



Bringing Organisations & Network Development
to higher levels in the Farming sector in Europe

www.bondproject.eu

BOND PROJECT

New Solutions for Collective Action

BIODIVERSITY & LOCALITY

Poland And Czech Republic

THE FUTURE OF EUROPE'S **FOODS & LANDSCAPES**



Bringing Organisations & Network Development
to higher levels in the Farming sector in Europe

BOND PROJECT

New Solutions for Collective Action

B I O D I V E R S I T Y & L O C A L I T Y

*Poland And
Czech Republic*



THIS PROJECT HAS RECEIVED FUNDING FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HORIZON 2020
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME UNDER GRANT AGREEMENT N° 774208

Editorial Consultancy:

Centre for Academic Writing, Coventry University
Catalina Neculai and George Ttoouli

Authors:

Tomasz Włoszczowski (Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny Poland)
Alena Wranová (Asociace místních potravinových iniciativ, o.p.s. Czech Republic)

With contributions from:

Justyna Zwolińska (Koalicja Żywa Ziemia - Poland)
Wioletta Olejarczyk (Gospodarstwo Słoneczna 25, Poland)
Marcin Wójcik (OIKOS, Poland)
Jacek Bender (Gospodarstwo Brodaty, Poland)

Anna Page Vejvodová (Ohař Farm, Czech Republic)
Martin Rosenbaum (Lukava Farm, Czech Republic)
Vojtěch Veselý (Biostatek Valeč, Czech Republic)

Revisions:

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
MariaGrazia Rocchigiani and Francesca Carpano
Coventry University
Angela Hilmi


Responsibility for the information and views set out
in this report lies entirely with the authors.
The Agency and the Commission are not responsible
for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

This report is part of BOND project
that has received funding from
the European Union's Horizon 2020
Research and Innovation Programme
under Grant Agreement No. 774208.

Design and Layout Cristina Canestrelli- Francesca Lucci
July 2020 Rome, Italy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	7
1. Introduction	9
BOND Project Overview in the Region and collective farming in post-Soviet EU countries	
2. Poland / Czech Republic Report: Regional Background	13
Poland	
Communist Nationalization	
1989: Adapting to Capitalism	
2004: Accession to the European Union	
The situation Today	
Collective Action in Poland	
Czech Republic	
Communist phase: forty years	
The Velvet Revolution and the end of the 20th century	
The era of the beginning of the 21st century	
The Situation Today	
3. Methodology – BOND Regional Flow of Activities	21
SEE	
France	
Norway	
United Kingdom	
LEARN	
TELL	
4. Participants' Stories	27
Poland	
Marcin Wójcik	
Ewa Czap	
Jacek Bender	
Wioletta Olejarczyk	
Czech REPUBLIC	
Vojtěch Veselý	
Anna Page Vejvodová	
Martin Rosenbaum	



5. Issues/Outcomes	35
Local Workshops	
National Workshops	
Poland	
Czech Republic	
Training of Trainers	
Policy Round Table	
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	
Poland	
Czech Republic	
6. Conclusions	43

Executive Summary

This report sets out the BOND project's activities and findings in two Central European countries – Poland and Czech Republic – focusing on small scale organic farming.

Both countries share a common history as part of the Eastern bloc after WWII and then post-soviet reality from the end of the twentieth century. Both joined the European Union in 2004 and have been implementing the Common Agricultural Policy since then. They also have important differences, and all these factors and sometimes turbulent histories have heavily affected these countries' agriculture and farmers.

Participation in BOND provided an opportunity to conceive of new ways to bridge not only the slightly different local situations in Central Europe but also created a stronger links between individual, diverse actors in the agricultural sector, with different experiences and needs. The reality for many of these voices is that are not always heard, yet small scale farmers are entrusted with building sustainable agroecological farming from the bottom up.

This report summarises three years of work by the project consortium. It focuses on seven active representatives from the farming sector and their approaches to collective action under the BOND scheme, through its three main stages – SEE, LEARN, TELL – describing their active participation in study tours; an Interregional Forum in Córdoba; Training of Trainers events; National thematic workshops; and a Policy Round Table, which led to a Memorandum of Understanding.

