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Editorial

Dear Members and Friends,

The starting point for the 'Agricultural Course' was the perception that the quality of food was diminishing. Rudolf Steiner's central message was that we have to re-connect the farm organism with cosmic forces to enable the growth of plants that can really nourish us.

As biodynamic farmers we try to increase the sensitivity of our plants to these forces with the help of the biodynamic preparations. Cosmic forces appear in the colours, smells and tastes, in the shapes of our plants. We are not only nourished by good food but also through our senses, perceiving the beauty of life.

Christoph Simpfendörfer, General Secretary of the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International

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News from the Federation

Advisory, Research & Training

BFDI Training excursion for members

Looking back at the excursions



After the Agricultural Conference 2023 the International Federation organized for the first time a guided excursion open to its members of the international biodynamic community.

Over four days, participants from Thailand, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, India, and Korea visited different biodynamic farms, producers and manufacturers across Switzerland and Germany.

The excursion had two broad objectives. The first objective was to enable the exchange of experiences and learnings between BD practitioners of long-standing biodynamic initiatives in Europe and members of the international biodynamic community. The exchange raised mutual awareness on the very different realities encountered by BD practitioners across the world. At the same time, it brought new perspectives among participants on the ecological and socio-economic potential of the biodynamic path. It was encouraging to experience how some of the core principles of biodynamics are so lively present within the European movement. For instance the passion by which “Animal husbandry and welfare” is investigated in [FiBL](#), or carried out with so much respect on some of the oldest biodynamic farms of Germany like [Rengoldshausen](#) or [Heggelbach](#). The quest to safeguard the “integrity” of biodynamics seeds in [Sativa](#), as well as, the 'quality' of biodynamically grown products in companies like [Wala](#) and [Naturamus](#) was also very inspiring to observe. In Paul Ong’s words ([Malaysia Demeter Association](#)):

“The excursion was indeed amazing ... How the farmers treat everything as a being and build the connection with the soil, the plants, the animals and the co-workers opens my heart to a better understanding of our coexistence as one...I sense willingness, warm heartedness, openness and harmony in the souls of everyone that I have met. Thank you all, for this memorable experience.”

To deepen into the “social” dimension within biodynamic enterprises was very interesting. Unique stories were shared. Like the challenges and learnings experienced by the families of Heggelbach after 35 years in their search to be a self-sustaining and diversify organism. The pioneering path developed by the community at [Reyerhof](#) to establish a unique CSA in the middle of the city of Stuttgart, and the admirable and inclusive approach to farming and community experienced in the Dorfgemeinschaft Tennental in Stuttgart. In the words of

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"The possibility of getting to know projects that have been working with biodynamic agriculture for decades gave us the opportunity to learn about how these practices are carried out in Europe. In addition to agriculture itself, it is relevant to know how the social aspects of the farms work and how they have been able to integrate into a changing and diverse world. "

The second main objective was to contribute to continue to unify and strengthen the international biodynamic community. The excursion provided unique spaces for very diverse members of the community to meet, to listen to each other and share different experiences and knowledge. It is through these closer human interactions that empathy and kindness towards the other, as well as bonds of collaboration and trust start to develop, and in doing form the basis for a real and resilient community as well. In the words of Rudolf Steiner:

"A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living."

The excursion was motivated by a deep feeling of gratitude towards our member organisations. The Federation acknowledges and recognizes all that they genuinely do within their very diverse local realities so that biodynamics can grow and develop around the world, and we are grateful for it. We hope that gratitude will continue to spread across our community, and that we grow into a more unify global movement deeply rooted and guided into the future by love and trust.

Thank you to all hosts and organizers, specially to Christoph Simpfendörfer and Herman Lutke-Shipholt, for all the dedication and love you gave to this memorable excursion.

By Maria Paz Bernaschina, member of ABDChile, Advisory, Research and Training coordinator at BFDI and a grateful participant of this excursion. For more information on the ART area, please contact Maria Paz Bernaschina at: paz.bernaschina@demeter.net.

BFDI Project Funding 2023

ART, Marketing & Membership

On behalf of the ART, Membership and International Marketing committees, we would like to thank all member associations and organisations who applied for project funding 2023. We have received a total of 20 project applications from all around the world. The Federation is proud that its call for applications has reached out to so many associations across the world, and it was encouraged by the quality and vision of the applications it

valuable for the Biodynamic Federation.

