



ACCESSTOLAND

A European network of grassroots organisations securing land for agroecological farming

Local authorities supporting access to land for farmers: stories from Europe



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About the authors

This booklet has been written by members off the European Access to Land network, as part of a European partnership focused on promoting access to land for agroecological farmers.

The European Access to Land network (www.accesstoland.eu) brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological farming and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 20 organisations. The network's main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land, and to put land issues in the spotlight. To that end, it organises information and experiencesharing, fosters cooperation between members, and facilitates broader communication.

For two years, our organisations have researched the experiences of local authorities engaged in facilitating access to land for farmers. This publication presents some of our results. A broader report will complement good practices, with several country overviews and an analysis of the main levers which local authorities can use to facilitate access to land for farmers. It will contribute to analyse how local authorities are approaching the issue of land in order to support job creation, local food systems and vibrant rural communities. This overall report will be available by September 2017.

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How to use this booklet

This booklet presents a series of case studies illustrating the role local authorities can play in facilitating access to land for farmers, in particular agroecological farmers. It is meant for local authorities' representatives – both elected representatives and staff – and for civil society organisations engaging with local authorities.

These stories present ideas and tools on how planning and managing land use can be key to pursuing many policy objectives, where such objectives are anchored in a vision of farmland's role for local food provision, economic development, environment protection, community connections and territorial balance. Read it for inspiration, contacts and new energy!

This booklet is the first part of a longer report on the role of local authorities in facilitating access to land, which will also include a series of country overviews, an analysis of diverse policy levers and some recommendations. It will be published in September 2017.

INTRODUCTION



“Local authorities, as the public institutions closest to citizens, hold responsibility to execute a mandate to satisfy their constituencies’ needs, mainly through the provision of basic services. They have opportunities to mobilise their local communities, in most of the cases, while acting as catalysts for change.” (European Commission)

In today's European Union of 28 Member States, nearly 300 regions and 91,000 municipalities have major powers in key sectors such as education, the environment, transport and economic development, and they account for two thirds of the total public investment expenditure. The quality of local governance is also related to the way Local Authorities manage and implement public policies and services on the basis of local policymaking processes and interactions with other public institutions, civil society and the private sector.

From a growing interest for food and farming to a deeper engagement with land

For the past two decades, an increasing number of local authorities have developed an interest in food and farming as part of their local development policies and/or their sustainable development policies. Their reasons are very diverse: promoting local quality food in public restaurants and local markets; developing a green belt to increase local food supply; supporting local businesses and job creation; promoting environmentally friendly forms of farming as a way to manage environmental risks or preserve assets (e.g. water resources); or improving their food resilience as part of their climate change strategy.

Most local authorities come to develop a vision for farmland as part of these broader policies in favour of local food systems, job creation, local development and environment protection. Some also have a direct interest to act because they own – sometimes considerable – areas of farmland. Many EU local authorities currently experience financial hardship, due to the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and the reduction of state transfers from central governments to local authorities. Many are thus tempted to sell off their land to balance public expenditure. However, our experience – and studies in this booklet – show that some local authorities are managing to balance this pressure and wisely using their farmland as a public asset to fulfil their policy objectives.

Shifting from a food and farming policy to a deeper engagement with land is often a complex step for many local authorities. Many lack a clear vision of the state-of-play of local agriculture and food systems, as well as of the local land market. Many also doubt their role or legitimacy to act on farmland. For many local authorities, it takes a major change of mindset to stop considering farmland as a ‘reserve’ for urban development, and agriculture as destined for decline. An increasing number of local authorities are nevertheless recognising the strategic importance of food and farming, and the need to adequately plan and manage farmland use.

Engaging with land use and management

Land access is a growing issue in many parts of Europe. It has become one of the major obstacles to the entry of a new generation of farmers and to the development of agroecology

and sustainable forms of farming. There are national differences but some trends prevail throughout Europe. While national or EU institutions and policies have a decisive role, local authorities can act on the main three challenges.

Preserving farmland from urban sprawl and land abandonment

Throughout Europe, farmland area is declining, often at a fast pace. The Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)¹ represents approximately 40 % of EU territory. Since 1990, the EU-27 (in its current borders) has lost 12% of its agricultural area, i.e. over 22 million hectares representing approximately the equivalent to the area of Romania.

Most of this land is lost to urban sprawl and other infrastructure projects. The pressure is particularly high around city centres and on the coastline, which are also often the most fertile land. In some areas, particularly in the mountains, the loss of farmland is due to the decline of farming and land abandonment. In both cases, there are major environmental issues connected with urban pressures, intensification of agriculture (e.g. loss of biodiversity, deterioration of water resources, homogenisation of landscapes) and land abandonment (e.g. bush fires).

Local authorities can act:

- Local authorities are in charge of developing a vision and policies for their local territory and community. In their planning documents, they can assign a role and place to food and farming, in coherence with other activities and land uses.
- Local authorities can preserve farmland by limiting urban sprawl and encouraging brownfield development, through planning and tax policies.
- Local authorities can also preserve specific farmland areas, either by giving them specific planning protection, or by directly acquiring farmland to preserve them in farmland use.

Securing land for farmers

A second major trend impacting access to land is land concentration. Land for sale or rent usually goes to the larger farmers, who tend to have more financial means and support from agricultural institutions and other farmers. Today, out of the EU's 12 million farms, only 3% are large farms (over 100 hectares), but they control 50% of the farmland. Land concentration is increasing in the EU, making Europe a highly inequitable continent in terms of land distribution.

Going hand in hand with land concentration is the financialisation of the land market and the rise of land speculation. Many landowners now view land primarily as a money-making asset. Owners near urban areas hope for land to be designated for development; this may lead to a tenfold increase in land prices. Non-agricultural investors invest in farmland to secure food

¹ "Utilised agricultural area" means the total area taken up by arable land, permanent pasture and meadows, land used for permanent crops and kitchen gardens, *Eurostat 2015*.

provision and/or speculate on land prices. Across Europe, diverse pressures have resulted in skyrocketing farmland prices, with a rise of up to 200% in the Netherlands, and 400% in the UK between 1990 to 2014².

In this context, it has become really difficult for a new generation to enter farming. Access to land is a particularly important challenge for newcomers to farming, who do not enter farming on a family farm. Even within farming families, the size and price of land and farms make them difficult to transfer to a new generation. In 2010, 48% of farm holders were aged over 55 (25% were over 65). Many have no successors in their family, and have no other identified successor. Without proactive support for farm succession, particularly to enable the entry of a new generation of farmers, many farms will end up closing down or being absorbed by neighbouring farms.

In some mountainous and remote areas, local authorities also have an interest to maintain active farming and fight depopulation and land abandonment, as a way to maintain the openness of landscapes and the attractiveness of their local territory.

Local authorities can act:

- Local authorities can monitor the evolution of local farms and farmland. Is there some land under-used or abandoned? Many farmers who do not have a successor? Too many small farms or disjointed plots? Major impacts of farming on environmental assets?
- In many countries, local authorities – directly or with the support of a land bank – can reclaim unused land and/or can help regroup plots to make viable farming units.
- Local authorities can facilitate multi-stakeholder processes and provide funding to facilitate farm succession and entry into farming.

Organising land access for agroecological farmers

Access to land is particularly difficult for agroecological farmers. Their production model is indeed often based on limited size, diverse production and activities (e.g. processing), direct marketing or short supply chains. They often do not match existing expectations and criteria to benefit from bank loans and public policy support. They also often have less financial capacity than conventional farmers, and established farmers. Many agroecological new entrants are also newcomers to farming and therefore lack the social and professional networks and credentials to be chosen by local farmers or landowners as the buyer or tenant farmer of their land.

At the same time, there is increasing consumer demand for local quality food, for organic food in schools and other public places, for forms of farming which respect the environment, preserve biodiversity and landscape quality.

² SAFER, Les marchés fonciers agricoles en Europe en 2014, in *Le prix des terres en 2015*, p.18 – based on Terres d'Europe-Scafr, Eurostat and national data.

Some local councils are also interested in promoting sustainable forms of farming as a way to preserve and manage natural areas of particular significance –e.g. entrusting farmland of water catchment areas to organic farmers to ensure the quality of the resource and cut treatment costs. Some also wish to preserve a traditional market gardening area close to town, to diversify local food production, or to preserve local farms and farming jobs. In some areas, local councillors face a new social demand to develop community land-based businesses (e.g. community-supported agriculture farm).

The potential for local authorities to act on farmland as part of their local sustainable development policies is thus tremendous and many fantastic initiatives have the potential to be consolidated and upscaled. The effects that can be expected– in terms of local quality food, job and business creation, environment protection, vibrant rural communities, reconnecting urban/rural population, or mitigating climate change – are just as important. Some local authorities have already well developed and coherent food and farming policies, including a strong land dimension. In many instances though, local authorities are still at an early stage of their project and vision..

The sixteen case studies presented hereafter describe the projects developed by a range of local authorities, from municipalities to regional councils from five European countries. They illustrate a diversity of policy goals and levers, results, successes and challenges met by local authorities in developing their projects. These case studies do not provide ready-made solutions. They aim to provide inspiration and ideas to local authorities and civil society organisations engaging with local authorities to facilitate access to land for farmers, and particularly for agroecological farmers. Enjoy reading!

Local authorities can act:

- Local authorities can pre-empt, stock, rent or sell land for the benefit of uses or users that match their policy objectives (e.g. vegetable gardener, young farmer, organic farming, short supply chains, etc.).
- Local authorities can directly support and fund the development of organic farming and peasant farming.
- Local authorities can encourage short supply chains, by developing access to markets (e.g. creating farmers' markets, facilitating transports, etc.), by prioritising local farmers in public tenders and by educating local consumers to the quality and benefits of local quality food.

CASE STUDIES



There is a wealth of European experiences from local authorities which are developing innovative ways of securing access to land for new forms of socially and environmentally responsible farming. Most of them rest on strong connections with their local or broader community.

These case studies, written by members of the network or collected from partners, aim at providing ideas and inspiration, nurturing emerging experiences, and showing that alternatives are possible. They also highlight the constraints and difficulties these initiatives are faced with, as well as the beneficial impact they can have in a favourable policy environment.

1.1 FRANCE

Creating a vegetable market Hub: Bourgoin-Jallieu³

Author: Sophie Lejeune and Marie Leroy, Terre de liens

Local authorities involved

- Bourgoin Jallieu municipality.
- The grouping of municipalities including Bourgoin Jallieu (= *Communauté d'Agglomération des Portes de l'Isère - CAPI*).
- The Regional Government (*Conseil régional Rhône-Alpes*).

