

# Peasant Agroecology Training Guidelines

For An Agroecological Transition



October 2023



# Acknowledgements

This Agroecology Training Guideline was written by Olcay Bingol, International Policy Officer, European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) and Leonardo van den Berg, coordinating member for peasant agroecology working group of European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC), with the contribution of Janneke Bruil, Cultivate Collective, Natalia Rastorgueva, Research Fellow, University of Gastronomic Sciences, Alessandra Turco, coordinating member for peasant agroecology working group of ECVC and Paola Migliorini, Associate Professor, University of Gastronomic Sciences.

A great appreciation goes to the organisers, participants and trainers of ECVC member organisations:

Land Workers' Alliance in the UK, Toekomstboeren in the Netherlands, FADEAR and Confédération Paysanne in France, Le MAP/L'EPI in Belgium, Ehne Bizkaia and SLG in Spain who have contributed to this Training Guideline with their successful training programmes and with their experience and knowledge. A special thanks to the Southern and Eastern Africa (SEAF) region of La Via Campesina who supported us and stayed in solidarity throughout the Guideline preparation process.



#### Supported by:

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No101000478. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union. More information about the H2020-Agroecology for Europe project can be found here: [www.ae4eu.eu](http://www.ae4eu.eu)



# Table of Content

<b>Background</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. The Basics: Objectives and Target Group</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Training Objectives	7
2.2 The Learning Outcomes	7
2.3 The Target Group	8
2.4 Building a training team and preparing the training	9
<b>3. The Content of Agroecology Trainings</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4. Methodologies</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 Peasant to Peasant (P2P) methodology and the Dialogue of Wisdoms	23
4.2 Combining political and technical aspects of agroecology	24
4.3 Integrating Field Visit and field work	27
4.4 Generating “affect” (emotional engagement) and building a culture of care	28
<b>5. Evaluation of Training Sessions</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>33</b>



# Background

These agroecology training guidelines link principles and processes of training activities with a focus on agroecological transition in the context of the work done by the European Coordination Via Campesina<sup>1</sup> (ECVC). By representing small and medium scale farmers' organisations, ECVC has a strong focus on peasant agroecology and plays an important role in disseminating knowledge concerning the agroecological transition.

For the AE4EU project<sup>2</sup> ECVC member organisations developed and carried out three training programmes in agroecology in order to foster the agroecological transition in Europe during the AE4EU project timeline. The training programmes were designed to reflect ECVC's vision on peasant agroecology<sup>3</sup> and the Nyéléni Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology's (2015)<sup>4</sup> vision on learning agroecology and also .

The guidelines are based on the theoretical knowledge, practical experience and exchanges that should be included for efficient training on the transition to agroecology. Furthermore, the guidelines emphasise a strong focus on the grassroots level, Peasant to Peasant (P2P) methodology and the “diálogo de sa-

beres” or “dialogue between ways of knowing” as an educational approach with different practical activities (meetings, seminars, individual reading, exchanges of experiences, field visits, etc.). The guidelines propose to use Peasant to Peasant (P2P) methodologies centring principles of horizontalism, peer-to-peer learning approach and participation.

These training guidelines follow the perspective of ECVC's vision on peasant agroecology as an open process, which allows peasants to put their knowledge into practice using the ‘learning by doing’ methodology, and to reinforce it through collective work and the relationship with the environment. The multiplication of knowledge is made possible by the creation of a network of promoters through trainings of trainers who will replicate the experiences in their own territories. This positive and proactive relationship with the environment enables them to adapt their production model to their environmental and climatic conditions, to increase production capacities and develop methods for resistance and to enhance their resilience while improving the ecological, socio-economic and cultural sustainability of their farming systems through agroecological peasant farming.

1 [www.eurovia.org/](http://www.eurovia.org/)

2 [www.ae4eu.eu](http://www.ae4eu.eu)

3 [www.eaken.eurovia.org/peasant-agroecology-according-to-ecvc/](http://www.eaken.eurovia.org/peasant-agroecology-according-to-ecvc/)

4 [www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Download-declaration-Agroecology-Nyeleni-2015.pdf](http://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Download-declaration-Agroecology-Nyeleni-2015.pdf)

# 1. Introduction

ECVC defines peasant agroecology as a way of life, of working with nature and not against it towards sustainable agriculture and considers training and learning activities as an important process for agroecological transition. Agroecology offers solutions to the major environmental, social, economic and political challenges we are facing today. It is a living practice, as well as a science and a socio-political movement, built and fostered by people over thousands of years.

According to ECVC, training and learning is an infinite process of permanent production and dissemination of new knowledge that comes from sharing different opinions and ideas and from encounters between these ideas and reality.

Agroecology, due to its knowledge-intensive character, combines traditional, indigenous, peasant and experiential knowledges with elements of modern ecological, social and agronomic science, creating a dialogue of wisdoms from which principles for designing and managing biodiverse and resilient farms may be derived. In different countries, vocational trainings are widely used to promote agroecology.<sup>5 6 7 8</sup>

Peasant farmers' movements and organisations have a deep knowledge of the ecosystem as they are immersed in it. Therefore, they are important actors in the trainings because their lived experiences and their adequate interpretation of reality give the political strategy a higher probability of success in terms of attaining both immediate and strategic goals.<sup>9</sup>

Transformative agroecology learning, a collective strategy for food system transformation, is based on four key characteristics or qualities: horizontalism; diálogo de saberes, combining practical and political knowledge; and building social movement networks (Anderson et al. 2019).

These Training Guidelines work towards systematising agroecological insights and experiences to provide improved, efficient and transformative agroecological training programmes across Europe.

5 Pimbert, M., Moeller, N. I., Singh, J., & Anderson, C. (2021). Agroecology. In Oxford Research Encyclopedias Oxford University Press. [doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.013.298](https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.013.298)

6 FAO. (2019). Scaling up agroecology to achieve the sustainable development goals. In Proceedings of the 2nd FAO International Symposium on Agroecology. Rome: FAO.

7 Deguine, Jean & Gloanec, Caroline & Laurent, Philippe & Ratnadass, Alain & Aubertot, Jean-Noël. (2017). Agroecological Crop Protection. 10.1007/978-94-024-1185-0.

8 Migliorini, P., & Lieblein, G. (2016). Facilitating transformation and competence development in sustainable agriculture university education: an experiential and action oriented approach. Sustainability, 8(12), 1243.

9 [agroecologia-socla2015.net/](http://agroecologia-socla2015.net/)



## 2. The Basics: Objectives and Target Group

For ECVC, agroecology allows peasants to collectively develop knowledge and practical skills in areas of peasant farming in order to promote sustainable agricultural food production systems across Europe and beyond. At the same time, agroecology may foster a stronger network of peasants with a deeper understanding of their rights and help to amplify their voice towards achieving the positive change they want to see. Rather than a one-off event, we understand training as an ongoing process of learning and exchange.

