



Goetheanum · School of Spiritual Science
Section for Agriculture
Sektion für Landwirtschaft
Section d'Agriculture
Sección de Agricultura

Activity Report 2020



Editorial

The work of the Section for Agriculture in 2020 was marked by the development of fields of activity which contrasted greatly both thematically and practically. At the start of the year, the spiritual theme of “The spiritual in agriculture”, which is close to the hearts of those in the immediate circle of biodynamics and anthroposophy. A year later the Annual Conference with a topic that concerns all farmers throughout the world irrespective of their farming methods: “Breathing with the Climate Crisis”. The way in which the conferences ran could also not have been more different: at the start of 2020 over 900 people from 48 countries gathered in Dornach – a large and wonderful celebration of connection and the spirit. A year later, with over 1,200 people from 63 countries, there were more participants but all of them stayed at home. All had passed months of reduced direct social contact. Many had experienced existential fear. But it was once again a celebration. The relationships which had developed over the last few years and decades also carried this purely digital conference, and the new format allowed people to participate who previously had only been linked to the Goetheanum through the reports of third parties.

From seed via preparation to the shared meal, Jasmin Peschke in her new book “Vom Acker auf den Teller” (from field to plate) covers a great span in order to show that healthy food has many facets and working with it is enjoyable.

The project “Living Farms - the potential of biodynamic places in times of global change” has felt the effects of

this global change at first hand. This has not stopped Lin Bautze from reaching out around the world: she visited not only small farmers with their cooperatives in Kenya, but also profiled the largest biodynamic wine company in South Tyrol and a mixed farm in Finland. The videos of these visits can be watched on the Section’s website as inspiration and encouragement.

We have been able to work on many other topics large and small in this particular year and are happy to be able to report on them here. Please stay in touch and carry on helping us to cover a wide range of interests, to encourage the biodynamic community through our work and to serve it, in keeping with our vision 2020:

“Every person can freely and actively join in shaping the biodynamic farming and food culture for the future of the earth and humanity.”

