

Reflections on Agriculture as a Cultural Impulse

Towards the 100th Anniversary
of Biodynamics

Report of the Agriculture Conference 2023

Contents

What has happened since 1924? A look back at the history of biodynamics in eight pictures	4
The impulse of agriculture: from the origins in Göbekli Tepe to modern-day Turkey <i>Arzu Duran / Martin von Mackensen</i>	7
The rediscovery of the sacred in agriculture <i>Vandana Shiva</i>	9
The Michael Letter <i>Werner Michlits / Albrecht Römer</i>	11
Cosmic sources in agriculture <i>Sherry Wildfeuer</i>	12
The development of biodynamic work Short reviews from individual countries	14
The earthly origins of agriculture <i>Tom Saat</i>	16
Panel: Women as pioneers in biodynamics: past, present and future <i>With Arizona Muse, Alysoun Bolger, Maaienne Knuth, Sherry Wildfeuer and Christine Saahs, Facilitated by Lin Bautze</i>	18
Who are we? Questions about destiny in the biodynamic movement <i>Ueli Hurter</i>	21
The atmospheric roots <i>Jean-Michel Florin</i>	24
On the way to Koberwitz: Rudolf Steiner's meeting with the herb gatherer Felix Koguzki <i>Peter Selg</i>	27
Report on the launch of the Biodynamic Research Platform	29
Workshop: Women pioneers in organic agriculture and horticulture <i>Lead by Mathilde Schmitt</i>	30
Theme of the year 2023/24: 100 Years of the Agriculture Course	31

Support the Section through donations

EUR-Bank-Account
Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft,
Postfach, 4143 Dornach, Schweiz
IBAN: CH71 8080 8001 0200 5131 1
Raiffeisenbank Dornach, 4143 Dornach, Schweiz
SWIFT-BIC: RAIFCH22
Please add: „Donation Section for Agriculture 1150“
and, if possible, with your complete address.

CHF-Bank-Account
Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft,
Postfach, 4143 Dornach, Schweiz
IBAN: CH54 8080 8001 1975 4658 2
Raiffeisenbank Dornach, 4143 Dornach, Schweiz
SWIFT-BIC: RAIFCH22
Please add: „Donation Section for Agriculture 1150“
and, if possible, with your complete address.

Imprint

Publisher: School of Spiritual Science –
Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum.
www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org

Conference Organisation: Kalle Hübner, Ueli Hurter

Editor: Anna Storchenegger

Translations: Lynda Hepburn

Logo symbol: Rudolf Steiner

Pictures from the conference: Xue Li. And unless otherwise stated by the respective authors.

Design and layout: Johannes Onneken

Legal notice: In passing their manuscript on to the publisher authors and patent holder agree to its complete or partial publication. No liability will be accepted for the incorrect designation of a protected title. Reprinting or translation requires permission from both author and editor.

Contact address: Section for Agriculture, Hügelpweg 59,
4143 Dornach, Switzerland, agriculture@goetheanum.ch
and on our website: www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org

Copyright: Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft,
Dornach, Schweiz

Quotation references: Section for Agriculture (Ed.) (2023): Reflections on Agriculture as a Cultural Impulse – Towards the 100th Anniversary of Biodynamics. Report from the Agriculture Conference 2023.

USD-Bank-Account

Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft,
Postfach, 4143 Dornach, Schweiz
IBAN: CH23 8080 8001 7896 7636 5
Raiffeisenbank Dornach, 4143 Dornach, Schweiz
SWIFT-BIC: RAIFCH22
Please add: „Donation Section for Agriculture 1150“
and, if possible, with your complete address.

For donations with tax-effective donation receipt from Germany

Anthroposophische Gesellschaft in Deutschland
IBAN: DE13 4306 0967 0010 0845 10
GLS Gemeinschaftsbank eG, Christstraße 9, DE-44789 Bochum
BIC: GENODEM1GLS
Please add: „Donation Section for Agriculture 1150“
and, if possible, with your complete address.



Opening of the Conference

Editorial

The 2023 Agriculture Conference at the Goetheanum had a very special mood. Was it the joy of meeting in person again after two years of conferences that only happened online? At the end of this meeting there were many smiling faces and a great sense of thankfulness amongst those present: around 550 in-person participants, roughly the same number online and seven regional groups (China, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Africa, Argentina and Ukraine) that organised a hybrid conference in their respective countries. The conference had depth, seriousness and at the same time a mood of lightness and tolerance, qualities that are perhaps a mark of the maturity of this almost centenarian movement.

The first theme of the conference was the review of the development of agriculture itself. Perhaps we should actually speak of “agri-culture”. As Vandana Shiva and Martin von Mackensen showed, in the beginning agriculture was in fact a culture – in other words, it arose from a new relationship of human beings to the sacred and to Mother Earth. Many farmers now have a great longing to rediscover this sacred or cultural quality. As Helmy Abouleish from Sekem and Maaianne Knuth from Zimbabwe showed, the biodynamic approach can unite with the cultural traditions of different regions in order to develop a worthy agriculture of the future.

The introductory morning presentations on the Michael Letter by the two farmers Albrecht Römer and Werner Michlits were followed by contributions by Sherry Wildfeuer, Tom Saat and Jean-Michel Florin. They showed in a very personal way how it is possible to develop a new

and free relationship to the cosmos, the fertile soil and the atmospheric landscape surrounding us, from which an agriculture in keeping with its essential nature can develop.

Another theme was the review of the varied facets of the history of biodynamics since its foundation in Koberwitz in 1924. A number of reports described the innovative capacity of the biodynamic community. Short presentations on the history of the development of biodynamics in different countries showed how biodynamics developed with the culture of each country.

A further highlight was the panel “Women as pioneers in biodynamics”. This explored the importance of the work of women in agriculture – something that has often received scant attention in the past – and touched on subtler aspects such as the dimension of individuality. Ueli Hurter’s lecture on questions of destiny in the biodynamic movement picked up this latter theme and looked at it in more detail. The conference ended with Peter Selg’s lecture on a frequently asked question: Did Rudolf Steiner discover all his knowledge about plants and the secrets of nature himself?

This biodynamic event showed how art, science and practical experience can combine and offer mutual support in order for a true agriculture or culture of the living to continue to develop. Biodynamics is therefore able to make us aware once more of the dignity of working with the spiritual on earth.

What has happened since 1924?

A look back at the history of biodynamics in eight pictures

Eight pictures looking back at various areas of biodynamics formed the introduction to the 2023 Agriculture Conference. They showed how biodynamics has influenced agriculture since 1924, illustrating the impressive effects of the Koberwitz impulse.



Farms – Ueli Hurter

The *Agriculture Course* took place on a farm, the Koberwitz estate. Farms are the origin and bearer of the cultural impulse of agriculture. The early farms were large estates, managed in the style of

a Medieval manorial economy. After the Second World War, biodynamic farms were primarily family enterprises. Before they knew about biodynamics, farmers found themselves between the disapproval of the village vicar on the one hand and the offers of the chemical spray suppliers on the other. In the 1970s and 1980s, when many people were looking for new social forms, “alternative” farms were set up. The 1990s were a time when farms specialising in particular crops (fruit, tropical fruits, etc.) were established, followed by vineyards, which have now been booming for 25 years. Farms exporting colonial products (coffee, spices, cotton) have been in existence now for decades. In the growing countries, initiatives were started with hundreds or thousands of micro farmers for whom biodynamics brought an improvement to the living conditions of the whole family. Lastly there are the market gardeners, particularly landscaped gardens such as the Goetheanum garden park. So we can see that biodynamics includes many different types of farms.



Research – Christopher Brock

One hundred years ago an *Agriculture Seminar* took place with Rudolf Steiner. The participants learned to fill horns with manure, bury them and later stir the contents

and spray this on the land. This novelty was developed from spiritual science and Rudolf Steiner asked that this should be tested with experiments. The research group was born. The biodynamic farming method was studied and developed further over decades of research. This raises the question of whether it is possible to record and prove the findings of spiritual science by means of natural science? Because everything that cannot be understood scientifically is rejected and not acknowledged. But this demand is a legitimate one. Natural science and spiritual science are two approaches which will be reconciled in the long term, according to Rudolf Steiner. Currently, a scientific proof of the efficacy of the preparations is on the horizon. The high sustainability potential of biodynamic farms can also be demonstrated, something which is of public interest. Scientific research is not the basis of agriculture: this is provided by the intuitive relationship of the farmer to their area of activity – and research can support this.



Nutrition – Jasmin Peschke

Nutrition, farming and medicine belong together: they are all healing and all work for the health of human beings and the earth. Nutrition has a preventative role. As a doctor,

Ita Wegman paid great attention to good nutrition and acquired the Sonnenhof for growing food for the clinic kitchen. Rudolf Steiner asked Ita Wegman whether she wanted to set up a section for medicine, nutrition and farming. She declined, as she was already overstretched. So in 1963, Gerhard Schmidt established the Section for Food and Farming. This only lasted for a couple of years. After this, the Nutrition Section was created. In 2015 the Coordination Center for Nutrition was established in the Section for Agriculture and headed by Jasmin Peschke. Our view needs to broaden from the field to the plate. Many disciplines should and can combine for the healthy development of the human being and the earth. Nutrition is also a social issue: there are many people who are overweight and many who are hungry. We need a culture of sharing.



Brand and market – Michael-Olbrich Majer

As a student I saw pioneering set-ups in backyards for supplying the ingredients for muesli or flour for bread – there were no organic shops, no markets. There was

still no sign of Demeter. Then I remember the light blue Demeter oat flakes in the first co-operative shops. Where does the brand come from? There is no mention in the Agriculture Course of biodynamics or Demeter. The designation “biodynamic” arose in 1927: Demeter was launched with the Demeter standard specification and a trademark with a round flower. In 1929 a Demeter consumer group was formed in Breslau and in 1932 the brand was registered. Looking back we can see that the new agricultural system linked to a brand was the invention of organic farming. In Germany a “threefold-ing” developed: the research group for research and guidelines, the “Demeter Bund” for certification and a cooperative for marketing. Next the Demeter logo was added. In 1997 Demeter International was founded. The Demeter co-marketing strategy was agreed and introduced. Demeter values gained in importance. In 2016 the Demeter marketing policies for trade were introduced, enabling Demeter to become part of the retail food trade. Demeter is now well-known and considered sustainable. There are trademark applications in 75 countries. The model of combining biodynamic agriculture with a trademark i.e. with guidelines and values, was and is successful.



Inner work – Albrecht Römer

“The farmer is a meditator” is a quotation from the *Agriculture Course*. A personal understanding of the *Agriculture Course*, intellectually and in meditation, is a help for

practice. Independent thinking is right for the present day: we move along a developmental path for which we are personally responsible. Meditation is a personal matter. When I worked as a farmer, I made the effort to think about and meditate on Steiner’s weekly verses before the alarm in the morning and before falling asleep at night. I also learned to picture the context of time in

my work, including that of the planetary constellations. Agriculture as an individuality links my practice in space and time to the biodynamic impulse. Anthroposophy can be fruitful for working with the Agriculture Course, which was first published as a volume in Rudolf Steiner’s complete works in 1963. Prior to that it could only be obtained on special request. For many years participation at the Agriculture Conference was also only by personal invitation, whereas today it is open to the public. Since 1970 the Section has been studying the Michael Letters. This has proved very helpful, as this work is inspiring for the worldwide biodynamic movement. In addition, the esoteric teachings of the First Class of Spiritual Science are of relevance as a course for all the sections and therefore also for agriculture. The inner work enables the concepts, pictures and ideas to be grasped by the individual. Each generation acquires its own understanding. Meetings of all kinds encourage the exchange of views, providing a refreshing effect and a source of strength for working with the cultural impulse of agriculture.



Social effect – Nadia El-Hage Scialabba

The first 25 years of biodynamic agriculture were characterised by the debate about synthetic nitrogen fertiliser and the upheavals in farming that went with this. Does the

spirit come from the laboratory and industry, or from the earth and the cosmos? In the book by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer published in 1937, biodynamics is described without any cosmic dimension: the preparations are an aid to fermentation. In 1939 important meetings took place in England with Sir Albert Howard, Lord North-born and Lady Balfour, and in the USA with the Rodale Institute. Biodynamics, represented by Pfeiffer, was the mother of “organic”, known as “bio” in German. In the second half of the 20th century society became keenly interested in environmental protection. There were major environmental disasters and, at the same time, a successful landing on the moon and the discovery of the double helix of DNA. Globalisation spread but the green revolution ended in disaster. In 1962 *Silent Spring* was published by Rachel Carson – a kind of initial spark for the environmental movement. The book described the dangers for life caused by the widespread spraying of the insecticide DDT. Rachel Carson was inspired by

two biodynamic gardeners. The biodynamic movement started to have a global presence, with new initiatives everywhere. In the 21st century, one crisis followed another. Are these not symptoms of the separation of the human being from the earth, from nature? But mechanisation continues: technology and artificial intelligence make their appearance in the farming and food industry. Free approaches such as biodynamics come under attack, as we have seen in recent months in Italy. Much has been achieved, but the struggle continues.



Preparations and soil fertility – Bruno Follador

Four days ago I was sitting on the tractor using the front loader to mix manure and other materials for a good compost. What for? What is the point

of this? For a better harvest? For better broccoli? For a more resilient farm? What is my reason for doing all this? Ninety nine years ago the young farmers Emmanuel Vögele and Helmuth Bartsch wrote a letter to Rudolf Steiner asking for a course. On 27 January 1924, the 27-year-old Vögele wrote a further letter to Steiner. This was about the fact that Vögele, through his agricultural work, had a purpose in life that allowed him to connect his humanity with the development of the earth. I feel akin to the young Vögele: thanks to Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy I have the opportunity to connect my destiny with those of mankind and the earth: and therefore to actually live out my responsibility. Humus and humanity have the same root. The work with compost for new humus is complemented by the inner work for a new humanity. I have hope and trust in the possibility of cultivating life in such a way that we can become something that we are not yet.