### 2.1 Training Objectives

To improve the general literacy around peasant agroecology for peasants across all levels as well as for other food system actors, the specific objectives of peasant agroecology trainings are to:

1. Appreciate the socio-ecological, cultural and economic values of traditional peasant knowledge systems;
2. Build a strong network of peasants who are knowledgeable of their practices and can speak with a united voice to advocate for a global transition to peasant agroecology
3. Demystify foster an in-depth analysis of industrialised food systems while empowering peasants with their rights to food production and food sovereignty
4. Promote the agro-bio diversification of farms and their role in financial and farm autonomy.
5. Instigate food systems initiatives through development of farm and community-based food

systems plans to support the transition to peasant agroecology

6. Initiate training programmes focused on strengthening women's capacity and roles while providing solidarity initiatives to support them.

### 2.2 The Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the programme, the participants should be able to:

1. Understand what peasant agroecology is and what it is not and advocate accordingly;
2. Identify the principles of peasant agroecology;
3. Justify the urgent need for a transition towards peasant agroecology and food sovereignty;
4. Understand how to build a balanced, equitable and fair food system through agroecology;
5. Appreciate the socio-ecological and economic values of traditional peasant knowledge systems in agroecological settings;
6. Understand the importance of the agro-biodiversification of farms and its role in financial and farm autonomy;
7. Build and amplify social movements and alliances for sustainable food systems;
8. Define their own and other actors' roles in building a balanced, equitable and transparent food system.
9. Develop plans to practise peasant agroecology at farm and community level.
10. Properly use the training guidelines to develop training programmes based on their needs.
11. Be the resource people to transmission of

information on existing policies and legislations on agroecology in order to advocate for a better agroecological transition.

## 2.3 The Target Group

The first target group for agroecology training programmes in La Via Campesina are peasant farmers, which includes peasant leaders, new entrants, youth, women or a mix.

Community leaders and organisers, leaders and facilitators of networks of food and agriculture, producers in processing, actors in short food supply chains, such as distributors, cooperatives, networks, activists and/or researchers, can also be part of the target group of agroecology trainings.

However, any training aimed at agroecological transformation should always centre farmers as the key actors.

In addition to farmers, one of the important target

groups to consider are (urban and rural) activists. Activists may have a lot of information and are committed to make changes in the rural world, but their understanding and experience with the reality of rural life and production practices are limited. Engagements between activists and farmers in a training setting can contribute to filling these knowledge gaps while offering valuable political lessons to all participants.

Local or regional policy makers are not often included as target audiences. Nevertheless, including them in some ways might allow them to learn more about the realities and political challenges faced by the farmers. Local policy makers can for example be included on excursions to the farmers' fields or production areas, or to municipal events. Inviting representatives from local governments to create spaces for dialogue or discussions on key policies could generate lessons or pose opportunities for problem-solving. However, it is important to note that the main purpose may in such cases be

### **Le MAP, Belgium: Dividing farmers by experience**

Le MAP has its own training centre with the title 'L'Ecole Paysanne Indépendante' (the Independent Peasant School). In their training, they were faced with the challenge that participants came from very different backgrounds. As a solution, they started to divide the participants into different groups based on their experience and knowledge. The activities were developed according to participants' backgrounds. For example, one group was a farm school for the children of peasants with an agroecology background. One other, more experienced group was taken on farm visits, followed by conversations on what they observed.

### **Toekomstboeren, Netherlands: Uniting farmers and activists**

Agroecology trainings by Toekomstboeren are often organised in collaboration with the Dutch Agroecology Network. They aim at a combination of farmers, researchers and activists. Over one third of the participants are generally farmers. The activists and researchers come from different groups, with a strong emphasis on the climate and decolonial movements. The diversity of participants is pretty good, but there is also space for improvement (for example in the inclusion of people of colour, or those active in the LGBTQI community).

come political advocacy, distracting from the learning objectives.

When selecting an audience, it is important to keep in mind:

- **Diversity:** Ensure spaces for youth, women, and other gender diversities;
- **Distance:** Consider for which participants virtual training is more accessible and for whom in-person training is an option. This can greatly differ per target group and per geographical region; create easy access to the training materials.
- **Farmers' and landworkers' time:** Timing should be programmed in advance in consultation with farmers in relation to farm work and the seasonal work-load
- **Level of knowledge and experience:** Taking into consideration the different levels of knowledge and experience of the participants

## 2.4 Building a training team and preparing the training

**1. The importance of building a training team:** The training team should be involved in all stages of the training, including preparation, implementation, and post-training activities. This ensures consistency and continuity throughout the process.

**2. Trainers as facilitators:** Depending on the duration of the training, it is recommended to have two facilitators who can alternate in leading and supporting the training. This helps maintain engagement and prevents fatigue and mistakes.

**3. Support staff:** Support staff play a crucial role in preparing training materials, handling logistics such as photocopying documents, and assisting the facilitators during the training.

**4. Documentation:** Assigning a person to document the training through note-taking and pho-

tography is important for capturing key information and preparing a training report.

**5. Reviewing the learning guide:** The trainer or training team should review the learning guide in collaboration with the organisation involved in the training. This ensures a common understanding of the methodology, materials, and background for each session.

**6. Pre-training preparations:** The trainer or training team should define the roles and responsibilities for each session in advance. They should make a list of necessary preparations, required materials, responsibilities, and timing.

**7. Rehearsal:** Allocating one day for a rehearsal before the training allows the trainer or training team to walk through and practise each session. This ensures smooth delivery and identifies any gaps in materials or processes.

**8. Technical background and facilitation:** The trainer or training team should allocate time to understand the technical background covered in the sessions and to enhance their facilitation skills.

Once the target audience has been decided, and the path is clarified the educational activities should be designed and planned. Preparation includes establishing the following elements of the training:

- Learning Objectives (a precise and clearly formulated objective determines all training activities)
- Decision on the content - depends on the stated objective and selected audience (relevance, quality and depth of the content)
- Pedagogical approach and methodologies
- A plan for documentation of learnings and outcomes (including capturing photos or videos)
- Establishing a team of trainers/facilitators
- Formulating a compelling invitation for participants

To ensure the training is relevant, the facilitators/trainers could enquire about participants' expectations and experiences while designing the training. By incorporating participants' expectations and experiences, the training can be tailored to their specific needs and foster a more engaging and effective learning environment.

The planning process should include a clear agenda which contains the methodology, objectives and outcomes, along with the resource documents for each session.

By following these recommendations, the training team can effectively prepare and deliver a training session, resulting in a more successful and impactful learning experience.

