

Contents



The European Network of AgroEco
Cities kicks off

pp. 1 & 2

AgroEco cities have been launched

p. 3

The 'Walking towards a European
Network of AgroEco Cities' Conference
Programme and speakers

pp. 5-9

The Milan Pact

p. 10

At the Conference we also ate tasty,
locally-sourced agroeco food

p. 11

Contact us

p. 12

The European Network of AgroEco Cities kicks off

Walking towards a European Network of AgroEcoCities

Public Seminar and Networking Event



Jornadas Públicas y Seminario de Trabajo en Red

Caminando hacia una Red Europea de Ciudades por la AgroEcología

Zaragoza (España), 13-14 diciembre 2016

► En Etopía. Avenida de la Ciudad de Soria, 8

The 'Walking towards a European Network of AgroEco Cities' International Conference was held on 13 and 14 December 2016. This international event was organised by Zaragoza Council within the framework of the Huertas LIFE Km 0 programme.

Representatives from cities keen to create this network came together for this conference alongside council experts and representatives, and social organisations and movements actively involved in developing urban agroeco experiences.

The conference had a dual purpose: on the one hand, to generate an open space in which to meet, exchange ideas, debate and contemplate the cities which have opted for eco-farming and food sovereignty; and, on the other, to start the European Network of AgroEco Cities, by holding two specific workshops for the cities and people explicitly involved.



Zaragoza
AYUNTAMIENTO



Over 150 people from around Europe came together for the 'Walking towards a European Network of AgroEco Cities' Conference, with the intention of articulating and enhancing the European networks which, through public involvement, enable the creation of a city/municipality-based movement for food sovereignty. A process that contributes to obtaining healthy, tasty locally-sourced produce, stimulating the local economy and fostering sustainable land management and environmental improvement.

These were just some of the objectives and goals for the conference held in the 'Etopia' Arts and Technology Centre. The event brought together experts and technicians from around Europe (Freiburg, Hernani, Liverpool, Valencia, Ghent, Barcelona, Bristol and Italy, among others). Over the course of two days of intense debates and workshops, once the framework was established around 'New policies and new management models for the city-based agri-foods system', various topics were pursued across five expert panels. These covered matters such as the renewal of the peri-urban farming fabric, local food chains, land access and protection of agricultural land use, food governance and, lastly, the creation of networks for local agri-food system sustainability.



Photos from the publication: CEAM

AgroEco cities have been launched

This Conference tried to showcase the most successful experiences in the areas of land access and agroeco food provision in the cities, and to encounter solutions to put the commitments taken on through the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact into practice. The aim of this commitment, also known as the Mayors' Pact, one of whose signatories was Pedro Santistevé (Mayor of Zaragoza), was rubber-stamped in October 2015, is to promote fair, locally-sourced food systems to supply the cities. The diverse programme featured talks, tasting of varieties of vegetable produce, workshops and debates, plus visits to agroeco farms.

At the end of the Conference, the cities gathered together in Zaragoza took the decision to progress towards a 'European Network of AgroEco Cities'. The participating cities are going to share responsibility for the development of the network, having already taken steps to organise new events and meetings and incorporate new cities. Similarly, there will be an immediate start to sharing experiences and the setting up of topical work groups focused on those matters which aroused most interest among the participants: the reduction of food surpluses and the circular economy, the creation and coordination of distribution and logistics infrastructures to improve food sustainability, stimulating spatial planning and the protection of agrarian resources within the area, preparation of strategic food plans, creation of local food advisories, starting up sustainable public purchasing initiatives and the pursuit of new relations between municipal governments and civil society.

The members of the network will primarily be the cities and social movements who have partnered in the fostering of agroeco policies. However, the network is arranged to be sufficiently open and flexible so all those agents contributing towards the advancement of its goals can participate. Having said this, there is a clear vocation towards coordination and even integration into other networks to strengthen and develop the initiatives already in place. In short, the cities aim to be efficient, share and benefit from the resources, coordinate through other events and meetings, develop projects in common and seek resources to continue working. But, above all, the hope is to build an eminently practical and useful network for the cities that choose agroeco as the manner in which to pursue sustainable, healthy food policies.



