

# PARTICIPATORY FIELD WORKSHOP

## *Seed sovereignty: just a dream?*

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On the 22nd of October 2022, Agroecology Europe Youth Network organized, in collaboration with Valdibella Cooperative, Aterraterra Association and Schola Campesina, a participatory workshop titled "Seed sovereignty: just a dream?" One of the most discussed and controversial issues in agriculture is seed supply and how peasants cannot produce their own seeds while being dependent on big companies. During this workshop we discussed a simple question, but with the answer not equally easy: How to achieve patent-free agriculture?"

The topic was chosen together with the other partners since a new project between Aterraterra and Valdibella was recently born dealing with the production of vegetables only using "free seeds" and reproducing their own seeds every year.

The event lasted one day. The morning was dedicated to interactive lessons carried out by Cristina Laurenti who introduced the Agroecology Europe Youth Network. Raphael Bueno (Professor of the University of Palermo) explained the anatomy of the seeds, the methods of transportation of them and the challenges we are facing with the loss of biodiversity. Andrea Ferrante (Director of La Schola Campesina) gave an overview of the political situation and contextualized his lectures on the current Italian political development. Massimiliano Solano (President of the Valdibella Cooperative) explained their story with the ancient grain Timilia and their battle to become a steward of it. Luca Cinquemani and Fabio Aranzulla explained what they are doing with their association Aterreterra.





The afternoon was instead dedicated to in-field activities through the visit to the Aterraterra and Valdibella fields in which they grow vegetables using free seeds with the purpose of replicating them each new season. Aterraterra deepened the concept of pollination and isolation.



During the day a seed bank was exposed using the seeds brought by participants, giving them the occasion to share and exchange seeds. During the day several projects have been informally shared by young participants and active participation was the key element for the success of this event. Since the beginning a very proactive and warm environment has been created, the components of having young agroecologists coming all from Sicily gave them the possibility to concretely think about future collaborations and installing real networks to continue what has just started on this day.



The other highly important component that led this event to be successful where all the activities proposed: from the seeds exchange to the field visit and the launch together. The launch is also a nice moment for the hosting farm to show and present their products and to show that it is possible to talk about agroecology at 360°.

In conclusion, it is important to empower agroecological farms to encourage young people to invest in agriculture and feel capable of really transforming the food system. Connecting farmers, students and young professionals provide the possibility to understand and support each other.

Local and participatory events have the strength to link a European association to local realities, and give the opportunity to remind us that it is not possible to build an agroecological transition if we don't start by promoting small scale changes and initiatives.



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