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Building Food Communities at the Organic World Congress

By Elizabeth Henderson, Farmer, Honorary President of Urgenci and author of *Sharing the Harvest*



Strengthening and empowering small holder farmers all over the world is IFOAM's most important commitment – that is how Andre Leu, President of the IFOAM World Board, opened the pre-conference on Building Food Communities, October 11, 2014. Focusing on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), the pre-conference attracted over 170 people including organizers and farmers from Turkey, the Philippines, Latin America, China and Europe. I had the honor of introducing the program, and when I asked who in the audience was a farmer, over half those assembled raised their hands.

I spoke about the basic values that unite CSAs across national and international boundaries, interweaving the abstract terms of “solidarity”, “local”, and “partnership between farmers and consumers” with my personal story of how CSA has added meaning and rich community engagement to my life as an organic farmer. In researching *Sharing the Harvest*, I have visited hundreds of CSA farms in the US, and in other countries, and I can testify that no two are alike. Each project fits into the cultural and physical landscape in a unique way that suits the farmers and loyal supporters attracted to that particular piece of land, or group of farms. There is no set formula – crops vary from farm to farm and season to season, each community finds its own methods of distribution, packaging and sets its own prices and payment schedule. Every culture has its own name – AMAP, Teikei, GAS, Reciproco. Yet underlying all of these distinct projects is a set of shared values that were first set out in the 10 principles of Teikei, written and adopted by the Japanese Organic Agriculture Association in 1978. These values are reflected in the charters of CSA networks in France, England, and across Europe, and in the basic platform of Urgenci :



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“URGENCI is the International Network of Community Supported Agriculture and defines CSA in these terms :“*Local solidarity-based partnerships between farmers and the people they feed are, in essence, a member-farmer cooperative, whoever initiates it and whatever legal form it takes. There is no fixed way of organizing these partnerships, it is a framework to inspire communities to work together with their local farmers, provide mutual benefits and reconnect people to the land where their food is grown.*”

During that day and over the three days of the Organic World Congress, I spoke with the founders of the first CSAs in Turkey, met an urban farmer from Bangkok who reviewed the Thai translation of my book *Sharing the Harvest*, and had passionate exchanges with farmers and organizers of CSAs in Australia, Switzerland, and Peru. At the IFOAM General Assembly, I voted for motions recommending that the World Board strengthen its ties with like-minded movements like CSAs, and lead the world debate on “improving the life, welfare and justice for farmers and farm workers.



CSA Demetria as a pioneer project for CSA Brazil

By Johanna Abeln, Intern at Demetria CSA Farm, Brazil.

Community Supported Agriculture has existed for approximately 3 years in Brazil.

In 2011, 12 km away from the city of Botucatu and 240 km away from the metropolis Sao Paulo the native born German, Hermann Pohlmann, initiated CSA Demetria. Starting with just five families, the CSA now has 330 member families and functions as a role model for other CSA's in Brazil. In total, 1000 people receive fresh and healthy groceries from 9 depots in 4 different cities. The members are provided with more than 400 so-called „Cotas“. A Cota forms one unit of 7 different products. It includes, for example, authentic buffalo mozzarella, which is produced directly on the Demetria by a Swiss couple. Farmer Marcello works with five families to biodynamically farm cultivates 12 hectares.

The CSA project not only provides healthy food to local people, it also contributes to the stability of farming families finances. For example, within one year, five new work places have been established and the children of these farming families have enrolled in the local Waldorf Kindergarten and Waldorf School.

What is special about the Demetria ?

During the 80's the „Enstancia Demetria“ emerged as the first biodynamic (?) initiative in Brazil. The school of Rudolf Steiner was founded in 1984 on the farm and was initially only intended for the children of the workers.

However, the school attracted more and more families from outside and „Condominios“ (colonies) were developed. Today the area includes about 6 condominios.. The Demetria is unlike any other neighborhood in Brazil. It is an „ecological oasis“: is the neighborhood is green all around, there are no asphalt streets and many small bike and footpaths.

Groceries for daily use can be purchased at two small health food stores and the „Associação Biodinamica“, an institute for biodynamic research on seeds, is in the community. Because of this infrastructure, the establishment of a Community Supported Agriculture program at this location seemed obvious. Many of the local families are already members.