## 3. The Content of Agroecology Trainings

There are variations in operational areas and practices within peasant agroecology. Therefore, instead of providing an exhaustive list of practices for each section, the program outline serves as a guide. The facilitators/trainers delivering the program have the responsibility of identifying and extracting different practices from the participants and allowing for the practical sharing of experiences. They should focus on learning from the best practices within each section while staying within the framework of the main learning areas.

These training guidelines follow the perspective of ECVC on peasant agroecology as an open process, which allows peasants to put their knowledge into practice using the 'learning by doing' methodology, and to reinforce it through collective work and the relationship with the environment. The multiplication of knowledge is made possible by the creation of a network of promoters through trainings of trainers who will replicate the experiences in their own territories. This positive and proactive relationship with the environment enables them to adapt their production model to different environmental and climatic conditions, and increase their production

capacities and methods to enhance resilience as well as the ecological, socio-economic and cultural sustainability of farming systems through agroecological peasant farming.

To ensure the training is practical, facilitators/trainers should consider the participants' expectations regarding learning peasant agroecology and their experiences within the group regarding specific concepts. This information can be used as a basis for selecting practical elements that align with the respective sections of the training program. By incorporating participants' expectations and experiences, the training can be tailored to their specific needs and foster a more engaging and effective learning environment.

One of the most important objectives of agroecology trainings therefore is to incorporate both the practices as well as the political aspects of agroecology, from the perspective of peasants. Understanding agroecological practices in their political context can help to connect peasants with others in the food system, notably citizens. One way to do so is by linking practices to public policies that exist (or lack) at different levels (see also section 3.2).

### **FADEAR, France: Peasant Farming Diagnosis Tool**

FADEAR and its network were built around the Charter of Peasant Agriculture. They train members and activists of the Confédération Paysanne, supporting farmers who want to improve their practices, develop the autonomy of their farm, improve the quality of their products or diversify their activities. One way FADEAR supports farmers is with the Peasant Farming Diagnosis tool. This allows peasants to assess the state of their farm using specific indicators and to identify possibilities for improvement. In a one day short course, the Diagnostic Tool is introduced along with the history of peasant agriculture. After that, participants are given a chance to apply the tool on different farms they visit. As such, this short course also offers participants an opportunity to share experiences with other farmers, to discover other practices and to gain new perspectives on the management of their own farm.

### **Landworkers' Alliance, UK: Agroecological principles in relation to farming practices**

Through its training, the Land Workers Alliance allows farmers to develop a firm understanding of agroecology, which can be used to analyse their own farming challenges and begin developing agroecological solutions to overcome them. The training link agroecological principles to farming practices and processes that reduce reliance on external inputs and support the transformation of farming and food systems. Agroecology is presented as a food system that combines food production, environmental public goods, financial viability, and climate resilience. Over the course of two days, participants explore various definitions and principles of agroecology, gain skills in systems thinking to analyse farming problems and imagine solutions, witness agroecological practices and systems in action, and learn the importance of the socio-political dimensions of agroecology.

Agroecology trainings can zoom in on specific topics, for example the principles of agroecology, farmer seed systems, access to land, rural workers and migration, trade, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, and so on. Here follows an overview of possible topics to be included in an agroecology training programme.

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
<p><b>How do peasant movements/ organisations organise?</b></p>	<p>Peasants fight to defend their rights on a local, national and international level in order to feed the planet in a sustainable, dignified and healthy way through food sovereignty and peasant agroecology.</p> <p>Fairer and more sustainable agricultural systems can be summarised into three core concepts: food sovereignty, agroecology, and peasants' rights. These three concepts are complementary and together represent the essence of our political vision.</p>	<p><b>The Organisation and Strategy of social movements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://viacampesina.org/en/who-are-we/">viacampesina.org/en/who-are-we/</a> <a href="http://what-is-la-via-campesina/eurovia.org/about-us/">what-is-la-via-campesina/eurovia.org/about-us/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Introduction to European Policies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/european-policies/">eurovia.org/working-groups/european-policies/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>A call to European institutions - Manifesto:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/publications/manifesto-for-agricultural-transition-to-address-systemic-climate-crises/">eurovia.org/publications/manifesto-for-agricultural-transition-to-address-systemic-climate-crises/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Introduction to Global Governance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/global-governance/">eurovia.org/working-groups/global-governance/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Introduction to Rural Workers and Migration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/rural-workers-and-migration/">eurovia.org/working-groups/rural-workers-and-migration/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Introduction to Trade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/trade/">eurovia.org/working-groups/trade/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Introduction to Agrarian reform and access to resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/agrarian-reform-and-access-to-natural-resources/">eurovia.org/working-groups/agrarian-reform-and-access-to-natural-resources/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Introduction to Peasants rights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/peasants-rights/">eurovia.org/working-groups/peasants-rights/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Introduction to Youth, Women, Gender and Sexual diversities Articulations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/youth/">eurovia.org/working-groups/youth/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/women/">eurovia.org/working-groups/women/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/working-groups/gender-and-sexual-diversities/">eurovia.org/working-groups/gender-and-sexual-diversities/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Political positions on diverse topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/our-policy-positions/">eurovia.org/our-policy-positions/</a></li> </ul>

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCS.
<p><b>What is peasant agro-ecology?</b></p>	<p>Peasant agroecology is not only a sustainable farming practice but considers the relationship between people, plants, animals and their environment; the ECVC approach to peasant agroecology, Nyeleni Agroecology Declaration and the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations) and HLPE (High Panel of Experts) principles of agroecology and the food sovereignty concept of La Via Campesina.</p>	<p><b>Peasant Agroecology Declaration of ECVC (2014):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/publications/agroecology-transforming-society-through-food-production-and-the-peasant-struggle/">eurovia.org/publications/agroecology-transforming-society-through-food-production-and-the-peasant-struggle/</a></li> </ul>
	<p>Peasant agroecology asks for systemic change and is a political movement. The principles of Peasant Agroecology include: Environmental Dimensions of Agroecology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political, Social and Cultural Dimensions of Agroecology</li> <li>• Economic Dimension of Agroecology</li> </ul>	<p><b>Peasant Agroecology According to ECVC (2022):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Agroecology_EN.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Agroecology_EN.pdf</a></li> </ul>
	<p>What is food sovereignty and the relation between food sovereignty and agroecology.</p>	<p><b>Nyéléni Declaration of the international forum for agroecology:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Download-declaration-Agroecology-Nyeleni-2015.pdf">foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Download-declaration-Agroecology-Nyeleni-2015.pdf</a></li> </ul>
	<p>The basic concepts, structures and glossary around agroecology, food sovereignty, climate justice, peasants' rights</p>	<p><b>FAO “The 10 elements of agroecology: guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems”:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://fao.org/3/i9037en/i9037en.pdf">fao.org/3/i9037en/i9037en.pdf</a></li> </ul>
	<p>Agroecology as resistance and transformation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/12/2016-12-14-Nyeleni_Newsletter_Num_28_EN.pdf">viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/12/2016-12-14-Nyeleni_Newsletter_Num_28_EN.pdf</a></li> </ul>



TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCS.
<b>What is peasant agro-ecology?</b>	In order to strengthen organisations, the work around agroecology should be done through collective horizontal processes, not individualised projects	<b>HLPE - Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition:</b> • <a href="http://fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf">fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf</a>
	Building capacity to struggle and transform, not to conform, is key.	<b>Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007:</b> • <a href="http://nyeleni.org/en/declaration-of-nyeleni/">nyeleni.org/en/declaration-of-nyeleni/</a> <b>Food Sovereignty:</b> • <a href="http://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FOOD_EN.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FOOD_EN.pdf</a>
	Questioning and transforming structures, instead of reproducing them is vital for the transformation of the society	<b>Food Sovereignty Now! An In-Depth Guide:</b> • <a href="http://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/FINAL-EN-FoodSov-A5-rev6.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/FINAL-EN-FoodSov-A5-rev6.pdf</a>
	The recognition and promotion of Agroecology by intergovernmental institutions, governments, universities and research centres is needed.	<b>Declaration By Organizations Of Small-Scale Food Producers And Civil Society Organizations At The International Symposium On Agroecology Convened By FAO, 2018:</b> • <a href="http://viacampesina.org/en/declaration-at-the-ii-international-symposium-on-agroecology/">viacampesina.org/en/declaration-at-the-ii-international-symposium-on-agroecology/</a>
	The recommendations of the participants of the 'International Symposium on agroecology for food security and nutrition' of FAO	• <a href="http://fao.org/3/i7604e/i7604e.pdf">fao.org/3/i7604e/i7604e.pdf</a>
	Analysing and understanding the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) as a collective dimension of the rights established which protects peasant and other rural communities as a group in the protection of collective management of natural resources, decision-making processes and participation	• <a href="http://eurovia.org/publications/lvcs-publication-undrop-book-of-illustrations/">eurovia.org/publications/lvcs-publication-undrop-book-of-illustrations/</a>

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
<b>Protecting and developing biodiversity on the farm</b>  <b>INTRODUCTION</b>	Agro-biodiversity in its different forms is the basis of cohabitation and survival on earth	
	Crop, animal, seed, and soil diversity, biodiversity conservation technologies, GMOs, genomic techniques and their impacts on agriculture and life.	
	The challenges of preserving domestic biodiversity (food sovereignty, dependence on inputs, adaptation to the land and to climate change, etc.)	
<b>Right and access to land; Soil health, building fertility and crop rotation</b>	The long demanded realisation of the right to land as defined in Article 17 of the UNDROF is threatened today: concentration and land grabbing lead to the disappearance of farms, the increase of land prices, the devitalisation of rural areas and the industrialisation of farming practices. There needs to be a European framework for land governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/publications/proposal-for-an-eu-land-directive/">eurovia.org/publications/proposal-for-an-eu-land-directive/</a></li> </ul>
	Public policies supporting young people in agriculture, the establishment of young farmers and generational renewal, access to land, in the framework of food sovereignty.	
	To explore the many possible ways of ensuring access to land for agroecology, from concrete land struggles to local and national political transformation, in order to respond through action to the imperative of inventing new commons.	<b>Roots of Resilience</b> <b>- Land Policy for an Agroecological Transition in Europe:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/rootsofresilience_online-light2.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/rootsofresilience_online-light2.pdf</a></li> </ul>
	The importance of soil organisms and soil structure to the health of the soil	<b>PESTICIDES OUT !</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ECVC_Out-Pesticides-Brochure_EN_2018.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ECVC_Out-Pesticides-Brochure_EN_2018.pdf</a></li> </ul>

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
<b>Right and access to land; Soil health, building fertility and crop rotation</b>	Identify different soil types based on the texture and structure and literacy of soil analysis on the agroecological farm. Define the role and importance of organic matter in soil (water holding capacity, aeration, nutrient bank, cation exchange capacity- CAC)	
	Soil, plant-water relations (the complex relationship of the three elements)	
	The role and impact of different types of cultivation. Different methods for improving soil fertility. Identifying crop families to plan and carry out successful rotations. The processes behind building and maintaining an effective composting system.	
	The products used for "plant protection" and which result from synthetic chemistry, synthetic biology, and/ or enter the field of nanotechnologies.	
	Soil and water conservations, water harvesting techniques and field water management, control of run-off, water pollution.	
	Nutrient recycling and improved efficiency of ecological processes as the bedrock for productive Agroecosystems.	
	The ecological management of pests, weeds and soil fertility for increased productivity with minimum to no external inputs.	
	Climate change mitigation through systematic management of carbon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://eurovia.org/publications/ecvc-publication-carbon-farming-a-new-business-model-for-who/">eurovia.org/publications/ecvc-publication-carbon-farming-a-new-business-model-for-who/</a></li> </ul>

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
<b>Distribution of Power</b>	<p>The power and control on the food system - corporate capture. How structures of patriarchy, class and racism can affect participation and decision-making mechanisms in communities, farms and organisations.</p>	<p><b>The PATH of peasant and popular feminism in la Via Campesina:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/VIA-CAMPESINA-feminismo-campesina-y-popular-DIGITAL-ENGLISH2.pdf">viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/VIA-CAMPESINA-feminismo-campesina-y-popular-DIGITAL-ENGLISH2.pdf</a></li> </ul>
	<p>Recognition of the role of women, youth and children in decision making and in bringing about positive change</p>	
	<p>Gender and sexual diversity and political identities</p>	<p><b>Embracing Rural Diversity: Genders and Sexualities in the Peasant Movement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://eurovia.org/publications/embracing-rural-diversity-genders-and-sexualities-in-the-peasant-movement/">eurovia.org/publications/embracing-rural-diversity-genders-and-sexualities-in-the-peasant-movement/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Introduction to 'AE practices'</b>	<p>Ground-cover management, integrated crop-livestock management, sustainable viticulture, integrated pest management, agroforestry, biodynamic agriculture, plant-plant interaction, regenerative agriculture, permaculture, synergistic agriculture, reduced tillage, virtuous farming techniques such as, water and soil conservation, farmers' seed systems, crop mixing, rotation and diversification, the release of beneficial insects and the use of manual labour and animal traction</p>	<p><b>Collective farming in support of gender equality- Bizkaigane farm case: Peasant Agroecology According to ECVC (2022):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Agroecology_EN.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Agroecology_EN.pdf</a></li> </ul>

