



# Land Sharing Models for Sustainable Agriculture

*-Proposals for land preservation,  
new land use and management practices-*

**3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> June 2013 | Brussels, Belgium**  
**Working Seminar**



Demeter International along with Terre-de-Liens, Bioforum Vlaanderen and Terre en Vue decided to convene a follow-up seminar on land preservation and on land sharing approaches.

Experts are invited to discuss, and brainstorm about the situation of land grabbing in Europe, as well as to propose alternative land use and management practices.



## What is Land Sharing?

A number of citizen-led initiatives have developed to provide easier land access to local, ecological forms of agriculture geared at matching the needs of their communities. They are of different shape and size, some are centred on one or two farms, others have regional or national scope.

They engage in different ways with consumers, local inhabitants, and other local stakeholders, but all include some forms of involvement of the communities in land use and management. Many of these initiatives have already been very successful and bear testimony to the interest and readiness of the public to get involved in favour of ecological, local food production and the preservation of vibrant rural areas. Although they are still a loose movement, these initiatives pave the way for inventing new ways of owning and managing land as a common good.

They (re)place farmers as part of a long chain of good land stewards, develop a long-term perspective on land use and environment protection and try to reconnect land with its intrinsic and use value, rather than its market price.

They have many challenges ahead, but also experiences and reflections to share with all those concerned in the future of European agriculture, food and countryside.

## Background: a follow-up Seminar

On 16 October 2012, Demeter International, along with other partners, organized a conference on **Land sharing versus Land grabbing**, where the situation of land was discussed and community-based, sustainable land ownership and land use models were presented. In the wake of the conference, several speakers and participants expressed the desire to go further.

More about the October 2012 Conference, see: <http://www.demeter.net/land-sharing-vs-land-grabbing>

Demeter International, supported by a group of organisations (Terre-de-Liens, Bioforum Vlaanderen and Terre en Vue) focusing on land preservation and on land sharing approaches decided to convene a follow-up seminar, in which experts could discuss, and brainstorm about the situation of land grabbing in Europe, as well as alternative land use and management practices.

We are already considering organising a third seminar in 2014 to move yet one step further, in presenting developed policy proposals and a consolidated European Land Sharing Network.

## Main Objectives

- Provide a platform for exchanging ideas and experiences, brainstorming and capacity building for practitioners, political decision makers and NGO representatives.
- Establish a state of the art of access to land, land preservation, land grabbing and land sharing in Europe: problems, policy frames, and good practices.
- Share analyses of existing EU, national and local legal framework and public policies, to identify those elements which constitute obstacles to, or levers for, access to land and land preservation.
- Discuss possible ways forward and brainstorm policy recommendations.
- Network and build alliances.

## Organizers

**Demeter International** was the organizer of the first conference about land sharing in October 2012. Demeter farmers and gardeners are already practicing successfully land-sharing models over decades. The Demeter Liaison Office in Brussels possesses the relevant contacts to speakers and experts whom we plan to invite to this workshop. Being based in Brussels it makes sense to organize this follow-up workshop here, where the European Institutions are based. [www.demeter.net](http://www.demeter.net)

**Terre de Liens**, is a French citizen-based movement started in 2003 to address the difficulties encountered by local organic and peasant farmers in getting access to land, as well as to decommodify agricultural land. It has two main lines of action: 1/ financial tools (a citizen-owned ethical investment company and a land trust) which collect investment and donations to acquire land and rent it to farmers on the long run; and, 2/ mobilisation and mediation tools to raise awareness of citizens and support local authorities. TDL now has a network of 2000 members and 9000 shareholders. Having raised 30 million euros, it has acquired about 2400ha and contributed to the establishment or continuation of about 200 farmers. [www.terredeliens.org](http://www.terredeliens.org)

**Bioforum Vlaanderen**, is the umbrella organization, in Flanders, of the organic sector and a membership organisation with a strong network of certified producers, processors, distributors, retailers and relevant partner organisations. BioForum has strong connections with Landwijzer vzw which in Flanders was initiator of the Bio- Grondfonds. Landwijzer, as an organic training centre has a strong focus on farmers' continuity and access to land for new farmers. <http://www.bioforum.be/>

**Terre-en-Vue** is a brand new citizen driven, French speaking Belgian movement, that gives back to farmland its status of a common good. It is composed of a NGO, a cooperative company and a foundation. It revives local economies through agro-ecological projects that are guided by local networks of citizens, public institutions and partner NGOs. Terre-en-vue works in close collaboration with its Flemish counterpart Land-In-Zicht. It started off after an intensive period of studying the strenghts and weaknesses of other European examples. Collective intelligence and sociocratics are at the basis of its functioning. These approaches, the close collaboration of the organization with farmers, public institutions, citizens and NGO partners, its developing vision of the Commons and its critical mindset may contribute to a successful conference. [www.terre-en-vue.be/](http://www.terre-en-vue.be/)

## Participants

**This seminar is designed as a working seminar for:**

- ✓ citizen-based land initiatives;
- ✓ land institutions, farmers' organisations (e.g. IFOAM, Via campesina);
- ✓ policy-makers (DG Agriculture, DG Environment, Members of the European Parliament, European Social and Economic Committee, European Council, Purple network);
- ✓ Brussels-based NGOs (ARC2020, Friends of the Earth Europe, FIAN, MIJARC, etc.);
- ✓ Experts (e.g. Groupe de Bruges, aGter, European Environmental Agency, researchers);
- ✓ Ethical banks and foundations (e.g. GLS Bank, Triodos Bank, Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer) to meet, share analyses and build proposals around land issues in Europe.