What are the plans for the future of CSA Demetria ?

The membership goal is to expand to 500 allowing the agricultural business to be financed completely by the CSA. Right now, half of the income is generated through sales at markets. Additionally, the community plans to establish a kindergarten on the farm to combine CSA and education. It is of utmost importance for the cofounder, Hermann Pohlmann, to create a successful model to assist with the growth of CSA in Brazil. To help with this replication, the „CSA Brasil“-network has been launched (www.csaBrasil.org).

About the author: Johanna Abeln is currently working as the first German intern at CSA Demetria. After finishing her Master degree in „Sustainable Services and Nutrition Management“ at the University of Applied Sciences in Münster, Germany, she applied for an internship at CSA Demetria. This is a reasonable combination of theory and practice: working hard for the CSA during the morning, supporting Hermann in the project coordination and networking activities for CSA Demetria and CSA Brasil. If interested, more interns are welcome to take part in this project.



CSA Marcellos Farm in Sweden



What do people do when they can not find proper organic food in the stores ? They start a Community Supported Agriculture Farm !

CSA Marcellos Farm currently feeds 20 families with an unlimited amount of vegetables. Member families pay their pledge every month and are free to fetch their share at the farm whenever they like.

The principle of "unlimited" shares is an interesting way of working, we all become more aware of our needs and responsibilities towards each other. The value of food is re-defined. It all started a couple of years ago when the farmers Inge Schwagermann and Marcel Van Sitteren sold their farm in Holland and left for Sweden.

Why would dutch farmers sell their farm and move to Sweden ?

Well, in the Netherlands, legislation makes it is difficult to have cows on the farm.. Inge and Marcelo wanted to farm biodynamically and the heart of biodynamic farming is a closed circuit that includes cows to feed the soil and soil that feeds the cows. Inge and Marcel sold their Dutch farm and bought a farm in Ugerupsdal, just 14 km outside of Kristianstad in Sweden.

After a couple of years getting the new farm going they met Juliette Snijders. Juliette, who is also from Holland, was developing an urban farming program in Kristianstad city park. The project, Bondens Skyltfönster, is funded by the European Union and seeks a to bring organic food and organic growing closer to the people. Juliette and Inge shared some key life philosophies; the importance of teaching people about organic growing, the fact that money is not the most important thing in life and land can not be owned....

Together they decided to start a CSA and invited Lincoln Geiger from Temple Wilton Community Farms to Sweden. Lincoln is originally from Sweden but moved to USA in the eighties and started the CSA at Temple Wilton Community Farms. Lincoln's visit worked as a great inspiration for all those who participated in the workshop and in June 2014 the CSA Marcellos Farm was started.

There is a great potential for growth at CSA Marcellos. When we reach our goal of 300 members, the farm will be 100% CSA.. We already have members taking initiative and participating in unique ways (like building a hen house together !) at the farm.

5 years after moving to Sweden, 200 hectares farming land and 30 cows later, CSA Marcellos Farm is the province of Skånes' only biodynamic farm and Sweden's largest Community Supported Agriculture farm.



DATA

Start CSA : 2014

Members today : 20 families

Max amount members : 300 families

Farm size : 200 hk Animals : 30 cows

Farming Varied vegetables, meat

Future plans : Dairy, farm café,

farm boutique, chickens

www.marcellosfarm.se

[Facebook.com/marcellosfarm](https://www.facebook.com/marcellosfarm)

www.bondensskyltfonster.se

[Facebook.cpom/bondensskyltfonster](https://www.facebook.com/bondensskyltfonster)

<http://www.twcfarm.com>

Advocating the cause of the Consumer Constituency and C.S.A at Civil Society Mechanism of U.N Committee for Food Security

By Judith Hitchman, Urgenci Advocacy Officer



CFS41 in Rome was a particularly active moment for the URGENCI team of Andrea Calori and Judith Hitchman.

It proved to be a rich and fruitful outcome of several different levels of work carried out in recent months.

Judith had been moderating the working group on Food Waste and Loss in the context of sustainable food systems since last Spring. It was a good solid working group, with participation of several social movements and INGOs.