Verena Wahl, Executive director

Imprint

General Anthroposophical Society

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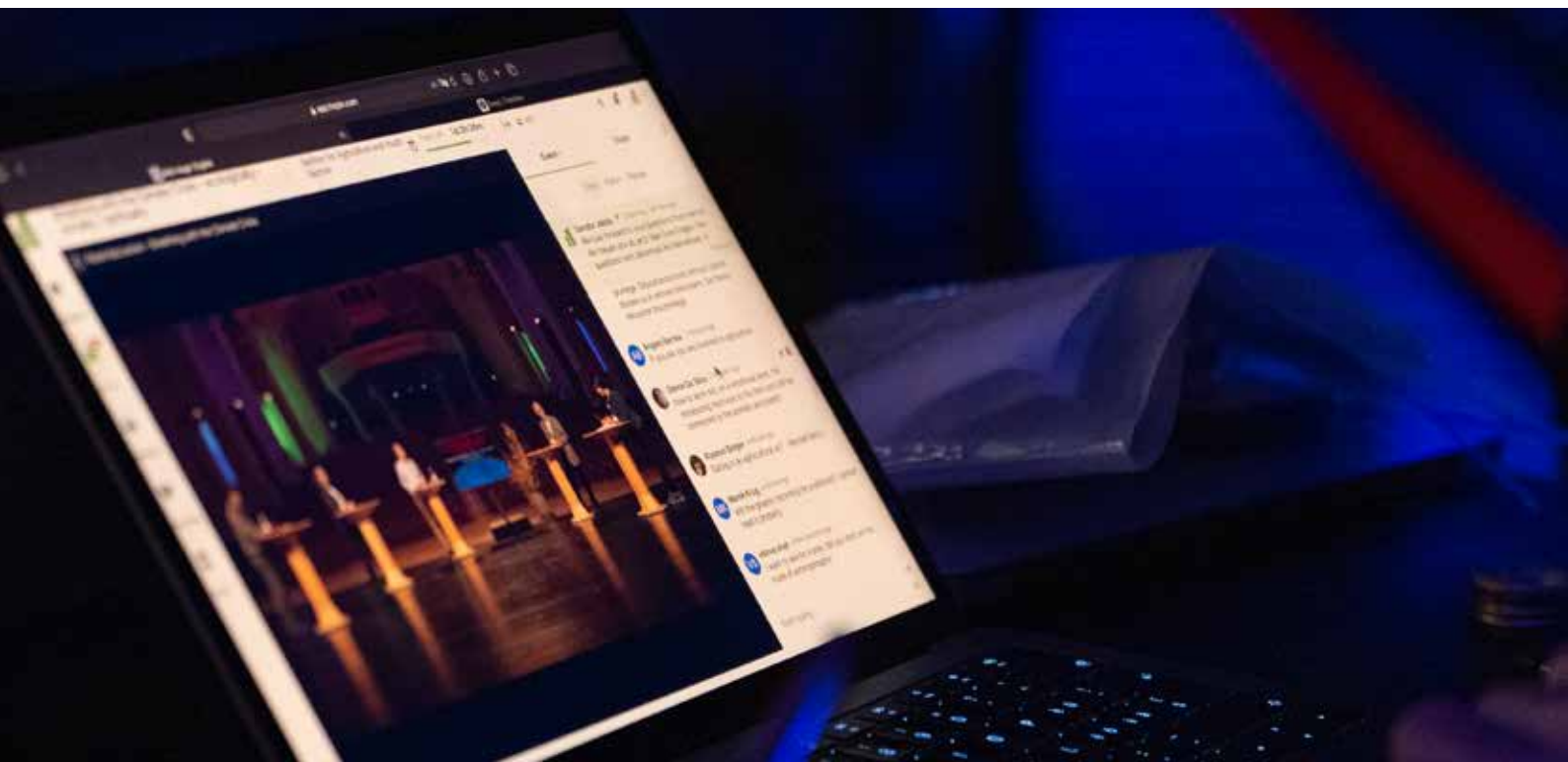
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The ecologically integrative approach of biodynamic agriculture – a future-oriented way to prevent epidemics?

Covid-19 has become an everyday life-changing situation worldwide. This basically came as no great surprise to people working in agriculture and with nature. Since the BSE crisis, epidemics in animal husbandry as well as in the plant world have become almost the norm. A marked increase in infectious diseases as well as a general weakening of living organisms can be observed. This is due to the destruction of their natural environment, pollution and the stresses of climate change. Studies show that the reduction in biodiversity increases these processes. Our environment is sick!

What does this situation say about our relationship to nature, especially agriculture? And how can the biodynamic approach open up ways to heal this situation?

It can be recognised that our attitude towards nature is often a dominating one: we regard plants, animals and the earth as resources to be used and commercialised as we see fit. This seems to be particularly true with regard to the assumed origins of Covid-19. Can we develop an attitude of partnership with nature, feel part of it and thus find a positive, holistic relationship to nature?

How can healthy living relationships emerge from this attitude? With his organismic approach, Rudolf Steiner draws our attention to the fact that all living beings, es-

pecially microorganisms, are parts of larger organisms. If landscape organisms are irretrievably destroyed, many complex natural cycles between soil, plants and animals are affected. Bacteria, viruses and fungal diseases can develop unchecked and become pests.

Biodynamic agriculture therefore does not aim to eliminate germs and parasites but tries to manage the farm as an organism. This integrates the greatest possible diversity of plants, animals and microorganisms as a basis for resilience that encourages self-regulation. The aim is to enable landscape organisms that provide space for almost every species. In this context, it is also important to develop a new relationship to animals.

This future-oriented approach of “inclusive ecology and agriculture” was presented and discussed in different formats as part of the Section’s work.

Jean-Michel Florin

Agricultural Conference 2021, the Goetheanum in snow. Photo: Paul Stender



Breathing with the Climate Crisis - the Agricultural Conferences 2021

The conferences of the two consecutive years could not have been more different. In 2020, over 900 people gathered at the Goetheanum, with sunny warm winter weather, an outdoor art installation, moments in the Great Hall with the utmost concentration and involvement that erupted in powerful standing ovations and night coffees until dawn. The theme 'The Spiritual in Agriculture' was inviting and open to new perspectives on the 'old' agriculture ... in short, it was a festive, profound occasion at the Goetheanum for the worldwide biodynamic movement. Everyone could come, except our friends from China who were already affected by the COVID-19 situation and were only able to be present online.