Other agents involved

- The local Safer – Safer is the agency in charge of regulating the French rural land market⁴.
- Terre de Liens, a civic organisation established in 2003 to preserve farmland and support access to land for peasant and organic farmers.

Highlights:

- Supporting organic market gardening for local markets.
- Supporting new entrants.
- Co-acquisition between a municipality and a community land trust.
- Ensuring access to land and housing.
- Land portage.

Description

Bourgoin-Jallieu, a town of 27,000 inhabitants, lies at the foot of the French Alps. As it is situated between two major city centres, Lyon and Grenoble, there is a high demand for land for urban development. The municipality had the idea of developing a market gardening area that would provide organic vegetables to the municipal kitchen, which prepares food for schools, and other public services (e.g. retirement home, etc.).

³ Source: Terre de Liens, Création d'un pôle maraîchage à Bourgoin-Jallieu, in [Agir sur le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités locales](#), 2014-2015 – updated in 2017 by V. Rioufol, Terre de liens. Read the presentation of [Marais des Mûres](#) farm on the Municipal Council website.

⁴ More on the Safer, see: <http://www.accesstoland.eu/Unique-land-agencies-the-SAFER>.

In 2010, the farm "Marais des Mûres", comprised of 3.4 hectares of land, farm buildings and a farmhouse, was put for sale. . The municipal council viewed it as the first step towards constituting a broader market gardening area. It asked the Safer to pre-empt⁵ the land so that it would not be bought for non-agricultural uses. At the same time, it contacted Terre de Liens - which had already helped with a feasibility study of the market gardening area – to explore the possibility of jointly acquiring the farm.

In 2012, the farm was jointly bought by the municipal council and Terre de Liens, in the following way:

- The municipality bought the farm house for €212,000 (with subsidies from the local federation of municipalities and the Regional Council covering about half the price).
- Terre de Liens bought the land and the farm buildings, for €95,000, after raising money from local citizens and consumers.
- The municipality rented the farmhouse to Terre de Liens with a leasehold (99-year lease). In this way, while not bearing the initial cost of farmhouse acquisition, Terre de Liens can ensure that it remains directly linked to farmland and buildings, and can rent it all to current and future tenant farmers.

The Safer had to hold on the land for over 8 months, which was the time needed for the partners to organise the acquisition and for Terre de Liens to raise the money needed to buy the farmland and buildings. The Regional Council paid the Safer for supporting the costs of the land portage during that period⁶.

Time period

2010-2012

Main actions

- Directly mobilising farmland to make it available to a grower as part of the development of a local food policy.
- Joint acquisition of the land and buildings by the municipality and Terre de liens, a community farm land trust.
- Pre-emption of the land by the Safer to fulfil the objectives of the municipality and temporary land portage by the Safer to enable the municipality and Terre de Liens to organise land acquisition and crowd funding.

⁵ Pre-emption means that a third party (here the Safer but it can be a local authority) can impose itself as the buyer of a land that goes for sale. It automatically becomes the buyer and the seller has no other choice (except to renounce selling the land).

⁶ More on land portage: see forthcoming presentation on "Temporary Land Portage and land portage agreements" on www.accesstoland.eu. Land portage is the temporary holding of agricultural land and buildings to preserve them and put them at the disposal of a specific use or user. In cases when there is no farm successor, or no new entrant matching the objectives which a local authority or public institution has for a piece of land, that authority may decide to acquire the farm and buildings and then resell them after a period of time. This period of time makes it possible to find a farmer matching the criteria and /or gives the farmer time to prepare his entry into farming (e.g. completing training, finalising administrative procedures or bank loan applications).

Results so far

- In 2012, a first market gardener started organic production on the farm. She was joined in 2013 by a second market gardener. All their produce is sold locally.
- Preserving a farm unit, consisting of land, farm buildings and a farmhouse, hence providing all necessary infrastructures for the farmer and avoiding the dismantlement of farms, where farmhouses are turned into secondary residences.
- The municipality was initially concerned with developing organic farming. Through this project, it has developed a vision of the need to preserve and secure farmland for local organic produce. It has also moved from a focus on the municipality to building a vision and strategy at the scale of the grouping of municipalities.

Why it is a good practice?

This project shows the importance of the strong commitment of the community as well as the cooperation of various stakeholders to ensure the success of the project. In addition, this project led the municipality to expand from a limited project of developing organic farming on one site, into a broader strategy to preserve agricultural land and develop local food.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- Strong political will of the municipality to develop organic farming and openness to work with other stakeholders bringing complementary skills and capacity (Safer, Terre de Liens).
- Very active local group of Terre de Liens volunteers, which was key to work on the feasibility study, engage with the municipality, raise funds locally, support the future growers, etc.
- A multi-stakeholder partnership.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- The various stages and time needed for implementing such a project were initially under-estimated.
- Multiple zoning and planning documents with a diversity of public authorities having diverse competences and responsibilities (14 different planning/zoning documents).

Fighting rural decline: the Livradois-Forez network⁷

Author: Marie Leroy and Sophie Lejeune, Terre de Liens

Local authorities involved

- Nine groupings of municipalities from the same area (up from 5 groupings when it started in 2005)
- Regional Natural Park of Livradois Forez.
- Local Council (equivalent to County Council) (*Conseil général du Puy de Dôme*).

Other agents involved

- Local Safer – Safer is the agency in charge of regulating the French rural land market⁸.
- Local Chamber of Agriculture.
- Local Rural Development Associations (e.g. CREFAD, *Maison des Paysans*, Terre de Liens...).

Highlights:

- Monitoring land and farm transfer opportunities.
- Setting up a GIS.
- Organising a common vision between groups of municipalities.
- Supporting entries into farming in a remote rural area and fighting rural depopulation.
- New land zoning aimed at preserving farmland.

Description

Auvergne is a mountainous part of central France which has experienced dramatic rural exodus and loss of farms for the past 50 years. Since its establishment in 1986, the regional natural park of Livradois-Forez has always paid attention to the renewal of the farming population in the area of the park. In France, a regional natural park is a public body bringing together the regional authority and all municipalities and groupings of municipalities of a specific natural area, which choose to adhere to a Charter and participate in the actions of preserving and developing the value and potential of the area⁹.

Initially, the Park conducted a series of land assessments to identify retiring farmers with no successors, and areas where land is so fragmented that it may hamper the entry of new farmers. It then decided to constitute a “network on land and entry into farming in the Livradois-Forez”. The first activity was to develop an online platform compiling, managing and updating all the data produced by the different land assessments with a geographic information system (GIS). This platform makes it possible to know, in real time, who’s producing what, where, on which land, for how much longer, and with which perspectives of farm succession.

⁷ Source: Terre de Liens, case study on Le réseau installation-foncier du Livradois-Forez, in [Agir sur le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités locales](#), 2014-2015; and Terre de Liens Rhône-Alpes, case study on Favoriser les transmissions: le réseau du Livradois Forez, in [Communes, intercommunalités: comment préserver les terres agricoles, 21 exemples en Rhône-Alpes et ailleurs](#), 2015, pp 26-8. Updated by V. Rioufol, Terre de Liens in 2017. See also: <http://www.parc-livradois-forez.org/Reseau-Agricole-Livradois-Forez.html>

⁸ More on the Safer, see: <http://www.accesstoland.eu/Unique-land-agencies-the-SAFER>

⁹ More on French Regional Natural Parks, see: <http://www.accesstoland.eu/National-Federation-of-Regional-Natural-Parks>

In addition, the network has taken shape through regular meetings, gathering representatives of the Park, of the County Council, of municipalities and agricultural stakeholders, as well as the establishment or consolidation of agricultural committees in each grouping of municipalities.

Today, the network is structured around three main objectives:

- Farm Succession: “to succeed with farm succession, one needs to plan it in advance”.
- Entry into farming: “to live and start businesses locally”.
- Farm re-structuring: “Improving land allocation to ensure better farming conditions”.

Time period

Operating since 2005

Main actions

- Online GIS database, which enables municipalities to monitor the situation of local farms in terms of land (farm size, plot distribution) and succession status. Currently, 1100 farms are referenced in the database, including 900 farms that are still in operation.
- Setting up or consolidating agricultural working groups in all municipalities of the area.
- Development of local agricultural policies at both municipal and supra-municipal level which translated into determined actions (pre-emption of land sales by municipalities, approval of land plans which designate certain areas for farming in the long run and consider farming positively).
- The network now experiments with amicable plot exchanges, intended to group farming areas, so as to facilitate the work of farmers and plot restructuring in the perspective of farm succession.

Results so far

On a concrete level, the network succeeded in facilitating the entry into farming of a couple of organic goat and cow breeders, with on-farm dairy processing. But the main result of the project has therefore been to make local representatives aware of the challenges of preserving active farming on their territory. It has translated into land planning laws where farmland and the conditions for farming are well preserved. The results of the network inspired the establishment of a similar network in a nearby area (Combailles).

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- A full-time employee, who coordinates the project and facilitates cooperation of all parties involved. Key to his success is that he has skills both in agriculture and GIS.
- The political will of local elected representatives and staff of the various municipalities and groupings of municipalities. The network truly functions as a "the tool by and for local authorities".
- The role of the Regional Natural Park is paramount, to facilitate cooperation and develop a joint vision of land planning and management. The support of the County Council was also essential in the implementation of the project.
- Over time, trust has developed between local authorities and institutions representing the farming sector. The network was able to complement and advance their actions by making them more coherent and strategic.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- The main challenge has been for each participant to "find their place" and to grow trust among the partners.
- Daily administrative management is sometimes complicated, in particular because no elected official is responsible for the network.



Direct municipal management of food production: Mouans-Sartoux¹⁰

Author: Sophie Lejeune, Terre de Liens

Local authorities involved

- Mouans-Sartoux municipality

Summary

In Mouans-Sartoux, a town of 10,000 inhabitants on the French Riviera, local councillors have developed an agricultural policy aimed at municipal self-sufficiency. Their objective is that 100% of the meals offered in the three school restaurants come from local organic production. To that end, they set up direct municipal management of organic vegetable growing and have hired a market gardener as a municipal employee.

Highlights:

- Farming under municipal management (farmer = municipal employee).
- Constituting land reserves over time.
- Preserving a strategic estate from development .
- Providing 80% local organic vegetables for school restaurants.
- Creating a new food and farming culture in the municipality, for children and the community .
- Supporting entries into farming in a remote rural area
- New land zoning aimed at preserving farmland.

Background: An innovative agricultural and food policy

In the area of Mouans-Sartoux, (10 km north of Cannes), land prices are much higher than national standards and are skyrocketing. Competition for coastal land is high due to the double pressure of urban sprawl and increased tourist demand. If farmland use continues to decline at the current rate, it will all be gone within 25 years. However, the food production potential of the area is considerable and the need to feed the local population is increasing.