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
<b>FIELD WORK</b>	Soil Sampling and Soil Nutritional composition Analysis – (application of lime or ash for pH correction, application rate of manure)	
	Basal Dressing techniques (Manure treatment, Compost, Vermicompost, Biofertiliser, Biochar, Green manure)	
	Top Dressing (Liquid manures, Fermented Biofertiliser)	
	Soil organic matter and its role in soil physical and chemical properties.	
	Soil fertility management approaches for increasing soil organic matter: mulching, green manure and cover crops, etc.	
<b>Peasant seed systems and Cultivated biodiversity</b>	Peasant seeds, peasants' rights to seeds and seed autonomy. The societal stakes of the preservation of cultivated biodiversity and the right of farmers to sow part of their harvest	<p><b>Key documents of ECVC: Seeds and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://eurovia.org/working-groups/seeds-and-genetically-modified-organisms-gmos/">eurovia.org/working-groups/seeds-and-genetically-modified-organisms-gmos/</a></li> </ul>
	UNDROP and ITPGRFA: Legal recognition of peasants' rights to seeds. Selection schemes, the impact of cultivated varieties on the production system, the interest in developing seed autonomy on one's farm in connection with other farmers in the area.	<p><b>Seed Stories   Fighting Against the Privatisation of Life:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://viacampesina.org/en/publication-seed-stories-fighting-against-the-privatisation-of-life/">viacampesina.org/en/publication-seed-stories-fighting-against-the-privatisation-of-life/</a></li> </ul>
	Seed Rights and Legislation at national, regional and international level. . The main obstacles to the use of farm-saved seeds and the rights of farmers in this matter.	<p><b>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/UNDROP-Book-of-Illustrations-I-EN-I-Web.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/UNDROP-Book-of-Illustrations-I-EN-I-Web.pdf</a></li> </ul>

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOC.
Peasant seed systems and Culti-vated bio-diversity	The legal frameworks which exclude and criminalise peasant seed systems; the UPOV Convention: an international framework developed for and by the industrial seed system; the violation of the rights of peasants to exchange and sell their seeds by European legislation on seeds marketing.	<b>ITRPGRFA:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://fao.org/plant-treaty/en/">fao.org/plant-treaty/en/</a></li> </ul>
	The regulatory framework for seeds and GMOs: intellectual property laws, patent law. The economic environment of seeds: main seed companies and industries, strategy of industrialists to impose new GMOs etc. Present the issues at stake in the fight against old and new GMOs.	<b>Incorporating Peasant Rights to seeds in European Law:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Publication_Incorporating-Peasants-Rights-to-Seeds-in-European-Law_EN.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Publication_Incorporating-Peasants-Rights-to-Seeds-in-European-Law_EN.pdf</a></li> </ul>
	The main obstacles to farmers' use of their own seeds: use of the F1 hybridisation technique by the seed industry, European seed and intellectual property law (patents, plant variety certificates etc.). The different levels of precision in the technical, legal, economic and political knowledge of the fight against GMOs and the privatisation of life.	
	The different techniques of genome modification, both old (cell fusion, mutagenesis, transgenesis etc.) and new (in vitro cell multiplication, directed mutagenesis etc.) and proposals to develop seed autonomy on a farm scale.	
	Regulatory frameworks dealing with commercial seeds and with peasant seed systems and ECVC's demands and requests for a coherent European Regulatory Framework	
	The challenges of preserving cultivated biodiversity (food sovereignty, dependence on inputs, genetic homogenisation and health, fragility, etc.)	
	The advantages of hardiness and adaptation of plants to the local soil, climate and agronomic environment	
	The societal challenges of preserving domestic biodiversity.	

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
<b>Animal biodiversity on the farm</b>	<p>Selection based solely on the criterion of productivity per animal is detrimental to other selective advantages and constrains the production system and breeding practices. The genetic selection issues at farm level and identification of relevant selection criteria (performance, longevity, hardiness etc.)</p>	<p><b>ECVC publication: Livestock farming in the European Union: supporting an ambitious transition to peasant farming:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ECVC-2023-ENG-Livestock.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ECVC-2023-ENG-Livestock.pdf</a></li> </ul>
	<p>The advantages of hardiness and the adaptation of animals to the specificities of the territory; the legal, technical and commercial constraints that hinder the development of farmers' breeding.</p>	<p><b>Booklet “La biodiversité animale à la ferme” - Confédération paysanne</b></p>
	<p>The distinction between individual genetic performance and adaptation to the system as a whole (environment, breeding practices etc.); farmers' practices that allow the development of the autonomy of the breeding system and the increase of genetic diversity (mass selection practices, decision-making autonomy, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – 2007</b></p>
	<p>The origin of pyramidal animal selection and its consequences on the decline of genetic diversity.</p>	<p><b>Wilderswil Declaration on Livestock Diversity – La Via Campesina:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://viacampesina.org/en/wilderswil-declaration-on-livestock-diversity/">viacampesina.org/en/wilderswil-declaration-on-livestock-diversity/</a></li> </ul>
	<p>The genetic impoverishment of livestock and the protection of small breeds</p>	
	<p>The technical, commercial and administrative constraints of selection</p>	
	<p>How to direct people towards actors who are involved in preserving domestic biodiversity (breeder groups, exchange networks, associations, etc.).</p>	

TOPIC	ELEMENTS	RESOURCES/BACKGROUND DOC.
<b>Technological Autonomy</b>	Developing technological autonomy on farm scale; the evolution of farmers' relations with technology throughout history; how agro-equipment constrains production systems and technical itineraries.	<b>Atelier paysan exhibition “Machines et bâtiments agricoles libres”:</b> • <a href="http://latelierpaysan.org/Publications">latelierpaysan.org/Publications</a>
	Strengthening advocacy capacity with a focus on agro-equipment constraints on production systems and technical itineraries.	<b>Campagnes Solidaire n°361, Folder “L'autonomie technologique pour l'agriculture paysanne”:</b> • <a href="http://confederationpaysanne.fr/sites/1/cs/documents/CS%20361%20leger.pdf">confederationpaysanne.fr/sites/1/cs/documents/CS%20361%20leger.pdf</a>
	Critical thinking and analysis on high technology and digitalisation in food and agriculture systems; the links between technological development and indebtedness, land restructuring, work rationalisation and energy dependence	<b>The Atelier paysan plea for technological sovereignty:</b> • <a href="http://latelierpaysan.org/Plaidoyer-souverainete-technologique-des-paysans">latelierpaysan.org/Plaidoyer-souverainete-technologique-des-paysans</a>
	The imposition of technological and infrastructural regime centred on extracting maximum production from the land by states and large corporations.	<b>ECVC Peasant Agroecology in Eastern Europe and Central Asia - PACE Future technologies and food sovereignty publication:</b> • <a href="http://eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PACE-Future-technologies-and-FS.pdf">eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PACE-Future-technologies-and-FS.pdf</a>
	The false ‘feed the world’ narrative of industrialised farming and digitalisation; a critical analysis of digital technologies on farms and in society.	
	DAMN classification of 4IR technologies: Digitalisation, Automation and sensing, Molecular manipulation and Natural systems modification; peasant technologies used in agroecology as innovation for food sovereignty	