Across the two days of the Conference, the debates were lengthy and intense. Numerous proposals to be included in the agenda for the Network of AgroEco Cities were noted, amongst which are the following, by way of conclusions:

Local food networks and short distribution channels:

- Consolidate the figure of the local agroeco markets and network marketing as the hallmark of the member cities given its many and varied values (social, community, identity, pedagogical, etc.) so they help in the necessary scaling to make this food model a large scale matter.
- Begin processes of social partnership within the cities to define the local agroeco strategies, wherein language, concepts and procedures are agreed upon in common.
- Provide support for local producers. In accessing public infrastructures, supporting commercialisation and distribution, training and market positioning.

Reinvigoration of peri-urban agricultural fabric:

- That the Network of Cities encounter ways to integrate social movements. Networking at various levels: European, state, regional, local.
- Reconnecting land and city, fostering communication between the two and progressing towards a territorial culture. Foods can rebuild identities and be the perfect link between town and country.
- Progress towards an administration that goes beyond its role as regulator and inspector and works to serve the processes and needs of civil society.
- Ensure that the use of the term 'agroeco' does not become something banal, empty or misused.
- Establish cross-cutting food policies which impact on all areas (health, energy, waste, land access, water, countryside, etc.).



Land access and protection for agrarian land use. Obstacles and legal tools:

- The network must encourage policies that conserve and regain peri-urban agricultural land and enhance land access formulae.
- Farmers' associations fighting for this model should be incorporated.
- Develop an agroeco farmers' Erasmus, and generate support processes for farmers who are en route to changing to eco-farming.
- Demand that urban plans incorporate the agroeco model into their criteria and that its worth is made evident.

Food governance, participatory processes, local food policies and networks for local agri-food system sustainability:

- The Network must incorporate mechanisms to ensure active participation of the three key groups: consumers, producers and representatives from social movements.
- The Network itself must be an umbrella to guarantee city continuity over time, whoever may be in power or making policies, and even serve to gestate a state-wide network of agroeco cities.
- Achieving the two previous points requires the integration of food policy tools linked to social participation, environmental education, fiscal and budgetary tools, active communication to shine light on campaigns and results, mirroring campaigns and results, assessment, etc.

This approach by the cities is complemented by support and work within civil society. The conference has been hugely successful in both organisation and participation, with over 20 speakers from 7 countries, 150 participants, the presence of international institutions such as the FAO, the Milan Pact, the Città del Bio and Sustainable Food Cities Network, a wide range of Spanish social movements and over 15 cities setting up this new network. Over and above these impressive figures, the conference in Zaragoza aimed to cement the key role of cities in their citizens' food, health and sustainability, as role in which the city of Zaragoza is at once both driving force and player.

The 'Walking towards a European Network of AgroEco Cities' Conference Programme and speakers

13 December 2016

10:00 Institutional Introduction: Towards a European Network of AgroEco Cities

- **José Luis Castellano**, Technical Secretary General, Rural Development and Sustainability Dept., Govt. of Aragon.
- **Pedro Santistev**, Mayor of Zaragoza
- **Teresa Artigas**, Councillor for Environment and Mobility

Pedro Santistev, Mayor of Zaragoza, inaugurated the event, alongside Teresa Artigas (councillor for Environment and Mobility) and José Luis Castellano (technical secretary general at the Rural Development and Sustainability Dept., Govt. of Aragon). Santistev noted the quantity and quality of kitchen garden produce from Zaragoza of old and how the city's urban development has affected the productive land in the environs of the city, to the extent that 90% of vegetable cultivation has been lost. José Luis Castellano and Teresa Artigas highlighted the virtues and results of the project in terms of food sovereignty, generating a sustainable economy and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.



