

Supporting access to land for farmers in Europe

Experiences and potential of local authorities



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“The most common barrier identified for new entrants into farming is access to land. Local authorities are found to be particularly helpful.”

European Focus Group on new entrants into farming, *New entrants into farming: lessons to foster innovation and entrepreneurship*, May 2016

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Foreword

Fostering the role of local authorities to guarantee access to land for farmers

By **Raimon Roda i Noya** Manager of the Consortium of the Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park, near Barcelona

Agricultural land is a complex, finite and limited renewable resource, which is becoming more and more scarce in metropolitan areas. Agricultural land is an asset to both the private and public sector, harbouring a high diversity of human activities. It is an essential resource, necessary for food production and a key element for rich and balanced ecosystems. It is, as well, a key ingredient in the constitution of the landscape and the quality of life of its population. It is the physical basis for farming: no land, no farmers. At the same time, farmers are the best guarantors of its management. Thus policy-makers and the administration cannot ignore the agricultural sector, neither in rural nor in urban areas, vital as they are as the providers of food - and of other ecosystem services.

Agricultural land is, however, highly vulnerable. It needs protecting if it is not to disappear. The fight is not just to prevent its physical disappearance - mainly through urbanisation - but also against the "tabula rasa": the idea that agricultural land has no value by itself; it is only a resource for "better" future projects. Agricultural space - valued according to its productive capability - needs its own account, its own identity, beginning with a solid, legal definition and delimitation.

The defence, promotion and management of agricultural land could be effected in several ways:

- Recovering abandoned or damaged plots; disseminating offers and claims for agricultural land; or setting up land banks;
- Promoting actions to restore agricultural land that has been degraded by dumping or other forbidden uses that challenge its ability to produce food for the population;
- Establishing incentives and coercive mechanisms to motivate the landowners of abandoned or unused plots to start growing or to make the plots available for rent or sale.

These measures must in turn relate to wider and more ambitious strategies, including both town and country planning, as well as systems of production, improved nutrition and consumption patterns. This requires a participatory approach involving all stakeholders. Thus, agricultural land whether in the metropolis or the countryside must be part of a common project and strategy. It should be able to interact with other areas of agricultural land. It should be an important piece of the landscape mosaic. Agricultural land must become a connected infrastructure, linked at the same time to the whole landscape. It must also be part of a socially and economically harmonious project.

The Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park (Parc Agrari del Baix Llobregat), an area specialising in food production next to a big metropolis - Barcelona and its metropolitan area - is a model of what can be achieved. The Park faced challenges that led to five percent of the agricultural land being abandoned and one percent of the land being degraded. This was against a background of high pressure for urban land encouraging speculation which in turn led landowners to hold onto their land rather than renting or selling it, hoping for prices to increase, and preventing its use by new entrants. Moreover, the aging population of farmers, the lack of succession, and the difficulty of maintaining farming as a viable economic activity all limit the historical role of the area as a source of food for the population.

Three key devices ensure the Park's protection and sustainability: a Special Urban Plan; a management entity (the Agricultural Park Consortium); and a Management and Development Plan. However, specific tools are needed to maintain the fertility of the agricultural soil that is left, and to make it available. So the Consortium is implementing three new tools: a pool of available land to invigorate the land market; a set of subsidies for the recovery of abandoned or regraded land; and a farm incubator programme.

Beyond these tools, the sustainability of agricultural land must rely on the identity and value of the agricultural activity developed, and thus on the existence of long term stable projects. With this aim, local authorities and other agents involved need to guarantee the social and economic viability of the project, and to allow farmers to continue with their activities. Active farmers are the best guarantee for the preservation of agricultural land! ●

About the authors

This booklet has been written by members of the European Access to Land network, as part of a European partnership focused on promoting access to land for agroecological farmers.

The European Access to Land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological farming and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 20 organisations. The network's main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land, and to put land issues in the spotlight. To that end, it organises information and experience-sharing, fosters cooperation between members, and facilitates broader communication.

For two years, our organisations have researched the experiences of local authorities engaged in facilitating access to land for farmers. This publication presents our results. It analyses how local authorities are approaching farmland in order to support job creation, local food systems, environment protection and vibrant rural communities, and presents a range of good practices to get inspiration from.

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Introduction

“Local authorities, as the public institutions closest to citizens, hold responsibility to execute a mandate to satisfy their constituencies’ needs, mainly through the provision of basic services. They have opportunities to mobilise their local communities, in most of the cases, while acting as catalysts for change.”

European Commission¹

¹ Source: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-rights-and-governance/local-authorities_en

In today’s European Union of 28 Member States, nearly 300 regions and 91 000 municipalities have major powers in key sectors such as education, the environment, transport and economic development. They account for two thirds of the total public investment expenditure and are vital to the democratic life of the European Union. The quality of local governance depends on how local authorities manage and implement public policies and services; on the basis of local policy-making processes and interactions with other public institutions, citizens and private sector; and on the allocation of available resources.

Local and regional authorities have a key role to play to support agroecological farmers in finding and securing farmland in good condition. While many agricultural and land policies are made at the provincial and federal level, there is still a great deal that local authorities can do to facilitate access to land for agroecological farmers, particularly new entrants.

This report results from our experience as field-based organisations working on various issues including: support to young farmers; community land trusts; land stewardship; and support for organic agriculture. Besides our own experience of collaborating and engaging with local authorities, we have drawn from exchanges with experts and partner organisations who also work with local authorities.

This report presents some approaches and levers that local authorities are using or could use to facilitate access to land for farmers. It consists of:

- an overview of the situation in Europe, based on our experience in six European countries: Spain, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Italy, Romania and France;
- a detailed analysis of approaches, policy levers and challenges met by local authorities in each of our six countries;
- a compilation of 15 good practice case studies from across Europe
- This report can be used by:
 - local authorities wishing to broaden their understanding of their potential role with regard to farmland, to receive inspiration from foreign examples and to learn about a range of tools and levers they can use to fulfil their objectives;
 - farmers and community groups who are collaborating with their local authority or seeking to mobilise it in favour of farmland access and preservation.

There are undoubtedly major differences in the governance structure from country to country, as well as in the political make-up of every local authority, due to geography and history. As a result, what works well in one authority may not be automatically transferable to another. Our analysis however shows that similar challenges and issues - promoting local food systems, developing vibrant rural areas, limiting climate change, etc. - are evident in all countries. Everywhere, political determination is the key to the success stories that we have analysed. We hope that reading about the policies and best practice set out in this report will inspire local stakeholders and contribute to improvements for farmers, food security, local communities and the environment. ●

Overview

Access to land: the challenges

² Read more on the role and importance of small farms in Europe: www.accesstoland.eu/Recognising-the-viability-of-small-farms-and-their-territorial-impacts.

³ For more data and information, see: www.accesstoland.eu/Land-Data

Farmland is the irreplaceable basis for food production. We need farmland to grow our food and feed local communities, while creating local jobs and preserving ecosystems. To farmers, farmland is many things at once: a means of production, workplace, home, source of identity and belonging, and an environment to steward for current and future generations.

But farmland represents a site of convergence of many different uses and users. Urban and infra-structure development mostly take place at the expense of farmland. In parallel, non-food uses of farmland - particularly for biofuels - are growing rapidly, thereby limiting the area for food production. Crucially, competition for land also exists between models of farming. Intensive agriculture - taken to extremes with the rise of corporate agriculture - is operating on ever-larger areas, while agroecological and small-scale farming is declining².

Today, preserving land for agroecological farmers is a major struggle throughout Europe. In our experience, the main land challenges faced by agroecological farmers and local communities³ are:

The loss of farmland

The Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) represents approximately 40% of EU territory. From 1993 to 2013, the EU- 27 (in its current borders) lost 12% of its agricultural area, i.e. over 22 million hectares (approximately the area of Romania). Most land is lost to urban sprawl and infrastructure projects. In some countries, land abandonment also plays a major role in farmland loss. The loss of farmland is becoming a threat to achieving sufficient local food production, as well as to the resilience of many local areas.

Increasing environmental pressure

Intensive farming practices - monoculture, use of heavy equipment, use of fertilisers and pesticides, etc. - result in soil compaction and degradation, pollution of soil and water resources, and the loss of biodiversity, which in turn undermines the quality and resilience of farming ecosystems. Environmental pressures on farmland often result in the homogenisation of landscapes and the deterioration of ecosystems; this then negatively impacts the quality of life and the attractiveness of the local area.

Land concentration

Land for sale or rent usually goes to larger farmers who tend to have more financial means to buy land as well as support from agricultural institutions and other farmers. Today, out of 12 million farms in the EU, only 3% are large farms (over 100 hectares), but they farm 50% of the land. Land concentration is increasing in the EU, making land distribution in Europe highly inequitable. Land concentration has direct impacts in terms of the diversity of food produced, farm employment, economic vitality, natural resources and landscapes.

The financialisation of the land market and the rise of land speculation

Many landowners now view land primarily as a money-making asset. Landowners in peri-urban areas hope for land to be designated for development, as it may lead to a tenfold increase in land prices. Non-agricultural investors invest in farmland to secure food provision and/or speculate on land prices. Across Europe, diverse pressures have resulted in skyrocketing farmland prices, with a rise of up to 200% in the Netherlands, and 400% in the UK from 1990 to 2014. Prices are now so high that using farmland for farming is becoming uneconomical which hinders the entry of a new generation of farmers. In addition, financialisation and speculation are fuelling land concentration and the development of corporate agriculture, at the expense of diverse local farms.

The need for generational renewal

In 2010, 48% of farmers were aged over 55 (25% were over 65). Many have no identified succession plan, from either their own family or elsewhere. Without proactive support for farm succession, particularly to enable the entry of a new generation of farmers, many farms will end up closing down or being absorbed by neighbouring farms. This will result in a loss of population, jobs and local activities from rural areas (farming as well as related businesses, social or cultural activities).

All these issues have direct impacts on local food provision, jobs, economic development, balanced spatial development and the environment. They are therefore receiving increased interest from local authorities. ●

Local authorities' role in access to land

General role of local authorities

All EU countries experienced a decentralisation process over the last 40 years with an overall tendency to transfer competences from the state to local authorities (including sometimes newly created competences). Local authorities' power is variable, according to the country, their functions and areas of work, their size and income sources. Our study focuses on six countries - Belgium, France, Italy, Romania, Spain, and the UK - where the structure and composition of local authorities are very diverse (see Appendix 1).

Local authorities set guidelines or directly regulate a wide array of human activities. In most countries, they play a key role in land planning and local development. They are thus responsible for allocating land to a variety of uses: infrastructure, housing, industry, services, agriculture and conservation areas. Over the past decades, most local authorities have favoured industry, services and housing as the best source of added value and local development. For a long time, they also viewed urban sprawl as the only and desirable form of urban development. As a result, in many instances, farmland has been considered as a reserve for future urban development, and farmland loss has gone largely unnoticed.

Public finance is another key parameter in local authorities' engagement with land and farming. In many countries, local authorities draw part of their income from property tax and business tax. As the market value of urban and designated land is higher than that of farmland, urban sprawl serves to directly increase their income. Allocating land to business parks and commercial areas also results in more business taxes and job creation. In terms of local authority spending, they tend to favour other sectors considered more important than agriculture, such as education, social development, and economic development.

For the past two decades, however, an increasing number of local authorities have developed an interest in food and farming as part of their local development policies and/or their sustainable development policies. This was initially due to a variety of reasons: promoting local quality food in public restaurants and local markets; developing a green belt to increase local food supply; supporting local businesses and job creation; promoting environmentally friendly forms of farming as a way to manage environmental risks or preserve assets (e.g. water resources); or improving their food resilience as part of their climate change strategy.

Strengthening local authorities' action on farmland

Shifting from a food and farming policy to a deeper engagement with land is often a complex step for local authorities. They may lack a clear vision of the state-of-play of local agriculture and food systems, as well as of the local land market. They may also doubt their role or legitimacy to act. For many local authorities, it takes a major change of mindset to stop considering farmland as a 'reserve' for urban development, and agriculture as a sector in an inevitable state of decline. Often, this change stems from one of these situations:

- A local authority has a major environmental responsibility (e.g. risk prevention) or policy objectives (e.g. climate change), which a particular use of farmland can help fulfil;
- A local authority owns significant areas of farmland as part of its public assets and decides to use this land strategically;
- A local authority seeks benefits associated with agroecology, in terms of local quality food provision, health, economic development, social activities, or environmental protection.

In developing these policies, local authorities often respond to the expectations and requests of community-based organisations, community members or other local stakeholders.

Pursuing environmental objectives

Some local authorities are interested in promoting sustainable forms of farming as a way to preserve and manage natural areas of particular significance – e.g. entrusting the farmland in water catchment areas to organic farmers to ensure high water quality and cut water treatment costs.

As agroecological farming contributes to major environmental objectives, local authorities may support it as part of their environmental policies. In this way, they can draw from environmental regulations and policy instruments – which are often more developed than those for farmland and agriculture – as well as from environmental budgets, which may have more dedicated resources.

Acting on farmland may help them fulfil the following environmental objectives:

- Protecting water catchment areas to ensure water quality
- Preventing risks: floods, bush fires, and drought
- Limiting climate change and mitigating its impacts, through changes in agriculture
- Maintaining soil quality
- Preserving local landscapes

Strategically managing farmland

In all six countries under study, local authorities own farms and farmland. In many instances, local authorities have no clear design for using this land, apart from generating income to cover their cost and contribute to the public budget.

Increasingly, local authorities are developing a vision and purpose for their farmland. They are renting out to farmers who not only pay a rent but also fulfil some of their policy goals, e.g. maintaining a traditional market gardening area or providing organic food to local consumers. Some are also using it to achieve a non-farming long-term purpose, such as containing urban sprawl or preserving water resources.

Seeking the benefits associated with agroecology

An increasing number of local authorities are recognising that agroecological farming is beneficial for local communities and local development (see graph below). On the other hand, conventional farming may not contribute much to the public good locally as the environmental and social benefits are often minimal and the food produced is traded on global commodity markets.

Contribution of agroecological farming and public expenditure avoided

-
- Food security
 - Producing local food
 - Water resource protection (Storing and purification of water)
 - Biodiversity
 - Reducing of greenhouse gas emissions / climate change
 - Job creation
 - Healthy diets and obesity prevention



Agroecological farming

Agroecological farms create jobs and local businesses, contribute to public health objectives, help to protect or even restore natural resources and biodiversity, maintain rich and diversified landscapes, etc. Some agroecological farms also engage in non-farming activities such as on-farm tourism or educational activities, which contribute to the quality of life and attractiveness of the local area. This means that the benefits associated with agroecology are aligned with the policy objectives of many local authorities. In addition, supporting agroecology enables local authorities to avoid certain costs (e.g. health costs, post-flood restoration, etc.).

With the financial crises, many local authorities are facing a reduction in the level of income transferred by national governments, and/or of their direct tax incomes (e.g. decrease of taxes based on the construction sector and on businesses). This financial pressure directly impacts their capacity to develop proactive food and farming policies. However, our experience shows that some local authorities are managing to balance this pressure and to support farming as part of their local development and/or environmental policies.

Local authorities' approaches to land use and management

Local authorities may play a direct role in farmland use, allocation and management. They may intervene at different stages and through widely diverse approaches. Some stem from a recognition of the strategic importance of food and farming, and the need to adequately plan and manage farmland use. Many start by conducting pilot projects, or engaging with a specific situation, before scaling up their action, or being asked to do so by local communities. In our experience, local authorities can play a role in:

- Preserving farmland: planning for sustainable land use, limiting urban sprawl, protecting farmland from environmental damages;
- Organising general land accessibility: monitoring local farmland use, reclaiming abandoned land, supporting the constitution of viable farm units, facilitating farm succession, etc.
- Directing land towards specific uses and users: renting their land to priority farmers (young farmers, vegetable growers, organic producers), encouraging local landowners to rent to priority farmers, stocking land for future projects, etc.
- Providing a favourable environment for agroecological farmers and minimising the withdrawal from farming: developing local markets, public education campaigns about local produce, facilitating access to housing, setting up a farm incubator, etc.
- These various routes of action are further described in the next section.

- Local councillors and staff have found creative ways to mobilise the wide range of instruments at their disposal. They commonly use one or a mix of the following levers:
- Planning levers: Strategies, plans and processes setting out the vision for regional development as well as how land areas can be used and changes in land use.
- Regulatory levers: Rules which regulate the land market, farmland management, environmental protection and agricultural activities.
- Tax levers: Fiscal instruments which are used to curtail land speculation, prevent changes in farmland use or help new entrants and agroecological projects (tax rebate).
- Use of public assets: Use of existing public land or acquisition of new land to entrust it to farmers who will deliver benefits for the local community.
- Distributive and redistributive policies: policies which aim at providing services to the community as a whole, or to support specific groups.
- Local dialogue: processes to involve local stakeholders in the creation, implementation or evaluation of a strategy or policy regarding land and farming.
- Public education: educational campaigns about the benefits of local food, the work of farmers, etc. to create a support base and increase local food demand.

Local authorities and other players

Most of the time, local authorities have to act hand in hand with other local authorities, the state and agricultural institutions, as the responsibilities and policy instruments around farmland and agriculture are usually shared between several tiers of governance. It therefore often takes concerted planning, dialogue and cooperation, and hence time, to design and implement a project.

Local authorities may also engage with community groups to address farmers' needs and issues. Community groups can play an important role both by calling upon local authorities to act and by supporting them to do so. They can provide expertise, share lessons learnt from other local authorities, participate in land planning processes, conduct an independent or participatory review of local farmland, run educational campaigns or help build local support for a project. Some may also directly engage in farmland management, by renting out land from the local authority or setting up a community trust to acquire farmland, independently or in partnership with local authorities. ●



Local authorities' main courses of action

1. Preserving farmland

Why should local authorities act?

Farmland is disappearing at a fast pace throughout Europe (see above). Most of this land is lost to urban sprawl and infrastructure projects. The pressure is particularly high around urban centres and along the coastline, areas which also often have the most fertile farmland. In some areas, particularly in the mountains, the loss of farmland is also due to the decline of farming and land abandonment.

Farmland loss is of direct concern to local authorities. It limits local food production, entails the destruction of local jobs and livelihoods in rural communities and has many negative environmental impacts. In addition, soil sealing is a largely irreversible phenomenon.

Local authorities are also directly responsible for preserving farmland as they are in charge of land planning. For decades, most have viewed farmland as a reserve resource that can be used for the development of urban areas, industries and services. An urgent shift is needed to recognise the irreplaceable value of farmland and to preserve it in spatial and land planning documents. At state level, some countries (e.g. Germany, France) have started defining long-term objectives to curtail the loss of farmland. Increasingly, spatial planning documents, set for national or provincial levels, rest on the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development approaches are better able to account for the multiple functions of farmland such as wildlife habitat, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, food production, economic development or landscape quality.

Local authorities in charge of land planning - mostly municipalities - now need to develop a wider and more sustainable vision of farmland and the farming sector and to reflect it in their planning documents.

What are existing tools?

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Planning levers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing a vision and strategy for agriculture, recognising its multiple contributions to local development and territorial balance. – Implementing this vision in the planning documents to better include agriculture and food production in local land use needs. This includes recognising that farming works with ecosystems and needs land coherence beyond the farm unit. – Giving specific protection status to certain farmland areas through local, regional or national documents (incl. EU schemes such as Natura 2000, blue/green grids) |
| Tax levers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Taxes to limit land speculation and farmland conversion to non-agricultural uses – Favouring brownfield development through tax rebates or exemptions. |
| Regulatory levers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Asking developers to compensate for farmland loss, through acquisition or conversion elsewhere – Adopting environmental regulations which set objectives for natural resources or biodiversity protection which agroecological farming can fulfil |
| Use of public assets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Constituting land reserves to preserve areas of strategic importance |
| Distributive levers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Setting up land banks to stock land and/ or direct it to sustainable farming practices |

How to go further?

To improve the impact of their actions in favour of preserving farmland, local authorities may:

- Analyse the state of play of local agriculture and farmland, their strength and challenges, as well as their contributions, based on sustainable development principles.
- Produce planning documents with an ambitious vision for sustainable local development. Planning documents have a bigger impact when backed by broad policy goals: supporting agroecology, limiting land fragmentation, increasing urban density, etc.
- Ensure good coordination between planning at national, regional and local levels, in terms of objectives, priorities and speed of action. Sometimes, spatial plans display opposite measures to those of municipal urban plans, or are too vague to be implemented at municipal level. In other cases, municipal plans divert from certain sustainable development goals (e.g. increasing urban density).
- Define strategic areas to be designated permanently as farmland. Where possible, this designation should be legally enshrined at the provincial or national level to avoid later changes due to local elections, or local arrangements.
- Consider carefully the specific needs and challenges of connecting housing and land planning - e.g. building a housing

- settlement with land plots attached to them; enabling farmers to build a farmhouse, while preventing over-building on farmland.
- Include indicators for urban density in planning documents: limiting urban sprawl and encouraging brownfield development

Learn more on farmland preservation from the following case studies:

- Belgium, Walloon Region: Directing farmland use towards environmentally friendly farming practices in a Natura 2000 area.
- France, Livradois-Forez: change in spatial planning to value farming and preserve land in farmland use and encourage the convergence of local land plans.
- France, Mouans-Sartoux: change in the local land planning document and land acquisition to ensure self-sufficiency from local organic produce.
- France, Ile d'Yeu: participatory vision and plan for local agricultural development.
- Spain, Palou-Granollers: developing a vision and plan for local agriculture.
- Spain, Gallecs: designating protected agricultural areas in the spatial and urban plans.
- UK, Brighton and Hove: Encouraging public land in sustainable farmland use to ensure environmental benefits.

See also:

- France: [Clermont-Ferrand: organising temporary land storage to preserve farmland and support new farmers](#)
- UK: [Simms Shared Harvest: managing public land for the benefit of the community](#)

2. Organising land accessibility

Why should local authorities act?

Preserving land from urban development is not enough to make it available for farmers. Farmers may struggle to find information about available land, land may be too fragmented, farm succession may require support, etc. Through general measures benefiting the farming sector, local authorities can help address issues limiting farmland availability or accessibility to farmers. As the closest public administrations, they know well the local area and community, and are often considered legitimate by all parties.

Improve market transparency and curtail land concentration:

Farmers – particularly new entrants – are often faced with the opacity of the land market. Investors and established farmers often buy the land before it comes for sale on the open market. Besides, retiring farmers or local landowners usually prefer to sell or rent their land to a local farmer whom they know, rather than to a newcomer. Local authorities can help improve access to information about land for sale and rent, facilitate contact between farmers and landowners, or acquire land to avoid concentration.

Facilitate farm succession and the entry of a new generation:

Farm succession is often an invisible challenge. Many ageing farmers will retire within less than a decade, most of them with no successors. Local authorities that wish to maintain farming as part of their local economic fabric and to promote good land stewardship need to act. They can conduct a review of local farm succession needs and support ageing farmers to prepare their succession.

In parallel, local authorities can help new entrants, particularly newcomers to farming, who have no family farm. Social, generational and/or cultural differences between new farmers and landowners often create challenges in producing agreements between them. Local authorities have an essential role to play in mediating with all stakeholders.

Improve plots' viability:

In some areas, land is highly fragmented between multiple small landowners. Land for sale may not be in large enough units to create a viable farm. In this case, local authorities can help amalgamate and reallocate plots, or stock land until they gather enough for a new farm.

In other cases, farmland areas need drainage, irrigation, bush clearance, or better access to make it viable for farming. Local authorities can directly carry out or finance the necessary works. In some countries, local authorities can also claim ownership of abandoned land (unoccupied or ownerless) and put it back on the land market by renting or selling it.

⁴ A pre-emption right, or right of pre-emption, is a contractual right to acquire certain property before it can be offered to any other person or entity. Also called a "first option to buy."

Moderate land prices and counter speculation:

Certain areas – near cities, in coastal areas or areas of high tourist pressure – are prone to high land prices and speculation. While land prices are mostly regulated at national or provincial levels, local authorities may decide to act to ensure that land remains available and affordable for farmers. Planning documents are a key signal to landowners that certain areas will remain farmland in the long run, which helps to undercut landowners' speculation. Taxing land speculation or using a pre-emptive right to buy over-priced land may also signal the intention of the local authority to local landowners.

What are existing tools?

Planning levers

- Mapping existing farms and farmland to identify key issues (land available for farm succession, abandoned land, fragmented land, etc.). Can be developed as result of local dialogue.
- Giving long-term farmland designation in planning documents, to avoid speculation.

Local dialogue

- Facilitating contacts between landowners/retiring farmers and farmers, including convincing landowners to sell/rent their land to a new generation.
- Where local authorities are involved in the management of Commons: ensuring that common lands are accessible to the farming community, and not privatised

Distributive policies

- Organising a service to make an inventory and publicise land offers and demands on a local level. Where relevant, help connect offers and demands.
- Providing infrastructure and services to restore land to viable farming (e.g. creating an access path, providing access to water, draining land, paying a contractor to remove bush and scrubs, etc.)
- Setting up a land bank to reclaim abandoned or under-used land and serve as intermediary between land offers and demands.

Regulatory levers

- Monitoring the land situation, including transparency on land ownership, (e.g. availability of land registers)
- Recovering abandoned land (unoccupied or ownerless)
- Adapting succession law to limit land fragmentation
- Moderating agricultural land prices through pre-emption rights⁴

Tax levers

- Increasing property taxes for abandoned farmland
- Taxing land speculation

Public education

- Campaign to encourage ageing farmers to prepare their farm succession
 - Campaign to encourage landowners to rent out their land
-

How to go further?

Local authorities can improve their impact on land availability and accessibility by:

- Developing a strategic approach, combining a diagnosis and an action plan. Including these actions in the food and farming and/or environmental policies will help mobilise support and capacity/resources.
- Fostering multi-stakeholder processes, particularly to map the situation, and to conduct local dialogue. Local authorities can also support community groups which facilitate local mediation or act as intermediaries between farmers and landowners.
- Combining several levers and approaches: local dialogue and distributive policies are often mutually reinforcing. In some cases, local authorities may choose to rely only on local dialogue, or opt for regulatory approaches to change behaviour faster.
- Acting on land sales is often a very powerful way to influence land availability and accessibility. All local authorities can intervene through local dialogue and mediation. Some can also act through taxes and regulations. Acquiring land, particularly through a pre-emptive right to buy, is one of the most powerful tools (see below).

Learn more on land accessibility from the following experiences:

- Belgium, Walloon Region: Allocating public land to organic farmers through call for tender.
- France, Bourgoin-Jallieu: joint farm acquisition with a community farmland trust.
- France, Mouans-Sartoux: direct municipal farmland management and food production to cater for local school canteens.
- Italy: tender for selling public land with clear criteria in favour of organic farming, multi-functionality, social farming and cooperative business model.
- UK, Brighton and Hove: adapting the tendering process to support small and medium size farmers and environmental and social factors.
- UK, Dorset: providing starter farms for new entrants.

