

ARC 2020' view on the French Agroecology Project

Samuel Féret, ARC2020 coordinator

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What's the ARC?



- ARC is not an organisation, it's a platform facilitating a debate among NGOs for better food and farming EU policies
- A civil society platform: a flexible approach that respects NGOs specificities while having efficiency/reactivity in advocating, campaigning and communicating: more than 150 EU organisations and networks involved
- Kick-off in 2010 just before the new European Parliament and the new European Commission 2010-2014
- Initiators: Groupe de Bruges (EU think tank) and Forum Synergies (EU rural development network); actors involved: Friends of the Earth, PAN, IFOAM EU, Slow Food, European Milk Board, EPHA, APRODEV, National platforms...

The French Agroecology Project: foreword



- Background: Mr Le Foll (S&D) is the initiator of such project, even before he was appointed Ag minister in May 2012
- Before endorsing an agroecology vision, Mr Le Foll has been a MEP rapporteur on Ag and climate (2009) and has supported new collective approaches in the farming sector
- Mr Le Foll has been helped by various scientists (agronomists, economists) within its own Think-Tank (Groupe St Germain)
- His vision is primarily based on a motto: promote a dual economic and environmental performance of farmholdings
- The agroecology project launched in Dec 2012 is a step forward towards the approval of a French Ag regulation (LAAF) in Oct 2014.

The French Agroecology Project: Producing differently (1)

Reduce pesticides: Ecophyto Plan aims at helping farmers use less plant protection products while at the same time maintaining satisfactory levels of agricultural production to meet. This plan launched before, in 2008 did not work well except the pilot network of farmers. His original target was to “reduce 50% of pesticides by 2018... if possible”

Reduce antibiotics: The aim is to reduce antibiotic use by 25% in veterinary medicine in the space of 5 years: training, surveillance, monitoring, tools the prevent their need

Other: preferring natural plant protection and biocontrol, engaging in the sustainable beekeeping, promote biogas, promote organic and agroforestry



The French Agroecology Project: Teaching differently (2)

- Agricultural colleges: second largest educational system in France (both public & private); network of 189 farms and 33 technological workshops on those colleges
- They prepare pupils (150,000), students, apprentices and participants in continuous education for careers in farming, forestry, nature and the regions, from high school to doctorate.
- Agricultural production, personal services, landscape development, livestock care, agrifood: all these are careers for which agricultural teaching prepares students.
- Everywhere in France agricultural teaching establishments will fine-tune their teaching resources to train pupils in alternative production methods that are more sustainable in terms of economics and ecology.

The French Agroecology Project: Supporting/organising differently extension services and collectives (3)

- A call for proposals to farmers groups funded by the fund for agricultural and rural development (CASDAR) dedicated to prepare the way for **economic and environmental interest groupings (EEIGs)** in 2013 (€2.5m then €6.7m); EEIGs may have aid allocations or preference for aid allocation
- 103 projects supported by various bodies involved in agricultural development (chambers of agriculture, agricultural development groups, cooperatives, agricultural equipment cooperatives (CUMA), centers to valorise initiatives for agriculture and rural areas (CIVAM), organic groups...
- Areas for collective action: feed self-sufficiency for herds, water quality, reduced input use, organic farming, soil conservation, energy savings, biogas, agroforestry in all sectors: livestock, cereals, fruit & vegetables, wine

The French Agroecology Project and the “Loi d'avenir”

- A step further is the French law approved in Oct 2014:
 - *“Public policies aim at promoting and sustaining agroecological farming systems including organic...” (...) those systems give preference to farmholdings autonomy and to their competitiveness enhancement by keeping or increasing their profitability, by increasing added-value (...), by reducing energy, water, fertilisers, pesticides, veterinary medicine including antibiotics. Such systems are based upon biological interactions and ecosystemic services use...” (...)*
 - *“French State encourages farmers to adopt practices and innovative crop systems along an agroecological approach.”*
 - *“French State facilitates interactions between social sciences and agronomic sciences to facilitate knowledge transfer (...) needed for transitioning towards agroecological models, including relying on farmers and co-operative networks”.*

The French Agroecology Project: conclusion

- Everything but a a revolutionnary concept, rather a consensual but necessary approach to mobilise together farmers networks, agricultural colleges and research institutes under the agroecology motto
- French agroecology motto means a collective dynamic towards better farming systems, as well as the case in 1999 with “sustainability” under a former law
- Objective is to improve farmers' livelihoods through a technical/economical/ecological approach