**THE ROAD**

**TOWARDS AN AMAP (CSA) CHARTER**

**(Association pour le Maintien d’une Agriculture Paysanne)**

**The aim of this document is to explain the process that led to the choice of certain words and expressions used in the 2014 Charter**

**This is a road: the Charter is an on-going process…**

The democratic process of rewriting the Charter using participatory methods is exemplary and has involved the participation of at least 8 regional networks, 7 county networks, about 15 inter-AMAPs and several hundreds of AMAPs. It is a real success story!

**The result is a written Charter by all and for all!**

The outcome is a clear, open and politically sound text.

**The concepts of food sovereignty, co-producers, popular education, participatory evaluation, break with agro-chemicals and the commercial appropriation of living organisms, the defence of farmers’ seeds and the invitation to disseminate the “AMAP spirit”** all demonstrate a remarkable leap forward from the 2003 Charter, while still respecting the original fundamental spirit.

The road we travelled to achieve the 2014 Charter will enable you to gain better understanding of how we selected certain terms, and used specific words such as “peasants” rather than “producers”; “AMAP members” (Amapiens) rather than “consumers”, “AMAP members and AMAP peasant farmers” rather than just “ members” for both; “delivery” rather than “distribution”…

SUMMARY

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| The choice of feminisationWhat kind of agriculture do we defend?The concept of food sovereigntyThe concept of popular educationSocial solidarity economyThe legal and tax framework:* “Delivery” replaces “distribution”
* Commercial exchange

The choice of specific words:* “Production” or “product”
* “Peasant farmer”
* “Amapien” (CSA member)
* “Amapien” does not encompass “consumers” and “peasants”
 | * “co-producer”/co-production”

The concept of proximity/localSolidarity between peasants is upheldThe possibility to process foodsPresence at the delivery point for peasant farmersAn on-going evolutionary process and improved practiceDissemination of the “AMAP” (CSA) spirit |

**THE CHOICE OF FEMINISATION**

The choice of feminisation remained THE point that split opinion in two, both at the national assizes meeting and within the drafting team, to whom the assizes left the decision.

Disagreement on feminisation was not so much an issue on the fundamentals (the political reason for feminisation), as on the form (for some readers, feminisation makes a text harder to read). This feminisation is a fundamentally important aspect, as it demonstrates the will not to be restricted by French grammatical structure that is a vehicle for sexism, which is something we do not wish to support.

So we decided to leave the feminine form in place throughout the first version of the new Charter.

**WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURE DO WE DEFEND?**

To reply to this question, we need to refer to the whole Charter because the political vision of agriculture is important, as it demonstrates the desire to refrain from being locked into the predeterminations of an AMAP. Obviously the two first principles enable us to specify the terms of the approach and practice. The new Charter considerably clarifies our position in this respect.

The reference in the Charter to Peasant Agriculture was the object of heated discussions. Not so much as to the justification of the reference itself, but rather the place it occupies within the Charter. Consensus led us to situate this reference in the Preamble; this demonstrates the degree of importance we bestow on Peasant Agriculture in the Charter, and also desire to not be dependant on it. The same applies to organic agriculture. We refer to the organic agriculture movement (in the preamble) and in the fundamentals (in principles 2). This demonstrates our allegiance to this approach, as well as our desire to not be completely dependant upon it. As it is stands, the Charter clearly states that the AMAP are the positive and creative combination of peasant agriculture and organic agriculture that opens a new path for the landscape of alternative agriculture.

In principle 2, the new Charter includes reference to agroecology with a clear definition of the transformative scope of the term (this is of major importance in the context where the term agroecology is being used to quantify production systems that have productivist connotations). The formula “that break with agrichemical practice (use neither chemical fertilisers nor synthetic pesticides…) and have no relationship with any company involved in the commercial appropriation of living organisms” was used in order to include many different current and future issues. For example, the new Charter introduces the question of “GMO-free”, as an example in a parenthesis in order to state that we are against all companies that appropriate living organisms to commercial ends. This is all the more true at a time when new techniques of modification living organisms reach beyond simple transgenesis. This is consolidated in the new charter through the

reference to “peasant seeds” and “plant and animal biodiversity”.

