



In 2015, URGENCI will be holding its 6th Symposium in China !

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Every two years, URGENCI hosts an international conference with many foreign participants on CSA-related issues. Its aim is to strengthen links between CSA members and farmers, researchers and activists around the world. This event is also an opportunity to share our strategies and expectations with our key allies, from the Food Sovereignty and organic movements.

In 2015, from November 15th to 22nd, URGENCI will hold its 6th International Symposium in China in cooperation with the 7th Chinese national CSA meeting, in the Shunyi district of Beijing. The Symposium will include the following core activities :

- From November 15th to 18th, it will start by a 4-days program of farm visits and workshops in the Sichuan, Anhui and Zhejiang provinces
- The 3-days international CSA conference will then take place from November 19th to 21st. Dr. Shi Yan, initiator of CSAs in China and Vice-President of URGENCI, is organizing this event in conjunction with both Tsinghua and Renmin universities, under the guidance and support of the municipal government of Shunyi District and the URGENCI network
- On November, 22nd, the URGENCI General Assembly will chart the course of the organization for the next two years.

Both Chinese and international participants will attend the Symposium, with at least 50 international guests who will participate in all of the Symposium's activities. The 300-400 local participants will be able to take part in the activities they find most relevant to them. The URGENCI Symposium will officially be held in Chinese and English, with a team of interpreters offering simultaneous translation. It might be possible to facilitate some other languages if necessary. **We are currently working on the programme of the International conference, and will soon open the registrations !**



Regulating CSA in California

By Kiera Mulvey Bulan, URGENCI, Maine.

 **URGENCI's last International Symposium held in January, 2013 in California, was the site of much debate, speculation, and discussion regarding the "CSA Legislation" that was evolving in that state.**

The picturesque rolling shores and sandy beaches of Asilomar Conference Center and State Beach were the backdrop for heated conversations about the role of California's government in defining CSA, enforcing standards and regulations, and potential positive or negative long term impacts of such legislation. Some California CSA farmers disagreed with the need for any involvement by government and highlighted the primary relationship between their farm(s) and consumers as being sufficient oversight and guarantee. However, other farmers and the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) cited the mounting pressure from non-farm based "CSA-like" operations (primarily distribution centers aggregating food from multiple sources) and the looming threat of large-scale federal food safety legislation.

CAFF and supporting farmers saw CSA legislation as a necessary action to protect family farms from sweeping federal food safety legislation requiring costly farm modifications and tracking systems and imposing large-scale operating systems and oversight on small-scale farmers. On September 28, 2013, Assembly Bill number 224, Agricultural products: direct marketing: community-supported agriculture, was signed into law by the governor of the state of California.

CAFF, an URGENCI ally and partner in organizing the California based symposium, is a grassroots organization that advocates for California family farmers and sustainable agriculture. Their work engages with state and national policy development and leads the charge in safeguarding and promoting the livelihood of family-scale farming in the state. CAFF's policy director, Dave Runsten, organized farmers and worked with legislators to craft a bill that carefully defines single and multi-farm CSA's as follows :

a "Community-supported agriculture program" or "CSA program" means a program under which a registered California direct marketing producer, or a group of registered California direct marketing producers, grow food for a group of California consumer shareholders or subscribers who pledge or contract to buy a portion of the future crop, animal production, or both, of a registered California direct marketing producer or a group of registered California direct marketing producers.

The bill goes on to define single and multi-farm CSA and details the process for labelling shares with farm origin information to ensure traceability. In the United States the issue of "Good Agricultural Practices" or GAPs has been at the centre of the discussion about food safety and farm regulation related to food safety concerns. Fear of sweeping federal GAP requirements being imposed on family-scale farms has fuelled much of the work in California and other states to pre-emptively document and expand existing food safety practices and traceability of food. In the bill that passed, GAPs are included as guidance for registered CSA farms. According to Runsten, California CSA farmers have a "Food safety obligation, but don't have to follow GAPs explicitly – GAPs also extend to farmers markets and urban gardens as a way for the health regulators to deem all of direct marketing as coming from an "approved source" as required by Federal Law.

