



RIPESS EUROPE – Solidarity Economy Europe
5th General Assembly

Workshop 5

Solidarity Economy, Agroecology and Food Sovereignty: building bridges and strengthening transformative solutions

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The Nyéléni Forum on Agroecology took place in Mali in February 2015. The Declaration clearly identifies solidarity economy as one of the keys for achieving food sovereignty. It is not a set of production techniques or mere production practices.

Promote local markets for local products.

Support the development of alternative financial infrastructure, institutions and mechanisms to support both producers and consumers.

Reshape food markets through new relationships of solidarity between producers and consumers.

Develop links with the experience of solidarity economy and participatory guarantee systems, when appropriate.

One of the key bridging movements between the food sovereignty and solidarity economy is Community Supported Agriculture. There are also other emerging trends that connect producers and consumers through direct or genuine short food distribution chains: local food coop shops, farmers' collective shops.

This workshop aimed to examine:

- How the different forms of local solidarity partnerships between producers and consumers can influence policy makers and work collectively to build concrete solutions at territorial level
- Ensure that small-scale food producers can earn a decent living
- Guarantee that consumers have access to nutritional, healthy food that they can afford
- How these local initiatives fit into the wider picture of solidarity economy and agroecology

It also aimed to examine the threats as well as the opportunities facing the solidarity economy - agroecology - food sovereignty connections.

In order to turn the above reflexion into a World Café-style workshop, the following questions were asked:

What bridges do we need to build to achieve these goals?

How do we advocate for this? How do we make it happen?

The answers to the first question fell into different categories that can be best summarised as follows:

- Human rights form an overarching framework, including the right to food and adequate nutrition, social and environmental rights and decent work
- Food systems need to be local and to involve many different actors, producers, consumers and Local Authorities, but not intermediaries
- Institutional empowerment of CSO networks are one of the key factors
- Access to land is key to implementing local food sovereignty
- Experience sharing and training and education at all levels from primary schools to universities are essential tools
- The mutualisation of research and experience is an essential aspect
- Decommodification of food through local currencies enables the decoupling of food from financial speculation

The answers to how to advocate and make it happen:

- Build strong SSE networks at local level
- Work towards legislation at national and international level
- Educate and train at all levels
- Sharing experiences is key to knowledge building
- Communicate!
- Build a big picture approach based on a systemic vision

These outcomes fit closely with the proposed project to be submitted by Croatia for European funding (either under Horizon or Urbact or both). It will be supported by RIPESS Europe and Urgenci on specific axes, and is the outcome of one year's work and reflection between us and our Croatian partners, ZMAG, including E-Banka, a FEBEA member. The project outline as developed and approved by them is enclosed, as is the presentation made at the FEBEA conference in Croatia in May this year.