The report identifies several barriers to progress:

- lack of knowledge of problems hindering collective action by small scale organic farmers in Poland and Czech Republic, compared to other European countries;
- lack of trust, confidence, cooperation or good advice among farmers;
- lack of capital;
- restrictions and limitations on food processing in small scale farms;
- restrictions on growing their own seeds.

A number of recommendations emerge from BOND activities. Responding to the Declaration of Peasants' Rights is recommended for example:

- raising awareness through local media and local markets;
- sharing the Declaration widely through media in educational units and in local languages;
- creating a "Friends of the Declaration" group to engage as many people as possible, including researchers and scientists.

Finally, the report shares recommendations emerging from the Policy Round Table:

- allowing farmers to produce and exchange their own seeds;
- creating a seed database in Europe;
- working toward stability and clarity of seed laws and regulations;
- and creating seed networks.

Full recommendations are listed in Chapter 5.

The report concludes with a perspective on the place of Poland and Czech Republic small scale organic agriculture in Europe. It also gives the background of the agroecology what will be an essential form of the agriculture in the next decades according to the EU Green Deal Policy and Farm to Fork Strategy.¹

¹ "From Farm to Fork", European Commission, last modified, May 28, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/farm-fork_en

Farmland in Świętokrzyskie region in Poland
credited @ Dariusz Bałuk for SIE, 2020



1 Introduction

Introduction

BOND Project Overview in the Region and collective farming in post-Soviet EU countries

Many projects have been supported by the European Union for cooperation between European farmers and nature's protectors. However, BOND - Bringing Organization and Network Development to higher levels in the Farming Sector in Europe² - goes beyond existing projects in terms of design, size, structure and direct links to international institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), or the European Parliament.

The main objective of BOND over the project's three years has been to create strong, dynamic and efficient organizations with an emphasis on exploiting the great potential for cooperation between farmers and other rural landscape managers. In particular, from the point of view of small organizations, this has been an extraordinary opportunity for engagement at a European level.

Two non-profit organizations, SIE from Poland (Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny³) and AMPI from Czech Republic (Asociace místních potravinových iniciativ⁴) were directly involved in this project along with 15 other partners from 12 European countries. Both organizations focus mainly on cooperation between organic farmers, small scale farmers, biodynamic farmers and those who wish to conserve traditional, natural and human-friendly agriculture.

SIE used its channels of cooperation with organic farmers' associations, food cooperatives, folk universities and the Nyéléni movement.⁵

AMPI mobilized its network of farmers working for a healthier agricultural landscape. They are often involved in the food sovereignty movement, community supported agriculture (CSA⁶), and using agroecological practices to change the environment through positive processes in wider society as well as in the countryside.

The BOND project was designed to support collective action in the farming sector in Europe. But what is a collective action? And what is – or could be – collective action in Poland and Czech Republic?

Collective action occurs when a number of people work together to achieve a common objective. BOND encompassed a series of activities that included:

- an important farmer mobilization in early 2018
- local workshops applying a participatory methodology to analyse the attitudes, weaknesses and the constraints to collective action
- trainings, forums, and national thematic workshops
- one Policy Roundtable (Poland only)
- and the signature of a series of Memorandum of Understanding.

Four people from Poland and four people from Czech Republic were invited to participate in BOND's planned meetings, training sessions, workshops and related activities – these were our 'representatives'.