We believe however that it is important that all member associations are aware and acknowledge the economic reality of the BFDI 2023 funds. The total amount of funds requested by the 20 projects applications is 163.000€. The number of applications to fund projects unfortunately exceeds our total available budget of 69.000€, distributed in 44.000€ for the Advisory, Research and Training (ART) committee, 10.000€ for the International Marketing committee (IMC), and 15.000€ for the Membership committee (MC). For all our funds the amount of money requested at least double the available budget. This means that the three committees may have to fund some projects only partially, and in other cases, projects may not receive funding.

The decision around which projects will be funded, and the maximum amount they may receive, will be made based on an objective and transparent assessment process. To this end, the aim and overall impacts of each project will be reviewed first against the specific criteria defined by each of the committees as described in the application letter. Projects will then be assessed based on general criteria including for example that projects need to show co-funding (Ideally 50%), and that no organization can apply more than 2 years in a row to the same fund. Finally, emphasis will be placed on ensuring that as many projects as possible receive funding in a meaningful way.

Applicants may receive questions of inquiry by the coordinators of the committee, in the coming weeks to clarify unclarities or to inquire on the feasibility of the project with less than the requested amount. Please be aware of potential emails.

The results of the funds applications 2023 will be officially communicated to all applicants in May 2023. If you have any doubts or require further information on the MC Funds please contact Petra Derkzen (petra.derkzen@demeter.net), on the ART Funds contact Maria Paz Bernaschina (paz.bernaschina@demeter.net), and on the IMC Funds contact (felix.huebner@demeter.net).

Communication

Biodynamic Research Communication Network

Online & Physical Workshops



On January 30, a first workshop of the 'Biodynamic Research Communication Network' (BDResCom) project took place prior to the Agriculture Conference in Dornach, Switzerland. Around 30 members from all parts of the world joined forces to discuss the main objectives and outcomes of the project. The physical workshop was followed by an online workshop on February 23 for those who couldn't be present at the Goetheanum in January.

Starting with the idea that there is a genuine demand from members to have access to more communication material to further spread the biodynamic movement, the goal of the network is to better communicate the outcomes of research on biodynamics, and to generate a wider audience through the development of ready-to-use content. This was highlighted to be especially important in the context of recurring attacks against biodynamics and the anthroposophical community in general.

We have been awarded a one-year grant from Software AG in Germany to organize and intensify the communication of scientific facts and results to different audiences both within the movement and in broader society. The grant will help to establish the network, review existing material and develop example content and media output. There is also an urgent need to make more material available in different languages. The main tasks will include gathering of scientific studies, transforming their results into relevant communication material like factsheets and making them available in multiple formats (videos, podcasts, interviews, etc.).

Both workshops identified that the main objective of the project is now to work on a first general factsheet on biodynamic farming. If successful it could be the start of more factsheets on other topics related to biodynamics. The project partners are Christopher Brock for the [Forschungsring](#), Martin Quantin for [Biodynamie Recherche](#), Adrian Meyer for

For further information, please contact Clara Behr at: clara.behr@demeter.net.

Criticism of Biodynamics

FAQ - For internal use only

The biodynamic movement often faces recurring attacks, mainly regarding its link with anthroposophy and its supposedly non-scientific background. In short, the anthroposophical roots of the biodynamic movement are perceived as giving biodynamics an esoteric dimension that makes it a non-scientific practice.

In countries like Germany, France or Italy these critiques are quite strong and represent a challenge for the biodynamic community.

To address these frequent critiques, the Federation has prepared an FAQ providing responses to the main accusations. It is meant to offer guidance and arguments to respond to these accusations in case you should be confronted with them.

The critiques are summarised under 5 categories:

- scientific evidence,
- link with anthroposophy,
- biodynamic preparations,
- veganism,
- racism.

Please note that the FAQ will not be published, it is meant for internal purpose only. If you would like to receive it, please contact Clara Behr at: clara.behr@demeter.net.

100 Years Celebration

Workshop on the 100 Years Celebration

Feedback on the online workshop



On March 16, the Federation organised an online workshop dedicated to preparations for the 100 years anniversary of Steiner's 'Agricultural Course'.

After a quick overview of the planned activities for 2024, the campaign logo and main claim: 'In the rhythm of change', the key visual, examples of social media posts, and sample merchandising products were presented. The communication campaign for the centenary of biodynamics will revolve around 12 principles of biodynamic agriculture: each month, all actors of the biodynamic movement will be invited to post about the principle of the month on their website and/or social media.

