Challenges and opportunities in self-organized local food provisioning systems – case study: Zsámboki Biokert

Investigating Scale, Balance, Energy and Solidarity in Food Communities

Workshop 4

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#AEEUForum20
Zsámboki Biokert

Local, seasonal, organic

www.zsambokibiokert.hu
Zsámboki Biokert

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gi2fgk_5YhU
Features of box scheme

- Farmer-led
- Own and bought-in produce from trusted Hungarian organic producers
- Webshop platform
- Weekly selection, weekly ordering
- Collection points
- Some bike home deliveries
- Weekly newsletters, blog, seasonal open days
- Questions around scaling-up
Outreach
Farm profile

- approx 3,0 ha
- 60 km east of Budapest
- Mixed microfarm. Commercial base, mixed seasonal vegetable production
- Approx 1,0 ha veg production
- ~ 2,500 m$^2$ greenhouse (polytunnel) production – particularly winter harvest, unheated production
Zsámboki Biokert diverse production
Zsámboki Biokert aim

• To strengthen biological and social diversity
• regenerate and improve our soils
• grow abundant, nutrient-dense crops
• provide a stable incomes to multiple individuals
Unheated winter cropping
Farm profile

• Strong emphasis on high-value, green, leafy, salad crops, with seasonal cropping of approx 60 crops
• Bio-intensive permanent bed system (standardized, labour-intensive)
• Explore low-till row cropping
• Winter harvesting production methods
• 5.5 person permanent „core” team
• 12 collection points, good customer base
• Market and producer-led, on-line box scheme
Energy efficiency
Characteristics

- Strong commitment to environmental and social aspects of sustainability, as well as financial stability
- Low-tech solutions, predominantly hand-work
- Zsámboki Biokert established 2010, but based on history and sales since 1998
- Long experience with box schemes and early experience with CSA/AMAP/Közösség által Támogatott Mezőgazdaság
Komposztálás
Characteristics

• Long-term, year-round presence at Ökopiács, Budapest – since 1999
• Strong commitment to year-round, permanent employment of core team
• 2 young agro-ecological production manager trainees
• Focus on soil health, above plant protection interventions
Cover cropping
Willingness to:

• Work with and connect with many types of groups, individuals and other organic producers
• Engage in educational/outreach programmes
• Work with and explore effective, low-tech solutions
• Invest time, effort and money in own, on-site composting
• To train up young growers and future consumers
Challenges/threats

• Encroaching organic sales by large retailers (Aldi, Lidl, Auchen, etc.)
• Local, seasonal supply limited (especially Jan-Mar) – increasingly a challenge
• Climate change – winds and water resources
• Background pollution (soil, air, water)
Challenges/threats

• General erosion of community values and increasingly individualised, materialist consumerism

• Farm succession – who will run the farm in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years time?
Key questions

– How to develop our own production system to be more efficient?
– What is the optimum scale for our bok system?
– How to strenghten the consumer community
– How to strengthen the agro-ecological/regen/organic movement?
– How to keep going as small producers in an ever-globalising market?
– How to bring on the next generation of organic famers?
Zsámboki Biokert

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