To better understand the process here is an outline of how it works : First a subject is voted on to be included in the CFS agenda. This process has a 2-year time-line to allow the High Level Panel of Experts to do their research and write a report. Then, in the course of the summer prior to the CFS gathering, a Task Team of States, Civil Society Organisations and CFS/FAO staff formulate and input into the Decision Box. This process requires huge reactivity and does not allow for adequate consultation with social movements, which is a long-standing grief that has been expressed. It does not constitute a negotiation, merely input that may or may not be included in what is then put to CFS for negotiation. If something is written out of the Decision Box, it does not mean you can't get it back in the course of the negotiation itself.

Our initial position was to turn up with a list of "asks" that had nothing to do with the report, as we felt that the report was only based on the industrial food system, and failed to take alternative food distribution systems or solidarity economy into account. Of course we then had to fit our "asks" into the proposed decision, box, but we made our point!

The item was on the agenda of the first day of the CFS, and the team made 4 well organised statements (cf. opening statement by Judith enclosed that can be uploaded onto the website)

The Decision Box that went to the negotiation stage had written out many of our key "asks". But this in no

way deterred our team. We set about strategizing and negotiated all week late into the night. The whole process was long, painstaking and complex, but we did succeed in getting almost all our key "asks" incorporated in the text.

Here is the final decision box for the policy document on Food Waste and Loss in the context of sustainable food systems that we negotiated, working until 11pm at night on several occasions. It was voted unanimously in plenary. It contains several actionable items that are relevant to both food sovereignty and solidarity economy, and can be used to strengthen the global position of social movements as a whole :

a) Bringing the relevant decision making down to local authority level is a first for CFS, and is the result of a 3-year struggle on our part to gain acceptance of devolution of financial and decision-making powers at EU and African level. It allows our networks to use this document substantially in our work at local/territorial level

b) The use of the word food systems is important in terms of the interconnectedness at local level and a food sovereignty-based approach

c) Emphasis on the need for small-scale producer-led participatory research for producers and small-scale processing units is also very important in fighting multinational corporations and industrial agriculture's stranglehold on local sustainable food systems

d) The inclusion of reference to Food Policy Councils (albeit disguised as multi-stakeholder governance bodies) is again something that can be used and taken forward, especially in the context of the EU-funded Hungry for Rights project currently underway.

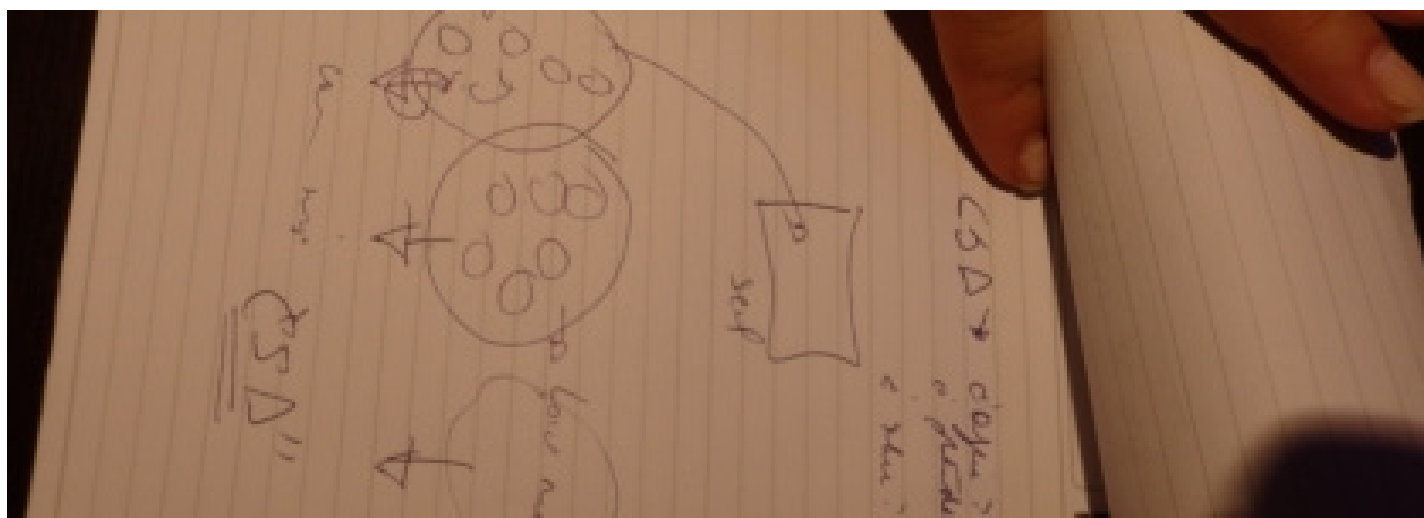
e) There is also reference to opening public tenders for school meals to groups of small-scale producers; this can also be used at local level.