## 4. Methodologies

Most of the agroecology training for peasants, small-scale farmers and other actors in the food system conducted by members of ECVC are rooted in participatory, experiential methodologies such as Peasant to Peasant learning (P2P), which allow farmers to find innovative solutions to the challenges they may face. This also creates a trusted space for horizontal communication and knowledge sharing among peasants. The methodology includes a combination of activities such as case studies, discussion/conversation circles, visual material and storytelling. They can take place in plenary, small groups or on an individual level, both in and out of the classroom, for example in farmers' fields.

It is important to note that the facilitators should create a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes effective cross-pollination and learning among participants, fostering the safe sharing of experiences and visions. Each session includes exercises and participatory techniques.

To support this, we propose a few pedagogical principles.

### 4.1 Peasant to Peasant (P2P) methodology and the Dialogue of Wisdoms

Peasant to Peasant (P2P) learning as a grassroots social methodology is the most effective way found to date, and rural social movements hold the key<sup>10</sup>. P2P methodology highlights the importance of horizontal communication and knowledge sharing among peasants. P2P emphasises the idea that peasants themselves are the primary agents of innovation and knowledge exchange. It recognizes that peasants have a deep understanding of their local environments, including the land, seeds and climate, as well as the socio-historical conditions which influences their agricultural practices and techniques. This methodology seeks to harness and promote this rich peasant knowledge, which is tightly connected to the specific territory and cultural heritage.

Rather than viewing learners as passive recipients of information, they are seen as active participants and agents of their own learning. The peasant-to-peasant methodology encourages learners to engage in

<sup>10</sup> Peter Rosset, Valentin Val, Lia Pinheiro Barbosa & Nils McCune (2019): Agroecology and La Via Campesina II. Peasant agroecology schools and the formation of a sociohistorical and political subject, *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, DOI:10.1080/21683565.2019.1617222

a process of discovery, where they actively contribute their own knowledge, experiences, and perspectives while also being open to learning from others.

The concept of “diálogo de saberes” or “dialogue between ways of knowing” in the Peasant-to-Peasant methodology is an approach that recognizes and values the diverse ways in which individuals understand and interact with the world. It goes beyond the traditional notion of education as a one-way transmission of knowledge and emphasises the importance of dialogue and mutual learning. The emphasis on dialogue in this methodology is crucial. Instead of simply delivering knowledge in a hierarchical manner, the aim is to foster an inclusive and respectful conversation where different ways of knowing can be shared, questioned, and enriched. Through dialogue, participants can challenge pre-conceived notions, develop critical thinking skills, and collectively construct new knowledge and understanding<sup>11</sup>.

Overall, the P2P-methodology and the concept of “diálogo de saberes” promote a collaborative and transformative learning process that recognises the importance of diverse knowledges and actively involves learners in their own training.

The new collective understandings, meanings and knowledges may form the basis for collective actions of resistance and the construction of new processes<sup>11</sup>.

The organisations that make up LVC have increasingly developed agroecological training processes aimed at accelerating historical transitions to food sovereignty.

The fact that agroecology is based on applying principles in ways that depend on local realities means that the local knowledge and ingenuity of farmers must necessarily take a front seat in this understanding.

## 4.2 Combining the political and technical aspects of agroecology

*“Agroecology is a way of life and the language of Nature, that we learn as her children. It is not a mere set of technologies or production practices. It cannot be implemented the same way in all territories.... Agroecology is political; it requires us to challenge and transform structures of power in society. We need to put the control of seeds, biodiversity, land and territories, waters, knowledge, culture and the commons in the hands of the peoples who feed the world.”*

Nyeléni International Declaration  
on Agroecology, 2015

A central characteristic of all agroecology training in La Via Campesina is that they address both the technical and political aspects of agroecology. There are different ways to do this. In many cases, more technically oriented sessions (such as on composting or water retention) are separated from political sessions (for example on food policy). A related methodological notion is the combination of practical and theoretical sessions. They are often, but not always, directly linked to technical and political aspects respectively. But there are also ways to connect these aspects naturally, for example when we talk about practices and start to understand how they make us more autonomous from large corporations or the state.

<sup>11</sup> María Elena Martínez-Torres & Peter M. Rosset (2014) Diálogo de saberes in La Vía Campesina: food sovereignty and agroecology, The Journal of Peasant Studies, 41:6, 979-997, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2013.872632>

### **EHNE BIZKAIA, BASQUE COUNTRY, SPAIN**

The Escuela de Accion Campesina shows how the peasant-to-peasant exchange fosters not only learning but also action. This political training is organised by member organisations from La Via Campesina in Spain (COAG, Sindicato Labrego Galego, EHNE Bizkaia) as well as non-peasant organisations including Amigos de la Tierra, Justicia Alimentaria and Mundubat, and covers themes such as public policies, food sovereignty, peasant feminism and agroecology. The training is attended by young people active in regional peasant organisations and takes place over 4 to 6 weekends. Every weekend is organised by a different organisation and treats a different theme. This set-up ensures that there is exchange between young people and people with experience working for a particular organisation. Participants learn from each other as they exchange with people involved in different organisational processes, climates and policies. As put by Unai from EHNE Bizkaia, this goes beyond learning: “Exchanging on agrarian, political and transformative themes, also strengthens the work of the movement and its organisations. Participants create connections with new people and gain practical know-how and ideas for actions and activities that they can implement in their own organisation. At the end of the training, they receive an assignment. They have to make a summary of an encounter, a small video, which they distribute through the networks of their local organisations. This is also to prepare youth so that they can work in their organisations.”

### **CNA, PORTUGAL**

Putting peasants at the heart of teaching and learning can also lead to the recovery and revival of traditional knowledge. This is exactly what CNA will be doing in an online course on agroecology that will start in 2024, and which will cover agroecology in forest, horticulture and animal production, as well as the commons and fair markets. Farmers are considered to be the basis of family farming. Therefore, a large part of the course will be given by farmers themselves, particularly those who have a lot of knowledge on traditional practices. As put by Laura from CNA: “The push for agro-industry has led to the disappearance of traditional practices. With the course we want to recall what happened 40 years ago, before the CAP. Some farmers have no choice but to change. With high input prices, they are looking for alternatives. In the North of Portugal, for example, some farmers close to the sea have started to use algae to fertilise the land again. The price of industrial fertilisers were so high that they remembered: “40 years ago we managed in another way so let’s start it again”. I think we can incentivise discussion with these webinars. But it is a slow process, because we are changing minds against a system that tells farmers that they have to produce in monocultures. We are saying the exact opposite, so it is very difficult.”

