

How do we bring agricultural food to the citizenship?

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Short Marketing Circuits

Presentation of experiences

International Network URGENCI. Judith Hitchman



To introduce the International Network URGENCI, we count on Judith Hitchman. Urgenci is an international network of support and promotion of CSA (Comunidades Mantenedoras de la Agricultura – Agriculture Supporter Communities), and refers to networks of people who join their forces to support one or more farms and share with them both benefits and risks of producing food.

Judith Hitchman tried to explain us during this seminar what a CSA is, on the premise of his variety of forms depending on the country where it develops.

In overall numbers there are more than 11,000 CSAs, that bring together nearly one million consumers and 18,618 farms all over the world.

Given the variety of the CSAs, Judith explained the common factors that define them. One of them is to share risks: communities of consumers belonging to a CSA support farms when they have a bad harvest, in the same way in which they benefit when the productions are extraordinary. In most cases, the CSAs have solidarity funds through which they help farms in difficulty or those which lose the harvest, in the same way families that because of the circumstances find themselves without income are supported with free food baskets.

Other features of the CSAs are horizontality and self-management: the groups adopt responsibilities ranging from food distribution, to support agricultural work, organizing parties linked to harvesting, etc.

Judith said that the CSAs are causing changes in local policies, like Town Councils which engage with the public purchase of food and reach food sovereignty goals.

Nekasarea (Euskadi). Isabel Álvarez Vispo



"It's time to renew or die"

To introduce the consumer groups network Nekasarea we have the presence of Isa Alvarez, who explained that the idea was born in 2005, and was given mainly by the need of the sector to look for other ways of marketing, and by Ehne Bizkaia to perform the comprehensive proposal that the change in the marketing model must be accompanied by changes in modes of production and ways in which we interact. This need was also given as an alternative to various political stakes of government: intensive modes of production, distribution conditions, the descent of small businesses and markets or obligation for school canteens to work with catering services that prevent farmers to enter this marketing channel.

Nekasarea is based on principles like food sovereignty, because it thinks of food as a right and not as a commodity for trading. On the other hand, it is also based on working with local and seasonal products from organic agriculture, active participation and involvement of members or the commitment criteria of social justice.

The network is organized in groups composed by consumers and producers, currently it has 40 groups with about 90 producers, of which the 50% are women, and 900 consumer families. There is not a single person producing for each group, but within the group several products from different producers are offered. This is a collective project, and the product of the others is seen as a support itself.

The commitment of consumers is annual and they should realize a planning of what they want to consume.

Nekasarea provides stability, because when working with planning and commitment, farmers know the product they have placed on this channel. For consumers the benefit is, on the one hand, the high quality product itself that they can consume and the relationship established between producers and consumers is an important benefit for both of them. It is a relationship of real support, in which both problems and solutions are shared, the ones that arise around the production as well as the ones that consumers can have.

They stress that the Nekasarea network facilitated and facilitates the incorporation of young people in the agricultural activity, who were able to face a progressive settlement, thanks to families and a planned consumption almost before sowing.

Cooperative Ribeira do Navia (Negueira de Muñiz- Lugo). Dora Cabaleiro.



To present a practical and personal experience of how to bring agricultural food to citizenship, there is Dora Cabaleiro, who told us about the beginnings and objectives of the Cooperative Ribeira do Navia, located in Negueira Muniz at the edge of the Navia de Suarna reservoir. Dora, along with other comrades, realized this project which has three main work lines, which would be the food production and transformation based on an agroecological model, other conservation and care of the land and the territory where all types of agricultural and forestry work are coordinated, and a third one focused on the rehabilitation of abandoned buildings and public spaces in the villages.

The Cooperative Ribeira do Navia is a productive initiative which constitutes a practical example of fight for Food Sovereignty held with great political and social consciousness, and framed in the construction of another type of society in which solidarity and joint work are its cornerstones. In the field of food they adopted the name "Ribeiregas" and, at first, had to face two problems to offer their products to people, one was the geographic

isolation, and the other the place of activity in the winter . The second was faced by making provisions during the year for auto-consumption producing all kinds of tinned food, while overcoming the first problem was possible thanks to the help of Mercado da Terra, a weekly meeting and sale space of organic products in the city of Lugo.

The people who are part of the Cooperative Ribeira do Navia establish other strategies and partnerships to try to achieve food sovereignty. They come from their own soil, breed animals and strive to achieve what they can not produce acquiring it through barter or buying from organic producers as close as possible to Nogueira. They also grow medicinal plants, opting for homeopathic medicine, when it is possible.

The Cooperative Ribeira do Navia founders assume two basic functions, which are to provide a livelihood to help keeping people in the area and also setting the awareness that an alternative society – a cooperative, supportive, natural, healthy and free one – is not only a necessary possibility but a reality.

Working Group

Final conclusions on Short Marketing Circuits

During the seminar we worked on Short Marketing Circuits or Channels of agricultural products, as a fundamental key in defining an agro-ecological model and in the struggle for a peasant and family agriculture.