International network – Alyssoun Bolger

The Agriculture Course was the source of inspiration and incentive. What had been heard was put into practice. Lilli Kolikso wrote: “It was a course for all people and farmers,

not for a small privileged group.” From the start it was an international movement as the spark jumped over to England and the USA. Groups and organisations sprang up in different places. Nowadays there are biodynamic organisations in 40 countries. And the principles need to be adapted everywhere to the climate, geography and culture. It is always a case of individualising biodynamics for each specific place. At the recent members meeting of the BFDI (Biodynamic Federation Demeter International) we adopted the motto “unity in diversity”. It is through diversity that we achieve resilience in the movement. For the time now at the start of February, many cultures have a celebration for the light, which is getting noticeably stronger again. Tomorrow is Candlemas. Rudolf Steiner drew attention to the time from mid-January to mid-February. It is now time to start the year in order to shape it from inside. It is also a matter of transforming information from knowledge into wisdom – and the transformation of an impulse into the different cultures. Are we strong enough for this? It is possible to swim against the tide of a powerful current with only a little exertion. Let us not doubt that a small group can put an important impulse into the world.



The impulse of agriculture: from the origins in Göbekli Tepe to modern-day Turkey

Arzu Duran and Martin von Mackensen

In his lecture on Göbekli Tepe and its archaeological development, Martin von Mackensen, head of the agricultural school at the Dottenfelderhof, asks when agriculture came into being and what fundamental differences can be found in people's ways of thinking and actions in the transition from nomadism to sedentarism. Before that, Arzu Duran, a biodynamic farmer and co-founder of the biodynamic movement in Turkey, describes her relationship to agriculture.

The honest way of agriculture

When Arzu Duran thinks back to her childhood in Istanbul, she remembers weekly markets and street vendors with crisp vegetables and fresh milk. Many of the products were produced in or near the city. In the course of the 1970s, however, these markets and traders gradually disappeared. In today's Istanbul, local agricultural production has long since given way to the import of hybridised seeds and chemical pesticides. This transformation moved Arzu Duran to seek a change.

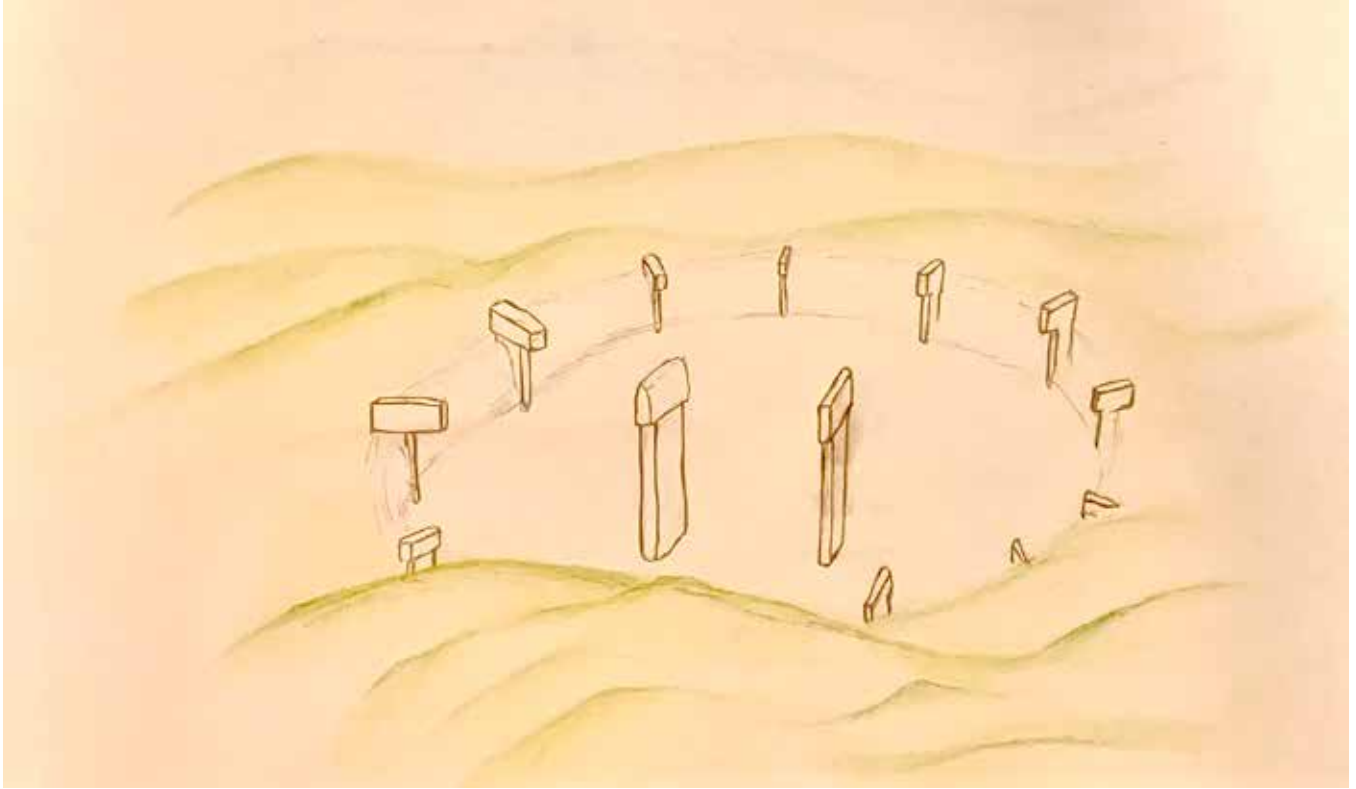
In 2015, she started her own farm, a three-hour drive from the centre of Istanbul. While searching for information on organic farming, she came across the biodynamic method. She made contact with Hans Supenkämper, himself an advisor and development facilitator for biodynamic farming. He agreed to visit her farm and introduced her to Rudolf Steiner's ideas as well as the principles of biodynamics. Arzu Duran was enthusiastic about this holistic approach and has been producing according to biodynamic methods ever since.

In 2018, the Turkish biodynamic Demeter Association was founded and now has almost 100 members. A year later, Arzu Duran opened Turkey's first biodynamic training centre on her farm. Courses were organised to raise awareness of the biodynamic method among the local population. During the Covid pandemic, online seminars on Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course were offered with the help of Hans Supenkämper. After the travel restrictions were lifted, further courses followed, covering medicinal plants, viticulture and animal husbandry, among other things.

Today, Arzu Duran produces vegetables and fruits according to Demeter standards for the local market. She has founded another farm, offers regular courses, and has networked with biodynamic farms and export companies beyond the borders of Turkey. There are now 210 farms in Turkey with a total area of over 1,200 hectares producing according to Demeter standards. She is convinced that nutrition is the most important basic need of humanity, and that biodynamic agriculture embodies the honest way of agriculture.

The origins of agriculture

Martin von Mackensen takes us on a journey into the past, to a time more than 10,000 years ago, when large parts of what is now Turkey were lush and green and herds of gazelles roamed the landscape. At that time, people were wandering beings, always on the move in the flow of the seasons and animal migrations, embedded in the moment. What is the route from such a nomadic way of life to permanent settlement? According to Martin von Mackensen, three principles are crucial.



Göbekli Tepe

First, there needs to be a detachment from the “now”: an abstraction of time that makes it possible to deal not with what is, but with what is to become. First principle: future. Added to this is the gradual emergence of a sense of place, the grasping of “home” as a specific territory. Second principle: place. Finally comes the positioning of the individual between above and below, between heaven and earth. Standing upright and thinking clearly. Third principle: verticality. The examination of these three principles demonstrates a fundamental difference to the self-concept of a nomadic community.

In 1995, the German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt was looking for a new excavation site. On a hill in Anatolia, he found numerous flint fragments and other relics of human origin. He was not the first archaeologist at the site, but he was the first to recognise the wider archaeological significance of Göbekli Tepe. The first excavation took place the following year, revealing large, sculptured pieces of rock, often decorated with animal designs. These T-shaped steles could be dated back to the tenth millennium before Christ and were thus several hundred years older than the oldest finds from surrounding excavation sites. The steles were several metres high, weighed many tonnes, and were each made of a single piece of limestone that had been mined in the vicinity. The steles were arranged in a circle, with one or two larger steles in the centre, surrounded by several smaller steles and a wall arranged in a circle around the centre. A total of about 20 such circular structures have been discovered so far.

The findings are evidence that a Stone Age society in Göbekli Tepe had invested an immense amount of time and effort and demonstrated artistic skill in the construction of these circular structures. Over several centuries, the complex was extended and finally buried again with material from the surroundings. It seems reasonable to assume that groups of people from a wide area regularly came to this site, possibly in times of abundance, and continued to work on their steles. Göbekli Tepe could have been a meeting or cult site where festivals were held. It seems that for the first time in human history, a society had become fond of a place, discovered the principle of place for itself.

The archaeologist Laura Dietrich recently conducted investigations on thousands of grinding bowls found in Göbekli Tepe and was able to find traces of wild or transitional forms of modern-day cereals. Comparable finds from surrounding, historically more recent excavations revealed remains of barley, lentils and an archetype of wheat, among other things. Since these plant remains were already closer to modern forms of cereals than those from Göbekli Tepe, it can be concluded that the cultivation and breeding of wild forms into today's cultivated forms of these plants began in Göbekli Tepe.

In 2018, Göbekli Tepe was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Further excavations are expected to take place for several decades to come, promising new insights.



The rediscovery of the sacred in agriculture



Vandana Shiva

The spread of the organic movement in India is due in large measure to a few forceful women. One of these is Vandana Shiva, a world-famous environmental activist and scientist who was invited

to the Goetheanum for the second time. She is the founder of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, and the Bija Vidyapeeth (Earth University) in Uttarakhand, India.

In every culture, not just in India, land was originally sacred. This is the fixed foundation and orientation for Vandana Shiva. The first step out of what has become our brutal agriculture and the abuse of resources consists in acknowledging and recognising the living nature of the earth as Mother Earth. The earth is the mother. I am a child of this mother. We are all *one* family on this common earth. Every living creature is an expression of the creator. We work in partnership with Mother Earth to protect our earth, our seed and our biodiversity. Nature has never functioned as a monoculture. Nature was always biodiversity.

Vandana Shiva's efforts are directed against the devastating effect of the neocolonialists and their mechanical thinking on the native population and what has been

taken from them. First the soil, then the seed and then life itself was declared to be empty and dead, and they were separated from their old wisdom and know-how. Finally the colonialists tried to take the knowledge that they had stolen from the natives and sell it back to them. It was only with biodynamics that white people brought something that the colonialists had taken away.

In 1987 Shiva founded a movement in India to save the seed, to protect biodiversity and to spread organic growing methods. Seed from their own seed banks is made available to the farmers, so that they can retain their independence.

In 1994 the Navdanya Farm was founded on a site that had lost its fertility due to many years of use as a eucalyptus plantation (Navdanya means "nine seeds/nine crops or gifts"). This land is now fertile again, without the use of herbicides, with over 2,000 kinds of crop plants and over 150 different species of trees. The organic farm is managed entirely by women. In 1993 Vandana Shiva received the Alternative Nobel Prize (Right Livelihood Award) and numerous other awards for her dedicated service to the position of women in society and for ecology in current development policy. Since 2005 she has been a dedicated member of the World Future Council, in search of ways to achieve a peaceful and healthy future for our planet.

In India, her political struggle prevented the third attempt by Monsanto (now Bayer) to patent seed: "Those

who sell real weapons, control armies. Those you control food, control society. And those who control seed, control life on earth." Over 3,000 varieties of rice are stored in the seed banks of Navdanya. Shiva was determined to protect the seed diversity and the rights of the farmers, so that they can continue to propagate, breed and exchange seed without restrictions. Her passionate fight against the poison cartels is based on trust in a future for agroecology with biodiversity and seed autonomy.

In her lecture she made repeated mention of Sir Albert Howard. In India, the memory of the pioneer of modern sustainable farming is still very much alive. Howard firmly believed that the basis of good crop growing lay not so much in the plant as in the soil. Industrial agriculture views the soil as dead matter, simply a container to be filled with artificial fertiliser.

Every place on earth is a legacy for which later generations take on responsibility. Vandana Shiva believes in the ability of the younger generation to do their best for the sacredness of the earth and agriculture, and to embark on the necessary changes. Without the divine and agriculture's sacred interaction with mother earth, Vandana Shiva sees no decent future for this planet. This was the basis for her appeal at the end of her lecture in the fully occupied great hall: Try to be awake, aware and creative and live in connection with the creatures and the earth, and make this earth beautiful!

Biodynamics in India

For a long time now, the organic farming movement has not been simply a matter for Western civilization. In India, millions of farmers are attempting to convert to organic farming. In the Federal State of Sikkim, a law passed in 2016 forbids the use of pesticides, artificial fertiliser and genetic engineering: the only farming allowed is organic.

The president of the Biodynamic Association in India and Secretary General of the All India Organic Network Association, Sundeep Kamath, who was also invited to the conference, spoke about the biodynamic movement there. Since the mid-1980s there have been two Demeter projects in India: for Makaibari tea and for mango. In Indore in 1995 the first training in the production of the horn manure preparation and the first sowing calendar appeared. Since then biodynamics has grown rapidly amongst the farmers in India. Indore is the place where Sir Albert Howard developed his compost method at the start of the 20th century. His book *My Agricultural Testament* (published in London in 1940) awakened an awareness of the possibilities of organic farming.