See also:

- France: [Eygagères Farm: recreating a farm out of consolidated land](#)
- France: [Clermont-Ferrand: organising land portage to preserve farmland and support new farmers](#)

3. Directing land towards specific uses and users

Why should local authorities act?

Access to land is particularly difficult for agroecological farmers. Their production model is often based on limited size, diverse production and activities (e.g. processing), and short supply chains. These often do not match the existing expectations and criteria necessary to benefit from bank loans and public support. As new entrants, they often have less financial capacity than established farmers. Besides, many agroecological new entrants are newcomers to farming and therefore lack the social and professional networks to be chosen by local farmers or landowners as the buyer or tenant farmer of their land. Some may also lack skills or practical experience.

Local authorities can help channel farms to specific uses and users such as agroecological projects and new entrants. The most direct way to do so is to rent the land they own to these farmers. They may also intervene when other farms go for rent or sale: mediating with the landowners, helping to stock land until a desirable user is found, acquiring the land in view of renting or selling it back. On a broader scale, local authorities may also set up or participate in land banks charged with allocating land to sustainable farming practices and specific farmers (young, female farmers, community groups...).

Using public land ownership as a tool

Local authorities may use land they already own, and/or decide to acquire additional land to fulfil specific policy objectives.

Management of existing public land

Some local authorities have been very creative in using their land to facilitate entry into farming, promote organic agriculture, maintain a green belt or combine farming with strict environmental objectives. Some are running starter farms, or providing facilities for a farm incubator. Some are using their land to reach their objectives of local (organic) food procurement. Others are facilitating conversion to farming, or preserving a traditional market gardening sector.

Here, the main challenge is a financial one. As most local authorities have decreasing budgets, they may be eager to sell their farmland to balance public expenditure. They then often tend to sell to the highest bidder rather than considering other criteria. Our organisations encourage local authorities to keep their land and encourage them to use it for agroecology. Our experience shows that some local authorities are succeeding to balance this financial pressure and wisely using their farmland as a public asset to fulfil their policy objectives.

If they decide to sell their land, we urge local authorities to choose criteria so as to ensure long term agroecological use of their land, for instance by selling it to a community land trust.

Acquisition of new farmland

Some local authorities wish to acquire farmland, to constitute public land reserves or be able to act on a specific farm or area of symbolic or strategic importance. Acquiring land is a very direct way to be able to rent it or sell it back to chosen farmers. It can also signal to local landowners the willingness of the local authority to prevent certain conducts such as land speculation, or concentration (see below pre-emption rights).

Again, the major limit is a financial one. To get around it, some local authorities cooperate with others (e.g. groupings of municipalities). Others choose to acquire land only for a transitory period before they sell it back to a farmer or community business who will fulfil their policy goals (see below temporary land storage). Local authorities also have the possibility of co-acquiring land with a community farmland trust.

What are existing tools?

Use of public assets

- Making an inventory of farmland owned, or managed by the local authority. Developing a plan of action to use it for the benefit of the community.
- Organising calls to tender for public land which give priority to agroecological farmers (e.g. premium points for organic, small scale farming, young farmers).
- Making public land available to agroecological farmers on favourable terms (e.g. low rent which increases after the start-up years).
- Directly farming public land for public benefits (e.g. municipal food production).
- Managing start-up farms, which are rented to new entrants for a few years, as they gain experience and are able to move on to their own farm.
- Acquiring new farmland (sometimes through a pre-emption right) to rent it or sell it to specific farmers.
- Co-acquiring new farmland, with community organisations, to promote community-supported agriculture.
- Selling public land under favourable conditions for community businesses which will ensure it remain farmland dedicated to agroecological projects.

Local dialogue

- Mobilising landowners and organising contacts with agroecological farmers, particularly newcomers
- Acting as intermediary for farm succession

Distributive policies

- Stocking land or paying a land bank to stock land until a suitable farmer is available
- Setting up a land bank to sell/ rent land to young farmers, organic farmers

⁵ See presentation on “Temporary Land Storage and land storage agreements” on www.accessstoland.eu

How to go further?

There is an increasing number of rich experiences of public land management benefiting agroecology. Based on the experiences studied, we have identified some other powerful levers for local authorities to intervene in favour of agroecology and community supported agriculture:

Acquiring land with a preemptive right to buy

Having a preemptive right to buy land gives a person or an institution the capacity to impose themselves as the buyer of a piece of land that goes for sale. They automatically become the buyer, and the seller usually has no other choice than to renounce selling the land. Legal preemptive rights to buy land exist in farming contracts and tenancy regulation, and can benefit public bodies, farmers and their family, or community groups.

The preemptive right to buy is a key tool for local authorities as it enables them to become the owner of strategic plots. It serves the local authority's purpose for those specific farms, while being a strong signal to other landowners and farmers. Acquiring land with a preemptive right to buy helps:

- Prevent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses;
- Curb land concentration;
- Create public land reserves;
- Moderate land prices;
- Direct farmland to specific users: agroecological farmers, new entrants, small-scale farmers, where the land is rent or sold back to them.

In many countries, local authorities or other public bodies (e.g. land banks) have at least some forms of preemptive rights to buy, often used for urban development. In some cases, they also have pre-emptive rights to buy farmland or can adapt urban preemptive rights to farmland areas.

Temporarily stocking farmland⁵

Temporary land storage (or portage) is the temporary holding of agricultural land and buildings which can be used in combination with a preemption right. If there is no farm successor, or no new entrant matching the objectives which a local authority or public institution has for a piece of land, the authority may decide to acquire the farm and buildings and then resell them after a period of time. This period of time makes it possible to find a farmer matching the criteria and /or gives the farmers time to prepare their entry into farming (e.g. completing training, finalising administrative procedures or bank loan applications).

As with preemptive rights to buy, both local authorities and public bodies can implement land portage. It is a much more affordable option than public land acquisition, while

having a positive effect on land use and agroecology. The cost of these operations is the loss of capital remuneration (which is approximately the current interest rate). This instrument has been particularly developed over the past decade by French Regional Councils.

Transferring public land to community organisations

Where they need to sell public land, or choose to do so to ensure agroecological land use beyond the current local council, local authorities may choose to sell their land to community organisations. In the UK, the Community Asset Transfer is an instrument allowing publicly owned land to be transferred to a community organisation for less than its market value to achieve a public benefit. In several countries (England, Scotland, Belgium, France), local authorities are already collaborating with community land trusts or other forms of community development trusts to whom they sell or long-term lease public land to ensure it will be used for social, economic and environmental benefits of the community.

Learn more on directing land to specific uses from the following experiences:

- Belgium, Brussels: Using designated land for farming; mapping areas of high potential for new farm holdings.
- France, Bourgoin-Jallieu: mobilising a public body (SAFER) to temporarily stock land to preserve it in farming use.
- France, Livradois-Forez: monitoring land transfer opportunities through an online platform; organising local dialogue and amicable plot exchanges; pre-emptive land acquisition.
- France, Ile d'Yeu: participatory local dialogue to map, prioritise and reclaim abandoned land. Using pre-emption rights (SAFER) to preserve farmland and counter speculation.
- Spain, Lluçanès: Mediating agreements for grazing in private forests to maintain active farming and limit bush fires; investing in land improvements (water tanks, fences, recovering fountains...)
- Spain, Gallecs: designating protected agricultural areas in the spatial and urban plans
- UK, Dorset: review of land holdings and rationalisation programme to maintain farms of a viable size, investment to improve farm viability.
- UK: Cambridgeshire County Farms to facilitate new entrants start-up

See also:

- France: [Stocking land temporarily to enable two new growers to enter farming](#)
- France: Clermont-Ferrand: [organising land portage to preserve farmland and support new farmers](#)
- France: Terres de Rivières: [Fighting back: from land loss to developing positive local community](#)
- Italy: [Mobilising land from the municipality: the hard-won experience of Arvaia CSA](#)
- UK: [Simms Shared Harvest: managing public land for the benefit of the community](#)

4. Providing a favourable environment to agroecological farmers

Why should local authorities act?

With most public policies and the organisation of the agro-food system mostly focused on intensive agriculture, agroecological farmers are often struggling to start and expand their business. Local authorities can decisively act to provide them a favourable environment, and thereby meet increasing public demand for local quality food and sustainable forms of farming.

Local authorities can directly support farmers by providing subsidies and facilitating their access to services: housing, training, loans, etc. They may also support agroecology through increasing the demand for agroecological produce. They can indeed develop local market infrastructures and channels, as well as run public campaigns to sensitise consumers about the value and benefits of local food. With foresight, some local authorities can also choose to support the setting up of farm incubators or the development of extension services, to prepare a new generation of agroecological farmers and secure their entry into farming.

Farm Incubators

A farm incubator enables prospective farmers to develop their farm business autonomously in full scale, while providing a protected environment. Through a farm incubator, prospective farmers can indeed experiment agronomic practices, marketing routes, processing or any other aspect of their future farm business. The experiment takes place over a limited period of time, within a framework limiting risks and staggering development and risk-taking. During the experiment, prospective farmers are given access to production means (land, equipment) as well as a business status and welfare. They also often receive mentoring or

guidance, from other farmers and experts. At the end of their experimental period, the candidates evaluate their project and themselves so as to decide whether to continue, adjust or abandon their project.

Farm incubators often provide guidance and infrastructure to several future farmers at once. They have many positive impacts on access to land and agroecological projects:

- They minimise withdrawal, as the candidates who tested their project in real conditions have better chances of success.
- they can facilitate access to land, by helping prospective farmers develop local social and professional networks which are key to finding land. It will also make them more credible in the eyes of local farmers and landowners.
- they facilitate market development. Prospective farmers they who start producing while on part of farm incubator, can start selling products and create a customer base which they will keep once on their own farm.

Read more on farm incubators: www.accesstoland.eu

What are existing tools?

Distributive policies

- Developing local markets
- Adapting public tendering to Increase public provision from local farmers
- Supporting the development of short supply chains (incl. farmers' markets, farmers' shops, box schemes, etc.)
- Supporting farmers' collaborations through the mutualisation of production and marketing means and the setting up of logistical platforms
- Setting up or supporting quality labels for local products
- Facilitating access to housing for future farmers (e.g. by acquiring the farm house, providing access to social housing, subsidising the farmer's rent, etc.).
- Building capacities for new farmers
- Participating in the establishment of a farm incubator
- Supporting entrepreneurs' training programs
- Supporting business start ups
- Guaranteeing funds to help farmers obtain bank loans
- Investing in or subsidising equipment or buildings for farmers
- Facilitating access to basic services (internet, education, medical services) in rural areas

Public education

- Public campaigns to promote Km.0 products, organic products, local labels
- Public campaigns to promote farmers' markets, CSA schemes, etc.
- Supporting open days and other educational activities on agroecological farms

Local dialogue

- Participating in processes to support newly established farmers and facilitate their integration in the local community

Tax levers

- Reducing property tax for new entrants or agroecological projects
- Reducing business taxes for young/ agroecological farmers

How to go further?

It is this fourth dimension where most local authorities have taken action, so that there is a wide number of good practices and studies to be learnt from. Organising local dialogue and directly engaging with farmers, future farmers and community groups to better understand their needs and capacities is an important key to success.

Local councillors should also feel confident to consider agriculture as a cornerstone of local development, not only for environmental purposes, but also for its economic benefits (including by creating jobs that cannot be relocated), and local/regional attraction. Supporting agroecological farmers is a form of support to local businesses. Successful strategies may come from thinking out of the agricultural box, and transferring experiences from other economic and social sectors (e.g. farm incubators).

Learn more on providing a favourable environment from the following experiences:

- Belgium, Brussels: Setting up a farm incubator and organising training sessions.
- Belgium: promoting sustainable urban food chains
- Belgium, Walloon Region: Encouraging synergies between farmers.
- France, Bourgoin-Jallieu: acquisition of the farm house to facilitate entry of a new grower; supporting sale of organic produce on local markets.
- France, Mouans-Sartoux: educating school children, municipal staff and the public about the value of local, seasonal organic food.
- Spain, Gallecs: Multiple forms of support to new entrants (subsidies, access to local markets); Public campaigns about local agriculture; favouring local farmers on local markets; supporting the setting of a farmers' shop and a machinery ring.
- Spain, Palou-Granollers: Multiple forms of support to new entrants (subsidies, access to local markets, access to housing)
- UK, Dorset: Using county farms to showcase farming as key to sustainable rural communities; encouraging tenant farmers to hire apprentices. ●

Country studies

Belgium

Terre-en-vue

⁶ Check key data on agricultural land in Belgium in Appendix 2. Read more on the Belgium context on land and agriculture at: <http://www.accesstoland.eu/-Belgium-61->

Introduction

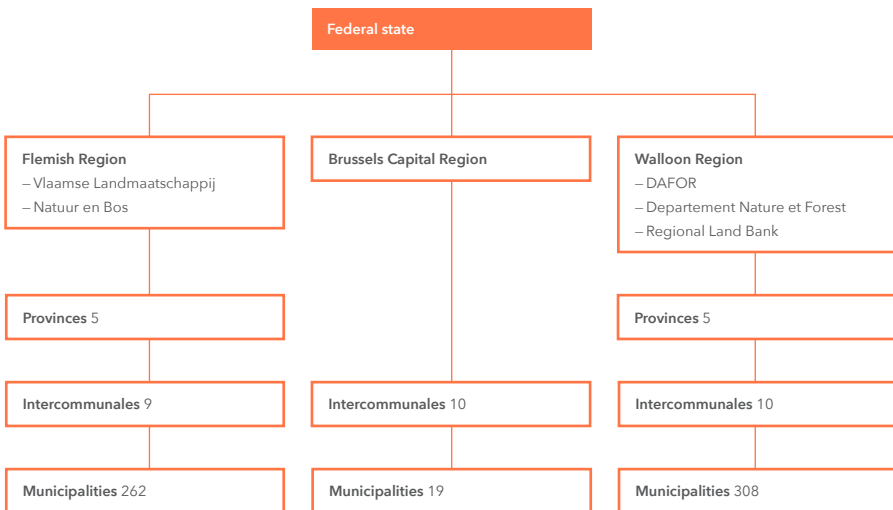
The major trend in Belgian farming is the structural disappearance of the number of farms brought about by the phenomenon of land concentration. In 34 years, from 1980 to 2014, Belgium lost 67 % of its farms. During the same period the average farm size has tripled, whereas the farming sector lost 60 % of its labour force. The average Belgian farm size is now 40 ha. Another important trend seems to be the replacement of family related force by a non-family labour force shifting from 4 % in 1980 to 20 % in 2013.

These trends seem to be paralleled by European trends, though the pace seems to be more rapid in Belgium. This may be related to a particular contextual feature in which Belgian agriculture is developing i.e. an extremely high population density causing farmland to be scarce. This has continuously pushed land prices upward (between 25.000 and 50.000 € per hectare in average) squeezing out human- scale farms and making it very hard for new entrants to have access to land⁶. Local authorities have very little tools to oppose this trend.

Local authorities could play an important role in this trend as they hold several keys that are essential in urban planning and land management. Farmland is attractive as an investment good as it often has a fair chance to become residential land. Local authorities could prevent this change by responding differently to demographic changes. Secondly, they could also manage public land in a different way. Today public land is often being sold in order to close municipalities' budgetary gaps. When it is not sold, it is often rented at the highest possible price thus allowing the most capital-intensive farms to rent the land, rather than local and or starting farmers. Some local authorities start using legal tools to favour local agriculture. This is especially the case for bigger cities such as Ghent, Brussels and Liège.

1. Local Government Structure

Belgium is a federal parliamentary state, established in 1830. Since 1970 it has had six state reforms, with the seventh ongoing. In this process, three regions, managing economic and infrastructural issues, and three communities, managing educational and cultural bound issues, have been put into place. Ever more powers have been shifted from the federal level to the regional level. As elsewhere in Europe, the centralised state has shifted more and more power downward to regions, provinces and municipalities.



Public land ownership

Farmland is considered as alienable goods like any other marketable goods. Land sales are not subjected to any particular rules unlike land leasing which is subjected to maximum prices under the Lease Contract Law (1968).

It remains extremely difficult to get reliable data on the distribution of ownership between public and private owners and within the public sphere. It is estimated that 30 % of the Belgian farmland is in public hands.

Regional bodies such as “Vlaamse Landmaatschappij” (VLM) and “Natuur en Bos” (N&B) in Flanders and their Walloon equivalents “Direction de l’Aménagement Foncier Rural” (DAFOR) and “Département Nature et Forests” (DNF) do have land in

ownership and in management. In the Brussels Capital Region several public bodies own and manage farmland as well. N&B and DNF own and manage land with the objective to maintain its natural features. They often entrust their pasture land to organic farmers through long-term use agreements.

Institutions such as VLM and DAFOR own land only temporarily as a way to fulfil their objectives. Both have land consolidation as a key objective. The Belgian land register shows a very high degree of fragmentation due to the absence of rules aimed at maintaining workable land size for farm parcels. When a land consolidation process is finalised, the land is sold and ownership privatised.

Cities, municipalities and public social service centres are also important landowners. Unfortunately they more and more sell their land in order to finance their actions and balance their budget. An average city like Leuven sells land for a yearly income of 1 million Euros. Ironically, they contribute to land-concentration by selling the land to the highest bidder, thereby often pushing away local farmers.

2. Main levers used by Local authorities for preserving and securing land

Planning & regulatory levers

Local authorities make land use plans that have a legal status. These plans in most cases react to demographic changes, i.e. a growing population. Only very recently a debate has started on the use of farmland as land for the extension of residential areas. The public opinion is still not very favourable to protecting farmland against this trend. It is thus rare that the democratic tools designed for public participation in land use change processes are being used to protect farmland. More and more cities set up food councils or other civil platforms related to food and agriculture. Those may contribute to the protection of farmland. The guiding principle when land is designated as agricultural land it is protected from many threats. However, Belgian local authorities do not gear the use of land towards one type of farming or another. Keeping horses is considered as farming and much farmland is lost to horse keeping.

Tax levers

Few tax levers exist to maintain or mobilise farmland. A Flemish tax rule should however be highlighted: new entrants who buy farmland to start farming benefit from a tax rebate on the first five hectares.

Using public land for agroecology

While still a minority, a slowly growing number of municipalities and regional bodies are using the land they own or manage to facilitate

⁷ www.galcondruses.be/index.php/economie/80-point-vert-favoriser-la-reussite-dun-projet-de-maraichage. See a case study about Point Vert, the farm incubator set up by the LAG Pays des Condruses on www.accesstoland.eu.

⁸ www.goodfood.brussels

entry of new farmers and to gear land use towards agroecology. The Nature and Forest Department of the Walloon Region recently expropriated land from a landowner who did not comply with Natura 2000 requirements and tendered the land to organic farmers (read our case study on Walloon Region and nature conservation). In another instance, the Department of rural land planning is collaborating with the community land trust Terre-en-vue, with a view to selling it an abandoned plot to develop a project consisting of agroforestry, organic production and the preservation of natural areas (read our Terres de Rebaix case study). Three municipalities – Pays des Condruses⁷ and Brussels Capital Region – have also participated in setting up a farm incubator on land they own so as to allow new entrants to experience farming before getting started on their own farm.

Promotion of local food and agroecology

Many public initiatives have been put into place to promote agriculture and local food in Belgium. VLAM is a regional agency whose aim is the promotion of farming in Flanders. It runs product-related communication campaigns that promote Flemish produce. It collaborates with more locally embedded initiatives such as Hoeveproducenten, that promote on farm sales, and Vlaamse Streek-producten, that promote typical Flemish produce.

In the Brussels Capital Region the government launched a strategy to promote local food consumption. Its aim is to encourage citizens to consume food grown in and around Brussels. A 20 km perimeter has been set as a goal in its campaign called “Good Food”, which is part of a broader strategy to make the Brussels food chain more resilient and includes work on facilitating access to land for farmers (read our case study on Brussels Good Food Strategy).⁸

Whereas the Brussels example shows how public authorities can take initiative, other examples show how civil initiatives may arise and be given legitimacy by public bodies. This is for instance the case for the food belt around Liege (“Ceinture Alimentaire de Liège”). This initiative aims at favouring local food production, processing, distribution and consumption in and around the city. On several occasions the city of Liege, the province and the Walloon Region have shown approval of this initiative by providing space, funds and potentially land and other infrastructure.

Support to farmers and local economic development

On the municipal level, local development agencies promote farming and facilitate the flow of information for new entrants and existing farms that aim at maintaining their activity. They promote collaboration, local direct sales, and diversification. Several municipalities have integrated farming in their Leader + program, structured around local action groups.

When it comes to setting up measures to limit land concentration

or rising land prices, we have so far not registered any activity from local authorities.

3. Main challenges and recommendations

As long as fundamental issues (e.g. land market regulation, agricultural policies) for which the federal government is responsible remain unchanged, it will be difficult for local authorities to offer real support to farmers around land access. One essential issue is that land prices and the land market remain unregulated, unlike for instance in France. A key action would be to regulate farmland prices. Another key action would be to develop a vision and process for selling and renting land giving priority to new entrants, and farmers who feed local communities.

These are also regional matters. Currently the Walloon Region prepares the setting up of a land bank. It will be a fund that will allow the Walloon region to buy land and resell it to farmers. However, the essential questions are still under debate. Will this fund be able to influence prices? Will it favour sustainable farming and new entrants? The answers to these questions are fundamental for a land bank to have a real and positive impact on current trend in Belgian farming.

Another issue is the planning approach to change of land use. Predominantly, farmland is still being sacrificed for other economic and housing purposes. Regional governments also need to define more clearly what constitutes farming. As long as keeping horses can be considered farming, land will be sold for prices that are totally disconnected from the agricultural economy.

One big potential for local farming and access to land is publicly owned land. However, as many municipalities have large debts, often related to the banking crisis, they remain eager to sell land to the highest bidder and do not gear their land toward local farming or new entrants. At municipal (and provincial) level, public land should be managed following clear guidelines.

While it is great that municipalities support farm incubators, it is not clear where new entrants will find land once they end their initial farming experience and want to set up their own farm. Opportunities for them and other new entrants may be sought in farm succession and in intermediation, i.e. land owners deciding to rent their land to a particular category of farmers such as new entrants, agroecological farmers, CSA, etc. Local authorities, who often have direct connections to local land owners, could promote these initiatives and even lead by example, through managing their own land differently.

4. Key strengths and challenges

Strengths

More and more municipalities take initiatives to promote local food production and facilitate training opportunities for new entrants by providing land for farm incubators.

Weaknesses

Once new entrants look for land to set up their own initiatives they are confronted with very high land prices and the fact that investors and existing farmers often buy the land even before the new entrants discover the land is for sale. The lack of land market regulation mechanisms is the greatest weakness for access to land.

Opportunities

Local authorities have much farmland. They may develop new ways of providing the land by orienting it to those farmers that have gone through the farm incubators and select those projects that correspond to the needs of the local population.

Threats

Local authorities have less and less budget and since the bank crisis they also have to close debt gaps. If they are not oriented towards a more sustainable land management, they may remain eager to sell farmland as a way to generate money and, moreover, they may tend to sell to the highest bidder rather than considering other criteria. ●



France

Terre de liens

⁹ Overseas local authorities do not have exactly the same perimeter and functioning as metropolitan regions and départements.

In France, local authorities have a major role to play to preserve farmland and gear its use towards agroecological farmers. An increasing number of them are actively engaged, with various motivations and approaches. They are helped in doing so by the strongly regulated land market, a rising culture of establishing local food systems and the support of multiple stakeholders. Recent public budget cuts, and the lack of skills to engage with farmland use and support farming, are the main obstacles they have to face, together with the continuous belief among many that agriculture is a marginal economic activity, not worth supporting.

1. Local government structure

France is historically a very centralised state. Since 1982, the national government has encouraged the decentralisation of power and responsibility, which has led to more powerful local authorities. France has a three-tier system of local governance (box 1): Regions are the main governance level for many areas, including economic development, transport, vocational training, land planning and agriculture.

- Départements (similar to county level) have a primary responsibility for social assistance and shared responsibilities in a range of other fields (e.g. local roads, culture, tourism)
- Municipalities are the main reference point for citizens in most daily activities. Due to their large number (36,782), the state has fostered a movement to establish groupings of municipalities and encourage mergers.

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|--|
| State | |
| 13 Regions + 5 overseas regions ⁹ | |
| 96 Départements + 5 overseas départements | |
| 550 Groupings of municipalities | |
| 36,782 municipalities | |

¹⁰ See: www.accesstoland.eu/The-tenant-farmers-statute

¹¹ See: www.accesstoland.eu/Unique-land-agencies-the-SAFER

¹² Check key data on agricultural land in France in Appendix 2. Read more on the French context on land and agriculture at: www.accesstoland.eu/-/France

Local authorities intervening in farmland and agriculture set foot in a sector with many major regulations and policies. Since the 1950s-1960s, the land market in France has been strongly regulated. These regulations rest on three pillars:

- Securing tenant farmers' rights to ensure that they have access to land under favourable, lasting and affordable terms¹⁰,
- Controlling farm structures, to ensure that farms are viable ("big enough") units, but remain "human-size", and
- Regulating the land sales markets, through the capacity to intervene on all land sales and allocate land to priority uses and users. This is the prime responsibility of the Safer (Société d'aménagement foncier et d'établissement rural, i.e. Rural Land Agencies), regional bodies which act as regulator of the land sales market¹¹.

Combined, these policies have decisively contributed to moderate land prices, slowed down land concentration and supported new entrants to farming. The same trends as in the rest of Europe are nevertheless at play: farm enlargement, financialisation of agriculture, land price inflation and competition for farmland use¹².

Local authorities can therefore count on the skills, instruments and means of other public bodies such as the Safer or the Chambers of Agriculture, which have a major responsibility for the development of the local agricultural sector. This can help them achieve their goals, but also means they may have to coordinate and negotiate with other institutions.

2. Main levers used by local authorities for preserving and securing land

Over the past decades, local authorities have gained increasing powers to act on land planning, land use and management. They have also increased their knowledge and awareness of the role they can play to preserve land and facilitate access to land for farmers. There are various motivations for this: some municipalities wish to source more of the food consumed locally from the surrounding area; some decide to create green belts; some want to maintain farming as part of local activities; etc. Usually, they move from a broader concern for local food and agriculture to a more specific action on farmland.

Through years of working with local authorities, we have identified a range of approaches and tools used by local authorities concerned with preserving farmland and supporting access to land for agroecological farmers (see the list in Box 2).

