



# Participatory Agroecology Workshop at Zsámboki Biokert September 24, 2023

Zsámboki Biokert  
Cargonomia  
Hungarian Agroecology Network  
Association (HANA)



## **Participatory Workshop Theme:**

Germinating Engagement within Agroecology Inspired Community Food Networks:  
Linking Farmers, Activists, Researchers and Food Communities

## **Background:**

On September 24th, 2023 around 30 students, gardeners, farm team members and interested citizens from more than 12 different countries met at [Zsámboki Biokert](#), a 3.5 hectare bio-intensive organic market garden located about 1 hour from Budapest in Hungary. The team was welcomed by the farm and organizing team before starting an introduction activity. Participants were able to describe their current interest and activity associated with agroecology networks, while also meeting the organic garden's farm team members. Guests participated in a 3 hour interactive workshop which focused on challenges, opportunities and potential synergies in developing agroecology networks moderated by farm team members and HANA members, before being treated to a lunch cooked with the farm's organic vegetables and experiencing a tour which introduced practical aspects of agroecology. The immersive workshop, lunch and farm tour comprised a program which lasted from the morning to late afternoon on a weekend.

## **Opportunity for Exchange:**

The world café style workshop was a three hour interactive session which specifically encouraged guests to share their own experiences as gardeners, researchers, advocates and activists while exploring the workshops three focus themes: challenges, opportunities and synergy potential in AE networks. The international participant group were able to share stories of farming movements from across the globe, while being informed of the current scenario in Central Europe based on the farm's experiences. Zsámbok team members provided perspective on the challenges that farmers face when trying to implement agroecology action plans for their own farms while also maintaining financial viability of their farming activity, and also the situation for young farmers in Hungary. HANA members contribution focus on the potential for non farmers to provide support to farmers and farming networks, presenting various experiences of volunteering, participatory action research and community organization.



## Workshop Summary: Key Emerging Discussion Points

### Key Challenges Identified:

- The level of interest of young persons in food and food systems
- Access to knowledge, training and educational resources for farmers
- Consumer awareness of organic/regenerative and agroecological practice
- Historical legacy of agricultural policy supporting industrial agriculture
- Dealing with stakeholder diversity in making effective policy
- Trust issues between farmers, and between farmers and consumers

### Key opportunities identified:

- Co-created, farmer to farmer education programs
- Closing gap of ecological and conventional food prices
- Rising interest in food self provisioning
- Community participatory budget planning, new democratic methods for supporting farmers
- Wide range of alternative food network examples which need support

### Key potential synergies identified:

- Living labs rich with farming knowledge encouraging new research cooperation
- Targeting public procurement to support AE food systems
- Social farms as important centers of well being and community building
- Farmer-Farmer-conscious researcher collaborations and co-creation projects
- Advancement of municipal food policy initiatives

### Policy Recommendations:

- Reducing VAT and associated taxes on domestic organic food products
- Encouraging the greater involvement of farmers from the onset of European Union supported research projects on agricultural transition, agroecology and soil health
- Acknowledging the key role that formal and informal civic organizations play in being catalyzers for promoting AE transition, supporting their work financially and structurally
- Encouraging municipalities to adopt best practice food policies which favor increasing access to agroecological products
- Acknowledging the potential of commons and public spaces for supporting existing alternative food systems
- Ensuring that university study programs give students the opportunity to engage with practicing farmers





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