

Shaping an agro-ecological future for Europe: milestones and agenda for transition

Findings of the preliminary meeting of the TYFA core group -
setting the feasibility of the project
Brussels - 27th March 2014

List of participants:

Andrzej Nowakowski (PAN), Bram Moeskops (IFOAM TP Organic), Eric Gall (IFOAM), Faustine Defossez (EEB, excused), François Léger (AgroParisTech), Guy Beaufoy (EFNCP), Gwyn Jones (EFNCP), Hannes Lorenzen (Arc 2020), Karin Ulmer (Aprodev), Marco Contiero (Greenpeace), Marta Messa (SlowFood), Pavlos Georgiadis (Sustainable Food Trust), Pierre Stassart (Univ Liège), Samuel Féret (Arc 2020), Sarah Lumbroso (ASCA-EFNCP), Sébastien Treyer (IDDRi), Stanka Becheva (FoEE), Stephen Meredith (IFOAM), Trees Robinjs (Birdlife Europe), Xavier Poux (ASCA-EFNCP)

The status of the note

This note restores the discussions during the meeting of the core group of TYFA¹ that took place on March 2015. This meeting took place one year after a first meeting dealing with a presentation of the TYFA project to the NGOs and experts involved in the core group, mobilised as a common platform. The aim of this 2014 meeting was to test the interest and expectations of these core group members relatively to building a scenario consisting in the development of agroecology in Europe. Conclusions from this 2014 meeting have been summed-up in a note.

During the last year (March 2014 to March 2015), progresses have been made on two folds:

- funding; with submission of an ambitious project to MAVA on January 2015
- methodology; with discussions involving the different academic bodies mobilized in the project.

In this context, the March 2015 meeting had the following agenda:

- Present the state of progress of the project: methodology and funding perspectives, taking stock that we are still waiting for the feedback of MAVA re their will to fund TYFA;
- Facilitate a strategic conversation between the different NGOs involved in the core group about the long-term vision for the scenario to be developed in TYFA. This item came after that the March 2014 revealed the need to clarify the way the different matters of interest could - or could not - form a consistent basis;
- Identify alternative plans linked to different budget options, agree on governance options

The present note is organised in four folds, restoring the discussions:

- positioning TYFA in the wider strategic agenda of the NGOs involved in the core group
- how does TYFA capture - or not - our matters of interests
- the targets of TYFA: which actors should we reach?
- possible strategies for pursuing TYFA, considering different funding options.

It proposes a synthesis of the discussions rather than comprehensive minutes.

TYFA in the wider strategic agenda of NGOs: the relevance of a positive narrative based on agroecology

TYFA takes place in the specific time of the completion of the CAP reform 2014-2020, which process has been such that environmental and alternative farming NGOs have lost most of their demands. In this light, TYFA must contribute to the wider strategic agenda already addressing the reform of the next CAP (2020 and beyond). This contribution should be achieved through a common narrative based on (a) research inputs characterizing the long-term transformations of farming and food systems across Europe and (b) the structuring of a strategic discussion centred on agroecology as a long term project between NGOs.

¹ For further development on TYFA, see the concept note.

=> TYFA indeed meets the approach undertaken by the coalition of NGOs involved in the CAP-NGO platform which is moving towards a "Beyond the CAP" thinking. TYFA must then: (a) consider a wider range of EU public policies than only the CAP (b) consider a phasing out of the CAP - or a considerable reform - as an option.

=> In the same range of ideas, TYFA should contribute to the wider frame of changes called by the core group NGOs. While the pre 2014 reform call was based on "public money for public goods" focusing on the environment, the angles of attack of the CAP and more generally of different EU policies (TTIP; pesticides;...) should put environmental issues in a wider agenda, in order to address the "you ask for green. Fine, but we have to arbitrate between different equally legitimate demands and notably more production". The narrative borne by the platform and that TYFA will contribute to formalise should then be comprehensive and address the whole range of legitimate issues: environment, farm income, rural communities, international trade, food.

=> This approach brings to the added value of a common platform that the composition of the core group reflects. TYFA will be an opportunity to build a common narrative, defended by different organisations. While each organisation keeps its specificity, its cause can be put in a more comprehensive and coordinated coalition.

