



Goetheanum · School of Spiritual Science
Section for Agriculture
Sektion für Landwirtschaft
Section d'Agriculture
Sección de Agricultura

Activity Report 2019



Editorial

The variety of topics, projects and events in the Section for Agriculture's portfolio increased again in this reporting year. The team itself has also grown and the scope of our communication has expanded significantly. The budget has increased accordingly on both income and expenditure sides. This review aims to provide you with an insight into these developments.

In the public eye, 2019 was marked by the increasing awareness of the climate crisis. The extreme weather conditions which we have been experiencing on our farms for many years, the melting of the glaciers, a large body of recorded data, the climate youth who have taken their state of shock onto the streets – all this serves to create a picture: as terrestrial mankind we have to see and understand ourselves anew and out of this take action. Agriculture plays an important role in this wholly new orientation which has taken hold of our culture and civilisation, and which we both must and want to develop together. On the one hand because agriculture can be a danger for the climate, but also an opportunity, a promoter of a healthy climate, something which we wish to demonstrate more widely. On the other hand because, from a social standpoint, agriculture is a kind of focus for everyone's question: what are we doing to nature? Nowadays this question is dominated by the fear of our excessively large footprint – we wish to strengthen the conviction that human beings can create an agriculture which helps the earth.

Ueli Hurter

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Front page photo: Agricultural Conference 2020, Woven Skin by Claudy Jongstra
Photo: Johannes Onneken

Lecture at the Agricultural Conference. Photo: Christian Vera



Agriculture Conference 2020

"Finding the spirit in agriculture" was the topic of the Agriculture Conference at the Goetheanum in Switzerland from 5-8 February 2020, an event which met with a positive response from around the world, with 900 people of all age groups from 48 countries accepting the invitation. For example, meetings were held by various international professional groups such as the Group of Biodynamic Viticulture, the Herb and Medicinal Plants Group and the Working Group on Biodynamic Preparations. 200 Chinese viewers who were unable to leave their country due to the corona virus also followed the conference via live streaming.

Over the four days various facets of the spiritual dimension of biodynamic agriculture were studied. Speakers from different places with very varied cultural and religious backgrounds spoke about their personal approaches, and shared their practical exercises and tangible results with the listeners. They showed that integrating the spiritual dimension means reinstating the dignity of the living beings and how this can be achieved. They also provided a broad overview of the bridges which the biodynamic movement can build with other civil society organisations.

The various contributions covered, for example, an approach to the "new" relationship to the other person through geometry; a description of the attitude which can lead us to a meeting with the earth as a living being with the beings that inhabit it; the search for common ground between biodynamics and the traditional cosmologies of the Mapuche Indians and the Maoris; as well as the role that spiritual agriculture can play

in the face of exclusion and social violence. These were all rich and moving speeches based on the personal and lived experience of the speakers.

The event closed with the inauguration of the new **Biodynamic Federation Demeter International** which has arisen from the amalgamation of the *IBDA* and *Demeter International*. This new organisation means a unifying message for the values of biodynamics and clearly confirms the commitment to social issues. At the heart of this initiative and through the entire conference a clear call was to be heard to connect to oneself and to others, to build bridges and to work beyond the familiar for the benefit of the earth and mankind.

Save the Date

Agriculture Conference 2021

Breathing with the Climate Crisis – ecologically – socially – spiritually

Annual International Conference of the biodynamic movement
at the Goetheanum Dornach, Switzerland
Thursday 11 February until Sunday 14 February 2021

Refreshment break during the Agricultural Conference outside the Goetheanum. Photo: Christian Vera



Pilot project for biodynamic course at Heliopolis University in Cairo

Heliopolis University for sustainable development, established by SEKEM in Cairo, is the first of its kind in the Arab world. Two years ago it introduced the new four-year Bachelor Degree Programme in Organic Agriculture. Last year a project was set up in cooperation with the Section for Agriculture, Heliopolis University and SEKEM to offer a course in biodynamic agriculture as a regular component of the course. This was a major venture for the Section who needed to put together a training team and a new curriculum. Three two-week courses have now been held, with most of the teaching taking place on the SEKEM farm. Everything was new for the students too: learning to observe the soils and plants, stirring preparations, etc. But the spark has been lit and the students were and are very enthusiastic. For Heliopolis University and SEKEM, the new way of teaching university using European guest lecturers has brought a breath of fresh air. Parallel to teaching the students, a "train the trainer programme" is being run for the Egyptian lecturers. This programme teaches methods that are particularly suitable for learning biodynamic subjects. An evaluation is also being carried out as to how this process could form the basis for implementing biodynamic modules in courses at universities in other countries. The biodynamic course pilot project is planned to run for four years.

