

Workshop 7: Public policies for agroecology and the CAP

Convenors: Stanka Becheva (Friends of the Earth Europe), Stéphane Parmentier (Oxfam Europe)

Impulse talks:

- Hanny Van Geel (European Coordination La Via Campesina, UK) - "Social movements assessment of public policies needed to support agroecology"
- Paolo Petersen (AS-PTA, Brazil) - "Lessons learned to overcome key obstacles for political change"
- Pedro Guzman (Red Nacional de Agricultura Familiar, Colombia) and Melinda Kassai (Pro-Cserehat Association, Hungary) - "Reactions"

Currently, European subsidies for agriculture (mainly CAP subsidies) create a very unequal situation, by favoring large farms, which results in a dramatic land concentration. The situation is no longer socially acceptable and causes the marginalization of waged workers, migrants, women and youth. Policies are too rigid (lock-in) and lack a more holistic approach and a truly and more direct democratic process, integrating solidarity and agriculture policies. From the situation in Brazil, we learn the importance to recognize family farming in policies: there, it was not recognized in public policies for a long time. It has been weakened (through productivity policies in the 90s), de-activated (by forcing family farmers to leave the land) and finally also strengthened (by recent policies on agroecology). In general, even though public funds start to promote it, family farming is still a niche of innovation in a hostile institutional environment. Different social movements (feminists, peasants, etc.) join their force to change the system. From the situation in Colombia, we learn that policies on paper are not enough when governments don't commit to support practical application on the field. There, even if organic agriculture is promoted, it is mainly exported to the European market and doesn't supply the local market. Some very controversial regulation prohibits farmers to exchange seeds and so far, all regional processes developed to support AE were not given any attention by the federal government. From Hungary, we learn that eastern countries are still not represented enough in the AE movement, which remains marginal. There, NGOs try to work with local decision makers and to reinforce the « movement » aspects of AE, hoping this will impact national policies on the longer term to move towards more holistic approach and supporting agroecology.