In 2021, there was not a single guest at the Goetheanum, during freezing cold winter days, nature art displayed itself in the form of snow and ice in front of the building and an open stage in the empty Great Hall, which had now been converted into a recording studio. The speakers spoke into cameras, with an empty hall as a backdrop, no night coffees and the theme 'Breathing with the Climate Crisis - ecologically - socially - spiritually' anxiously asked of the near future - will we manage to bring about the necessary changes? In short, a 100% digital conference, which had only one point of physical crystallization at the Goetheanum, and by means of which the Goetheanum had grown to a considerable size through a conference community of 1,300 people from 63 countries. Very many people could now participate - people who had never been able and would never be

able to travel to the Goetheanum in Switzerland. However, now through this format many regional meetings between farmers and young people were encouraged, spontaneous workshops arose with circles of participants who would otherwise never have met, all with a great sense of gratitude that the Goetheanum had had the will to open up such digital meeting spaces. The Youth Section and the Section for Agriculture organized this conference together.

What kind of conference will we have in the future? Will there be a return to physical meetings only? Will there now always be a digital version of the conference? What does this mean for the Sections, for the Goetheanum, for the biodynamic movement?

Ueli Hurter

Save the date

Agriculture Conference 2022

The quality of biodynamic products

and what it means for the earth and for human beings

Annual International Conference of the biodynamic movement
2 – 5. February 2022 at the Goetheanum Dornach, Switzerland

Agricultural Conference 2021, Anet Spengler Neff and Ronja Eis. Screenshot.



New book published “Vom Acker auf den Teller. Was Lebensmittel wirklich gesund macht” (From field to plate: what really makes food healthy)

The climate crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic increasingly turn our attention to the topic of the health of human beings and the earth. How does health come about and how do we stay healthy? Knowledge of the close link between health and nutrition has been with us long before an awareness of the positive influence of a varied gut microbiome. However, a healthy diet is only possible if we have access to the right food. As a result, Jasmin Peschke from the nutrition department has written a book “Vom Acker auf den Teller. Was Lebensmittel wirklich gesund macht” that includes contributions from a range of specialists. The focus is on healthy authentic foods that are grown in the field and are more than a composition of nutrients. These foods are the basis of the quality of life and a sustainable future.

The entire value-added chain is examined, starting from the seed and soil via raw milk and cheese-making all the way to the food on the table in a shared meal; a cookery school for children and the very personal daily contact with a self-determined style of eating must not be omitted. The values that characterise our lives must be re-examined. How to attach a monetary value



Jasmin Peschke:
Vom Acker auf den Teller – Was
Lebensmittel wirklich gesund macht.
ISBN: 978-3-03902-111-6
AT-Verlag

to these is described by Christian Hiss in the project “Counting correctly in agriculture”.

The inspiration for this publication was the Dutch book “Barstensvol leven” by Petra Essink and Paul Doesburg with its focus on vitality. The book describes both the production of healthy, vital and authentic foods and how to assess this quality, and the different aspects of the food system, a system that is dynamic and thus serves life and is based on partnership.

This book is an important foundation for the work of the Section in relation to a future agricultural and food culture. It has been published by AT Verlag, which attracts and successfully publishes high quality books.

The publishing house itself describes the book as “a manifesto for innovative food production” and says: “We are delighted about this book! It has appeared not a moment too soon and will serve a great need for guidance in an excellent manner.”

Dr. Jasmin Peschke

Photo: Verena Wahl



Living Farms in Finland, Lithuania, Kenya and Italy

During the corona pandemic it was a significant challenge to organise and make progress with an international science and film project. We have nevertheless set ourselves these important tasks.