Pawel Bietkowski from Demeter Poland gave a presentation of the planned activities for the 100 years Celebration in Koberwitz, Poland, where Steiner delivered his initial lectures. BDFI's Members' Assembly on June 22-25 will be followed by two days of excursions on June 26 and 27. Antje Kölling, from Demeter Germany also presented the celebrations plan in Berlin regarding the centenary.

The workshop was concluded by a lively discussion between the different participants on further activities around the 100 years. Inspirational exchanges made us look forward to 2024's rich program, which calls for a successful celebration.

There will be another online workshop in June during the Members' Assembly, followed by another in autumn this year. If needed, more meetings will be organised to ensure the best preparation and collaboration towards 2024.

The logo for the 100 Years is already available in English and German and ready to use for everyone interested. If you wish to receive it, please contact Clara Behr directly, or go on our internal [Communication & Marketing](#) page. We will share additional communication materials containing the main claim, the key visual and much more as soon as possible. Stay tuned!

Here is the [recording of the session](#) (password: fsV.v8@\$). The recording is available until April 16.

If you would like to receive the presentations from the session, please contact Clara

Policy and Public Relations

Online Workshop on New GMOs

March 30, 10 - 11.30 am CEST



New GMOs are often put forward by political actors as THE solution to a variety of problems including reducing pesticide use, mitigating climate change and ensuring food security. The biotech industry has been pushing for years to get new GMOs deregulated. This means that products from genetic modification techniques like CRISPR-Cas would no longer get any prior risk assessment, nor traceability or labeling.

What effects would a deregulation of NGTs mean for consumers' freedom of choice, for ensuring GMO-free traceability and for organic food and farming in Europe? Join the webinar hosted by [Slow Food](#), [Foodwatch](#) and the [Austrian Chambour of Labour](#) on March 30 from 10 to 11.30 am CEST to get a clearer understanding of the issue. It will be held in English through Zoom.

Clara Behr, Head of Policy and Public Relations at the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International, will present the political context of the upcoming legislation on NGTs, and share the concerns it raises for the organic and biodynamic sector, as well as the risks it poses concerning the freedom of choice for farmers and consumers.

To register, please send your name, organisation and any issues/questions you already have to office@akeuropa.eu with the subject 'Webinar NGTs 30 March'.

For further information, please contact Clara Behr at: clara.behr@demeter.net.

Letter to the European Commission on new GMOs

The Federation raises concerns on coexistence measures for organic production



The Biodynamic Federation Demeter International addressed a letter on February 24 to Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, on the concerns of the organic and biodynamic sector regarding the upcoming proposal of the European Commission on [new genomic techniques](#) (NGTs). More specifically, the stress was put on the importance of sufficient coexistence measures for organic production.

The upcoming legislative proposal on NGTs, expected to come out on June 7, will put forward a deregulation of the existing legislative framework on GMOs for NGTs. Even though NGTs are to be considered as GMOs, the proposal aims to bypass the current mandatory requirements – including risk assessment, traceability, and labelling – anchored in the EU legislative framework and currently applying to all GMOs on the market.

In the letter, the Federation expresses its concerns to Commissioner Kyriakides, stressing that the current GMO framework must stay in place to protect the organic and biodynamic sectors from GMO-contamination, and to respect the 420,000 citizens who signed the [EU-wide petition](#) to keep new GMOs strictly labelled, traceable and risk assessed.

If you would like to read the full letter, or for more information, please contact Clara Behr at: clara.behr@demeter.net.

Open Letter to the European Commission on the EU Soil Health Law

Over 250 signatories call for an ambitious and progressive EU Soil Health Law



The Biodynamic Federation Demeter International, along with over 250 representatives of the European agri-food sector and individuals, is calling on the European Commission in a joint letter to protect and restore European soils through an ambitious [soil health law](#).

Farmers, scientists, impact startups, finance and consulting industry actors, civil society organizations, soil, health and water associations, actors from the food and retail industry, the circular bioeconomy sector, as well as citizens strongly welcome the European Commission's initiative for a new Soil Health Law to be published in 2023.

