Goetheanum · Freie Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft
Sektion für Landwirtschaft
Section for Agriculture
Section d'Agriculture
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We Never Farm Alone

Do we trust in the power of communities?

Documentation of the Economy Council meeting on 4 February 2025
A collaboration between the World Goetheanum Association and the Section for Agriculture

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Introduction – *Ueli Hurter*

While in 1924, when Rudolf Steiner's Agricultural Course was written, most food was still produced, processed, and traded traditionally, over the course of 100 years an almost completely industrialized food industry has become established. Parallel to this, biodynamic agriculture emerged in 1924, followed later by organic farming, which spread significantly, especially since the 1970s and 1980s. In many countries – such as Germany, Switzerland, and Austria – relevant market and land shares were achieved. This phase can be understood as a period of success and growth for the organic sector.

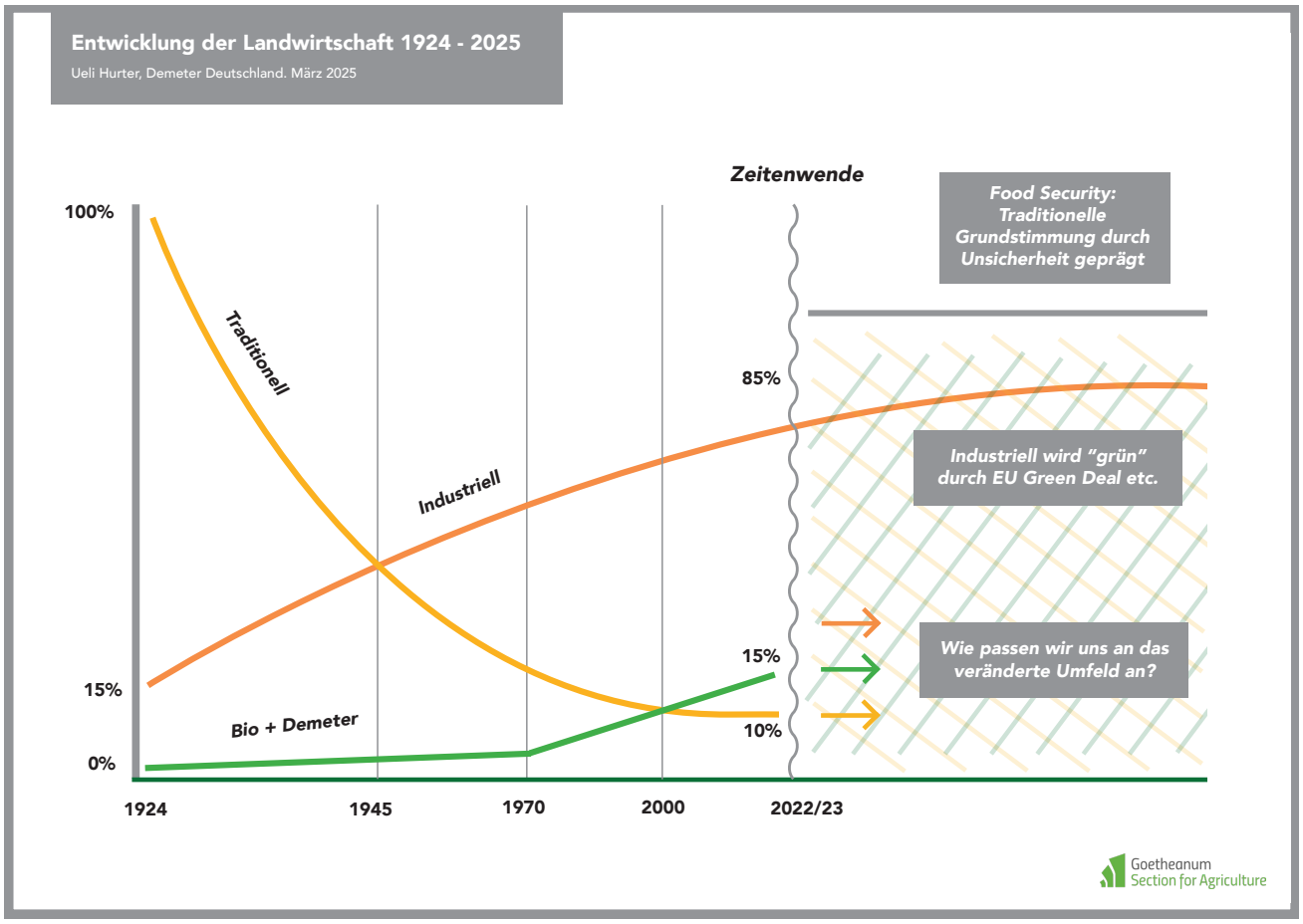
For several years now, however, this development has been experiencing a setback, exacerbated by Covid, war, inflation, and geopolitical tensions. A new social "wave" is sweeping over the organic and sustainability sector. Security policy, supply sovereignty, and economic pressure are gaining in importance, while ecological goals are losing ground. Political programs such as the EU Green Deal also represent a different, more technocratic understanding of "green," as a result of which organic farming is no longer automatically perceived as a leading force in sustainable transformation. The current situation can be described as a profound change of era, particularly in the areas of agriculture, food, and the economy.