f) Agreement to examine short food chains and Community Supported Agriculture as aspects that can inherently reduce food waste and loss.

Many of the above can be used as arguments to counter TTIP/TPP, as these agreements could have strong impacts at local level. The negative element of the decision box is the overspill of the policy document on responsible agricultural investment; all mention of agroecology is blocked, unless associated with elements considered unacceptable to civil society, such as 'climate-smart agriculture' or 'sustainable intensification'.

The key now will be to try to raise funding to move forward towards concrete action.

Other activities we engaged in during CFS were a side event on Food Waste and Loss (Judith), City-Region food systems (Andrea) and finally as an outcome of all the hard work through RIPESS, the Intercontinental network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy with the U.N. Interagency Task Force on Social Solidarity economy, both participated in a side event on solidarity economy and food security (or as we prefer, food sovereignty), together with the Via Campesina. An incredibly hard, long, intense week, but some great outcomes for Urgenci !



CSA Strengthening relations with the Food Sovereignty Movement at the Agroecology project meeting in Galicia

By Judith Hitchman, Urgenci Advocacy Officer



In late September, the ECVC Grundvig project on agroecology held a meeting in Galicia, dedicated to developing short food distribution chains. The exact location was in a wonderful, isolated centre about an hour's bus drive from Santiago de Compostelle, in the middle of a hilly, wooded region.

Although the official Urgenci members of the meeting were Tony Little and Judith Hitchman, many other participants also belonged to Urgenci member networks and had participated in Krems as well as Milan and the Villarceaux gatherings. These included Isa from Nekesarea, the Basque network, Dominik from Austria, and others from German and Belgian networks.

The meeting alternated between input and group discussion as well as two field trips: one to the local farmer's market in Téou, the other to visit several interesting farms, all selling their produce through direct channels, either farmers markets or to individuals, in the case of raw milk. The Galicians now plan to organise a CSA network as well.

The September sun and excellent company and vegetarian food all combined to create a convivial and constructive atmosphere, and the meeting was a great success.

Shinji Hashimoto's Farm slowly recovering from damaging mudslides



Among the CSA farmers that have been involved in Urgenci for a long time, Shinji Hashimoto, member of the International Committee of Urgenci since 2008, is an outstanding figure, known by all those who took part to the symposiums in Aubagne, Pamela, Kobe, or Monterey. Shinji is happy to announce that his farm is slowly recovering after it was severely affected and damaged by mudslides last Summer. His region was indeed severely hit by heavy rains that caused floods and mudslides, taking many lives.

"Hashimoto Farm", that was one of the highlights of the Organic Tour organized prior to the International Symposium in Kobe in February 2010, was almost completely destroyed. Yet, thanks to a large mobilization in the village and outside, Shinji received the help of many volunteers. During a recent International Committee phone meeting, he said he was optimistic about the future and thankful for the support shown by friends from the CSA movement.

Back from Istanbul : Urgenci delegates give their impressions on the IFOAM O.W.C

Joy Daniel - India

"Having participated in IFOAM OWC a few times, I could see some positive changes towards inclusiveness and in the understanding of food sovereignty. In this OWC, there was good participation in workshops/ discussions related to local markets, family farming, and participatory guarantee systems. Moreover, there is greater representation from countries with large numbers of small and marginal farmers. This is also evident from the composition of the present Board Members at IFOAM. Last but not least, the next IFOAM OWC 2017 is in India!! The land with 600 million small and marginal farmers! You can expect a lot of voices from small and marginal farmers."