These are not ordinary people, ordinary farmers. They are farmers because they wanted to be farmers, they wanted to work with the soil, produce food, do something more than selling their yields. They were also opened to seeing, learning and telling their knowledge, and wanted to share their passions. They also look beyond the present times and are aware of upcoming challenges like climate change, loss of biodi-

2) EU Horizon 2020, November 2017 - October 2020, www.bondproject.eu

3) Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny <https://www.sie.org.pl/>

4) Asociace AMPI - Association of Local Food Initiatives, <https://www.asociaceampi.cz/>

5) European Food Sovereignty Movement - Nyéléni Europe, <https://nyeleni-eca.net/>

6) As a leader of CSA movement in the Czech Republic AMPI cooperates closely with Urgenci - The International CSA Network. CSA as a way to contribute to a greater solidarity between urban and rural communities, is equally empowering for both the community and the farmers and offer solutions to common problems facing producers and consumers worldwide, <https://urgenci.net/>

versity, and the need to keep their locality alive. They act locally but think globally.

A large part of the project went into training these key representatives, who will help to build stronger organizations which can have greater impact in support of agroecological farmers. Dozens of networking workshops took place, a portal for (young) engaged farmers was created, and four regional policy round tables occurred with farmers, land managers and policy makers attending.

The community created around the BOND project is convinced that, if agriculture is to benefit both the countryside and the city, it is necessary to make gentle, fitting and fundamental political decisions. To show this, BOND created a short documentary movie that illustrated the links between farmers and nature and their importance to human society in general.

In this publication we share some of the stories, experiences and motivations carried forward during the BOND adventure by the amazing representatives from Poland and the Czech Republic.



Central Bohemia - organic poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) cultivation - typical production for the Czech Republic credited @ Šárka Krčilková for CoolAND, 2015

7) "Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics — 2018 edition", Eurostat, last modified, December 19, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-FK-18-001>

8) "Agriculture, Forestry", Statistics Poland, accessed June 4, 2020, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/>

Farmland in Świętokrzyskie region in Poland
credited @ Dariusz Bałuk for SIE, 2020



2 Poland/Czech Republic
report: Regional
background

Poland / Czech Republic Report: Regional Background

Poland and Czech Republic, neighbouring countries in Central Europe, both experienced communism in their histories, along with a similar level of economic development, which is present today in their two different agricultural systems.

Polish agriculture is mostly based on small or medium scale family farms displaying a large dose of individuality, independence and a lasting degree of biodiversity. The Polish landscape is colourful and divided into small plots with a lot of boundaries and mid-field forestations. Large scale farms are mostly located in north and west Poland, and were created for historical reasons partly related to the change of the borders after WWII, but they do not dominate the Polish countryside. However, the political past casts a shadow on the willingness of Polish farmers to engage in collective action. It is quite common for Polish farmers to act individually, being suspicious of the heavy heritage of the past.

There are three main differences between Czech and Polish agriculture:

- **Size of arable fields:** the average farm size in the Czech Republic is almost 133 ha (this is ten times higher than the EU average⁸), while in Poland it is 12 ha⁹; fields are composed of very small parts, and it is difficult to distinguish individual plots.
- **Ownership:** Czech agriculture is also characterized by a large share of leased land. Almost 80% of land is cultivated by non-owners.¹⁰ In Poland, most of the arable land belongs to individual farmers.
- **Consumer trends and political approach to agricultural development:** Czechs focus on the development of organic farming and strong local brands (similar to Austria, with which they have much stronger cultural and historical ties than with Poland). Poland focuses on the development of intensive animal husbandry for export, and at the same time has seen a drastic decrease in the number of organic farms. There is a lack of a coherent concept for building a regional and national brand.

Poland

Historically, three main factors have shaped today's forms of cooperation between farmers in Poland:

1. The centralization of agricultural production in the hands of the communist authorities, leading to a reluctance by farmers to undertake grassroots initiatives;
2. the need, after 1989, to adapt Polish agriculture to the conditions of capitalist economy; and,
3. the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2004.

Communist Nationalization

The communist nationalization of agricultural assets suffered a defeat in Poland, although over 6,000 State Agricultural Farms (PGRs¹¹) were established, which managed about 20% of the agricultural land area in Poland. They were characterized by low production efficiency or their subordination to political goals, and therefore - apart from the mainstream food sales controlled by the Communist Party - direct contact between individual farms and urban consumers quickly developed. Official authorities fought against this phenomenon, but Polish citizens kept purchasing directly from farmers because the shelves of state stores were empty.