Against this backdrop, there are three possible future directions:

- further industrialization and a stronger presence in supermarkets,
- a return to a more narrowly defined biodynamic-ecological core, or
- a stronger connection to traditional, artisanal forms of processing and marketing.

This search for direction is an expression of a deeper change of era in which the previous guiding values of ecological and social transformation are increasingly being questioned or even pushed back.

Social scientist Ingolfur Blühdorn analyzes that the project of an ecological-democratic social transformation—supported by responsible citizens—has effectively reached its limits. Instead, democratic, ecological, and emancipatory developments are in decline worldwide. International agreements (e.g., the 1.5-degree target) and the phase-out of nuclear power also show that agreed-upon ecological goals are not being politically upheld. This development is leading to increasing regulation and bureaucracy, which places a particular burden on small businesses, and at the same time to political counter-movements that are rolling back environmental regulations. The protests by farmers in Europe are an expression of this tension. Overall, it is clear that the current form of ecological transformation is no longer working.



Despite this sobering analysis, there is a positive perspective, namely—as French sociologist Bruno Latour argues—to no longer view the Earth as a dead object, but as a living being. Only on this basis can a new social and economic order emerge. Today, this idea is no longer a marginal phenomenon, but part of recognized social science debates.

Against this backdrop, the present documentation focuses on three topics:

1. A look at farms, which are currently under severe economic and structural pressure
2. Analysis of the regional market and trade situation
3. Classification in a global context

It is not about quick fixes, but about shared awareness, understanding, and realignment in a time of profound upheaval. Despite the uncertainties, collapse is not a solution. Examples such as the De Kollebloem farm in Belgium show that strong communities form the basis for sustainable agriculture. Concepts such as CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) demonstrate new forms of cooperation between producers and consumers.

In the area of trade and market relations, long-term contracts and transparent communication are presented as ways to achieve fair prices, for example at Odin or NaturaSì. In the processing and scaling of products, the example of the Vital Speisehaus AG bakery shows how industrial and artisanal approaches can be combined.

Historical impulses, such as those from Daniel Nicol Dunlop, demonstrate the importance of continuous, small but inspiring initiatives. Encounters, exchanges, and joint thinking are crucial, rather than rigid standards. The future requires active steering, experimentation, sharing of experiences, and renewed practice, supported by the principle of "We never farm alone" and trust in the power of community—towards customers, colleagues, and civil society actors.

1 The individual farm

Looking at individual farms provides insights into the diversity, challenges, and opportunities of organic farming. Each farm tells its own story, demonstrating different approaches to cooperation, self-organization, and innovation, while also illustrating that agriculture is much more than just production—it is a place where community, economic responsibility, and ecological stewardship intertwine.

