

Session 1: Agroecology and Food Sovereignty

Convenors: Janneke Bruil (Cultivate!), Sarah Schneider (Misereor), Stanka Becheva (Friends of the Earth)

Session talks:

- Lynne Davis (ECVC and goat farmer, England) – “Building agroecology for food sovereignty: the peasant movement’s perspective”
- Michel Pimbert (Coventry University, England) – “What role for researchers in supporting agroecology as a path to food sovereignty?”
- Jan Douwe van der Ploeg (Wageningen University, the Netherlands) – “Connecting Agroecology Europe with farmer and peasant networks”
- Paulo Petersen (AS-PTA, Brazil) – “Lessons from the agroecology movement in Brazil”

The session presented the points of view of different actors in science, movement and practice regarding the co-creation of knowledge on agroecology for food sovereignty. All speakers agreed that farmers’ wisdom, knowledge and experiences are not properly valued in research on agroecology. Knowledge creation on agroecology is dominated by academia. Speakers saw potential into action research that goes beyond current forms of participatory research. They recognised however that it is not an easy task to genuinely democratise knowledge creation and that some baseline requirements must be in place. For instance, the active participation of farmers must take place at all stages of project development and the individuation of problems and solutions should be the farmers’ prerogative. Also, traditional ways of researching must undergo structural changes in order to reach out to self-managed knowledge creation experiences and link up with agroecological initiatives led by social movements and farmer organisations. Most current research on agroecology was said to be limited in scope due to a lack of funding and precarious employment of researchers.

In the second part of the session, the 40 years long struggle of social movements in Brazil for political recognition and better representation of agroecology at the national level was described. The main insight from this historical process of the construction of agroecology in Brazil is related to the synergistic effect between practice, science and political action in defense of another model of rural development and agro-food systems.