The upcoming Soil Health Law plays a key role in the [EU soil strategy for 2030](#) to provide a framework and concrete steps towards protecting and restoring soils, and ensuring that they are used sustainably. The new Soil Health Law has been announced to ensure a level playing field and a high level of environmental and health protection.

The joint letter outlines the urgent need for action to counter the rapid degradation of soils, as these are essential to achieve the climate, biodiversity, water and zero pollution targets of the European Green Deal, and to support the EU's Farm to Fork objectives. Healthy soils are also a core value in organic and biodynamic farming.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#) For more information, please contact Clara Behr at: clara.behr@demeter.net.

Standards

The Future of the Demeter Standard

We need your input!

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Discussions have been going on since June 2022 about the direction, structure and content of the International Demeter Biodynamic Standard. This has been included in two Members' Assemblies as well as in conversations in the Standards Committee itself. In order to include feedback from as many users of the standard as possible, the Standards Committee has designed an online survey which is available from now until April 3. Please give us your views!

The survey only takes a few minutes to complete and will help us to shape the standard in ways that meet the needs of today and the future. Out of this consultation a proposal will come to the Members' Assembly 2023 for discussion, agreement and implementation.

You will find the survey under: <https://demeter.net/bfdi-standard-survey/>. Please fill it out yourself and forward the link to anyone who has views that should be included. The survey at the moment is available in English, Spanish and German.

Thank you very much for your support and time, it is extremely valuable!

For further information, please contact Alysoun Bolger at: alysoun.bolger@demeter.net.

News from the Section

New online courses



Associative Economics

How can we put it into practice?

What needs to be transformed?

with Ueli Hurter

Course starts on 20 March 2023 - register now!

In view of the times we are living in, when many people are confronted with economic and climate-related uncertainties, we want to take up the topic of associative economics from a practical angle. Participants are therefore warmly invited to bring along their own questions to find answers to these during the course. In a guided process over seven online meetings, new ways will appear for coping with complex challenges. The course is based both on Rudolf Steiner's associative principles and also C. Otto Scharmer's Theory U.

For further information and registration: <https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/standard-titel/basic-courses/2-associative-economics-how-can-we-put-it-into-practice-what-needs-to-be-transformed>

Healthy nutrition and community

... more than just an ordinary meal

with Dr. Jasmin Peschke

8 and 15 May 2023

A meal creates community, provides opportunities for meeting and increases enjoyment. In a community we can also reflect on eating and living habits, and establish lasting changes. Besides community at the table, the choice of our food forms the basis for relationships. What we eat is directly related to the health of the earth. So it is important how foods are produced, processed and treated. Cooperation based on trust and appreciation is the best approach.

These complex relationships will be demonstrated in the workshop by means of in-depth contributions by Dr. Jasmin Peschke, lively discussion sessions and practical exercises.

For further information and registration: <https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/standard-titel/basic-courses/4b-healthy-nutrition-and-community-more-than-just-a-common-meal>

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Save the date

The diverse role of animals and our responsibility How animals can enhance the health and resilience of the land

with Alysoun Bolger, Johannes Wirz and Jean-Michel Florin

4–28 September 2023

Nutrition Department

New article published on aroma



If you put a piece of good quality chocolate in your mouth while holding your nose, you will not taste the chocolate. It merely tastes sweet. Only when you unblock your nose does the chocolate aroma suddenly appear. What exactly is aroma and how is it produced? This fascinating question is examined in a recent article by Dr. Jasmin Peschke in the periodical Info3.

Read more: <https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/nutrition/sv/meeting-the-aroma>

Research

DOK study compares soil quality of different cropping systems after 42 years of agricultural use

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How do different farming systems influence soil quality over time? The DOK trial (BioDynamic, BioOrganic, Konventionell (German for conventional)) began in 1978 and, having been in operation for over 40 years, is one of the oldest comparative studies of its kind. Most of the test plots receive regular farmyard manure applications in varying amounts.

The organically fertilised test plots are compared with both minerally fertilised plots and unfertilised control plots. In their work, the research team led by Hans-Martin Krause investigated how the proportion of soil organic carbon (SOC) has developed over time.

The primary research questions were first, how long it takes for changes in SOC content to be detected and, second, which cultivation system is best able to stabilise or build up SOC. The researchers conclude that the application of composted farmyard manure – as is common in biodynamic agriculture – leads to a long-term enrichment of organic carbon in the soil and thus increases soil quality.