### **Ehne Bizkaia, Basque Country: Theory on Tuesday, practice on Thursday**

Ehne Bizkaia organised a feminist agroecology school, for and by women. Young peasant women participated as learners, while women who were food producers shared their experiences in workshops. In that sense, young people and established producers were linked.

For three months, participants had the following schedule: On Tuesdays they had a theoretical session (debate, round tables and presentations). On Thursdays they went on a field visit to a producer to learn about a practice (cheesemaking, milling, jam making, etc.). They would have a presentation, followed by a hands-on workshop, and a collective conversation afterwards. So, there was theory and practice, as well as political and technical aspects of agroecology.

An unexpected outcome was that the training also gave the established producers recognition.

There were also a few lessons learned: The young women wanted more space to reflect among themselves and they also wanted to visit each other's places. International participants were brought in as resource people online, but doing it online did not work well. Women who were professionals and gave workshops were also made visible and lifted up. And finally, working on the topic of feminism and care in this way also influenced the organisation as a whole.

### **Sindicato Labrego Galego, Galicia: Online technical training and schools for political education**

Sindicato Labrego Galego, Galicia: Online technical training and schools for political education

In Galicia in Spain, the Sindicato Labrego Galego offers specific training programmes on technical aspects related to for example cattle grazing or cultivation practices. Some of these take place via zoom, which gives access to producers who cannot travel. These training are sometimes spread over various days, for one or two hours per day. It was set up this way to address one of the challenges in Galicia: people are spread far apart, which makes training programmes that last several days much harder to attend for many farmers. Especially since the producers also have different work schedules in their day. SLG also offers political trainings, for example through its School for Peasant Action. These multiday in-person trainings are mostly for young people and have a strong political content around the peasant voice and vision. This school specifically looks to maintain a gender balance. Another SLG initiative is its feminist peasant education, with workshops, field visits etc. This has existed for many years already. The focus is not defined as agroecology per se, but as 'peasant farming with an agroecological orientation'. The topics are varied and can include political aspects as well as technical aspects around the commons, seeds, mountain farming, and so on.

### **Toekomstboeren, Netherlands: The technical and political aspects of soil health**

One of the sessions in an agroecology training by Toekomstboeren was a hands-on soil analysis. Participants brought soil from where they lived and together, they analysed the different soil types by feeling, smelling and looking. This workshop then turned into a political discussion on how the use of chemicals is promoted by government policy, skewed research and corporate lobbies, and how farmers can collaborate to increase soil health using ecological processes. The lack of government support for these practices came to the fore strongly without a need for the facilitators to point this out. This workshop beautifully combined technical and political aspects of agroecology.

## **4.3 Integrating field visits and field work**

Agroecology is not (only) learnt in a classroom. Being together in a farmer's field to see or experience the reality and having sensory experiences is key to understanding agroecology.

This resonates with the theory of experiential and action learning, which proposes a shift from theory towards "world" as the starting point for a learning process<sup>12</sup>

### **FADEAR, France: Working on 3 farms over a year**

In FADEAR's long-term courses for upstarting farmers, an action-learning approach was used to involve people in peasant agriculture. FADEAR matches the learners with member farms of Confederation Paysanne. The learners work on these farms over the course of an entire year. This field work is complemented by classroom lectures.

### **Landworkers' Alliance, UK: Combining principles and practices during field visits**

In the two-day agroecology training of LWA, day 1 starts with lectures and group work on the principles of agroecology, followed by an exchange to understand where participants see agroecology in their work. Participants are then taken on a farm walk to observe agroecological practices, followed by work in the field and group conversations with the farmer. On day 2 participants have more lectures and create a systems map of the farm they visited to address key issues raised by the farmer. Movement building and political agroecology are mostly addressed through lectures, and LWA is reflecting on how to use other forms, maybe in the field. Storytelling, music, and celebration are also important parts of the training, even though they formally are after-training moments.

#### **4.4 Generating “affect” (emotional engagement) and building a culture of care**

Training in agroecology is not only directed towards peoples’ thinking and cognition, but also focuses on “affect” - in other words, their emotional engagement. Affect refers to the passions, feelings, wishes and grievances which mobilise individuals and groups to engage in or change specific practices. Affect can engender deep forms of change that go beyond individual, economically motivated behaviours and break with unsustainable social, cultural and ecological patterns to establish more caring ones<sup>13</sup>.

Agroecological training can generate affect that motivates people to learn, connect and engage in political action. Affect can be generated through the use of methodologies that focus on participants’ experiences, stories, wishes and grievances. This can create a space of trust and solidarity where farmers can have honest conversations to decolonise their practices (see the case of the Landworkers’ Alliance), come together to “heal their souls” (see box) or self-organise for land action (see the case of Toekomstboeren).

Affect can be generated not only through methodologies but also by creating a motivational environment. A training that is only given in the classroom will quickly exhaust participants. That is why agroecological training often occur on the farm. Being surrounded by trees, plants and animals, on-farm practices can contribute to participants’ wellbeing and enable them to maintain energy throughout the training. In addition, exposure to the history, food and ceremonies on the

farm can inspire participants to bring their learning into practice. The experience of the farm surroundings should not be underestimated as this can leave a bigger imprint on participants than the content of the training. Ideally, the surroundings and the content reinforce one another.

.....  
<sup>13</sup> Van den Berg, L., Teixeira, H. M., Behagel, J. H., Verschoor, G., Turnhout, E., Cardoso, I. M., & Botelho, M. I. V. (2022). From managing transitions towards building movements of affect: Advancing agroecological practices and transformation in Brazil. *Geoforum*, 131, 50–60.

### **Landworkers' Alliance: Decolonising teaching**

In their training for teachers, the Landworkers' Alliance uses an affective methodology called "the community circle" to raise awareness of how colonialism can still be engrained in teaching. By creating an atmosphere of trust and focusing on teachers' personal experiences, people honestly reflect on their daily practices. As put by Hatty, this generates a type of reflection that is very different from an academic one: "What we do is give a little bit of information and then ask some very open questions about peoples experience and understanding of their own lives and the concept of decoloniality. What we find is that because the questions aren't overly academic, they are about people's personal thoughts and experiences, you get a very rich discussion about the topics. That helps people to learn from each other in a way that you would not get when you just continue to talk about the problem and ask overly academic questions."