Pedro Santistev



Jose Luis Castellano



Teresa Artigas

10:30 Inaugural speeches: New policies and new management models in city agri-food systems.

Presented by: **Caterina Batello** (FAO- ROMA)

- From urban food policy to land rights. **Isabel Álvarez**: Consumer representative on the Civil Society Mechanism Coordination Committee for the FAO's World Food Safety Committee.
- Eco-farming in European cities: state of the art. **Daniel López García**: Pablo de Olavide University, Seville / Entretantos Foundation.

- From urban food policy to land rights. **Machiko Taguchi**: Consumer representative on the Civil Society Mechanism Coordination Committee for the FAO's World Food Safety Committee.

The participants on this panel highlighted the need for change in the narrative between the countryside and agricultural areas and the town: they need to be at the same level, not dependent on each other. At the same time, they pointed out the effort made by the FAO to integrate ecological agriculture into their plans and programmes, such as Food for cities. There was also a review of the various national and supranational movements and networks connected to ecological agriculture.



Left to rightDe izda. a dcha.: Caterina Batello, Machiko Taguchi , Isabel Álvarez and Daniel López

12:30 Experience Panel 1: Reinvigoration of the peri-urban agricultural fabric.

Presented by: **Victoria Lafuente** (CERAI)

- Huertas LIFE km 0 Project. **Olga Conde Campos**, [Zaragoza Council](#).
- Regional networks for generational renewal in the farming sector. **Ilaria De Altin**, [Freiburg Council](#) (Germany)
- Circular economy and waste recycling in food systems. **Luis Intxauspe**, (Hernani Council), '[Composta en red](#)' Municipal Network.

The participants on this panel explained the initiatives undertaken with the Huertas LIFE Km 0 project, among which were the professionalisation of new farmers, in addition to the difficulties involved in setting up a Land Bank within the project. Freiburg Council has opted for locally-sourced markets as one of their plans to reduce the carbon footprint from inner-city mobility. The third experience shared by this panel was composting: how to make the most of organic matter in pursuit of a circular economy and the installation of composters in Hernani.



Left to right: Victoria Lafuente, Olga Conde, Ilaria De Altin and Luis Intxauspe

16:00 Experience Panel 2: Local food networks and short distribution channels.

Presented by: **David Olmo** (CAAE)

- Public procurement in the UK. **Ian Stenton**, Head of Sustainability at the [Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Trust Hospital](#).
- Public infrastructures for local distribution networks. **Josep Manuel Pérez**, [Valencia Council](#).
- Strengthening the local food chain. **Katrien Verbeke**, [Ghent Council](#) (Belgium).

The participants on this panel described the Royal Liverpool Hospital public procurement programme which promotes local consumption of agroeco produce. The representative from Valencia Council noted the experiences of 'Tira de Comptar', network marketing from farmers to private individuals at Mercavalencia. The 'Gent en garde' initiative from Ghent Council (Belgium) fosters sustainable food production and consumption, short distribution channels and reduction in food wastage.



Left to right: David Olmo, Josep Manuel Pérez, Ian Stenton and Katrien Verbeke

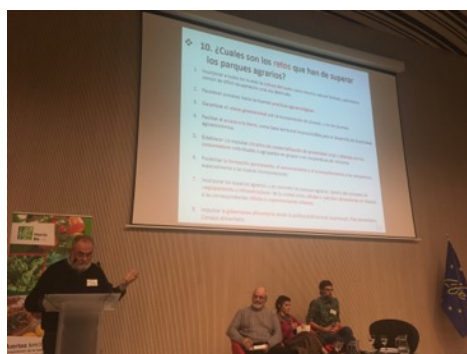


17:15 Experience Panel 3: Land access and protection for agrarian land use. Obstacles and legal tools.