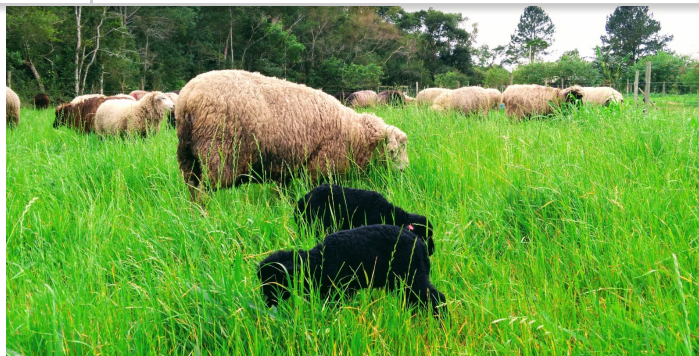
Read more: <https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/research/sv/dok-study-compares-soil-quality-of-different-cropping-systems-after-42-years-of-agricultural-use>

News from Member Organisations

Brazil

Biodynamics in Brazilian university

*Sheep and human being brotherhood and
university biodynamic research*



Biodynamic agricultural research at the Federal University of Santa Catarina – UFSC was initiated in 2012 and is carried out at the Nucleus for Research and Extension in Agroecology on the Farm, known as “Agroecology Center”, which pertains to the Center for Agricultural Sciences. Various studies on biodynamic agriculture, as well as introductory courses for students and farmers, have been successfully conducted since then.

The Nucleus received both organic and International Demeter certification for the production of sheep wool and the cultivation of vegetables, under the coordination of professors Patrícia Ana Bricarello and Marília Carla de Mello Gaia, from the Department of Animal Science and Rural Development. The Agroecology Center is the first sector of a Brazilian Federal University to have a biodynamic and organic production certification. The organic production certification and recently the biodynamic agriculture certification was obtained within the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), coordinated by the Association for Biodynamic Agriculture of the South Brazil ([ABDSul](#)).

The Agroecology Center has an area of five hectares, managed as a small rural property, and sits in the southern region of the island of Santa Catarina in Florianópolis city. On this land, research, teaching and extension in biodynamics and agroecology has received attention from the professors, researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, and community volunteers participating in research and extension projects.

The flock kept at the site is comprised of 60 sheep of the Texel, Crioula Lanada, Romney Marsh, and Polwarth breeds and their crossbreeds. The animals remain on pasture in a rotational grazing system (Voisin) and the animal health treatments are carried out with medicinal plants, homeopathic and herbal medicines. Motherhood for longer periods, free access to watering, shade for resting in the pastures and space for expressing animal behavior are examples of a priority given to the animal welfare at the Agroecology Center. As soil management received enough attention the bromatological results from analyzes carried out in 2022 indicate high nutritional contents in the pastures with 19.9% of crude protein (% DM).

Since 2018 the Agroecology Center has been using biodynamic preparations in the pasture and in the vegetable garden, as well as the astronomical calendar in the cultivation of vegetables and in the management of forage.

Plant cultivation produces vegetables, grains, tubers, medicinal and fruit plants. Plants are biodynamic managed, using preparations locally produced, with the exception of valerian. Intercropping, crop rotation, the use of organic compost, and homeopathy, use of straw and green manure are some of the practical soil activities. Plantings are oriented according

The whole process of production results in high quality biodynamic vegetables, foodstuffs and sheep wool. The wool is hand processed and dyed with natural colors from plants, and handcrafted by a local Women's Association. Vegetable produce is donated to families in situations of social vulnerability in Florianópolis and the region through the extension project "Solidarity Agroecological Planting", which has donated about three tons of biodynamic food per year to people in situations of social vulnerability.

Patrizia Ana Bricarello and Marília Carla de Mello Gaia

France

Le Mouvement de l'Agriculture Bio-Dynamique (France) presents its latest book!

Un autre regard sur l'alimentation - La cuisine des légumes (Another look at food- Cooking with vegetables) by Joël Acremand (only in French)

Joël Acremand
Un autre regard sur l'alimentation
La cuisine des légumes
Avec la collaboration de
Jean-Michel Florin



This book presents a vision of food that is based on the same conceptions of nature and man as those found in the foundations of biodynamic agriculture. In the vast landscape of plant-based nutrition, the focus here is essentially on the place of vegetables in daily nutrition and on their qualities, without any question of restrictive diet.