Key levers for French local authorities

Levers for preserving farmland

- Regulating land uses through zoning and planning (e.g. encouraging the use of brownfield sites)
- Giving specific protection status to certain farmland areas under planning laws
- Acquiring farmland for current or future plans so as to maintain it in agricultural use
- Compensating the loss of farmland (e.g. due to infrastructure projects) by the acquisition/ conversion of other pieces of land into farmland
- Using tax policy to counter land speculation and conversion to non-agricultural uses

Levers for making land available for future farms

- Monitoring land availability (e.g. identifying farmers about to retire)
- Stocking farmland
- Recovering abandoned land (e.g. convincing landowners to sell/ rent their land)
- Constituting a viable unit for a farm (e.g. doing infrastructure or renovation work to provide access to water)
- Facilitating farm transfer

Levers for facilitating entry into farming (acquisition and other policies)

- Owning farmland to put it at the disposal of agroecological tenant farmers
 - Participating in farm acquisitions with Terre de liens
 - Participating in the establishment of an incubator farm
 - Facilitating access to housing for future farmers (e.g. by acquiring the farm house, providing access to social housing, subsidising the farmer's rent, etc.)

 - Source: Terre de liens, *Handbook Agir pour le foncier agricole : un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités*, 2013 (updated 2015), available at: www.terredeliens.org/guide-collectivites-telechargeable.html
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On land issues, the main local authorities are:

- Regional governments: they plan for balanced and sustainable local development and provide public funds,
- Municipalities and groupings of municipalities: they are in charge of land planning and zoning, and provide direct support to local food systems.

Preserving farmland

The legal framework for land planning establishes that the French territory as a whole belongs to the French people, is inalienable and is the responsibility of the State. In practice, the State defines the overarching guidelines, with a growing role played by local authorities for local land planning and management.

Planning power is at the level of municipalities or inter-municipal authorities. For decades, their approach to farmland has been to view it mostly as a “reserve” for urban and infrastructure development. Economic development and local added value were deemed to come only from urban sprawl, industry and services. This has resulted in the increasing loss of farmland to development.

Due to the high number of municipalities (over 36,000), land planning has been very fragmented. The past decades have seen progress with the adoption of regional spatial plans, coherent planning schemes for metropolitan areas and the implementation of inter-municipal planning schemes (see Appendix 1 of this chapter). Planning nevertheless still lacks coherence, particularly in rural areas. In the numerous small municipalities, councillors may also find it hard to resist inhabitants’ expectation that their land will be designated for development.

Since the late 1990s, amidst a growing awareness of the need to preserve farmland, local authorities have gained new powers to preserve farmland for the long term. The two main schemes available are:

- the Protected Agricultural Zone (*ZAP- Zone agricole protégée*), and
- the Protection and Improvement Perimeter for peri-urban agricultural and natural areas (*PAEN - Périmètre de protection et de mise en valeur des espaces agricoles et naturels périurbains*).

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Zoning protections | Protected Agricultural Zone (ZAP) - 1999 | Protection and Improvement Perimeter for peri-urban agricultural and natural areas (PAEN) - 2005 |
| Local authority in charge | Municipalities or groupings of municipalities | Departments |
| Level of protection | Approval by the local state representative | Modifiable only through a government decree |
| Includes an action plan? | No | Yes |
| Eligible areas | Specific areas defined on the basis of the quality of production, geographic location or landscapes | All peri-urban areas |

¹³ These are Departmental Commissions for the preservation of agricultural, forestry and natural areas (*Commission départementales de la préservation des espaces agricoles, naturels et forestiers*). Set up in 2011 under a different name, they became CDPENAF with enlarged composition and perimeter in 2015.

Both are quite recent (less than 20 years old), and have not yet been used very often. The PAEN in particular could be a powerful tool to preserve farmland in peri-urban areas. It even creates pre-emption rights for departmental councils in agricultural areas (which only the Safer normally has). The level of protection afforded to agricultural areas is also particularly high, and the need to have an action plan encourages departmental councils to develop a strategic vision and plan for a specific peri-urban area and its urban/rural balance. However, departmental councils are weaker since the last reform of local authorities (2015), so that they now have limited financial means to implement action plans.

In 2010, the Agricultural Law set the objective of halving the rate of development on farmland by 2020. It established a national observatory for the preservation of agricultural, forestry and natural areas. Since 2015, local commissions, called CDPENAF¹³, bring together at departmental level a range of stakeholders (local authorities, farmers' unions, agricultural institutions, environmental NGOs, etc.) to discuss the guidelines and priorities of local land use. Their aim is to ensure a good balance between urban needs (in particular for housing) and farmland preservation. They examine all planning documents where the impact would be to decrease the farmland area.

Local authorities can also refer to a range of EU and national schemes for preserving natural resources and biodiversity, which may apply to farmland, and allow for the enforcement of specific agricultural uses and practices (e.g. Natura 2000, green and blue grid).

Supporting access to land

Local authorities may act at all stages of the process towards securing land and making it available for agroecological farmers. Some act in support of a specific farm or farmers; others act to promote an overall strategy for their territory. Some act to facilitate immediate entry into farming, others to enable farmers to get started in the future. Often they intervene hand in hand with Safer and Chambers of Agriculture. Sometimes they also cooperate with community-based organizations. Local authorities may intervene to:

Identify available local land

Local authorities can conduct or support local surveys to identify the main issues with regard to farmland (e.g. fragmentation, abandoned land, erosion). They can also map land which is available for sale, for rent or for farm succession (see Livradois-Forez case study). This map can be based on local land plans, on local surveys of actual land use, on local data about farmers, interviews with landowners and ageing farmers to ask about their plans, etc.

Acquire and stock farmland

Local authorities can choose to acquire and manage farmland, to fulfil a long term need: e.g. protecting water assets, reconstituting a traditional vegetable market area. They may also acquire land as a temporary tool, to ensure that they can thereafter sell the land back to specific farmers (e.g. young, organic, vegetable grower).

Recover unused land

In some areas of France, land abandonment is a concern for local authorities. This is the case in mountainous and other remote areas, where small farmers are struggling to find a successor, as well as in some peri-urban areas where landowners are hoping for their land to be designated for development, and therefore prefer not to rent it out to farmers. It creates issues in terms of landscape (reforestation), risk management (bush fires) and loss of economic potential, so that local authorities may decide to have their say, either by claiming unused land, or by convincing land-owners to sell or rent their land to farmers.

Two main legal schemes enable local authorities to recover unused land. They are rarely used, as local authorities usually prefer to opt for amicable processes. They are however sometimes part of a broader strategy to recover available land (see Ile d'Yeu case study).

| Legal Scheme | Developing unused or under-used land | Claiming unoccupied and ownerless land |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Legal basis | Rural Code (article L 125-1) | Circular of 8 March 2006 regarding the implementation of the 2004 Act on local liberties and responsibilities |
| Types of plots | Plots which may be used for agriculture and have been left unused or have been under-used (as compared with similar plots in the area) for at least 3 years (2 years only in mountain areas) | Unoccupied land which have no owners either because they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plots which are part of an inheritance but which were not claimed by any inheritor – Plots with an unknown owner and for which nobody has paid property taxes for 3 years or more. |
| Who can claim the land? | Any physical or legal person interested in developing the land | Municipalities where these plots are located |
| Public authority in charge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Request addressed to the regional state representative (<i>préfet</i>) – Informed by the <i>préfet</i>, the Departmental Council asks the local relevant committee to assess the abandonment of the land and its agricultural potential | Municipalities |
| Publicity of the decision | Yes - to allow other possible claimants | Yes - process in 2 stages so that potential owners may make themselves known. |
| Who receives the land | One of the claimants, which may be a local authority or Safer (decision by the <i>préfet</i>) | Municipalities where these plots are located |

Constitute a viable unit for a farm

Local authorities may help local farmers improve their farmland structure or have access to newly equipped plots. It may involve facilitating plot regrouping or plot exchange between landowners, doing infrastructure work to provide access to water or a road, subsidising irrigation work, etc.

Facilitate farm transfer

Local authorities can play a crucial role to ensure that, when farmers retire, their farms do not close down, or get consolidated into a neighbouring farm, but rather are transferred to new farmers. The first step often is to conduct a local diagnosis of farms which will be open for succession in the coming years. It may then also involve facilitating contact between transferors and successors, acquiring land and stocking it temporarily until a successor is found, or supporting local rural development groups working on farm succession (see Livradois-Forez case study).

Owning land and making it available for farming

A number of local authorities, mostly municipalities, own land. Some own land for historical reasons, others after they claimed land which had no owner and was left abandoned, others because they chose to acquire it for a specific project or for future planning (e.g. establishing a green belt). In some cases, municipalities own municipal farms which they rent to farmers as a way to facilitate their entry into farming (starter farms) or for the long term. Others put some of their land at the disposal of a farm incubator. In rare cases, municipalities have chosen to directly farm and produce food themselves (see Mouans-Sartoux case study).

Integrating local authorities and land policies and institutions

Local authorities intervening in farmland use and management can benefit from existing land policies and institutions. They are part of the governance of most land and agricultural institutions and can carry out a structured dialogue to define the local strategy regarding land planning and agricultural development. They also collaborate with Safer, in particular to:

- ask Safer to use its pre-emptive right to buy land which they wish to acquire or direct to a certain use/ user,
- ask Safer to provide an in-depth analysis of the local land market (e.g. monitoring local land prices)
- fund Safer so that Safer may hold some land until a “desirable” user is found.

Often local authorities and local Safer cooperate easily, with a shared vision of local needs or priorities for a specific piece of land. In some instances, they have diverging views or interests, and local authorities do not receive the support they would like from Safer.

3. Key strengths and challenges regarding local authorities and access to land

Strengths

- A strongly regulated land market, including:
 - Collaborations with SAFER
 - Several new schemes available for local authorities to preserve land and facilitate access to land
- Growing awareness and willingness to act among local authorities (both councillors and staff), backed by a growing range of concrete experiences from which to learn
- Local authorities can often find support among local citizens or civil society organisations, thanks to a comparatively high interest in local food and agriculture among French people

Weaknesses

- The majority culture – among both elected representatives and staff – continues to view farmland as a reserve for urban, industrial and service development
- Most local authorities both elected representatives and technical staff have too little confidence that they can act on farmland and too little knowledge of how to go about it
- The various levels of local authorities often act without coordinating their action and do not always cooperate well.
- The high number of municipalities means disjointed land planning, leading to competition between land uses and development on farmland
- The “land governance” is still predominantly co-managed by the State and agricultural sector, and local authorities may find it hard to find their place.
- Discrepancy between political time (medium term) and the time of land policies (long term).

4. Further reading

Publications of Terre de liens

See: <https://www.terredeliens.org/agir-avec-les-collectivites.html>

- Terre de liens, Handbook *Agir pour le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités*, 2013 (updated 2015)
- Terre de liens Nord Pas de Calais, *Le rôle des collectivités dans l'accès au foncier agricole*, 2011
- Terre de liens Massif central, 3 practical guides, 2012
- Terre de liens Rhône-Alpes, *Communes, intercommunalités : comment préserver les terres agricoles ? 21 exemples en Rhône-Alpes et ailleurs*, 2014

Other publications

- CETE Méditerranée, *Stratégies foncières locales et mobilisation des outils fonciers en faveur de la biodiversité, Methodological guide*, 2013
- CGAAER (Ministry of Agriculture), *Protéger les espaces agricoles et naturels face à l'étalement urbain*, 2009
- CGAAER (Ministry of Agriculture) and CGEDD (Ministry of Environment), *Gestion économe des terres agricoles dans les pays limitrophes*, 2012
- Mairie Conseils, *Foncier, développement agricole et urbanisme, Bouquet d'expériences*, 2013
- Site de proximité Sud-Ardèche, *La mobilisation de foncier agricole par les communes, Experience files*, 2011 ●

Appendix 1: Overall planning and zoning tools in France

This graph presents the main planning schemes and guidelines in France. All schemes and plans have to comply with upper level schemes and guidelines.



Source: Terre de liens, Handbook *Agir pour le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités*, 2013 (updated 2015)

Appendix 2: Tax policies available to local authorities to preserve farmland or make it available for farming

| Tax | Who pays it? | Who receives it? | Purpose | Effectiveness |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Taxes | | | | |
| Tax on capital gains | Paid by anyone selling a land or property | State | To fight land speculation | Not very effective (may even be included in the sale price so tends to fuel speculation) |
| Tax on the property of non-constructed plots | Landowners of plots which are neither constructed nor rented out | Local authorities | To promote access to land | Encourage owners to rent their land to farmers. Raising the tax significantly may have an impact in areas where there is a lot of unused land. |
| Tax for "low urban density" | Building developers | Municipalities (optional) | To fight urban sprawl | Encourage planners to build areas of higher density |
| Municipal tax on the sale of plots which are designated for development | Landowners | Municipalities (optional) | To fight urban sprawl | Not very effective - the current rate is too low to discourage the sale of such plots. The price of the tax is now often included in the sale price. |
| National tax on the sale of plots which are designated for development | Landowners | National fund for new entrants | To fight urban sprawl | |
| Tax on empty housing | To support new entrants | Not very effective: does not discourage land sale and may fuel speculation. The tax revenue is used to support entry into farming. | To fight urban sprawl | Encourage the use of empty housing (2 million in France) rather than developing new ones |

| Tax allowances | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tax reduction on the property tax of non-constructed plots | Young farmers benefiting from young farmers' grant (CAP) | Municipalities (optional) | To support new entrants Useful but restricted to "typical" new entrants - i.e. those meeting eligibility criteria for the CAP grant |
| Tax relief on the property tax of non-constructed plots - for land which is farmed organically | Organic farmers (max 5 years) | Municipalities (optional) | To support organic farming without having a major impact on municipal budget Supports organic farming without having a major impact on municipal budget |

Source: Terre de liens, Handbook *Agir pour le foncier agricole : un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités*, 2013 (updated 2015), pp 52-3 - updated for this report - 2016

Italy

AIAB Lazio

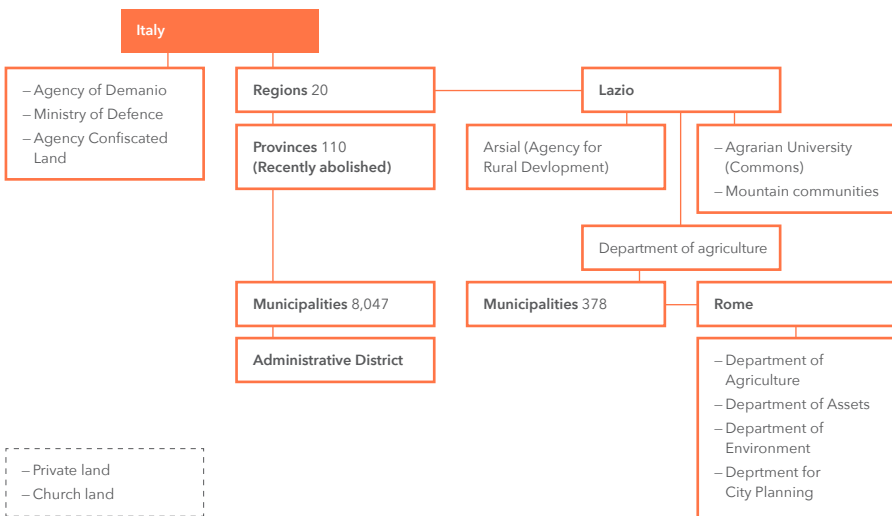
¹⁴ See Appendix 2 for more on agricultural land in Italy. Read more on the Italian context on land and agriculture at: www.accessstoland.eu/Italy.

Farming in Italy has historically been an important sector, for both the culture and the economy. However, over the last five decades, the structure of the agriculture system has undergone deep changes. Nowadays, Italy is the third country in Europe in terms of agricultural productivity and the first country in terms of the largest organic farmland area. However, the Italian farming sector is facing challenging trends and a complete lack of government vision and governance. In this situation, small scale sustainable farmers are struggling¹⁴.

This chapter is an initial exploration of the role, experiences and potential of local authorities to secure access to land for such small scale sustainable farmers, with a particular focus on the Lazio Region.

1. Local government structure

In Italy, local administration is organised around 20 regions, composed of over 8000 municipalities. The lower tier of governance is the administrative district.



¹⁵ [Treccani enciclopedia italiana](#)

¹⁶ [Bando per l'insediamento di giovani in agricoltura](#)

Overall, the Ministry of Agriculture is not very involved in land management. In fact, the most relevant in relation to land management are Local Authorities: Regions and lower level authorities, but these can differ from region to region. Regions manage European funds through rural development plans and the majority of public land is managed at regional and local levels.

For example, the Lazio Region has competence over agricultural companies and the whole rural and agro-industrial sector; the use of natural resources, in accordance with the concept of sustainability; the sectors of animal and vegetable production; promotion of farming and food products; common land (*usi civici*) for which it identifies the perpetual rights on land that belong to the members of a community; hunting and fishing activities.

Following the logic of subsidiarity and financial autonomy, Regions and Municipalities get the vast majority of their resources from direct taxation. The taxes are directly or indirectly related to urbanization as they tax real estate, infrastructure use (roads, electricity infrastructures) and waste management. Moreover, any transfer of funds from central government is steadily decreasing due to national political choices¹⁵.

2. Main levers used by Regional Authorities for preserving and securing land

Preserving farmland:

- Spatial planning lies in territorial regulatory regional plans. They also govern common land (*usi civici*).
- Local authorities can designate areas of particular historical and landscape value (*Aree agricole identitarie*) to be subjected to specific constraints.
- Regional authorities can exercise a veto over Municipal urban planning instruments.
- The law on the containment of soil consumption use and reuse and reuse of built soil (*Atto Camera n. 2039, Atto Senato n. 2383*) recognizes the importance of soil as a common asset and non-renewable resource. It allows the urbanization of soil exclusively in cases where there is no substantial reuse of already urbanized areas.

Supporting access to land:

- Regional authorities can help young farmers to access European funds, especially for new entrants. Thus, the public national agency ISMEA aims to encourage the establishment of young farmers in agriculture. For this purpose, the agency issues public calls aimed at supporting land transactions reserved to young people who are entering farming for the first time¹⁶.
- Local authorities can make the immense wealth of public lands

¹⁷ [Lazio Region regulation](#)

accessible to young farmers, agroecological farmers and small farms. Some examples of relevant policies and institutions include:

- > *Terrevive* decree: with this decree, the Ministry of Agriculture, together with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, kicked off the sale and rental of approximately 5,500 hectares of land, with a priority for farmers under the age of 40. Although it is an innovative tool, it is thought to have a negative impact as the bid system is based on no other criteria than the availability of money.
- > ARSIAL call for tenders: ARSIAL is the regional agency for agricultural development and innovation of Lazio. When tendering for the sale of public land, it chose to allocate the land to the best project rather than to the highest bidder. Higher points were given to young farmers, organic farming practices, social farming activities, and the number of people employed.
- > *Banca delle Terre Agricole*: this land mapping project aims at enabling everyone, especially young people, to find online public land for sale or for rent.

Local economic development:

- Support local farming community
Through the Houses of Agriculture (*Case dell'agricoltura del Lazio*), the Lazio Region intends to accomplish several goals: foster innovation, support new businesses, promote and enhance the typical and traditional products, and the Protected Designation of Origin and Protected Geographical Indication products.
- Market policies and Public Procurements
Lazio Region promotes and supports the production, quality enhancement, consumption and marketing of agricultural products, food, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, by encouraging short supply chains (Law n.14 November 2016)¹⁷.

Public education:

In Lazio Region, ARSIAL supports informal education programmes for schools. With the *Sapere i sapori* campaign, it supports actions to raise awareness among the youth on healthy lifestyles and conscious and responsible food choices, with particular regard to typical products of Lazio.

3. Local authorities' key strengths and challenges regarding access to land

Strengths:

- Large amount of public land managed by local authorities both directly and indirectly
- Wide competences on land at Local Authorities level
- Many laws protect the value of the Italian agricultural landscape and typical products

Weaknesses:

- Lack of networking among the various organisations interacting in the territory
- Poor communication and cooperation between the various levels of public bodies
- Slow disbursement of the approved funding
- Lack of strong processes to favour the entry of a new generation of farmers

Opportunities:

- Subsidies for new entrants into farming
- Thousands of hectares of public land are available

Threats:

- The high price of farmland
- The development of renewable energy, wind and solar, taking land away from agriculture
- 'Land footprint': the amount of land farmed in Italy is not enough to fulfil the food needs of the population (which can also be an opportunity)
- Decrease of the CAP budget allocated to Italy in 2014 for direct payments

4. Further reading

- Leonardo Gallico and Paolo Groppo , *The Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Land Tenure (VGGT) as a tool for improving access to land and the responsible management of natural resources: based on the experience of Lazio Region and Rome Municipality* - Final Report, 2015
- Ministry of Agriculture, *Costruire il futuro: difendere l'agricoltura dalla cementificazione. Perdita di terreni agricoli, approvvigionamento alimentare e impermeabilizzazione del suolo*, 2012
- CREA, *L'agricoltura italiana conta*, 2015
- FAI-WWF, *Terra rubata. Viaggio nell'Italia che scompare*, www.wwf.it ●

Romania

Eco Ruralis

¹⁸ See Appendix 2 for more data on agricultural land in Romania. Read more on the Romanian context on land and agriculture at: www.accesstoland.eu/-/Romania

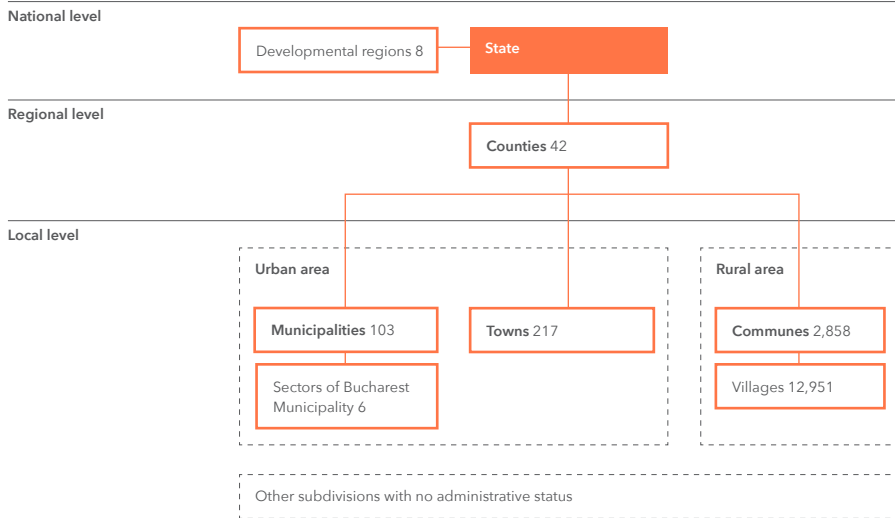
Agriculture has historically played a pivotal role in the Romanian economy. Today it employs about 30% of the population and contributes eight percent of GDP, one of the highest shares in Europe. One third of all farms in Europe are situated in Romania. Romanian farm structure is highly polarized and land fragmentation is often pointed out as the cause of the low efficiency of the agricultural sector: 93% of the holdings are less than five ha and occupy 30% of the farmland, while medium to big farms represent seven percent of the holdings and occupy 70% of Romanian agricultural land. In the last decade, land consolidation and the development of industrial agriculture have been the priorities of the government. This policy, however, not only understates the important contribution of small farms to domestic food consumption, but is also weakening rural economies, hampering a dynamic and sustainable development of the Romanian rural sector.

In Romania, where farmland exists in sufficient quality and quantity, the main land issue is that of land allocation among farmers and farming communities, i.e. the rife competition between farming communities and large-scale farmers, corporate agriculture and investors, including land-grabbing. Corollary issues to access to land are access to subsidies and credit¹⁸.

1. Local Government structure

According to the Constitution, the Romanian territory is composed of communes - which may include one or more villages - towns and counties. Some towns are designated municipalities. Two levels of government separate the central state from the citizen: the intermediate administrative level (judete, county), corresponding to the "regional" authority, and the local administrative level, consisting of communes (comune), towns (oraşe) and municipalities (municipii), plus villages (sate) in rural areas. After 1990, and following international political pressure, Romania has undergone a process to redefine the role of central government related to local government, which is still ongoing.

The mayors are the executive authorities at the local level and are responsible for town planning, environmental protection and management of green spaces. Local councils have general responsibilities regarding all matters of local interest, including approval of socio-economic development programmes; social services provision; urban development programmes; land use planning; environmental protection.



2. Main levers available to Local Authorities for preserving and securing land

Most land-related policies and regulations are taken at the higher level of governance. Local authorities have the following roles and could be using more of the following levers:

Spatial planning

The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing is responsible for the elaboration of the national and regional territory plans and the general urban planning regulation. The County administration then coordinates the spatial and urban planning activity carried on at the county level and establishes general guidelines regarding spatial planning of local councils, coordinating their activity and providing them with technical assistance.

Local authorities can use land planning regulations to save farmland and to rationalize urban development. Brownfield sites could be converted to agricultural land.

Public land ownership

Both the state and the administrative and territorial units (cities and counties) own properties consisting of real estate that, according to certain legal principles, belongs either to the public or the private domain.

Local authorities can foster access to land by renting/selling the land they own at a favourable price for young agroecological farmers or by making it available through calls for tender that reward organic small-scale farming, young generation, women etc.

Management of the Commons

Small farms in Romania are often too small, to the point that they would not survive without the common land. Most villages in Romania have at least one common pasture. Commons are often owned and managed by the municipality, for the benefit of the community. However, some municipalities have been involved in cases of fraud and embezzlement, leading the Ministry of Agriculture to prevent them applying for EU subsidies. As a result, more and more common land is now privately rented, by individuals or associations.

Local authorities have a responsibility to preserve the existence of common land, prevent it from being sold and privatised, and ensure that it is widely accessible to the farming community, particularly small farms which constitute an essential part of the farm system and livelihoods.

Privatization of former state farms/land

The privatization of national agricultural companies and state-owned agricultural lands which were part of the ex-communist farms is the responsibility of the State Domain Agency. To complement this, communal, town or municipal commissions are tasked with the repossession of land from landowners after the fall of the communist regime in conformity with Law 18/1991.

Local authorities have the authority to call upon the Agency of State Domain to foster access to land for younger generations for agroecological farming. Instead state land has largely been used by the State as an instrument to consolidate land. Many state assets are now in the hands of both national and foreign large industrial agricultural.

Tax policy

Property tax on agricultural land is paid to local authorities (county, town or municipality). The Local Council decides the rate of the levy according to the category of the land.

Fiscal policy could be used as an instrument to counter land speculation: local authorities could increase the tax on land that is used for non-farming purposes and reduce the tax for organic farming and young agroecological farmers.

Development policies

Local authorities could invest in rural development to make the countryside more attractive to young generations, support young farmers and help farmers to overcome technical and financial

constraints. They could also call upon the State to better provide grants and support to poor and isolated farming communities.