In 2020 we succeeded in visiting and filming a total of five farms in Kenya, Lithuania, Finland and Italy. The first visit was to the Limbua Group International. In a smallholder community of 5,000 farms they produce macadamia nuts that are successfully marketed in Germany. The second biodynamic location was the Mbaga-thi Rudolf Steiner School in Kenya. Here children up to the ninth class learn hands on how biodynamic agriculture and horticulture work. In June a visit was made to the farm of the Martinelis family in Lithuania. The focus here was primarily on how far the farm organism and agricultural individuality are formed by the agricultural and cultural traditions and the family on the farm. The visit to the Rekola farm in Finland followed at the end of July/beginning of August. This farm is distinguished by a well organised Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Henri Murto has spent the last few years here reflecting on the meaning of the social structure on a farm. The last visit of the year took place at the start of October to the Alois Lageder winery in Italy. This business is characterised by the personal, innovative and modern as well as demand- and customer-oriented and successful marketing of quality biodynamic wines.

In addition to these trips, we also interviewed a total of 20 people from all over the world at the Agricultural Conference in February 2020. Using short videos they

demonstrated the importance of biodynamic agriculture and the farm organism for them personally, but also for the world.

The aim of the project “Living Farms: the potential of biodynamic places in times of global change” is to demonstrate solutions for acute global problems such as climate change and provide inspiration for innovative action. This is made possible by access to biodynamic practice and thus a climate-friendly and resilient agricultural system.

In the light of the new global situation with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is also clear how important it is to create solutions to worldwide problems. Biodynamic agriculture has also shown that, through creative concepts, resilience and community, it is possible to manage a crisis of this type better than is the case with other agricultural systems.

These solutions are still only available on the farms and are therefore only accessible and available very locally for a few people.

So in 2021 we will continue to work at making the Living Farms accessible in order to provide inspiration for concerted action.

The videos are available on our website, on YouTube, and on Facebook and Instagram.

Lin Bautze

Living Farms – Limbua, Photo: Lin Bautze



International biodynamic research coordination

“To recognize the laws of one’s deeds, means to become conscious of one’s own freedom. Thus the process of knowledge is the process of development toward freedom.”

Rudolf Steiner: Truth and Knowledge (GA 3).
2nd Edition 1981, p. 95. Rudolf Steiner Publications

International biodynamic research conference

“Growing beyond resilience”

The second international conference on biodynamic research will take place in summer 2021. The original idea was to hold a large conference at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) in Great Britain however, at the time of publication of this report, it was decided to hold a purely digital conference: a face-to-face conference is planned in Great Britain for 2023. The concept for this conference started in early summer 2020 with the appointment of the international conference committee and confirmation of the Royal Agricultural University as a partner and event location.

The title of the conference is “Growing beyond resilience”. Resilience is one of the Section for Agriculture’s three strategic topics for the years 2021 to 2024. Resilient soils, plants, animals, human beings and systems are a key aim of all sustainable farming and food industries. “Growing beyond resilience” is also intended to express the fact that the approach adopted by the biodynamic farming and food industry goes beyond resilience. Furthermore, in addition to the current research results, we want to exchange ideas with the scientists: how do we encourage a living, breathing, constantly developing ag-

riculture that is in the process of transformation, thus contributing to the further development of humanity and the earth?

The main organiser is the Section for Agriculture. The partners, in addition to the Royal Agricultural University, are the Biodynamic Association in Great Britain, the Biodynamic Association in North America, the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International, the FiBL, the University of Kassel (Witzenhausen), the Forschungsring in Darmstadt and the Natural Science Section at the Goetheanum.

Strategy development for biodynamic research

Two strategy meetings took place with Petra Derkzen, representing the research at the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International (BFDI), Jean-Michel Florin as the section leader responsible and Verena Wahl as the project leader for research in the Section. These will be continued in 2021. In future the international biodynamic research strategy will be coordinated by the member organisations of the BFDI and the Section. To achieve this objective, Jean-Michel Florin and Verena Wahl are involved in developing the new BFDI advisory research training committee, which will become the basis for joint international research projects and the agreed strategy.