Sundeep Kamath also provides advice to agricultural enterprises in Bhutan, The Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. After years of organic farming, many farmers there are now going over to biodynamic methods.



After the lecture, Vandana Shiva signed her books on the executive floor where they went like hot cakes.

For biodynamics in India, see: Wochenschrift Das Goetheanum, 3.2.2023, Pages 6–9.

There is also a film about Vandana Shiva, her life and her commitment: *The Seeds of Vandana Shiva* (mindjazz pictures, 2021).

The Michael Letter

Werner Michlits and Albrecht Römer

During the annual agricultural conferences one of the Michael Letters is studied every morning. This year the letter entitled *The Condition of the Human Soul Before the Dawn of the Michael Age* (Rudolf Steiner, GA 26) was discussed by Albrecht Römer and Werner Michlits.

A year after the burning of the first Goetheanum (1922/23) that had been the centre of the anthroposophical work, Rudolf Steiner refounded the general anthroposophical society at the Christmas Conference. In order to strengthen this impulse, from February 1924 he published weekly Leading Thoughts with the aim of providing guidance for anthroposophical work. What came to be called the Michael Letters were added from August 1924. These are short concentrated texts where, in the final months of his activity, Steiner described the development of human consciousness. According to Steiner's research, Michael is the spiritual being who has accompanied our epoch since 1879 and who characterises the world of ideas of the cosmos.

During the development of consciousness, Michael initially inspired the thoughts of human beings. But since the 9th century, human beings gradually began to form thoughts themselves, so becoming free but also responsible for everything that they set in motion in their souls. Michael had the task of bringing the material and spiritual together and of opening the world of thought to the cosmic or spiritual. This uniting of heaven and earth can be practised in observing nature or even everyday objects. A few passages from the Michael Letter are looked at from this angle.

Human beings first had to fill the spirituality they had achieved for themselves with material content. The authors describe an experience with a field of sunflowers. The crop develops in the tension between the question of practicality, the yield and the biodynamic growing methods, and the development of the farm organism with a rich biodiversity. The sunflowers are observed throughout the growing period and appropriate measures carried out if necessary. The sight of the yellow blossoming field makes it possible to inwardly understand Rudolf Steiner's statement about the cosmos streaming inwards. The sense impressions of touching, seeing and smelling the scent build a bridge to the spiritual world. This field suddenly starts to be experi-



enced in a new way. The interplay of the cosmic forces which are expressed in the plant become perceptible. This continues long after the harvest and hulling of the sunflower seeds. Jupiter appears, heralding the greater connections of the cosmos.

Human beings are able to decide out of full consciousness and in freedom, either for a materialistic world view and the action that is motivated by that, or for creating a connection between the cosmos and the earth, to allow the cosmic spirit to stream into the earth, the world and also into human beings. In this way, "Into the cold, abstract world of thought can enter warmth, ... a spirit-reality that is filled with being." Taking the example of a winegrower's practical daily work, this means training your own perception in the production process and trusting in this. Particularly when tasting and with the sense for the increasing ripeness of the grapes, it is possible to perceive how the structure changes. This can be expanded by visualising what can arise in the future. In this way a wine reveals itself, one that will be produced and will be the bearer of many messages from the whole environment of the grape. This takes place by tasting the grapes, completely independently of the analytical parameters such as sugar and acidity. These latter are momentary numerical values, but can never be a profile, a complete picture of whether they are in a harmonic relationship to each other. The taste of the wine reflects the vegetation cycle into which all the rhythms and cosmic forces stream. With older vines, in addition to the impressions of one year with its moon rhythms, are added many other rhythms, such as the very long rhythm of Saturn which the vines have experienced over about 30 years. When their roots penetrate deeply into the soil, they develop a strong connection to the mineral realm, which is also a bearer of all the cosmic forces. This explains how the roots – if they only grow at the surface in the humus – produce mass but not terroir. When we observe and penetrate the processes, daily life offers countless opportunities to have

spirit-filled thoughts that are carried by attention and warmth of heart.

Thinking enables us to see and, as a farmer, in thinking we can be present in our doing. It requires sensitivity to recognise what it is in thinking that becomes seeing, and it needs courage to transform this into action. Our own spirituality, the seeing thinking, can become conscious for us through inner work. We can observe our own “garden of the soul” where there are different kinds of plants: there are individual thoughts, short and longer thought sequences, there may be symbioses of thoughts and feelings or even just pure feelings. We can distinguish two groups of plants: one group is simply there, beautiful to a greater or lesser degree, which likes to spread and takes up a lot of space. If we want to clear these kind of plants away, it is not usually easy to get rid of them. The other group belongs to those plants that first need to be given priority and then, when they are planted, they need good care. What is unusual about the plants in the garden of the soul is that those that do not appear by themselves must be produced intentionally by our thinking. They only gradually acquire a more permanent form. And thinking must be repeatedly created anew: the thoughts cannot just be presented like a souvenir picture. In this process we come across resistance to the repeated creation of the thought forms. But there are tools and strategies that can help. If a plant is forgotten for too long, because more urgent tasks get in the way or we have simply become neglectful, then this plant dies, even though it is really beautiful. And whether it then rots or leads to a decomposition process that supports the soil, is mostly down to the gardener. There are also preparations for our own garden of the soul, one being the feeling of thankfulness, which is like warm rain for the whole garden.

We can be aware of our current incarnation as a human being, with our role in the environment into which we are born. At the same time we can have an awareness of the spiritual guidance that we have chosen in freedom, and then we will recognise that we are guided by the sun. And if we then recognise that the other person is also guided by the sun, this forms a basis for respect for the other. This basis needs to be nurtured for the development of human beings and the earth.

Cosmic sources in agriculture



Sherry Wildfeuer

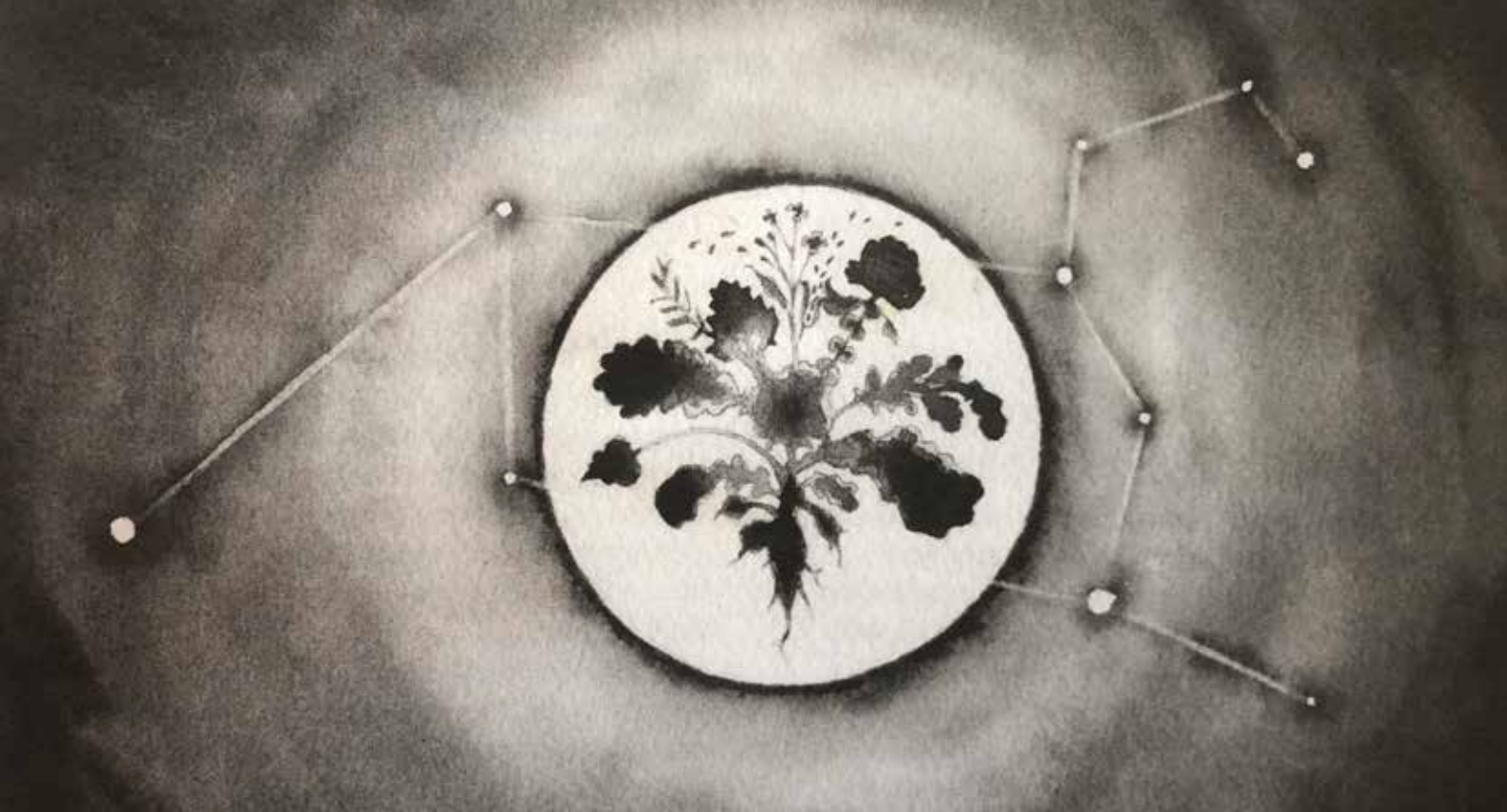
Sherry Wildfeuer opens the three-part series of morning keynote lectures. This part of the conference invites us to take an in-depth look at the cosmic, earthly and atmospheric sources of agriculture.

Sherry Wildfeuer started the three-part series of the (morning) keynote speeches. This part of the conference aimed to take an in-depth look at the cosmic sources, the earthly sources and the atmospheric sources of agriculture.

Who better to choose than Sherry Wildfeuer for the look into the cosmos? For 46 years she has been editor of the *Stella Natura* biodynamic planting calendar, and co-founded the work of the Agriculture Section in America. Her personal insights and how she discovered anthroposophy, biodynamics and the connection between the cosmic forces and plant growth were inspiring. She managed to take the audience along her personal encounter with biodynamic agriculture and her experiments in 1970 at the Goetheanum garden to replicate Maria Thun's work.

Her main approach was to focus on the importance of the questioning human soul, which can only answer its questions by activating the faculties of observation and thinking. We can expand our world of concepts through spiritual science to help us find the meaning in both our outer and inner experiences.

Sherry highlighted Rudolf Steiner's statement that “Everything on Earth is only a reflection of what is taking place in the Cosmos.” Throughout his agriculture lectures we can learn to see these influences reflected in nature. He suggested that the timing of planting and sowing would make a big difference in the flavor and nutritional quality of our crops, and encouraged people to take up this question. Maria Thun sowed radishes daily and observed differences in growth patterns every few days. Later, when her attention was drawn to the rhythm of the moon's passage through the zodiac constellations, she correlated her sowing dates with this rhythm. She



From the 2023 Stella Natura calendar

saw that the patterns she had observed related to the four elements, in that the different parts of the plants were enhanced in relation to these elements. She could only make sense of such an influence if there were some kind of sensitive, connecting medium that spanned the enormous distances throughout the universe and which is also active in plant growth. Through anthroposophy, we learn of the *etheric* as just such a connecting medium!

Sherry referred to the biodynamic compost preparations as a way to actively connect the planetary *astral* forces with our agricultural land. And preparations 500 and 501, as field sprays, are ways to integrate the Sun's working in the soil and in plant development. She recommended Dr. Bernard Lievegoed's study material on the planetary relations of the preparation plants and their sheaths.

To understand the *spiritual* qualities that ray in from the zodiac constellations, we must turn to the origins of the universe, which are portrayed by spiritual science as an outpouring of powerful, exalted spiritual beings whose existence preceded any material manifestation. Their aim was to create beings who would be endowed with the qualities of their creators, and would, in addition, be capable of love. But because love can only be given freely, the great creator beings have withdrawn from their creation into the periphery – the stars – and become silent. The rest of nature still hears the music and responds to the cosmic rhythms. Only we, who are emancipated, are

deaf to it – so that we may learn to listen to the inner voice of thought within our soul.

Will human beings be satisfied by the material world, or will we use our freedom to fill our spirit with cosmic content? If we do this, we may feel profound gratitude to those creator beings, and a heartfelt longing to be faithful to them in their trust in us. Then not only our thoughts but also our feelings and what we do will be in harmony with the created world, and we can safely become co-creators.

Indeed, we are encouraged in the agriculture lectures to become creators of farms in such a way that they become vessels for a higher “individuality” to be active within them, as microcosmic living organisms reflecting the great macrocosm.

Sherry said that the extent to which each of us turns to anthroposophy will be determined by the extent of our questions. This will vary among us. However, respect for and exchange with others will help us to evolve further in our understanding of the cosmos and its relationship to our agricultural practices.

Sherry ended her presentation by stating that “this kind of striving isn't merely a job, not even a profession – it's a calling, and it can fill our lives with meaning.” And she pointed to the need for us all to take up a path of inner development in order to create healthy human relationships on our farms – a work as necessary and meaningful as the farm work itself.

The development of biodynamic work

Short reviews from individual countries

The short reviews illustrate the developments from the Koberwitz Impulse in different countries. Pawel Bietkowski reports from Poland, Rasa Ciriene from Lithuania, Almut Zöschinger and Jordi Querol from Spain and Gabriel Kaye and Simon Reakes from Great Britain.



