

Agroecology for Sustainable Food Systems in Europe: A Transformative Agenda

Agroecology in the framework of food sovereignty

Luca Colombo

Fondazione Italiana per la Ricerca in Agricoltura
Biologica e Biodinamica

Italian Foundation for Research in Organic and
Biodynamic Agriculture



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"Agroecology will only be able to take root in agricultural practices if the market is reshaped to support it."

Olivier de Schutter

French Senate on April 8th 2013

Three main assumptions

1. Agriculture proves to be an advanced incubator of socio-economic innovation.
2. Agroeco and organic farming are not synonymous, but largely match
3. Organic farming is the main agricultural player in the 'new economy', in terms of participants and economic actors

(The organic sector is already structured and reasonably large; has made alliances with citizens who would like to change the system; consumers of organic products tend to be critical and active in society)

2002 NGO/CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty

The 2002 Forum action agenda:

» The Right of All Peoples to Food Sovereignty →

(2004) Voluntary guidelines on the right to food ("Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security")

» The Right of Local Populations to Manage and Control Local Resources;

» The Need to Move Towards Sustainable, Agro-Ecological Methods of Food Production;

» The Need to give primacy to food security and food sovereignty principles when considering trade measures.

Agroecology & food sovereignty

The link becomes a tandem riding for an alternative agro-food system.

The duo increasingly evocated by several groups, alliances and authors, among others:

Nyeleni 2007 and Nyeleni Europe 2011

La Via Campesina European members

FoodSovCap

Agroecology & Food Sovereignty (co-)evolutions

Agroecology
1990

- Farm unit ecological approach

Agroecology
2000

- systemic approach to production and distribution

Agroecology
2010

- "Sustainability" approach to the whole agro-food system

Food Sovereignty
1990

- Priority to local and national economies and markets and empowerment of family farming food provision

Food Sovereignty
2000

- "the right of countries and peoples to define their own agricultural and food policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate (...)"

Food Sovereignty
2010

- "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods (...)"

The Nyeleni Europe approach to Food Sovereignty

„We are convinced, that Food Sovereignty is not only a step forward towards a change in our food and agricultural system, but is also a first step toward a broader change in our society.”
(Nyéléni Europe Declaration, 2011)





The Nyeleni Europe 2011 Declaration



1. Changing how food is produced and consumed

"We are working towards resilient food production systems, which provide healthy and safe food for all people in Europe, while also preserving biodiversity and natural resources and ensuring animal welfare. This requires ecological models of production and fishing as well as a multitude of smallholder farmers, gardeners and small-scale fishers who produce local food as the backbone of the food system. We struggle against the use of GMOs and grow and recuperate a wide diversity of non-GM varieties of seeds and livestock breeds in these systems. We promote sustainable and diverse forms of food culture, in particular the consumption of high quality local and seasonal foods and no highly processed food. This includes a lower consumption of meat and animal products, which should only be locally produced using local non-GM feed. We engage in re-embracing and promoting knowledge of cooking and food processing through education and sharing of skills."

2. Changing how food is distributed

"We work towards the decentralization of food chains, promoting diversified markets based on solidarity and fair prices, and short supply chains and intensified relations between producers and consumers in local food webs to counter the expansion and power of supermarkets. We want to provide the building blocks for people to develop their own food distribution systems and allow farmers to produce and process food for their communities. This requires supportive food safety rules and local food infrastructure for smallholder farmers. We also work to ensure that the food we produce reaches all people in society, including people with little or no income."

agroecology & food sovereignty

A few challenges:

-how can we decolonise agricultural input provision?

- Seeds and breeds
 - Animal feed
- Energy (i.e. Fossil fuel)
- Machinery (?)
- ...

How can we restore mixed farming in an economically viable manner?

Rethinking economics, trade and markets: food sovereignty in practice

- The main question is how to create a new economy which answers to the massive social crisis by creating opportunities and challenging 'n' changing the mainstream economy.
- To be economically viable, farmer-citizen alliances have been promoted through short supply chains, PGS and CSA schemes, agroecological farmers' markets, relocalising alternative agro-food networks and providing proximity between producers-consumers to better remunerate agroecological practices
- Alliances are crucial in a food sovereignty perspective: citizen awareness and support can empower new eco(logical)-eco(nomic) actors
- Need to expand the food sovereignty struggle beyond the farming community and grassroots initiatives *per se*.

Food sovereignty in practice: Grassroots level CSA and farmers' markets

Re-localisation and re-appropriation of food systems

Need for paritetic partnerships:

GODO (Organized Supply Demand Groups):

A National project aiming to pool together organic producers and consumers in a structured manner

GODO activities are :