1.1 Farm De Kollebloem – Antoinette Simonart and Ruben Segers

The biodynamic farm "De Kollebloem" is located in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. With around six hectares of land, it is a relatively small farm that operates according to Demeter guidelines. The focus is on vegetable cultivation, supplemented by the rearing of a small number of cattle for the farm's own meat production. The farm operates a shop that is open five days a week, a vegetable subscription service with around 200 boxes per week, a joint market stall in Ghent together with two other farms, and a small bed and breakfast. Around ten to twelve people are permanently involved in the daily work – in the fields, in the shop, in the office, delivering or packing. A special feature of the farm is its function as a so-called "care farm." People who do not have access to the regular job market work here and take on specific, meaningful tasks such as flower care, seed work, or cooking. It is emphasized that care is not a one-way street: not only does the farm take care of these people, but they also contribute significantly to the life, structure, and atmosphere of the farm. In addition, family members of the founders, volunteer groups for construction and landscaping work, and cultural events and activities also play a role on the farm.

Key Figures: Antoinette und Ruben

Antoinette Simonart originally came from a completely different professional field and worked as a lawyer for several years. A personal crisis and contact with an organic farmer led to a fundamental reorientation. This was followed by several years of training in biodynamic agriculture and practical work on various farms. An earlier project failed not for economic reasons, but because of

interpersonal conflicts. Finally, the path led to the "De Kollebloem" farm, where Antoinette Simonart later took on joint responsibility for the business. She is particularly concerned with social issues: low incomes in agriculture, limited access to organic food for broad sections of the population, and the ongoing tension between idealism and economic survival.

Ruben Segers grew up in the immediate vicinity of the farm, but for a long time had no desire to go into agriculture. He experienced life on the farm as labor-intensive, restrictive, and offering little freedom. Instead, he studied cultural anthropology and pursued a career in IT and development, partly in an international context. Over time, however, an inner conflict arose: while sustainable agricultural projects were being supported elsewhere, there was a lack of people at home to work on his own farm. Finally, he made a conscious decision to return. He has now been working full-time on the farm for over a decade, initially combining field work with office organization, then almost exclusively in administration and coordination during the coronavirus pandemic, and now once again more involved in practical work.

History

The history of the farm itself is described as a generational project. In the early years, the business was small, inefficient, and heavily family-based, with up to four generations working there at the same time. As the farm grew—particularly through the introduction of vegetable subscriptions—the workload increased significantly. It became clear that, in the long term, the business would only be viable through cooperation outside the family. The fear of ending up as an isolated individual business was a strong motivator for seeking cooperation.

This search initially led to a merger of several organic farms, but it failed. The cooperation was organized purely on economic grounds, and competition, mistrust, and unresolved conflicts ultimately led to its collapse. In retrospect, this crisis was understood as an important learning

process. It gave rise to a new form of cooperation called "De Oogst." It started with two farms and later grew to three. The key factor here is that not only economic aspects are consciously cultivated, but also social and cultural-spiritual aspects. There are joint price agreements, clear operational specializations, and a regular exchange of products for boxes and stores. More than thirty people from the participating farms meet regularly for joint weekends to cultivate relationships, resolve conflicts, and learn together.

Another central aspect is the legal and ownership structure of the farm. In order to secure its long-term future, the farm was converted into a cooperative, while the land belongs to a specially established foundation. The land was acquired through donations and interest-free loans from supporters. The farm leases the land on a long-term basis, and the buildings are now also owned by the cooperative. People can purchase shares, return them later, and are invited to participate in the general assembly. In this way, the farm was removed from private family ownership and permanently secured for biodynamic agriculture.

Agropolitical situation in Belgium

The current agricultural policy situation in Belgium forms the backdrop for many of the tensions described. While only a very small proportion of agricultural land in Flanders is farmed organically, the proportion of organic farming in Wallonia is significantly higher. At the same time, Flanders has an extremely high livestock density, with millions of pigs, cattle, and poultry. This form of industrialized agriculture creates enormous ecological pressure and great existential fears among farmers. Even within the small organic cooperative, price negotiations are difficult and conflictual, especially in times of high inflation. Fear acts as a central obstacle to open dialogue here. As a conscious counter-movement, the theme of "encounter and mutual welcome" was chosen for an upcoming meeting.

The example of Brussels, with its multitude of nationalities and languages, clearly shows how much mutual learning between city and countryside would be possible. The aim is to understand agriculture as a communal task that connects city and countryside, producers and consumers, work and culture.