In this context, the local councillors of Mouans-Sartoux decided to develop a strong local agricultural and food policy in order to move towards self-sufficiency at local level. Their first objective was to offer 100% local organic meals in the three school restaurants of the town.

To this end, they first reviewed the specifications of their tender for public catering with a view to making it more accessible to small producers (introduction of environmental criteria, allotment of the tender, reduction of the price criterion to 30% of the final grade...). Despite these changes, they only received offers from organic wholesalers.

¹⁰ Source: Terre de Liens Rhône-Alpes, Produire sur des terres communales pour la restauration collective: la régie agricole de Mouans-Sartoux, in [Communes, intercommunalités: comment préserver les terres agricoles, 21 exemples en Rhône-Alpes et ailleurs](#), 2015; Terre de Liens, La régie agricole de Mouans-Sartoux, in [Agir sur le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités locales](#), 2014-2015; Article "Les cantines mettent du bio dans les épinards", in Libération, 3 May 2016

In the absence of sufficient local organic production, the local council then made a crazy wager: to establish municipal production of organic vegetables by dedicating farmland for that use and hiring a grower as a municipal employee.

Main actions

- Securing farmland, a prerequisite for developing municipally managed vegetable growing

From early on, the municipality had developed a strategy of acquiring “strategic” farmland. In 2005, it had pre-empted the sale of an old agricultural estate, the Haute Combe estate, which was going to be bought by a real estate developer¹¹. Located near the town center, it is composed of 4 ha of land and a farmhouse. The acquisition amounted to € 1 million. While not immediately using it, the municipality decided to designate this area back as farmland so as to ensure that it remains in farming use in the long term.

- A test year, to ensure the municipality can mobilise energies and change perspectives

In 2009, the municipality decided to use the Haute Combe estate¹² to develop vegetable growing. It carried out a feasibility study to assess the possibility of supplying the three school restaurants with organic locally produced food. In 2010, the municipality requested and obtained organic certification for the estate. The municipal Park Departments tested vegetable growing on a few acres for one year, producing 1 tonne of potatoes and 130 kg of squash. These vegetables were included in the three school restaurants.

At the same time, local councillors mobilise multiple stakeholders (municipal staff, cooks, etc.) to serve a common objective: "We have changed all our practices. In the school restaurant, for example, there are no more menus set in advance, but a food plan: every week, we went to see what is produced on the farm and then asked our wholesaler for complements." Local school children and staff from the Parks department are involved in vegetable growing during this test year.

- The creation of a grower’s position as a municipal agent

After a successful first year, the municipality decided to hire a grower under the status of "municipal agent". Since the position of agricultural employee does not exist in the public service, the local councillors had to innovate to create this position. The grower was hired as an executive, so as not to count hours, which was considered more adapted to vegetable growing. In exchange, the municipality took charge of the farmhouse which was made available to the grower, in addition to his monthly salary. Staff of the Parks Department sometimes come and help, as replacement during holidays, or occasionally during heavy work periods.

¹¹ On pre-emption right, see footnote 5 above.

¹² See: <http://restauration-bio-durable-mouans-sartoux.fr/le-domaine-de-haute-combe/>

In parallel, €60,000 has been invested in the farm (tractor, irrigation, greenhouses, cold room...). In 2012, the operating costs of the farm amounted to €60,000 for a production of 20 tonnes of organic vegetables. The cost price is €2.45 / kg of organic vegetables. There are now two municipal growers.

- Developing production and reconnecting children with food

In the first year, the production - ie 10 tonnes of vegetables - covered 30% of the needs of the school restaurants. In 2012, it amounted to 50%, or 15 tonnes. In 2015, it covered 85% (about 1,400 daily meals), which is the threshold for the viability of vegetable growing as a municipal activity. The price of meals has not increased. The reduction of transport costs (the farm is between 1 and 3 km of the schools), the quasi-elimination of food waste and the disappearance of intermediaries allowed the budget to be balanced. In 2016, the municipality bought two more hectares of land for vegetable growing. so as to be able to produce 100% of the vegetables consumed in school restaurants.

In addition, the municipal farm is an opportunity to reconnect with agriculture. Children are directly involved in this educational project. They participate in the planting, growth and harvesting of products that later come onto their plates. During the summer, the harvest surplus is given to a local food bank. Local councillors now plan to create a packaging unit, which will freeze vegetables harvested during school holidays so as to be able to use them during the school year.

Time period

Since 2009

Results so far

- Providing 80% of the vegetables for school catering from vegetables produced by the municipality (i.e. 153,000 meals per year). 100% of school meals are organic. The price paid by families for school meals has not increased (€2 to €5.30 depending on the family's income).
- Hiring a market gardener as municipal employee, an innovative status for a farmer
- Turning a rural estate designated for development back into farming use (4 hectares and a house). Designating 120 hectares of land as farmland (i.e. 9% of the local area, up from 40 hectares a decade earlier) - this area is viewed as the minimum required to ensure food self-sufficiency for the municipality and local residents.
- Creating a multi-stakeholder dynamic involving multiple players (e.g. local councillors, council staff, cooks of the school restaurants, teachers, pupils) which has fostered a new relationship to land, food and agriculture within the municipality and among local residents.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and levers:

- The constitution of farmland reserves over time, which started years prior the project of developing municipal food production
- The revision of the local land plan, to increase threefold the land area designated for farming (from 42 to 119 hectares)
- Prior experience of the municipality with direct, in-house management of public services (water, local transports, funerals) and local councillors dedicated to offering high-quality public services
- A clearly defined policy for sustainable development (Agenda 21...)
- The strong political will of local councillors

The revision of the public tender for school catering so that local producers can apply (e.g. tendering for each fruit or vegetable instead of for all fruits and vegetables in one lot).

Weaknesses/ challenges:

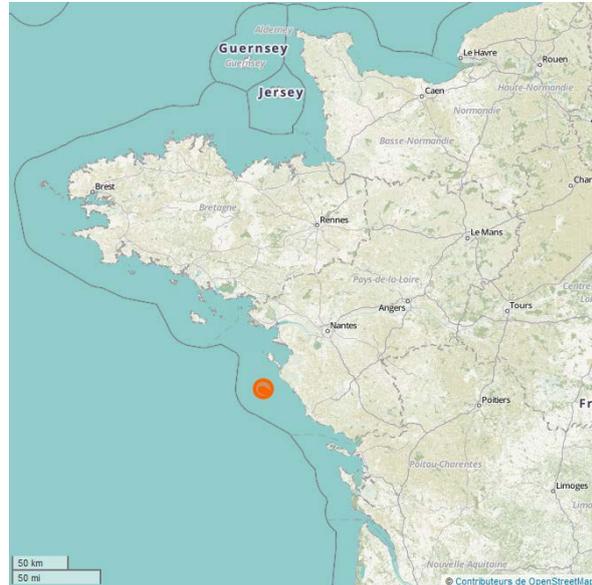
- > Conforming to health and safety norms



Participatory Governance of Land and Farming on Ile d'Yeu

Author: Tanguy Martin, Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire

Ile d'Yeu is a small island off the Atlantic coast of France. Its population of 5000 year-round residents swells to 30,000 people in the summer. Pressure from tourism combined with a gradual decline in farming (in favour of fishing) has led to an unprecedented situation in which one fourth of the island now lies fallow. A coalition made up of the island's farmers, elected officials and representatives of local civil society organisations (CSOs) has undertaken the task of reviving farming on Yeu. In just a few years' time, with the Terres Fert'Île project, Ile d'Yeu has become a laboratory for participatory democracy and innovation in the governance of farming and rural areas.



Local authorities involved

The municipality of Ile d'Yeu and its elected representatives: the basic level of local government. The entire island of Yeu forms a single municipality.

Other players

- *Collectif Agricole*: A collective of farmers and 'eaters' involved in promoting and developing ecological farming on Ile d'Yeu.
- *Yeu Demain*: An association of year-round and occasional residents of the island promoting the social, environmental and economic development of Ile d'Yeu.
- *Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire*: A regional non-profit organisation that seeks to connect and support collective farmland acquisition and management initiatives to support the emergence of ecologically and socially responsible rural undertakings. Member of the Terre de Liens movement¹³.
- The some ten farmers already established on the island.
- *Safer Poitou-Charentes*: A semi-public organisation tasked with monitoring and regulating the local land market.
- Residents and landowners, who are kept informed and consulted through public meetings.

¹³ See www.terredeliens.org (in French) and <http://www.accesstoland.eu/-Terre-de-liens-> (in English)

Presentation of the project

Context

Ile d'Yeu's economy is based primarily on tourism and, to a lesser extent, fishing. Farming on the island, which was at its peak in the first half of the 20th century, is now in decline: there are currently around ten operating farms on the island, representing less than 130 hectares (320 acres) being actively used for crops, haymaking or pasturing. Of the island's total surface area of 2300 ha (5680 ac), one fourth—some 500 ha (1235 ac)—lies fallow. This vacant land leads to soil degradation, landscape homogenisation and loss of biodiversity. It also leaves an important resource untapped: as an island that can be reached only by boat or helicopter from the mainland, Yeu is an ideal setting for developing high-quality, safe, healthy and ecological local food production.

How the project began

In France, land use (zoning and suitability for building) is defined by a Local Development Plan (PLU). In 2013, the Ile d'Yeu Municipal Council undertook a revision of PLU, which involves consulting the population. Members of *Collectif Agricole* and *Yeu Demain* mobilised for the cause of preserving farmland on the island. This experience served as a catalyst, spurring the two CSOs to draw up a proposal for an agriculture development plan on Ile d'Yeu, with the help of *Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire*. The plan was included in the platform of the party that won the municipal elections in 2014. It called for a participatory assessment of the island's vacant farmland, and set out actions for returning the land to agricultural use.

Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire was well-known in the community, notably for its role in helping a young farmer get started by purchasing land with funds from a citizen savings scheme. *Terre de Liens* offered its tools and expertise to the local players, particularly its experience in facilitating local participatory farmland acquisition and management projects.

True to its campaign commitments, the new municipal government set about implementing the agriculture development plan at the end of 2014. It set up the Agriculture Development Committee (CDA)—a participatory body made up of the three CSOs, the Municipal Council and all of the farmers who wished to join—which is in charge of the island's agriculture development project, *Terres Fert'Île*. The CDA's work quickly brought it into contact with Safer, a semi-public land management and rural development organisation, with which the municipality entered into a land market oversight agreement (see below).