In the longer run, the role of local authorities to support access to land would benefit from a clear shift of national agricultural policy in favour of small-scale agroecological farms. In this context, they would also benefit from the establishment of a land management agency, which could correct the effects of an unregulated land market. Such an agency could have a pre-emptive right on the purchase of farmland put on the market. It could thereby contribute to setting up or maintaining agroecological young farmers, and discourage land speculation.

3. Conclusion

Land property is seen as a social cushion against economic hardship: peasants hardly ever sell their land. In the current Romanian context this is an opportunity because otherwise, peasants would sell to agribusiness. To foster access to land for agroecology, peasants could be approached by alternative land management schemes (CSA farming, ethical land banks etc.). Local authorities could intervene in facilitating the establishment of such schemes and in fostering cooperative forms of farming. However, there is a lack of financial resources, which challenges the achievement of grants and subsidies for accessing to land. Authorities should act as an intermediary and support farmers. ●

Spain (Catalonia)

Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori & Rurbans

¹⁹ Read more on the agricultural and land contexts in Spain and Catalonia at: www.accesstoland.eu/-/Spain-Focus-on-Catalonia

²⁰ Agrarian survey, 2009

Spain, like other EU countries, has experienced rapid intensification and specialisation of agriculture. Due to historical events and late accession to the European Economic Community (1986), this process took place very rapidly and with devastating effects on peasant farming, with the disappearance of many farms, the replacement of family labour by waged labour, and the decline of rural areas and population.

The land situation in Spain is marked by the loss of important farmland, including land abandonment and land erosion. Furthermore, Spain is one of the European countries with the most unequal land distribution, comparable to that of many Latin American countries. Modernisation, combined with land speculation from urban and agricultural users, have led to major price increases, particularly on irrigated land. Today, it is really hard for new entrants, particularly newcomers, to access land in Spain and in Catalonia.¹⁹

Local authorities can play a major role in facilitating access to land for new entrants, given the high proportion of public rural land in Spain (7.4%, 1.7 millions of ha²⁰). Recently, legislation is stimulating the sale of public land and the transmission of its management from farmers' associations and inhabitants to the public administration. Local authorities therefore have a huge responsibility to keep this public land useful and serving the local communities.

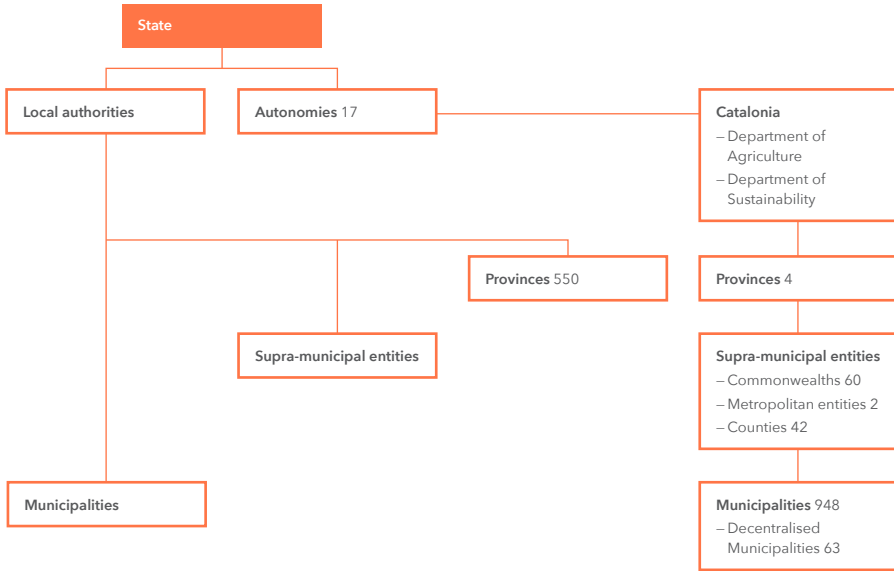
This analysis provides a special focus on Catalonia, as it is the area of practical experience and knowledge of the organisations engaged in this network.

1. Local Government structure

Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities, which in turn are divided into 50 provinces. For example, the autonomous community of Catalonia is divided into 4 provinces and more than 900 municipalities. Between these two tiers, there are 41 comarques, roughly equivalent to 'districts' or 'counties'. A comarca is a commonwealth, or union, of municipalities with powers in several areas (Law 6/1987 of the Parliament of Catalonia).

Land planning

Article 33 of the Spanish Constitution underlines the social function of private property, which makes private property useful not only to the owner but also to the community. Because of this social function, every owner has to bear a series of limitations that determines



the exercise of their rights. This justifies the large number of laws regulating land, both urban and agrarian.

The regulatory framework for land management is complex. The Spanish Government has transferred land planning responsibilities and powers to the Autonomous Governments through the law Real Decreto Legislativo 2/2008. The autonomous Government of Catalonia, which designs territorial and sectorial plans, decides which rural areas should be protected, according to the kind of crops, ecosystems and location. However, the specific use of land depends on the municipalities, who are responsible for making the municipal planning, always pursuant to the Catalan legislation.

2. Main levers available to Local Authorities for preserving and securing land

We have identified a series of levers which Spanish local authorities can use, based on exchanges with stakeholders and on advice from experts and technicians from local administrations. Some of these levers are currently being successfully applied, while others are tools that could be used in the future. The implementation of these levers depends mostly on political will, but in some cases, some levels of the public administrations are involved in the issue making it more difficult to use them.

²¹ Segrelles Serrano, J.A. (2015), *Agricultura periurbana, parques naturales agrarios y mercados agropecuarios locales: una respuesta territorial y productiva a la subordinación del campo a la ciudad*. Scripta Nova, 19(502)

Planning levers

– Territorial Plans (*Plans Territorials*): large scale spatial planning at the level of Autonomous Governments. In Catalonia, there is one territorial plan, complemented by 7 sub-regional plans.

These plans:

- Regulate land uses through land planning (limiting urban development, encouraging the use of brownfield sites, etc.).
- Regulate food provision.

Plans for Areas of Agricultural Interest Plan (PEIA): they give specific protection status to certain farmland areas. Although this scheme has existed in Catalonia since 1983, it has not yet been applied. The existing scheme that is most similar is that of the Agrarian Park, which has no specific legal definition (the law is currently under process) but acts to protect certain rural areas. There are currently five Natural Agrarian Parks in Spain, which protect areas with an important rural tradition where high pressure from urban development exists. In Catalonia, there are two Natural Agrarian Parks and at least five more projects under development²¹.

– Municipal urban planning instruments (POUM):

- > Establish and regulate agricultural uses in peri-urban areas.
- > Include compensation for the loss of farmland (e.g. due to infrastructure projects) by the acquisition/conversion of other pieces of land into farmland. Although it has not yet been applied, it is a possibility to be considered.
- > Constitute a viable unit for a farm (e.g. doing infrastructure or renovation work to provide road access, access to water, etc.) Such measures could be covered with EU rural development funds and coordinated under the POUM.

Regulatory levers

- Farming contracts Law (*Llei 4/2008, de contractes de conreu*):
 - > The Catalan government can acquire farmland with the aim of maintaining it in agricultural use through Government pre-emptive right to buy (art. 43).
 - > Forest Property Center (CPF): allowing clearing of forest areas for farmland.

Tax levers

- Real Estate Tax (IBI): there are tax rebates for farmland dedicated to personal and family farming, partially set by the municipality and by the Spanish government.
- Succession and Donations Tax (ISD) / Property Transfer Tax (ITP): facilitating farm transfer through ISD/ITP exemption set by the Catalan government.

²² See: <https://productesdepalou.wordpress.com>

²³ <http://parcs.diba.cat/web/BaixLlobregat>

²⁴ See: e.g. <https://productesdepalou.wordpress.com>, <http://www.espairuralgallecs.cat/>

Local dialogue and public education

- Citizen Attention Offices: these aim to put farmers and organisations in contact with land-owners to facilitate access to disused farmland, via leasing, sealing, usufruct, land stewardship agreements among others.
- Issuing leaflets and civic campaigns for agriculture (e.g. Products from Palou in Catalonia²²)

Local economic development

- Identifying land available (abandoned land) or about to become available (e.g. retiring farmers) to make it available again for active agriculture through the management of Agricultural Cooperatives.
- Entrepreneurs training programs: contributing to make agriculture a sustainable business by training existing and new farmers. A few municipalities in Catalonia and Spain have set up farm incubators, helping farmers gain practical experience and experiment with various agronomic or marketing options, in order to start their farm business in a more secure way.
- Promoting specific agricultural lands of major interest. A well-known Catalan example is the Agrarian Park of Baix Llobregat²³. Agrarian Parks have the aim of protecting agrarian activities and promoting the economic development of these activities.
- Promoting local markets and local produce in shops and supermarkets: promoting zero miles products; traditional products; local organic food²⁴.

Social policy levers

- Public Housing Agencies: facilitating access to housing for future farmers (e.g. by acquiring the farmhouse, providing access to social housing, subsidising the farmer's rent, etc.). Currently such a facility does not exist, but some projects have incorporated the idea (e.g. Espai rural de Gallecs).

In addition, local authorities could have a better impact on securing land for agroecology, by adopting some new measures, such as:

- Reforming regulations on hostelling and food manufacturing. In Catalonia, current regulations make it very expensive for farmers to carry out activities such as agrotourism or food processing (e.g. farm cheese) as an alternative income. Reforming these regulations could help make these farms more viable and boost local economic development.
- Facilitating access to housing for farmers, for instance by regulating (capping) the house rent for farmers, investing in the renovation of private housing, etc.

According to Soler & Fernández (2015)²⁵, municipalities can play a major role in land management, since it is one of the areas with the greatest economic impact on municipalities. Through Municipal

²⁵ Soler, C. & Fernández, F. (2015) *Estructura de la propiedad de tierras en España. Concentración y acaparamiento*. Fundación Mundubat y Revista Soberanía Alimentaria, Biodiversidad y Culturas.

Urban Planning Plans (POUM), municipalities can directly affect the management and governance of the territory. The Charter for Food Sovereignty in Our Municipalities, approved in November 2014 in Zaragoza, proposed several measures to take into account when developing the POUM:

- Develop participatory territorial plans and land management agreements to protect the natural heritage and promote good agricultural practices, involving local stakeholders as well as technical and research staff in the process.
- Take into account the activity and point of view of local grassroots organisations, as well as seek cooperation with other municipalities, being part of municipal networks (for example to generate synergies among Agrarian Parks, co-management of natural resources).
- Update, expand or carry out studies of the territory based on agricultural surveys, maps of changes of use, cadastre, etc., in order to define, delimit and protect the agricultural landscape, watersheds and coasts, as well as all its assets.
- Define or implement figures such as municipal or supra-municipal agrarian parks, accompanied by management plans and stimulation of local agriculture through concrete actions and annual budgets.
- Create land-related ordinances with the objective of taking advantage of underutilized agrarian lands, both public and private, for agroecological production.
- Create banks, funds or other initiatives, with public or private land, to facilitate access to land, generating mechanisms that favour land transmission and avoid the speculative market.

3. Key strengths and challenges

Opportunities:

- Local authorities usually have an array of powers and functions which the law attributes them by default. They often do not use all of these powers even though they would have a good legal basis for doing more on land use and preservation.
- Local authorities can be innovative in addressing land issues, using as best they can their toolkit for supporting agriculture, as well as drawing from other sectors. For instance, they could include in the municipal bylaws of urbanism a reserve of land in loan from property development for agroecological uses.

Weaknesses:

- This multi-layered division of powers among public authorities has led to diverse situations. A minority of municipalities have gone for preserving the municipality's rural and natural areas. The vast majority have transformed the rural areas into industrial use or

- housing settlements, to increase their revenues.
- Local government revenue is directly related to construction and real estate. Therefore, there is a common pattern of re-qualification of agricultural land to industrial, infrastructure and service areas in peri-urban areas.
- Measures to support farm transfers, except for some measures supporting intra-family farm succession (from parents to sons or daughters) have not been taken.

Threats:

- A recent law has introduced new legal ways to sell public and particularly common land (Law 27/2013 de racionalización y sostenibilidad de la Administración Local).
- High and increasing land prices make it hard for farmers to buy land and make a living. Local authorities are struggling to acquire land or to find new farmers who can make a living in agriculture.
- The interest in the 'subsoil' is growing, with an increase in extractive activities such as open pit mines or threats such as fracking. Local authorities can play a role in mobilising against these projects, in defence of local food and farming.

4. Further reading

- Badal, M., Binimelis, R., Gamboa, G., Heras, M. & Tendero, G. (2010) *Arran de terra. Indicators participatius de Sobirania Alimentària a Catalunya*. Associació EntrePobles & Institut d'Economia Ecològica i Ecologia Política.
- Basora, X., Mitchell, B., O'Neill & Sabaté, X. (2013) *Caring together for nature. Manual on land stewardship as a tool to promote social involvement with the natural environment in Europe*.
- Segrelles Serrano, J.A. (2015), *Agricultura periurbana, parques naturales agrarios y mercados agropecuarios locales: una respuesta territorial y productiva a la subordinación del campo a la ciudad*. Scripta Nova, 19(502).
- Soler, C. & Fernández, F. (2015) *Estructura de la propiedad de tierras en España. Concentración y acaparamiento*. Fundación Mundubat y Revista Soberanía Alimentaria, Biodiversidad y Culturas. ●



The United Kingdom

The Real Farming Trust and the Soil Association

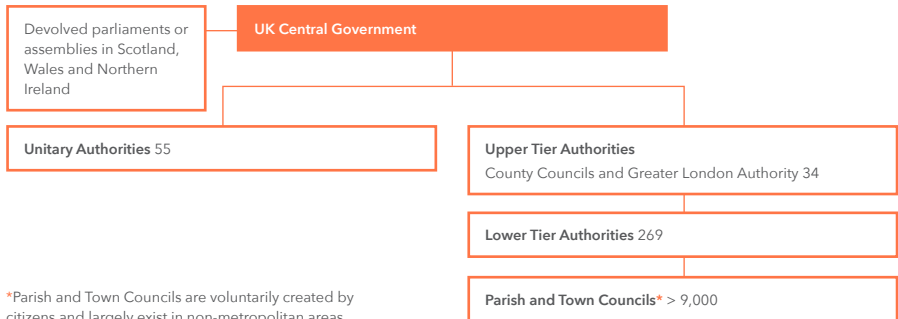
²⁶ See key data on agricultural land in the UK in Appendix 2. Read more on the UK context on land and agriculture at: www.accesstoland.eu/-/United-Kingdom.

The high level of private ownership and an unregulated land market mean that local authorities play a relatively minor role in access to land for agroecological farming in the UK compared to other countries in Europe²⁶. This is part of a wider trend, with little room seen for the role of the State in food production in the UK. There are, however, several tools at their disposal should they wish to use them, including some explicitly designed to facilitate land access which are currently often underused or neglected. Other levers exist which were not designed with land access in mind, but that could be used for this purpose with some innovative thinking.

1. Local Government structure

There are various types of local government structures in the UK. In England, both a one tier and a two-tier system exists. The single tier system consists of unitary authorities, which tend to cover large urban areas and are responsible for almost all local government powers, though they can also occasionally have town and parish councils beneath them. Scotland and Wales operate under a single tier system. The two-tier system consists of county councils, which can be metropolitan or non-metropolitan, and below these further district councils or boroughs (in cities). Powers are split between these two levels, with county councils' responsibilities including education, transport, waste disposal and strategic planning; while district councils cover housing, leisure and recreation, environmental health, waste collection, planning applications and local taxation collections.

In addition, there is a third tier of parish and town councils, which vary amongst themselves a great deal in their structure, size and activity, and do not cover the whole country. These local councils are responsible for smaller local services such as parks, community centres, and allotments. Their powers, and freedom to act, have recently increased following the 2012 Localism Act.



²⁷ <https://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn02.pdf>

Local Government Income

The UK tax system is highly centralised by international standards with only a small percentage of taxation raised at the local level. The result is that the majority of local government activity (over 80%) is financed through grants given by central government.²⁷ In recent years government austerity has seen these grants reduce, though in many cases service provision is expected to remain at a similar level. Local government spending has been cut more than any other part of government and local authorities are now rapidly becoming unable to provide much-needed services, many of which, though not including farming or food, they have a statutory duty to provide. This financial pressure has also resulted in a drive among some local authorities to sell off assets in order to raise revenue.

UK Devolution

Devolution of powers from central to country, regional or local levels has happened at several stages in recent UK history. This has largely been happening in two parallel ways: devolution from Westminster to the devolved country administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and at the same time, in England, a move to devolve powers to local level, including plans for regional authorities, increased powers for large cities and city mayors and some increased powers to local authorities. Some of this is aimed at solving the problem posed by England not having its own national parliament. For this project, our work on local authorities is focusing on England more than the other three UK countries.

The devolution agenda is still progressing and it is in many cases too early to tell what it will mean for a range of issues. One important aspect is that much of it depends on being driven by local communities, with a tendency for central government to present options for the devolution of powers, which it is then up to regions, cities or local authorities to take up if they want to.

²⁸ <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/>

²⁹ https://www.sustainweb.org/planning/which_areas/

2. Main levers used by Local Authorities for preserving and securing land

Land Planning

Local government is responsible for implementing the planning system, including deciding what land is used for, and choosing from competing uses such as housing, commercial or agricultural. Balancing these interests and judging where farming fits into local economies and landscapes should be a key role for planning bodies. In England responsibility for planning usually rests with the lower tier (district or borough) councils where there is a two-tier system in place.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): This is the guidance at national level which sets out how planning should be done. It states that: the “purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”. This so-called golden thread running through the whole NPPF is the “presumption in favour of sustainable development”.²⁸ This includes reference to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, prioritising job creation and assessing the need for food production. All of this could empower local authorities to support agroecological farming in the planning process if they can show that this type of farming should be considered as sustainable development.

Local Plans: Local plans are the main method by which the goals of the NPPF are implemented on the ground. Every local planning authority is expected to produce a local plan and keep it up to date. The plan should contain information on what is expected to happen in the area and when, in terms of land use and development. They allow significant input from local residents and aim to represent local priorities (within a national framework). There is existing guidance²⁹ on how local planning can be used to support food growing. As with much of the advice and case studies encouraging local food, however, this tends to focus more on community food production for its social benefits, rather than as serious commercial, local production.

Neighbourhood Planning: Communities now have the right to develop a shared plan for their neighbourhood, setting out their own policies and priorities for what, how and where development should take place. Often this is done through town or parish councils. Once a draft plan has been produced (and meets certain national, regional and EU requirements) it is then put to a local referendum. If it receives support it has then to be legally adopted by the local planning authority and considered alongside the local plan when making decisions.

³⁰ <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/121114oneplanetguideen.pdf>

³¹ www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/consult.ti

³² www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/item/4534-landlines-why-we-need-a-strategic-approach-to-land

³³ <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/121114oneplanetguideen.pdf>

One Planet Development (Wales): The Welsh government has made a commitment to "One planet development", which attempts to ensure development has "its ecological footprint reduced to the global average availability of resources of 1.88 global hectares per person". Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6 - "Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities", develops this policy for low-impact development in the open countryside, i.e. away from existing developments. New developments in the open countryside must reach certain strict sustainability requirements, including encouraging people to live and work in the same location and encouraging land-based employment. "The development must provide for the minimum needs of residents in terms of food, income, energy and waste assimilation in no more than five years."³⁰

Spatial Planning: Spatial planning involves looking more strategically and on a larger scale at what a place looks like. The aim is to zoom out and consider the cumulative effects of development on an area or region; to counter the risk that otherwise combined local planning policies and decisions can create challenges or incoherence. One approach to joint spatial planning comes from the West of England joint spatial plan,³¹ which sees four local authorities come together to look at how to meet housing and transport needs for the region. The encroachment of agricultural land by development is one problem that spatial planning aims to solve.

National Land Use Planning: The concept of a strategic long term approach to land use planning has not been in vogue in the 21st century, though there have been some recent calls to revisit the idea.³²

Saving the best agricultural land: Planning laws are also meant to protect the best agricultural land from being developed, though some criticize that they too often fail to do so.

Land Use

One way of fostering access to land for agroecology is to encourage local authorities to see agroecological farming as a beneficial practice that would help it to meet numerous goals in the public interest. Conventional farming per se may not contribute much to the public good locally as the environmental and social benefits are often minimal and the food produced is traded on global commodity markets. Agroecology, however, can produce jobs, environmental benefits to the area and supply healthy food to local inhabitants. For this reason there may be levers to ensure local authorities aim to see more farmland managed in this way.

Commissioning land-based social enterprises: A recent UK report³³ looked at how local authorities could commission social enterprises

to manage the land that local authorities own or manage. Though there are barriers to this type of commissioning, it can allow local groups or individuals to find innovative ways to manage the land for the public benefit. This includes using land for food production.

Land use and climate change: Many local authority policies assume a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A focus on agroecology and forms of food production that help mitigate climate change would therefore be able to be pursued by local authorities in service of meeting these targets.

Healthy diets: Many local authorities have plans or aims to tackle obesity which could reasonably be aided by an expansion of local healthy food production but, as with other policies, there is rarely join-up between these aims and the concept of agroecology as a solution.

Land Ownership

There is no reliable data on how much land is owned by local authorities, with some never having registered the land they do own with the national Land Registry. Estimates suggest, however, that it could be less than one percent of UK land and it continues to decrease as assets are sold off. It is difficult to find out exactly how much as ownership exists for many different reasons (housing, utilities, allotments, green spaces, smallholdings) and each of these may be managed by a different local government department. Greater attempts have been made to ascertain how much brown-field land local authorities own as part of the general pressure to find land for development. One estimate is that local authorities own 11,000 acres/4,452 ha of previously developed land (obtained from surveying authorities in recent years). The result is a lack of clarity over the total amount of land owned by any one local authority, and all the problems of having to deal with many different individuals or departments.

Compulsory Purchase: This allows local authorities to acquire land without the owner's consent in exchange for paying compensation. It requires the consent of central government and should be "for the public benefit". Usually used for infrastructure or development projects but theoretically there is scope to do so for environmental benefits.

Community Asset Transfer: This instrument allows publicly owned land to be transferred to a community organisation for less than its market value to achieve a public benefit. (See also Development Trusts). It would depend on a community wishing to see land used for sustainable, socially beneficial food production.

³⁴ Donald Curry - The Importance of the County Farm Service to the Rural Economy, 2008

³⁵ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/601763/smallholdings-annual-report-2015-2016.pdf

County Farms: Local authorities are enabled by law to purchase and own land for use as county farms, designed to be smaller scale farms for new farmers to make a start in the business. Many local authorities have been selling these farms. From 1984 to 2006 there was a reduction of 30% in the amount of land in county farms and a 58% reduction in the number of tenants renting them.³⁴ Currently reporting of county farms only requires Local Authorities to report how much land they own is given over to county farms. However, there is scope to have more transparency and proactive policies, for example aiming to achieve multiple benefits from the county farm estate. Recent guidance from Defra has encouraged local authorities to use County Farms to support new entrants into farming.³⁵ For further discussion on the challenges and opportunities presented in the UK by the County Farm system, see Dorset and Cambridgeshire case studies.

Land acquisition for utilities: e.g. Brighton owns land surrounding the city in order to provide clean water to the city (see Brighton and Hove case study).

The Asset Register and Asset Management Plan: Within the Localism Act powers there is the 'Asset of Community Value' and 'Community Right to Bid' provisions, though these do not appear to have been used with respect to farmland given the requirement to demonstrate that "current use furthers the social wellbeing and interests of the local community, or a use in the recent past has done so". However, it may be possible to argue that either County Farms or land used for community food growing could be purchased under these provisions.

Other levers

Local food policies/councils: these are usually unofficial bodies which can perform an enabling function, bringing together different stakeholders, including local government, food producers, consumers, retailers and processors, to encourage the production and consumption of local food.

Development Trusts: they allow community activists to use enterprise and the ownership of buildings and land to create long term social, economic and environmental benefits in their communities (<http://www.sharedassets.org.uk/policy/social-innovation-case-study-1-development-trusts/>).

Community Land Trusts: they allow communities to acquire and manage land for social, economic and environmental benefits of the community. (<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04903>)

Collaborations with large land-owners including conservation organisations or water companies.

3. Key strengths and challenges regarding local authorities and access to land

A key challenge in the UK for local authorities when considering how to foster access to land is that this is not something they are generally used to doing. The county farms system notwithstanding, local authorities do not tend to consider themselves as an important player in land access for food production. While individuals within the authority may have an interest in promoting food production, it is not often part of a broader strategy, with the resulting commitment from across the organisation. Similarly, many people who want to access land do not necessarily think of local authorities as a first port of call in their attempt to do so.

A second major challenge is the relative lack of power and resources that local government has compared to central government. While recent years have seen an attempt to move power from the centre to the regional and local level, the fact that local government has either not had or not used some powers before means there will need to be a period of learning. Coupled to this is the current economic context of shrinking budgets, austerity and cuts. Local authorities face severe cuts in grants from central government (their main source of income). A result of this could be either a reluctance to start ambitious new programmes in areas that are not seen as central to local authority areas of work; and a drive to either sell off assets such as land or aim to get the most economically out of it as possible (driving towards high rents and intensive land use).

This leads to another challenge facing people wishing to see local authorities take a more proactive role in fostering land access for agroecology; the current paradigm for valuing activity tends to have a strongly economic lens. The tendency to see local authority owned assets purely in terms of the financial cost and benefit is one aspect of this. An alternative would be to view assets, such as county farms, in a far more holistic way, valuing the social and environmental benefits that they bring and adding these to the balance sheet of their total value to the local community. Rather than viewing the farms as an asset from which to extract the most return in terms of high rents and low overheads, they could be seen as ways of promoting other goals of the local authority, such as thriving rural economies, climate change mitigation and healthy communities.

A similar mindset is seen in the way local authorities carry out their role as planning authorities. There are huge competing pressures over land use, in particular with transport, energy and housing all competing for land. In this climate, any decisions that a local authority makes over land use, such as policies to

encourage access to land for agroecological farming, will be strongly scrutinised and contested. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), however, as already stated has a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as well as a number of specifications of what this means. Agroecology is widely regarded as meeting many of the goals of sustainable development providing healthy food, decent jobs, ecological benefits such as flood control and climate change mitigation. Unfortunately, many people see the interpretation of the NPPF, and of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as rather a presumption in favour of any development, and focussing mostly narrowly on the contribution it will make to the economy. As well as making it harder for agroecological farming to thrive, this in fact disadvantages agriculture more widely, for example leading to industrial or residential development taking place on high quality agricultural land because the economic calculus makes this appear the best option.

There is a job to do by civil society to persuade local authorities to see the huge value that could be gained from good and innovative use of land - including health, environment, education, biodiversity, food production. Productive land could fulfil a whole range of aims that local authorities have for their communities.