1.2 Farm Heggelbach – *Ilsabé Zucker*

The Heggelbach farm cultivates a large contiguous area and is jointly managed by several equal partners. Within this association, there are various closely linked businesses, including artisanal processing areas, its own energy supply, and innovative forms of land use that combine agricultural production and energy generation. The entire farm is energy self-sufficient, and the individual businesses provide each other with financial security so that economic risks are not borne by individuals but are shared collectively.

Successful generational change – successful masterpiece

Particular emphasis is placed on the fact that this farm has successfully managed a comprehensive generational change without losing its internal stability or focus. It was awarded a federal prize for organic farming for this achievement. One member of the jury described the farm as a "total work of art" because agricultural practice, social structure, economic organization, and ecological responsibility work together in a harmonious way here.

At the same time, Ilsabé Zucker warns against developments that are shaping agriculture as a whole: advancing industrialization, the rapid disappearance of farms, and the increasing loss of those creative qualities associated with soil, water, air, light, and social interaction. In this situation, she sees community-supported agriculture as one of the key responses to the crisis.

View beyond the farm

Humanity is at a turning point where it must decide whether to continue on the path of ever-increasing technological advancement and industrialization or to focus on a responsible, humane approach to the Earth. Agriculture appears to be central to this decision because it is where the relationship between humans, nature, and community is directly shaped.

The core of the presentation lies in the understanding of agriculture as a social, economic, cultural, and spiritual whole. It is sustainable where community does not arise by chance but is consciously shaped, where property is organized in such a way that it serves life, where fear is replaced by sustainable relationships, and where economic issues remain inseparably linked to human ones. In this understanding, farms are not seen as production sites, but as living organisms in which the future of society is taking concrete shape.

1.3 Vilicus Farms, Montana, USA – *Anna Jones-Crabtree*

Montana is extremely vast, sparsely populated, and boasts an overwhelmingly open landscape. Vilicus Farms is located in the Northern Great Plains, a region with a very harsh, dry climate, strong winds, and low rainfall. Trees are rare, and even small wooded areas immediately catch the eye.

The farm covers around 12,000 acres, which is equivalent to 6,000 hectares. This scale is unusual for Europe, but in Montana it is part of a largely industrialized agricultural landscape. The operators are career changers who started farming relatively late in life. Although one of them grew up on a farm, agriculture was not an obvious career path. The decision to enter the field was a conscious and idealistic one, driven by the desire to practice organic farming on a large scale.

A decisive factor in the choice of location was the availability and affordability of land. In other parts of the US, such a venture would have been financially impossible. Most of the land is leased on a long-term basis, partly through yield-based lease models. The farm is not biodynamic, although there is great interest in this. The main reason for this is the lack of a market for biodynamic products in the USA. Instead, the farm is certified to the highest standard of "Regenerative Organic Certification".

Crop rotation and cattle farming

From the outset, it was clear that organic farming in this region could only work with diverse crop rotations. The usual practice in the area consists mainly of wheat cultivation in combination with so-called "chemical fallow": one year of wheat, no cultivation the next year, but intensive spraying for weed control. This practice serves to conserve moisture, but leads to soil degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Vilicus Farms deliberately pursues a different approach. It works with diverse crop rotations, including wheat, rye, legumes (e.g., peas), oilseeds, flax, and large-scale cover crops. In addition, there are undersown crops, mixed crops, and extensive biodiversity strips. Around 25% of the total area is not used directly for crop cultivation, but is specifically used for ecological stabilization and to promote insects, wildlife, and soil life.

In recent years, livestock farming has also been reintroduced. Cattle are grazed temporarily on catch crops and subplots. This serves both to improve soil fertility and to better integrate the nutrient cycle. One observation regarding landscape design is particularly impressive: in areas with hedges and tree strips, more snow remains in winter, which leads to a noticeably better water supply to the soil in spring. In an extremely open, windy landscape, this is an important learning process for the future design of the farm.

The farm regularly employs international workers, in particular a team from South Africa that has been returning to work on the farm for several years. This creates continuity and trust, but is also an expression of the difficulty of finding sufficient local workers in this remote region.