### **Sindicato Labrego Galego, Galicia: Farmer encounters**

SLG uses different strategies to foster affect. Every year, SLG organises a two day forum with talks, roundtables and workshops. This is a great place for farmers to meet people with similar experiences. For many farmers this is very healing for the soul. It is an opportunity for them to get away from their farm and their everyday difficulties, and to meet people with fresh perspectives. Farmers have stated that these encounters give them the strength to continue. SLG also regularly organises well-attended and appreciated farmer dinners as ways to foster relationships of trust. These have shown to be a fantastic basis for knowledge exchange.

### **Toekomstboeren, Netherlands: Farmers' Fire**

The BoerenVuur (translated as Farmers' Fire) is a methodology used by Toekomstboeren. It mobilises farmers' grievances and wishes to foster learning and collective action. During a Boerevuur on land in 2020, participants expressed problems they had with accessing land. Many felt insecure as they only had 1-year tenure contracts. Some farmers shared how as a result of this, they often had to move from place to place. The sharing of these experiences created solidarity and trust among participants as well as motivation to do something. The land was too expensive to buy individually but collective purchases in collaboration with citizens offered new opportunities. Interested farmers formed a working group, which explored existing examples in the Netherlands and abroad, looking specifically at how to set up a crowdfunding scheme, organise a community around land and create a legal entity for the acquired land. They also began to elaborate plans for their own commons and wrote a project proposal to support their implementation. Currently, some farmers have succeeded in moving to the commons. This year the group has also published a handbook with lessons on how to become a commons farmer.

# 5. Evaluation of the Training Sessions

In order to receive more detailed feedback, the trainings should be evaluated by both trainers and participants.

It is suggested that to end the training, the trainer/facilitator should first make closing remarks for the session: take a few moments to summarise the key points covered during the session, highlight the main takeaways and emphasise their significance, and express your gratitude to the participants for their engagement and participation.

For conducting the final reflection, the purpose of

the session should be explained and the objective of the training programme should be repeated. It is important to encourage openness in the group's reflections. Encouraging the participants to explore how they can effectively incorporate these ideas into their own specific situations or contexts is also important at the end of the session and before the evaluation of the programme. This would facilitate a meaningful and interactive reflection process that allows participants to consolidate what they have learnt, gain further insights and develop strategies for applying their newfound knowledge and skills.



## Evaluation by trainers

**Table 1. An example of trainers' evaluation of a training on agroecology**

N	Questions	Evaluation
1	How would you evaluate the defined objectives of the training?	1-not clear, 2- somewhat clear, 3- moderately clear, 4-very clear
2	How would you evaluate the achieved goals (increased awareness of agroecological transition) of the performed training?	1- not achieved, 2- somewhat achieved, 3- moderately achieved, 4- achieved
3	How would you evaluate the content introduced during the training (its usefulness, appropriate focus, specific interest)	not interesting/useful/appropriate (1) - interesting/useful/appropriate (4)
4	How would you evaluate the time allowed for this training?	1-not sufficient time, 2- somewhat sufficient time, 3- moderately sufficient time, 4- sufficient time
5	How would you evaluate the location of the training activity?	1-not comfortable, 2- somewhat comfortable, 3- sufficiently comfortable, 4-very comfortable
6	How would you evaluate the training performance (process) from a participation point of view?	1- not participative, 2- somewhat participative, 3- moderately participative, 4 – Very participative (*participation of the trainees in training activities)
7	How would you evaluate the methodology/ training approach?	1-not appropriate, 2- somewhat appropriate, 3- moderately appropriate, 4-very appropriate
8	How would you evaluate the training outcomes obtained by the participants (received knowledge/practices/level of capacity building/ encouragement)?	1- low, 2- moderate, 3- high, 4- very high
9	How would you evaluate the coherence of the training activities with your expectations and needs?	1-not coherent, 2- somewhat coherent, 3- moderately coherent, 4- very coherent
10	How would you evaluate the training programme and space for sharing experience and ideas?	1-not appropriate, 2- somewhat appropriate, 3- moderately appropriate, 4-very appropriate

### Open-ended questions:

- 1) What can be improved for future training programmes/workshops and other comments/suggestions?
- 2) What do you think was missing during the training?
- 3) In terms of content, which components need further elaboration?

## Evaluation by participants

In order to triangulate the evaluation of the training activities, participants are required to assess aspects such as objectives, time, performance and quality of the content.

The three pillars of agroecology (science, practice and social movement), are proposed as a basis

for participants' evaluation of the training. In other words, people participating in trainings on agroecology are asked to evaluate their perceived learning outcomes from points of view of practice (questions 5 in Tab.2 and question a. below Tab. 2), science (questions 6, and question b. below Tab. 2) and social movement (questions 7, and question c. below Tab. 2), as demonstrated in Table 2.

**Table 2. An example of participants' evaluation of a training on agroecology**

N	Questions	Evaluation
1	How would you evaluate the achieved goals (increased awareness of the agroecological transition) of the performed training?	not achieved (1) – achieved (4)
2	How would you evaluate the quality of the content introduced during the training (its usefulness, appropriate focus, specific interest)?	not interesting/ useful/appropriate (1) - interesting/useful/appropriate (4)
3	How would you evaluate the training performance (process) from a participatory point of view?	Not participative (1) – Very participative (4)
4	How would you evaluate the time of the training activities?	Definitely not sufficient (1) - Sufficient (4)
5	How do you evaluate the obtained practical skills related to agroecology and agroecological transition?	Definitely not useful (1) – Very useful (4)
6	How do you evaluate the obtained scientific/theoretical knowledge related to agroecology and the agroecological transition?	Definitely not useful (1) – Very useful (4)
7	How do you evaluate the obtained knowledge and skills on movement building related to agroecology and the agroecological transition?	Definitely not useful (1) – Very useful (4)

### Open-ended questions:

- a. Could you specify at least 2-3 obtained practical skills that are most important/interesting to you?
- b. Could you specify at least 2-3 obtained scientific/theoretical knowledge that are most important/interesting to you?
- c. Could you specify at least 2-3 obtained skills on movement building that are most important/interesting to you?



## Conclusion

Peasant farmers, agricultural workers and other rural peoples are recovering their land and territories and preserving their culture and way of life on a daily basis. Those who committed to defend the Earth and to feed people, who carry out or desire to carry out peasant agroecological farming are the key actors constructing food sovereignty.

Peasant farmers are considered as the main stakeholders who potentially will participate in future

training programmes on agroecological transitions. We hope these guidelines on peasant agroecology trainings will encourage and make the path easier for peasant farmers organising agroecology training programmes focused on fostering the agroecological transition, and contribute to their advocacy efforts for furthering peasant agroecology and small-scale agroecological farms.



[www.eurovia.org](http://www.eurovia.org)