Poland **Pawel Bietkowski**

Organic agriculture in Eastern Europe has only had a real chance to thrive since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. From 1996 onwards, the *Agriculture Course* was translated

into the languages of Eastern Europe and from 2000, six countries set up biodynamic organisations. The Pole Stanislaw Karlowski (1879–1939), banker, businessman, politician and farmer, converted his Szelejewo estate to the new agriculture after a meeting with Günther Wachsmuth and was convinced that biodynamics would also be a business success. He also devoted himself to the academic development of Rudolf Steiner's suggestions. The 2000-hectare project "Juchowo" in West Poland, co-founded by Manfred Klett, is supported by the Stanislaw-Karlowski foundation. The former German Koberwitz is now the Polish Kobierzyce. We warmly invite everyone to visit this historic place next year for the centenary of the *Agriculture Course*.



Lithuania **Rasa Ciriene**

Margarethe Vögele, the youngest daughter of Immanuel Vögele, one of the very young participants at the *Agriculture Course* in 1924, came to Lithuania in 2005. It was

through her that I learned about biodynamic agriculture. In 2011 a group including Lithuanian farmers went on an excursion to a biodynamic farm in Northern Germany. In January there was an introductory biodynamic course

in Kaunas with 70 participants. Following this, two professors approached me with research requests. This was based on the activity of the Swiss association SVWO, with Dr. Reto Ingold and others in the 1990s. There are now three accepted doctoral dissertations on biodynamic topics and in 2015 a large research conference took place at the Kaunas University of Technology. Learning about making the preparations was an exciting event. I organise seminars every year and many speakers have already travelled to Lithuania. With their 600-hectare farm, Arunas and Christina Martinelis are amongst the first to have converted, and their farm has been profiled in a video as part of the Living Farms project by the Section for Agriculture. Another example is the Gailis family's fruit-growing farm. They have transformed the 112-ha of fruit monoculture into a farm with a 200-strong herd of Aubrac cattle, 150 ha of fruit and 150 bee colonies. Currently the Lithuanian Biodynamic Association is developing the Demeter farm Grüner Hof on about 6 ha by the Baltic Sea as a centre for autistic children.



Spain Almut Zöschinger and Jordi Querol

Biodynamic work began in Spain in 1979 with courses from Eckhart and Brigitte von Wistinghausen. After its founding on the Canary Islands in 1981, the Asociación de Agricultura *Biodinámica* de España was based for quite some time on the 22-ha Finca Rio Pradillo, one of the first biodynamic farms near Madrid. The first Maria Thun sowing calendar appeared in Spanish in 1983. This was also of great importance for those not working in agriculture.

More biodynamically managed farms as well as clusters of farms such as in La Vera, Marilu y Javi, as well as the first Demeter-certified farms were added. Advisory services were provided by Eduardo Sanchez. Further

developments were the preparation work in the Association and the publication of the Spanish edition of the *Agriculture Course*.

In 1998 Almut Zöschinger came to the Finca Rio Pradillo. She began giving introductory courses and training in the preparations at various places in Spain, often along with Julio Arroyo. Other further training centres developed, such as Casa San Martin, Granja Laya, Harpa (Portugal) and Finca Rio Pradillo, where numerous lecturers from various countries gave courses. Regional groups were also established in Catalonia, Basque Country, Navarre, Asturias, Galicia, on the Canary Islands, etc. An important aspect of development in Spain is the cooperation with the Waldorf and Montessori schools.

From 2000 onwards further initiatives developed: a national and several regional preparation groups in 2006, a training initiative in 2009 and further initiatives such as the Dreiskel company run by Jordi and Julia Querol. Dreiskel now provides advice to over 50 biodynamic farms and gives a large number of courses. In 2017, at the suggestion of the *Agro-Cultura Con Respeto, amigos de la biodinámica*, the first trade fair for biodynamic agriculture was set up in cooperation with the Biodynamic Association.

Over the last five years biodynamic agriculture has grown rapidly with about 30% new farms per year, with over 500 farms (16,000 certified hectares) in 2022. In view of this growth, the Biodynamic Association wishes to improve the efficiency of the certification body. In recent years, due to its special climate and its demographic diversity, Spain has become one of the larders of Europe, which is beneficial for the biodynamic impulse.



Great Britain Gabriel Kaye and Simon Reakes

We are reporting on a three-year research project using the “Genius loci” method, developed by Aonghus Gordon from the Ruskin Mill Trust. The starting point was the question: “How can we understand the character of biodynamics in Great Britain? Why is the movement for biodynamics and Demeter in Great Britain not stronger

and how can this be changed?” We put together an 8-strong research team who studied the history of the biodynamic impulse in Great Britain. At the beginning we find names such as Daniel Dunlop, George Adams and Lili Kilisko. In the 1950s the two existing organisations were combined and there were more farms and regular meetings.

Biodynamic agriculture had a difficult position in Great Britain, where industrialisation had taken hold so early and forcefully. Earlier, the country was influenced by the Celtic culture of the druids, with its close connection to the land and to nature. This was followed by the modern development with exponents such as Francis Bacon who attempted to rule and subjugate nature with his science. A wound formed between humans and nature, a separation of spirit and matter. Nowadays in Great Britain it is difficult to connect agriculture and spirituality. Organic without the cosmos is acceptable, but biodynamic with a cosmic dimension is difficult.



We found seven modalities through which the being of biodynamic agriculture manifests: scientific and spiritual scientific research, alchemy with the preparations, youth work through practical activity, food as a product of the farm organisms, education and further training, medicinal plants and health, and curative and social education with inclusive societies.

The search and research bring us close to the being of biodynamic agriculture. We are trying to understand what is needed to let it shine. We want to encounter it with consciousness and love and to publish the research work.

The earthly origins of agriculture



Tom Saat

After Sherry Wildfeuer in the first presentation looked to the stars as the origins of agriculture, Tom Saat turns his gaze downwards. He looks at soil fertility and how thinking about this has

narrowed in the course of the technological developments of the 20th century. How can we find our way back to the original earthly impulse?

The history of agriculture

I'll start with a personal experience. When I was at university in the 1970s, a change of name took place from "Section for soil science and soil fertility" to "Section for soil science and plant nutrition". This example is a symptom of how the soil, in the wake of Justus Liebig's theory of mineral nutrients, became viewed to an increasing degree as a nutrient medium for plants. At the end of his life, Liebig himself held doubts about the theory of mineral nutrients, because he recognised the importance of the organic processes in the soil. But after decades of dispute between the two sides, it was the mineral theory that finally won out. This was not due to research results, but because it fitted with materialistic thinking. The input-output way of thinking is materialistic and logical. In parallel with this, a change also took place in the view of agricultural history. Up to the 19th century, the beginnings of agriculture in Mesopotamia were spoken about with reverence. Nowadays the development from primitive hunters and gatherers to present-day agriculture is explained by means of technical progress. This explanation follows the Darwinian model where complexity develops from simplicity. Yuval Harari is a proponent of this narrative with his book *Sapiens*, which has been translated into 45 languages and has sold 12 million copies. He is associated and networked with top-level politics, he goes to the World Economic Forum in Davos, and is frequently in the Netherlands. Many find his way of thinking very convincing. He explains the history of agriculture as a technical development and illustrates this with cartoon films. Progress arises from random discoveries. Consciousness is assumed to have been the same as at the present day, just with less intelligence. In the Michael Letters, Rudolf Steiner tells

us that consciousness changes. There we learn a view of history by understanding the impulse. We can understand the basic principle because an independent actor, the human being endowed with spirit, is present. This is the difference between spirit and nature. In Harari's view the active human being is absent. The human being is viewed as a complex machine which will lead in future to transhumanism. In both approaches the blueprint for the future is based on the starting point that we find by researching the past.

Animal domestication

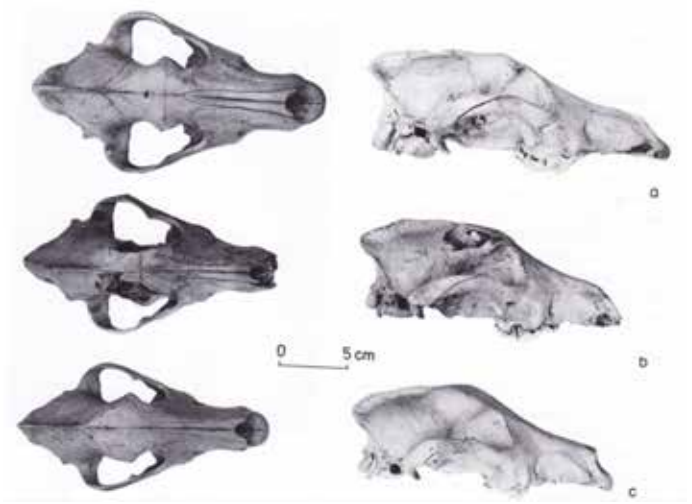
What is the starting point for agriculture? The cultivation of animals and plants at the start of the Neolithic period: the human being carries natural evolution further. From what we know at present, the first animal to be domesticated was the wolf that was turned into a dog. This took place over a short period, within a few human generations, at various places on earth. It led to the fixed phenotype of the wolf being transformed into the very large variation amongst dogs. This development also applies to other species of animals. It can be established that the earlier in the Neolithic that domestication occurred, the greater the variety in the domesticated form. From bone remains it is clearly apparent that a shortening in the skull took place in the transformation from wolf to dog. The dog has a skull like a young wolf. The form of the wolf that had been fixed for thousands of years changed over a short period and produced the large variety of dog breeds. The teeth and brain change with the shape of the skull. The size of the brain is reduced and there is a shift from the cerebrum to the anterior forebrain. These phenomena are the result of domestication. This was responsible for changing the nature of the animal in such a way that a dangerous wild animal became a friendly domestic animal. How was this possible? In those times people had a different state of consciousness. They did not live with a separation of perception and concept, as we do nowadays with the intellectual soul. Back then the sentient body was being developed, meaning that the perception also provided the active spirit. But let us touch on the sacred secret of humanity at that time. Sacred means acting from the spirit into the physical via the soul. This is what it is about. I call it a secret, because it can only be seen and experienced when we can understand this metamorphosis of consciousness.

Plant breeding

We can draw conclusions about the beginnings of crop plants from the charred remains of grains. We know that wheat developed from three wild species of grasses. The difference lies in the fruit formation in the grain. Where did this change from a wild plant to a crop plant come from? Looking at the phenotype of the plants we can see how the wild forms display a massive refinement in space, until at the end of the shoot as many seeds as possible appear at the periphery. In wheat we see a holding back of the refinement throughout its form, which is simpler and compressed. The cultivated form displays less strength going to the periphery and more strength that is transferred from building the form into building the grain. The remains point to a targeted approach in breeding. The human being was not outside this process, as is the case with breeding nowadays, but inside it. They were an integral part of the process of transforming the plant: a relationship that artists today still have with their works. A change was made to the whole plant and not just single characteristics. Something to note is that there was a highly developed culture in all the world's gene centres, in Mesopotamia, Peru, Abyssinia and so on. You could ask whether the great biodiversity in the gene centres might not be due to human beings. Perhaps a not insignificant proportion of "wild plants" are actually forms of crop plants that have become wild. The principle of cultivation must not be confused with a technical adaptation. A complete transformation of the substance is achieved through a radical change in the form. This is something we know from art. We have the material, the artist and the idea. The material becomes an expression of the idea. The idea appears in a material form, which corresponds to the cultivation. Things are different with technology where an external relationship applies. The idea of the plough and the steel with which I put the idea into practice have an external relationship. The technician stands outside while the artist is himself realised in the work of art. The human being realises himself in the cultivation. The process of breeding and cultivation is also sacred in nature, as is domestication of the animals. There is a principle difference to present-day breeding technology in which CRISPER/Cas is edited in the genome with the aim of changing individual characteristics.

Fertile soil

In the beginning, fertile soil was provided by nature. In the fertile valley floors clay, silt and organic material were added by flooding. A settled way of life created a new relationship to the soil. Referring to the description of



Göbekli Tepe by Martin von Mackensen, we can say: here is where human beings first touched the soil. Working the soil brings chaos into it. Chaos arises where it receives a relationship to the surroundings, to the cosmos. Tillage is part of the process of living in the horizontal being brought into the vertical. A vertical relationship arises to the cosmos. Soil fertility can be seen in a relationship of mineralisation and humification in harmony with local conditions. Mineralisation is more active when more oxygen is brought into the soil from tilling the ground and above temperatures of 10 °C. Humification occurs at temperatures as low as 0 °C and increases when the soil is left alone. These are the conditions in the Netherlands. Things are different in the tropics. Both processes depend on the supply of organic material. The heart of soil fertility is provided by humic acids with a C:N ration of approx. 10. Young humic acids have a lower C:N ratio whereas older substances that are heading towards conversion into peat have a higher one.

Humic acids are stable, they are only present where they are active and are substances related to roots, fungi, etc. The living colloidal complex with humic acids is the heart of fertility. It is not a matter of building up organic matter to become peat. In agricultural soil it is also a matter of rejuvenation, which contains the ability to promote growth. This is the basic principle of agriculture. The humic acids have a close relationship to animal products. Manure has a longer effect in the soil than other organic materials. Humic acids are products of digestion. The digestion that has already taken place in the cow, becomes active in the soil.

Agriculture Course

The Agriculture Course takes as its basis the primeval agriculture. This is the topic we want to discuss next year. Rudolf Steiner's course is developed entirely from the basis of knowledge. We want to understand this free epistemic act in order to penetrate to the sacred again. We look forward to the conference next year to mark 100 years of the Agriculture Course.



Panel: Women as pioneers in biodynamics: past, present and future

With Arizona Muse, Alysoun Bolger, Maaianne Knuth, Sherry Wildfeuer and Christine Saahs, Facilitated by Lin Bautze



The importance of women in the biodynamic movement, something practically ignored to date, gained attention through this event. Five pioneers reported on their work from various perspectives and on their accompanying experiences as women.