International conference for biodynamic teachers and trainers

Biodynamic agriculture is starting up on almost all continents and a wide range of training initiatives and teaching and further education formats are being developed in various countries. One of the aims of the International conference for biodynamic teachers and trainers in Dornach, Switzerland, in November 2019 was to increase awareness of each other throughout the world, and from this derive practical teaching and further education impulses locally. Around 80 participants from 27 countries gathered to discuss the future of biodynamic training and the issues that affect it. Groups of participants worked on a broad range of topics on specific issues in biodynamic training and further education: from training for trainers via building capacity of new biodynamic initiatives to biodynamic training materials (what is already available, what is still needed?). Besides deepening knowledge, different methods were practised. The various methodological elements created space for community, changed the focus and allowed a rhythm to arise. The conference was both a place of learning and a first encounter for some, as well as the source of new ideas and common visions and projects in biodynamic training.

International biodynamic advisory service

The rapid growth in biodynamic agriculture worldwide increases the need for high-quality biodynamic advice. The Section for Agriculture has supported the exchange of bio-

Students at the Heliopolis University engaged in group work, Sekem, 2019. Photo: Ueli Hurter



dynamic advisers through the organisation of international meetings for many years. At these meetings the wish for a common foundation and the necessity of quality assurance became apparent. A new quality system for biodynamic advisers was therefore developed over time in a participative process. Last year the project was put into practice in cooperation with Demeter International so that the new quality system, which is based on the peer reviewer method, was ready to be launched in January 2020. The peer review quality system is based on the charter which covers ethical questions such as transparency, respect and confidentiality. The minimum criteria to be met serve quality assurance while the peer reviews and the constant self-reflection support quality development. This peer review process aims to promote trust and transparency in order to create a common basis for qualitative advisory work in biodynamics.

Living Farms project

In 2019 we all became very aware of the climate emergency in agriculture and beyond. In specialist circles we know that the situation is equally alarming as regards biodiversity, the drinking water supply and soil erosion. Individually and as a biodynamic movement we need to ask ourselves: what can we do to help? What potential solutions already exist? How can we support action for a sustainable future?

As a biodynamic movement, the main thing that we have in real terms is our farms. We have built them up from the inner concept, from the ideal of creating agricultural individualities. They are an expression of our personal commitment,

and centres of innovation and practical research. Our farms are places where, in the spirit of a prototype, an agriculture is developed which offers something constructive instead of the erosion of climate, soil and biodiversity. They are the germ of a new partnership of man and nature, a new eating culture from field to plate, sources of nutrition workshops as well as a new social partnership, for example in land ownership, and also the source of new educational initiatives (see contribution above).

Could a selfless demonstration, providing insights into model farms, sharing our experiences in all their imperfection, not be a contribution to a sustainable agriculture? So that many other people find courage, so that they are inspired, so that they say: "I can also make a contribution!"

We in the Section have decided to make this contribution. We call it "Living farms". Between 2019 and 2022 we will produce up to 20 farm portraits from every continent. These will be made available for everyone as videos in three languages (German, English and French). We view this especially as a research project in which we work with a qualitative social research approach. The aim is to research and show each farm in such a way that it can stand as a completely individual contribution and nevertheless give answers to the big questions of our time.

The first three videos are already online on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram – and have so far reached over 25,000 people worldwide (as at January 2020). The next few are in progress and will be published as soon as possible.

Living Farms: Interview. Photo: Philip Wilson



International biodynamic research coordination

Biodynamic agriculture has enormous potential to provide positive, realistic and forward-looking concepts for the big challenges of our time. Biodynamic research can be of help in turning this potential into a future worth living for all. This is why it is of such importance especially today. The development of a stronger research approach in the international biodynamic movement, international knowledge transfer, and the active networking and support of the researchers are therefore core thematic areas of the Section for Agriculture. Thanks to additions to the team in 2018 and 2019, the Section is now in a position to work with and provide support to the network of biodynamic researchers.

In spring 2019 the Section published a 100-page document entitled "Evolving Agriculture and Food – Opening up Biodynamic Research – Conference Contributions" with contributions from the 2018 international research conference. Thanks to the support of a number of foundations, this important document is now available online free of charge.

Seed, olives, preparations... more varied thematic areas

The issue of suitable seed for biodynamic agriculture and the use of hybrid varieties in Demeter farming were discussed in depth and developed in cooperation with Demeter International and experts. International professional groups for viticulture, fruit-growing, preparations, herbs and olives provide opportunities for exchanging views on specialist subjects and exploring them in greater depth. This includes such fascinat-

ing questions as the being of the grape vine. The new edition of the "Landwirtschaftlicher Kurs" (Agricultural Course) with a volume of supplementary materials and a historically accurate account of the founding event in June 1924 in Kobieryce in Poland is in preparation and is due to be published for the centenary in 2024.

In order to enable our activities for the biodynamic impulse to be effective we need to have active, accurate and open-minded communication. To this end the website of the Section in German, English, French and Spanish, the regular newsletter, a printed conference proceedings in five languages, and a twice-yearly circular providing more detailed information in two languages have been considerably expanded over the last few years.

Mindful eating

Activities in the nutrition department have focused on nutrition in terms of responsible consumption behaviour and a self-determined diet for our own health but also for the health of the earth. Projects, events and publications are some of the ways of addressing and supporting the consumers' self-determination.