Therefore California, through this legislation, has created a pathway for family CSA farmers to be direct agents responsible for the health and safety of the food they grow while maintaining their direct and personal relationships with their members.

Some nuts and bolts of the legislation are still undergoing revisions as the regulation is put into action on the ground, Runsten is currently lobbying for the CSA registration fee to be reduced from \$75 to \$50 after the first year, a reduction likely to be enacted once the registration system is streamlined to be fully online. He also anticipates that the number of registered CSA farms may increase soon due to actions by the Environmental Health authorities, the entity responsible for food safety oversight.

To read the full bill as approved, visit this website : http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB224

To learn more about Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) visit their website : <http://caff.org/>



Learning towards Solidarity-based Food Systems - report

By Jan Valeška. PRO-BIO L



The Experience sharing project LetSFS was initiated in November 2014 within the European Union Lifelong Learning programme Grundtvig by 8 partner organizations from all over Europe. The purpose of the project was to share knowledge about solidarity-based food initiatives (namely CSAs, food coops, etc.) among partners and educate so-called multipliers eg. people who would spread the word and help the development of local food systems based on solidarity in their region.

The project is based on 4 or 5-day-long meetings filled with workshops, discussions and hands-on experience organized by each partner's country. Every meeting is focused on a different topic, based on local knowledge and experience, and is attended by roughly 30 people.

So far the participants have taken part in 5 workshops in Hungary, Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany and Italy. The meetings in Poland and Sweden wil soon be happening.

So far the participants have experienced things like a CSA farm day, farmers markets, urban gardens and many others. During the numerous workshops and debates learners shared their experience on the issue, discussed the European cooperation and how to efficiently work together and, of course, how to apply the knowledge and inspiration they gained once they return home.




LEARNING TOWARDS
SOLIDARITY-BASED
FOOD SYSTEMS



More about the projects past and furutre events can be found on : www.urgenci.net/en-gb/content/Letsfs.

Be part of CSA : Kick-off meeting in Budapest

By Perényi Zsófia, coordinator, Tudatos

 The “Be part of CSA!” project started in November. Activists, volunteers, farmers, coordinators and educational experts from four countries (Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania and France), met to synthesize their knowledge and start working on a training programme for CSA communities. Although CSA movements are a bit different in these four countries, the participants could easily identify some common topics – e.g. empower the members for more active participation, initiate communication between farmers and consumers, and educate consumers on agriculture? These aspects will play a key role in the informal training programme.

Although the schedule of the meeting was quite tight, the host organisation (TVE, Hungary) tried to introduce some interesting initiatives that exist in Budapest. The first dinner was therefore organised at the Szatyor buying community where we could get to know how a grass-roots informal group that has become a social enterprise (website: <http://szatyorbolt.hu/rolunk>). The vegan dinner was prepared from the products of local farmers and definitely contributed to the good atmosphere.

The next step is to prepare a survey that will be widely distributed to the future participants of the CSA training sessions to collect their needs and wishes and identify the key lessons to be included in the informal training programme. It will then be time to draft the first educational CSA materials...




More news about the training programme will be available here : <http://www.urgenci.net/en-gb/content/be-part-csa>



REAS, the Spanish network of solidarity economy congress in Saragossa and food sovereignty

By Judith Hitchman, Urgenci Advocacy Officer

 **One of the tracks of the International REAS congress in Saragossa that brought together over 600 people for 3 days in November 2014, was a full day's workshop on food sovereignty and solidarity economy, attended by about 40 food sovereignty activists.** It focussed specifically on how these two key concepts can be brought together a local level, and the many different dimensions that can be implemented by Local Authorities to regenerate and relocalise the economy, create sustainable employment and provide both food security and food sovereignty for all. At a time when the industrial food system is undermining people's health and food security, it is essential to refocus our attention on local short chain food production and distribution in all its many forms, and ensure local food sovereignty is implemented as an essential dimension of solidarity economy.

As someone who has been working on these questions for several years, I believe this workshop was a watershed moment. It was the first time that these concepts have been taken up and developed so completely at grass-roots level.

The methodology was participatory and very well prepared in advance, and ensured that all ideas were captured on paper. The outcome should be a booklet for supporting local food policy implementation and the realisation of food sovereignty. Participants included members of the Via Campesina and Urgenci.