A final problem is another that applies to local government more generally, which is the inherent variability between local authorities. Differences in the political make-up of an authority, its structure as well as particular variations due to geography and history, can all mean that what works well in one authority may not be automatically transferable to another. This reveals itself in the difference between local authorities that take an innovative, progressive or strategic view of food production, and those that do not. Again there is a role here for civil society to point to the best examples of what local authorities have done to foster access to land, why they have done this, and how it can be replicated.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In general, although there is in fact significant room for manoeuvre within existing legislation, financial pressure and the relatively small amount of land owned by local authorities mean there are limits to what they can achieve. The key lever that local authorities have at their disposal is the county farms system. This could be used most effectively to support new entrants into agriculture and while doing so to encourage new and more sustainable farming, i.e. agroecology.

Additional levers, such as the planning system, will only be used if civil society exerts pressure on local authorities and demonstrates both the demand for agroecology and best practice

in how to support it. This should involve presenting a convincing case for the benefits of agroecological farming and highlighting areas where the planning system and other policy levers could support this.

Below are some possible actions or recommendations that could help this process:

Policy recommendations for Local Authorities

- Increased transparency around the ownership, management and sale of local authority assets including clarity over their strategic aims of owning or managing land and if these are being achieved. This should include a requirement to report in detail about how assets are being managed and the social and environmental, as well as merely economic, benefits they are producing. Land should be kept in the best ecological condition and the outputs from that land should benefit the community.
- No whole county farms estate sell off without an independent review and/or public consultation. This should involve producing an assessment of the potential economic, social and environmental benefits of managing the estate for new entrants wishing to pursue agroecological farming. The local authority should present in detail the evidence and reasoning used in any decision to sell county farms.
- When land becomes available that could be used for food production, priority should be given to genuine new entrants who are planning to farm agroecologically. A minimum expectation of social and environmental benefits from this land could be set, for example an assumption that certain methods should be used.

Recommendations for Civil Society

- Create a toolkit with advice on how local residents can begin to map the land owned or managed by their local authority. Detail which people within local government should be contacted and what questions should be asked of them.
- Continue to develop (following Daniel Scharf and others) a body of evidence showing how local, agroecological food production fulfils, or even exemplifies, sustainable development as promoted by the NPPF.
- Develop tools with which to lobby local planning authorities explaining this evidence and the multiple benefits that could accrue from supporting new farmers to farm agroecologically.
- Use the planning system to encourage the provision of accommodation for farm workers (see Shared Assets report).

- Develop a shared vision for publicly owned and/or managed farmland in the 21st century. Show what an innovative and inspiring agroecological network would look like. Highlight how owning assets can add value to a local authority, rather than being something to be disposed of.
- Encourage collaboration between local authorities and other land owners such as the National Trust, Crown Estates, Forestry Commission or Ministry of Defence.

5. Further reading

Making Public Land Work, Shared Assets, 2016

- *Local Authority Rural Estate Asset Management Planning - Good Practice Guidance* ("The Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in the Public Sector" supported by the Tenancy Reform Industry Group (TRIG), 2015):
 - www.aces.org.uk/images/editor/TRIG_REPORT-FINAL-WEB.pdf.pdf
 - Defra, *Future of Farming Review Report*, July 2013:
 - www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/211175/pb13982-future-farming-review-20130709.pdf
 - <http://lammas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/one-planet-development-guidance.pdf>
 - Dan the Plan, a blog by planner Daniel Scharf.
 - > <http://dantheplan.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/planning-and-local-food.html>
 - > <http://dantheplan.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/what-policies-are-needed.html>
 - > <http://dantheplan.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/food-and-planning.html>
 - > <http://dantheplan.blogspot.co.uk/2016/05/inspector-rules-that-food-is-planning.html>
 - > <http://dantheplan.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/should-planning-control-use-of.html>
- *Sixty-sixth Annual Report to Parliament on Local Authority Smallholdings in England 1 April 2015 - 31 March 2016*
- *Planning for the Common Good, Shared Assets* ●

Case studies

Belgium

| Case study | Local authorities involved | Preserving farmland | Organising land accessibility | Directing land toward specific uses and users | Providing a favourable environment to farmers |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Promoting sustainable urban food chains: Brussels | Brussels Capital Region | Developing the Good Food strategy, as a long term, multi-stakeholder strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cartographical study mapping land available for farming – Legal study on the pre-emptive right to buy – Contacting landowners willing to rent land for new farms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support to food producers – Single contact point for people with agroecological projects – Public campaigns on local food consumption | |
| Collaboration between a land agency and citizen groups: Terres de Rebaix | Government of the Walloon Region | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Putting back into active farming an unused plot in public ownership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Project of selling the land to a community farmland trust (Terre-en-vue), based on a participatory proposal – Meanwhile, the land is already rent to a CSA farmer | |
| Growing farmers for the City: Brussels farm incubator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anderlecht Municipality – Brussels Capital Region | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mapping to better understand land uses and ownership and identify priority areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Renting public land to a farm incubator – Identifying another public plot to enable a farmer to set up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Brussels Capital Region funds civil society organisations to advise future farmers – Good Food strategy to promote local food chains |
| Nature conversation and farming by Regional Agencies | Walloon Region | Preserving land protected as an EU Natura 2000 site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recovering land farmed in a way not complying with Natura 2000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Allocating land to organic farmers through call for tenders, developed with the involvement of civil society farmers and 2 conversions to organic farming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encouraging synergies between farmers |

France

| Case study | Local authorities involved | Preserving farmland | Organising land accessibility | Directing land toward specific uses and users | Providing a favourable environment to farmers |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vegetable market Hub: Bourgoin-Jallieu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – City Council – Grouping of municipalities – The regional government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Asking the SAFER to pre-empt land to ensure it remains in agricultural use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Joint farm acquisition with a community land trust (Terre de Liens) – Temporary land storage by SAFER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Acquiring land and leasing it in favour of an organic grower producing for local markets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Acquisition of the farm house – Local policies in support of organic market gardening for local markets |
| Fighting rural decline: the Livradois-Forez network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Groupings of municipalities – Regional Natural Park – Departmental Council (equivalent to County Council) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Constitution of agricultural committees, which develop a strategy for farming – Approval of local land plans which designate certain areas for farming in the long run | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monitoring land and farm transfer opportunities – Setting up an online (GIS) platform compiling data on land and farms – Organising amicable plot exchanges | | |
| Direct municipal management: Mouans-Sartoux | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – City Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Revising the local development plan to designate 120 ha as farmland – Turning land designated for development back into land designated for farming – Strategic farm acquisition to maintain land in farming use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pre-empting the sale of a farming estate to enable the municipality to use it for vegetable production | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Organic farming under direct municipal management (2 growers) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Revising tendering criteria for public catering to open it to agroecological farmers – Creating a new food and farming culture among municipal staff, school children, local residents |
| Participatory Land Governance: Ile d'Yeu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – City Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Revision of the local development plan, to emphasise the importance of agriculture and return fallow land to agricultural use – Claiming ownership of ownerless plots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participatory assessment of vacant land and priority areas – Motivating land owners through individual contact – Subsidising the clearing of fallow land if the owner agrees to make it available to a farmer – Monitoring local land sales and prices, with SAFER (incl. pre-emptive right) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Creating a shared culture among residents that recognises the importance of farming for the island – Plan to develop public catering to increase farmers' access to local markets |

Italy

| Case study | Local authorities involved | Preserving farmland | Organising land accessibility | Directing land toward specific uses and users | Providing a favourable environment to farmers |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Grassroots mobilisation to defend a traditional farming area: the Castel Di Guido | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lazio Region – Rome municipality | | Regional ownership of a 2000 ha estate, whose management is entrusted to the municipality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong local mobilisation to avoid the farm sale and reorientate its management – Privileging in the public call for tender: organic food production, labour intensity, multifunctional farming, etc. | |

Spain / Catalonia

| Case study | Local authorities involved | Preserving farmland | Organising land accessibility | Directing land toward specific uses and users | Providing a favourable environment to farmers |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recovering agricultural land: Palou - Granollers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising a participatory process to develop a strategy for local development, incl. the role of agriculture Designating land as farmland in the local development plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivising landowners to sell/ rent underused land through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediation between landowners and tenant farmers Regrouping plots to make viable farm | <p>Project of setting up a farm incubator to facilitate entry into farming of new entrants</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting civic agriculture: creation of the "Palou products" brand; civic campaigns; etc. Facilitating farmers' access to public housing Improving farmers' access to market Assessing water use. Plan to improve irrigation |
| Grazing in forests: Lluçanès consortium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councils of 13 villages Barcelona province council | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land stewardship agreements to make private forests available for grazing so as to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimise fire propagation risk, provide free land access to ranchers and improve the production of established ones Incentivising landowners by investing on their land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in infrastructures needed by ranchers (e.g. fences, water tanks) Specific actions in water catchment areas to reduce withdrawal and maintain water quality | |
| Strengthening traditional farming: Galles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City councils Catalan Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a vision for local agriculture and its environmental benefits in the spatial and urban plans Including of Galles farmland in the Catalan Government Plan of protected areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilising agricultural land that is already public | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting agroecological farmers Subsidising new entrants Improving farmers' access to markets Investing in farm houses and buildings which need repair Supporting the setting up of a machinery ring |

The United Kingdom

| Case study | Local authorities involved | Preserving farmland | Organising land accessibility | Directing land toward specific uses and users | Providing a favourable environment to farmers |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Balancing farming, the environment and people: Brighton and Hove City Council | City Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly owned farmland is part of a National Park and UNESCO Biosphere Establishing a multi-stakeholder Advisory Board to develop policy for a viable local farm economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of Council owned land becoming available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renting out public land to farmers protecting the local environment (Higher Level Stewardship agreements) Renting out land to community projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a favourable environment to farmers |
| Championing the farm estate: Dorset county council | County Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a management plan and approach for the County farm estate (2600 ha) that values the farms and the wider contribution food and farming make to the region | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking a property review rationalisation program to preserve farms in "viable sized" holdings - less farms but more viable Capital invested in infrastructure and repairs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the County farm estate to provide a 'gateway' into agriculture => starter farms for new entrants, with fair rent, lease duration and support to move at the end of the tenancy Providing land for local allotments and community projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public support available to farmers who suffer financial hardship at some point Encourage and support tenants to employ agricultural apprentices |
| Cambridgeshire County Farms | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserving the largest UK County farm Estate as an asset for local population and source of income for the Council Focus on effective management of the estate, which may result in an emphasis on ever bigger farms and selling off some farms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediation between landowners and tenant farmers to help new entrants move to another farm at the end of their tenancy Regrouping of plots to make larger viable farm units Recovering unused land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive discrimination for new entrants, including provision of housing Openness to new ideas and innovations, e.g. agro-forestry but also solar farm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing public land for the benefit of the community, including social and recreational uses |

Belgium

Promoting sustainable Urban Food Chains: the “Good Food” strategy in Brussels

Maarten Roels Terre-en-vue

Highlights

- Multi-sectorial strategy aimed at supporting Brussels local food chain.
- Coherent approach, building up from existing grassroots initiatives
- Support to producers and access to land are two clear priorities
- Studies on farmland lease, available land and preemptive right to buy.

Local authorities involved

The Brussels Capital Region and its Ministry of the Environment

Other agents involved

Brussels' Good Food strategy is a multi-stakeholder project that involves many actors from different fields, ranging from primary food production and food processing to food advisory services, sustainable food distribution, commercialisation and matters such as access to land and access to credit.

Description

“Good Food” is the name of an initiative set up by the current ministry of the environment of the Brussels Capital Region. It aims to make the Brussels food chain more resilient. It does so by making actors involved in this objective more visible through an online platform, by encouraging them to collaborate and by financially supporting some of them.

The online platform (www.goodfood.brussels) allows citizens and professionals to find out everything about sustainable food in Brussels. It includes information about existing projects, about how to set up a new initiative, learn from existing ones, where to find ingredients, etc.

Time period

The Good Food strategy was launched in 2016 and will last at least until the end of the current Brussels government term (2019). It brings together initiatives that were supported by former governments with a clear objective of improving Brussels' food resilience. As the current project builds on several former government terms, one can expect that it will continue after the current government.

Main actions

The project aims at making Brussels food chain resilient by 2035. It has seven objectives:

- Raising local, sustainable food production
- Relocalising the supply of sustainable food
- Supporting the demand for sustainable food
- Developing a new culture around good food
- Reducing food waste
- Reflecting on sustainable food systems and supporting them
- Organising the sustainable governance of these changes
- Several priorities have been identified by the Brussels government:
 - The development of local food production in Brussels and its periphery: by 2035 Brussels should reach 30% self-sufficiency in vegetables and fruits.
 - Awareness raising and empowerment of the Brussels population, starting from a very young age.
 - Reducing food waste by 30% in 2020.
 - Integrating social and multicultural features of the city in these changes.

A large series of actions have been supported already to move forward to these objectives. For priority number one, the Brussels government has identified access to land to be both the biggest obstacle and lever. The second main lever is to offer proper support to food producers. The environmental agency (Bruxelles Environnement) leads a FEDER project with several actors in order to tackle these two issues inside of the capital's administrative borders.

The Brussels Region commissioned several studies in order to address the first objective. A first project produced a legal handbook for editing lease contracts for farm and in and around Brussels. A cartographical study then mapped the land that is potentially available for farming. Another study is under way on the use of the pre-emptive right to buy which the Brussels government could use to release farmland.

Results so far

Both the handbook and the mapping study are published. The results of the latter will be put on a collaborative website, with a geographic information system in 2018.

Good Food also supports Terre-en-vue to find landowners in peri-urban areas who are willing to rent land on the long term for new farms that feed the city. A first call for projects was launched in the summer of 2017, with a farm start foreseen in 2018. So far, 15 projects have responded to the call and several new landowners have contacted Terre-en-vue to propose land.

In 2018, a single contact point will be set up to bring together all actors working on access to land (Terre-en-vue), know-how (Le début des Haricots for technical knowledge, and Crédal and SAW-B for financial know-how), capital (Crédal), and local markets.

Why it is a good practice?

It is a good practice because it is a top-down strategy supporting existing bottom-up initiatives and encouraging new ones to arise. It thus starts from built up knowledge and practices rather than re-inventing the wheel. However, there is little coordination between the different actors involved.

The Good Food programme also established a local food advisory council, however participants feel that their contributions are not really taken into consideration by the Brussels government, so there is little enthusiasm about it. A Food Council should be given a certain level of authority if it is supposed to be managed by participants who have expertise and to attract participation from civil society.

Another strong point is that primary production has been identified as a priority and that the main obstacle, access to land, has also been identified. However, few financial means are provided to tackle this obstacle; and structural change needs proper financial support.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The major strength of the Brussels government's approach is that it builds further on former policy decisions and strategies. It supports existing practices and encourages new ones to take a leap of faith. This strategy has a chance to succeed as it has identified the right priorities, although budget spending allocated to these priorities is not sufficient.

Another strength is that it gathers many actors on an online platform, though the same actors are not encouraged to collaborate or coordinate their actions. They are however free to do so and the fact that they have not been encouraged to do so may be seen as an opportunity because it allows them to independently create a

framework for collaborations.

The latest government initiative in the Good Food strategy is the call for projects to set up a single contact point for actors who need support to develop sustainable food projects. This may both allow for closer collaboration between existing actors and support new initiatives.

Weaknesses and challenges:

Land for production in and around the city is rare and very often land owners wait for their farmland to become residential land or their residential land to be built on or allotted for construction projects. It is therefore hard to get long-term contracts with these landowners, whether they be private or public. Political will to support (peri-)urban food production may thus not be enough. What may also be needed is a clear signal that farmland will not be turned into residential land. There could even be a move to turn certain designated areas into farmland (see case study Growing farmers for the city: farm incubators in Brussels).

However, this raises questions concerning private property and speculation which are not easily debated by current political leaders as these issues are not very popular. They are however fundamental and must be dealt with. The same applies to public land where public institutions have a responsibility to fill in.

Currently social service agencies own a lot of farmland in Belgium. Brussels is no exception to this. As governments cut their budgets this land is often sold with no other objective other than to generate profit. This could be considered as totally opposed to the social role these agencies are supposed to play. Building a real (public) dialogue is an important challenge for Brussels as the land these agencies and similar public actors own is considerable. ●

Terres de Rebaix: a fruitful collaboration between a public land agency and citizen groups

Maarten Roels Terre-en-vue

Highlights

- A piece of land in public ownership is returned to active farming.
 - A CSA farmer finds secure access to land, and is able to maintain his business and customer base.
 - Fruitful collaboration between a public agency, a community farmland trust and citizen groups.
 - Elaboration of an agroecological project, realising the food production and environmental potential of the plot.
-

Local authorities involved:

The Government of the Walloon Region - Department of Rural Land Planning (DAFOR)

Other agents involved

- Terre-en-vue, a cooperative company facilitating access to land for sustainable farming in French-speaking Belgium
- GASAth, an association supporting local food systems around the city of Ath situated in the province of Hainaut in Wallonia. Members of GASAth are consumers who support farmers through community supported agriculture. GASAth supported Yannick Hostie, one of their suppliers who lost access to land.

Description

The Walloon Department of rural spaces and rivers has an agency working on farmland, called the “Department of rural land planning” (DAFOR). One of its activities is to manage land consolidation. It thereby often becomes the owner of land that is not yet allocated to a particular farmer. This is the case for a seven-hectare field in the

province of Hainaut in a municipality called Rebaix.

Yannick Hostie is a farmer, established near Rebaix, who sells his produce only through local and direct supply chains, in particular to GASAth members. Yannick farmed land belonging to another farmer who decided to take back his land. As there was no written agreement, Yannick had to look for land elsewhere. The quest for land proved to be hard and after several years Yannick had not yet found a long-term solution.

Hostie's consumers group (GASAth) knocked on Terre-en-vue's door to ask for support. Through its network, Terre-en-vue heard of potentially available public land near where Yannick lives. The land will be sold through a particular procedure in which DAFOR looks for a sustainable project that is in keeping with the characteristics of the land and which develops local food systems.

Terre-en-vue initiated preliminary discussions with DAFOR, which agreed to let Yannick grow on the land before the land is sold. Terre-en-vue is considered as a good candidate to buy the land, granted that it comes up with a proposal that fits the specifications developed by DAFOR. DAFOR designed the specifications based on an analysis of the plot's potential, which was supported by Terre-en-vue.

Time period

A first contact between DAFOR and Terre-en-vue took place in 2015. The land consolidation – and the sales procedure which is part of it – should be finished at the latest by 2020.

Main actions

DAFOR informed Terre-en-vue of the land consolidation in 2015. Terre-en-vue organised several field visits to better understand the characteristics of the land and to develop different maps. On DAFOR's request, it submitted a proposal for the land, with the support of Yannick's consumers. The final result was an agroecological project, which includes agro-forestry features, given that there is much wood on the land. The project would also preserve some natural zones as DAFOR requested.

Since then, several citizen-driven actions have taken place on the field – bush clearing, tree cutting – in order to start producing food. This allowed the farmer to partly compensate for his land loss. Hence he could keep his customers who he feared to lose as production slowed down.

Event though the land is not yet for sale officially, Terre-en-vue decided to launch a call for shares for the estimated amount of the plot (€180,000). Nearly half of the total budget has been gathered so far. Once the land is officially for sale and Terre-en-vue accepted as the buyer, the cooperative will rapidly be able to sign a lease.

Results so far

A farmer has been able to find land and will be assured long-term access to it, assuming that Terre-en-vue will buy the land and rent it to him.

Public land will be sold to a citizen-driven initiative. The citizens have been able to collaborate with the managing public owner to set the criteria that should be respected by the future owner. The land is already transforming towards a well-balanced agro-ecosystem designed and transformed by citizens and their farmer.

105 shareholders have taken shares to support the project and the local municipality is one of them. Citizens who did not know the farm got to know it and learned that as a citizen one can have impact on what happens with the public goods.

Why it is a good practice?

The plot was formerly abandoned, as its destination in the land consolidation procedure was not clear. The synergy that emerged between DAFOR, Terre-en-vue and citizen groups was very fruitful. DAFOR wanted to restore the food production function of the land and maintain certain important environmental services the land offers to its surroundings. This fitted perfectly Terre-en-vue's vision for agroecology.

The specificity of this project is that the regional body DAFOR entered into direct dialogue with local citizens, through the regional actor Terre-en-vue, to reflect on how to reshape the land and find a balance between nature and agriculture. This process comes close to what could be understood as management of the commons in which common resources are managed taking into consideration the needs of local communities.

While the project is not finalised yet, there seems to be a very strong citizen consensus on the future of the land. The project submitted by Terre-en-vue gained much legitimacy from the fact that local citizens and local public authorities are supporting it.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The strength of the project is clearly its multi-level character. Regional and local public and private actors collaborate and a real dialogue has been put into place. To our knowledge this is the first time Wallonia has witnessed such a process.

Could this experience lead to a new procedure for land attribution that occurs under land consolidation? Could Terre-en-vue be an interesting interface or facilitator between public landowners who wish to sell their land for a project and the needs of local communities? We may be able to answer this question once the procedure is totally finalised.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

However ideal this case may seem, it has been a very slow and exhausting process. It took much time before the dialogue started and much time lapsed before we formally received answers to our questions. The main reason is the lack of a procedure, which, on the other hand, was also an opportunity to develop an innovative approach.

The main challenge thus is how to create smooth procedures for these kinds of opportunities without creating a bureaucracy that makes the procedure time-consuming and inaccessible. A partnership between public bodies and NGOs like Terre-en-vue may offer a solution. ●



Growing farmers for the city: farm incubators in Brussels

Maarten Roels Terre-en-vue

Highlights

- The use of public land for farming, even though it has been designated for development.
 - The creation of a farm incubator which supports new entrant farmers.
 - A partnership between a Local Authority and several Civil Society Organisations (TEV, DDH...).
 - One specific project (a farm incubator on 3ha) is advocating for, planning and promoting farmland use for local food production.
 - High land pressure in peri-urban area.
-

Local authorities involved

- Anderlecht Municipality, one of the nineteen municipalities making up the Brussels Capital Region .
- Brussels Capital Region, one of Belgium’s three regions (together with the Flanders Region and the Wallonia Region).

Other agents involved

- *Le Début des Haricots* (DDH), a Brussels based association that creates collective gardens, compost sites, and urban farms.
- *Terre-en-vue*, an association, cooperative company and Foundation facilitating access to land for agroecological farming in Brussels and Wallonia.
- Crédal, an NGO that offers advice for local investments and startup companies with a social aim. They also manage a cooperative credit bank.
- *La Maison Verte et BIEue*, an NGO that promotes the Brussels rural area where the project is situated called Neerpede.
- *Bruxelles Environnement* (BE), a regional official agency that manages environmental issues. Its responsibilities include green spaces in the city such as parks, prairies and potentially farms.

Description

Brussels is the capital city of Belgium with 1,175,000 citizens, and 19 municipalities. Until the 19th century the city was fed by farmers in and around Brussels. The most important production zone is the valley of the Senne river which runs from central-west Brussels to the north-east of Brussels. One part of this zone has not urbanised, and is called Neerpede. It is part of the municipality of Anderlecht situated in the central-west part of Brussels.

In the 19th century this municipality was home to many textile manufacturers, but much land was used for farming. Recently the Region of Brussels and the municipality decided to publicise this more rural region of Brussels for its landscape quality. A recent ERDF project has been established to renovate an old farm in this zone, to start up farm incubators and to launch new permanent farms. In parallel, the ministry of agriculture started a “Good Food” campaign in 2016 in order to promote sustainable food chains in Brussels (see case study on Brussels Good Food strategy) and included local production in its work program.

The farm incubator is managed by the association Le Début des Haricots. Its name is “Graines de Paysans”, a reference to the role of the initiative in “generating” new farmers. The land belongs to the municipality of Anderlecht. Officially the land is farmland and its total size is 2.5 ha, with new land being added regularly. However, Anderlecht decided to lease use of the land to DDH for 7 years. This is very remarkable because this lowers the chance that this land could become used for residential housing development in the near future. If the farm incubator project becomes a success, social and cultural issues would make it difficult for the municipality to change its use to residential use.

The farm incubator started in 2016 and will run until 2020 when further resources will be sought to continue operating the farm. The farm offers guidance and infrastructure to several future farmers who experiment with their financial, technical and social skills related to farming near the city. Once individuals are comfortable settling as farmers, they can access land elsewhere around Brussels with a long-term lease. Terre-en-vue constantly looks for land to facilitate transition from the farm incubator to long-term settlement on the land.

Time period

The financing of the project through ERDF started in early 2016 and will end in 2020, though hopefully the project will continue once this period is over.

Main actions

The lead organisation in this project is DDH. They provide 5 permanent staff members plus office and growing infrastructure. Staff members offer technical support to the future farmers

and build and maintain the farm site. Technical support covers advice for growing food, finding markets, internal governance and communication. The farm infrastructure consists of three greenhouses, a secure shed for tools, an irrigation system, electricity and access points for deliveries.

All other actors provide specific services. Terre-en-vue looks for land for farmers after the experimentation period, Crédal helps the farmers to ensure their future viability by developing business plans with strong financial models, La Maison Verte et Blue helps to give more visibility to those farmers that choose to stay in the "Neerpede" zone in Anderlecht once they decide to settle.

Results so far

Six projects started in 2016 which were worked on by seven future farmers. Most of them will carry out a second experimental year in 2017 and will start to look for land in 2018. New entrant farmers have learned better how to grow vegetables, fruits and herbal plants close to the city using innovative techniques. They have set up collaborations with local urban markets, with vegetable box schemes and with local stores and restaurants. They have also showcased to more conventional farmers based nearby that they know what they are doing, and that they are efficient.

Terre-en-vue has conducted a mapping research project that has allowed for better understanding of land use and ownership in the capital region of Brussels. This has helped identify zones of high potential for new farmer settlements. Terre-en-vue also gave training sessions making farmers more autonomous in both finding land for themselves and in negotiating a fair contract with the landowner.

Crédal gave training sessions in creating a good business plan so that farmers with a strong technical profile can also manage sales and marketing of their produce.

An added result is that the site for the farm incubator has been able to grow its size thanks to a farmer who was prepared to swap land. This land swap was facilitated by Terre-en-vue.

In 2018 a further project will start on a new plot in the east of Brussels, with negotiations for this new land currently in process. The land is used by a farmer moving out of the industry, and is owned by a Brussels-based university, under environmental restrictions. An informal agreement has been obtained and is in the process of becoming formalised. This will be the first settlement of a farm that has been through the test phase. In the future, calls for projects will be organised for the land that will be found by Terre-en-vue.

Why is this good practice?

Organic food is in high demand today in cities like Brussels. Land is available in the city and the farmers who farm this land still produce for the market as they did 30 to 40 years ago. Farmers who are willing to work differently and produce fresh perishable food for the

city are mainly new entrants to farming. They typically don't come from farming families and many are unsure of their capacities: the incubator is a perfect way for them to practice and learn.