It is above all a question of encouraging a kind of special care in the preparation of vegetables that tends to bring together virtues that are too rarely combined: greed and health. On the practical side, the proposed use of herbs, spices and condiments adds colours to the gustatory rainbow in order to avoid the possible repetitive monotony in the presentation of vegetables throughout the year. The importance of the eater himself in his

Eight botanical families to which our main vegetables belong are detailed through a sensitive approach, which allows us to understand their advantages in cooking and for our health.

The book presents revisited classics as well as original recipes, which are out of the ordinary in terms of combination of ingredients. Without proposing a vegan or even vegetarian cuisine, the author puts vegetables at the centre of the plate, where they are often relegated to a secondary role next to foods considered more noble, such as meat. The recipes are simple and affordable and open the door to everyone's creativity.

"Eating healthy means composing the diet so that the whole body is energized, without being overloaded. From this point of view, knowing how to prepare the vegetable part in a creative, light and gourmet way is a major asset." Joël Acremant.

For more information, please contact Emilie Pirra at the MABD : e.pirra@bio-dynamie.org.

Italy

Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die biologisch-dynamische Wirtschaftsweise (ARGE)

Bozen - Trient



Quartz particles are finely ground with pieces of rock crystal on a glass plate

Foto: Gino Cunego

On December 27, 2022, the Working group for biodynamic agriculture ground quartz in South Tyrol. A large group was eagerly at work.

In addition to the practical work, the basics of this activity were also taught in this special time: precisely in the middle of winter, at the moment when the earth is completely internalised, the Christ impulse - the Ego - appeared on earth. This is the prerequisite for

into cow horns in spring and buried.

The working group for biodynamic agriculture has been organising group meetings for over 40 years, at which members jointly produce the biodynamic spray and compost preparations. They meet in autumn to make and bury most of the preparations. In winter quartz is ground. In spring the preparations are dug up together and horn silica is buried. In summer, many preparation plants are harvested, and valerian and nettle preparations are made.

The preparations are stored by the working group and distributed free of charge to the members.

South Africa

Biodynamic training in Southern Africa

Changing with the times



Student, Hanneke Bentz (left) with Training Facilitator Helen van Zyl at a farmers' market

Helen van Zyl, Training Facilitator for BDAASA's apprenticeship training arm, BDAT, outlines how training in biodynamic farming is changing to meet the needs of Southern Africa.

The nature of our engagement in biodynamics has changed in line with the evolution of biodynamic practices in Southern Africa since the 1970s. From 2011, BDAASA held a series of vision workshops with its members to develop a training in biodynamics. This resulted in us introducing the on-farm training of the UK Biodynamic Agricultural College (BDAC) of Crossfields in late 2013, which was well received by eager participants.

their enthusiasm and practice their newfound skills.

The thinking one brings to an understanding of biodynamics following the lectures in Poland in 1924 continues to evolve as we ourselves have evolved over the past century. The essence of biodynamics can and does have spiritual insights that are universal, yet the thought process that followed the lectures and guided its subsequent development is essentially Western.

As a European training in Africa, I need to be conscious of my eurocentric teaching as it can so easily inhibit the students from engaging in ways where they can express their own future relatedness and feel inspired to share past intergenerational knowledge.

Learning to be aware of how one brings the concepts and principles of biodynamics in a teaching scenario is key. Our approach is to be open to the existing context and not come with dogmatic or fixed concepts. This enables both trainer and students to learn while discovering how biodynamics has and can evolve in Southern Africa.

We endeavour to work with the Goethean method by engaging phenomenologically with most of the topics. This way of awakening faculties of perception invites students to gain confidence in their own ways of knowing. We use various process exercises to ensure meaningful engagement and understanding, integrating this way of knowing into the syllabus of the diploma course.

The syllabus includes topics like phenomenological observation as an ongoing approach to soil science, plant botany, animal husbandry and human development. Other topics include soil fertility, soil cultivation, biodynamic preparations, biodynamic seeds, animal husbandry and human nutrition, history of agriculture, nature and human life.

Over the past couple of years we have run the course online on one or two Saturdays monthly plus onsite training during the spring and autumn to combine with BD preparation making and application. Here we specifically try to visit as many farms as possible and learn the numerous ways and reasons for BD preparation application.