The individual entry points per se were not new: they covered local food policy councils, allotments, community gardens and CSAs, public procurement, governance of land planning and use, small-scale local processing linked to peasant agriculture and sustainable job creation, as well as access to land for youth and transmission of farms to new farmers, incubator training schemes for new farmers and more... What was new to me was the collective bottom-up determination to make it happen as a coherent and systemic approach.

When the outcomes have been duly written up we will find the means of translating them into other languages and making sure they can be shared. Hopefully it will also lead to more comprehensive work through a European programme and further dissemination.



Case study : REKO – a winning concept in Finland !

By Thomas Snellman, the REKO-man in Finland

 **REKO has in a very short period become a great success in bringing producers and consumers together, and at the same time creating local networks and logistics for locally produced food.**

During the last 30-40 years, direct selling from producers to consumers has significantly decreased in Finland. In recent years, the demand for local and organic products has gone in the opposite direction. Consumers have screamed about this with almost no any answers.

When I visited France in November 2012, I was introduced to the AMAP-system. I immediately saw the potential for something similar in Finland.

Back home I started preparations with a group of friends, and in January 2013 we presented the REKO system (Swedish shortening for fair consumption)

We started two so-called REKO circles at Jakobstad and Vasa, both situated in the Swedish speaking area of western Finland. Differently from other similar projects we use social media as platform. This makes the handling very easy. At first we worked with written contracts between producers and consumers, similar to AMAP, but after a few months the producers declared that they were ready to make delivery based business.

A REKO-circle is based on a closed FaceBook group. The producers and consumers that want to participate ask for membership in this group. The administrators, often a small group of consumers, accept the applications from people who are seriously interested, and the business can start.

Normally, delivery is every week or every other week, depending on the size of the group. For every delivery the producers that want to participate make an announcement on FaceBook, and the consumers start to put orders as comments

under the announcements. The producers mention also their wishes for payment. It can be cash, credit card or bill.

When a REKO-circle has started, running it almost takes care of itself. Normally the only thing that the administrators have to do is to accept applications from new members and decide on the delivery dates. And best of all: no-one has paid a single cent to participate. It's totally free for everyone !

The very first REKO-circle delivery started at Jakobstad in June 2013 and a month later at Vasa. These two circles were the only ones running during the first year and it took time to implement the idea among consumers and get the word out about it. At the end of 2013, we had 400 active consumers in these two circles. During 2014 our project became known around Finland and new projects started. At the end of the year, we had 27 REKO-circles in Finland with 12 000 consumers involved. A growth of 3000 per cent! This has continued so at the beginning of February 2015 we have 39 circles and more than 19 000 members.

The turnover is a little bit hard to estimate but if the situation at Jakobstad in 2015 were to spread all over Finland, it would mean about 60 million euro at national level !



MEET THE CATALYSTS !

A webdoc has been realized for the project Hungry for Rights. It contains 8 interviews with Food Sovereignty Catalysts acting on 5 different territories in Europe.

Follow the link : <https://rb34113571.racontr.com>

2015 MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN !

Increasing membership is a crucial challenge for an organisation like URGENCI: apart from the financial dimension of this support, large membership is a precondition for designing efficient advocacy actions. Becoming a member offers a range of rights: participation in dissemination missions, financial support for/free access to URGENCI's events.

Type 1 member, CSA partnerships, contribute 10€/year;

Type 2 members, local/regional/national networks contribute 100€/year;

Type 3 members, supporting organizations, give a 100€-support/year;

Type 4 members, individuals, support with 10€/year.

There are two different ways of paying :

1. Bank transfer to:
ASS RESEAU INTERNATIONAL URGENCI
FR76 4255 9000 3121 0293 6960 970
BIC/Swift: CCOPFRPPXXX
Bank: CREDITCOOP PRADO
2. Send a check to URGENCI, Maison de la vie associative, Allée Robert Govi 13400 AUBAGNE

Your contribution is needed to support our actions, THANK YOU.



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

Twitter : @urgenci1

Address : Maison de la Vie Associative
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TEIKEI 提携

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

HAPPY NEW YEAR OF THE SHEEP !