The project allows new farmers to test their skills in the particular context where they will apply them once they start growing on their own account. It also is a good practice for Terre-en-vue. This organisation often receives demands from future farmers, but it is often difficult to estimate the capacity of the applicant to grow food and manage all the aspects of a farm. In a context where land is scarce and the demands multiple, it is of great value to have some guarantees about the applicants' skills, which the incubator can provide.

The project also involves several policy levels and several actors that complement one another. It allows for networking that leads to future collaborations related to access to land. The site that is now being developed is a typical example - it allowed Terre-en-vue and BE to react very quickly with a clear offer to the landowning university. The municipality where the land is situated was also motivated to support the settlement of the new farmer when it realised Anderlecht is also supporting farmers. The multi-actor nature of the work seems to have unexpected positive impacts.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The strength of the project is the synergy gains for all actors involved. The greatest opportunity is that the work connects the growing skills of the food producers to growing demands for local and organic food. The project lifts several (potential) barriers: access to know-how (DDH), access to finances and planning skills (Crédal), access to land (Terre-en-vue, Anderlecht and BE). Anderlecht and BE also add legitimacy to the project and its managers when they meet new potential landowners that are willing to sell or rent land.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

The project needs external finances and resources in order to function. It has no built-in objective for financial self-sufficiency and is currently destined to remain dependent on subsidies or grants. The challenge is to find new sources of finance and investment. Land is very scarce and extremely expensive. Renting land is possible but most actors are not willing to rent for a very long time because once the official land use changes (housing, industries...) the value of the land raises by a factor of between 4 and 10. If the land is under a conventional land lease contract it is very hard to "free" the land and obtain the new market value.

The challenge is to negotiate good land leases and to be sure that government gives clear signals that certain farming sites are unlikely to become housing land in the near and mid-term future, thereby lowering the chance for speculation. ●

Nature conversation and farming by Regional Agencies

Maarten Roels Terre-en-vue

Highlights

- Recovering land farmed in a way that does not comply with Natura 2000 objectives.
 - Allocating land to organic farmers through call for tenders
 - Consolidating existing farms and supporting 4 new farmers.
 - Encouraging synergies between farmers.
-

Local authorities involved

Walloon Region, Department of Nature & Forests

Other agents involved

- University of Gembloux, *Centre de Recherche Agronomique* (CRA) is a well established agronomic research institute that is part of the university of Gembloux, the biggest agronomic university in Belgium situated in the middle of one of the most productive farming zones of Europe, called Hesbaye.
- FUGEA, a peasant farm syndicate situated in Namur which especially represents many young farmers. They support sustainable, but not necessarily organic, farmers in the Walloon Region.
- Terre-en-vue, an NGO, cooperative company and Foundation facilitating access to land for agroecological farming in the Brussels Capital Region and the Walloon Region.

Description

In the Walloon Region of Belgium much land is protected by the EU Natura 2000 statute. Very often this land is managed by an NGO called Natagora, but many farmers have pastures in which the Nature status limits how they can be used.

The Department of Nature and Forests (DNF) of the Walloon Region owns a significant amount of land that is classified as Natura 2000. One property is situated on a hill called "Montagne Saint

Pierre" near the border with Holland in the province of Liège of the Walloon Region. The site is protected by Natura 2000 status as its surrounding area harbours endangered species. However, the owner of the land did not respect these restrictions. DNF's response was to expropriate the land from the owner and to manage the land itself. It did so by organising a call for proposals using very restrictive specifications. Terre-en-vue was contacted by DNF to offer support as DNF was new to this kind of process. The NGO proposed to work together with several partners from its network, including CRA and FUGEA. Together these partners agreed upon the specifications and a procedure for the selection. As DNF wanted the farms to be organic and inclusive towards surrounding farmers, Terre-en-vue proposed selecting four projects. Two of them would be organic and two of them non-organic. The deal would be that those that are organic would support their neighbours to become organic, with the non-organic farms agreeing to transition toward organic under the supervision of organic colleagues. The partners agreed upon the idea as did everyone on the selection board. Four out of 16 farmers were selected and today they sell and market their organic produce together.

Time period

The project ran from the beginning of 2013 to the beginning of 2014. The first harvesting season took place in 2014.

Main actions

A public institution has decided to take public land management into its own hands and to orient the use towards sustainable farming. In addition this institution has decided to collaborate with non-governmental organisations without ceding control or responsibility.

In order to start this project, several preparatory field visits were organised to test the potential of the site and get to know the local farmers. Several meetings were also organised to understand the goals and expectations of all the actors that were involved in the process. The call for proposals was sent out through the networks of all the partners and the selection made after having interviewed 16 proposals.

The four final candidates were invited for a start-up meeting and soon they decided to work together. From then on Terre-en-vue and CRA offered support by telephone and visited the site once per year to follow up the project while DNF also conducted more visits.

The project has been described on the website and has led to new opportunities for Terre-en-vue to do similar work, surprisingly with private land owners rather than public ones.

Results so far

Four farmers have gained access to land for sustainable farming, transmitted their knowledge, and shared their clients. The formerly non-organic farmers are in the process of transforming their fields to organic production having discovered the advantages of organic farming.

Why is it a good practice?

This project has allowed at-risk environment and ecological systems to be used by environmentally mindful farmers. It also shows the potential of public agencies to look for alternative ways to manage public land - it allowed the land to be managed as a common good. Local farmers were asked to produce good food for the local market. The collaboration between the different actors allowed for experience sharing, for the sharing of responsibility and building credibility. Terre-en-vue and CRA gave legitimacy to the final choice as they are rather neutral actors and the collaboration with DNF gave credibility to Terre-en-vue as a facilitator as it was later selected by a public body to co-ordinate a call for proposals and participate in a selection process.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The strength of the project is the clear vision from DNF concerning the type of farming they wanted, which is supported by the Natura 2000 status. Another strength is the partnership between complementary actors in the selection process. The process itself has been very well organised and that clearly contributed to its success.

The major opportunity was to allow farmers to gain access to land and to allow them to learn from other farmers. For Terre-en-vue the opportunity was to learn to co-manage a call for proposals and to work together with a public agency. The process gave more visibility and legitimacy to Terre-en-vue.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

The weakness of the project is that it was only basically supported by three people in the agency, so the lessons learned have not yet been included in its general policy. The project could only be put into place because of the motivation of these people and the temporary absence of a head of department.

The challenge now is to monitor and evaluate the project, integrate processes in to the policy of the agency in question, and to convince other local authorities to do the same. ●

France

Creating a vegetable market hub in Bourgoin-Jallieu

Sophie Lejeune and Marie Leroy Terre de liens³⁶

³⁶ Source: Terre de Liens, *Création d'un pôle maraîchage à Bourgoin-Jallieu*, in *Agir sur le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités locales*, 2014-2015 - updated in 2017 by V. Rioufol, Terre de liens. Read the presentation of Marais des Mûres farm on the Municipal Council website.

³⁷ More on the Safer, see: www.accesstoland.eu/ Unique-land-agencies-the-SAFER

Highlights

- Supporting organic market gardening for local markets.
 - Supporting new entrants.
 - Co-acquisition between a municipality and a community land trust.
 - Ensuring access to land and housing.
 - Temporary land storage
-

Local authorities involved

- Bourgoin Jallieu municipality.
- The grouping of municipalities including Bourgoin Jallieu (*Communauté d'Agglomération des Portes de l'Isère - CAPI*).
- The Regional Government (*Conseil régional Rhône-Alpes*).

Other agents involved

- The local Safer – Safer is the agency in charge of regulating the French rural land market³⁷.
- Terre de Liens, a civic organisation established in 2003 to preserve farmland and support access to land for peasant and organic farmers.

Description

Bourgoin-Jallieu, a town of 27,000 inhabitants, lies at the foot of the French Alps. As it is situated between two major city centres, Lyon and Grenoble, there is a high demand for land for urban development. The municipality had the idea of developing a market gardening area that would provide organic vegetables to the municipal kitchen, which prepares food for schools, and other public services (e.g. retirement homes, etc.).

In 2010, the farm "Marais des Mûres", comprised of 3.4 hectares of land, farm buildings and a farmhouse, was put up for sale. The municipal council viewed it as the first step towards constituting a broader market gardening area. It asked the Safer

³⁸ Pre-emption means that a third party (here the Safer but it can be a local authority) can impose itself as the buyer of land that goes on sale. It automatically becomes the buyer and the seller has no other choice (except to renounce selling the land).

³⁹ More on land portage: see forthcoming presentation on “Temporary Land Portage and land portage agreements” on www.accesstoland.eu. Land portage is the temporary holding of agricultural land and buildings to preserve them and put them at the disposal of a specific use or user. In cases when there is no farm successor, or no new entrant matching the objectives which a local authority or public institution has for a piece of land, that authority may decide to acquire the farm and buildings and then resell them after a period of time. This period of time makes it possible to find a farmer matching the criteria and / or gives the farmer time to prepare his entry into farming (e.g. completing training, finalising administrative procedures or bank loan applications).

to pre-empt³⁸ the land so that it would not be bought for non-agricultural uses. At the same time, it contacted Terre de Liens - which had already helped with a feasibility study of the market gardening area - to explore the possibility of jointly acquiring the farm.

In 2012, the farm was jointly bought by the municipal council and Terre de Liens, in the following way:

- The municipality bought the farmhouse for €212,000 (with subsidies from the local federation of municipalities and the Regional Council covering about half the price).
- Terre de Liens bought the land and the farm buildings for €95,000, after raising money from local citizens and consumers.
- The municipality rented the farmhouse to Terre de Liens with a leasehold (99-year lease). In this way, while not bearing the initial cost of farmhouse acquisition, Terre de Liens can ensure that it remains directly linked to farmland and buildings, and can rent it all out to current and future tenant farmers.

The Safer had to hold on to the land for over eight months, which was the time needed for the partners to organise the acquisition and for Terre de Liens to raise the money needed to buy the farmland and buildings. The Regional Council paid the Safer for supporting the costs of the land portage during that period³⁹.

Time period

2010-2012

Main actions

- Directly mobilising farmland to make it available to a grower as part of the development of a local food policy.
- Joint acquisition of the land and buildings by the municipality and Terre de Liens, a community farm land trust.
- Pre-emption of the land by the Safer to fulfil the objectives of the municipality and temporary land portage by the Safer to enable the municipality and Terre de Liens to organise land acquisition and crowd funding.

Results so far

- In 2012, a first market gardener started organic production on the farm. She was joined in 2013 by a second market gardener. All their produce is sold locally.
- A farm unit has been preserved, consisting of land, farm buildings and a farmhouse, hence providing all necessary infrastructure for the farmer and avoiding the dismantlement of farms, where farmhouses are turned into secondary residences.
- The municipality's initial concern was to develop organic farming. Through this project, it has developed a vision of the need

to preserve and secure farmland for local organic produce. It has also moved from a focus on a single municipality to building a vision and strategy at a larger scale, grouping several municipalities.

Why is it a good practice?

This project shows the importance of strong commitment from the community as well as the co-operation of various stakeholders to ensure the success of the project. In addition, this project led the municipality to expand from a limited project of developing organic farming on one site, into a broader strategy to preserve agricultural land and develop local food systems.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- Strong political will of the municipality to develop organic farming and openness to work with other stakeholders bringing complementary skills and capacity (Safer, Terre de Liens).
- Very active local group of Terre de Liens volunteers, which was key to working on the feasibility study, engaging with the municipality, raising funds locally, supporting the future growers, etc.
- A multi-stakeholder partnership.
- Weaknesses/ challenges:
 - The various stages and time needed for implementing such a project were initially under-estimated.
 - Multiple zoning and planning documents with a diversity of public authorities having diverse competences and responsibilities (14 different planning/zoning documents). ●

Fighting rural decline: the Livradois-Forez network

Marie Leroy and Sophie Lejeune Terre de Liens⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Source: Terre de Liens, case study on *Le réseau installation-foncier du Livradois-Forez*, in *Agir sur le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités locales*, 2014-2015; and Terre de Liens *Rhône-Alpes, case study on Favoriser les transmissions: le réseau du Livradois Forez*, in *Communes, intercommunalités: comment préserver les terres agricoles, 21 exemples en Rhône-Alpes et ailleurs*, 2015, pp 26-8. Updated by V. Rioufol, Terre de Liens in 2017. See also: www.parc-livradois-forez.org/Reseau-Agricole-Livradois-Forez.html.

⁴¹ More on the Safer, see: www.accesstoland.eu/Unique-land-agencies-the-SAFER

Highlights

- Monitoring land and farm transfer opportunities.
 - Setting up a GIS.
 - Organising a common vision between groups of municipalities.
 - Supporting entrants into farming in a remote rural area and fighting rural de-population.
 - New land zoning aimed at preserving farmland.
-

Local authorities involved

- Nine groupings of municipalities from the same area (up from 5 groupings when it started in 2005)
- Regional Natural Park of Livradois Forez.
- Local Council (equivalent to County Council, Conseil général du Puy de Dôme).

Other agents involved

- Local Safer - Safer is the agency in charge of regulating the French rural land market⁴¹.
- Local Chamber of Agriculture.
- Local Rural Development Associations (e.g. CREFAD, Maison des Paysans, Terre de Liens...).

Description

Auvergne is a mountainous part of central France which has experienced a dramatic rural exodus and loss of farms for the past 50 years. Since its establishment in 1986, the regional natural park of Livradois-Forez has always paid attention to the renewal of the farming population in the area of the park. In France, a regional natural park is a public body bringing together the regional authority and all municipalities and groupings of municipalities of a specific natural area, which choose to adhere to a Charter and participate in the actions of preserving and developing the value

⁴² More on French Regional Natural Parks, see: www.accesstoland.eu/National-Federation-of-Regional-Natural-Parks

and potential of the area⁴².

Initially, the Park conducted a series of land assessments to identify retiring farmers with no successors, and areas where land is so fragmented that it may hamper the entry of new farmers. It then decided to constitute a “network on land and entry into farming in the Livradois-Forez”. The first activity was to develop an online platform compiling, managing and updating all the data produced by the different land assessments with a geographic information system (GIS). This platform makes it possible to know, in real time, who’s producing what, where, on which area of land, for how much longer, and what are their prospects for farm succession.

In addition, the network has taken shape through regular meetings, gathering representatives of the Park, the County Council, municipalities and agricultural stakeholders, as well as the establishment or consolidation of agricultural committees in each grouping of municipalities.

Today, the network is structured around three main objectives:

- Farm Succession: “to succeed with farm succession, one needs to plan it in advance”.
- Entry into farming: for people “to live and start businesses locally”.
- Farm re-structuring: “improving land allocation to ensure better farming conditions”.

Time period

Operating since 2005

Main actions

- Online GIS database, which enables municipalities to monitor the situation of local farms in terms of land (farm size, plot distribution) and succession status. Currently, 1100 farms are referenced in the database, including 900 farms that are still in operation.
- Setting up or consolidating agricultural working groups in all municipalities of the area.
- Development of local agricultural policies at both municipal and supra-municipal level which translated into determined actions: pre-emption of land sales by municipalities, approval of land plans which designate certain areas for farming in the long run and give a central and positive role to farming in their local development strategy.
- The network now experiments with amicable plot exchanges, intended to group farming areas so as to facilitate the work of farmers and plot restructuring in the perspective of farm succession.

Results so far

On a concrete level, the network succeeded in facilitating the entry into farming of a couple of organic goat and cow breeders, with on-farm dairy processing. But the main result of the project has been to make local representatives aware of the challenges of preserving active farming on their territory. It has translated into land planning laws where farmland and the conditions for farming are well preserved. The results of the network inspired the establishment of a similar network in a nearby area (Combailles).

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- A full-time employee, who coordinates the project and facilitates cooperation of all parties involved. Key to his success is that he has skills both in agriculture and GIS.
- The political will of local elected representatives and staff of the various municipalities and groupings of municipalities. The network truly functions as a "tool by and for local authorities".
- The role of the Regional Natural Park is paramount to facilitating cooperation and developing a joint vision of land planning and management. The support of the County Council was also essential in the implementation of the project.
- Over time, trust has developed between local authorities and institutions representing the farming sector. The network was able to complement and advance their actions by making them more coherent and strategic.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- The main challenge has been for each participant to "find their place" and to grow trust among the partners.
- Daily administrative management is sometimes complicated, in particular because no elected official is responsible for the network. ●



Direct municipal management of food production: Mouans-Sartoux

Sophie Lejeune and Véronique Rioufol Terre de Liens⁴³

⁴³ Source: Terre de Liens Rhône-Alpes, *Produire sur des terres communales pour la restauration collective: la régie agricole de Mouans-Sartoux*, in *Communes, intercommunalités: comment préserver les terres agricoles, 21 exemples en Rhône-Alpes et ailleurs*, 2015; Terre de Liens, *La régie agricole de Mouans-Sartoux*, in *Agir sur le foncier agricole: un rôle essentiel pour les collectivités locales, 2014-2015*; Article "Les cantines mettent du bio dans les épinards", in *Libération*, 3 May 2016

Highlights

- Farming under municipal management (farmer = municipal employee).
 - Constituting land reserves over time.
 - Preserving a strategic estate from development.
 - Providing 80% local organic vegetables for school restaurants.
 - Creating a new food and farming culture in the municipality, for children and the community.
 - Supporting entrants into farming in a remote rural area.
 - New land zoning aimed at preserving farmland.
-

Local authorities involved

Mouans-Sartoux municipality

Summary

In Mouans-Sartoux, a town of 10,000 inhabitants on the French Riviera, local councillors have developed an agricultural policy aimed at municipal self-sufficiency. Their objective is that 100% of the meals offered in the three school restaurants come from local organic production. To that end, they have set up direct municipal management of organic vegetable growing and have hired a market gardener as a municipal employee.

Background: An innovative agricultural and food policy

In the area of Mouans-Sartoux, (10 km north of Cannes), land prices are much higher than national standards and are skyrocketing. Competition for coastal land is high due to the double pressure of urban sprawl and increased tourist demand. If farmland use continues to decline at the current rate, it will all be gone within 25 years. However, the food production potential of the area is

⁴⁴ On pre-emption right, see footnote 5 above.

⁴⁵ See: <http://restauration-bio-durable-mouans-sartoux.fr/le-domaine-de-haute-combe/>

considerable and the need to feed the local population is increasing.

In this context, the local councillors of Mouans-Sartoux decided to develop a strong local agricultural and food policy in order to move towards self-sufficiency at the local level. Their first objective was to offer 100% local organic meals in the town's three school restaurants.

To this end, they first reviewed the specifications of their tender for public catering with a view to making it more accessible to small producers (introduction of environmental criteria, allotment of the tender, reduction of the price criterion to 30% of the final grade etc.). Despite these changes, they only received offers from organic wholesalers.

In the absence of sufficient local organic production, the local council then made a crazy wager: to establish municipal production of organic vegetables by dedicating farmland for that use and hiring a grower as a municipal employee.

Main actions

Securing farmland, a prerequisite for developing municipally managed vegetable growing

From early on, the municipality had developed a strategy of acquiring "strategic" farmland. In 2005, it had pre-empted the sale of an old agricultural estate, the Haute Combe estate, which was going to be bought by a real estate developer⁴⁴. Located near the town centre, it is composed of four hectares of land and a farmhouse. The acquisition amounted to €1 million. While not immediately using it, the municipality decided to re-designate this area as farmland so as to ensure that it remains in farming use in the long term.

A test year, to ensure the municipality can mobilise energies and change perspectives

In 2009, the municipality decided to use the Haute Combe estate⁴⁵ to develop vegetable growing. It carried out a feasibility study to assess the possibility of supplying the three school restaurants with organic locally produced food. In 2010, the municipality requested and obtained organic certification for the estate. The municipal Park Departments tested vegetable growing on a few acres for one year, producing one tonne of potatoes and 130 kg of squash. These vegetables were included in the three school restaurants.

At the same time, local councillors mobilised multiple stakeholders (municipal staff, cooks, etc.) to serve a common objective: "We have changed all our practices. In the school restaurant, for example, there are no more menus set in advance, but a food plan: every week, we go to see what is produced on the farm and then ask our wholesaler to fill in the gaps." Local school children and staff from the Parks department were involved in vegetable growing during this test year.

The creation of a grower's position as a municipal agent

After a successful first year, the municipality decided to hire a grower under the status of "municipal agent". Since the position of agricultural employee does not exist in the public service, the local councillors had to innovate to create this position. The grower was hired as an executive, so as not to count hours, which was considered more suitable for vegetable growing. In exchange, the municipality took charge of the farmhouse which was made available to the grower in addition to his monthly salary. Staff of the Parks Department now sometimes come and help, as replacement during holidays, or occasionally during heavy work periods.

In parallel, €60,000 was invested in the farm (tractor, irrigation, greenhouses, cold room etc.). In 2012, the operating costs of the farm amounted to €60,000 for a production of 20 tonnes of organic vegetables. The cost price is €2.45 / kg of organic vegetables. There are now two municipal growers.

Developing production and reconnecting children with food

In the first year, the production - i.e. 10 tonnes of vegetables - covered 30% of the needs of the school restaurants. In 2012, it amounted to 50%, or 15 tonnes. In 2015, it covered 85% (about 1,400 daily meals), which is the threshold for the viability of vegetable growing as a municipal activity. The price of meals has not increased. The reduction of transport costs (the farm is between one and three km of the schools), the quasi-elimination of food waste and the disappearance of intermediaries, allowed the budget to be balanced. In 2016, the municipality bought two more hectares of land for vegetable growing so as to be able to produce 100% of the vegetables consumed in school restaurants.

In addition to producing food for school meals, the municipal farm is an opportunity to re-connect with agriculture. Children are directly involved in this educational project. They participate in the planting, growing and harvesting of products that later come onto their plates.

During the summer, the harvest surplus is given to a local food bank. Local councillors now plan to create a packaging unit to freeze vegetables harvested during school holidays so as to be able to use them during the school year.

Time period

Since 2009

Results so far

Providing 80% of the vegetables for school catering from vegetables produced by the municipality (i.e. 153,000 meals per year). 100% of school meals are organic. The price paid by families for school meals has not increased (€2 to €5.30 depending on the family's income).

- Hiring a market gardener as municipal employee, an innovative status for a farmer.
- Turning a rural estate designated for development back into farming use (four hectares and a house). Designating 120 hectares of land as farmland (i.e. 9% of the local area, up from 40 hectares a decade earlier) - this area is viewed as the minimum required to ensure food self-sufficiency for the municipality and local residents.
- Creating a multi-stakeholder dynamic involving multiple players (e.g. local councillors, council staff, cooks of the school restaurants, teachers, pupils) which has fostered a new relationship to land, food and agriculture within the municipality and among local residents.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and levers:

- The municipality started stocking farmland over time, already years prior to the project of developing municipal food production.
- The revision of the local land plan, to increase threefold the land area designated for farming (from 42 to 119 hectares).
- Prior experience of the municipality with direct, in-house management of public services (water, local transport, funerals) and local councillors dedicated to offering high-quality public services.
- A clearly defined policy for sustainable development (Agenda 21).
- The strong political will of local councillors.

The revision of the public tender for school catering so that local producers can apply (e.g. tendering for each fruit or vegetable instead of for all fruits and vegetables in one lot).

Weaknesses/ challenges:

Conforming to health and safety norms. ●

Participatory governance of land and farming on Ile d'Yeu

Tanguy Martin Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire

⁴⁶ See www.terredeliens.org (in French) and www.accesstoland.eu/Terre-de-liens (in English)

Ile d'Yeu is a small island off the Atlantic coast of France. Its population of 5000 year-round residents swells to 30,000 people in the summer. Pressure from tourism combined with a gradual decline in farming (in favour of fishing) has led to an unprecedented situation in which one fourth of the island now lies fallow. A coalition made up of the island's farmers, elected officials and representatives of local civil society organisations (CSOs) has undertaken the task of reviving farming on Yeu. In the space of just a few years, with the Terres Fert'île project, Ile d'Yeu has become a laboratory for participatory democracy and innovation in the governance of farming and rural areas.

Local authorities involved

The municipality of Ile d'Yeu and its elected representatives: the basic level of local government. The entire island of Yeu forms a single municipality.

Other players

- Collectif Agricole: A collective of farmers and 'eaters' involved in promoting and developing ecological farming on Ile d'Yeu.
- Yeu Demain: An association of year-round and occasional residents of the island promoting the social, environmental and economic development of Ile d'Yeu.
- Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire: A regional non-profit organisation that seeks to connect and support collective farmland acquisition and management initiatives to support the emergence of ecologically and socially responsible rural undertakings⁴⁶.
- The some ten farmers already established on the island.
- Safer Poitou-Charentes: A semi-public organisation tasked with monitoring and regulating the local land market.
- Residents and landowners, who are kept informed and consulted through public meetings.

Description

Context

Ile d'Yeu's economy is based primarily on tourism and, to a lesser extent, fishing. Farming on the island, which was at its peak in the first half of the 20th century, is now in decline: there are currently around ten operating farms on the island, representing less than 130 hectares (320 acres) being actively used for crops, haymaking or pasturing. Of the island's total surface area of 2300 ha (5680 ac), one fourth—some 500 ha (1235 ac)—lies fallow. This vacant land leads to soil degradation, landscape homogenisation and loss of biodiversity. It also leaves an important resource untapped: as an island that can be reached only by boat or helicopter from the mainland, Yeu is an ideal setting for developing high-quality, safe, healthy and ecological local food production.

How the project began

In France, land use (zoning and suitability for building) is defined by a Local Development Plan (PLU). In 2013, the Ile d'Yeu Municipal Council undertook a revision of its PLU, which involved consulting the population. Members of Collectif Agricole and Yeu Demain mobilised for the cause of preserving farmland on the island. This experience served as a catalyst, spurring the two CSOs to draw up a proposal for an agriculture development plan on Ile d'Yeu, with the help of Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire. The plan was included in the platform of the party that won the municipal elections in 2014. It called for a participatory assessment of the island's vacant farmland, and set out actions for returning the land to agricultural use.

Terre de Liens Pays de la Loire was well-known in the community, notably for its role in helping a young farmer get started by purchasing land with funds from a citizen savings scheme. Terre de Liens offered its tools and expertise to the local players, particularly its experience in facilitating local participatory farmland acquisition and management projects.

True to its campaign commitments, the new municipal government set about implementing the agriculture development plan at the end of 2014. It set up the Agriculture Development Committee (CDA)—a participatory body made up of the three CSOs, the Municipal Council and all the farmers who wished to join—to be in charge of the island's agriculture development project, Terres Fert'Île. The CDA's work quickly brought it into contact with Safer, a semi-public land management and rural development organisation, with which the municipality entered into a land market oversight agreement (see below).