Economic viability

From the outset, one of the operators' key concerns was the hope that ecologically sound agriculture would also be economically viable. However, this hope has only been partially fulfilled. Neither high ecological quality nor careful social practices automatically guarantee economic security. Against this backdrop, the farm developed an innovative concept called "Community Supported Stewardship Agriculture" (CSSA), a further development of the classic CSA idea. The basic idea is that a significant part of the work on a regenerative farm does not generate a directly saleable yield, such as biodiversity management, soil improvement, or landscaping. Nevertheless, these services are recognized as valuable. The farm estimates this value at $100 per acre. Supporters can symbolically "support" one, five, or ten acres, thereby specifically financing ecological services. This model has attracted attention and recognition, but so far it has not been enough to ensure the farm's economic stability.

Economically, the farm is heavily focused on grain markets. Wheat and rye are delivered to mills in the US and Canada. Rye for whiskey production in particular currently offers comparatively good revenue opportunities. As there are hardly any people living in the region itself, the farm is dependent on distant sales markets on the US coasts. At the same time, these markets are characterized by short-term contracts and unstable purchasing relationships.

A particularly problematic example illustrates this situation: Vilicus Farms had a binding contract with a Canadian mill for the purchase of wheat. This contract was effectively not honored by the mill. The goods were not picked up and the agreed price was not paid. For Vilicus Farms, this meant that a harvest worth nearly half a million US dollars was left in limbo.

The Regenerative Institute was founded in response to these structural problems. The farm serves as a living laboratory where new agricultural, ecological, and economic approaches are tested and documented. The aim is to rethink agriculture, economics, and ecology and develop models that can be transferred in the long term.

Supply Circles

One of the institute's core projects is the establishment of so-called "supply circles." Unlike traditional market relationships, which focus on individual products, the aim here is to consider and market entire crop rotations as a whole. Buyers must be prepared to purchase not only wheat, but also legumes, oilseeds, or flax—in other words, a "basket of crops" that is agronomically necessary. Long-term partnerships along the entire value chain are intended to create resilience, fairness, and planning security.

The institute's analysis clearly shows that today's markets and government safety nets do not reward regenerative farming. Despite the availability of agronomic solutions, most land continues to be farmed in ways that damage soils and biodiversity because farmers need to survive economically in the short term. Climate change further exacerbates this pressure. In practice, this means that farms are repeatedly forced to make short-term decisions that run counter to long-term land management. This is exactly where Supply Circles come in: they are designed to ensure that ecological responsibility and economic viability are no longer mutually exclusive.
The first phase of the project has already been financed. It includes interviews with farmers and buyers, the identification of common issues, and moderated roundtable discussions. The aim is to develop new contract models, pricing mechanisms, and forms of cooperation. Further funding is to secure the project in the long term.

In conclusion, it is clear that Vilicus Farms are representative of many regenerative farms around the world. They demonstrate both the enormous ecological potential of large-scale regenerative agriculture and the massive structural deficits of existing markets. The central message is that without new economic relationships and long-term partnerships, even the best agricultural practices are not sustainable.

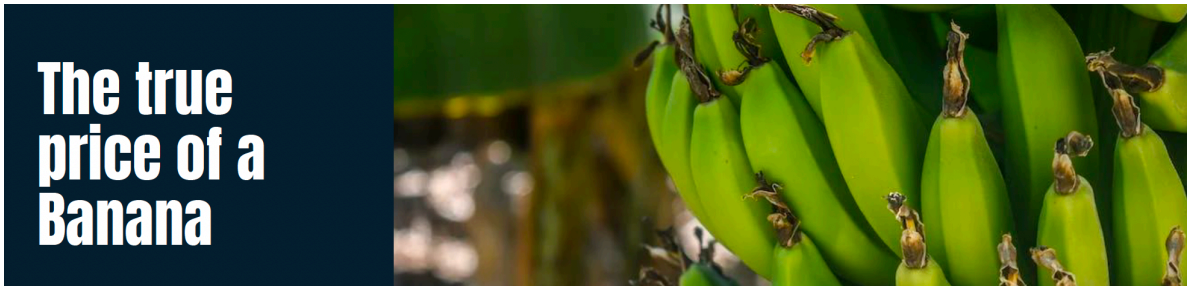
2 Regional trade

Sustainable agriculture does not only work at farm level, but requires the connection of producers, consumers, and trade across regional and international borders. Transparency, long-term partnerships, and the involvement of all stakeholders are crucial for combining ecologically responsible management with social justice and economic stability. This shows that regional action can be implemented both in a global context and at the local level if value creation, communication, and cooperation are consciously designed.