Actions carried out

The *Terres Fert'Île* project, initiated and developed by the CDA for the term of the current Municipal Council (2014-2020), is focused on optimising the island's agricultural potential by gradually reclaiming vacant farmland. The project's scope of 165 ha (407 ac) includes 70 ha (172 ac) of fallow land. Its aim is twofold: to support the continuation of existing family farms and to help new farmers bring their projects to fruition, with the support of landowners. It is broken down into the following complementary actions:

- Taking stock of fallow land and identifying priority areas.

A task force made up of members of the CDA and representatives of the three CSOs first defined the parameters to be considered: location, soil quality, condition, size, identity of the landowners, condition of ditches, etc. These criteria were mapped alongside additional information collected during field visits. Based on these data, the CDA defined the priority areas to focus on.

- Creating a shared culture among residents that recognises the importance of farming for the island

The goal is to raise awareness among both permanent residents and part-time/temporary residents through initiatives such as festive events (like the annual Farm Open House organised by *Collectif Agricole*), information meetings and annual consultations open to all. These actions are supported by communication for the general public on the municipality's website, through the *Collectif Agricole* blog and in a four-page pamphlet presenting the project, which is distributed at the summer markets.

- Motivating landowners through individual contact/dialogue and information meetings

The goal is to convince landowners to loan, lease or sell their land to farmers and project initiators. The 560 owners of the 1078 parcels within the priority areas were contacted individually by letter in 2015. Around a hundred of them responded, which is a high response rate for this type of operation. Most of the landowners who responded said they were willing to sell, lease or loan their land. However, the proposals received thus far for new farming projects or support for existing farmers have not been viable enough to be implemented. In the meantime, parcels of land with no known owner have also been identified. The municipality is going to initiate an administrative procedure to obtain ownership of this land.

- Clearing and rehabilitating the parcels of land

Since 2016, the municipality has offered landowners the following voluntary agreement: it will subsidise the clearing of land if the owner agrees to make the rehabilitated parcels available to a farmer.

- Controlling land prices

Competition for land use between agriculture, housing and tourism has led to land speculation on the island. Prices are ten to fifteen times higher than on the mainland. The municipality has entered into a land market monitoring and regulation agreement with Safer. Safer informs the municipality of all sales of farmland within its territory. The municipality relays the sales notices to members of the CDA who know the territory, and issues an opinion on the transaction (whether the listed price is consistent with the local market, accessibility and location of the parcel with respect to existing farms, possibility of cultivating or pasturing the land, etc.). At the municipality's request, Safer can step in and require the sale to be made to the municipality at a lower price, if the transaction is deemed to be speculative. Safer has exercised this pre-emptive right, lowering the sale price, three times at the municipality's request. At the same time, solicitors (*notaires*) and real estate agencies

have been informed of these measures taken by the municipality, which encourages moderation in pricing. This coordinated effort combining administrative oversight and input from volunteers with local expertise is apparently a first in France.

Values and approach implemented

- **Transparency:** All interested citizens, whether permanent residents or others, are informed of the project and its progress through online communication, presence at the summer markets and the annual public meeting.
- **Participation:** All interested citizens can participate through local CSOs. All collective players relating to agriculture and/or with local interests and all farmers were asked to take part.
- **Amicable approach:** The project voluntarily ruled out the use of any coercive measures. It aims to educate and raise awareness thanks to the players' conviction, through an attractive approach that reflects positively on them.

Outcomes

With the Terres Fert'île project, agriculture—long viewed as a thing of the past on the island—has once more become a matter of public policy and economic development. Elected officials and residents now broadly recognise the importance of farming for the island and the environment. Local farmers feel valued and supported in their work. They are in dialogue with other local players, fostering stronger community and economic ties on the island.

A number of stakeholders—environmentalists, farmers, landowners, local government and citizens with varied objectives—have set a common goal, enabling concrete cooperation. They have invested in capacity building in order, together, to be effective in helping shape the future of the island.

The first hectare of land was cleared in early 2017 for the placement of hives by a beekeeper. New farmers are being sought, and candidates will be met in 2017, with a view to helping establish them on cleared land.

In the medium term, the goal is to set up outlets for local farm products, such as school and hospital cafeterias, once there is enough available farmland to establish new farms.

Tools implemented

- **Urban/rural planning tools:** Land use/zoning (PLU), procedure for the local authority to obtain ownership of ownerless land (bona vacantia).
- **Land market oversight and regulation tools:** Monitoring land transactions, and the pre-emptive right to lower the price on land sales, by Safer.
- **Participatory governance tools:** Local dialogue and public meetings.

Success factors and challenges

The island context is an incentive for cooperation between players with different priorities, because it is costly and complicated to bring in external material or resources. Between 2012 and 2015, the island's residents and CSOs had a number of opportunities to express their views

on farming and planning matters, e.g., the land use/zoning (PLU) survey, the survey on defining the objective in the *Natura 2000* document, citizen mobilisation for the acquisition of land by Terre de Liens, and the election of a CSO officer during the municipal election, etc. These developments, which followed in rapid succession, allowed certain residents to acquire competence in these areas and created motivation to further the effort. Volunteers from the island's CSOs provide an estimated 25 weeks of labour for the Terres Fert'ile project.

Conclusion

This project illustrates collaboration between a dynamic civil society and a determined local authority. Their combined efforts, facilitated by local dialogue tools, have resulted in a hybrid form of governance based on encouraging and recognising positive voluntary actions in order to raise public awareness and participation.

Not all of the tools used here are innovative, but they have been carefully adapted to the local context. The players had the time and resources to deploy the tools as appropriate, in order to create a project suited to their community. This allowed them to combine not only technical and political expertise, but also the user-based 'citizen expertise' of the members of the population involved in the project.

Key stages

October 2014: Terres Fert'ile project adopted by the Municipal Council and entry into operation of the Agriculture Development Committee (CDA)

Spring 2015: Intern taken on, landowners contacted by letter, training for members of CDA on local dialogue and tenant farming status

July 2015: First public information meeting

October 2015: Agreement with Safer regarding Vigifoncier, the land transaction oversight tool (pre-emptive right exercised three times)

January 2016: Second public information meeting

Winter 2016: Responses to letters analysed to identify landowners to work with

Spring 2016: Intern taken on, individual meetings with landowners, first land cleared

April 2017: Project officer recruited to manage the project and lighten the volunteers' workload

1.2 THE UK

Balancing farming, the protected environment and people: Brighton and Hove City Council

R. Harries

Local authorities involved

- Brighton & Hove City Council

Other agents involved

- Farmers
- South Downs National Park
- Wildlife specialists
- Brighton and Hove Food Partnership
- Plumpton College
- Fork and Dig it CSA

Description

Brighton and Hove is a city in East Sussex on the south coast of England. It is bordered on one side by the sea and to the other by the South Downs, a protected area of chalk hills that runs east to west.

Much of the hills to the north of the city are protected by the South Downs National Park, which covers 1600 square kilometres of lowland landscape, including farmland, heathland, ancient woodland, and various towns and villages. Another significant recent classification is the categorisation of the area containing the city, downland and coast including the sea, as the Brighton and Lewes Downs UNESCO Biosphere.

Brighton and Hove has a population of approximately 270,000 and are popular seaside resorts. The city is governed by a unitary authority, the Brighton and Hove City Council. The city is known for electing the UK's first green Member of Parliament, Caroline Lucas, although the council is currently Labour led.

The Brighton and Hove City Council is in the unusual position of holding (in public ownership) 4,825 ha of farmland. This land forms a band around the city. It was originally bought by the city to protect its water supply, as all of the city's water filtered down through the chalk land hills. Now, much of this land is in the South Downs National Park. Primarily land management is the responsibility of the council's property department with contracts etc being managed by a firm of land agents.

Most of Brighton and Hove's land on the South Downs is chalk downland (an internationally significant habitat) that is best preserved by sheep grazing, but this means is it of low value for agriculture. Much of the area is being managed under Higher Level Stewardship agreements and is farmed by tenant farmers, many on lifelong or multigenerational tenancies, and many

Highlights:

- Farming in a highly protected environment.
- Managing public land for the benefit of the community, environment, local food and recreational uses.
- Developing multi-stakeholder plan and vision.
- Supporting community businesses.
- Farming as lever to protect municipal water resources.

over 75 years old. While they face the traditional financial pressures associated with farming, they also have to deal with the huge number of visitors the Downs attract, issues around open access and dog walking.

This land and their situation capture the conflicting demands on land of farming and recreation. Outside of the National Park, on the urban fringe, land is in demand for housing as the city, like many UK areas faces a desperate housing shortage.

Main activities in relation to access to land for farming:

- Preserving land in agricultural use

Both the South Downs National Park and Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere have helped to ensure that land is preserved in agricultural use. These structures have the potential to influence land use, however priorities are very much environmentally focused rather than specifically considering farming or food production.

A City Downland Advisory Board has been established (includes representatives from farmers, City Council, wildlife specialists and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership) to develop policy which supports a viable local farm economy; to support diversification such as eco-tourism; to reconnect farmers and city residents; and to promote sustainable food **production**.

- Mobilising land

Previously the City Council had pledged to work with one farmer on a council owned land to become a beacon farm. At this stage, it is trying to identify a farm to work with.

- Supporting the establishment of new farmers

The Council has agreed to publish information when Council owned land suitable for food growing on short or long term leases become available. If the policy intention is to maximize social and environmental value as well as financial value, the processes for tendering need to support this. For example, longer deadlines to apply for tenders to support small and medium sized enterprises and a tender process that supports environmental and social factors.

Specific Projects

- Stanmer Park and Estate

The council-owned Stanmer Park and Estate offers an opportunity to develop a beacon food and farming project on the outskirts of the city. A historic 18th century estate covering 485 ha, it included a walled garden and working farms, and provided fruit and vegetables for the city. Now it includes a variety of tenants, including land farmed by a council tenant, several community projects such as Stanmer Organics, Brighton Permaculture Trust and Fork and Dig It CSA.

A Stanmer Park Master Plan has been produced to focus on the sustainable management of land on a historic estate on the edge of the city. Part of this includes a

small-scale processing unit currently in development for producing juice, preserves, chutneys, etc. from fruit harvested on the estate. Although the areas are not large, this is precious land in such a constrained city. Funding is currently being applied for to further develop this estate management plan with a joined up vision that includes collaborating and synergistic land enterprises.

- Racehill Orchard

Developed on abandoned orchards owned by the local authority, Racehill Orchard is one of several Brighton Permaculture Trust projects. It now includes over 200 fruit trees.

Why it is a good practice?