1. AWARENESS:

Where are the consumers?

- It is considered that farmers have a very important and central role in the consumers' "awareness".
- Producers should bring production towards the consumers through:
 - Direct sale of farmers products.
 - Through small shops.
 - Sale on the farm ...
- They must spread a "message" to the consumers is that could appraise the peasant agriculture (POSITIVIZE - HEALTH – JOY)
- Re-educate the consumers on issues such as health, environment, social issues, awareness in schools ...
- Organize visits/open days in the producers' farms
- Involve consumers in the agroecological production model.
- Consumers need informations about the peasants products such as:
 - Accurate information about the product.
 - Information about the price.
 - Necessity of the right informations to identify organic farmers products

What methodology would use?

- Creative processes in positive key (lively processes).
- Search spaces where to shorter distances between producers and consumers.
- Training / Correct identification of organic peasant food.
- Look for partnerships.
- Activities in schools, both with children and with their parents.
- Use “subvertising”.

• Goals	• What tools do we have?	• What tools do we need?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking for Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With organizations that are « outside » agriculture - Schools (mothers/fathers/teacher s...) - Workers Unions -Social models in general... • Make the farmers reality visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our organizations • Nyeleni • Farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education material • Mapping of existing experiences (local, regional ...) • Develop partnerships. • Awareness and mobilization of our bases...

2. **ORGANIZATION / COMMUNICATION**: How do we relate to each other?

To improve communication among (producers and consumers) the following keys are fundamental:

- *Set working groups at a local level*: It is considered that organizations have some responsibility in this key, since they must promote meetings in order to meet other people.
- *Producers working together*: Look for flexibility since all producers are different.

- *Existence of trust relationships*: to build "trust" is the primary key of all the others above.

Communication flow and the organization of local groups are basic issues also to create networks with other local groups that would enrich the group itself and promote collaboration with other groups.

Goals	What tools do we have ?	What tools do we need ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get top know each other - Raise awareness among farmers about new consumption demands. - Foster communication (operational / knowledge sharing). - Enhance collective processes. - That farmers could have the support of consumers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diagnosis of our farms - Producers web information. - We're realizing collective processes (solidarity). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More informations for producers. - Make the most of sharing moments (markets, farm visits ...)

3. DISTRIBUTION / MEETING POINTS: Where do we meet?

a) Geographic Issues:

- distances, region size.
- population density.

b) Legal issues:

- a who is allowed to pay?
- sanitary rules.

c) Climate Issues:

- Seasonal offer change.
- Storage.

d) Application:

- Quality of food.
- Environmental, ethical and social issues.

Goals	What tools do we have ?	What tools do we need ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting alternative production models. - Our food reaches the public. - Having an active social mass. - Sell our products as HEALTHY. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Markets / Direct sale. - Direct contact (by word of mouth). - Increasingly aware population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regionalize distribution. - Foster / Recover markets. - Public canteens (self-management) - Change laws / public policies in a favorable way to peasant agriculture. - More production (we need to value more our food).

4. ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY: Is it possible to create a fair price?

There are different realities, thus leading to different criteria when creating a fair price:

- Market prices.
- Production costs (direct / indirect).
- Energy calculation.

- There is NO valuation of farmers labor.
- Price is a tool of the capitalist system.
- We must find a balance between:

FARMERS' SALARY --- FOOD ACCESSIBLE TO CONSUMERS

We must learn to build:

- Product value.
- Work value.
- Remuneration.

What are our expectations? (UTOPIA)

- System transformation.

- How to live without money?
- Basic income.
- Barter.

Tools to go forward:

- Transparent pricing / double labelling.
- Fit to different realities prices, wages ...
- "Adjustable" Prices.

Goals	What tools do we have ?	What tools do we need ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find a balance between: FARMERS' SALARY and ACCESSIBILITY TO CONSUMER - Collective construction of price (consumers / producers) - Ensure a worthy wage, adapted to different realities. - Strengthen local economy. - We do not want a subsidized agriculture, we want fair prices for our products. - We want a community supported by agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Double labelling. - Transparency. - Exchange/Barter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To internalize all of our costs - To build a real price - Diversification

What are participatory guarantee systems?

Presentation of experiences

Nature&Progrès (Francia). Geoffrey Raout



To present the long experience of Nature & Progress, there was comrade Geoffrey Raout. Nature & Progress is a French network of people who produce and consume organic food, which is a pioneer in Europe and works since 1964. During half a century of experience, Nature & Progress was a driving engine of agroecology in France and Europe. Today, Nature & Progress is a network in which 27 other production and consumption groups distributed throughout France are integrated, plus another one in

Belgium, and it has its own Participatory Guarantee System, which is independent by the official regulations for organic farming . This PGS is based on:

- ⑩ **A common goal of every participant.** It is expressed in their own charter of principles which defines agroecology.
- ⑩ **Horizontality.** There is no hierarchy, everyone has the same decision-making power.
- ⑩ **Transparency.** PGS rules are clear and accessible to everyone. There are controls, but the most important thing is mutual trust. The peasants' word and the word peasant is critical because without trust the system does not work.
- ⑩ **The progressive improvement goes beyond the guarantee.** More importance is given to the progression and evolution than to sanctions or expulsions for breaching the group's principles. This mechanism of "control" starts in "regional commissions" which verify the observance of principles by the

members themselves, that is the members of the regions that manage themselves. Deadlines are given to farms to change gradually. A participatory guarantee system would be meaningless if it would be just a guarantee.

