



## 2nd Agroecology Forum

26-28 September 2019, Heraklion, Crete, Greece

The second [Agroecology Forum](#) is upcoming! The Forum intends to provide critical and constructive input for the European agenda of Agroecology. What should be in the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to advance agroecology? And what local practices and policies exist in Europe that support access to land for young and first generation farmers? And what traditional and new knowledge is available on soil improvement? Your ideas for workshops can be sent to us, by using the template found in the Forum's website [here](#).

The deadline for abstracts submission is by

**April 15, 2019.**

Next to workshops (self-organised) there will be excursions to agroecological farms.

In 'Stories from the Field' the story of Melitakes, one of the agroecological collectives involved in the second Agroecology Europe forum. In 'Publications' an interesting publication on the situation in Greece, 'Democracy Not For Sale, The Struggle for Food Sovereignty in the Age of Austerity in Greece'.

We encourage our members & friends to organize collective transport to the forum. To travel together by train/bus/boat is an opportunity to organize nationally/regionally, to strengthen relationships and exchange amongst farmers, scientists, students and to plan additional excursions on the way to the Forum and homewards. The process toward a forum is as important as the Forum.

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## Stories from the field

### Melitakes, agroecological collective in Greece

Melitakes is a group of 8 passionate people with a common dream. We chose this name because "Melitakas" is the ant in the Cretan dialect and comes from the corresponding Medieval Greek "melitax", a root word of ancient Greek "honey". We strongly believe that human beings should cultivate their soul and mind every day, taking examples from nature.



Our philosophy is that food stands as one of the basic factors determining health and quality of life. That's why we are cultivating only traditional varieties on the principles of agro-ecology. We established a social cooperative company in 2016, based on cultivation seeds of local traditional varieties, using agroecology methods.

These methods combine the food production with the great values of solidarity and respect to the natural environment. We try to grow a big variety of plants (old, traditional varieties) like olives, grapes, legumes, cereals, fruits and vegetables so we achieve autonomy firstly among our members. We treat plants with natural substances for fertilization and plant protection, some of them are made by ourselves. Composting and mulching are some of the techniques we use, focusing on water saving.

However, the most important action is the transfer of our values and practices to other people, mainly to the young generation. Seminars for cultivating mind, soul and soil, and experiential workshops for school pupils in the school garden of the village are organized for this purpose. The annual Seed festival by Melitakes is the highlight of this effort. As the number of people who are aware of the connection between high quality food and health keeps growing the last years, we feel encouraged to continue our work.

On the other hand the National or local policies do not help ecological practices. For example, there are no measures to protect our land from any conventional farming neighbor. Tax decrease, combined with financial support by the state would be crucial for dropping the costs and the final price of our products. Despite the difficulties, Melitakes keep working hard and hope that gradually people who appreciate the value of Agroecology will become the majority and one day Crete will become fully organic and the first "green" island in the world.

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### **“European models still unattached to the needs of peasant farmers”**

*Nikos Koutsodimos*

Together with his brother Dimitris, Nikos runs an organic farm in Gastouni prefecture of Peloponnesus, Greece with different citrus varieties and local grape varieties for wine, having under their management a total 20 hectares of land such as a small scale winery. The last years there is a tendency in Greece of preservation and further multiplication of local grape varieties as an effort for the upscaling of the national wine heritage that refers to the ancient times. The two brothers' winery which is called "MikroBio" has a capacity of 100.000



liters of organic wine on a year basis which they distribute mainly in the local and national market. The name Mikro Bio was derived by their two pillar approach in farming, the micro scale of the production unit and biological concept of management, promoting in the same time the importance of microbial life on farm level but also during the vinification process.

According to studies from international institutions organic acreage in Greece since the crisis is minimizing by 10 -12 percent each year. The per capita consumption of organic products is one of the lower in Europe, the dramatic majority of the products are exported and their added value is diminishing. The marketing cycle of organics is not connected at all to the production

status that independently of its losses keeps being “oversized” compare to the national consumption having as a result many organic products to be sold as conventional. On the other side crisis brought a new approach into cost saving and also more sustainable and economical solutions even for the conventional farmers.

Geographically and culturally motivated, Greece has small-scale farms exposed to different microclimates and conditions. So by definition different legal norms on the substitution of agriculture have to take place. The new CAP has to protect the quality assurance of products instead of applying an abstract quantitative logic into the assessment of the efficiency of a farm. Unsustainable farming has to be taxed, and agroecological practices such as biodynamic practices have to be promoted. Nikos: “We need to understand that a new environment has to arise, one that will be based on the quality of the European agricultural product and the whole cultural setting around it.” Yet policies are not the only constraining factor, the local commercial sector selling agrochemicals are as harmful. A post crisis period, where the easy capitalization of assets is taking place and indications for economies of scale are arriving, gaining the experience of the crisis to ask again and understand that we still exist and act because of certain experiences and knowledge that we gained.

Nikos lately became interested into biodynamic agriculture as a natural consequence of the many years of organic management. Biodynamic as an approach of farming needs first of all associative mindset, therefore he is organizing the conversion of his farms into biodynamic management together with the rest of the farmers of the cooperative where he belongs “BionetWestHellas”, a cooperative of citrus and kiwis growers based in west Peloponnese Greece, which organizes all the stages from “the soil to plate” concept. Recently Nikos participated in the international Biodynamic Conference. Nikos: “I was attracted by the notion of “associative economics” where different stakeholders of the food chain, from the soil to the plate, take initiatives of collaboration out of the common policy contexts.” That means an associative interaction between production, retail and consumption is put in motion, that is a free initiative between the actors involved and where there is no external supervisory authority and the principle of self-declaration applies.

