



Activity Report 2017 / 2018

Preparations – the heart of biodynamic agriculture

A stirring barrel stood on the stage of the large auditorium. A young person was stirring it for an hour! The transparent container in the Goetheanum was lit up from below and the patterns cast were projected on to a large screen. The atmosphere was festive, there was no talk, only a practical demonstration. The conference community then distributed itself around the exhibition rooms and took in all that there was to see about the preparations – cow horns of all shapes and sizes, crystals and ground silica, stag bladders, intestines, dandelion flowers, bark from different oak species etc. What a wealth of earthly material! A long queue of people could be seen comparing, smelling and assessing the diverse range of preparation samples laid out on extended tables. Here we could directly experience what the Goetheanum leadership have so often sought to describe over the last months: How the greater Goetheanum expressed as world-wide anthroposophical activity, comes to fertilise the small Goetheanum here in Dornach and then carries back new inspiration for the world at large.

Conference contributions came from all continents. Five languages were spoken. Some contributions were in two languages. What is it about the preparations that proved such a draw? After all 900 people from 47 different countries came to this conference because of its theme! There is new openness towards them and from all corners of the world it was reported how young people are coming to the farms and the courses offered because of the preparations, there is genuine public interest.

In reflecting on the conference two particular aspects of the current interest in the preparations could be mentioned, firstly: Matter and spirit are moving ever further apart in our post modern civilization or else coming together as toxic cocktails, yet here they are being brought together to heal both earth and mankind. The second is the discovery that common goods like the preparations, can be actively created. As an active human being I do not have to cause disturbance or bring destruction to the earth but can become a positive helper.

Photo left: Heinrich Heer / Photo right: Charlotte Fischer



A range of projects and events

Indian journey in November 2017

With the help of the Indian Biodynamic Association and other supporters, the Section arranged an educational trip to India for more than 70 representatives from 20 countries and 5 continents. The focal points of this trip were:

- A meeting of the Council of Representatives on the very inspiring and diverse farm of Sarvdaman Patel in Gujarat and making contact with the Council of the Biodynamic Association of India.
- The Organic World Congress 2017 (OWC) near Delhi which included more than 40 biodynamic farmers and researchers from across the world. This allowed many new contacts to be made with the global organic community and especially with Indian farmers.
- A study trip to meet the preparation makers of Nainital (Uttarakhand). This brought our international group into direct contact with Indian farmers.
- We also visited the biodynamic training centre run by Binita Shah where the preparations for many tens of thousands of local farmers are produced.

This trip helped us move beyond our more Eurocentric focus and become a truly global movement. A more detailed report is available on our website.

Biodynamic wine production

Today's wine industry applies the largest amount of chemicals. Wine growers are increasingly trying to rethink the way they work. In the last few years more and more wine producers have opted for the biodynamic approach. Biodynamic viticulture is advancing in many countries (France,

Italy, Spain, Germany, USA) and is becoming an emissary of biodynamic agriculture. Many positive experiences with the preparations have been made in recent decades. In order to gather these experiences – first shared during various conferences – and make them available to a wider public, a book has been published by the Goetheanum Press: *Biologisch-dynamischer Weinbau – Neue Wege zur Regeneration der Rebenkultur*. The need for a platform was also identified so that there could be an international sharing of the many questions and experiences. And so during the 2018 conference, an International Working Group on Biodynamic Wine Production was founded. Anyone interested in participating should please make contact with us.

Conference: «Evolving Agriculture and Food – Opening up Biodynamic Research»

The new biodynamic research conference planned for September 2018, aims to bring research into much greater focus within the biodynamic movement and encourage active researchers to cooperate and share their different approaches with one another more closely. The keynote speakers Prof. Dr. Miguel Altieri (University of Berkeley, USA) and Prof. Dr. Jürgen Hess (University of Kassel, Germany) are well known scientists. The FiBL Organic Research Centre in Frick, the Forschungsring in Darmstadt and the department of organic agriculture at the University of Kassel have agreed to be scientific partners. During 2017 a steering group was set up with: Dr. Christopher Brock (Forschungsring, Germany), Dr. Petra Derkzen (Demeter-International, Holland), Dr. Jürgen Fritz (University of Kassel/Witzenhausen, Germany) and Dr.

Photo: Uli Johannes König



Anet Spengler Neff (FiBL, Switzerland). The conference is international and will take place in English. Alongside university research contributions there will also be space for practical farm-based research.