**THE IDEA OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

Food sovereignty is a concept created in 1996 by the Via Campesina. The 2003 definition sates that it is “the right of all peoples, countries and organisations to define their agricultural and food policy without dumping on third-party States”. AMAPs are therefore the obvious tools for promoting food sovereignty at local level. But the new Charter also insists on the dimension of international solidarity of the concept of food sovereignty, stating that by winning our food sovereignty we also create conditions for others peasants in other countries to do likewise. The example of food self-sufficiency (autonomy? independence?) of French farms is significant in this respect.

**THE CONCEPT OF POPULAR EDUCATION**

The concept of “popular education” has now been incorporated into the AMAP Charter. Is this just a matter of naming the daily practice if AMAPs since they began, or is it rather an issue of clear political positioning? And in both cases, is the term of “popular education” the correct one? These were the issues we discussed on this point.

The conclusions we drew was that popular education belongs to no one; we identify with an approach and shared values: removing the hierarchy of knowledge, self-management, free speech, collective dynamics, social transformation, re-appropriation by citizens. Discussions also enabled us to shine light on the fact that AMAPs totally identify with these principles in their concrete practice. Thus, the reference to “popular education” does not refer to belonging to any label or specific movement, but to a theoretical and practical attitude to individual and collective emancipation. The new Charter states: AMAPs are tools of popular education, in the strong meaning of the term.

**SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY**

AMAPs have progressively become important actors in social solidarity economy. There was no discussion on this point.

Discussion was on the way of writing the expression, with or without capital letters. The decision was to not use capitals. This is not a mere subtlety of style, but marks a political choice. If we were to write Social Solidarity Economy, using capitals, we would be part of an institutional dynamic and therefore indirectly support the official lines adopted over a period of several years to capture this “sector”. The discussion would have been too long and too difficult to reach consensus in the institutionalisation of SSE. By choosing not to use capitals, this designates a broader political line, and further down the road, an independent movement.

**LEGAL AND FISCAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to avoid any commercial interpretation of AMAP activities it is necessary to reframe the Charter in appropriate legal and fiscal terms.

This is why the word “delivery” replaces that of “distribution”, that was generally used by AMAPs, because “delivery” refers to an individual act, and “distribution” to a commercial one. The food that is brought to the AMAP distribution point are not the object of a commercial transaction: the AMAP members already own the food that they have pre-paid. The peasant-farmer has the obligation to bring the food to the contractually designated place at a predetermined time and date. The term “distribution” is there not appropriate, as the delivery point is not a collective point of sale. We thereby conform to any control by the French Legal and Tax Authorities legislation on misleading advertising.

Definitions:

- Distribution: all operations and stages that follow the production function, implemented by the producer him/herself or by other intermediaries that make the said products or services available to end consumers.

- Delivery: act of delivering goods that have already been sold

This is also the spirit in which it is forbidden to carry out any commercial exchange at the delivery point was included in the Charter. The time at which AMAP deliveries occur is not the time for commercial exchange. This is a fundamental point in avoiding any ambiguity on the fact that an AMAPs &re not commercial intermediaries.

If money changes hands during the delivery, the delivery becomes a point of sale and it then becomes necessary to respect certain regulations (such as a municipal authorisation).

Advance payment and the associative framework are the means of avoiding being considered under trading regulations. AMAPs have no commercial activity and are not a distribution company.

**THE CHOICE OF CERTAIN WORDS**

The words “production” and “product” occur at several points in the Charter. They were used however when we really could not find any other word. We never use the word “producer”, but always “peasant”.

We are aware that productivist language has colonised our brains and our conversations, this small struggle we engaged in during the rewriting of our Charter might seem out-dated. But we are our words, and this Charter represents our values.

Of course peasant farmers demanded the right to the status of producers in the 19th century, to distinguish them from the gentleman farmer landowners living the easy life on the rent from their lands. The peasant agriculture Charter marks the return to vocabulary that is linked to agriculture.

**Because a “peasant” represents the human level and “production” the commercial** we searched our dictionaries to find words that convey things in accurate terms, and that specify the reality of what we wish to develop in AMAPs.