Apart from a flourishing collaboration between farmers and a black market of agricultural products, a common resentment of communist authorities was another factor uniting Polish society in the countryside and in the cities. This created a bond among farmers themselves, who - perhaps in a less spectacular way than in the case of workers' movements - showed social disobedience, active resistance and agricultural solidarity.

Farmers were forced to associate in agricultural production cooperatives, which, without adequate support and funding from public authorities, quickly became a site for various pathological behavior, con-

8) "Agriculture. Forestry", Statistics Poland, accessed June 4, 2020, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/agriculture-forestry/>

9) "Agriculture Data 2015", Eurostat, accessed, May 6, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/agriculture/data>

10) "Agriculture Data 2015", Eurostat, accessed, May 6, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/agriculture/data>

11) PGR - Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne

tributing more to the loss of mutual trust between farmers than to real cooperation among them. Unfortunately, the communist authorities managed to break up cooperative structures between farmers, processors and agri-food trade, which were very strong in pre-war Poland.

1989: Adapting to Capitalism

The biggest breakthrough in Polish agriculture took place in Poland at the beginning of the 1990s due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the change of the state system from a totalitarian regime to democracy and, above all, due to the change from the socialist economy to capitalism. Initially, this freed agricultural prices from official regulation, opening the domestic agricultural market to foreign competition and eliminating most of the budget subsidies for agriculture and food products.

In addition, in 1990, the official setting of agricultural loan interest rates was abolished and unemployment among agricultural families working outside their own farm increased. The main consequence of these activities was a decrease in the number of farms. This is also a period of privatization of state-owned agricultural assets, including transformation of state-owned farms into large-scale private farms. Under these conditions, strengthening cooperation between Polish farmers faded even further into the background.

2004: Accession to the European Union

Poland's accession to the European Union and participation in the CAP brought with it new opportunities and new threats to cooperation between Polish farmers. Under the new conditions, Polish cooperatives were reborn within individual agricultural production sectors (for example, in milk, sugar, cereals, eggs, fruit and vegetables, pork). However, a division remained between production and further stages of the value chain.

This change was also connected to the majority of Polish agricultural processing passing into the hands of foreign capital. Nevertheless, CAP funding for the creation and operation of agricultural producer groups was an incentive for joint actions. Since the creation of the financial instrument supporting the formation of these groups, their number has never been constant in Poland. Some groups have formed and others ended their activities.

The Situation Today

Today, in addition to the need to rebuild mutual trust between farmers, which was lost to the systematic destruction of grass-roots cooperation by communist authorities, Polish agriculture also faces problems caused by the current situation.

The main factors hampering the development of collective action among Polish farmers include:

1. Reluctance to accept top-down cooperation proposals. Currently there are 962¹² producer groups in Poland established by financing activities from the Rural Development Program. Most of them are based on family contacts or private acquaintances, which reflects the mutual lack of trust between Polish farmers.
2. Growing competition between Polish agricultural producers heavily affected by globalization of the trade of agricultural products and their standardization, which is subordinated to intensive, industrial agricultural production.
3. Stratification of the farming community, due to the size of farms and production methods.
4. A dangerous concentration of power in trade unions over decisions regarding the distribution of funds for the promotion of Polish agri-food products (especially animal, cereal and fruit production), leading to the exclusion of smaller producers and smaller agricultural cooperatives.
5. A weak representation of the interests of small and medium-sized farms resulting in, among other things, the continuing decline in the number of farms.
6. A decrease in the number of folk universities since the 1990s. Nowadays their number remains too small.