Actions carried out

The Terres Fert'île project, initiated and developed by the CDA for the term of the current Municipal Council (2014-2020), is focused on optimising the island's agricultural potential by gradually reclaiming vacant farmland. The project's scope of 165 ha (407 acres) includes 70 ha (172 acres) of fallow land. Its aim is twofold: to support the continuation of existing family farms and to help new farmers bring their projects to fruition, with the support of landowners. It is broken down into the following complementary actions:

- **Taking stock of fallow land and identifying priority areas:** A task force made up of members of the CDA and representatives of the three CSOs first defined the parameters to be considered: location, soil quality, condition, size, identity of the landowners, condition of ditches, etc. These criteria were mapped alongside additional information collected during field visits. Based on these data, the CDA defined the priority areas to focus on.
- **Creating a shared culture among residents that recognises the importance of farming for the island:** The goal is to raise awareness among both permanent residents and part-time/temporary residents through initiatives such as festive events (like the annual Farm Open House organised by Collectif Agricole), information meetings and annual consultations open to all. These actions are supported by an area for the general public on the municipality's website, through the Collectif Agricole blog and in a four-page pamphlet presenting the project which is distributed at summer markets.
- **Motivating landowners through individual contact/dialogue and information meetings:** The goal is to convince landowners to loan, lease or sell their land to farmers and project initiators. The 560 owners of the 1078 parcels within the priority areas were contacted individually by letter in 2015. Around a hundred of them responded, which is a high response rate for this type of operation. Most of the landowners who responded said they were willing to sell, lease or loan their land. However, the proposals received thus far for new farming projects or support for existing farmers have not been viable enough to be implemented. In the meantime, parcels of land with no known owner have also been identified. The municipality is going to initiate an administrative procedure to obtain ownership of this land.
- **Clearing and rehabilitating the parcels of land:** Since 2016, the municipality has offered landowners the following voluntary agreement: it will subsidise the clearing of land if the owner agrees to make the rehabilitated parcels available to a farmer.
- **Controlling land prices:** Competition for land use between agriculture, housing and tourism has led to land speculation on the island. Prices are ten to fifteen times higher than on the mainland. The municipality has entered into a land market

monitoring and regulation agreement with Safer. Safer informs the municipality of all sales of farmland within its territory. The municipality relays the sales notices to members of the CDA who know the territory, and issues an opinion on the transaction (whether the listed price is consistent with the local market, accessibility and location of the parcel with respect to existing farms, possibility of cultivating or grazing the land, etc.). At the municipality's request, Safer can step in and require the sale to be made to the municipality at a lower price, if the transaction is deemed to be speculative. Safer has exercised this pre-emptive right, lowering the sale price three times at the municipality's request. At the same time, solicitors (notaires) and real estate agencies have been informed of these measures taken by the municipality, which encourages moderation in pricing. This coordinated effort combining administrative oversight and input from volunteers with local expertise is apparently a first in France.

Values and approach implemented

- **Transparency:** All interested citizens, whether permanent residents or others, are informed of the project and its progress through online communication, presence at the summer markets and the annual public meeting.
- **Participation:** All interested citizens can participate through local CSOs. All collective players relating to agriculture and/or with local interests and all farmers are asked to take part.
- **Amicable approach:** The project voluntarily ruled out the use of any coercive measures. It aims to educate and raise awareness thanks to the players' conviction, through an attractive approach that reflects positively on them.

Outcomes

With the Terres Fert'île project, agriculture – long viewed as a thing of the past on the island – has once more become a matter of public policy and economic development. Elected officials and residents now broadly recognise the importance of farming for the island and the environment. Local farmers feel valued and supported in their work. They are in dialogue with other local players, fostering stronger community and economic ties on the island.

A number of stakeholders – environmentalists, farmers, landowners, local government and citizens with varied objectives – have set a common goal, enabling concrete cooperation. They have invested in capacity building in order, together, to be effective in helping shape the future of the island.

The first hectare of land was cleared in early 2017 for the placement of hives by a beekeeper. New farmers are being sought, and candidates will be met in 2017, with a view to helping establish

them on cleared land.

In the medium term, the goal is to set up outlets for local farm products, such as school and hospital cafeterias, once there is enough available farmland to establish new farms.

Tools implemented

- **Urban/rural planning tools:** Land use/zoning (PLU), procedure for the local authority to obtain ownership of ownerless land (*bona vacantia*).
- **Land market oversight and regulation tools:** Monitoring land transactions, and the pre-emptive right to lower the price on land sales by Safer.
- **Participatory governance tools:** Local dialogue and public meetings.

Success factors and challenges

The island context is an incentive for cooperation between players with different priorities, because it is costly and complicated to bring in external material or resources. Between 2012 and 2015, the island's residents and CSOs had a number of opportunities to express their views on farming and planning matters, e.g., the land use/zoning (PLU) survey, the survey on defining the objective in the Natura 2000 document, citizen mobilisation for the acquisition of land by *Terre de Liens*, and the election of a CSO officer during the municipal election, etc. These developments, which followed in rapid succession, allowed certain residents to acquire competence in these areas and created motivation to further the effort. Volunteers from the island's CSOs provide an estimated 25 weeks of labour for the *Terres Fert'île* project.

Conclusion

This project illustrates collaboration between a dynamic civil society and a determined local authority. Their combined efforts, facilitated by local dialogue tools, have resulted in a hybrid form of governance based on encouraging and recognising positive voluntary actions in order to raise public awareness and participation.

Not all of the tools used here are innovative, but they have been carefully adapted to the local context. Those involved had the time and resources to deploy the tools as appropriate, in order to create a project suited to their community. This allowed them to combine not only technical and political expertise, but also the user-based 'citizen expertise' of the members of the population involved in the project.

Key stages

- October 2014: Terres Fert'ile project adopted by the Municipal Council and entry into operation of the Agriculture Development Committee (CDA)
- Spring 2015: Intern taken on, landowners contacted by letter, training for members of CDA on local dialogue and tenant farming status
- July 2015: First public information meeting
- October 2015: Agreement with Safer regarding Vigifoncier, the land transaction oversight tool (pre-emptive right exercised three times)
- January 2016: Second public information meeting
- Winter 2016: Responses to letters analysed to identify landowners to work with
- Spring 2016: Intern taken on, individual meetings with landowners, first land cleared
- April 2017: Project officer recruited to manage the project and lighten the volunteers' work-load ●

Italy

Grassroots mobilisation to defend a traditional farming area: the Castel Di Guido

Marta Di Pierro AIAB Lazio

Highlights

- Large peri-urban farm with the potential of producing food for local residents.
- Complexity of reconciling 2 tiers of governance (Region/ municipality).
- Selling off public land to balance the local authority's budget.
- Strong involvement, and eventual recognition, of local farmers and citizens.

Local authorities involved

- Lazio is one of Italy's 20 Regions. Regions acquired a significant level of autonomy following a constitutional reform in 2001, which granted them residual powers. Since 1972, agriculture is in the remit of regional policies.
- Rome Municipality - Rome constitutes a comune speciale, named "Roma Capitale", and is the largest of the 8,101 comuni of Italy. It owns and/or directly manages five farms.

Other agents involved

- Farmers
- Farmers' Representatives
- Farmers' union and citizens united in the Associazione Campagna Romana Bene Comune (Roman Countryside Commons Association)

Description

Castel di Guido is an organic farm situated in Rome. It covers over 2,000 hectares and lies within the State Natural Reserve of the Roman Coastal Area.

The area is an excellent example of Agro Romano, the Roman

countryside, known for its history and landscape. It has an important productive and environmental role for the city. Farmed since the time of the Romans in the 8th century, it became an important domusculta, a military guarded farm aimed at supplying cereals and meat to urban citizens. In the Sixties, the farm belonged to a group of nine Roman hospitals for whom it was producing the full range of meat, milk, oil, fruit, vegetables, bread, cheese... raw and processed items.

Since 1980, as a result of the Law 833/78 on Local Authorities, ownership of the farm was transferred to Lazio Region, while its management was entrusted to the Municipality of Rome. Currently, Castel di Guido is in crisis. It is running at a loss. Its activities are now limited to cattle breeding and environmental education. It stopped most of its activities just a few years ago: meat, milk, cheese, olive oil and cereals with a view to local, short supply chain, organic farming.

The two local authorities are in a dispute over who manages the land and for what purpose. The sale of the farm has been avoided, but its future is unclear and there is no business plan. In this context, local farmers and Castel Di Guido farm workers united in the Associazione Campagna Romana Bene Comune so as to be recognised as stakeholders and have their say in the process.

How did it start?

In January 2012, the Italian government, led by Mr. Monti, ruled for a systematic sale of the state's assets with the "Decreto sulle Liberalizzazioni" (Decree on Liberalization) in order to pay off the increasing public debt. Shortly afterwards, the decree was made "active" in Lazio Region (but not by the Municipality). Meanwhile, without having disclosed any clear plan, Lazio Region started the process of claiming back the management of Castel di Guido Farm from Roma Capital whose contract would have anyway come to an end in April 2016.

The idea of selling the land was not considered for long by Lazio Region, partly thanks to public mobilisations against the sale of public assets which took place nationwide. But the uncertainty over who was going to manage the farm led to delays and highly bureaucratic management such that at times the livestock were without food - as it was unclear who had the authority to purchase cattle food!

Worried by this situation, and uncertain about the future of the farm, farm workers reached out to local farmers both for direct help on the farm and for political support. For decades, Castel di Guido has indeed been of interest to local farmers, some out of their commitment to food sovereignty, others for their concern for efficient and sustainable local food provision, and others out of economic self-interest. The newly born grassroots activity raised the interest of many big players around three main concerns:

- The need to be reassured that Castel di Guido would be kept as a public asset and not sold nor broken up. Above all, farmers and

citizens were determined to avoid the sale of Castel di Guido to a big company.

- The need to change farm management to stop running the farm at a loss as this could again lead Lazio Region to consider selling the farm. Farmers have been asking for a different, more autonomous and less bureaucratic management system, as well as a more suitable farm labour system.
- The need for a plan for the future of Castel di Guido to be set up with the active participation of local farmers, citizens, associations, and strong support from the Municipality of Rome. Castel di Guido is a site of natural and heritage importance, with woods and archaeological remains from different periods. The farm serves as a museum of rural culture, a bird sanctuary, and a meeting space for local people. All these roles should receive recognition. Castel di Guido could also foster systemic change in terms of farming models: by keeping the farm in organic certification and striving for an even more agroecological model of production, producing for the local market and connecting the production with the needs of the Municipality.

Actions conducted

From 2014, grassroots activists organised a series of direct actions, as well as other forms of mobilisation (media work, conferences, meetings with decision-makers). They have been fighting back against the sale of the farm and asking to be involved in defining its future plan and its management.

In 2016, they set up an association “Campagna Romana Bene Comune” (Roman Countryside Commons) to promote the history and the production potential of the Roman countryside. In February 2017, activists organised a new series of actions, leading the local government to informally accept a farmers’ delegation on the technical round table on Castel Di Guido.

Following the most recent negotiations, the management of Castel di Guido will eventually return to Lazio Region. Castel di Guido will not be sold, but will be awarded to the best project through a public tender. The criteria of the tender are not yet defined, but the Campagna Romana Bene Co-mune Association is finally recognised (and heard) as a stakeholder in the process.

Key values

- Right to participate in decision making over public rural land management.
- Protection of rural land and its biodiversity and landscape character.
- Fighting land speculation and concentration.
- Promoting sustainable and climate efficient farming methods (organic agriculture).

Results so far

- Following grassroots actions, the governor of Lazio Region committed not to sell the land, and to develop a public call for tender for the management of the farm.
- Campagna Romana Bene Comune delegates have been accepted at the technical round table on the future of Castel Di Guido.
- According to the latest negotiations, the public call for tender will award a higher grade to organic food production, labour intensive, multifunctional and social farming and a cooperative business model.

Way ahead

Taking a leading role in setting the criteria for the call to tender.

Why is it a good practice?

Castel di Guido is an organic public farm in a major patch of land, with astounding historical, environmental, social, and spatial values. It acts as a lung and a biodiversity spot in the middle of a very populated area. The farm has an enormous production potential and could be easily integrated in Rome's food policies and food supply structures (e.g. producing food for school restaurants).

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- The future of the Castel di Guido farm and rural land has been recognised as a political issue.
- Local farmers have been informally recognised as stakeholders.
- Castel di Guido will not be dismantled to be sold and managed in separate pieces but will be kept together safeguarding its environmental, spatial and historical value.
- The use of a public call for tender guarantees a more transparent process.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- Strong interests in Castel Di Guido from real estate businessmen as well as from non local, non organic farmers.
- Complexity of the issue in terms of the characteristics of land area as well as in terms of competencies and bureaucracy.
- Setting the criteria for the call for tender will be a whole new struggle. ●

Spain / Catalonia

Recovering agricultural land in Palou – Granollers

Vicenç Planas Granollers City Council

Pau Carnicero and Jofre Rodrigo Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori

Highlights

- Recovering unused and under-used land.
- Mediation between land owners and tenant farmers.
- Regrouping of plots to make viable farm units.
- Complementary forms of support to new entrants (subsidies, access to local markets, access to housing...).
- Developing a plan and vision for local agriculture.

Local authorities involved

- Granollers city council
- Other agents involved
- XCT: Land stewardship network of Catalonia
- Terra Franca: Organisation that promotes a responsible use of soils and aims to facilitate access to land.
- Banc de Llavors del Vallès Oriental (Seed bank of local ancient varieties)
- Land owners associations
- Farmers trade unions

Description

Palou is a small village with a rural area of 350 ha in the municipality of Granollers, a small city capital of Vallès Oriental. It consists mostly of agricultural land and a few farms and houses. For several years, the Granollers city council wanted to highlight Palou as a place of green infrastructure within the city.

As part of a regeneration strategy, the city supported several projects in 2011, one of them a participatory process involving neighbours, land owners and local and rural development experts. The aim of the process was to shape how Palou should look 10 years in the future.

Two of the major problems highlighted from the participatory process were difficulties in access to land, and land owners not being interested in farming activities. A strategy Plan for Palou, published in 2015 is now being implemented to facilitate access to land and thus preserve Palou as a rural area for the future. In recent years, services for Palou inhabitants have improved, but agricultural land was underused and people wanting to access land faced many difficulties.

Time period

Since 2011, the Strategic Plan for Palou has activities planned up until 2025. Its duration and follow up actions depend on the results achieved and any new challenges that are found.

Main levers used

- Preserving land in agricultural use: the city council classified land as agricultural land (land planning at local level).
- Making land available for farmers: the city council influenced and incentivised landowners (especially retired farmers) to sell/rent their land, through:
 - > Mediation between land owners and farmers
 - > Promoting regrouping of small plots under a single administrator, to facilitate access to larger areas of land.
- Supporting farmers to get established:
 - > Subsidies for the production and marketing of local agricultural products
 - > Facilitating access to housing for future farmers through public housing stock
 - > Facilitating access to basic services (internet, education, medical services) in rural areas
 - > Promoting civic agriculture: creation of the “Palou products” brand
 - > Issuing leaflets and running civic campaigns for agriculture
 - > Providing better access to local markets to local farmers
- Improving local markets: access to local markets for farmers plus the willingness of consumers to buy local/agroecological food.

Main actions

- Mediation between land owners and farmers: the high heterogeneity of particular cases led to the establishment of specific protocols for every case.
- Creation of Saturday Markets: local weekly markets for local producers.
- Subsidies for the production and marketing of local agricultural products.
- Creation of the new “Productes de Palou” brand, aiming to

identify products produced in Palou in a way that respects human health and the health of the environment. The creation of the brand is linked to a campaign to promote civic agriculture among consumers. It identifies new products as well as products of long established farmers which fulfil the brand requirements.

- Studies to optimise the use of water and increase the area of irrigated land.

Results so far

- So far, two new farmers have succeeded in accessing land and establishing milk and organic chicken production enterprises.
- The new “Productes de Palou” brand has been created and the products are distributed in local shops and markets.
- Local communities benefit from Palou by having an increased availability of “km 0” products, new job opportunities, environmental education and a space for healthy, free time activities.
- It contributes to maintaining a traditional activity and what used to be the main landscape of the area.

Way ahead

- Try to acquire agricultural land to make it available to new farmers
- To establish an incubator farm: aiming to provide support to new farmers at four stages:
 - > Access to land
 - > Selection of viable projects
 - > Start up and development support
 - > Consolidation
- Continue to facilitate access to land for new farmers
- Diversify production through increasing the number of irrigated lands and building greenhouses
- Promote manufactured products
- Increase economic income for agricultural activities through increasing sales and promoting complementary activities
- Improve the quality of life of Palou inhabitants
- Increase and improve communication

Why is it a good practice?

Palou makes a big effort to preserve agricultural land and to make it accessible to new farmers. The strategy of highly personal mediation process and a strong participatory process can result in increased confidence between owners, farmers and local authorities. The combination of nature and agricultural heritage preservation results in a highly positive impact for local communities.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The good reputation that the rural area of Palou enjoys with citizens; politicians' engagement; and the existence of different initiatives to promote agroecology at local and regional levels.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

The main weakness detected is the problem of access to land due to the fragmentation of ownership, the low availability of owners to lease land and the lack of agricultural land owned by the municipality. ●



Grazing in forests, a way to prevent fires and to facilitate access to land. Lluçanès consortium

Laura Megías Consorci de Lluçanès

Pau Carnicero and Jofre Rodrigo Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori

Highlights

- Protecting forests from fires.
- Facilitating access to grazing areas for ranchers.
- Mediation between land owners and tenant farmers.
- Complementary support to adapt forest for the new grazing activities.

Local authorities involved

- Lluçanès partnership (cocoordinator): councils of 13 villages
- Barcelona province council: funding
- Other agents involved
- Association of forest land owners of Lluçanès (coordinator, funding)
- Land stewardship network of Catalonia (XCT): provides support in land stewardship agreements.

Description

Since 2008, the association of forest owners of Lluçanès has provided support to forest owners in forest management. In 2010, they signed a plan for improving forests in Lluçanès in collaboration with the partnership of Lluçanès. Grazing forests was considered a useful tool after a pilot project and was therefore included in the plan.

The project is coordinated by the association of forest land owners and a partnership constituted by Lluçanès villages. Its main aim is to use forests for grazing through land stewardship agreements of five years involving four members: the owner, the rancher, the partnership and the owners association. Grazing forests helps maintain the understory and thus minimises the risk of fire

spreading. It also provides free land access to ranchers, improves the productivity of established ones and allows the establishment of new ranchers.

The project benefits from a regional plan for recovering ovine and goat ranching (*"Pla de recuperació del sector ovi/cabrum"*, 2013, Catalan government), which promotes forest grazing and fire prevention.

Time period

Since 2013.

Main levers

- Making land available for farmers, through:
 - > Mediating and promoting agreements for grazing in private forests.
 - > Entitling landowners to benefit from infrastructure investment and grazing so as to maintain a low fire risk.
 - > Supporting the establishment of farmers:
 - > Agreements increase the viability of their production systems by providing ranchers free access to land.
 - > Actions (see below) in water catchment areas reduce withdrawal and maintain water quality.

Main actions

- Previous to forest grazing, woodland management plans in the previous five years must have been implemented. Both land owners and ranchers must fill an application requesting to participate in the project.
- Many contacts between ranchers and forest companies have established dialogues and new grazing agreements. Mediation continues after the agreement is signed, advising and solving any conflicts that arise.
- Improving land used for grazing: recovery of fountains, ponds, installation of water tanks, fences.
- Follow up and evaluation of contracts: indicators to evaluate the success of each agreement were defined in the project's description. Evaluation is conducted following a protocol of biodiversity improvement by grazing.

Results so far

10 agreements have been signed and have performed successfully

Way ahead

- Continue to increase the number of agreements and ensure that the resulting agreements no longer need mediation.
- Expand the project to surrounding areas.

- Propose measures to improve livestock management strategies, based on biodiversity monitoring of current agreements.
- Promote trade of meat from forest grazing.

Why is it a good practice?

It results in benefits for the two involved agents (land owners and ranchers). Local authorities facilitate the development of new agreements by mediating and funding infrastructure. The project has good evaluation tools and works in the long term works to see agreements arise independently.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

The project promotes mutual support between two parties allowing them to solve their own problems with a single course of action (grazing forests).

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- Funding: lack of recognition of forest grazing by European funding entities.
- Lack of productive grasslands in lands affected by agreements.
- Lack of infrastructure for the establishment of new farmers. ●

Strengthening traditional farming activities in Gallecs

Gemma Safont Consorci de Gallecs

Pau Carnicero and Jofre Rodrigo Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori

Highlights

- Maintaining farming activities.
- Protection of landscape and biodiversity.
- Recovery of ancient local varieties. Promoting commercialization of farm products.
- Complementarity forms of support to new entrants (subsidies, access to local markets...).
- Developing a plan and vision for local agriculture.

Local authorities involved

- City councils of Mollet del Vallès, Santa Perpètua de Mogoda, Palau-solità i Plegamans, Parets del Vallès, Lliçà de Vall and Montcada i Reixac.
- Catalan government: Department of Territory and Sustainability.

Other agents involved

- Partnership of Gallecs: constituted by involved city councils and the Catalan Government. This manages the area of Gallecs.
- Agroecological Association of Gallecs: constituted by farmers and families working in Gallecs. Its main aim is to promote organic farming and to guarantee farm succession for farmers.
- Universities and research centres: several studies from different disciplines include Gallecs. Moreover, Gallecs contributes to two Master degrees.
- Europe: Member of Fedenatur and Eurosite.
- Member of the Land stewardship network of Catalonia (XCT).

Description

Gallecs is a rural area located 15km north of Barcelona. It represents what used to be the main landscape of "Vallès", nowadays one of the most populated regions in Catalonia. It acts as a lung and an area of biodiversity in the middle of a very populated area. It is a protected area (PEIN) that combines farming activities with biodiversity protection and public use of the space. It is managed by a partnership constituted by involved city councils and the Catalan government, which has a land stewardship agreement for the entire protected area with the city councils involved.

The surrounding area consists mainly of rural land, much of which has been lost locally due to urbanisation, and natural habitats, mostly Mediterranean forest areas. Together, the combination of rural and natural areas results in a mosaic landscape with noticeably high biodiversity. Organic farming is promoted as beneficial alternative land use, due to its high respect for the environment and biodiversity.

The current protected area was expropriated as a whole in the 1970s for the purpose of building a new city. Due to the oil crisis of the 1970s, the city was never built and local administrations and communities began to ask that the area be preserved. In 1998, the city council of Mollet del Vallès modified its municipal ordination plan to protect the rural areas of Gallecs. In subsequent years, the Catalan government and other stakeholder city councils developed plans to declare it a non-urban area and in 2006 they constituted the present partnership. In 2009 the area was finally declared a protected area with high natural interest (PEIN).

Time period

The present partnership was born in 2006, but it built upon a series of activities that were carried out previously.

Main levers

- Preserving land in agricultural use:
 - > Development of spatial and urban plans to declare it an agricultural area (city councils from the area of Gallecs and Catalan government).
 - > Inclusion of Gallecs in the PEIN, a network of protected areas of the Catalan government.
- Making land available for farmers by freeing up agricultural land that is already public.
- Supporting the establishment of farmers, through:
 - > Promoting local agriculture: Plan of sustainable agricultural managing 2001-2005 and Plan of re-conversion to organic farming 2006-2016 (Local farmers association)
 - > Issuing leaflets and civic campaigns for agriculture
 - > Promoting Km.0 products, fashion for healthy and ethical living in local markets/Supermarkets

- > Providing better access to local markets for local farmers.
- > Improving local markets: access to local markets for farmers and willingness of consumers to buy local/agroecological food.
- > Checklist of farmhouses to be restored and investment from the consortium or other local authorities sources.
- > Farmers' network which gives support via acquisition of common machinery and an "Agroshop" which provides support in the trade of Gallecs products.

Main actions

- Switch from mostly foraging production to human food production.
- Recovery of local agricultural varieties.
- Promotion of organic farming.
- Reduction of food waste through producing preserved food.
- Enhancement of local commerce through the "agroshop", fairs, distribution to local restaurants and schools etc.
- Acquisition of machinery for common use by all farmers.
- Farming research.
- Generation of new jobs and opportunities for young people.
- Environmental education activities with schools.
- Construction of windmills for irrigation.
- Investment in farmhouses and other buildings related to farming restoration.
- Scientific research and collaboration with two Masters degrees in organic farming at the University of Barcelona and the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Results so far

- Gallecs products are distributed to restaurants and schools in surrounding villages. People can also visit an Agroshop in the middle of the natural space where it is possible to purchase Gallecs products.
- Ancient local agricultural varieties have been recovered.
- New and former farmers benefit from investment in farms and machinery and new job opportunities.
- Gallecs has preserved a landscape of high ecological and historical value while maintaining farming activities.
- Several research studies conducted in the area.

Way ahead

The main aim is to establish organic farming in the whole rural area of Gallecs in a period of five to six years and to contribute to maintaining Gallecs as a reference for research in organic farming and rural development.

Why is it a good practice?

Gallecs acts as a lung and an area of biodiversity in the middle of a very populated area. The combination of nature and agricultural heritage preservation results in a very positive impact for local communities.

Difficulties and opportunities**Strengths and opportunities:**

- Lands are public and all city councils involved have the necessary goodwill to continue protecting the area and promoting farming for a long-term period.
- The farmers' association helps to create useful infrastructure and to distribute produce.
- Local communities enjoy the benefits of Gallecs and the produce is successfully distributed.
- There is an increasing interest from universities in using the area for research projects.

Weaknesses/ challenges:

- The high number of outdated farming licenses challenges the establishment of long-term projects.
- A very limited presence of ranching and restrictive regulation regarding farming infrastructure. ●

The United Kingdom

Balancing farming, the protected environment and people: Brighton and Hove City Council

Rachel Harries The Soil Association

Highlights

- Farming in a highly protected environment.
 - Managing public land for the benefit of the community, environment, local food and recreational uses.
 - Developing multi-stakeholder plan and vision.
 - Supporting community businesses.
 - Farming as lever to protect municipal water resources.
-

Local authorities involved

Brighton & Hove City Council

Other agents involved

- Farmers
- South Downs National Park
- Wildlife specialists
- Brighton and Hove Food Partnership
- Plumpton College
- Fork and Dig it CSA

Description

Brighton and Hove is a city in East Sussex on the south coast of England. It is bordered on one side by the sea and to the other by the South Downs, a protected area of chalk hills that runs east to west.

Much of the hilly landscape to the north of the city is protected by the South Downs National Park, which covers 1600 square kilometres of lowland landscape, including farmland, heathland, ancient woodland, and various towns and villages.

Another significant recent classification is the categorisation of the area containing the city, downland and coast including the sea, as the Brighton and Lewes Downs UNESCO Biosphere.

