

EVENT REPORT
PARTICIPATORY
WORKSHOP



EMPOWERING YOUTH IN BUILDING AGROECOLOGICAL PROJECTS

INTEGRATED NO-TILL MARKET GARDEN AND SYNTROPIC AGROFORESTRY SYSTEMS

DATE: 25 MAY 2024

LOCATION: LUGAR DA TERRA, TORRES VEDRAS, PORTUGAL

On May 25th, 2024, Lugar da Terra hosted a participatory workshop aimed at empowering youth interested in sustainable agriculture, particularly in **No-Till Market Gardening and Syntropic Agroforestry systems**. Situated in Torres Vedras, just an hour north of Lisbon, Lugar da Terra is a pioneering small-scale farm known for producing regenerative food and offering educational experiences. This workshop attracted 16 enthusiastic young participants eager to learn and apply practical knowledge to start their own sustainable agricultural projects.



The urgent need for generational renewal in Portugal's Agricultural Sector



Generational renewal in Portugal's agricultural sector is critical for ensuring the sector's sustainability, especially given that approximately **50% of Portuguese farmers are over the age of 65, with only about 5% under 35 years old (Eurostat, 2020)**.

The aging workforce poses a significant challenge, as younger generations face barriers such as **rising land prices, which have increased by about 20% in some regions between 2016 and 2020** (Instituto Nacional de Estatística).

To address these issues, the Portuguese government has allocated around €200 million in the 2021-2027 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) specifically for young farmers (Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture). Young farmers and new entrants's participation in agri-environmental schemes is significantly higher, at 45% compared to 25% for the general farming population, highlighting their commitment to sustainability (European Court of Auditors).

Through the organization of this participatory workshop in a country facing particularly significant challenges, AEEU, in collaboration with its member organization Lugar da Terra, aimed to highlight an inspiring and functional example founded by young farmers. Their energy is also being harnessed to replicate this model and train other young people interested in starting their own agricultural ventures. This report outlines the key takeaways for better understanding the challenges of establishing innovative models shaped by young people, for young people, and the role of an association like AEEU in gathering data, analyzing different contexts, and designing tailored support systems that rise to the urgent challenge of agricultural establishment.

Lugar da Terra



Lugar da Terra is a 5,000 m² small-scale farm located along the coastal region of Portugal, dedicated to producing regenerative food for restaurants and home deliveries. The farm operates using an integrated system of no-till market gardening and agroforestry, which not only sustains its food production but also serves as a model of sustainable agriculture.

Beyond its role as a food producer, Lugar da Terra has evolved into an educational hub, offering workshops throughout the year. These workshops focus on the development of small-scale regenerative farming tools and provide consultancy services to help other landowners and farmers implement agroecological food systems.

Founded in 2014 by Job Leijh, a cinema studies graduate, and Tânia Carvalho, who studied nutrition, Lugar da Terra reflects their transformative journey into farming. Their path began in 2011 after participating in a two-week course with renowned agroforestry pioneer Ernst Götsch, an experience that profoundly impacted their lives. Inspired by this experience, they created a documentary titled "Abundance" (2011), which chronicles their journey. Since then, Job and Tânia have fully committed to their agroforestry practices, continuously learning and refining their approach over the past 13 years. Today, they focus on creating resilient, balanced, and abundant food systems, while generating a sustainable income to support their family of four.

Project Background

The workshop was born out of a growing need to educate and inspire the next generation of farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices. Lugar da Terra, with its integrated approach to no-till market gardening and syntropic agroforestry, serves as an exemplary model for such practices. The farm's dual focus on food production and education provided an ideal setting for this hands-on workshop. Participants were not only introduced to the principles of agroecology but also engaged in practical activities that demonstrated the integration and maintenance of these systems in different contexts.



Lessons Learned

One of the key takeaways from the workshop was the importance of **innovation and adaptability** that small-scale diversified systems, such as vegetable production systems provide. As highlighted by the facilitators, success in projects like Lugar da Terra hinges on **continuously reinventing the products offered and the marketing strategies employed**. Participants learned that diversity in crops and practices is essential to building resilience and that engaging consumers in understanding the value of agroecological farming is critical to overcoming market challenges. Another significant lesson was the role of education in bridging the gap between the costs of sustainable practices and consumer expectations.

Challenges and Limitations

The workshop also shed light on some of the challenges facing small-scale agroecological farmers. The primary obstacle discussed was the **low price point consumers expect for food products**, which often does not reflect the higher costs of sustainable farming methods. Additionally, the **bureaucratic and financial barriers for small-scale farms to access subsidies and support** were noted as significant hindrances to growth. The discussions underscored the need for greater public awareness and policy support for sustainable agriculture.

Policy Recommendations

In light of the challenges identified, several policy recommendations emerged from the workshop. Participants emphasized the need for **EU decision-makers to redefine agricultural subsidies to include small-scale and biodiverse farming systems like agroecology and agroforestry**.

Simplifying the bureaucratic processes and ensuring that policies support the integration of diverse farming techniques were also recommended.

Moreover, there was a call for increased investment in educational initiatives that promote the nutritional and ecological benefits of regenerative farming to consumers.





About Agroecology Europe

Agroecology Europe, is a non-profit European association intending to place agroecology high on the European agenda of sustainable development of farming and food systems. It wants to foster interactions between actors in sciences, practices and social movements, by facilitating knowledge sharing action. It aims at the creation of an inclusive European community of professionals, practitioners, and more generally societal stakeholders in agroecology.



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