⑩ **Participation of all stakeholders.** We try to avoid extremes as people who do not participate in meetings or those carrying most of the weight of the decisions of the organization.

SPG Córdoba (Andalucía). Mamen Cuellar.



The person in charge to introduce the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), or Participatory Certification System implanted in Cordoba (Andalusia) was the researcher Mamen Cuéllar, from the Sociological Institute of Peasant Studies, University of Cordoba, since she is part and participated in the development of the first PGS in Andalusia.

Although initially they had the support of public authorities, afterwards the administration abandoned them to their fate. On the one hand the Andalusian government promoted a model of public PGS, which would be implemented in 3 Andalusian territories, with their own letter of intent, with autonomous functioning and that would work in network would among the 3 territories.

This process declined, mainly because the groups (producers and consumers) did not identify with the "official" PGS.

However, they continued and it's now already 5 years that they maintain an autonomous and self-managed PGS in Cordoba which relates, in total, 10 farms and fifty consumers.

Mamen explained that they tried from the beginning to make this process quick and easy, adapting to the assembly and debate spaces that already existed in the network. Thus, when a monthly network assembly is held, it takes place in one of the members farm itself so that everyone who participates can see how it produces and ask all kinds of questions about its production model.

In this way each peasant welcomes an assembly at his/her place once a year, which is preceded by a visit to the farm by the other members of the assembly.

In regard to the control of production in the farms, Mamen added that they believe more in transition processes than in farms that are 100% agroecological since the beginning and fully respect the charter of principles agreed in the PGS. In fact, they accept the entry of farms that have showed their willing to follow the principles of the group as an horizon, and they give help and support in order to enable them to achieve this horizon.

Mamen launches a serious question: **What would happen if the PGS would be officially recognized?** After its experience, the group that worked for Mamen believes that this would not adapt to reality, but would have advantages to be able to access to markets, for example.

Associazione Italiana per l'agricoltura Biologica (AIAB). Andrea Ferrante



Andrea Ferrante spoke for AIAB, which is an organization that supports and promotes organic farming and is formed by peasants that fulfill European regulations.

Regarding the issue treated on the second day of the seminar, participatory guarantee systems, Ferrante explained that in Italy, small farms have many difficulties to access the official organic certification, so that PGS can be great tools to use for them.

Indeed, of an organic farm with official seal in Italy is of 28 hectares. This contrasts with the average territorial base of conventional farms in the transalpine country, which is 8 hectares.

In AIAB they work in order to facilitate this small farms in the passage to be ecological: improving prices to make the activity more profitable, sharing machinery, land and facilities with other farms,; and, of course, being part of the participatory guarantee systems that allows them to certify as organic the food

that they produce without having to comply with bureaucracy and excessive requirements of official regulations.

"All this is only possible with the participation of society," says Andrea Ferrante, and he also believes that at this time, the problem is not boosting Participatory Guarantee Systems, but to achieve that society takes part to agroecological model. Without the active participation of society PGS would not be possible.

Andrea Ferrante considers that this would be one of the main challenges of La Via Campesina and the various organizations that are part of it.

Working Group

Conclusions on Participatory Guarantee Systems

1. Why do we want a Participatory Guarantee System?

- To ensure the quality and provenance of food.
- To improve agroecological and environmental practices.
- To motivate producers groups (exchange of knowledge).
- To enhance aspects of consumers groups as responsibility, motivation, involvement or awareness.
- To improve the relationship between producers and consumers.
- To raise urban and rural relationships and boosting the rural social fabric.
- Because we would have a certification system adapted to our reality.
- Because it would help us move towards food sovereignty.

2. Which actors are needed?

- Peasants.
- Consumers looking for quality of life.
- Professionals who can help to form us and advise us.
- Local groups (schools, residences ... enhance public food purchase).
- Local governments as a support but not as manager.

3. The organic food certification has to be public?

It would not be possible to have a public PGS because it must always have a local dimension to allow mutual understanding among all stakeholders and participants. If it would be possible a public support, as is being done in Bolivia, where infrastructure is supported by government resources to let the system work, that is, the institutions do not run or make decisions; they simply provide resources to achieve them.

4. Is it possible to have a SPG without penalties?

- It is possible, but you need to set clear criteria from the beginning to face any coming problem.
- Better than to sanction is to help solve problems and support during difficulties.
- Trust must replace sanctions, but it takes time to build it
- The non-recognition by the group may also be a way of punishment.