How should TYFA capture our different matters of interest? Deploying agroecology across a diversity of European regions and food-chains

This section restores a mapping exercise which objective was to see how the different matters of interest borne by the constituencies of the core group converge or diverge when put in the light of agroecology. This mapping is crucial when considering the above objective of contributing to a platform: do we agree on what should TYFA defend?

The two questions supporting this exercise were, for each organisation:

- What issues do we want to win in the future?
- To what extent does agroecology (as a global concept) strengthen our matters of interest? Is there a risk of weakening our individual strategies with a too vague concept?

It was proposed to organise the Mol in five domains: (1) environment, (2) farms, (3) rural communities, (4) food-chain, (5) consumers; with focus on both EU and the rest of the World.

The mapping shows three different approaches for organising the matters of interest, depending on the NGO:

- Focused on environmental outcomes: a core matter of interest centred on biodiversity (species and habitats) and low levels on chemical inputs in the environment, while this entry relates to other matters of interest in the way they support biodiversity conservation (rural communities and food chain). This type is represented by environmental NGOs: Birdlife Europe, EFNCP and PAN.

- Holistic: lively rural communities are the core matter of interest, with a vision bridging low-input farming (including organic farming), small farms and healthy food provided to consumers through local food-chains. This type is represented by: Slow food, IFOAM, FoEE, Greenpeace and Arc2020. Sustainable Food Trust (Greece) shares this vision, but the social innovation process is the core Mol.

- International: focuses on resilient communities at the international level (the issue is to lower the impact of Europe towards developing countries), which is consistent with the use of local resources (seeds, auxiliary biodiversity) and, on the other end of the chain, social justice. This type has been represented by Aprovech, but it strongly echoes most of the international vision of the other NGOs.

On this ground, the mapping has shown the need to add a domain in itself, named "governance" during the exercise, encompassing food sovereignty, participatory research and crowd sourcing, innovation and long term research, political organisation (more power given to local/regional actors), economic "contracts" along the chain. Complementary to the "substantial" matters of interest developed above, these governance matters of interest give emphasis on the processes at play, which can be targets in themselves.

The conclusions from this mapping:

=> On a general level, there is no contradiction between the different matters of interest considered altogether. On the contrary they form an overall consistent set in which low-input farming, biodiversity, health (pesticides and diet) and more transparent and less industrialized food chain, not dependent from imports from the rest of the World are key elements of the vision. While each item considered separately may be consistent with the continuation of industrialised farming, taken together they describe the strong agroecology vision.

=> However, while the organisation of the matters of interest across the food-chain is clearly expressed (meaning that changes and governance of the food chain are the path to reach both environmental and social objectives), territorial and more regionalised concerns are relatively less visible. Discussion about the way peripheral regions could play a role in the sustainable food chain, far

away from populated consumption basins illustrates this issue. With regards to this issue, focusing on landscape management is a way to hold territorial issues that could be neglected in a (too) general food-chain approach.

=> In the food-chain, a blind spot consists in the intermediary steps. If preference by the upholders of the "holistic" approach is expressed for local food and short-supply chain, as opposed to international and industrialized food industries, the necessity and even desirability of generalized short-supply local food chain is debatable in an agroecological scenario.

=> Other identified blind spots: land access, jobs/employments, working conditions, urban/rural relationships, climate change, technological changes and business models. TYFA scenarios should address these gaps.

=> Discussions have shown the need to go further than the general converging statements. Principles should be translated into actual socio-economic descriptors, taking into account different territories in Europe (notably the extensive livestock agrarian systems) in a consistent way. Agroecology scenario cannot be a collection of scattered success stories related to local horticulture close to urban or the development of legumes in crop rotations. Such stories are part of the image, but the use of these legumes in the animal feed chain and the consequences on the overall land use must be addressed.

=> Autonomy is key to many of these MoI, reduce fossil fuel dependency, close local cycles, but the scale at which this autonomy should be achieved is to be clarified. EU autonomy is paramount, but intra EU exchanges can be consistent with agroecology.