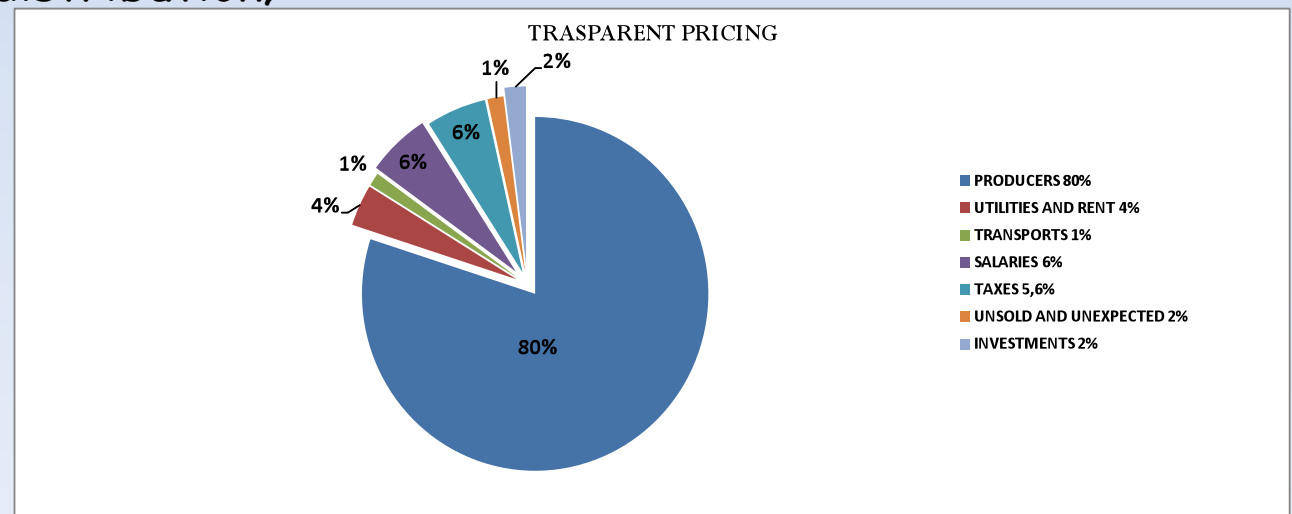
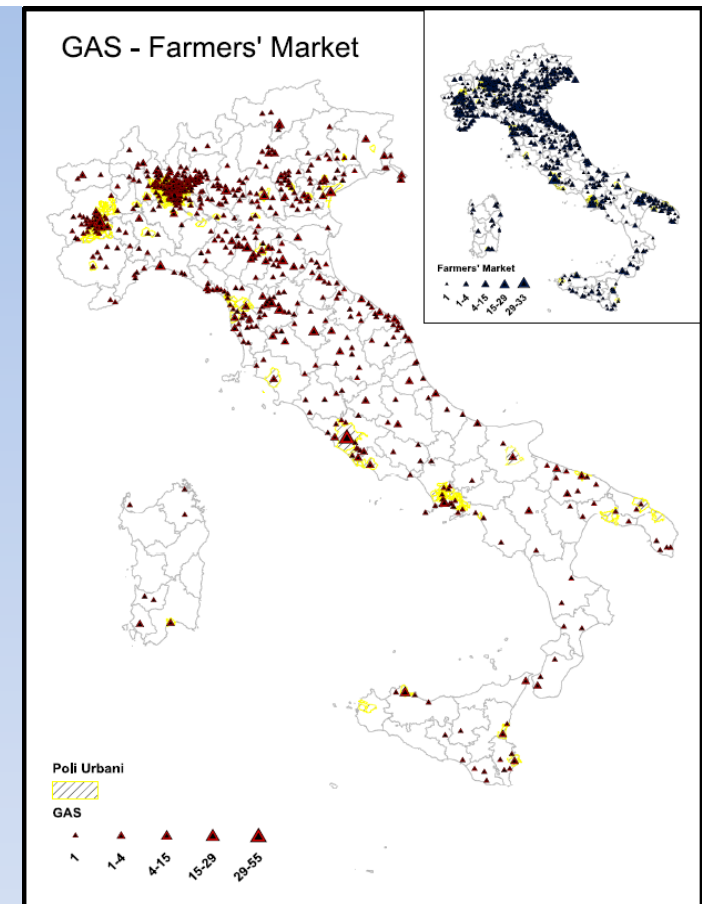
minimal logistic and product distribution;

organization of e-orders;

+

organic food tasting event;

joint evaluation moments



Food sovereignty in practice: Scaling up (and institutionalising?) Bio-Districts



The Bio District is an area, naturally devoted to organic agriculture, where:

- FARMERS are integrated in the social context,
- CONSUMERS are willing to buy "organic" (addressing directly to the producers),
- PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS engage in Green Public Procurement, improving the development of organic public canteens

Existing Italian Bio-Districts

- "Cilento Bio-District", Campania
- "Grecanico Bio-District", Calabria
- "Agro-Falisco Bio-District", Lazio
- "Greve in Chianti", Tuscany
- "Val di Vara", Liguria

E.N.O.A.D. European Network
Of Organic Agriculture Districts

Food sovereignty in practice: Scaling up (and institutionalising?): Social farming and GPP

The social co-operative Aretè: The co-operative produces organic food and activated a network of distribution of organic products together with local farmers, with the direct involvement of prisoners, that base their rehabilitation path on this project.

This initiative is more broadly embedded in social farming programmes

Organic school canteens intend to promote healthy nutrition and seasonal + local agriculture at the same time.

This often comes together with nutritional&agricultural pedagogic actions

Food sovereignty in practice: A grassroots-institutional experience

The City of the Alternative Economy (la Città dell'Altra Economia)

The City of the Alternative Economy (la Città dell'Altra Economia, CAE) aims to put the alternative economy into practice: dignity and sustainability (environmental, social and economic) at the centre - and before profit

Organic (a shop managed directly by organic farmers) is part of a major project where fair trade, alternative energy, recycling, sustainable tourism, bicycle repair shop ethical finance are at the same time in the same place.

These activities help people understand the other economy is tangible.

