

PROJECT FOCUS AGRICULTURE & NUTRITION

WANDERING AGRICULTURE

The Free International Wandering School of Biodynamic Agri-Culture has made it its goal to bring Demeter agriculture into the world - free of charge and without economic interests

"Sales of Demeter products in Germany and other European countries have risen significantly in recent years, while domestic production has almost stagnated. This means that more and more Demeter raw materials are coming from non-European countries, such as Turkey", says Ralf Kunert of Naturamus GmbH, which supplies raw materials and starting materials for the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries. In these countries, farms are often advised by raw material traders on the conversion to biodynamic farming methods. Usually these have the additional cost of Demeter goods and their profitability in mind. "Biodynamic measures are being used less and less out of conviction and thorough training", explains Hans Supenkämper, consultant for Demeter agriculture and, along with Ralf Kunert, one of the co-initiators of the Wanderschule.

With it, they pursue a so-called open source concept. This means that they advise interested farms on the conversion and application of this special concept of agriculture without self-interest or financial interests with the aim of making themselves redundant as soon as possible. At the same time, competent advisors are to be trained on site.

"IT'S ABOUT THE EMPOWERMENT TO BE INDEPENDENT"

Hans Supenkämper, biodynamic consultant

Turkey has been one of the most important project regions for the Wandererschule since the founding of Demeter Turkey. But the focus is also on countries without their own Demeter organisations, such as Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Chile or Kenya. In Kenya a conversion course was recently held with more than 5,000 farmers. "Half a hectare of land there feeds one family", says Hans Supenkämper. "The crops are very diverse - coffee, avocados, macadamianuts and vegetables, which are relatively diverse and grow in a small area." In the meantime, the project is managed by the Kenyans themselves. "What fascinated me most was that the initiative to work biodynamically came from the local people and not from a German company that needs raw materials" adds Ralf Kunert. The farmers' maxim was: If the tree is doing well, then I am doing well too. In addition, the farmers can tell their own story about each tree.

FASCINATION COMPOST

In the past, farmers in Kenya simply dug a pit to get rid of the plant and animal waste; it then rotted over time. Now real composts were set up.

A video reached the team of the Wanderschule, showing people's fascination with this type of biodynamic composting, which (unlike the pit) is characterised by an internal temperature of up to 65 degrees Celsius. "It's not about labels, but about cultivation conditions," explains Hans Supenkämper. "We have taken a big step towards producer quality."

INTERDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION

With their experience, the initiators complement each other perfectly for the tasks at hand. In addition to many years of agricultural practice and international consultancy work, they have extensive knowledge of the purchase of raw materials and of the national and international quality assurance of the Demeter Association.

A similar concept as Wanderschule does not exist so far. Its aim is to design biodynamic training in such a way that it leads directly to higher quality products and at the same time benefits the environment. This requirement, which is adapted to the conditions and cultural factors in the regions, should take place at eye level without paternalism and should continue to spread independently.

The concept of the Wanderschule is also about deeper aspects of cooperation:

Searching, finding and cultivating, i.e. supporting the development of a broader understanding of the importance of agriculture.

Giving impulses and creating awareness, that is to enable people to produce good products from their own enthusiasm and through honest biodynamic work. In this way a constant balance and development can be achieved between the ideal and the real possibilities of the farm.

Perceiving, encountering, exchanging, leading to independence and self-responsibility through the exchange of experience and knowledge

Structuring, organizing, providing, means to develop good structures to work professionally and economically, in an open and honest dialogue with all participants.

The idea, which is carried together and rooted and grown in the soil in a very practical way, forms the framework for future biodynamic work. The quintessence is to see the "biodynamic development accompaniment as an 'adventure'", in a space that allows creativity and transforms it into practical use.

Hans Supenkämper

The former Demeter farmer is now a consultant for biodynamic farming - especially in developing and emerging countries. He coined the term "spiritual composting", which means that man can develop new abilities and powers for social processes from his individual "waste, one-sidedness and obstacles". Since 2007 he has been working for the WALA Heilmittel GmbH for the development of biodynamic rose cultivation worldwide

Source: annual report 2018 Mahle Foundation