Brighton and Hove's land on the South Downs is relatively well protected from the housing and infrastructure development due to its recognised status as a National Park and UNESCO Biosphere. Land that is classified as 'urban fringe', which includes some farmland, is very likely to be developed for housing. The integration of food growing and wildlife friendly landscaping could be achieved via the planning process for these sites using the Brighton & Hove City Council Planning Advice Note on Food Growing as a framework.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- With the city council being such a large landowner and water and environmental issues so key here, there is the potential to demonstrate farming's role in fulfilling these objectives.

Likewise, with so much land under Higher Level Stewardship agreements, it is also good for demonstrating best practice.

- **The current devolution agenda has the potential to take a wider perspective on where food comes from into the city and the city's links with the Greater Brighton Region.**

Weaknesses/challenges:

The lack of land in urban areas means competition with other needs (eg housing) is high. Food growing enterprises often have a focus on community groups with a social, therapeutic and educational orientation rather than a strictly productive one, ie food to sell. Urban local authorities often have little experience/skills in dealing with farmers. There are challenges in identifying what local government department certain land resources come under (eg nurseries, part of parks department). Continuing local government cuts impact new and current enterprises and future plans.

Championing the farm estate, a rural perspective: Dorset county council

R. Curtis

Local authorities involved

- Dorset County Council

Other agents involved

- Country Landowners and Business Association (CLA)
- National Farmers Union (NFU)
- Dorset County Tenants Farmers Association
- Tenant Farmers Association (TFA)
- Local landowners

Highlights:

- Well managed farm estate, clear policies with wider educational aim to connect people and farming and food.
- Balanced rationalisation/modernisation process.
- Support to new entrants including apprentices.

Description

Dorset, with an approximate population of 755,000, is situated in the South West of England on the English Channel coast and is governed by Dorset County Council and the unitary authority areas of Poole and Bournemouth. Around half the population lives in the South East Dorset conurbation (Poole-Bournemouth) while the rest of the county is largely rural with low population density.

Dorset has a varied landscape featuring broad elevated chalk downs, steep limestone ridges and low-lying clay valleys. Over half the county is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Three-quarters of its coastline is part of the Jurassic Coast Natural World Heritage Site.

There are no motorways but a network of A roads cross the county and two railway main lines connect to London. Dorset has ports at Poole, Weymouth and Portland.

Dorset County Council's County Farm Estate extends to over 2,600 ha and comprises 46 tenanted farms, a large proportion of which is dairying, and includes 63 km of public rights of way.

In addition to its statutory duty to provide a 'gateway' into agriculture for people to farm on their own account, Dorset sets out a wider educational aim, to 'sustain rural communities by supporting the living, working countryside and providing opportunities for greater public access and understanding of agriculture and the countryside'. It also aims to provide 'best practice and innovation in estate management and agriculture'.

Main activities

- *Preserving land in agricultural use*

In order to preserve its farms in 'viable sized' holdings, Dorset undertook a property review rationalisation programme in 2000. Holdings were split into core (suitable for long term retention) and non-core (suitable for amalgamation or sale). The number of farms was reduced from 84 but the area of land has remained relatively constant (3063 ha in 2000 compared to 2,600 ha today).

The released capital has been re-invested in the core farms - infrastructure and repairs - and has contributed significantly to the Council's Corporate Capital Programme (CCCP).

The estate returns a healthy £0.5 million to the CCCP annually and there are a few holdings, identified in 2000, that still could be sold and these together with the wider estate are kept under review.

The review in 2000 was supported by county councilors with a strong interest in preserving the farms estate. This has been central to developing an ongoing management plan and approach that values the farms, the farming enterprises and the wider contribution food and farming make to the region.

Following an estate wide consultation in the summer of 2015, which included workshops and meetings with tenants from the estate, representatives from the Tenants Farming Association and others, a revised County Farm Estate Management Plan 2016-2021 has been produced. The plan reinforces the Council's commitment to the preservation of its core farms for both new entrants and more experienced farmers.

- Mobilising land

The farms estate is split into a starter farms, for new entrants, and promotion farms, for more experienced farmers. Starter farms are offered on a shorter tenancy and entrants are expected to develop their business and to actively seek another holding. They are normally given preference for promotion farms. The Council aims to have of a ratio of 1 starter holding to 2 promotion holdings and has a masterplan for each farm which is kept under review.

The farms estate has a land acquisition policy and has established an opportunity purchase budget (funded by property/land sales) for this purpose.

2 acres of land was recently made available in a village for local allotments and community use. In addition, the Council is looking to enhance the 63 km public rights of way within the estate, eg. with specific community groups and projects such as dementia friendly walks.

- Supporting the establishment of new farmers

The current management plan's policies ratify the gateway concept, encouraging and supporting tenants to get established and to progress. For example:

- Fair tenancy term – usually 10 years for starter holdings, with no automatic renewal to encourage moving on to alternative farms at end of tenure

- Starter farm rents are fair and set by Director of Environment and Economy based on applicants' data and business proposal
- Starter farm tenants given preference to progress to promotion farms
- Informal liaison with private landowners to establish links to assist tenants' progression at end of tenancy or to acquire more land to add to an existing holding (eg facilitate a tenant to privately rent additional land nearby)

Tenancies are being moved over from the older style Agricultural Holdings Act tenancies (lifetime and retirement) to the modern Farm Business Tenancies, with a policy for no tenancy length beyond retirement age and a maximum tenure length of 35 years. The Council retains nomination rights on a limited number of affordable housing units (developed on land previously owned by the farms estate) that it is able to offer retiring farmers but so far this has not been needed.

Farms are supported by a repairs and investment programme and details of investments are published on the council's website. There is an ongoing move to change from model clauses in tenancy agreements (where the council can recover certain costs from the tenants for work carried out) to a simpler and clearer allocation of repairs liabilities with incentives such as rent reduction or lease extension to encourage tenants to move to the new system.

The council acknowledges that the cyclical nature of farming means tenants may at some point suffer financial hardship. There is a range of support available, from council funded independent financial advice to rent abatement/reschedule and working in kind.

A new policy is to encourage and support tenants to employ agricultural apprentices by linking with the local land-based college and providing support from the Council (such as HR/employment advice). This is a developing area with the aim of helping to train agricultural workers in general, not just for opportunities within the farms estate. Potentially each of the 46 holdings could employ an apprentice each year.

Why is it good practice?

Management planning and consultation

- Publication of a comprehensive estate management plan. Wide stakeholder consultation as part of review of the farming estate.
- The rationalisation process - fewer holdings but more sustainable - struck a good balance between providing funds for the farms estate and the wider Council.
- Reinvestment into the farms estate has been significant, modernising and enhancing them.
- Strong County Councillor (political) support for the farms estate and its plans

New entrant support

- Support for tenants to employ agricultural apprentices

- Two tier system of starter and promotion holdings with aim for ratio of 1:2 (starter: promotion).
- Fair tenancy term - 10 years for starter holdings, with no automatic renewal to encourage moving on to alternative farms at end of tenure
- Liaison with private landowners to establish links to assist tenants' progression at end of tenancy

Governance

- A County Farm Liaison Panel drawn from local representatives of CLA, NFU, TFA, and the farming tenants to advise on estate matters and to select new tenants
- Transparency – estate management plan and farm investments published on website

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- Demonstrate good/best practice to other local authorities' farm estates.
- Consider additional support for new entrants – business planning, mentoring etc – and sharing best practice when apprenticeship scheme develops further.
- Consider releasing smaller areas of land to the community (for eg community asset transfer) when land is put up for sale.

Weaknesses/challenges:

- Constant need to balance existing farm estate management plans with increasing financial demand/contribution to the Council in face of wider government budget cuts.
- A change of (political) view within the Council could introduce a different approach, promoting greater farm estate sell off.
- Uncertainty in the face of Brexit.



1.3 ITALY

The role of grassroots mobilisation in Defending a traditional farming area: the Castel Di Guido

Marta Di Pierro, AIAB Lazio

Local authorities involved

- **Lazio** is one of Italy's 20 Regions. Regions acquired a significant level of autonomy following a constitutional reform in 2001, which granted them residual powers. Since 1972, agriculture is in the resort of regional policies.
- **Rome Municipality** - Rome constitutes a *comune speciale*, named "*Roma Capitale*", and is the largest of the 8,101 *comuni* of Italy. It owns and/or directly manages 5 farms.

Other agents involved

- Farmers
- Farmers' Representatives
- Farmers' union and citizens united in the *Associazione Campagna Romana Bene Comune* (Roman Countryside Commons Association)

Highlights:

- Large peri-urban farm with the potential of producing food for local residents.
- Complexity of reconciling 2 tiers of governance (Region/ municipality).
- Selling off public land to balance the local authority's budget.
- Strong involvement, and eventual recognition, of local farmers and citizens.

Description

Castel di Guido is an organic farm situated in Rome. It stretches for over 2,000 hectares and lies within the State Natural Reserve of the Roman Coastal Area.

The area is an excellent example of Agro Romano, the Roman countryside, known for its history and landscape. It has an important productive and environmental role for the city.



Farmed since the time of the Romans in the 8th century, it became an important *domusculta*, a military guarded farm aimed at supplying cereals and meat to urban citizens. In the Sixties, the farm belonged to a group of 9 Roman hospitals for whom it was producing the full range of meat, milk, oil, fruit, vegetables, bread, cheese ... raw and processed items.

Since 1980, as a result of the Law 833/78 on Local Authorities, farm ownership was transferred to Lazio Region, while its management was entrusted to the Municipality of Rome. Currently, Castel di Guido is in crisis. It is running at loss. Its activities are now limited to cattle breeding and environmental education. It stopped doing most activities it had just a few years ago: meat, milk, cheese, olive oil and cereals with an eye at local, short supply chain, organic farming.

The two local authorities are in a dispute over who does the management and to which purpose. The sale of the farm has been avoided, but its future is unclear and there is no business project. In this context, local farmers and Castel Di Guido farm workers united in the *Associazione Campagna Romana Bene Comune* so as to be recognised as stakeholders and have their say in the process.

How did it start?

In January 2012, the Italian government, led by Mr. Monti, ruled for a systematic sale of the state's assets with the "*Decreto sulle Liberalizzazioni*" (Decree on Liberalization) in order to cover the increasing public debt. Shortly after, the decree was made "active" in Lazio Region (but not by the Municipality). Meanwhile, without having disclosed any clear plan, Lazio Region started the process to claim back the management of Castel di Guido Farm from Roma Capital whose contract would have anyway come to an end in April 2016.

The idea of selling the land has not been in consideration for long by Lazio Region, partly thanks to the mobilisations against the sale of public assets which took place nationwide. But the uncertainty over who was going to manage the farm brought delays in the heavily bureaucratic management so much so as to leave the stock with no food – who was to issue the public call to purchase cattle food?