The topic of "mindful eating" was introduced at an impulse presentation during the mystery drama conference at the Goetheanum last summer. Knowledge always requires a perception and therefore the activity of the senses. And just as acquiring knowledge is a kind of digestive process, the digestion itself also needs a preceding sense perception, and not only in the physiological sense. Mindfulness while eating therefore first needs a perception of what is on the plate before we start to eat. How does it smell, what does it look like,

Seed. Photos: Verena Wahl



how is it arranged? And what is it actually? We then start to eat and attentively notice how it tastes. Later, after the meal, we notice how easy the meal is to digest. To make this conscious and guide your attention to it means strengthening the relationship to yourself. This is the prerequisite for relationships to other people and other situations.

From a consideration of the relationship and the ability to form relationships, light is thrown on many aspects of nutrition, from the origin and quality of the foodstuffs all the way to fair trade and a healthy sustainable future for the human being and the earth.

The press release "Because we are worth it" for World Food Day in October was one of the most successful of the entire year from the Communication at the Goetheanum. Requests to publish it in blogs and journals even came from overseas. It explored the relationship between consumption behaviour and nutrition with a sustainable agriculture and a healthy earth.

Other contributions and publications were released, such as "Eat your way to beauty", an article on the topic of beauty, cosmetics and nutrition.

A one week further training for cooks and nutrition experts from various places in France was a great success. The varied programme included theory, observation exercises, eurhythmy, a tour of the Goetheanum and cooking experience in anthroposophical institutions nearby, as well as cooking and eating together. The participants were especially impressed by the quality, appreciation and atmosphere which are encouraged in the team and in dealing with the food and guests in the various kitchens (Anfora Dornach, Klinik Arlesheim and Sonnenhof Arlesheim). *Dr. Jasmin Peschke*

Trip to China and Japan: two examples

Work at the Section develops in constant exchange with the world.

As part of this, in November 2019, Jean-Michel Florin undertook a trip to China and Japan at the request of their respective biodynamic associations, and experienced two countries very close geographically but very different in terms of biodynamics.

On the one hand there is a rapid development: in China biodynamics interests the top level of society, various entrepreneurs are developing exciting activities (farm and school, restaurants, honey production, etc.). The journey offered the opportunity both to give a course on the farm organism for 50 participants and also to see the local initiatives.

In comparison to China, biodynamics in Japan is only spreading slowly. Nevertheless, there is the pioneering biodynamic farm of Pokowappa on the South Island. The farmers there have been tireless in giving courses, and so various small initiatives have arisen over the years: winegrowers, medicinal plant growing, organic restaurants, etc. Jean-Michel Florin gave courses for winegrowers and biodynamic farmers on three islands and visited Japanese gardens to experience the wonderful art of forming the landscape as an image of the relationship of man and nature.

What is important on visits like these is to find a balance between our own contributions, talks and courses and getting to know the people and their culture and an appreciation of the work that has been done there. It is important to avoid a type of "neocolonialism" (with European biodynamics) – the crucial things are exchange and openness.

Speisehaus kitchen, Dornach. Photo: Heinrich Heer



Section for Agriculture

The Section for Agriculture is one of eleven Sections of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. Its main task is to coordinate and give new impulses to the biodynamic movement across the world. Courses, seminars, conferences, lecture tours and publications create points of contact for people who are seeking a deepened anthroposophical/spiritual scientific understanding of agriculture. Encouragement to become responsible for one's own activity is especially important in agriculture and horticulture, in food processing, trade, nutrition, inner work and in public relations. An active worldwide network of individuals and associations, Demeter businesses, research establishments, trusts etc. are encouraged and developed. The Section is led by Jean-Michel Florin and Ueli Hurter. The team running the Section is currently made up of eight people. Other co-workers are also involved with specific projects. The Council of Representatives which represents the biodynamic movement in its regional and professional diversity, currently includes 70 people from 18 different countries.

Contact

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The Section has a number of sources of income. The income and expenditure for 2019 were as follows:

Income 2019	CHF
Individual donations	51'179
Donations from institutions and project funding	515'229
Income from events	193'443
Miscellaneous income	17'621
Carried over for projects from previous year	144'160
Goetheanum*	81'340
TOTAL	1'002'972
Expenditure 2019	
Personnel	564'347
Project reserves	50'000
Miscellaneous	388'625
TOTAL	1'002'972

* Annual basic contribution by the General Anthroposophical Society from donations and members' contributions

Section team. Photo: Duilio Martins



Back: **André Hach**, event organiser / **Verena Wahl**, team leader and project management / **Jean-Michel Florin**, leader of the Section, **Sarah Sommer**, project assistant for education, advisory services and professional groups / **Dr. Jasmin Peschke**, nutrition department
Front: **Lin Bautze**, Living Farms project, research / **Ueli Hurter**, leader of the Section / **Johannes Onneken**, graphics & web design, communications / **Sandra Jakob**, administration