Because “production”, “producers” “products” give the false illusion of progress and modernity, they impoverish our language and reduce the margins of our freedom and our imagination.

It is because when **we put a name to something it exists and becomes that thing** that we dispensed with certain words that are all too often incorrectly used.

**The term “co-producer/co-production”** that you can find at various points in the Charter also provoked a lot of discussion.

It appeared important to us to emphasize the complementary role of the partners involved in ensuring production, and thus of food; but not only: agricultural practice, consumption habits, human relations and preservation are all the result of this partnership and therefore constitute both material and immaterial production.

The term “consumer often has a negative connotation in AMAPs; this is why it seemed important to us to establish a change in the status lf AMAP members and peasants who, by becoming co-producers, have set aside the dominant model, thus defining the connection between us. The practice of sharing the harvest (as opposed to selling the produce), of solidarity in the face of the unforeseen, (climate or other events) as well as pre-financing, are enough for us to justify this notion of co-production.

The concept of co-production has been used for a long time by some AMAPs; it is not a new invention. It is grounded in the inspiration shared by Vandana Shiva, the well-known Indian ecolo-feminist activist, who, in one of her speeches at Terra Madre in Turin, where she was speaking to 5,000 people who had been invited by the Slow Food international movement in October 2004 during the Salone del Gusto:

*“For me, Terra Madre is the celebration of the diversity of life, of generosity and of the miracles of the earth, of our earth that provides us with the abundant food that has sustained our society and our communities for thousands of years. Terra Madre is the tribe of those who care for the earth: small farmers, local producers, peasants and their co-producers (the earth, mycorrhizae, fungi and those who eat food). I would like to thank Carlo for using the term co-producers rather than consumers, as a consumer consumes and consumption leads to the destruction; and until now, consumers have belonged to the chain that destroys food. We now invite all consumers to be part of life, biodiversity and the values of humanity in a creative act of conservation of the Earth, its diversity, human life, including the right to food for all humankind. As co-creators, we are all here as participants in Terra Madre, and we have built this process in order to be able, all together, here and in our home areas, to participate in one of the greatest transformations of our times, a transformation that calls for food as food, as the true price of life, the basis of life and of its condition, as everything is life only because everything is food”*

**Why does the word “Amapian” not include both “consumers” and “peasants”?**

In order to facilitate reading the Charter and identifying the actors in AMAPs, the new Charter distinguishes between “Amapian” and “Peasant AMAP grower”. In absolute terms, the peasant is also an Amapian, as he/she is part of the collective of citizens who jointly commit to a direct partnership based on solidarity. But the term “Amapian” was the best alternative to the word “consumer”, and we wanted to get rid of the term in our new Charter (just like the word “producer”). Furthermore, the word “peasant” seemed to be an important word for us to continue using.

 **THE CONCEPT OF PROXIMITY/LOCAL**

The new Charter on several occasions refers to the word “local” and “proximity”. These are very similar terms, but they are not quite identical. Local implies geographical proximity, but proximity is not reduced to local. The proximity in AMAPs is as much a question of relationships and ethics as it is geographical. That said, geographical proximity, the “local”, remains an important element in the Charter. And contrary to any temptation to quantify (which would mean defining the number of kilometres beyond which food is no longer “local”, the spirit of the Charter is rather to insist on the importance of the territorial scale. A territory is a place where people live, think and act, and where an individual or group of individuals know one another, and put meaning into their actions. AMAPs work as a territory and for a territory, while ensuring that their actions and reflections reach beyond any borders.

**UPHOLDING SOLIDARITY BETWEEN PEASANTS**

An example: a peasant AMAP grower lost his potato crop, but has a surplus of cabbage. His neighbour has a lot of potatoes, so he/she can help him/her out this year; and he/she is interested in the cabbage, as he/she can turn it into sauerkraut (for example).

With the agreement of the Amapians, the peasant is able to make this exchange, and provide food that wasn’t gown on his/her farm in the share, as long as this food corresponds to the AMAP Charter.

This is an occasional solidarity-based kind of exchange of vegetables of the same kind.

