

Meeting of the European youth of Via Campesina 16th and 17th November 2007, Agurain, Basq Country

Participants:

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Presentation of Via campesina

International Peasant Movement created in 1993 against WTO negotiations. 8 régions. More than 100 member organization in 56 countries. Working committees: food sovereignty, migrations, women, agrarian reform, biodiversity, peasants rights, sustainable family farming.

Youth assembly

2004, 4th Conference of Via campesina and 1st youth assembly. Beginning of regional processes.

2 days of assembly with about 80 people from the whole world. Similar problems : cultural losses, privatisation of resources, Transnational companies, GMOs, access to land difficult. Common statement was issued.

Situation in each country

Belgium

2002 Chevetogne seminar organized by CPE on start-up in agriculture and access to land: we can work with this basis. After this seminar, no follow-up.

Small farms disappear: 16000 farms in Wallonie /1000 less every year. Farms with less than 50 ha are not considered viable.

Access to land difficult because of speculation (problem link with CAP and decoupling).

Concentration of land. Difficulties to find small farms to buy or rent.

September 2007 creation of a small group which work on access to land. In Peasant organizations, advices on start-up.

Subsidies for start-up: criterias to get the subsidies have changed: 3 months practical training on farm, support for „quality products”, criteria of incomes after 3 years (and not based on farm size anymore)

Training: not easy to get recognized as a training center. PO develop their own trainings. It's good for young people to stay long period in farms to get experience. Problem of insurances for long-term trainings.

Basq Country

50% of the farms disappeared over these last 10 years.

Two types of problems:

-Bad situation of agriculture in general: sector which is not economically attractive

-Specific difficulties linked with starting-up: access to land.

Most of young people who want to set up are not from the countryside.

Training: Need for training adapted to urban youth without experience. Traditional training is too theoretic and pro-intensive models of production. EHNE has its own training sessions.

Access to land: Different solutions: buy land, land bank managed by the government, progressive transmission with retiring farmer, occupation (specifically in case of speculation).

Germany

353000 farms (over 2ha) / 15000 disappear every year.

Since 2004 project of the University of Kassel for the promotion of agriculture. What can young people do to become farmers, how do they do?

Results: many well-trained young people want to become farmers. 50% of them are not children of farmers. Parallely many farmers have no successors. Two groups with are complementary but which don't meet because of cultural differences.

Agricultural organizations have changed in their positions / start-up: first very negative, but now they recognize that there are young people who want to start-up and that it can be good for agriculture.

Characteristics of start-ups: intensive in labor rather than in capital, strong relation with consumers, progressive start-up.

Obstacles: Access to land and to credit, inefficiency of training, pressures from other farmers / land.

Solutions:

-creation of a network of young people who want to start up (December 2007)

-Database on candidates and farms to be let (June 2008)

-Lobby / politicians (letters, meeting,...)

-Information meeting between candidates and retiring farmers

Access to land difficult car you can't buy land without being a farmer and you can't be a farmer without land

Austria

No movement of young people for starting-up in agriculture yet. 4,5% of population farmers, yet 1500 farms disappear every year.

Many young people wish to farm but not on traditional way, more collective.

Access to land difficult, specifically in western Austria which is very touristic: competition with holiday houses. .

Average farm size is 19 ha. Sustainable family farming still strong.

But the government does not care about start-up in ag.

Switzerland

The Swiss agricultural policy is very similar to CAP. It will be revised in 2011.

Law on land which limits speculation: indexed on farm revenues. Yet land is very expensive to buy (40000 euros / ha). Young people who start up near Geneva rent land.

May projects around Geneva because strong demand of local and organic products. Contract agriculture consumers-producers (Jardins de Cocagne, Affaire Tourne-Rêve,...)

France

550000 farms / about 15000 disappear every year. A farm over two has no successor.

Difficulties:

-Access to land (competition with industry, housing, but above all other farms)

-Support which is not adapted (positive evolutions towards project which is taken into account and not only size of the farm)

-image of agriculture not very attractive

SAFER: in principle priority for start-up, but not implemented. We would need a system so that if there is no candidate immediately when land becomes available, it is stocked rather than sold to the neighbours.

Problem to find a house: many farmers don't want to leave their house when retiring, so land ends up without house facilities.

Cultural gap makes it difficult for different generations to leave together on a farm, while this cohabitation could be very positive for training and transmission of know-how.

What actions at the European level ?

•Declaration of Chevetogne

How to transfer these ideas into concrete actions?

•Common problems

-Small farms disappear

-training

-access to land

-agriculture is not attractive

-agricultural price too low

-people lack of knowledge / peasants products

-domination of supermarkets on the markets

-agricultural policies

Lobby / european policies:

Example of the letter send in Germany + need to meet the politicians to explain.

Possibility to draft a testament in a coming meeting.

Develop networks and youth movements in favor of start-ups in agriculture in our countries

Develop exchanges of young people who want to start up:

Trainings in another European country, with a follow-up by the organization.

A contact-person in each organisation to answer the demands and develop a network of farms.

This list of contact person will be posted on the website.

Send a message to the organisations, specifically those which are not represented here.

Question on rules for insurances?

We need precise information on accomodation possibilities, how long, what kind of farm itis, etc...

Evaluation of the work at next meetings.

Exchange of information:

Set up a web page to share information between us on start-up, activities in our organizations, etc...: Kari

Set up internet list for our group (not google nor yahoo): Morgan

Youth camp:

Idea of a European youth camp in summer 2008 with the goal to give more visibility to the question of start-up and exchange experiences. Complementarity discussions / practical workshops.

Two options: Aragon or Sweden. Sweden in September 2008 parallelly with ESF.

We need people from Sweden to take part to the next meeting.

Next meetings will be to prepare this camp.

Message to send to all organisations: express the importance of start-ups, present the proposal of youth camp and invite organisations and other young people to take part to its preparation.

Next steps

Meeting in February (France, MRJC)

Meeting in June (Germany, Kassel)