

## Session 2: Co-evolution of organic agriculture and Agroecology

Convenors: Paola Migliorini (Agroecology Europe, UNISG, IFOAM AgriBioMediterraneo, Italy), Victor González (SEAE, Spain)

### Session talks:

- Eric Gall (IFOAM EU, Belgium) - "The role of Agroecology for the future of the European organic movement"
- Susanne Padel (Organic Research Centre, England) - "Transitions to Agroecology Systems: Agroecology in the UK"
- John Hayden (The Farm Between, Vermont, USA) - "Perspective from 25 years of Practicing Agroecology"
- Paola Migliorini (Agroecology Europe, UNISG, IFOAM AgriBioMediterraneo, Italy) - "Convergence, divergence, and specificities between agroecology and organic agriculture in Italy"
- Karen Hoberg (SEAE, Spain) - "Agroecology in Spain"

From a practice point of view there are similarities between the two and even though not all organic farmers practice agroecology, it is nonetheless at the heart of organic farming practices. In Italy and Spain the co-evolution of the two movements is quite old (from 1990s in Italy, and early 2000s in Spain).

Organic 3.0 was presented as going beyond just covering market demand by moving toward better practices, fostering a culture of innovation, widespread conversion (50% of EU agricultural surfaces as Organic or agroecology (not necessarily certified) by 2030) and inclusiveness through building partnerships with other movements.

Several comments were made around certification and regulations and how Organic standards have been achieved through minimum requirements, which is a limitation as they focus on things which are easy to control. However, it is important to notice that not all aspects can be or should be regulated. There was a debate about whether Organic certification is more useful when selling to people who don't know the farm or don't have the time to ask questions about how the production is done.

There seem to be a consensus that for agroecology there is no need for another label like organic agriculture. It was suggested that perhaps there is a necessity to adjust the certification processes (eg. Participatory Guarantee Systems).

While organic agriculture and agroecology should keep their own identity, there is a strong convergence between the two thus they must coexist, combined where necessary and work in synergy.

There were discussions about how farmers make the transition from conventional to agroecological practices. Susanne Padel presented the 'triggering change model' (getting started, active assessment, implementation) but pointed out that models do not explain why people change. Her research showed that there is a learning and an unlearning process during a transition and that farmers want to judge their progress for themselves through accepted indicators for resource use and sustainability. She mentioned how psychological studies showed that change is mainly triggered by what farmers saw on the farm and being introduced to new ideas as main drivers of change. Thus there is more need to help farmers go and spread the word through exchange trips and making their examples more accessible. She reminded us that the farmers are not supposed to copy, they're supposed to be inspired (same as researchers).

John Hayden shared his experience of having run an organic fruit nursery in for 25 years, how two flooding events in 2011 triggered a change of mindset, and lead to a decision to convert to agroecological practices to increase their resiliency and focus on creating a regenerative model. John described the USDA divergent evolution in terms of what organic is in the USA where 'Industrial Organic' is very distinct from 'Agroecologically-based Organic'. He stated that there is a need to develop better models, to educate consumers, and for Organic agriculture and agroecology to become so good as to make industrial agriculture inconsequential. He is in favor of production by the masses rather than mass production with amplification (more farms) rather than going bigger and bigger.