Economic Circle

During the course of a conference involving the Economic Circle of the Agriculture Section and the Foundations Forum of Demeter Germany that took place at the Alanus Hochschule Alfter from 23rd - 25th November 2017, participants formulated the key principles of a mutually beneficial economy from the plant breeder through to the consumer and created a basic mission statement. The Economic Circle then took this work further during the 'Oikopolis' organic network gathering in Luxemburg and produced the first draft of the "Charter for Associative Economy in the Organic Trade". This charter was signed by around 50 active players from all sections of the biodynamic supply chain. A first step towards its implementation was taken in an exemplary way by the Oikopolis Group with its prototype 'Fair and Associative' label. The Sekem Group is also a pioneer in this comprehensive associative approach as the lecture given by Helmy Abouleish clearly demonstrated. The draft charter is now to be developed further by the Section for Agriculture. The idea is for the very many associative approaches found in the biodynamic movement to come together and form a network under the umbrella of this charter.

www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org

Coordination Centre for Nutrition

The Coordination Centre for Nutrition worked with various themes in order to increase understanding for nutrition. Workshops or professional fora were held during the three largest conferences at the Goetheanum (education training, medical and agriculture conferences). Examples of these themes:

Warmth is an essential ingredient for soil life, compost development and the effectiveness of the preparations. Fruits ripen through warmth and meals are cooked with it. Human relationships come about through warmth of heart. Nothing exists without warmth, it is at the beginning and end of all processes.

Then the cross of nutrition was developed as an idea. The substances and forces that nourish the vertical nature of the human being enables him/her to become creative in the horizontal direction. This is made visible in the supply chain as it proceeds from the seed to agriculture, processing and trade through to food preparation, the culture of eating and community life. In this way nutrition concerns relationships and the need for interdisciplinary work.

During a science conference in Lithuania it was demonstrated how the future of nutrition does not lie in discovering new super foods, diet trends or the development of insect burgers. Healthy nutrition for the future is far more about changing the way we think and strengthening our resilience.

Agriculture Conference 2019

Annual International Conference of the Biodynamic Movement
Wed 6th to Sat 9th February 2019 – Goetheanum Dornach

The Economy of Agriculture

What type of economy does biodynamic agriculture need?

Photo left: Bernard Schmitt / Photo right: Binita Shah



The tasks of the Agriculture Section

The Section for Agriculture is one of eleven Sections of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. Its main task is to coordinate and give new impulses to the biodynamic movement across the world. Courses, seminars, conferences, lecture tours and publications create points of contact for people who are seeking a deepened anthroposophical/spiritual scientific understanding of agriculture. Encouragement to become responsible for one's own activity is especially important in agriculture and horticulture, in food processing, trade, nutrition, inner work and in public relations. An active worldwide network of individuals and associations, Demeter businesses, research establishments, trusts etc. are encouraged and developed. The Section is led by Jean-Michel Florin and Ueli Hurter. The team running the Section is currently made up of six people. Other co-workers are also involved with specific projects. The Council of Representatives which represents the biodynamic movement in its regional and professional diversity, currently includes 70 people from 18 different countries.

Trips and contacts in 2017

Egypt, Belgium, Germany, England, Finland, France, Greece, India, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Switzerland, Slovenia, Spain and South Africa.

Contact

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Publications

- Biologisch-dynamischer Weinbau – Neue Wege zur Regeneration der Rebenkultur. ISBN: 978-3-7235-1583-9
- Viticulture biodynamique : Nouvelles voies pour la culture de la vigne. ISBN 978-2-913927-57-5
- Biodynamische Präparatepraxis weltweit – Die Fallbeispiele. Verlag Lebendige Erde. ISBN: 978-3-941232-15-0
- Worldwide Practice of Biodynamic Preparation Work – The Case Studies. Sektion für Landwirtschaft am Goetheanum
- Bericht zur Indienreise der Sektion (deutsch)
- Listen to the Farm – Report on the Journey to India (English)

The Section is built financially on four pillars.

The figures for 2017 are:

Free gifts	CHF 162'000.–
Project grants	CHF 161'000.–
Income from events	CHF 253'000.–
Allowance from the Goetheanum account	CHF 94'000.–
Total income	CHF 670'000.–

Donations

You may also wish to offer financial support
Bank details can be found under 'donations' on:
www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org

The Agriculture Section team on site



Jean-Michel Florin
co-leader of the
Section

Photo: Heinrich Heer

Ueli Hurter
co-leader of the
Section

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