Presented by: **Javier Sánchez** (UAGA)

- Peri-urban agricultural parks and other forms of protection status. **Josep Montasell**, Barcelona Council.
- Protective legislation for urban/peri-urban agrarian land use. **Jofre Rodrigo**, 'Access to Land' European Network (Xarxa de Custodia del Territori).
- Beyond city boundaries: Urban planning from an ecological agricultural perspective. **Marian Simón**, Agroeco Madrid/ Madrid Polytechnic University.

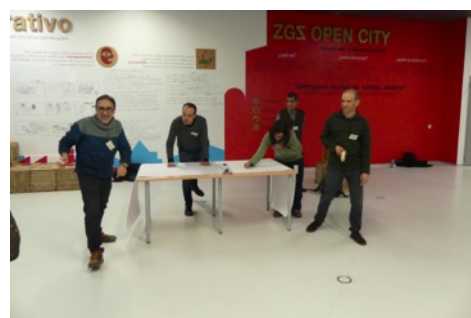
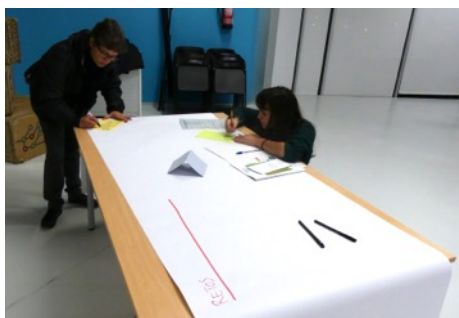
The participants in this panel highlighted the characteristics an agricultural park should have, where soil conservation takes on particular importance as it is a non-renewable resource. On similar territory, the 'A2L' Project noted the monopolization of land by large corporations and land access problems within Europe. 'Agroeco Madrid' sought to underscore the need for urban planning which makes the most of and boosts the pre-existing tools and which combines the importance of land and locally-sourced food.



Left to right: Javier Sánchez, Marian Simón, Jofre Rodrigo and Josep Montasell

18:45 Reinvigorating and galvanising the local agri-food fabric.

- An open workshop to craft new questions and share solutions.
- Workshop specifically for city representatives.



The participants in this workshop split into 4 topic groups, contributing to new challenges to each of the topics and new questions that might round out the debates over the course of the day. The proposed dynamic was to rotate through the various groups to add to and enrich other ideas

9:30 Experience Panel 4: Food governance, participatory processes and local food policies.

Presented by: **Mari Carmen Velasco** (CERAI)

- Local Food Strategies and Advice. **Lucy Antal**, Liverpool Food People.
- The link between the Agriculture Sector and local authorities. **Claudio Serafini**, 'Città del Bio' Italian Network.
- The link between food movements and local authorities. **Jacqueline Reeves**, Bristol City Food Network.

The participants on this panel explained the experiences from Liverpool regarding the consumption of fresh produce to foster and encourage healthy eating, the characteristics of the Città del Bio network in Italy and the actions taken by food movements in Bristol with experience in campaigns related to food wastage.



Left to right: Mari Carmen Velasco, Lucy Antal, Claudio Serafini and Jacqueline Reeves

10:45 Experience Panel 5: Networks for local agri-food system sustainability.

Presenta: **Jorge Hernández** (Slowfood - Mensa cívica)

- Sustainable Food Cities Network. **Lucy Antal**.
- 'Organic Cities' Network . **Claudio Serafini**.
- 'Bio Städte' German Network. **Ilaria De Altin**
- 'Intervegas' State-wide Network. **Javier Alonso**, coordinator.

The panellist highlighted initiatives such as the 'sustainable Food Cities Network', which recognises the key role that food can play as a way to face some of the most urgent social, economic and environmental challenges. They also covered the German 'Bio Städte' Network where cities jointly promote ecological agriculture and organic food. The 'Organic Cities' Network is a supranational network, or network of city networks, led by the Italian Città del Bio Network, which fosters the creation of a genuine international network of Cities, Municipalities and Regions. Lastly, within Spain, the 'Intervegas' Network is dedicated to food sovereignty and defending our land, aiming to aggregate agroeco initiatives from the 17 autonomous regions.