Even at Rudolf Steiner's lectures in Koberwitz in 1924, about a third of those present were women. There were also women amongst the members of the *Arbeitskreis der anthroposophischen Landwirte* (working group of anthroposophical farmers) who put Steiner's remarks into practice. Many women work in an agricultural context but, then as now, often remain unseen. In order to redress this imbalance, Arizona Muse, Alysoun Bolger, Maaianne Knuth, Sherry Wildfeuer and Christine Saahs reported on their work and showed via examples what an impressive contribution women make on a daily basis to agriculture all over the world.



Sherry Wildfeuer – special attention to plants and people

At 18, Sherry Wildfeuer felt a need to learn more about anthroposophy, so worked in a Camphill Village. There she got to know a gardener who

had a special appreciation of plants. Sherry wanted to develop this too. So she chose a career in gardening and learned everything from scratch. She has now worked for about 50 years in a Camphill Village in Pennsylvania, USA. It is a community of about 110 people that looks after the 420 ha of land as well as a dairy, bakery and a range of workshops. Half of the residents have special needs that they bring to the work.

While Sherry was raising a family there was no spare time for gardening. However, she noticed that she could encounter the people in her household of 10 with the same attentiveness as the plants and realised that everything belonged together. In 1978 she published a farming calendar, the *Stella Natura*, for the first time and in 1981 founded the Agriculture Section in the USA. At present she teaches the foundations of anthroposophy at the Camphill Academy.



Alysoun Bolger – from Waldorf pedagogy to the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International

Born in the USA, Alysoun Bolger is co-director of the Biodynamic Federation

Demeter International (BFDI). She completed a training as a Waldorf teacher at the Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, USA, where she came into contact with biodynamics for the first time. She later moved to Great Britain, studied at Emerson College and worked as a lecturer in the biodynamic training. She learned biodynamic agriculture while teaching and later married a biodynamic farmer.

She continues to be fascinated by the paths which her students follow after training. She is pleased to see how they carry the biodynamic impulse out into the world and thankful that she was able to make an important contribution to biodynamic agriculture through her teaching.

She is also thankful to the generations before her, particularly her parents, who fought for feminist matters and enabled her to make her own choice about what she wanted to do for the world – regardless of her gender. Nowadays she observes, for instance in her daughter and her friends, that it is less a matter of gender categories and more about the issue of who is it that I encounter?



Arizona Muse – model and climate activist

Arizona Muse is a climate activist and loves biodynamic agriculture because it offers solutions to the climate crisis. As a child she attended a Waldorf

school that sourced its food from a biodynamic farm in Santa Fe. However, at that point she was not interested in biodynamics. It was only as an adult and working as a model on international catwalks that she came back to it. She worked for major fashion labels and, after some time, realised that no one in this working environment spoke about the origin of the clothes. No one would ever have thought of thanking a farmer for producing the cotton. So she decided to go in search of evidence and came across shocking methods of textile production. Her

mother then advised her to look into biodynamic agriculture. When Arizona Muse discovered the wealth that this contains, she set herself the goal of combining this with the fashion industry and founded *DIRT. Foundation for the Regeneration of Earth*. She hopes that the fashion industry will recognise the potential offered by biodynamic agriculture and that textiles will at last be fairly produced, without chemicals and without destroying the soil.



Maaianne Knuth – Co-founder of the Kufunda Village, Zimbabwe

Maaianne Knuth spent her early years in Denmark and later lived in Zimbabwe. When as an adult she had the choice of taking up

a position in Europe or living in Africa, she decided in favour of the latter. Along with others, she founded the Kufunda Village community in Zimbabwe. Maaianne Knuth did not want to send her children to the state school and so discovered Waldorf education, which led her to find out about biodynamic agriculture. This revealed exactly what it was she was looking for: a path of healing – for the community and for agriculture in Zimbabwe.

When Maaianne Knuth began to investigate women's role in society, she became extremely angry. However, this anger gradually disappeared when she started to work on her own path, on the question of who she is. The role of the man suddenly seemed less important and the importance of the individual, irrespective of gender, became central. Maaianne Knuth is nevertheless convinced that African women in particular require to be supported and listened to, as discrimination and unequal treatment are widespread as a result of colonisation. In many parts of Africa women, especially widows, are less important than men and have fewer rights. One example of this is that women make up 70 per cent of the Zimbabwean population but only 10 per cent own their own land. Women nevertheless form the backbone of Zimbabwean society. The men move to the cities and the women continue to farm the land with enormous commitment, a strong will and ultimately with the help of micro finance. It is clear that much can be achieved with a little support. Biodynamic agriculture is a very helpful approach in this context. So Maaianne Knuth stresses how important it is that farming biodynamically becomes widespread in Africa and that women micro farmers are included on the road to Demeter certification.



Christine Saahs – biodynamic vintner, hostess and cookery book author

Christine Saahs' Demeter-certified vineyard Nikolaihof lies in Wachau, a wine region 70 kilometres west of Vienna.

It sits on the foundations of a 2000-year-old Roman fortress and is the oldest inhabited building in Austria. It has been owned by the Saahs family since 1894. When Christine Saahs married 52 years ago, she took over the vineyard belonging to her parents-in-law – 6 ha of land in a poor condition. Due to lack of funds, she was forced to tend the vineyard by natural means, something that in retrospect proved to be a blessing. The vineyard now extends to 22 ha and the Saahs family exports wine to 46 countries.

Via a family friend, the anthroposophical doctor Dr. Jutta Scheich, Christine Saahs was introduced to Rudolf Steiner's writings and hence to biodynamic agriculture, which immediately fascinated her. This was in complete contrast to her surroundings: both her mother-in-law and her neighbours and colleagues were convinced that this method of farming spelled certain ruin for the enterprise. However, the opposite actually occurred: quicker economic success ensued, the wines were full of vitality and their quality lasted for decades. Added to this, Christine Saahs' love and pleasure in working with people helped to build up an international trading network. The wine trade at that point was men's business and she was repeatedly asked whether her husband allowed her to carry out this work. However, she refused to let this put her off, and travelled to places like Japan where she successfully sold her wine to top-class hotels.

Even after 44 years, Christine Saahs still takes pleasure in her restaurant as she loves receiving guests. They have many visitors now, especially young women who want to know more about healthy Demeter food. This is why Christine Saahs also publishes cookery books. But the greatest success in her eyes is that she has been able to pass on the anthroposophical philosophy of life to her four children and that she will leave a healthy earth to the next generation. She is convinced that biodynamic agriculture is the way forward and will be the way to overcome future agricultural challenges.



Wishes for the future

In founding DIRT, Arizona Muse found her voice and experienced the strength that comes from empowerment. This is something that she wishes for all women. One of her main concerns is that increasing numbers of girls will be able to grow up with equal rights and self-determination. She also hopes for greater acceptance of all gender forms, so that we no longer have to adhere to specific categories and conditioning, but can adopt what feels right for each individual. Sherry Wildfeuer shares this wish. She had the experience of sometimes being taken less seriously in the biodynamic movement because she was a woman. However, she steadfastly stuck by her cause, thus achieving changes and equal rights. Many things have now changed, such as the large proportion of women on the podium at this year's Agriculture Conference, in contrast to previous years. Alysoun Bolger hopes that we will be able to listen better to other people and that we will also encourage others to stand up for themselves. Maaianne Knuth calls for the courage to acknowledge discrimination, to talk about it and to take action in discriminatory situations. Only through an awareness of discrimination is there a possibility of healing, transformation and eventually equal rights. The panel *Women as Pioneers in Biodynamics: past, present and future* was a prelude to the debate on this topic in the biodynamic movement, in the hope that it will be more widely discussed and transformed in the future – whether in day-to-day work or at conferences and other events.



Who are we? The founding of the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International (BFDI) 2020 at the Agriculture Conference at the Goetheanum (Photo: Heinrich Heer)

Who are we?

Karmic questions in the biodynamic movement



Ueli Hurter

This lecture addresses the questions of destiny in the biodynamic movement and also deals with the matter of how we can look at our personal destiny and that of the biodynamic impulse in

a human context. It is not just a case of preserving the earth for its own sake but, because human beings want to go on incarnating onto the earth, also for the sake of the people who will come in the future. A feeling of responsibility for the earth means creating new karma, keeping the earth as a place of karma alive.

At the same time as he was giving the *Koberwitz Course*, Rudolf Steiner held lectures about karmic relationships. The lectures on agriculture held on the Koberwitz estate took place in the mornings, and Steiner talked about karma in Breslau in the evenings. The same people who listened to him when he spoke on agriculture were again present when he gave lectures on karmic questions. Both issues, destiny and agriculture, are interwoven in a special way.

Personal dimension

Biodynamics has the power to affect biographies, to give a direction to them, in fact to be the crucial motive for an entire life on earth. The first meeting can come about

because we were born into a house where biodynamics was already an influence. Jean-Michel, my colleague and co-head of the Section, has frequently mentioned that he remembers his childhood well, because he didn't have to go to school on days when the dandelion flowers were being picked for the preparation. Things were quite different for me, on the other hand: I always had to go to school! Because no one in my family or surroundings knew anything about the dandelion preparation or biodynamics. It was only after I was 20 that biodynamics appeared on the horizon of my life. But it can happen in a totally different way, this encounter with biodynamics, it can come "out of the blue". For example, as Binita Shah in India recalled so strikingly, describing how she turned up "by chance" at a presentation on compost by Peter Proctor, exactly on the same spot in Indoor (Central India) where the English founder of organic agriculture, Albert Howard, had previously carried out his work based on compost, which he described in his book *An Agricultural Testament*. This struck her like a flash of lightning and from that moment onwards she became one of Peter Proctor's pupils.

A second step is then to embark on an apprenticeship or studies. Binita described how she travelled around India by train with her teacher and her lessons took place at the stations. She trained in biodynamics on the railway platforms of India and her teacher was Peter Proctor. My story is that I arrived at the Dottenfelderhof, which was my university. The principle that influenced me the most is: "You are the free creator of your destiny".

The third step is the decision to take on responsibility for a farm or an organisation. One day I received a call telling me that they urgently needed a farmer near Neuchâtel in western Switzerland. I travelled there on the 1st of May to look round and discuss the proposition. I was immediately convinced that this would be my farm. Things then went very fast and, on 23rd May I started work, and after taking over the farm I was a partner in L'Aubier for 30 years. It was exactly what I needed.

As life and work progress, there are repeated situations where we can and must make a renewed decision to remain loyal to the cause. Destiny can then send the right person across our path. I was once in a hopeless situation, nothing was working any more, neither in the house, nor in the byre nor on the fields. At that moment Fritz Baumgartner arrived. Older people amongst you might remember him, a large man with huge "workman's hands", president of the Swiss Biodynamic Association, the personification of the biodynamic impulse. So Fritz Baumgartner arrived, listened to all my woes, how everything was stuck and nothing worked, and said: "This is exactly the right thing for you, Ueli, this is a perfect situation for you!" No tip, no advice, just affirmation. So I stuck with it.

Through all the variety of these situations in life, something can be present that has a "karmic touch": I find myself in a situation that is really and truly mine and I have to make a decision. And at the same time it is as though something is working from outside, something approaches me that belongs to me, like a different part of myself, perhaps from the past, perhaps from the future. Moments like these bear the signature of being "karmic". This means that my I – or my individuality – is in dialogue beyond the limits of my current biography. It is as though I am meeting myself from outside. I am the cause of what comes towards me from outside.

The examples quoted can serve as an illustration for karma that acts out of the past. Rudolf Steiner called this action from the past moon karma. But there is also sun karma, in which something is beginning! Here the encounter is not shaped by the past, neither in a good or a bad way. If I arrive on a biodynamic farm and what I see there simply speaks to me, if I hear a lecture about biodynamics and it interests me, if I eat a Demeter product and it convinces me, then a new relationship begins and a new thread is woven into our life's tapestry. This happens to all of us again and again – hopefully!

The movement dimension

An auspicious star stood over the cradle of the biodynamic movement. Even the days in Koberwitz were experienced as a celebration, and down through all the decades to the present day, a strong will for development has been at work, despite all the difficulties. This is something I want to stress, so that we are aware of it and also feel responsible for it. In the case of the biodynamic movement, it appears clear to me that the powers of cohesion are stronger than the powers of separation, although this was sometimes in the balance. Cohesion was repeatedly threatened in some countries or areas of work. Is there a reason for this? I believe so, as there is an early example that functions to this day: the founding of the research group. The story goes like this: during the course the committed farmers in Koberwitz decided to get together in a group, a research group, in order to have an organisation for the new impulse. This foundation almost failed. There was a massive argument. In the new edition of the Agriculture Course this is clearly described on the basis of new documents. There was a deep rift between the "esoteric" Ernst Stegemann and the "businessman" Carl Keyserlingk in the presence of the group of young practical men, Bartsch, Vögele, Dreidax and von Wistinghausen: they could simply not agree. Stegemann believed what was important was the meditative approach to the living world. Keyserlingk was interested in rational economics, he wanted to be able to make the sums add up. They managed to work things out and in the end the research circle was founded as a joint organisation. I also think that this was a moment when the founding figures were able to jump over their shadows, in a manner of speaking, in order to enable the joint venture. In other words: something of personal karma or personal destiny was partially sacrificed in order to be able to open up a new common endeavour.

I see the diversity of those involved with their different approaches as an expression of how, in a karmic sense, there are many forerunners in the cultural history of what is now unified in biodynamics. There is not just one root in the past, but many. We come from different "karmic streams" to meet in the biodynamic movement. Let us manage this great legacy of our pioneers in the best tradition: let us meet between people, regions and countries, and the various working groups in such a way that we are not held back by the otherness of the others – the otherness especially in terms of their karmic background – but that we develop a real active interest for the otherness of the others. Let us tackle our differences authentically, in order to hopefully decide on cooperation.