**THE POSSIBILITY TO PROCESS FOOD**

The addition of the adjective “processed” (in the sentence “the delivery of fresh or processed foods”) in the Charter, allows peasants to process their food when there is a surplus, in order to include it when the shares are a bit thin, in winter, for example. This possibility must be foreseen in the contract.

This also allows the peasant to provide food that has a higher added value. It therefore constitutes an improvement that the AMAP movement is proposing.

*How may farm produce be processed?*

* The peasant has the means to process: this corresponds to what already exists in the previous charter
* The peasant doesn’t have thee means to process it and needs to sub-contract the work to a local vegetable processor, a cheese-maker etc.

This is therefore possible, on condition that the additional inputs (spices, oil etc…) are of controlled origin and guaranteed, and that the processing takes place under conditions that guarantee quality, ethics and transparency that have been accepted by the Amapians.

This is encapsulated in the Charter in the mention that is made to *“Processed produce will include specific mention as to the transparent processing methods and traceability,…) that are included in the contract”.*

In all cases the peasant remains responsible for the food in the share, irrespective of whether it is fresh or processed.

\*Some people present at the General Assembly felt that this term was negative. C.f. the minutes of the MIRAMAP General Assembly (15th and 16th March 2014.)

**PEASANTS’ PRESENCE AT THE DELIVERY POINT**

No peasant AMAP farmer will disagree that this is an important objective in terms of the essential meetings and in the relationship between the peasant and the Amapians. However it is sometimes difficult for the peasant to present at each delivery. There may be essential work that needs to be done that justify his/her occasional absence. It may be relevant however, if two peasants in AMAPs live close to one another, to take turns with the deliveries. This has led to the formulation “to be present at the delivery point (or occasionally represented), as this allows flexibility and arrangements to be made, while remaining totally transparent with the Amapians.

**AN ON-GOING EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH AND IMPROVEMENT OF PRACTICE**

The new Charter includes the notion of “participatory evaluation”. The issue of this expression was to qualify the different approaches to running AMAPs and their networks to accompany the AMAP partnerships in good conditions. The idea was to say that the AMAP Charter needs tools that enable it to have a concrete existence that is evolutionary and shared between Amapians and the peasant farmer. The new Charter does not impose any tools: it is up to the AMAPs and their networks to invent or develop them. Some AMAP networks already have such tools (e.g. Participatory Guarantee systems in the Provence Alpes Côtes d’Azur and Rhône-Alpes regions); others are considering it (e.g. Démarche Participative de Progrès - Participatory Progress Approach in the Île de France region), but no model exists. The new Charter merely specifies the principles “the need to include a shared evolutionary approach between Amapians and peasants”.

**POSITIVE DISSEMINATION OF THE “AMAP SPIRIT”**

The discussions on the new Charter enabled us to clearly pose question of the place of non-peasant processors in the AMAPs. Between officially inclusion (that would no doubt have weakened the concept of the AMAP) and the decision to exclude them (which is against the overall approach of the AMAPs), there was consensus on a proposal to open the door. The new Charter invites people to engage in the positive dissemination of the “AMAP spirit”. By doing this, it sends an invitation to create new local partnerships that include processors who share the values and principles of the AMAP, but without their having to merge with the AMAP. Thus for those artisans who have already built partnerships with AMPs (such as bakers who are not peasants), it offers them the possibility to re-qualify their contracts in an inclusive and inventive way. Although AMAPs remain a direct support for agriculture by the nature of the contract between the Amapian and the peasant, the new Charter also positions them as incubators of alternatives.

The approach initiated by MIRAMAP to develop short circuits of solidarity finance (Les “Cagnottes Solidaires” – solidarity funds) is significant of the dissemination of this AMAP spirit.

***Authors:*** *Isabelle Capdeville (Amapian - Basque Country), Elisabeth Carbonne (Amapian – Limousin), Léo Coutellec (Amapian – Alliance RA), José Florini (Amapian – Alliance Provence), Claudine Léhon (Amapian – Alliance Provence), Didier Loufani (Amapian – Tarn network), Laurent Marbot (market gardener ) AMAP Île de France network)*