=> The above items emphasise on the role of the case studies in TYFA. These CS should illustrate contrasted parts of the agri-food puzzle in Europe and show the diversity of governance and territorial issues across Europe. CS are more than illustrations of success stories put in a general frame, they are the way to base the TYFA approach on meaningful challenges and processes.

Which actors should TYFA reach? Broadening the range of potential allies and targets

On the basis of the previous mapping, a discussion had been proposed about mapping the targets of TYFA. The objective was mainly to broaden the range of potential allies and targets beyond already converging community represented in the core group. The strengthening of this community is still a major lever for enabling future changes, but reaching out to other stakeholders seems necessary to build a strategy for change, facing a very efficient alliance of powerful statu quo players.

A strategic typology, proposed by EFNCP/AScA to identify the actors playing in the overall "game" dealing with the transition of unsustainable agricultural and food system according to the following types:

- "ourselves" (i.e. the core group as a player)
- our opponents (i.e. the groups opposing our projects)
- our constituencies (i.e. our close allies)
- the hesitating actors, open both to some of our causes and to the ones of our opponents and who have some influence on those latter. They are not convinced - yet - that they should rally our cause.
- the "golden triangle", consisting of the actors who are different from ourselves and are able to influence the hesitating actors.
- the passive actors, forming the bulk of "sleeping" players but who are part of the game while their opinions do matter for the set of active players (ourselves, opponents, hesitating, golden triangle...).

On this ground, the question addressed was: "What narrative built for/with the golden triangle, convincing for hesitating actors, taking into accounts passive actors interests?" In fact, discussions went on identifying such actors and did not address the nature of the narrative.

Partly due to time constraints, the discussion was not fully conclusive and the above typology, proposed in order to support the analysis has not proven to be relevant enough. Notably, it has been made clear that actors should not be classified regarding the institution/category they belong to; MEP and/or intensive farmers can be opponent or in the golden triangle, for instance. The analysis should be more specific.

However some findings can be drawn from the exercise:

- our main opponents might be more the upholders of the sustainable intensification narrative than the broad category of "intensive farmers", who might be hesitating for some of them.
- it is crucial to address the farming community in the hesitating actors type and a way of doing so is to mobilise alternative active farmers in the process and the narrative.
- economic actors (investors) also are in the hesitating actors and thus TYFA should investigate how they can be interested in the scenario.
- passive actors consist in tax payers (who should care about the way public money is spent, but don't care about it), consumers (who should care about the quality of the food they eat, but don't care about getting the information), and some farmers (understanding why such farmers are passive is a challenge for TYFA and more generally for future strategy).

- golden triangle consists in medias (e.g. the European Journalist Forum), health concern actors (cancer league, mothers networks), advisory services and some researchers, anti TTIP activists.

Going further in the analysis was beyond what was reachable in the frame of the meeting.

Possible strategies

As the funding from MAVVA is still unclear both in terms of decision (will MAVVA fund the TYFA project as it has been submitted on January? Only a part of it? Not at all?) and process (when?), different options have been envisaged in order to continue TYFA (which is a key conclusion in itself: despite the difficulties and numerous challenges anticipated, it would be meaningless to give up with the project).

The following table sums up the discussions:

Option	What does it consist in?	+	-
A. MAVVA	The project submitted to MAVVA is funded (100% or to a significant share).	Allows academic involvement supporting the credibility of MAVVA. Significant means for running the project	Risk of a too academic and too complex exercise where we could lose the strategic dimension Uncertainty on MAVVA decision process, competition with other funding demands (?)
B. Our own resources	A lot of volunteer time from the participating NGOs Mainly workshops and low cost display (case studies at hand, notes, qualitative scenarios)	This force to focus on qualitative aspects, which might be the most useful at the end. Possibly efficient	Hidden costs for NGOs Requires some coordination while it is unpaid Lack of quantitative analysis which might be crucial
C. Other funding	Limited funding from other sources to be identified (on going FPH, Fondation Daniel et Nina Caraso, Cariplo, H2020 Thematic Network (??), others?)	Allows a good compromise between the two previous options: best use of scarce funding (give means to a qualitative analysis)	Unclear who are the possible funders and what strategy to reach them Possibly an unclear compromise (what if the available budgets are not sufficient to cover the costs while engaging on a more ambitious project than option B)