On September 30th, Agroecology Greece organized – with the support of Agroecology Europe – the participatory workshop “How to start an agroecological farm project as young farmers?” in Athens, Attica, Greece. The goals of the workshop were: i. to exchange experiences and to gain organisational capacities on how to build an agroecological farm project as young farmers, ii. to discuss barriers and to generate ideas on promising solutions, iii. to raise awareness on barriers and opportunities reaching out to policy makers, agricultural advice and education, iv. to network and build working relationships for practical implementation of ideas created during the workshop, and v. to provide information on regenerative farming application in Greece. The targeted audience were mainly young farmers, students and young people looking to engage in the agricultural sector. A good ratio of male/female participants was achieved.

The workshop consisted of two parts: a) impulse speeches which provided an overview of different important aspects when planning to build an agroecological farm. Expert speakers offered participants personal insights and experiences and b) field trip to an agroecological farm project “To Perivolaki”. A tour around the farm and a direct exchange with the people in charge of the project allowed the participants to dive deeper into the organisational aspects of building such a project.
At the end of the day an on-site plenum discussion following the concept of a World Café participants took place. The five topics the participants explored were:

1. What is needed to start an agroecological project
2. What are the financial aspects to be taken into account
3. What are the barriers/challenges one can face when setting up an agroecological project
4. What are the solutions/Opportunities that arise
5. What are the available resources for those who want to learn more about Agroecology.
During the workshop plenty of useful insights and conclusions came up, the main focus being on the challenges/difficulties when it comes to setting up an agroecological project and the solutions/opportunities that agroecology offers to those who aspire to embark on a farming journey. Those can be summarized as follows.

**Results of the workshop**

Difficulties/Challenges for those who want to start an agroecological project:

- No access to land and or land being scattered into too small parcels, which does not allow for a proper agroecological farm to be setup
- Lack of capital, not easy access to funding for small scale farmers/projects
- Lack of consulting and/or knowledge on specific subjects such as picking the best location for the project/farm, choosing the correct animal/vegetal capital etc
- Climate change and changing weather patterns; people working on the land face more severe and unpredictable phenomena as time passes.
- Lack of an explicit legislative framework that provides to the agroecological farmers the tools they need.
- Bureaucracy
- Skepticism of the surrounding communities
- Consumers not being aware of what agroecology is and why they would need to support agroecological farmers and products
- Inner fears and uncertainty about embarking on a new, out-of-the-beaten-track agrifood project.
Emphasis on locality, community relations, solidarity, open-source knowledge and knowledge sharing. Social networking and the relations of the farmers with the local community can enrich their work and broaden not only their pool of customers, but also their collaborations with like-minded people and projects. An excellent example is the Open farm days.

Collaborative businesses / projects can lead to joining forces and achieving more.

Differentiation of products and services, for example linking agritourism to the production.

Great need for subject-specific seminars, workshops, trainings, and even more at an official level (universities etc).

Putting into place certification possibilities for agroecological products and practices.

Funding programs and schemes specifically for small scale agroecological farms/projects.

Motivation for the adoption of high-precision tech into the production and of digital technologies for the business/marketing branch of the projects.

Greater visibility of successful agroecological examples, visits, networking on a global level to exchange good practices and acquired in-the-field knowledge, and to instill to the newcomers the trust in themselves and in the existence of a supportive network.

Raising awareness to the consumers through centralized campaigns; the increasing demand for organic products and the turn of people to a healthier lifestyle create favorable space for us to educate the audience on the concept of agroecology and all the benefits it has to offer to both humans and the environment.
Solutions/Opportunities/Suggestions

- Emphasis on locality, community relations, solidarity, open-source knowledge and knowledge sharing. Social networking and the relations of the farmers with the local community can enrich their work and broaden not only their pool of customers, but also their collaborations with like-minded people and projects. An excellent example is the Open farm days.
- Collaborative businesses / projects can lead to joining forces and achieving more.
- Differentiation of products and services, for example linking agritourism to the production.
- Great need for subject-specific seminars, workshops, trainings, and even more at an official level (universities etc).
- Putting into place certification possibilities for agroecological products and practices.
- Funding programs and schemes specifically for small scale agroecological farms/projects.
- Motivation for the adoption of high-precision tech into the production and of digital technologies for the business/marketing branch of the projects.
- Greater visibility of successful agroecological examples, visits, networking on a global level to exchange good practices and acquired in-the-field knowledge, and to instill to the newcomers the trust in themselves and in the existence of a supportive network.
- Raising awareness to the consumers through centralized campaigns; the increasing demand for organic products and the turn of people to a healthier lifestyle create favorable space for us to educate the audience on the concept of agroecology and all the benefits it has to offer to both humans and the environment.

Conclusion

There are certain obstacles regarding the start and development of an agroecological farm in Greece, mainly related to land use, lack of proper consulting, bureaucracy etc. However, collaborative schemes and knowledge sharing can play an important role, together with mobilization of stakeholders such as consumers, decision makers and others.

With the support of:

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