Brighton and Hove has a population of approximately 270,000 and is a popular seaside resort. The city is governed by a unitary authority, Brighton and Hove City Council. The city is known for electing the UK's first Green Member of Parliament, Caroline Lucas, although the council is currently Labour-led.

Brighton and Hove City Council is in the unusual position of holding (in public ownership) 4,825 ha of farmland. This land forms a band around the city. It was originally bought by the city to protect its water supply, as all of the city's water filtered down through the chalk-land hills. Now, much of this land is in the South Downs National Park. Primarily land management is the responsibility of the council's property department with contracts etc. being managed by a firm of land agents.

Most of Brighton and Hove's land on the South Downs is chalk downland (an internationally significant habitat) that is best preserved by sheep grazing, but this means it is of low value for agriculture. Much of the area is being managed under Higher Level Stewardship agreements and is farmed by tenant farmers, many on lifelong or multigenerational tenancies, and many over 75 years old. While they face the traditional financial pressures associated with farming, they also have to deal with the huge number of visitors the Downs attract, leading to issues around open access and dog walking.

This land and its situation capture the conflicting demands on land of farming and recreation. Outside of the National Park on the urban fringe, land is in demand for housing, as the city like many UK areas faces a desperate housing shortage.

Main activities

Preserving land in agricultural use

Both the South Downs National Park and Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere have helped to ensure that land is preserved in agricultural use. These structures have the potential to influence land use, however priorities are very much environmentally focused rather than specifically considering farming or food production.

A City Downland Advisory Board has been established (including farmer representatives, the City Council, wildlife specialists and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership) to develop policy which supports a viable local farm economy; to support diversification such as eco-tourism; to reconnect farmers and city residents; and to promote sustainable food production.

Mobilising land

Previously the City Council had pledged to work with one farmer on council owned land to become a beacon farm. At this stage, it is

trying to identify a farm to work with.

Supporting the establishment of new farmers

The Council has agreed to publish information when Council owned land suitable for food growing on short or long term leases becomes available. If the policy intention is to maximise social and environmental value as well as financial value, the processes for tendering needs to support this. For example, longer deadlines to apply for tenders to support small and medium sized enterprises and a tender process that supports environmental and social factors.

Specific projects

Stamner Park and Estate

The council-owned Stamner Park and Estate offers an opportunity to develop a beacon food and farming project on the outskirts of the city. A historic 18th century estate covering 485 ha, it included a walled garden and working farms, and provided fruit and vegetables for the city. Now it includes a variety of tenants, including land farmed by a council tenant, several community projects such as Stanmer Organics, Brighton Permaculture Trust and Fork and Dig It CSA.

A Stanmer Park Master Plan has been produced to focus on the sustainable management of land on a historic estate on the edge of the city. Part of this includes a small-scale processing unit currently in development for producing juice, preserves, chutneys, etc. from fruit harvested on the estate. Although the areas are not large, this is precious land in such a constrained city. Funding is currently being applied for to further develop this estate management plan with a joined up vision that includes collaboration and synergistic land enterprises.

Racehill Orchard

Developed on abandoned orchards owned by the local authority, Racehill Orchard is one of several Brighton Permaculture Trust projects. It now includes over 200 fruit trees.

Why is it a good practice?

Brighton and Hove's land on the South Downs is relatively well protected from housing and infrastructure development due to its recognised status as a National Park and UNESCO Biosphere. Land that is classified as 'urban fringe', which includes some farmland, is very likely to be developed for housing. The integration of food growing and wildlife friendly landscaping could be achieved via the planning process for these sites, using the Brighton & Hove City Council Planning Advice Note on Food Growing as a framework.

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- With the city council being such a large landowner and water and environmental issues so key here, there is the potential to demonstrate farming's role in fulfilling these objectives.
- Likewise, with so much land under Higher Level Stewardship agreements, it is also good for demonstrating best practice.
- The current devolution agenda has the potential to take a wider perspective on where food comes from into the city and the city's links with the Greater Brighton Region.

Weaknesses/challenges:

- The lack of land in urban areas means competition with other needs (e.g. housing) is high.
- Food growing enterprises often have a focus on community groups with a social, therapeutic and educational orientation rather than a strictly productive one, i.e. food to sell.
- Urban local authorities often have little experience/skills in dealing with farmers.
- There are challenges in identifying what local government department certain land resources come under (e.g. nurseries are of parks department).
- Continuing local government cuts impact new and current enterprises and future plans. ●

Cambridgeshire County Farms

Ruth West The Real Farming Trust

Highlights

- Positive discrimination for new entrants including provision of housing.
 - Mediation between land owners and tenant farmers.
 - Regrouping of plots to make larger viable farm units
 - Well maintained farmhouses and farm buildings.
 - Managing public land for the benefit of the community including social and recreational uses.
 - Recovering unused land.
-

The East Anglian County of Cambridgeshire has a population of approximately 640,000 about half of whom live in cities and towns of more than 10,000 people. The county has three cities: Cambridge (also the “county town”), Ely, and Peterborough and a number of market towns.

There is one main railway line (East Coast Railway) connecting some towns to London and a motorway runs from London to Cambridge. The county has long-term plans (2031) for improvements to transport (rail, road, and cycling and walking links).

The county is on the whole low-lying with about 50% of the land below 30 metres: it contains the UK’s lowest point (Holme Fen) of 2.75m below sea level. It is drained by two major rivers, the Great Ouse and Nene, and their tributaries. Fenland is its outstanding feature: a remarkably flat and extensive plain which thanks to 400 years of farming is up to six metres lower from erosion.

Local authorities involved

Cambridgeshire’s County Farm Estate is the largest remaining estate in England and Wales. As of 2017 it consists of 13,400 ha (134 square kilometres) providing a living to 197 tenant farmers with farm sizes ranging from 2.5 to over 200 hectares, including specialist horticulture, livestock, arable and vegetable producers.

⁴⁷ www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/business-with-the-council/countyfarms/

Other agents involved

County farm estates are owned by county councils and unitary authorities in England and Wales. They were established in the 1890s as a route into farming for young people. (In 1984, the House of Lords, debating what would become the 1984 Agricultural Holdings Act, emphasised the role the holdings played as “starter units”.) They became of increasing importance after World War 1 because of government concern for food security and the need to provide a living for returning soldiers. By 1926 the estate consisted of 177,265 ha, providing 29,532 holdings. This though is far from the case today, for two main reasons:

- The rules for the administration of statutory smallholdings are set out in Part III of the Agriculture Act 1970 in which counties and unitary authorities are given powers to “provide opportunities for persons to be farmers on their own account by letting holdings to them”. But Section 39 of the Agriculture Act of 1970 firmly states a twin objective: they are not only required to offer opportunities to new entrants, but also to sustain existing tenants in their farming authorities. This has led counties to reorganise: to consolidate and enlarge their holdings so that farmers can transition to larger holdings, thus reducing the number of holdings.
- Periods of recession which have led counties to sell off parts of their estate.

Thus between 1964 and 2012 the estate was reduced by 37% to 111,650 ha, and the number of holdings owned by the remaining 50 local authorities fell by 79% to just 3,442. The latest figures (2016/17) show a further reduction in the area of land to around 86,000 ha (1% of the farmed land in England) and in the number of holdings to 2,583.

Description

The county provides a broad range of holdings⁴⁷. The farm size for arable cropping to be commercially viable for a full-time living varies, depending on the crops that can be grown and their yield, but is calculated to be between 80 and 200 hectares; intensive horticulture, 8 – 20 hectares. The estate also includes bare land that can be let to their “better” tenants to help their business grow. Thus for example, Charles Leadbetter started farming on 188ha eight years ago. He then bought and rented more land and now farms 890ha arable and 121ha of grassland.

Support for New Entrants

The county’s focus is on offering farm business tenancies to new entrants with “good business plans and strong ideas who are also able to pay a competitive rent”. Farmers are encouraged to “expand their businesses and plan for moving on” as shorter business tenancies have replaced retirement and lifetime tenancies. Their

criteria for selection of tenants states the preferred age range to be 23-40 (though under 23 year olds may be offered a part-time unit); applicants need to have five years' full-time practical farm work (though this can include a three year full-time course in agriculture); and anyone who is already an established farmer who just wants to add a County Farm to extend his/her business need not apply.

This approach has led to 92 new tenants from 2000 to 2017. In 2013 18 new tenancies became available; and in October 2017 a further eight farms (607ha in all) will have new tenants, four of which are farmers taking on tenancies for the first time. All have been made available either because of retirement or because tenants have moved to larger units.

The eight farms in the 2017 batch vary in size: two are starter holdings of 34 and three ha - the latter is Grade 3 permanent pasture and comes with a three-bedroom house. The largest is 198ha; then come three at 98, 106 and 119 ha; then two at 60 and 36ha. Apart from the eight ha holding, the farms are mostly arable: oilseed rape, wheat, barley; but some are suitable for root crops (sugar beet and potatoes). All come with farm buildings; all, except for one, come with a farmhouse.

New tenants are also good for business for the Council: "They come with the best ideas and will pay market-level rent", comments Hugo Mallaby, Asset Manager for the estate.

Effective Management and Maintenance of the Estate

In 1990 the estate was valued at £60m; but in 2012 it was taking £3.4m in annual rental income. In year ending March 31 2017, this was expected to be £4.1m from the estate's 13,400 ha; this from a farm rental income of £300 per ha - higher than the average £278 per ha for most local authorities. The focus on revenue clearly works! "Prove your business model and progress; expand and move on": such policy clearly allows the Council to maintain its estate. It also means the Council receives a steady revenue to support its services. And the farms are also seen to be an important part of rural life: generating rural income; providing access to the countryside for the public and schools for educational purposes. However, to be financially viable most tenants need to diversify their income to include contracting or running a separate rural business.

The County is not against selling off parts of the estate in order to maintain a continuing stream of capital receipts. Such sell-offs though do have other objectives in mind: for example some land may be appropriate for social housing. But as a result the 216 tenants they had on 13,405 ha in 2013 had been reduced to 197 tenants on 13,400ha in 2017.

The above approach is spelt out in the County's new objectives and policies, published early in 2017 following a strategic review. For Cambridgeshire investment in its estate, providing the infrastructure the farmers need, ensures that they can keep their

⁴⁸ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110318142205/http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/economics/foodfarm/reports/documents/Entry.pdf>

⁴⁹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100702224742/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/farming/pdf/PC%20Report2.pdf>

rents in line with the private sector and maintenance costs are reduced: returns are improved in the long run. When farms become vacant, but only then, they assess whether they should be retained or sold.

Supporting Innovation

The County it seems is open to new ideas. One of their tenant farmers, Stephen Briggs, is a pioneer of agroforestry in the UK and runs the largest agroforestry system in the UK. He has a 15 year tenancy which started in 2007; and his original 52 ha farm has grown to 400 ha. More controversially, as far as agroecology is concerned, in June 2017 the County launched a solar farm on 28 ha of the estate: 45,000 photovoltaic panels to generate electricity to supply more than 3,000 homes a year - with the option of sheep grazing to keep the grass low - creating £1 million in revenue a year from an initial investment of £9 million.

Discussion

The well managed estate can be a good, assured source of revenue for local authorities. Figures for county farms in local authorities in England as a whole for 2015-16 give an income of £23,229,300 against an expenditure of £10,413,700. By contrast, Herefordshire County Council, which is just selling off its entire estate of 1,940 ha for a projected £40m, managed in that time to receive a rental income of £439,900 against maintenance and administrative costs of more than £2.8m.

A report by the University of Plymouth in 2002⁴⁸, concluded that county farms are still the main route into farming for new entrants in England. The Curry Report of 2008⁴⁹, recognised the other benefits of the county farm estate - for example, environmental protection and conservation of biological diversity; learning outside the classroom; planning policies; greenbelt management; and management of flood risk. And it called for a longer-term vision for an "important national strategic asset": that councils should manage land sales more thoughtfully, using proceeds to buy further land and maintain the size of their estates; and that there should be greater co-operation between counties and private landlords to help new farming entrants progress beyond county council farms.

But the emphasis it seems is always on bigger and bigger units to increase margins, and reduce risk. Thus Curry: "It is not sufficient to offer only opportunities for new entrants if they cannot then make the transition on to larger holdings in the public and private sectors." In other words, they must be able to pursue the model of industrial agriculture. And although there is a requirement under the Agriculture Act for local authorities to report to Parliament on an annual basis on the status of their smallholdings, ownership rests with the local authority: there is nothing in law to control the

⁵⁰ www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/farming/item/4647-uncertain-harvest-does-the-loss-of-farms-matter

management of their holdings nor to prevent their sale.

Graeme Willis in his recent report (August 2017⁵⁰) holds out the hope that county farms can become “beacons of a more diverse farming industry” continuing to offer access to new entrants, but engaging more with the local community. He gives as examples selling to local authority caterers, more emphasis on improving farm access to the public. But he concludes that if nothing is done, “if current trends continue, few if any farms under 20ha could be left within a generation while most of those up to 50ha could be gone in two generations”. ●



Championing the farm estate, a rural perspective: Dorset county council

Ruth Curtis The Soil Association

Highlights

- Well managed farm estate, clear policies with wider educational aim to connect people and farming and food.
 - Balanced rationalisation/ modernisation process.
 - Support to new entrants including apprentices.
-

Local authorities involved

- Dorset County Council
- Other agents involved
- Country Landowners and Business Association (CLA)
- National Farmers Union (NFU)
- Dorset County Tenants Farmers Association
- Tenant Farmers Association (TFA)
- Local landowners

Description

Dorset, with an approximate population of 755,000, is situated in the South West of England on the English Channel coast and is governed by Dorset County Council and the unitary authority areas of Poole and Bournemouth. Around half the population lives in the South East Dorset conurbation (Poole-Bournemouth) while the rest of the county is largely rural with low population density.

Dorset has a varied landscape featuring broad elevated chalk downs, steep limestone ridges and low-lying clay valleys. Over half the county is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Three-quarters of its coastline is part of the Jurassic Coast Natural World Heritage Site.

There are no motorways but a network of A roads cross the county and two railway main lines connect to London. Dorset has ports at Poole, Weymouth and Portland.

Dorset County Council's County Farm Estate extends to over 2,600 ha and comprises 46 tenanted farms, a large proportion of

which is dairying, and includes 63 km of public rights of way.

In addition to its statutory duty to provide a 'gateway' into agriculture for people to farm on their own account, Dorset sets out a wider educational aim, to 'sustain rural communities by supporting the living, working countryside and providing opportunities for greater public access and understanding of agriculture and the countryside'. It also aims to provide 'best practice and innovation in estate management and agriculture'.

Main activities

Preserving land in agricultural use

In order to preserve its farms in 'viable sized' holdings, Dorset undertook a property review rationalisation programme in 2000. Holdings were split into core (suitable for long term retention) and non-core (suitable for amalgamation or sale). The number of farms was reduced from 84 but the area of land has remained relatively constant: 3,063 ha in 2000 compared to 2,600 ha today.

The released capital has been re-invested into the core farms - infrastructure and repairs - and has contributed significantly to the Council's Corporate Capital Programme (CCCP).

The estate returns a healthy £0.5 million to the CCCP annually and there are a few holdings, identified in 2000, that still could be sold which together with the wider estate are kept under review.

The review in 2000 was supported by county councillors with a strong interest in preserving the farms estate. This has been central to developing an ongoing management plan and approach that values the farms, the farming enterprises and the wider contribution food and farming make to the region.

Following an estate wide consultation in the summer of 2015, which included workshops and meetings with tenants from the estate, representatives from the Tenants Farming Association and others, a revised County Farm Estate Management Plan 2016-2021 has been produced. The plan reinforces the Council's commitment to the preservation of its core farms for both new entrants and more experienced farmers.

Mobilising land

The estate is split into starter farms for new entrants, and promotion farms, for more experienced farmers. Starter farms are offered on a shorter tenancy and entrants are expected to develop their business and to actively seek another holding. They are normally given preference for promotion farms. The Council aims to have a ratio of one starter holding to two promotion holdings and has a masterplan for each farm which is kept under review.

The farms estate has a land acquisition policy and has established an opportunity purchase budget (funded by property/land sales) for this purpose.

Two acres of land was recently made available in a village for local allotments and community use. In addition, the Council is looking to enhance the 63 km public rights of way within the estate, e.g. with specific community groups and projects such as dementia friendly walks.

Supporting the establishment of new farmers

The current management plan's policies ratify the gateway concept, encouraging and supporting tenants to get established and to progress. For example:

- Fair tenancy term – usually 10 years for starter holdings, with no automatic renewal to encourage moving on to alternative farms at the end of the tenure
- Starter farm rents are fair and set by the Director of Environment and Economy based on applicants' data and business proposal
- Starter farm tenants are given preference to progress to promotion farms
- Informal liaison with private landowners to establish links to assist tenants' progression at end of tenancy or to acquire more land to add to an existing holding (e.g. facilitate a tenant to privately rent additional land nearby)

Tenancies are being moved over from the older style Agricultural Holdings Act tenancies (lifetime and retirement) to the modern Farm Business Tenancies, with a policy for no tenancy length beyond retirement age and a maximum tenure length of 35 years. The Council retains nomination rights on a limited number of affordable housing units (developed on land previously owned by the farms' estate) that it is able to offer retiring farmers, but so far this has not been needed.

Farms are supported by a repairs and investment programme and details of investments are published on the council's website. There is an ongoing move to change from model clauses in tenancy agreements (where the council can recover certain costs from the tenants for work carried out) to a simpler and clearer allocation of repairs liabilities with incentives such as rent reduction or lease extension to encourage tenants to move to the new system.

The council acknowledges that the cyclical nature of farming means tenants may at some point suffer financial hardship. There is a range of support available, from council funded independent financial advice to rent abatement/reschedule and working in kind.

A new policy is to encourage and support tenants to employ agricultural apprentices by linking with the local land-based college and providing support from the Council (such as HR/employment advice). This is a developing area with the aim of helping to train agricultural workers in general, not just for opportunities within the farms' estate. Potentially each of the 46 holdings could employ an apprentice each year.

Why is it good practice?

Management planning and consultation

- Publication of a comprehensive estate management plan. Wide stakeholder consultation as part of the review of the farming estate.
- The rationalisation process - fewer holdings but more sustainable
 - struck a good balance between providing funds for the farm estate and the wider Council.
- Reinvestment into the farm estate has been significant, modernising and enhancing them.
- Strong County Councillor (political) support for the farm estate and its plans

New entrant support

- Support for tenants to employ agricultural apprentices
- Two tier system of starter and promotion holdings with the aim for a ratio of 1:2 (starter: promotion).
- Fair tenancy term - 10 years for starter holdings, with no automatic renewal to encourage moving on to alternative farms at end of tenure
- Liaison with private landowners to establish links to assist tenants' progression at the end of the tenancy

Governance

- A County Farm Liaison Panel drawn from local representatives of CLA, NFU, TFA, and the farming tenants advises on estate matters and selects new tenants
- Transparency - the estate management plan and farm investments are published on the estate website

Difficulties and opportunities

Strengths and opportunities:

- Demonstrate good/best practice to other local authorities' farm estates.
- Consider additional support for new entrants - business planning, mentoring etc, and sharing best practice when the apprenticeship scheme develops further.
- Consider releasing smaller areas of land to the community (for example for community asset transfer) when land is put up for sale.

Weaknesses/challenges:

- Constant need to balance existing farm estate management plans with increasing financial demand/contribution to the Council in the face of wider government budget cuts.
- A change of (political) view within the Council could introduce a different approach, promoting greater farm estate sell off.
- Uncertainty in the face of Brexit. ●

Conclusions

Local authorities, together with local communities, have the possibility to play an important role in reversing the tendency towards loss of farmland, land degradation, land concentration, land price increases and speculation. Although many powers belonging to states and nations are shared between different levels of government, with the right political will much more could be done at the local level.

There is a range of tools, often under-used or neglected, at the disposal of local authorities including some explicitly designed to facilitate land access. In our analysis, there are four main ways in which local authorities can support access to land for farmers:

1. Local authorities can preserve farmland to ensure that it remains in agricultural use

Directly responsible for land planning and zoning at a local level, the main challenge is to shift from a vision of farmland as a “stock of available land for the development of industries and services” to one where farmland is a cornerstone of the local, sustainable environment.

2. Local authorities can organise access to land

They can monitor the land situation to better know the potential and challenges of their local territory. They can facilitate farm succession and entries into farming, so as to ensure that existing farms do not disappear as a result of land concentration or abandonment. They may also recover unused land and help constitute viable farming units (regrouping plots, providing access to water or roads, etc.).

3. Local authorities can channel land towards specific uses and users

They can pre-empt, stock, rent and sell farmland for the benefit of specific users: young farmers, organic farmers, farmers selling on local markets, or community farm businesses. They can also act as intermediaries between land owners/ageing farmers and tenant farmers/new entrants (facilitating contact, offering their guarantee, etc.).

4. Local authorities can provide a favourable environment for farmers

They can develop local distribution channels and promote local food to local consumers. They can also support access to training and to housing for farmers. And they have a key role to play in providing general public services and infrastructures needed by all businesses and local residents (internet, roads, medical services, etc.).

Clearly, local authorities who own farmland have a very powerful lever to pursue their policy objectives, as well as a major responsibility for preserving this essential public asset. But local authorities can also play a major role as mediator between landowners and farmers. As a central and often respected stakeholder, they can facilitate land sales or rentals to farmers.

This can be of major importance in reclaiming underused land, in stimulating changes in agricultural practices (organic farming, local marketing for example) or promoting synergies among farmers.

This report shows the importance of political will and vision. But interaction with other local stakeholders is just as important: farmers' organisations, agricultural institutions, environmental activists, consumers' groups, etc. The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is often key not only to planning and realising the project, but also to ensuring its long-term relevance and viability.

Additional research and experience sharing could help local authorities and other interested stakeholders to develop and scale-up actions. And by drawing from levers existing in other sectors and adapting them to the farming sector (e.g. farm incubators), local authorities are well placed to innovate new and effective solutions. ●

Appendix 1: Administrative structure in the studied countries

| Country | Federal (F) Unitary (U) | Local government | | Regional government |
|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Tier 1 | Tier 1 | |
| France | U Centralised | – 36.782 Communes – 550 Groupings of municipalities | 101 Départements | 13 Regions |
| The UK (England) | U Centralised | – 269 Lower tier authorities – 55 Unitary Authorities – 9,000 parish and Town Councils | 34 County Councils | 3 Regions (Devolved Governments) |
| Italy | U Centralised | 8,047 Comuni | 110 Provinces (recently abolished) | 20 Regions |
| Belgium | F Decentralised | 589 Communes | 10 Provinces | 3 Regions and 3 Communities |
| Romania | U Centralised | – 103 Municipalities – 217 Towns – 2858 Communes | | 42 Counties |
| Spain | U Centralised | 8,110 Municipalities | 50 Provinces | 17 Autonomous Communities |

Source: Adapted from Marcou, G. Alcance y naturaleza de las competencias de las entidades locales en los estados miembros del consejo de Europa. MAP, 2006, ISBN 84-95912-29-5.



Appendix 2: Key land data from the six countries under study

| | Belgium | France | Italy | Romania | Spain | UK |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Farmland area | | | | | | |
| No of hectares (million ha)* | 1.3 | 28 | 17.2 | 13.7 | 23.4 | 17.2 |
| % of country area* | 44% | 53% | 57% | 58% | 46% | 70% |
| Farmland loss | | | | | | |
| UAA evolution (1993-2013)* | -32 200 ha (-2,5%) | -1145300 ha (-3,8%) | -4058000 ha (-24,6%) | -888 600 ha (-6%) | -6261000ha (-21%) | -903500 ha (-5,5%) |
| Farmland ownership | | | | | | |
| % of privately-owned land ¹ | 70% | Unknown | Unknown | 93,6% | Unknown | 90% |
| % of public land ¹ | 30% | Unknown (Estimate: 3%) | 4% (0,7 M ha) | 6,4% | Unknown | 10% |
| % of commons ² | ≈ 0% | 2,7% (750 000 ha) | 4% (610 000 ha) | 11% (1 500 000 ha) | 7% (1 700 000 ha) | 7% (1 195 000 ha) |
| Tenure regime | | | | | | |
| % of land owned by farmer* | 36% | 21% | 61% | 61% | 59% | 64% |
| % of tenanted farm-land* | 63% | 78% | 34% | 27% | 33% | 29% |
| Other tenure regimes* | 1% | 1% | 5% | 1,2% | 8% | 7% |

| | Belgium | France | Italy | Romania | Spain | UK |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------|
| Land concentration | | | | | | |
| % of holdings > 100 ha* | 6% | 21% | 1,5% | 0,5% | 5% | 22% |
| % of farmland area farmed by holdings > 100 ha* | 25% | 62% | 27% | 49% | 55% | 75% |
| Evolution in the number of small farms (<5 ha) (2003-2013)* | -65% | -31% | -61% | -20,5% | -19% | -8,6% |
| Average farm size* | 35 ha | 59 ha | 12 ha | 3,6 ha | 24 ha | 92 ha |
| Land prices | | | | | | |
| Average purchasing price ³ | €25000 to 50000/ha | €6100/ha | €20000/ha | €2000 to €10000/ha | €10500/ha | €21309,8/ha |
| Average rental price ³ | €150 to €450/ha/year (under Lease Contract Law) | €140 ha/year on average | €140 ha/year | 500 to 1500 kg/ha (based on international price of 1 ton of wheat) | €140/ha/year | Arable: €22,6/ha Livestock: €133/ha |

Sources

All data are from Eurostat - 2013 (marked with *), except for the following items, with footnotes:

1. National Sources:

- > Belgium: Terrones Gavira F., Burny P. & Lebaillya P. Caractéristiques du capital foncier des exploitations agricoles dans le Sud de la Belgique, Colloque SFER Le foncier agricole, usages tensions et régulations, June 2014
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2. Eurostat - 2010

3. National Sources:

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- > Romania: Average purchasing price: <http://agrintel.ro/69918/pretul-minim-pentru-un-hectar-de-teren-agricol-in-romania/> and average rental price: <http://agrintel.ro/25900/pretul-arendeipentru-teren-agricol-oscileaza-intre-500-si-1500-kgha-unde-se-gaseste-cel-mai-scump-si-cel-mai-ieftin-pamant-din-tara/>
- > Spain: Average purchasing price: Secretaría General Técnica, Subdirección General de Estadística, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación. General Técnica, Subdirección General de Estadística, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación. Encuesta de cánones de arrendamiento rústico, 2015.
- > UK: purchasing price: <https://kfcontent.blob.core.windows.net/research/157/documents/en/q1-2017-4640.pdf>; and average rental price: <http://www.fwi.co.uk/business/survey-shows-farm-rents-are-still-increasing.htm>

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