Lef to right: Jorge Hernández, Javier Alonso, Claudio Serafini, Lucy Antal and Ilaria De Altin

Numerous questions were asked by the attendees of the sessions across the two days.

12:15 The AgroEco Cities European Network: More than just a pact.

- Visit to the farms in the Zaragoza Agroeco Kitchen Garden Network.
- Workshop specifically for city representatives.

While the city representatives finalised and outlined the creation of the AgroEco Cities European Network, the remaining participants visited one of the agroeco producers - a former student from the Km 0 Farming School - who have become professional farmers. At the Torre de Urreano, the members of 'Milhojas, huerto biológico' told the participants of the peculiarities involved in the agroeco kitchen garden, the various tasks needing doing, the specific needs in terms of seed use for the different varieties, fertilisation of the land and the protection and promotion of biodiversity on the farm.



The Milan Pact

As a postscript to the 'Feed the planet - energy for life' International Exhibition held in Milan from May to October 2015, a document was written and signed by over 133 cities, including 9 from Spain. Zaragoza is among the nine Spanish signatories.

This pact, signed in October 2015, places a focus on the strategic role cities play in the development of sustainable food systems and the promotion of healthy diets, as centres for economic, political and cultural innovation. Likewise, it cautions against the hurdles to food supply in cities, among which are the imbalance in terms of access and distribution, environmental damage, a lack of resources and climate change, non-sustainable production and consumption methods, food loss and wastage, etc.

The document also warns against urbanisation processes and what kind of environmental impact this has, as well as the need to re-examine the way in which food and water is supplied. Additionally, it underlines the social stigma of hunger and malnutrition, opting for the opportunities offered by urban and peri-urban agriculture to conserve and integrate biodiversity within the urban/regional context and food systems. It thus contributes to creating synergies between food and nutritional safety, services related to ecosystems and human well-being.

A meeting was held a year on from the signing (October 2016) of the Milan Pact, in the so-called International Forum on the Milan Food Policy Pact. Teresa Artigas (councillor for Environment and Mobility) attended this second annual meeting of Councils on behalf of Mayor Pedro Santistevé at which the pact was initialled.

Representatives from the FAO and numerous other European Union countries were also present for this meeting. The councillor herself participated in the FAO plenary session during the World Food Day Ceremony. There she reiterated the Municipal Government's position on 'promoting local food production, access to the short distribution channels for small-hold farmers and fostering the consumption of locally-sourced ecological agricultural products, i.e. choosing food sovereignty'.

Full text of the [Milan Pact](#)

[Milan Pact Website](#)



At the Conference we also ate tasty, locally-sourced agroeco food

During the two day Conference, we were also able - in line with the philosophy of the Conference - to enjoy locally-sourced, tasty agroeco food.

13 December Menu

- Vegetable pie with cheese sauce.
- Ecological thistle with almonds.
- Cream of ecological lentils stew with greens and Bajo Aragón extra virgin olive oil.
- Locally-sourced milk.

14 December Menu

- Ecological spelt sandwich with cheese, ecological rocket and Bajo Aragón black olive pâté.
- Ecological borage from the Ebro Valley with cubed cod.
- Ecological pasta salad from Daroca with endive and dried fruit vinegar.
- Calanda peach with D.O. Somontano wine.

During the coffee breaks, there were tasty cakes and ecological juices from local and nearby companies... and among the drinks D.O. wines from Aragon and local lagers.





Zaragoza Huertas LIFE Km 0 is a European project for the environmental restoration of peri-urban areas in Zaragoza through an intervention in the ecosystem and ecological agriculture.

For further information on the Huertas LIFE Km 0 project, see the town website and follow us on the following platforms and social networks:



<http://www.zaragoza.es/ciudad/medioambiente/huertas/>



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