Danijel Balaban - Croatia

«The aim of Organic World Congress pre-conferences to bring together practitioners from Community Supported Agriculture and Participatory Guarantee Systems was a clear success! The interest for Building Food Communities workshop had a great response with over 170 attendees which put us in a position of effectively communicating what a CSA movement stands for within the organics.

Urgenci delegates, Kiera Mulvey, Fergal Anderson, and Danijel Balaban brought closer to the public a world of organic agriculture where active consumers are making a commitment to local farms to share the risks and the bounty of ecological farming. The preconference fishbowl experience gave us valuable insight of how people perceive CSA around the world. An interesting part during the Food Communities workshop was the PGS (Participatory Guarantee System) talk about its position and the formalised path which it is taking, giving me an impression that no matter what we strive to achieve in order to have communities involved it all revolves around trust. While Urgenci and IFOAM are doing tremendous work in establishing a firm position for organic movements and markets, a stronger advantage for family farming could be possible through mutual fellowship of CSA and PGS in order to sustain competence and lasting cooperation within organic movement.

It is clear that family farming ensures resilience and steady income from various farm enterprises. Focusing on local food systems, family farmers are clearly challenging the current dominant agricultural paradigm of economies of scale as the only way to feed the world. It is truly empowering to see and hear stories from small-scale family farmers embracing alternative ways to show that they can feed themselves, their communities and their regions while preserving the natural resources.»

Kiera Mulvey - United States

“Participating in my second OWC in Turkey strengthened my understanding of and appreciation for the diverse work happening to grow and connect the international organic movement. From discussions on the next frontiers of organic certification featuring panelists from many different backgrounds to practical presentations on dry land farming in arid Montana and organic tobacco cooperatives in Yunnan province, the intentions of IFOAM to engage and empower family farmers were apparent. There is still much work to do to make the conference and the workshops more accessible to more family farmers, but the content and the discussion often focused on those who are growing the vast majority of the world’s food, family-scale farmers.

For me a real highlight was the wonderful success and engagement of over 150 participants at Urgenci’s “Building Food Communities” pre-conference. As we discussed and shared stories and best practices, questions and ideas, a real sense of comradery and shared vision were present in the room.

There is ample work for Urgenci on the international stage and the OWC was a wonderful opportunity to connect with other practitioners and continue to expand our ever growing sense of what Community Supported Agriculture is and can be. “





Resolution from the Building Food Communities Pre-Conference



At the end of the Building Food Communities pre-conference, Urgenci circulated this resolution to the IFOAM World Board: *“Urgenci is an international network with the mission “to further at the international level, local solidarity-based partnerships between producers and consumers. We define the solidarity-based partnership as an equitable commitment between farmers and consumers, where farmers receive fair remuneration, and consumers share the risks and rewards of sustainable agriculture.”* IFOAM has taken an important first step towards bringing the Principle of Fairness to life in Organic Agriculture by incorporating the concepts of fair pricing for farm products and living wages for all organic food system workers into the SOAN process and the Best Management Practices document.

Another step could be for IFOAM to recognize the importance of Community Supported Agriculture and its underlying principles as a model for family-scale farms all over the world. The participants in the Building Food Communities pre-conference call upon the IFOAM World Board to recognize the important contribution that CSAs and Solidarity projects are making to the development of more resilient, local communities. We ask that the World Board commission a White Paper on CSA and Solidarity Economics and provide regular coverage of CSAs in organization periodicals IFOAM Insider and IFOAM in Action.

Urgenci

TEIKEI 提携

The International Network of Community Supported Agriculture !

URGENCI brings citizens, small farmers, consumers, activists and concerned political actors together at global level through an alternative economic approach called Local Solidarity Partnerships between Producers and Consumers. Find more on the web (& Facebook) ! www.urgenci.net
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13400 Aubagne FRANCE // Phone : +33 6 87 04 49 30 //
Mail : contact@urgenci.net

Urgenci's newsletter has been named TEIKEI, «cooperation» in Japanese, as a tribute to the pioneering role of the Japanese organic agriculture movement in setting up the first Community -supported Agriculture models. It is also a tribute to the victims of the March 2011 Earthquake and Fukushima nuclear disaster, which hit Japanese so cruelly, just one year after Urgenci IVth International Symposium had been hosted in Hyogo prefecture