Verena Wahl

Sekem. Photo: Ueli Hurter



New edition of the Agricultural Course

To mark the hundredth anniversary of the Agricultural Course in 2024, the relevant volume from the Rudolf Steiner complete edition (GA 327) is due to be reissued. Rudolf Steiner gave the course from 7-16 June 1924 in Koberwitz (nowadays Kobierzyce in Poland) near Breslau (nowadays Wrocław). The aim is to produce the new edition by the end of 2021 so that it can be used as the basis for new translations into other languages, which will themselves then be able to be published in time for the centenary.

The planned new edition is the product of cooperation between the Rudolf Steiner Archive in Dornach and the Section for Agriculture. The editorial team is made up of Ueli Hurter, Rudolf Isler, Martin von Mackensen, Albrecht Römer and Hans-Christian Zehnter.

For the new edition the shorthand notes taken by Lili Kolisko – of which only the last four lectures and the accompanying answers to questions have been available to date – have been retranscribed.

Due to this and other changes, the new edition of the course will have a completely new appearance. Part I of the volume will contain the eight lectures by Rudolf Steiner and the answers to questions; Part II is devoted to the founding of the Agricultural Research Group. The appendix has also been expanded with a number of documents and editorial notes.

Hans-Christian Zehnter, Rudolf Steiner Archive

Pilot project for training

At the international trainer and teacher conference in 2019 there were frequent requests for additional international training and further education courses for trainers. In summer 2020 an online pilot project on the topic of the preparation plants was set up following a request from Asia. The webinar was run by Jean-Michel Florin and Sarah Sommer in four blocks interspersed with practical exercises. Forty five students and advisers from nine Asian countries including China, India, Taiwan and Sri Lanka participated, and were happy to be able to take part in training sessions in this way. These webinars provided an opportunity for the Section and also the participants to discover the benefits but also the limitations of further training online. Following the good feedback, we are now taking the next step and developing modules for biodynamic agriculture as webinars and as further training on the ground.

Sarah Sommer / Jean-Michel Florin

Donations

You may also wish to offer financial support. Bank details can be found at:

www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/donations

Approaching the castle in Koberwitz (Kobierzyce)



Interdisciplinary work

Interdisciplinary work is becoming increasingly important for us in the Section in order to develop new ideas, discuss concepts and discover solutions. In 2020 we worked with the Youth Section to plan, organise and carry out a joint conference in 2021. Young people and agricultural practice were able to bundle their resources and jointly organise the annual conference “Breathing with the Climate Crisis”.

In 2020 we also started a new series with the Medical Section at the Goetheanum. Under the title “Agriculture meets medicine”, we are publishing short videos on the interfaces between biodynamic agriculture and anthroposophical medicine. Issues from the viewpoints of the two disciplines are illustrated in short interviews with Ueli Hurter, Jean-Michel Florin, Matthias Gierke and Georg Soldner. How does the cosmos influence our bodies and agricultural production? What is a human or agricultural organism? What role do the preparation plants play in medicine and biodynamic agriculture?

This collaboration has produced 19 short videos that are being made available on the social media channels of the sections.

Lin Bautze

Communication

In 2020 we were engaged in communication as follows:

Website: From 2019 to 2020 we saw an increase in visitor numbers to the website of 35%, up to 34,000 (not including the conference platform “Hopin”). 55 **news items** on the website, with the majority in several languages.

Printed materials: Two circulars, each in three languages; Agricultural Conference documentation and documentation of the Trainer & Teacher Conference, each in four languages; books (including some translations into other languages) plus the annual Review in three languages.

Newsletter: Seven mailings to approx. 4,400 subscribers. A further 10 mailings to expert and project groups.

Videos on the Agricultural Conference, interviews and lectures as well as the series: “Agriculture meets Medicine” and “Living Farms”.

(www.youtube.com/channel/UCD4ZhiUedj331Z8pAsjfFsw)

Press releases: 8 releases.