Covid quickly propelled us into online training which allowed the training to be accessible not only across various provinces but also in other countries in Africa. We are very proud of our first two students from Kufunda Biodynamic Community in Zimbabwe who are completing now. Following the successful Train the Trainer Conference in Zimbabwe, we are opening to other African countries.

There is now an organising team from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Egypt (Sekem) and Israel inspired to share and pass on much needed training skills regularly throughout Africa.

The students resume:

"I am three quarters through the course now and it has been a far richer experience than I anticipated. It introduced me to a way of approaching the natural environment through observation and awareness first, and then through considered, practical action."

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often lacking in a conventional agricultural approach. Also, the vines are alive and well which is definitely a bonus!”, commented Hanneke Bentz, an experimental wine farmer, based at Phillipolis in the Free State province of South Africa.”



*“I am planning to apply my teachings to the communities that Kufunda works with across Zimbabwe. We have worked with rural communities for a number of years using participatory approaches to help them identify what they most care about and find a way to move towards this together,” said **Tichaenzana Koke** from Kufunda Village in Zimbabwe, who recently completed the course.*

News from the World

Pathways Project

Envisioning the future of our livestock systems



Pathways is a 5-year (2021-2026), EU Horizon 2020 project, contributing to the EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy, at the heart of the EU Green Deal. It is coordinated by the [Swedish](#)

With the aim of reducing environmental impacts while addressing societal demands for safe, nutritious and affordable meat and dairy products, Pathways is about identifying and increasing sustainable practices along the supply and production chains of the European livestock sector.

One year into the project, the core visioning work has been completed from the [Practice Hubs](#) and the Pathways [Multi-Actor Platform](#). From these visions, initial scenarios are being developed on what the future of livestock farming could look like by 2050.

A Leaflet on Pathways' approach and core concept was published. You can view it through [this link](#). Click [here](#) also to access the video hub where you will find interviews of actors taking part in the project, as well as several past seminars presented by Pathways on animal welfare, life cycle analysis, and much more.

An online LinkedIn event about '[Livestock for Sustainable Food Systems](#)' was hosted by [Revolve](#) on March 21 (see [here](#) for more information on the topic). Experts from four research and innovation projects dedicated to husbandry for quality and sustainability, discussed how livestock are crucial to food system redesign. The roundtable addressed key points including:

- Why do we need more sustainable food systems and what is the role of livestock?
- How do consumer expectations enhance the need for transparency and influence production systems?
- Is there a link between animal welfare and quality of the product?

For further information, please contact Clara Behr at: clara.behr@demeter.net.

Synthetic pesticides are significantly more dangerous than natural ones

Outcomes of the latest scientific study



The study, commissioned by [IFOAM Organics Europe](#) and [Agroecology Europe](#), was conducted by Helmut Burtscher-Schaden, Thomas Durstberger and Johann G. Zaller and published in December 2022 in the peer-reviewed scientific journal [Toxics](#). It shows that there is a significant difference between organic and conventional agriculture when it comes to pesticide toxicity.

According to the study, out of the 256 synthetic pesticide active substances allowed in conventional agriculture, 55% carry health or environmental hazards warnings. For all 134 natural active substances also allowed in organic agriculture, that number falls to 3%.

[Helmut Burtscher-Schaden](#), biochemist at [Global2000](#) and lead author of the study, also mentions that "while around 90% of the conventional pesticides are of chemical-synthetic origin and underwent screening programs to identify the substances with the highest toxicity (and thus highest efficacy) against target organisms, the majority of the natural active ingredients are not even 'substances' in the strict sense, but living microorganisms. These make up 56% of the pesticides approved in organic farming. As natural soil inhabitants, they do not have hazardous substance properties. Another 19% of organic pesticides are classified from the outset as 'low-risk active ingredients' (e.g. baking powder, ferric phosphate) or approved as basic substances (e.g. sunflower oil, vinegar, milk)."

The study therefore provides scientific-based arguments to counter claims made by the European pesticide industry, that the expansion of organic agriculture envisaged in the European Farm to Fork Strategy could lead to ecological 'trade-offs' due to an increase in the volume of natural pesticides used. The results speak for themselves: warnings about possible harm to the unborn child, suspected carcinogenicity, or acute lethal effects were found in 16% of the pesticides used in conventional agriculture, but in none of the pesticides approved for organic use.

To access the full study, click [here](#). For further information, please contact Clara Behr at: clara.behr@demeter.net.

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