12) Grupy producentów rolnych - ile ich nadal czeka na uznanie?, Włescirolnicze, last modified, May 29, 2018, <https://wiescirolnicze.pl/w-polsce-nie-ma-kli-matu-dla-tworzenia-grup-producenckich/>



Świerże Panki - a typical pasture landscape in Mazovia region in Poland, credited @ Tomasz Włotzczowski for SIE, 2014

Collective action in Poland

Despite these barriers, still some agricultural organizations and new initiatives give hope for the reconstruction and strengthening of collective action undertaken by Polish farmers. Thanks to EU initiatives, farmers are gradually getting involved in collective action. For instance, rural development solutions offered by CAP (second pillar - LEADER +¹³) have contributed to the creation of Local Action Groups as well as the creation and restoration of places for agri-rural communities, under measures like village renewal. There are currently about 400 local action groups in Poland.

In addition, Polish authorities, following action by International organizations (such as the UN Decade on Family Farming), are increasingly beginning to recognize the need to protect small family farms and their key role in maintaining the vitality of rural areas, including their cultural heritage and agricultural and culinary traditions. This has led to a number of opportunities

1. Food quality has become the basis for building structures of informal cooperation between producers and consumers. Food cooperatives, based on direct sales opportunities and short supply chains, are becoming increasingly popular. In recent years, CSA has become more and more popular.
2. The tradition of the community of the Polish countryside remains alive. Mainly women, who cooperate within the framework of the Rural Women Institute (Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich) contribute to this. The beginning of their activity in Poland dates back to the second half of the 19th century. In 2018, a law entered into force enabling the Rural Women Institute to officially register and receive small financial support from the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture (ARiMR). Not all of them took advantage of this opportunity, but so far over 4700 have registered.
3. The tradition of folk universities also remains alive, as places for the extracurricular education of youth and adults, connecting rural teachers as well as youth from agricultural and rural schools from various places in Poland. There are still 16 regional branches of the Society of Folk Universities of the Republic of Poland. In 2015, the first Ecological Folk University was founded, which teaches respect for biodiversity in food production.
4. Agricultural producers have recently begun forming organizations that focus on organic production, or regional and traditional products. The Polish Chamber of Organic Food (PIŹE¹⁴) and the Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Product (PIPRiL¹⁵) were established to develop high quality market products.

13) „Leader/CLLD”, European Network for Rural Development, last modified, March 30, 2020, https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld_en

14) „Polska Izba Żywności Ekologicznej”, Misja, Struktura, Rada, accessed June 4, 2020, <https://jemyeko.com/o-nas/>

15) „Polska Izba Produktu”, Aktualności, Wądarzenia, accessed June 4, 2020, <http://www.produktyregionalne.pl/>

5. Three individual farmers' organizations have survived Poland's difficult political history, remaining to this day (mainly dealing with the social and health problems of farmers), as well as the structure of Polish cooperatives (mainly milk producing, and plants and food cooperatives).
6. Finally, a number of non-governmental organizations have mobilized with important goals, such as to protect the food sovereignty of Polish farmers, promote agroecology and agroforestry, develop methods of organic and local food production, and ensure a fair income for family farms. A great example for the development of collective action was the Second Food Sovereignty Forum organized by Nyeleni Polska (representative of La Via Campesina in Poland) at the end of January 2020, gathering over several hundred farmers and activists to debate the future of Polish agriculture, promoting agro-practices, supporting the preservation of ecological foundations for the sustainability of agricultural production and strengthening forms of cooperation between farmers and consumers.

Czech Republic

The agricultural sector is traditionally important to the Czech economy, although its share in GDP or production and gross value added is very low (3%)¹⁶, as in all developed countries. Over the past decades, this sector has changed fundamentally in the context of the transition to private farming after 1989, with regards the structure of agricultural holdings.

Approximately 3.7 million hectares of agricultural land in the Czech Republic (92%) is privately owned and only 0.32 million hectares are state-owned.¹⁷ This structure is one of the most important details, and has its roots in the period of collectivization over 40 years of communism.