Instagram: 23 posts (794 subscribers)

Facebook: 45 posts (1,366 subscribers)

Lin Bautze, Johannes Onneken, Verena Wahl

Recording the videos “Agriculture meets Medicine”, Photo: Ariane Totzke



Vision and Mission of the Section

The Section team held a retreat to develop a vision and mission statement. They also decided on the focus topics of climate, resilience and health for the Section's work from 2021-2024."

Vision

Every person can freely and actively join in shaping the biodynamic farming and food culture for the future of the earth and humanity.

Mission statement

We create space for inspiration

Through people in the biodynamic movement all over the world the Section comes into contact with many questions, ideas and challenges. We take these up in a range of projects and international events in cooperation with our partners, thus creating spaces in which the questions and challenges can be transformed into sources of inspiration for those who are active in biodynamic agriculture and the food industry.

We renew the view of biodynamic principles

Developing and supporting a basic competence on current issues and phenomena is an important part of our work. We believe it is essential to consider the fundamentals of biodynamics as well as issues around food with an open mind, and to repeatedly relate these to current developments.

We combine research and practice

Biodynamic research is carried out in all areas of agriculture and at many places all over the world. It uses a wide range of methods and has links to various other research areas. We support and represent an expanded concept of science and a learning process that goes beyond the often reductionist traditional research. We bring together academic research with practical expertise in order to examine and discuss the pressing problems in the biodynamic food and farming systems and to contribute to their solution.

We learn, we are open, we meet. We serve.

We want to contribute to and support individual development and personal responsibility and see ourselves as learners in this process. By creating social and cultural meeting spaces, encounters can enable the experience of the individual to become fruitful for all.

We are partners

We see ourselves as partners of all those who want to work via the biodynamic farming and food culture for the future of the earth and mankind. This partnership is experienced when we meet and share as equals and include others in the process of change. We actively cultivate a worldwide network with individuals, groups and organisations, and with professional fields such as medicine and education, particularly within the Free University at the Goetheanum. The Section therefore communicates in several languages.

The Glashaus in Dornach, Switzerland, headquarters of the Section for Agriculture

Back cover: Agricultural area in Mbagathi. Photo: Philip Wilson



Climate – Resilience – Health

Working themes 2021 – 2024

The Section develops important impulses in a range of topics and disciplines in the biodynamic farming and food culture. Climate, resilience and health will be the focus of the Section's work over the next few years and will be developed in new and existing interdisciplinary projects. We wish to make an active contribution in times of major global challenges and to look for and present holistic ideas and possible solutions along with our partners. There are currently projects and planned events in the following areas and topics: training, advisory work, nutrition, research, biodynamic preparations, 100 years of the Agricultural Course, the agricultural organism, associative economics and animal husbandry. There are also active specialist groups on the subjects of herbs and medicinal plants, olives, fruit-growing and viticulture.

“The earth is waiting for my footprint – I want to walk on the earth and make my contribution for our joint future.”

Ueli Hurter, 2020

The Section has a number of sources of income. The income and expenditure for 2020 were as follows:

Income 2020	CHF
Individual donations	21'191
Donations from institutions and project funding	442'960
Income from events	424'164
Miscellaneous income	20'191
Carried over for projects from previous year	50'000
Goetheanum*	110'221
TOTAL	1'068'727
Expenditure 2020	
Personnel	570'820
Events and projects	457'834
Communication	24'829
Miscellaneous	15'244
TOTAL	1'068'727

* Annual basic contribution by the General Anthroposophical Society from donations and members' contributions

The Section is led by Jean-Michel Florin and Ueli Hurter. The team running the Section is currently made up of nine people. Other co-workers are also involved with specific projects. The Council of Representatives which represents the biodynamic movement in its regional and professional diversity, currently includes 70 people from 18 different countries. **Back:** André Hach, conference organisation and animals on farms / Verena Wahl, executive director / Jean-Michel Florin, leader of the Section, Sarah Sommer, project assistant for education, advisory services and professional groups / Dr. Jasmin Peschke, nutrition department. **Front:** Lin Bautze, Living Farms project, research / Ueli Hurter, leader of the Section / Johannes Onneken, graphics & web design, communications / Sandra Jakob, administration

Section team. Photo: Duilio Martins





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