Worried by this situation, and uncertain about the future of the farm, farm workers reached out to local farmers both for direct help on the farm and for political support. For decades, Castel di Guido has indeed been of interest to local farmers, some out of their commitment to food sovereignty, others for their concern for efficient and sustainable local food provision, and others out of their economic self-interest. The newly born grassroots activity raised the interest of many big players, around three main concerns:

- The need to be reassured Castel di Guido would be kept a public asset and not sold nor broken up. Above all, farmers and citizens were willing to avoid the sale of Castel di Guido to a big company.
- The need to change farm management to stop running at a loss – as this could again lead Lazio Region to wish to sell the farm. Farmers have been asking for a different, more autonomous and less bureaucratic management, as well as a more suitable farm labour system.
- The need for a plan for the future of Castel di Guido to be set up with the active participation of local farmers, citizens, associations, and strong support from the Municipality of Rome. Castel di Guido is indeed a natural and heritage site, with woods

and archaeological vestiges from different periods, which serves as a museum of rural culture, a bird sanctuary, and a meeting space for local people. All these roles should receive a recognition. Castel di Guido could also foster systemic change in terms of farming models: by keeping the farm in the organic certification and striving for an even more agroecological model of production, producing for the local market and connecting the production with the needs of the Municipality.

Actions conducted

From 2014, grassroots activists organised a series of direct actions, as well as other forms of mobilisation (media work, conferences, meetings with decision-makers). They have been fighting back against the sale of the farm and asking to be involved in defining its future plan and its management.

In 2016, they set up an association “*Campagna Romana Bene Comune*” (Roman Countryside Commons) to promote the history and the production potential of the Roman countryside. In February 2017, activists organized a new series of actions, leading the local government to informally accept a farmers’ delegation in the technical round table on Castel Di Guido.

According to current negotiations, management of Castel di Guido will eventually go back to Lazio Region, it will not be sold and will be awarded to the best project through a public tender. The criteria of the tender are not yet defined, but the *Campagna Romana Bene Comune* Association is finally seen (and heard) as stakeholder in the process.

Preserved/claimed values

- Right to participate in decision making over public rural land management.
- Protection of rural land and its biodiversity and landscape.
- Fighting land speculation and concentration.
- Promoting sustainable and climate efficient farming methods (organic agriculture).

Results so far

- Following grassroots actions, the governor of Lazio Region committed to not selling the land and to develop a public call for tenders for the management of the farm.
- *Campagna Romana Bene Comune* delegates have been accepted at the technical round table on the future of Castel Di Guido.
- According to the latest negotiations, the public call for tender will award a higher grade to organic food production, labour intensive, multifunctional and social farming and a cooperative business model.

Way ahead

Taking a leading role in setting the criteria for the call to tender.

Why it is a good practice?

Castel di Guido is an organic public farm in a major patch of land, with astounding historical, environmental, social, and spatial values. It acts as a lung and a biodiversity spot in the middle of a very populated area. The farm has an enormous production potential and could be easily integrated in Rome food policies and food supply structure (e.g. producing food for the school restaurants).

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- The future of the Castel di Guido farm and rural land has been recognized as a political issue.
- Local farmers have been informally recognised as stakeholders.
- Castel di Guido will not be dismantled to be sold and managed in separate pieces but will be kept together safeguarding its environmental, spatial and historical value.
- The use of a public call for tender guarantees a more transparent process.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- Strong interests over Castel Di Guido both from real estate businessmen as well as from non local, non organic farmers.
- Complexity of the issue in terms of the characteristics of land area as well as in terms of competencies and bureaucracy.
- Setting the criteria for the call for tender will be a whole new struggle.



1.4 BELGIUM

Growing farmers for the City, Test farms in Brussels

M.Roels

Local authorities involved

- Anderlecht Municipality, one of the nineteen municipalities making up the Brussels-Capital Region .
- Brussels-Capital Region, one of Belgium's three regions (in addition to the Flanders Region and the Wallonia Region).

Other agents involved

- ASBL Le Début des Haricots (DDH), a Brussels based NGO that creates collective gardens, compost sites, and urban farms.
- Terre-en-vue, an NGO, co-operative company and Foundation facilitating access to land for agro-ecological farming in Brussels and Wallonia.
- ASBL Crédal, an NGO that offers advice for local investments and start-up companies with a social aim. They also manage a co-operative credit bank.
- ASBL La Maison Verte et Blue, an NGO that promotes the rural area within Brussels where the project is situated called Neerpede,.
- Bruxelles Environnement (BE), a regional official agency that manages environmental issues. Its responsibilities include green spaces in the city such as parks, prairies and potentially farms.

Highlights:

- The use of public land for farming, even though it has been designated for development.
- The creation of a farm incubator which supports new entrant farmers.
- A partnership between a Local Authority and several Civil Society Organisations (TEV, DDH..).
- One specific project (a farm incubator on 3ha) is advocating for, planning and promoting farmland use for local food production.
- High land pressure in peri-urban area.

Description

Brussels is the capital city of Belgium with 1,175,000 citizens, and 19 municipalities. Until the 19th century the city was fed by farmers in and around Brussels. The most important production zone is the valley of the Senne river which runs from central-west Brussels to the north-east of Brussels. One part of this zone has not urbanised, and is called Neerpede. It is part of the municipality of Anderlecht situated in the central-west part of Brussels.

In the 19th century this municipality was home to many textile manufacturers, but much land was used for farming. Recently the Region of Brussels and the municipality decided



to publicise this more rural region of Brussels for its landscape quality. A recent FEDER (in UK, ERDF) project has been established to renovate an old farm in this zone, to start up test farms and to launch new permanent farms. In parallel, the ministry of agriculture started a campaign in 2016 called “Good Food” in order to promote sustainable food chains in Brussels and included local production in its work program.

The test farm is managed by ASBL Le Début des Haricots and named it “Graines de Paysans” referencing that the initiative will “generate” new farmers. The land is owned by the municipality of Anderlecht. Officially the land is farmland and its total size is 2.5 ha, with new land being added regularly. However, Anderlecht decided to lease use of the land to DDH for 7 years. This is very remarkable because this lowers the chance that this land could become used for residential housing development in the near future. If the test farm project becomes a success, social and cultural issue would make it difficult for the municipality to change its use to residential use.

The test farm started in 2016 and will run until 2020 when further resources will be sought to continue operating the farm. The farm offers guidance and infrastructure to several future farmers who test their financial, technical and social skills related to farming near to the city. Once individuals are comfortable settling as farmers, they can access land elsewhere around Brussels with a long term lease. Terre-en-vue constantly looks for land to facilitate transition from test to settlement.

Time period

The financing of the project through FEDER started in early 2016 and will end 2020. Once this period is over, the project will hopefully continue.

Main actions

The lead organisation in this project is DDH. They provide 5 permanent staff members plus office and growing infrastructure. Staff members offer technical support to the future farmers and build and maintain the farm site. Technical support concerns advice for growing food, finding markets, internal governance and communication. The farm infrastructure consists of three greenhouses, a secure shed for tools, an irrigation system, electricity and access points for deliveries.

The other actors all provide specific services. *Terre-en-vue* looks for land for settlement after the test phase, *Crédal* helps the future farmers to ensure future viability by developing business plans with strong financial models, *La Maison Verte Blue* helps to give more visibility to those farmers that choose to stay in the “Neerpede” zone in Anderlecht once they decide to settle.

Results so far

Six projects started in 2016 which were worked on by seven future farmers. Most of them will carry out a second test year in 2017 and will start look for land in 2018. Entrant farmers have learned better how to grow vegetables, fruits and herbal plants close to the city using innovative techniques. They have set up collaborations with local urban markets, with vegetable box schemes and with local stores and restaurants. They have also showcased to

more conventional farmers based nearby that they know what they are doing, and that they are efficient.

Terre-en-vue has conducted a mapping research that has allowed for better understanding of land uses and ownership in the capital region of Brussels. This has helped identify zones of high potential for new farmer settlements.

Terre-en-vue also gave training sessions making farmers more autonomous in both finding land for themselves and in negotiating a fair contract with the landowner.

Crédal gave training sessions on creating a good business plan so that farmers with a strong technical profile when it comes to production can also manage sales and marketing of their produce.

An added result is that the site for the test farms has been able to grow its size thanks to a farmer who was prepared to swap land. This land swap was facilitated by Terre-en-vue.

In 2018 a further project will start on new land in the east of Brussels with negotiations for this new land currently in process. The land is used by a farmer moving out of the industry, and is owned by a Brussels based university and under environmental restrictions. An informal agreement has been obtained and is in the process of becoming formalised. This will be the first settlement of a farm that has been through the test phase.

In the future calls for projects will be organised for the land that will be found by Terre-en-vue.

Why is this good practice?

Organic food is in high demand today in cities like Brussels. There is land available in the city and the farmers who farm this land still produce for the market as it was 30 to 40 years ago. Farmers who are willing to work differently and produce fresh perishable food for the city are mainly new/entrant farmers. They typically don't come from farming families and can have many unsure of their capabilities - the test farm is a perfect place for them to practice.

The project allows new farmers to test their skills in the particular context where they will apply them once they start growing for their own account. It also is a good practice for Terre-en-vue. This organisation often receives demands from future farmers, but it is often difficult to estimate the capacity of the applicant to grow food and manage all the aspects of a farm. In a context where land is scarce and the demands multiple, it is of great value to have some guarantees about the applicants' skills. The test farm offers these guarantees.

The project also involves several policy levels and several actors that complement one another. It allows for networking that leads to future collaborations related to access to land. The site that is now being developed is a typical example - It allowed Terre-en-vue and BE to react very quickly with a clear offer to the landowning university. The municipality where the land is situated was also motivated to support the settlement of the new farmer when it realised Anderlecht is also supporting farmers. The multi-actor nature of the work seems to have unexpected positive impacts.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The strength of the project is the synergy gains seen by the actors involved. The greatest opportunity is clearly that the work connects the growing skills of the food producers to growing demands for local and organic food. The project lifts several (potential) barriers: access to know-how (DDH), access to finances and planning skills (Crédal), access to land (Terre-en-vue, Anderlecht and BE). Anderlecht and BE also add legitimacy to the project and its managers when they meet new potential landowners that are willing to sell or rent land.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

The project needs external finances and resources in order to function. It has no build-in objective for financial self-sufficiency and is currently destined to remain dependent on subsidies or grants. The challenge is to find new sources of finance and investment.

Land is very scarce and extremely expensive. Renting land is possible but most actors are not willing to rent for a very long time because once the official land use changes (housing, industries, ...) the value of the land raises by a factor of between 4 to 10. If the land is under a conventional land lease contract it is very hard to “free” the land and obtain the new market value.

