

General Policy Document

Commission: Environment

Question: An eco-farming revolution

Author: Germany

It is utopic to think that we can continue living in the manner that we have until now: our consumerism cannot support an optimal productive structure. As a matter of fact, we have reached the physical limits of the resources that are sustaining our present way of living, placing the entire world in a situation of scarcity that increases inequality. Nowadays, intensive agriculture is very badly managed and the main emissions of environmentally polluting gases in agriculture are due to the use of fertilizers and to livestock farming. In Germany, intensive agriculture is responsible for 11% of all emissions; the food sector is responsible for 16 to 20% of CO₂ emissions and 90% of methane emissions originate in bovine livestock.

This is why in order to protect the environment and the biodiversity Germany has decided to focus on the development of an environmentally sound agriculture that will also be effective on the long term. The awareness of the unsustainability of our way of living has led to the expansion of organic farming and more specifically to permaculture. The interest in permaculture has strongly increased since 2014. Organizations active in this field have developed a wide network and occupy an important place in German society: They provide a way of acting locally while obtaining an effect on a worldwide scale benefiting all humanity because they forge communities, achieve food resilience, promote healthy food and tend towards a more sustainable way of life not relying on imported goods.

Angela Merkel considers that “the costs of reducing emissions should be seen as a sound investment”. It goes without saying that a sound environmental plan is very beneficial for a country's economy and is a viable form of profitable agriculture. Our Chancellor is a big defender of an economy that respects the environment. Her vision is quite clear: “rigorous climate protection will cost only 1% of this prosperity and makes economic sense”. Following her lead all Germany applies a rigorous policy in this domain. Our country is present in big organizations like the G7 and the G20 that bestow Germany the status of a very influential country, which allows our approach to reach other countries.

Germany has the oldest tradition of ecological farming, beginning in the early XXth century with the Reformhäuser. Our objective continues to be the promotion of an efficient and sustainable agriculture. Its beneficial aspects at the economical and social levels represent a strong criticism directed against all conventional ways of production. Ecological farming shows adaptability when avoiding the depletion of natural resources and gives rise to a new way of life by promoting harmony in the ecosystem. It also enables the full utilization of every country's potential and the use of all their arable land: hunger will be consequently not inevitable.

This vision is strongly implemented by our country through subsidies to farmers in order to make their ecological production more competitive. This policy was established in 1989 and was reaffirmed in the Agenda for Rural Development in 2000. We are thus able to alleviate the pressure exerted by our industry on natural resources and restore the ecological balance. Permaculture and all other ways of eco-farming offer an integrated approach to our current way of life, which is based on a fragmented approach that does not take into consideration the requirements of a sustainable development. There has been a decline in the number of conventional farms which have decreased by 34%, whereas in the last 20 years organic agriculture has spread rapidly reaching at the end of the year 2000 a total of 12,740 farms with an area of 546,023 ha. Ecological agriculture covers 3.2% of the land used for agriculture and is practised by 2.9% of German farms. A great majority of ecological farms are members of our umbrella organization Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ökologischer Landbau (AOL).

Aware of the fact that air, soil and water pollution tends to increase with Germany's mounting productivity, our country has developed and implemented a series of measures aimed at modifying our unsustainable practices such as awareness raising campaigns. Their goal is to incentive our citizens to prefer bioproducts instead of conventional ones, because millions of people attending to their individual problems simultaneously resolve the big ones. Moreover, fines are levied on farmers who use pesticides to dissuade them from using toxic products.

Germany has always endeavoured to apply new methods that could make a difference for the better. This is shown by our active participation in the Earth Summit, the Kyoto Protocol and the COP (Conference of the Parties) 21 and 22, where our country has actively sought to benefit the world community and to achieve the respect of core values in the field of human and environmental rights. Following this line, Germany solemnly promises to offer its help to developing countries in the elimination of internal bottlenecks that hamper their ecological development. It is our strong belief that no country should be left outside this objective.

Our country considers that in this particular field countries should act in perfect unison and harmony, leaving their

interests aside in order to achieve the greater common good. Germany places its confidence on an international alliance that would lead to the reorientation of the industrial and agricultural systems in the world. In the face of the problems that we are encountering today, we must stop perpetuating the growth of an economic system that leads to the destruction of the Earth's ecosystem. New optimal structures must be put in place with the aid of a new financial logic with the goal of correcting the shortcomings and unbalances present in the current global scene. Our country gives its staunch support to the United Nations wherever the final objective is to help the peoples of the world, as shown *inter alia* in the Millenium Summit held in 2001.