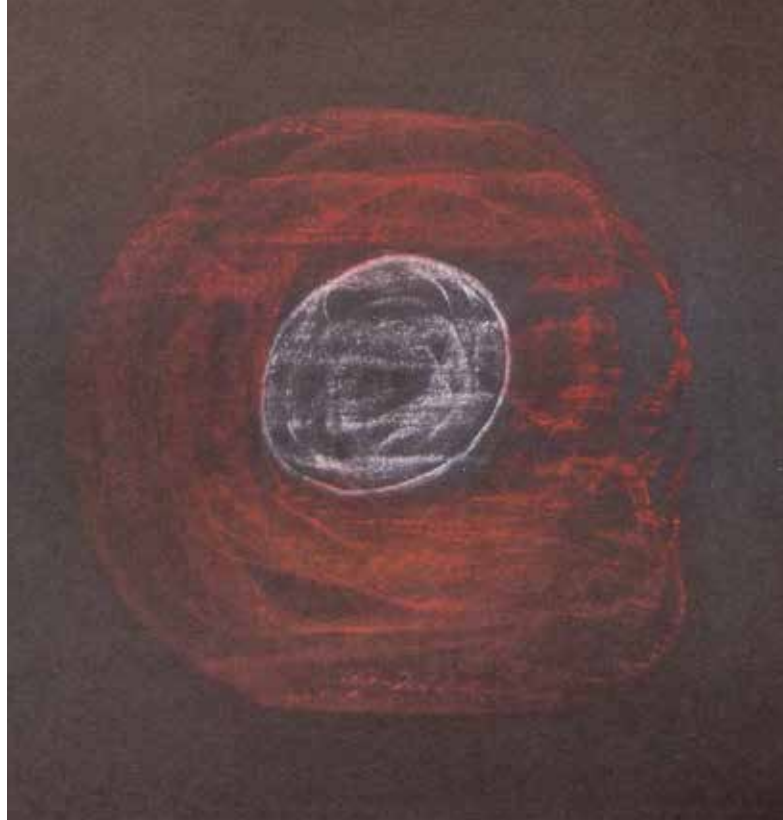
Human dimension

It is generally acknowledged that we are facing an environmental abyss and the existential question of how the cultural impulse of farming should be developed nowadays.

Throughout anthroposophy, Steiner indicates that human beings are creative, that they are beings of deeds, in knowledge, art and practice, with an increasing degree of freedom and therefore a growing responsibility. The Agriculture Course is also a textbook for this, you might even say that it is a schooling of freedom and responsibility in the field of agriculture. This also includes the cosmos and all cosmic aspects in an earthly manifestation. Why? On the one hand because the organisms on the earth are actually united with the earth's etheric body and astral sheath. On the other hand, because we humans also live in the cosmos, particularly between death on earth and a new birth. Between death and a new birth we live in the cosmos. You could also say that we live in spiritual worlds that reveal themselves as the cosmos from the earth. It was during the evening lectures in Breslau that Steiner described how the soul-spirit traverses the planetary spheres after death, working on its past life. It then turns around and approaches the earth again, gradually building karma for the new incarnation. Earthly life – cosmic life – earthly life – the human individuality lives within these swings of the pendulum. And each time the earthly life is the basis for the cosmic life and the cosmic life for the earthly. It needs communication and dialogue between both sides.

Generally speaking, we might say that it is about an agriculture that enables – or continues to enable – karma. This includes the earth remaining habitable and human beings being able to incarnate. It also has a connection to food. The quality of the food that we seek should be a basis and support for free and responsible thinking, feeling and willing.

There are even greater rhythms. The earth has developed and will pass away. It has passed the mid-point of its development. The original impulses grow ever weaker and the power of nature declines. But earthly nature already carries new forces within itself. “The human being will learn to speak of an inner Sun”, is how it is expressed in the Michael Letter that we are studying at this conference.



Detail from the wall drawing by Rudolf Steiner to the Karma Lecture of 23 April 1924 (GA 235)

Biodynamics has a comprehensive approach, aimed at the co-creation of an agricultural organism. This is possible due to the 10,000-year development of agriculture. The new element is that this should increasingly lead to an individualisation of each particular place on earth. For human beings, being an individual means being a representative for the whole of humanity. For agriculture, developing an individuality means that this place will be a representative for the whole earth. The earth can be individualised at specific places where human beings want this to happen. This means, receiving the earth with its destiny. I believe that this is the purpose of the development of the cultural impulse of agriculture.

But we are not alone. It is of the greatest importance to be open to cooperation with all the people and movements who, whatever their circumstances, are dedicated to enabling the common destiny of human beings and the earth.

The atmospheric roots



Jean-Michel Florin

Jean-Michel Florin's contribution looks neither up nor down, but into the horizontal. The atmosphere of the weather, the climate, the times of day and year, is a third basis for agriculture, and is expressed in the landscape with its unique composition of soil, water, air and warmth at each place. Agriculture can shape the landscape and the climate – both for the good and the bad.

expressed in the landscape with its unique composition of soil, water, air and warmth at each place. Agriculture can shape the landscape and the climate – both for the good and the bad.

Agriculture was originally undertaken from the heavens. Many traditions tell how the gods of the heavens gave food plants to human beings. Agriculture was at first a culture, even a cult, and arose after human beings had obtained a new consciousness of their place between heaven and earth (see the contribution from Martin von Mackensen, page 7). We then learned that the soil was equally important (see contribution by Tom Saat, Page 16). Finally, there is a third dimension of our relationship to the world, the horizontal dimension which people were not consciously aware of until the Middle Ages. They lived fully immersed in and were a part of it.

What concrete experience to we have nowadays of this horizontal, atmospheric dimension? As soon as we go outside, at every place we have an overall experience of a particular mood. This is “preconscious”: the experience arises before our senses perceive the various aspects of our surroundings. And when we examine exactly what it is about, we notice that the atmosphere does not exist around us as a surrounding, but that we are part of it. The philosopher Emmanuele Coccia wrote the following about this: “The space in which we live is not simply a container to which we have to adapt ... The atmosphere is not something that is added to the world: it is the world as reality of mixture within which everything breathes.” (1)

If we take a further step and try to perceive the atmosphere consciously, we can say that it arises from a mixture of two aspects: from the visible (substance, the earthly) and the invisible that comes from the heavens and contributes the quality of cohesion, wholeness and beauty. The latter was formerly called the cosmos.

Rudolf Steiner describes this cosmic quality of beauty: “A

being that is formed from the periphery of the universe has beauty impressed upon it — ‘beauty’ in the original meaning of the word. Beauty is indeed the imprint of the cosmos, ... on a physical, earthly being.” (2)

The cosmos in the sky

Both in ancient times and in the High Middle Ages, the sky was seen as a cosmos, in other words a place of order, beauty, brightness and the cohesion of the world. This is shown in painting with the golden sky. At this time, earthly things were not seen in a naturalistic way, but with a cosmic view, in other words, in terms of their overall meaning. What could be experienced with the senses still had no power.

Petrarca was the first to turn his gaze away from the purely cosmic view towards his own experience. In 1335 the poet wrote the first report of an experience of landscape, after climbing Mont Ventoux (3). The philosopher J. Ritter (4) wrote: “Landscape is nature which, in the process of looking, is ‘aesthetically’ present for the feeling, sensing observer.” Aesthetic, meant in the original sense of cognition through the senses.

Later, in the 17th century, the artist Claude Lorrain represented this experience of landscape in a wonderful way. The atmosphere of his paintings arises through the marriage of the cosmic – the light, which creates cohesion, the connection between all things – and the earthly. The cosmos is no longer experienced from above, but around us and in us, for example in the quality of the light. We can now create consciously with the earth and the cosmos. The agronomist Olivier de Serres expressed this at the turn of the 16th to the 17th century as follows:

In order to pursue agriculture, a place with the following qualities is needed: “This means, that it is good and beautiful and that heaven and earth are in harmony and give human beings the things they wish for so that they can lead a rich life.” (5)

The garden as a place where beauty (cosmic) and useful (earthly) things are brought together has long been a model for good farm management. In the palace garden of Villandry in France, it was taken to the point of using vegetables for the beautiful Baroque borders. After this, a separation took place between the beautiful – that became the task of architects and landscape gardeners – and the useful – that was assigned to farmers and foresters.



Poplars on the banks of the river Epte. By Claude Monet

The loss of the cosmos in agriculture

Three centuries after Olivier de Serres, the introduction to the French dictionary of agriculture (6) states: “The earth is a giant factory that works day and night with a large number of visible and invisible workers, whose most important tool is plants.”

Beauty is no longer the task of the farmer: creating landscapes and gardens is totally separated from agriculture. Beauty – the cosmic – has totally disappeared. This also implies that we no longer look at the cohesion of the world, at what holds the world together, but only at the earthly things. All is made into a thing: plants, animals and human beings, who are reduced to farm workers, “human resources”. Agriculture is an industry and has completely lost its cultural task.

How can we reclaim the cosmos through aesthetics?

Schiller, who had a wonderful description of the experience of atmosphere in his poem *The Walk (Der Spaziergang)*, puts the development of human consciousness in relationship to nature into words and points the way to the future. (4) He describes how, over the last few centuries, mankind has freed itself from the old ties to nature and from the cosmic order, which brings it onto the path towards freedom and emancipation. He then describes how it is the task of aesthetics (as perception through the senses) to recover nature with its cosmic part in the form of landscape through active, free sense observation. In fact, we now need to actively reclaim the lost cosmic aspect – the cohesion, the beauty – of the world through sense perception. How can we practice this? Interestingly, at the beginning of the industrialisation of agriculture

there were artists who sensed this loss of the cosmic in nature intensely and tried to explore the cosmic (or etheric) levels of reality.

Let us follow these artists on their way to the different levels of the etheric. We will use Jochen Bockemühl’s four concepts as our guide in order to describe the four levels of the ethers (7).

- The first to create an atmosphere is the warmth ether. In his painting of a lark, Van Gogh actually only paints a warm summer mood: there is not much more to see, but we can feel the warmth quality that penetrates everything and creates a whole.
- Claude Monet attempted to paint the moment. We can see this very clearly in the series in which he painted the same object up to twenty times at different times of the day and year. What he actually wanted to paint was the invisible light, in other words the momentary quality of the light that changes every instant but always creates cohesion, a whole. The light ether creates the spatial relationships between the things.
- Pissarro was more interested in a different relationship: that of the rhythm of the seasons. We cannot recognise the time of day or season in his paintings. We actually have an unconscious reliance on this relationship most of the time. It is only if the weather is topsy turvy and we get a summery feeling in winter that we notice the importance of this relationship that provides a cohesion through time.
- And Cézanne attempted to reach yet another layer: that of the biography of the place, the life ether. Cézanne, who painted the Montagne Saint-Victoire at Aix en Provence for 20 years, said: “I myself want to loose myself in nature, grow again with her, as her...



Mont Saint Victoire seen from Lauves. By Paul Cézanne

There before us, a great being of light and love, the flickering universe, the hesitation of things. I will be their Olympus, I will be their god. The ideal in the sky will marry in me. Listen now, colours are the sparkling flesh of ideas and of God, the transparency of mystery ... Their opaline smile reanimates the dead face of the vanished world.” (8)

These artists enable us to perceive the invisible, the in-between, so that we develop a sense for the connections.

Where does this aesthetic study of nature lead us? First it must be said that one of the biggest problems in our landscapes, in fact on the earth as a whole, is the loss of connection. Landscapes are increasingly fragmented into disconnected parts. The individual elements of earth, water, air and light (warmth) are expressed very crudely without any relationship to each other. They appear to have become huge unfettered monsters who fight each other. There is no longer a dialogue between the earth and the heavens. Even the light appears to be losing its connecting quality. It is often ferociously bright and dazzling. The seasons have lost part of their cohesion. And more and more “non-places” are created, such as motorways, airports and industrial zones, which all look the same and negate the Genius loci.

We need to observe this loss in order to work on it. This is something we can learn from the artists. One of our greatest tasks at the present time is to recreate connections, meaning to cultivate the cosmic, the beautiful on the earth and to support this in nature. More specifically, how can we encourage the dialogue between the elements and the ethers (warmth, light, rhythm, etc.) in the landscape? The best means to achieve this is always

life. When the elements crash against each other, like water on the rocks in the high mountains, there is no real meeting. A meeting only takes place when living organisms, first maybe lichens, moss or other plants, slow down and absorb the water, and something new is able to arise between the rock and the water: a little humus, on which other plants and animals can later develop and so step by step form a new context of life.

We now need to develop our sense for a culture of the living, in order to create something new. Steiner points out that there are three types of creation of new things (9):

- Spirit – nowadays there is a lot of clever things written on this.
- Nature – is nowadays given almost no support.
- Dead substance, technology – is used innovatively, in order to “improve” the living.

The second type in particular is badly neglected. Nowadays even plants and animals are bred industrially. In the past there was much greater awareness of the culture of creating new things with living entities. All our beautiful landscapes were created in this way. A beautiful and varied meadow is not natural: it is the result of the culture of the living, where human beings have created new entities with living nature. This was how crop plants and domestic animals were produced. Many methods were developed, for example how to work with domestic animals. It is a huge wealth of innovation, which we can link to and take further. This will produce more life, more fertility ... Our great task in agriculture nowadays is to strengthen the cultural element through innovation with life and for life.