The challenge is to negotiate good land leases and to be sure that government gives clear signals that certain farming sites are unlikely to become housing land in the near and mid-term future, thereby lowering the chance for speculation.



Nature conversation and farming by Regional Agencies

M.Roels

Local authorities involved:

- Walloon Region, Department of Nature & Forests

Other agents involved

- University of Gembloux, Centre de Recherche Agronomique (CRA) is a well established agronomic research institute that is part of the university of Gembloux, the biggest agronomic university in Belgium situated in the middle of one of the most productive farming zones of Europe, called Hesbaye.
- FUGEA, a peasant farm syndicate situated in Namur which especially represents lots of young farmers. They support sustainable, but not necessarily organic farmers in the Walloon Region.
- Terre-en-vue, an NGO, co-operative company and Foundation facilitating access to land for agroecological farming in the Brussels Capital Region and the Walloon Region.

Highlights:

- Recovering land farmed in a way that doesn't comply with Natura 2000 objectives.
- Allocating land to organic farmers through call for tenders
- Consolidating existing farms and supporting 4 new farmers.
- Encouraging synergies between farmers.

Description

In the Walloon Region of Belgium much land is protected by the EU Natura 2000 statute. Very often this land is managed by an NGO called Natagora, but many farmers have pastures of which the use is limited by this status.

The Department of Nature and Forests (DNF) of the Walloon Region has much land in ownership that is classified as Natura 2000. One property is situated on a hill called "Montagne Saint Pierre" near the border with Holland in the province of Liège of the Walloon Region. The site is protected by the Natura 2000 status as its surrounding area harbours endangered species. However, the owner of the land did not respect these restrictions. DNF's response was to expropriate the owner and take the land into management itself. It did so by organising a call for proposals using very restrictive specifications. Terre-en-vue was contacted by DNF to offer support as DNF was new to this kind of process. The NGO proposed to work together with several partners from its network, including CRA and FUGEA. Together these partners agreed upon the specifications and a procedure for the selection. As DNF wanted the farms to be organic and inclusive towards surrounding farmers, Terre-en-vue proposed selecting four projects. Two of them would be organic and two of them non-organic. The deal would be that those who are organic would support their neighbours to become organic, with the non-organic farms agreeing to transition toward organic under the supervision of organic colleagues. The partners agreed upon the idea and all seated in the selection board. Four out of 16 farmers were selected and today they sell and market their organic produce together.

Time period

The project ran from the beginning of 2013 to the beginning of 2014. The first harvesting season took place in 2014.

Main actions

A public institution has decided to take public land management into its own hands and to orient the use towards sustainable farming. What is more is that this institution has decided to collaborate with non-governmental organisations without losing control nor responsibility.

In order to start this project, several preparatory field visits were organised to test the potential of the place and in order to get to know the local farmers. Several meetings were also organised to understand the goals and expectations of all the actors that were involved in the process. The call for proposals was sent out through the networks of all the partners and the selection made after having interviewed 16 proposals.

The four final candidates were invited for a start-up meeting and soon they decided to work together. From then on Terre-en-vue and CRA offered support by telephone and visited the site once per year for following up the project together with DNF which conducts more visits.

The project has been described on the website and has led to new opportunities for Terre-en-vue to do similar work, surprisingly with private land owners rather than public ones.

Results so far

Four farmers have gained access to land for sustainable farming, transmitted their knowledge, and shared their clients. The formerly non-organic farmers are in the process of transforming their fields to organic production alongside having discovered the advantages of organic farming.

Why it is a good practice?

This project has allowed at-risk environment and ecological systems to be used by environmentally mindful farmers. It also shows the potential of public agencies to look for alternative ways to manage public land - it allowed the land to be managed as a common good. Local farmers were asked to produce good food for the local market. The collaboration between the different actors allowed for experience sharing, for the sharing of responsibility and build credibility. Terre-en-vue and CRA gave legitimacy to the final choice as they are rather neutral actors and the collaboration with DNF gave credibility to Terre-en-vue as a facilitator as it was later selected by a public body to coordinate a call for proposals and participate in a selection process.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The strength of the project is clearly the clear vision of DNF of the type of farming they wanted. This is supported by the Natura 2000 status. Another strength is the partnership

between complementary actors in the selection process. The process itself has been very well organised and that clearly contributed to its success.

The major opportunity was to allow farmers to gain access and to allow them to learn from other farmers. For Terre-en-vue the opportunity was to learn to co-manage a call for proposals and to work together with a public agency. It gave more visibility, credibility and legitimacy to Terre-en-vue.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

The weakness of the project is that it only basically supported by three persons in the agency, the lessons have not yet been included for in its general policy. The project could only be put into place because of the motivation of these people and the temporary absence of a head of department.

The challenge now is to monitor and evaluate the project, integrate processes in to the policy of the agency in question, and to convince other local authorities to do the same.



1.5 CATALONIA (SPAIN)

Recovering agricultural land, Palou - Granollers

V. Planas, P. Carnicero & J. Rodrigo

Local authorities involved

- Granollers city council

Other agents involved

- XCT: Land stewardship network of Catalonia
- Terra Franca: Organisation that promotes a responsible use of soils and aims to facilitate access to land.
- Banc de Llavors del Vallès Oriental (Seed bank of local ancient varieties)
- Land owners associations
- Farmers trade unions

Highlights:

- Recovering unused and under-used land.
- Mediation between land owners and tenant farmers.
- Regrouping of plots to make viable farm units.
- Complementarity forms of support to new entrants (subsidies, access to local markets, access to housing...).
- Developing a plan and vision for local agriculture.

Description

Palou is a small village with a rural area of 350 ha in the municipality of Granollers, a small city capital of Vallès Oriental. It consists mostly of agricultural land and a few farms and houses. For several years, the Granollers city council wanted to highlight Palou as a place of green infrastructure within the city. At part of a regeneration strategy, the city supported several projects in 2011, one of them a participatory process involving neighbours, land owners and local and rural development experts. The aim of the process was to shape how Palou should be look 10 years in the future.



Granollers, Catalonia, Spain

Two of the major problems highlighted from the participatory process were difficulties in access to land and land owners not interested in farming activities. A strategy Plan for Palou, published in 2015) is now being implemented to facilitate access to land and thus preserve Palou as a rural area for the future. In recent years, services for Palou inhabitants have improved, but agricultural land was underused and people wanting to access land faced many difficulties.

Time period

Since 2011, the Strategic Plan for Palou has activity planned until 2025. Its duration and follow up actions depend on the results achieved any new challenges that are found.

Main levers used

- *Preserving land in agricultural use*: the city council classified land as agricultural land (land planning at local level).
- *Making land available for farmers*: the city council influenced and incentivized landowners (especially retired farmers) to sell/ rent their land, through:
 - Mediation between land owners and farmers
 - Promoting regrouping of small plots under a single administrator, to facilitate access to larger areas of land.
- *Supporting farmers to get established*:
 - Subsidies for the production and marketing of local agricultural products
 - Facilitating access to housing for future farmers through public housing stock.
 - Facilitating access to basic services (internet, education, medical services) in rural areas.
 - Promoting civic agriculture: creation the “Palou products” brand
 - Issuing leaflets and civic campaigns for agriculture
 - Providing better access to local markets to local farmers
- Improving local markets: access to local markets for farmers plus willingness of consumers to buy local/ agroecological food.



Main actions

- Mediation between land owners and farmers: the high heterogeneity of particular cases, forces to establish specific protocols for every case.
- Creation of Saturdays Market: local weekly market for local producers.
- Subsidies for the production and marketing of local agricultural products.
- Creation of the new “Productes de Palou” brand, aiming to identify products produced in Palou in a way that respects human health and nature health. The creation of the brand is linked to a campaign to promote civic agriculture among the consumers. It identifies new products as well as products of long established farmers which fulfil the brand requisites.
- Studies to optimize the use of water and increase the area of irrigated land.

Results so far

- By now, two new farmers have succeeded in accessing land and establishing production of milk and organic chickens.
- The new “Productes de Palou” brand has been created and the products are distributed in local shops and markets.
- Local communities benefit from Palou by having an increased availability of “km 0” products, new job opportunities, environmental education and a space for healthy free time activities.
- It contributes to maintaining a traditional activity and what used to be the main landscape of the area.



Way ahead

- Try to acquire agricultural land to make it available to new farmers
- The establishment of an incubator farm: aiming to provide support to new farmers at four stages:
 - Access to land
 - Selection of viable projects
 - Start up and development support
 - Consolidation
- Continuing to facilitate access to land to new farmers
- Diversify the production through increasing irrigated lands and building greenhouses
 - Promote manufactured products
 - Increase economic income for agricultural activities through increasing sales and promoting complementary activities
 - Improve the quality of life of Palou inhabitants
 - Increase communication

Why it is a good practice?

Palou makes a big effort to preserve agricultural land and to make it accessible to new farmers. The strategy of highly personal mediation and a strong participatory process can result in an increased confidence between owners, farmers and LAs. The combination of nature and agricultural heritage preservation results in a very positive impact for local communities.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The good reputation of the rural area of Palou by citizens, politicians' engagement and the existence of different initiatives to promote agroecology in local and regional level.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

The main weakness detected is the problem of access to land due to the fragmentation of ownership and low availability of owners to lease land and the lack of agricultural land owned by the municipality.

Grazing in forests, a way to prevent fires and to facilitate access to land. Lluçanès consortium

L. Megías, P. Carnicero & J. Rodrigo

Local authorities involved

- Lluçanès partnership (cocoordinator): councils of 13 villages
- Barcelona province council: funding

Other agents involved

- Association of forest land owners of Lluçanès (co-ordinator, funding)
- Land stewardship network of Catalonia (XCT): provides support in land stewardship agreements.

Highlights:

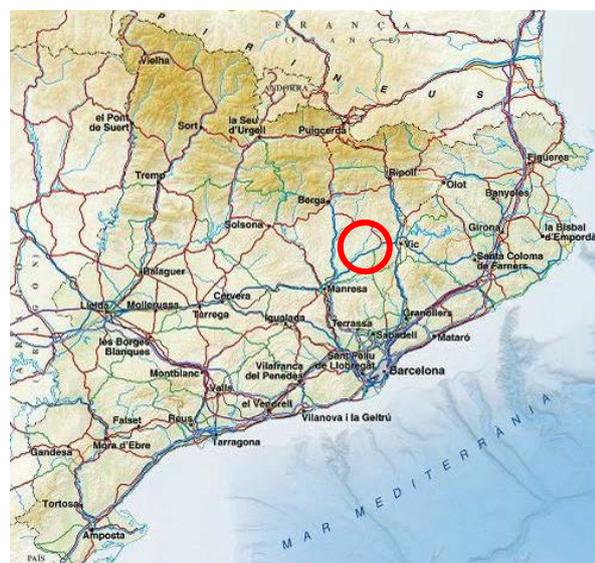
- Protecting forests from fires.
- Facilitating access to grazing areas to ranchers.
- Mediation between land owners and tenant farmers.
- Complementarity support to adapt forest for the new grazing activities.