2.1 Banana initiative by Odin, Netherlands – *Merle Koomans van den Dries*

Merle Koomans van den Dries has been working at Odin, a Dutch organic food company, for 20 years and is part of the second generation of the company's management. Her training in marketing communications and biodynamic agriculture allows her to combine both areas—agricultural requirements and communication on topics such as community building and sustainability. Odin is a cooperative with approximately 20,000 households as members who own the company. In addition to 38 organic stores, Odin operates a wholesale company, a farm with open seed breeding, and beekeeping, which primarily serves environmental education. The bees act as "ambassadors" for both farmers and consumers to raise awareness of environmental issues.

The challenges of the banana market are, in particular, low transparency, monoculture of banana varieties, and Fusarium infestation. Together with a customer and the organization "True Price," Odin launched a project to determine the "true price" of the products. This revealed that the largest part of the cost gap lies in cultivation and social aspects, e.g., wages and water consumption. In order to support farmers in the long term, stable five-year contracts are concluded, investments are made in irrigation, new varieties, and mini-plantations, and consumers are involved in time-limited campaigns to finance the additional cost. This model can also be applied to other products, such as carrots from open-pollinated seeds.



2.2 «True-Price-Campagne» NaturaSì, Italien – *Fabio Brescacin*

Fabio Brescacin and colleagues from Italy explain the similar approach taken by their company, NaturaSì, which has grown to 350 organic and Demeter stores with sales of €450 million. The company is owned by a foundation that holds all the shares and supports agriculture directly through farms, training, and investments. Italian pricing initiatives are starting with transparent

campaigns for products such as tomatoes, bread, and fruit to communicate the actual costs to consumers and establish a fair price. Here, too, dialogue between agriculture, consumer organizations, and politics is seen as central to securing long-term value creation in agriculture.

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In addition, a scientific project has been launched with the University of Milan to quantify the positive external effects of biodynamic agriculture and translate them into economic values. The aim is to expand the market model: in addition to traditional profit and loss statements, ecological and social costs and benefits will also be included in the balance sheet in the future. In the long term, this could generate new income for farmers and establish the "true price" of food.

True price, living wage

Overall, both companies, Odin and NaturaSì, emphasize that long-term partnerships, transparent pricing, and consumer involvement are key tools for promoting sustainable, regenerative agriculture and making it economically viable.

The discussion following the presentations from the Netherlands and Italy focused primarily on the issue of fair remuneration for farmers and the actual cost of food. Questions were raised as to why farmers are not paid higher prices directly and how an "true wage" is calculated, especially given the large differences between countries such as the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Europe.

The speakers explained that pricing is complex: farmers are often satisfied with the current price, but need additional capital for investments to make their farms more sustainable. This allows consumers to continue paying a fair price without costs rising permanently – a so-called "win-win-win" model.

The concept of a "living wage" plays a central role here: different cost of living levels are calculated for each country. In practice, however, producers often encounter structural limitations, for example when workers from poorer regions are employed under precarious conditions. Although a minimum wage is paid in these cases, it does not reflect the full reality of the workers' lives. At the same time, it was emphasized that products such as bananas or coffee can only be grown economically today under these global poverty structures—a system that cannot be changed by individual companies alone.

It is important to focus on the process: gradual improvements are possible, for example through stable purchase agreements, investments in sustainable farming methods, and transparency in pricing. The companies in the presentations are therefore working to calculate the costs of environmental, social standards, and fair wages and to enable improvements on the plantations through campaigns, funds, or longer contracts. Patience is required here, as historical injustices and global market structures cannot be changed immediately. At the same time, it is a social responsibility to ensure the survival and economic stability of agricultural businesses in order to prevent poverty and the loss of farms.