- 1) Coccia Emmanuele. The life of plants: A metaphysics mixture. Translated by Dylan J. Montanary. Polity Press 2019.
- 2) Steiner Rudolf, GA 82, Lecture 9.04.1922.
- 3) Petrarca Francesco. Die Besteigung des Mont Ventoux. Fischer Klassik plus 2010.
- 4) Ritter Joachim. Subjektivität. 6. Aufsatz. Suhrkamp Verlag 1974.
- 5) De Serres Olivier. Le théâtre d'agriculture et mesnage des champs. Jamet Metayer 1600.
- 6) Larousse Agricole. Introduction. Librairie Larousse 1921.
- 7) Bockemühl Jochen. Erscheinungsformen des Ätherischen. Verlag Freies Geistesleben 1977.
- 8) Doran Michael (Ed.). Conversations with Cézanne. University of California Press 2001.
- 9) Eichenberg Ariane. Weltenschöpfung – Menschenschöpfung und die Schöpfung aus dem Nichts. Stil Weihnachten 2022.

On the way to Koberwitz: Rudolf Steiner's meeting with the herb gatherer Felix Koguzki



Peter Selg

Nowadays, it is not just the television reporter visiting a biodynamic farm, but also novices to farming who ask where Rudolf Steiner got his plant knowledge and his understanding of nature

from? Peter Selg found an answer to this in the person of Felix Koguzki and his influence on Rudolf Steiner's path of development.

"It then chanced that I became acquainted with a simple man of the plain people. Every week he went to Vienna by the same train that I took. He gathered medicinal plants in the country and sold them to apothecaries in Vienna. We became friends." (The Story of my Life, Chapter III, GA 28) One was a student on his way to the Technical University and the Goethe researcher, Karl Julius Schroer in Vienna; the other to the pharmacies in the same city. It took decades until finally Emil Bock's research was able to identify this character. He was Felix Koguzki (1833–1909) from the village of Trumau in Lower Austria, an officially certified collector of medicinal plants. Bock came across a son of Koguzki and also his diaries from the crucial years 1976–1884, which are now kept in the Rudolf Steiner Archive.

Rudolf Steiner's verbal remarks about Koguzki to his close pupils reach back to Christian Rosenkreuz, one of Steiner's two initiators, who influenced him through Koguzki. "I did not meet the M. (master) immediately, but first someone sent by him who was fully initiated in the secrets of the efficacy of all plants and their connections to the cosmos and to human nature." (Document de Barr, 1907, in GA 262)

We are now familiar with the fact that Steiner based the figure of Felix Balde in the Mystery Dramas on Felix Koguzki. In his talk on this occasion, Selg paid less attention to the references to Koguzki in the Mystery Dramas. His focus was on Koguzki's influence on Rudolf Steiner's relationship to nature, according him a key role here in Steiner's life, and also in essence in the Agriculture Course.

The student of the Technical University in Vienna be-

tween new and old, between using and conquering the forces of nature, and the last notes of the old wisdom of nature and the reverential treatment of it. Koguzki had a devout and hallowing relationship to the earth and to nature. Through Koguzki and the walks and talks with him, Rudolf Steiner experienced his first spiritual introduction to nature.

The encounter with Koguzki occurred at the biographical point of the first moon node in Steiner's life and at the beginning of the Michael Age, and took place in the environment of his childhood and youth. Through Koguzki, Rudolf Steiner was still able to connect to the old healing knowledge of nature before he took his own path of an evolutionary, spiritual understanding of nature, and presented this for his contemporaries and anthroposophists.

In Selg's summary of the various impressions and descriptions, we get a moving picture of Koguzki as someone working from the heart. "Ora et labora! This is how God calls to us" he noted. He was pious and devout. When circumstances allowed, the lifelong self-educated man devoted himself daily to the study of books and at least three hours of music. His musical talent benefited the whole village when he played the organ in church or at wedding celebrations. He helped the illiterate with their correspondence with the authorities and wrote letters for lovers. He was full of interest for the small things and events, especially in his family life with five sons.

He always rose early in the morning to go on long walks gathering herbs. "Times for getting up when duty and haste require. In the months of May, June and July, mornings at 3, August and September at 3.30, in October at 4, in November at 4.30, in December and January at 5, in February at 5.30, in March at 4, in April finally at 3.30." In addition to selling medicinal plants he took on casual work in the weaving mill or as a peddler of footwear. His wife Johanna often needed to work as a helper in the kitchen, in the laundry, with the harvest or as a nurse to earn extra money.

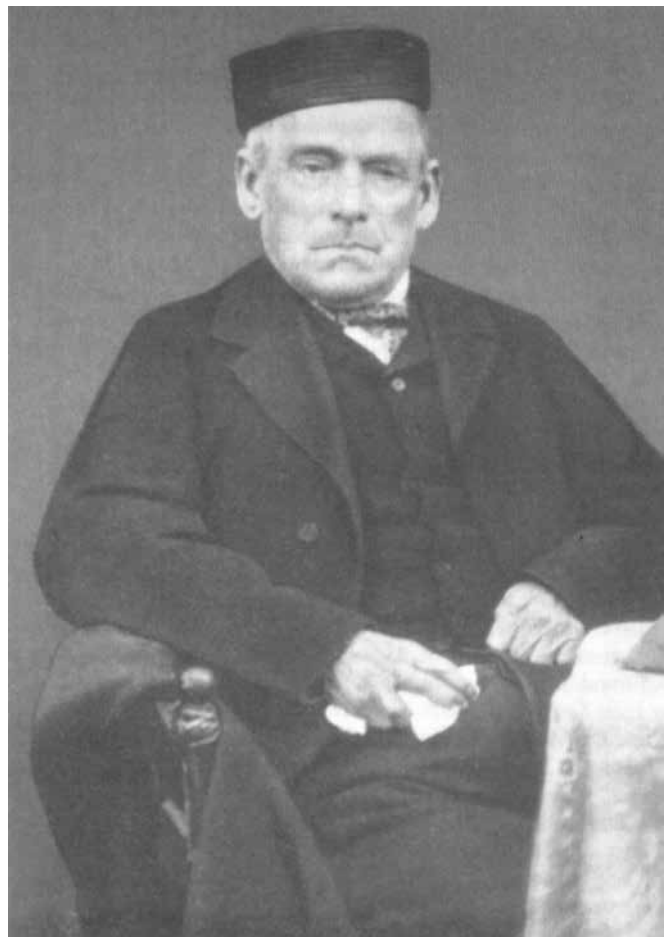
And in Rudolf Steiner's words:

"With him it was possible to talk about the spiritual world as with one who had his own experience therein. He was a personality of inner piety. He was quite without schooling. He had read very many mystical books, but what he said was not at all influenced by this reading. It

was the outflowing of a spiritual life which was marked by its own quite elementary creative wisdom. It was easy to perceive that he read these books only because he wished to find in others what he knew for himself. He revealed himself as if he, as a personality, were only the mouthpiece for a spiritual content which desired to utter itself out of hidden fountains. When one was with him one could get a glimpse deep into the secrets of nature. He carried on his back his bundle of medicinal plants; but in his heart he bore results which he had won from the spirituality of nature in the gathering of these herbs. I have seen many a man smile who now and then chanced to make a third party while I walked through the streets of Vienna with this “initiate.” No wonder; for his manner of expression was not to be understood at once. One had first in a certain sense to learn his spiritual dialect. To me also it was at first unintelligible. But from our first acquaintance I was in the deepest sympathy with him. And so I gradually came to feel as if I were in company with a soul of the most ancient times who – quite unaffected by the civilization, science, and general conceptions of the present age – brought to me an instinctive knowledge of earlier eras. According to the usual conception of “learning,” one might say that it would be impossible to “learn” anything from this man. But, if one possessed in oneself a perception of the spiritual world, one might obtain glimpses very deep into this world through another who had a firm footing there.” (The Story of my Life, Chapter III, GA 28)

In his lecture, Selg presented two new and unusual perspectives. At the start of the path that led to the unforeseen Agriculture Course in Koberwitz, was this meeting with Felix Koguzki, the “ambassador of one master”. The second perspective dealt with the lectures on encounters with nature and on experiencing the seasons in nature that preceded the Agriculture Course. Selg sees the four Michael lectures held in Vienna in 1923 “Michaelmas and the Soul-Forces of Man” (GA 223) as a special reference to Koguzki, without mentioning him by name. Selg discovered this correspondence primarily from the fact that Rudolf Steiner spoke to the anthroposophists here in Vienna, in the place where he was permitted to experience the spiritual initiation into nature through the meeting with the herb gatherer, his friend.

With this view of the events in Koberwitz at Whitsun 1924, the information about Rudolf Steiner from Guenther Wachsmuth acquires a special meaning. “...I still have a clear memory of how, during the journey from Breslau to Jena, after a time spent in quiet contemplation reviewing the previous few days, he suddenly said to



Felix Koguzki

me with a strong and joyful emphasis: *Now we have also achieved this important work.* I have seldom seen Rudolf Steiner after a completed act so joyful and visibly happy, as happened at this moment after the Agriculture Conference. He talked with pleasure about these days several times during the train journey.”

For more details on these topics, see also Peter Selg’s book: “Rudolf Steiner und Felix Koguzki. Der Beitrag des Kräutersammlers zur Anthroposophie” (Rudolf Steiner and Felix Koguzki. The herb gatherer’s contribution to anthroposophy), Verlag des Ita Wegman Instituts, Arlesheim 2009.

Report on the launch of the Biodynamic Research Platform

On 3rd February 2023 the official launch of the Biodynamic Research Platform took place during the annual Agriculture Conference at the Goetheanum. The Platform promotes the international collaboration of scientists working in biodynamic agriculture. The development of a professional network aims to improve the quality of biodynamic research in the long term. The Research Platform is not limited to the mere sharing of published studies and highlights but is also intended to provide support and networking opportunities for students and young researchers in particular. The project is led by the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum, in collaboration with the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International (BFDI) and the “Forschungsring” (research group) in Germany.

It all started with the Biodynamic Research Conference (BDRC) in 2021, the second conference of its kind to bring together academic, participatory and practical research under the motto “growing beyond resilience”. More than 90 papers on current global research in biodynamic agriculture were presented in a digital format. Following BDRC 2021, it was planned to publish selected contributions in the form of a special issue of a renowned scientific journal. However, this did not come about, in part due to reservations about the formal and content-related quality of individual contributions. During follow-up discussions, it became apparent that there was a need from several sides to increase the quality of research on biodynamic agriculture. This gave rise to the idea of founding the Biodynamic Research Platform.

Over the course of 2022, this original idea crystallised into a collaboration between the BFDI, the Forschungsring in Germany and the Section for Agriculture in Switzerland. In autumn 2022, two online meetings took place to which researchers from all over the world who were involved in the topic of biodynamic agriculture were invited. During these meetings, the needs of the researchers for such a platform were discussed, as well as how these needs differ according to geographical circumstances or professional functions, and how mutual exchange and effective support could be achieved. Finally, all participants were invited to meet on-site in Dornach,



Switzerland, during the 2023 Agriculture Conference to jointly launch the Biodynamic Research Platform.

The launch event on 3rd February 2023 was well attended with over 30 participants from all over the world as well as some media representatives. The organisers gave an overview of the origins and function of the research platform. Afterwards, there was time for some comments from the audience and short interviews.

The Biodynamic Research Platform aims to provide a professional network to build and share expertise among researchers. The primary research topics are agriculture and nutrition, where possible involving practising farmers and considering geographical and socio-cultural conditions. A lively exchange should be made possible on the questions of how exactly biodynamic agriculture works, what research work currently exists on individual topics, and how additional work can be organised and coordinated. With the help of a worldwide network, it should also become easier for students and young researchers in particular to enter the field, gain an overview of the current state of research, and receive suggestions about formal requirements, high-quality methodology and a robust statistical evaluation of data. A concrete first goal of the research platform is the organisation of an online colloquium, in which participants will be able to present and discuss ongoing as well as previously published research work and engage with other researchers on specific topics.

The Biodynamic Research Platform project is managed by the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum. Lukas Maschek is the main contact person. Contact address: biodynamic.research@goetheanum.ch

Workshop: Women pioneers in organic agriculture and horticulture

Lead by Mathilde Schmitt

The aim of the workshop *Women Pioneers in organic agriculture and horticulture* was to supplement the history of organic farming, which up to now has been mainly attributed to that of “great men”. It aimed to show that, since the beginning of the 20th century, women have also been pioneers: researching, experimenting, publicising and founding training schools, thus furthering the various branches of organic farming and horticulture to a significant extent.

On the first day, based on the biographies of Sir Albert (1873–1947), Gabrielle (1876–1930) and Lady Louise Howard (1880–1969), we explored how “socially structured forgetting” (1) contributed to the disappearance of women from memories and the record of history. In addition it was stressed that, at the start of the 20th century, there were numerous people who were in search of alternatives in agriculture. It was a time of major social change which, besides the “life reform” in Germany and Switzerland and the early women’s movements, also produced the youth movement, progressive education and the free monetary economy. A short overview of the contents of the book *Passion und Profession. Pionierinnen des ökologischen Landbaus* (2) and the distribution of ten quiz questions, left everyone curious about the second day. Based on answers to the quiz questions, further facts were made known about the early period of the biodynamic movement, e.g. that a third of the participants at Rudolf Steiner’s *Agriculture Course* in Koberwitz in 1924 were women. After all, a quarter of those who received transcripts along with a non-disclosure agreement were women, who tried to put the ideas they received into practice on their farms and gardens and to experiment with them. Amongst these was the *LOHELAND* women’s settlement near Fulda in Germany, which had been founded in 1919 by Louise Langgaard (1883–1974) and Hedwig von Rohden (1890–1987). There was also the *Wurzerhof* in Carinthia in Austria, which was converted in 1927 by the sisters Hemma (1903–1988) and Luise (1905–1992) and their mother Hemma (1875–1949); and the biodynamic horticulture school for girls in Hüni-

bach in Switzerland founded in 1934 by Hedwig Müller (1895–1983), Gertrud Neuenschwander (1907–2002) and Ruth Pfisterer (1912–2001). In the Netherlands Joanna Maria Tak van Poortvliet (1871–1936) played a key role, not only in developing *Loverendale*, the first biodynamic farming enterprise, and the Demeter trademark but also for the development of the *Anthroposophischen Vereeniging*, the *Zeitschrift für soziale Dreigliederung* and the first clinic for anthroposophical medicine. In the third part of the workshop we looked at the importance of the work of couples for women organic pioneers and the nature of biodynamic contexts for women.