Description

Since 2008, the association of forest owners of Lluçanès has provided support to forest owners in forest management. In 2010, they signed a plan for improving forests in Lluçanès in collaboration with the partnership of Lluçanès. Grazing forests was considered a useful tool after pilot project and was therefore included in the plan.

The project is coordinated by the association of forest land owners and a partnership constituted by Lluçanès villages. Its main aim is to use forests for grazing through land stewardship agreements of 5 years involving 4 members: owners association. Grazing forests helps in fire propagation risk. It also provides free land access to ranchers, improving production of established ones and favouring the establishment of new ranchers.

The project benefits from a regional plan for recovering ovine and goat ranching (“Pla de recuperació del sector oví/cabrum”, 2013, Catalan government), which promotes forest grazing and fire prevention.



*Lluçanès, a group of villages
in Central Catalonia*

Time period

Since 2013.

Main levers

- *Making land available for farmers, through:*
 - o Mediating and promoting agreements for grazing in private forests.
 - o Entitling landowners to benefit from infrastructure investment and grazing so as to maintain a low fire risk.
- *Supporting the establishment of farmers:*
 - o Agreements increase the viability of their productions by providing ranchers free access to land.
 - o Actions in water catchment areas reduce withdrawal and maintain water quality.

Main actions

- Previous to forest grazing, woodland management plan in the previous 5 years must have been carried out. Both land owners and rancher must fill an application requesting to participate in the project.
- Many contacts between rancher and forest companies have establish dialogues and new grazing agreements. Mediation continues after signature of the agreement advising and solving arisen conflicts.
- Improving of lands used for grazing: recovery of fountains, pounds, installation of water tanks, fences.
- Follow up and evaluation of contracts: indicators to evaluate the success of each agreement were defined in the projects description. Evaluation is conducted following a protocol of biodiversity improvement by grazing.



Results so far

10 agreements have been signed and perform successfully

Way ahead

- Continue to increase the number of agreements and resulting agreements that no longer need mediation.
- Expand the project in surrounding areas.
- Propose measures to improve stock management strategies, based on biodiversity monitoring of current agreements.
- Promote trade of meat from forest grazing.

Why it is a good practice?

It results in benefits for the two involved agents (owners and ranchers). LAs facilitate the development of new agreements by mediating and funding infrastructure. The project has good evaluation tools and works for the long term and independent application of agreements.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The project promotes mutual help between two parties which can solve their own problems with a single action (grazing forests).

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- Funding: lack of recognition of forest grazing by funding European entities.
- Lack of productive grasslands in lands affected by agreements.
- Lack of infrastructure for establishment of new farmers.

Strengthening traditional farming activities in Gallecs

G. Safont, P. Carnicero & J. Rodrigo, XCT

Local authorities involved

- City councils of Mollet del Vallès, Santa Perpètua de Mogoda, Palau-solità i Plegamans, Parets del Vallès, Lliçà de Vall and Montcada i Reixac.
- Catalan government: Department of Territory and Sustainability.

Other agents involved

- Partnership of Gallecs: constituted by involved city councils and the Catalan Government. It manages the area of Gallecs.
- Agroecological Association of Gallecs: constituted by farmers and families working in Gallecs. Its main aim is to promote organic farming and to guarantee the generational relief of farmers.
- Universities and research centres: several studies from different disciplines include Gallecs. Moreover, Gallecs contributes to two Master degrees.
- Europe: Member of Fedenatur and Eurosite.
- Member of the Land stewardship network of Catalonia (XCT).

Highlights:

- Maintaining farming activities.
- Protection of landscape and biodiversity.
- Recovery of ancient local varieties.
- Promoting commercialization of farm products.
- Complementarity forms of support to new entrants (subsidies, access to local markets...).
- Developing a plan and vision for local agriculture.

Description

Gallecs is a rural area located 15 km north of Barcelona. It represents what used to be the main landscape of “Vallès”, nowadays one of the most populated regions in Catalonia. It acts as a lung and a biodiversity spot in the middle of a very populated area. It is a protected area (PEIN) that combines farming activities with biodiversity protection and public use of the space. It is managed by a partnership constituted by involved city councils and the Catalan government, which has a land stewardship agreement for the entire protected area with the city councils



involved.

The main values of the area are rural land, which was extremely eroded in the surrounding areas due to urbanization, and natural areas, mostly Mediterranean forests patches. Altogether, the combination of rural and natural areas results in a mosaic landscape with noticeably high biodiversity. Organic farming is promoted as an alternative of high quality and higher respect for environment and biodiversity.

The whole currently protected area was expropriated in the 70s' with the purpose of building a new city. Due to the petrol crisis in the 70s', the city was never built and local administrations and communities began to ask that the area were preserved . In 1998, the city council of Mollet del Vallès modified its municipal ordination plan to protect the rural areas of Gallecs. In subsequent years, the Catalan government and other involved city councils developed plans to declare it a non-urban area and constituted the present partnership in 2006. In 2009 the area was finally declared a protected area with high natural interest (PEIN).

Time period

The present partnership was born in 2006, but several actions were carried out previously.

Main levers

- *Preserving land in agricultural use:*
 - o Development of spatial and urban plans to declare it agricultural area (city councils comprised in the area of Gallecs and Catalan government).
 - o Inclusion of Gallecs in the PEIN, a network of protected areas of the Catalan government.
- *Making land available for farmers by mobilizing agricultural land that is already public.*
- *Supporting the establishment of farmers, through:*
 - o Promoting civic agriculture: **Plan of sustainable agricultural managing** 2001-2005 and **Plan of reconversion to organic farming** 2006-2016 (Local Farmers association)
 - Issuing leaflets and civic campaigns for agriculture
 - Promoting Km.0 products, fashion for healthy and responsible way of life in local markets / Supermarkets
 - Providing better access to local markets to local farmers.
 - o Improving local markets: access to local markets for farmers + willingness of consumers to buy local/ agroecological food.
 - o Checklist of **farmhouses** to be restored and investment from the consortium or other local authorities sources.
 - o **Farmers network** which give support via acquisition of common machinery and an "Agroshop" provide support in the trade of Gallecs products.



Main actions

- Switch from mostly foraging production to human food production.
- Recovering of local agricultural varieties.
- Stimulation of organic farming.
- Reduction of food waste via producing preserved food.
- Enhancement of local commerce, through the “agroshop”, fairs, distribution to local restaurants and schools...
- Acquisition of machinery for common use of all farmers.
- Farming research.
- Generation of new jobs and opportunities for young people.
- Environmental education activities with schools.
- Construction of windmills for irrigation.
- Investment for farmhouses and other buildings related to farming restoration.
- Scientific research and collaboration in two Master degrees in organic farming in the University of Barcelona and the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Results so far

- Gallecs products are distributed to restaurants and schools in surrounding villages. People can also visit an Agroshop in the middle of the natural space where it is possible to purchase Gallecs products.
- Ancient local agricultural varieties have been recovered.
- New and former farmers benefit from investment for farms, machinery and new job opportunities.
- Gallecs have preserved a landscape of high ecological and historical values while maintaining farming activities.

- Several research studies conducted in the area.

Way ahead

The main aim is to establish organic farming in the whole rural surface of Gallecs in a period of 5-6 years and to contribute to maintain Gallecs as a reference for research in organic farming and rural areas development.

Why it is a good practice?

Gallecs acts as a lung and a biodiversity spot in the middle of a very populated area. The combination of nature and agricultural heritage preservation results in a very positive impact for local communities.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- Lands are public and all city councils involved have goodwill to continue protecting the area and stimulating farming for a long-term period.
- The farmers' association helps in creating useful infrastructure and distributing production.
- Local communities feel the benefits of Gallecs and the production is successfully distributed.
- There is an increasing interest of universities in using the area for research projects.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- The high number of out-dated farming licenses challenges the establishment of long-term projects.
- A very limited presence of ranching and restrictive regulation regarding farming infrastructure.



CONCLUSIONS



These case studies illustrate the different roles and strategies of local authorities in facilitating access to land. In our analysis, there are four main ways in which local authorities can support access to land for farmers:

1- Local authorities can preserve farmland to ensure that it remains in farmland use

Directly responsible for land planning and zoning at local level, the main challenge is to shift from a vision of farmland as a “stock of available land for the development of industries and services” to one where farmland is a cornerstone of the local sustainable environment.

2- Local authorities can organise land accessibility

They can monitor the land situation to better know the potential and challenges of their local territory. They can facilitate farm succession and entries into farming, so as to ensure that existing farms do not disappear as a result of land concentration or abandonment. They may also recover unused land and help constitute viable farming units (regrouping plots, providing access to water or roads, etc.).

3- Local authorities can channel land towards specific uses and users

They can pre-empt, stock, rent and sell farmland for the benefit of specific users: young farmers, organic farmers, farmers selling on local markets, or community farm businesses. They can also undertake the intermediation between land owners/aging farmers and tenant farmers/new entrants (facilitating contact, offering their guarantee, etc.).

4- Local authorities can provide a favourable environment to farmers

They can develop local distribution channels and promote local food to local consumers. They can also support access to training and to housing for farmers. They also have a key role to play to provide general public services and infrastructures needed by all businesses and local residents (internet, roads, medical services...).

Clearly, local authorities owning farmland have a very powerful lever to pursue their policy objectives, as well as a major responsibility for preserving this essential public asset. But local authorities can also play a major role as mediator between landowners and farmers. As a central and often respected stakeholder, they can facilitate land sales or rentals to farmers. This can be of major importance to reclaim underused land, stimulate changes in agricultural practices (organic farming, local marketing...) or promote synergies among farmers.

There is therefore a range of tools at the disposal of local authorities, including some explicitly designed to facilitate land access. They are often under-used or neglected. Additional research and experience sharing would help local authorities and other interested stakeholders to develop and upscale actions. Sometimes, innovative thinking is needed to draw from levers existing in other sectors to adapt them to the farming sector (e.g. farm incubators).

Our case studies highlight the importance of the political will and vision of the local council to perform actions to facilitate access to land. As important is the interaction between local authorities and other local stakeholders: farmers' organisations, agricultural institutions, environmental activists, consumers' groups, etc. Involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is often key not only to planning and realising the project, but also to ensuring its long-term relevance and viability.