2.3 Bakery expansion for Vital Speisehaus AG, Switzerland – *Lucas Didden*

Lucas Didden joined the family business Speisehaus in 2017, a company affiliated with the General Anthroposophical Society and the Goetheanum. Originally, Speisehaus had a small bakery within a restaurant that produced rolls and bread for visitors. However, Lucas Didden recognized the potential for growth and developed the bakery into one of the largest Demeter bakeries in Switzerland. An important step was the collaboration with Coop, a large Swiss food retailer. This partnership allows the fixed costs of larger-scale production to be covered, so that small customers such as cafés and neighborhood stores can be supplied even if the delivery quantities are small. In this way, Lucas Didden combines industrial capacity with regional craftsmanship and small partnerships.

He also maintains close cooperation with local farmers: one example is a farmer friend who produces eggs and other products. Old bread is fed to pigs, whose meat is in turn used for regional specialty products. This system creates a closed, responsible production chain that promotes both environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Lucas Didden emphasizes that it is not a question of choosing between large or small, but of combining both approaches: industrial structures, craftsmanship, and small, personal partnerships.

This development shows that entrepreneurial activity, regionality, and community building can complement each other: demand for Demeter products in Switzerland is driving production, while at the same time growth requires careful market and resource planning, as quantities of grain and flour are limited. This approach demonstrates that economic success, quality, and ethical responsibility are compatible when structure, partnerships, and vision are combined in a targeted manner.

3 Global Trade

Global supply chains are currently under enormous pressure, marked by political, economic, and environmental crises that have been increasing noticeably since the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Transport disruptions, raw material shortages, and rising costs make it clear that conventional planning and calculation models are no longer effective. At the same time, the real central challenges – biodiversity loss and climate change – often take a back seat to short-term price debates. These developments are changing society's relationship to food and raw materials, whose value has long been taken for granted, and make it clear that sustainable supply and appreciation are only possible through the conscious creation of new economic and social relationships. At the same time, concrete initiatives show that alternative approaches exist: cooperative action, long-term partnerships, social responsibility, and ecological orientation form the basis for resilient supply chains that connect local and global networks.

3.1 Sustainable supply chains in practice – *Ralf Kunert*

What does quality actually mean—not only in terms of food, but also in terms of cosmetic raw materials—and how can this quality be communicated to customers in a way that they can understand? This question has been with Naturamus, a member of the WALA Group, for over twenty years and remains unresolved, as quality is much more than just measurable parameters. It encompasses social, ecological, and cultural dimensions that are difficult to communicate.

Impact of global crises

Massive global upheavals have shaken supply chains in recent years. The onset of the coronavirus pandemic around five years ago marked a turning point: flight connections were disrupted, transport came to a standstill, and essential raw materials—such as essential oils from South Africa—could not be delivered for months. This experience was not an isolated case, but part of a chain of crises that continues to this day: the war in Ukraine with its serious impact on agricultural commodities such as sunflower oil, the repeated blockage of the Suez Canal – first by a damaged container ship, later by geopolitical conflicts – and the resulting detours via South Africa with enormous time delays, cost increases, and ecological damage due to increased fuel consumption.

These developments make it clear that previous calculation and planning models no longer apply. Political uncertainties, for example with regard to the US and possible political changes of direction, reinforce the feeling that an era is coming to an end. Ralf Kunert emphasizes that we have long lived in a time when products – especially food – were always available and cheap. As a result, their value has been lost in the social consciousness. Without wishing for a future of scarcity, he posits that the lack of appreciation for food is closely linked to its constant availability.

At the same time, he points out that the truly central crises—biodiversity loss and the climate crisis—often take a back seat to price debates in public discourse. The example of olive oil illustrates this point: after two disastrous harvest years due to extreme weather conditions, the situation eased temporarily thanks to a good harvest in Spain. Prices fell and relief spread. But the fundamental problem remains: climate change is not only leading to higher prices, but also to real supply bottlenecks. The situation is similar with the increasing growth of red lists of endangered plant species—a process that will intensify dramatically in the coming decades and call into question the raw material base of many products.

