF understands agroecology as an integrated food system approach that pays due attention to both its social, economic, and environmental aspects. The vision of ENAF is to see people across Europe enjoying all the good that comes with food systems that are grounded in the principles of agroecology since they are environmentally conscious, socially just and economically fair.

ENAF acknowledges the tendency for top-down guidance on sustainability transitions in agriculture and food in Europe, and seeks to complement this by being principally orientated towards the knowledge and voice of agroecological food producers all over Europe. This European diversity in agroecology – from peasant farming to regenerative practices and community partnerships – are recognised as strong bedrocks for a holistic transformation of the European food systems. More details on ENAF, its next steps, opportunities for joining, and outputs from the launch can be found on: <https://www.ae4eu.eu/european-network-for-agroecological-food-systems/>

For more information, and/or if you would like to join ENAF, please contact: jessica.donham@agroecology-europe.org or seerp.wigboldus@wur.nl



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