Compared to other conference workshops our group was small. This meant we had the opportunity to find out about the living situations of those present and what their expectations were for the workshop through a short round of introductions. It was noticeable that many of the participants were keen to find links to their own living and working situations. They hoped to be able to harvest something for their daily work routine from what was said. In view of my many years of experience in agricultural and agrarian sociology as well as gender research, I was able to get involved in these kinds of conversations – and they occurred repeatedly.

On a small scale the workshop showed something that also became apparent in the plenary events: it is about time to raise awareness of the importance of the work of women for the development of biodynamic agriculture and horticulture, and so take account of individual circumstances as much as structural aspects of equal rights and gender equality, which are yet to be achieved in full.

(1) Douglas Mary. *Wie Institutionen denken*. Frankfurt/Main. Suhrkamp 1991.

(2) Inheteen Heide; Schmitt Mathilde; Spieker Ira. *Passion und Profession. Pionierinnen des ökologischen Landbaus*. Oekom 2021. <https://www.oekom.de/buch/passion-und-profession-9783962382933>

Theme of the year 2023/24

100 Years of the Agriculture Course

In 2024, we celebrate 100 years of biodynamics, as the Agriculture Course was held by Rudolf Steiner in Koberwitz in June 1924. Throughout these hundred years, the Koberwitz Impulse has been carried from one place to the whole world, from the first group to hundreds of groups, from the Central European context to many cultural regions of the world.

At the upcoming conference, we want to focus on the deep content of the Agriculture Course. Can the substance that we encounter there still be a source of inspiration today? How can we deepen the great images in the Course so that it can become the basis for our work with the earth? Do current challenges allow for a fresh look at Rudolf Steiner's eight lectures? Do we discover in the Course the strength to courageously approach the challenges that await us in the future?

We send out a Call for Contributions and thereby invite to shape the anniversary conference together. The conference should be jointly created by as many people and groups as possible from as many regions, countries, and languages of this world.

Inspired by the source of anthroposophy, the key points of the Course shall inspire us during this anniversary celebration, especially with regard to the current questions within our diverse biodynamic movement.

Rudolf Steiner: The Way of Michael and what Preceded. Leading Thoughts 103-105. (In: Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts, GA 26)

Agriculture Conference, 7–10 February 2024



Jetzt lieferbar!

Das Standardwerk des biologisch-dynamischen Landbaus *vollständig überarbeitet und erweitert*

Rudolf Steiner Landwirtschaftlicher Kurs

Geisteswissenschaftliche
Grundlagen zum Gedeihen
der Landwirtschaft
Hrsg. H.-Chr. Zehnter,
in Zusammenarbeit mit R. Isler,
U. Hurter, M. von Mackensen,
A. Römer
GA Band 327

9., vollst. überarb. Neuauflage
488 Seiten, mit über 70 Abb.,
10 farbige Wandtafelzeichnungen
in separater Druckbeilage,
gebunden
€ 59,- / CHF 68.-
ISBN 978-3-7274-3271-2



RUDOLF STEINER VERLAG

Rudi Bind | Ueli Hurter

Bio- dynamisch!

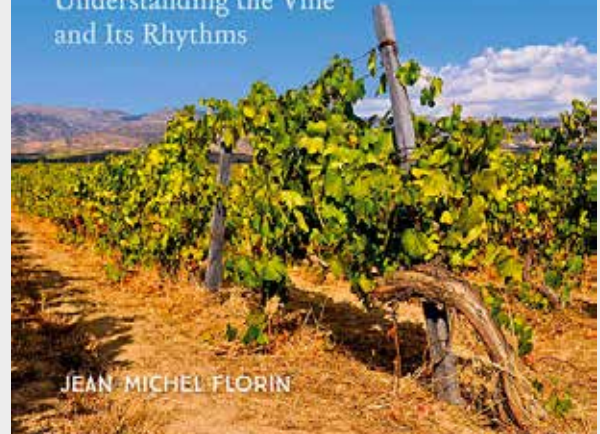
Geburtsstunde der biodynamischen
Landwirtschaft am Ausgangspunkt
der Ökobewegung

100 JAHRE
BIODYNAMISCH
IN RHYTHMUS DES WANDELS

ISBN: 978-3-7235-1726-0

BIODYNAMIC WINE GROWING

Understanding the Vine
and Its Rhythms



JEAN-MICHEL FLORIN

ISBN: 978-3-7235-1583-9



Sonett recycelt selbst!

sonett

Alles-
reiniger

Sehr ergiebig,
reine pflanzliche Tenside

• Reinigt und pflegt alle
abweichenden Flächen:
Böden, Fliesen, Fenster,
Park- und Küchenmöbel,
Sandbereichungen

• Frischet unangenehme
Gerüche von Oberflächen und
bei Lössungsbedarf

• 100 % biologisch
abbaubar



Die ersten Sonett-Flaschen* mit
bis zu 50 % Sonett-eigenem
Recycling-Anteil.

*Die Anzahl der Sonett-Flaschen
mit Sonett-eigenem Recycling-
Anteil variiert, abhängig von der
Rückgabe leerer Kleingebinde.

Weil wir nur dann wissen, was in
den Flaschen drin war.

Weil Recycling-PE aus dem Gelben
Sack Rückstände von syntheti-
schen Duftstoffen und anderen
Reststoffen enthalten kann.

Weil PE-Recyclat deshalb für Lebens-
mittel nicht zugelassen ist.

Weil Recycling-PE ein wertvoller
Rohstoff ist, der vielfach im
Kreislauf geführt werden kann.

Sonett – so gut.

www.sonett.eu




sonett

ÖKOLOGISCH KONSEQUENT




Sonett ist Sieger des
Deutschen Nachhaltigkeits-
preises 2022

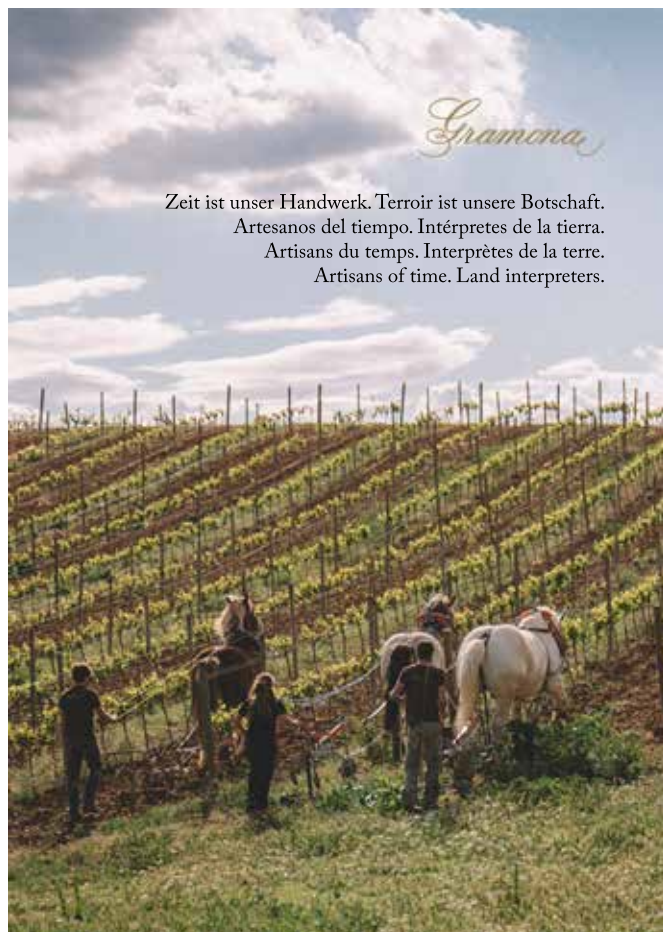


CHAMPAGNE
FLEURY
En biodynamie depuis 1989

«L'art d'être naturel»



www.champagne-fleury.fr



Gramona

Zeit ist unser Handwerk. Terroir ist unsere Botschaft.
Artesanos del tiempo. Intérpretes de la tierra.
Artisans du temps. Interprètes de la terre.
Artisans of time. Land interpreters.



M. CHAPOUTIER
FAC ET SPERA

Le vin naît du ciel et de la terre...
de l'amour qu'on lui porte.

Wine is born from the earth, the sky...
and the love one carries for it.



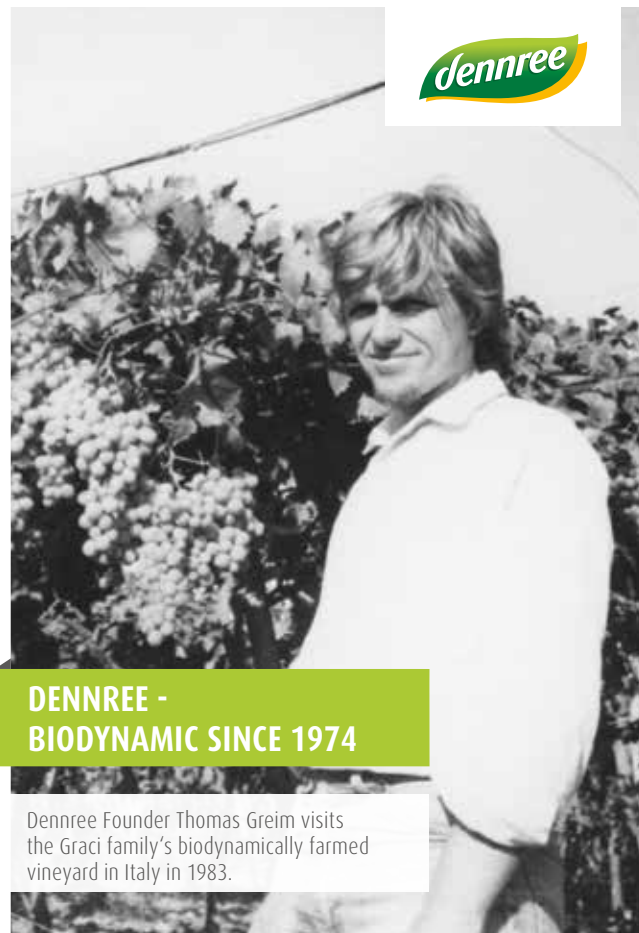

chapoutier.com





L'ABUS D'ALCOOL EST DANGEREUX POUR LA SANTÉ. À CONSOMMER AVEC MODÉRATION.
DRINK RESPONSIBLY.

gripette 01/22

**DENNREE -
BIODYNAMIC SINCE 1974**

Dennree Founder Thomas Greim visits the Graci family's biodynamically farmed vineyard in Italy in 1983.

demeter

Voelkel

VITALES GEMÜSE AUS GESUNDEN STRUKTUREN

Für eine enkeltaugliche Landwirtschaft setzen wir bei unseren Demeter-Gemüsesäften zu 100 % auf samenfeste Sorten und unterstützen – Hand in Hand mit unseren Anbaupartnern – die unabhängige Saatgutforschung. Denn die Entwicklung samenfester, zukunftsfähiger Sorten ist eine Gemeinschaftsaufgabe, die von der gesamten Wertschöpfungskette getragen werden muss.

Öko-Kontrollstelle:
DE-ÖKO-007



Für Mensch, **Tier**, Pflanze und Erde

Wir engagieren uns für einen nachhaltigen Umgang mit Geld und vergeben Kredite an Projekte in der biologisch-dynamischen Landwirtschaft.

Interessiert? Kontaktieren Sie uns!

Freie Gemeinschaftsbank Genossenschaft

Meret Oppenheim-Strasse 10 | 4002 Basel
T 061 575 81 00 | info@gemeinschaftsbank.ch
www.gemeinschaftsbank.ch



Freie Gemeinschaftsbank



OIKOPOLIS nutzt Logo
für **Assoziatives Wirtschaften**

- ✓ *Biologische und biodynamische Lebensmittel: kooperativ angebaut, verarbeitet und gehandelt*
- ✓ *Markt- und Rundtischgespräche seit 1994*

WELEDA

Seit 1921

WELEDA

Seit 1921

Skin Food

Nährende
Intensivpflege
Gesicht und Körper
Sehr trockene und raue Haut
Soin intensif
nourrissant
Visage et corps
Peaux très sèches et rêches

Garantierter Naturkosmetik

**SCHÜTZE
DIE HAUT
DER ERDE.**





demeter

Louis Rivoire
Ferme Saint Blaise, France

EAT MORE
VITALITY



you will grow

www.you-will-grow.net
www.demeter.net

100 YEARS
BIODYNAMIC

save the date

Agriculture Conference 2024

7 – 10 February 2024

The Agriculture Course

Sponsors and supporters

Voelkel
Die Naturkostsafterei

M. CHAPOUTIER
FONDÉE EN 1858

Biō
Markt

WELEDA
Seit 1921

sonett
ÖKOLOGISCH KONSEQUENT

oikopolis
Groupe
Luxembourg

konsumentenverband.ch

**CHAMPAGNE
FLEURY**
En biodynamie depuis 1989

Freie Gemeinschaftsbank

Gramona

BIO-MÜHLE SEIT 1969
**Bauck
HOF**

SOFTWARE AG
Stiftung

demeter

**BIODYNAMIC
FEDERATION** demeter

**MAHLE
STIFTUNG**

Stiftung FGB