Meeting the challenges—success stories

The crucial question is not whether this change will come, but how we will respond to it: with fear or by actively shaping new futures. Ralf Kunert already sees "small seeds" that point to alternative paths and presents several concrete examples of cooperation.

A key example is a German-Kenyan company that started producing organic macadamia nuts around 15 years ago with just 150 small farmers. Originally, sales were intended to be through

school projects, but the company grew rapidly and now works with around 10,000 farmers. It is now the largest processor of organic macadamias in Kenya. The decisive factor here is not primarily market success, but rather the strong social orientation that has been in place from the outset: support for small farmers, long-term relationships, and the conscious decision to work biodynamically – regardless of whether there is a market for it. Today, 240 farms are Demeter-certified, with another 200 in the process of certification. Although this proportion seems small, it is having a remarkable effect: farmers report better yields from working with biodynamic preparations. Initial scientific studies indicate this, even though the data is not yet statistically reliable.

Another example comes from Argentina and concerns lanolin, a cosmetic raw material derived from sheep's wool. Since lanolin was not available in organic quality for a long time, WALA developed a novel business model based on radical transparency in collaboration with an Argentine partner. It involves genuine profit sharing with open books: production costs, sales prices, and margins are fully transparent for both sides. The aim is not to negotiate the lowest price, but to jointly determine how much income the producer should earn. Profits and losses are shared. This model has proven to be crisis-proof and works even under difficult market conditions.
At the same time, it is clear that biodynamic agriculture cannot be implemented everywhere. The Argentine farms described above cultivate huge areas – up to 90,000 hectares with extremely extensive grazing. Under such conditions, it makes sense to stick with organic farming and try to make it as good as possible.

Avoid dependencies

A recurring theme is the desire to avoid dependencies. The Wala Group consistently pursues the goal of supporting partner companies in such a way that they become independent in the long term. Examples from India show producers who grow cotton, mangoes, and other products in addition to castor oil. Diversification is seen as the key to resilience.

From this perspective, Ralf Kunert criticizes an overly narrow focus on traditional supply chains. Biodynamic agriculture needs more than stable markets—it needs education, relationships, and cultural anchoring. That is why Wala founded an international traveling school for biodynamic agriculture in 2017, which trains farmers worldwide. The aim is to enable people to work biodynamically – including the independent production of biodynamic preparations. A striking example is a rose oil producer in Turkey who, ten years ago, was the first to start producing preparations himself instead of importing them.

Regional networks, for example in Eastern Europe, are being strengthened so that farmers can learn from each other and do not remain permanently dependent on consultants from Western Europe. This work is made possible by foundations, public programs such as Erasmus, and supporting companies.

China is now the third-largest organic market in the world, close behind Germany. A significant proportion of organic imports are baby food and milk powder. At the same time, examples from China and India show that awareness of fair prices and ecological relationships is still in its infancy. In India, the organic standard was originally introduced not by the Ministry of Agriculture but by the Ministry of Commerce – with the clear aim of exporting. A domestic market is only slowly developing. In China, on the other hand, consumers are willing to pay extremely high prices, for example for olive oil, which is pre-financed, stored temporarily, and delivered with long waiting times.

3.2 Global perspectives and philosophical guiding principles – *Andrea Valdinoci*

Andrea Valdinoci from the World Goetheanum Association refers to Daniel Nicol Dunlop, a pioneer of international energy and economic cooperation. Dunlop understood energy issues as peace issues and was convinced that international cooperation was a prerequisite for a viable future. His thoughts, inspired by Rudolf Steiner, emphasize that the solution to global problems begins within the human being—in the will to do good.

This perspective leads to a shared reflection: we live in a time when certainties are crumbling and reality itself has become questionable. The task is not so much to make quick judgments or present ready-made models, but rather to observe, learn, and collaboratively try out new forms of economic activity. Numerous examples from Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, the US, and other regions show that agriculture today is only viable in communities – as a connection between city and countryside, producers and consumers, economy and culture.

He concludes with the conviction that it is not a matter of ready-made standards or rigid principles, but of mutual inspiration, exchange, and joint "prototyping." In an open future, it is important to remain capable of action, to cultivate relationships, and to allow new economic realities to emerge step by step.