## Venue

**There will be two different venues:** one will be in the rue de Trèves, where participants will be in one single big room for the morning discussion and conclusion.

**The second venue** will be in the main building of the EESC in rue Belliard, where two working groups will stay in two different rooms, provided by the EESC (please see map for directions), for the afternoon discussion.

# Workshops

## 1. Preserving Farmland

Urban sprawl and the construction of infrastructures exert a strong pressure on agricultural land. Over the past five decades, EU has lost over 30 million hectares of farmland. In some parts of Europe, farmland is also being abandoned, and taken over by natural spaces. The preservation of farmland is particularly at stake where there is a strong competition for land use: peri-urban and urban areas, coastal areas, touristy areas, etc. However, there are a number of national or local regulations to protect farmland and monitor land use. How can we better preserve existing farmland so as to keep agriculture alive throughout Europe? And how can we preserve the quality of farmland and of its environment (soil fertility, water resource, biodiversity) so as to ensure food quality, environment protection, public health and diversified landscape?

## 2. Facilitating Farm Continuity and supporting Future Farmers

The farming population in the EU is aging rapidly: in 2007, 55% of farm holders were above 55 year old (33% over 65 years old), while only 6% were under 35. A whole generation of farmers is reaching retirement age and, like for the general European population, this calls for a massive transfer of jobs, skills and means of production to a new generation. This generational transfer is complicated by the size of the phenomenon –more than half of farm holders will retire within few years – as well as by the fact that, maybe for the first time in history, many aging farmers do not have a successor. What are the needs of transferors and future farmers? What can we learn from existing initiatives supporting farm and the establishment of future farmers? How to address the specific needs of local, ecological farmers?

## 3. Managing Land as Commons

Land as a common resource, especially farmland, is currently threatened by financial and short-term interests. Land speculation, unregulated competition for use and soil sealing of farmland, land appropriation for speculative productions, lack of environmental or social concerns in land management, public land sales and land concentration are a consequence of the communities' exclusion from land management decision-making. Some citizen-based experiences are currently trying to reconsider land as a common resource to be preserved rather than a financial heaven and a commodity, and developing new ways of managing land as commons. What can we learn from these experiences? How to support and spread them? Which ways are they opening towards recognition of land as commons in Europe? How to better articulate these experiences, local authorities and public regulations?

#### **4. Developing policies ensuring (or promoting) land access for local, sustainable agriculture"**

A growing number of citizens, experts, associations, and local authorities are calling for an agriculture, which is sustainable, nurtures the social and economic local fabric and endorses a civic dimension by engaging directly with the community or providing public goods. While forms of local, resilient civic agriculture already exist throughout Europe, they are still marginal and under pressure from the majority model of intensive, specialised corporate agriculture and sidelined by the current CAP. In Eastern Europe, we also witness phenomena whereby small-scale, rather extensive forms of farming are being replaced by intensive monoculture – phenomena likely to be heightened by the opening of land markets in these countries. How could the CAP be reformed to address these issues? How can we draw from the FAO guidelines on land tenure? What can we learn from good practices of local and national regulations and policies?

# PROGRAM

## 8.45: Registration

### 9.15 – 10.00: Opening and Welcoming

- Andreas Biesantz, Demeter International
- Yves Somville, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
- Representative of the European Parliament – to be confirmed

### 10.00 – 12.00: Panel: Situation of Land Sharing vs. Land Speculation in Europe

- Patrick Holden, Sustainable Food Trust, UK - **Food Systems Transition**
- Robert Levesque, AEIAR / Fédération nationale des SAFER, France – **Land Issues in the EU**
- Pablo Servigne - **Land as Commons**
- Titus Bahner, Projektbüro Kulturlandschaft Hitzacker, Germany - **New Community-based Funding Models**

### 12.00 – 12.15: Introduction to the workshops: themes and general objectives - Sjoerd Wartena, Terre de liens, France

### 12.15 – 13.15: Lunch

### 13.15 – 14.45 Workshops, Session 1 – State of the Art: Current Situation and Good Practices

- Working Group 1: Preserving Farmland
- Working Group 2: Facilitating Farm Continuity and supporting Future Farmers
- Working Group 3: Managing Land as Commons
- Working Group 4: Developing policies ensuring (or promoting) land access for local, sustainable agriculture"

### 14.45 – 15.15: Coffee Break

### 15.15 – 16.45 Workshops, Session 2 – Building Ways Forward

- W.G. 1: Preserving Farmland
- W.G. 2: Facilitating Farm Continuity and supporting Future Farmers
- W.G. 3: Managing Land as Commons
- W.G. 4: Developing policies ensuring land access for local, sustainable agriculture"

### 17.00 – 18.00 Reporting of each Working Group, Final Discussion and Conclusions