

Workshop 18: Rural-Urban linkages in Agroecology

Convenor: Stanka Becheva (Friends of the Earth Europe, Belgium)

Impulse talks:

- Judith Hitchman (Urgenci: the international network for community supported agriculture, France) – “Consumers as co-producers: The role of urban citizens in advancing agroecology through collaboration with farmers”
- Mamen Cuéllar-Padilla (University of Cordoba, Department of Social Sciences and Humanities) – “The role of cities to ensure better rural-urban linkages”
- Janneke Bruil (Cultivate!, the Netherlands) – “The experience of Ecuador: 250.000 families who want to eat healthy agroecological food”

In agroecology, bringing consumers and producers closer together is a major goal to achieve. Community Supported Agriculture can create linkages between urban and rural areas. Their goal is to ensure food sovereignty and to create solidarity economies, based on a participatory and democratic approach to farming and food consumption. To make them feel more involved, consumers are often called “co-producers” in such a system. On a more political side, The Milan Pact 2015 (MUFPP) developed a list of actions to implement better strategies in food systems, such as food aid programs, education & sensibilisation, and urban agriculture. The main challenges for these goals are limitations due to local policies and the difficult dialogue between urban and rural areas. Indeed, the question “Are cities going to decide how rural regions will produce?” has to be answered.

In Ecuador a grassroots movement led to the creation of an initiative to engage urban people in agroecology. By using sensorial activities and creative workshops, they attract people in cities to healthy, local and agroecological food. This is followed by political awareness raising and farm visits. The political context of these self-organised grassroots initiatives remains important, especially in the light of possible co-optation by others.