The human perception in both concepts (biodynamic and agroecological farming) is very important to Nikos. The human mind as a critical mechanism for the exploration of other perspectives onto the use of the nature’s system through more sensitive approaches, in the sense of participation and constructivism. Where not only systematic thinking will take place but also a new one more intuitively active based on interactive experience to nature. The human is the determining factor in the limited scale of his existence. Nikos: “We have to think about coexistence.”

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### **A coalition of 59 organizations hand in a position paper to the German Federal Government to strengthening agroecology**

With the position paper the organizations demand the German Federal Government to take agroecology as a leading concept in policies on climate change and the sustainable development goals and in the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union. Read the document at: [http://www.cultivatecollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Position-Paper\\_Strengthening-Agroecology\\_germany.pdf](http://www.cultivatecollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Position-Paper_Strengthening-Agroecology_germany.pdf)

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## Partnership with IFOAM

Agroecology Europe is collaborating with IFOAM for building the 20th Organic World Congress 'From its Roots, Organic Inspires Life' that will be held in Rennes (France) 21-27 September 2020, through the active involvements in the Commission of Scientific Forum and Stakeholder Forum. For more info see: <https://owc.ifoam.bio/2020>

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## Agroecology Europe Youth Network (AEYN)

Agroecology Europe aims to involve young people into agroecology while facilitating their inclusion and networking. This is why we decided to create Agroecology Europe Youth Network (AEYN)! In just few months 120 young people from 36 different countries and with an heterogeneous backgrounds joined [the Network](#). AEYN's main goal is to connect young people interested in Agroecology and to establish collaborations and networking with external partners, as well as being involved in Agroecology Europe's projects.

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## New blog 'Agroecology Now!'

*"Agroecology Now! is a research, action and communications project convened by the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience that focuses on understanding and supporting the societal transformations necessary to enable agroecology as a model for sustainable and just food systems."* (<https://www.agroecologynow.com>)

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## New Criteria Tool on Agroecology

*"The Agroecology Criteria Tool (ACT) methodology is based on the analytical framework by Gliessman on the 5 levels of food system change and is embedded within the 10 Elements of Agroecology by FAO. Each element of the transition includes a list of relevant topics (inclusion criteria), which were based on past work by DeLonge et al."* (<https://www.agroecology-pool.org/about/>)

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## New publications

Make sure you check [our website](#) regularly to find some of the latest peer reviewed articles and grey literature on agroecology. Here is a selection:

- Janneke Bruil, Colin Anderson, Annelie Bernhart, Michel Pimbert, 2019, [Strengthening FAO's commitment to agroecology](#). Coventry: CAWR.

- Stephan Backes, Jenny Gkiougki, Sylvia Kay, Charalampos Konstantinidis, Emily Mattheisen, Christina Sakali, Eirini-Erifyli Tzekou, Leonidas Vatikiotis, Pietje Vervest, 2018, [Democracy Not For Sale, The Struggle for Food Sovereignty in the Age of Austerity in Greece](#). Amsterdam, Heidelberg, Athens, Thessaloniki: AGRO ECO POLIS, FIAN, TNI.
- Anderson, C. R., Maughan, C., & Pimbert, M. P. (2018). Transformative agroecology learning in Europe: building consciousness, skills and collective capacity for food sovereignty. *Agriculture and Human Values*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-018-9894-0>
- Moudrý, J.; Bernas, J.; Moudrý, J.; Konvalina, P.; Ujj, A.; Manolov, I.; Stoeva, A.; Rembiałkowska, E.; Stalenga, J.; Toncea, I.; Fitiu, A.; Bucur, D.; Lacko-Bartošová, M.; Macák, M. Agroecology Development in Eastern Europe—Cases in Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. *Sustainability* **2018**, *10*, 1311.
- Xavier Poux, Pierre-Marie Aubert, An agroecological Europe in 2050: multifunctional agriculture for healthy eating, findings from the ten years for agroecology (TYFA) modelling exercise. IDDRI, <https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20iddri/Etude/201809-ST0918EN-tyfa.pdf>
- Olivier de Schutter, Towards a Common Food Policy for the European Union. IPES FOOD.
- Valeria García López, Omar Felipe Giraldo, Helda Morales, Peter M. Rosset & José María Duarte (2019) Seed sovereignty and agroecological scaling: two cases of seed recovery, conservation, and defense in Colombia, *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, DOI: [10.1080/21683565.2019.1578720](https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2019.1578720)
- Mette Vaarst, Arthur Getz Escudero, M. Jahi Chappell, Catherine Brinkley, Ravic Nijbroek, Nilson A.M. Arraes, Lise Andreasen, Andreas Gattinger, Gustavo Fonseca De Almeida, Deborah Bossio & Niels Halberg (2017): Exploring the concept of agroecological food systems in a city-region context, *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, DOI: [10.1080/21683565.2017.1365321](https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2017.1365321)

### Upcoming Events

- World Agroforestry Congress, Montpellier (France), May 20-22, <https://agroforestry2019.cirad.fr/>
- European Conference on Crop Diversification, Budapest (Hungary), September 18-21, <https://www.cropdiversification2019.net/>
- Agroforestry Workshop in Portugal <https://www.facebook.com/events/424178931486556/>

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