Velké Hostěrádky - a demonstration of ecological management in the landscape of South Moravia, credited @ Martin Michal for Hnutí DUHA, 2020

16) Association of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Crafts of the Czech Republic, Analysis of Agriculture (Prague: AMSP, 2019), 12, <http://amsp.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Anal%C3%BDza-zem%C4%9Bd%C4%9Blstv%C3%AD-2019.pdf>

17) Department of Economic Analysis, Analysis of economic development CZE (Prague, Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2020), <https://www.countryforfuture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ec.pdf>

Communist phase: forty years

After WWII, in the years 1945-1948, the second land reform took place. The ruling Communist Party demanded a land reform that led to the liquidation of private land ownership and the distribution of land to small farmers.

Land reform resulted in collectivization. Its beginning is dated February 23, 1949, when The National Assembly approved a law on united agricultural cooperatives. Farmers then became nothing more than workers on foreign land. Private land ownership was to be completely eliminated in the future.

At this time, there was also a collectivization of land, as most agricultural land was transferred to state ownership. The regime then required an increase in production yields. Beranová and Kubačák¹⁸ state that chemistry was used, agrochemicals with a low content of pure nutrients, along with mostly heavy equipment. The soil was thus devastated, which led to a deterioration in the quality of agricultural products and reduced fertility in the land. Collective ownership of the land lasted until 1990.

The Velvet Revolution and the end of the 20th century

Due to changes in society after 1989, it became necessary to repair the damage and the injustice of times past. Therefore, restitution processes were established, which once again enacted changes in land ownership. Almost 200,000 return requests were made on agricultural lands and the third land reform took place. At this time, the nature of agriculture also changed, with the emergence of self-employed farmers, private farms and a reduction in the number of cooperatives.

The era of the beginning of the 21st century

The current situation marks a significant proportion of large holdings owned by legal entities, as well as a large proportion of holders of leased land. Large farms with more than 50 hectares of cultivated agricultural land in the Czech Republic manage about 90% of the total area of agricultural land.¹⁹

Another important factor affecting the biodiversity of the agricultural landscape is the fact that only 18% of the land area is cultivated by farmers who own it. A study by Sklenička and other CULS scientists²⁰ even states that extreme fragmentation of agricultural land is becoming a limiting factor for its sustainable use. Scattered, very small parcels cease to be economically viable for individual farming. Owners are thus forced to rent these plots to larger entities managing neighboring lands.

This trend, named the “farmland rental paradox”, has subsequent impacts on the landscape and soil quality. Although it brings at first glance only administrative difficulties to the users of the land, it turns out that the renting of land from a large number of small owners leads to homogenization of the landscape and soil degradation.

Therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture views increasing interest in organically farmed land in a positive light. In terms of the Czech Republic’s numbers, it ranks among the top countries with the largest cultivation of organic land:

- At the end of 2017, 4,399 organic farms (about 10% of agricultural holdings in the Czech Republic) were ecologically farmed, on a total area of 520,032ha, which represents a 12.38% share of the total agricultural land in the Czech Republic.

18) Beranová, M. and Kubačák, A., *Dějiny zemědělství v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague, Libri, 2010), 430

19) Ministry of Agriculture, *Agriculture 2018 - report* (Prague: Ministry of Agriculture, 2019), 164, http://eagri.cz/public/web/file/627472/Zemedelstvi_2018_bro-zura_pro_web.pdf

20) Sklenička, P. et al., “The Farmland Rental Paradox: Extreme land ownership fragmentation as a new form of land degradation”, *Land Use Policy* 38, (May 2014), 587-593.

- The average size of organic farms was 119 ha, larger than the average area of conventional farms (about 74 ha in 2016).²¹
- According to the size of farms, this is the largest acreage in Europe after Slovakia and the United Kingdom.
- The EU average is only around 40 ha. Within the EU, the Czech Republic holds fourth largest share of organic farming after Austria, Sweden and Estonia.²²

Despite this, the Czech Republic's ranking among the leading countries with ecologically managed areas is mainly due to the share of permanent grassland.

The Situation Today

The Ministry of Agriculture has outlined a number of priorities in the field of organic farming in its Action plan to 2020:

- Organic farming will become an important part of Czech agriculture. The aim is to increase the viability of organic farms while concurrently retaining benefits for the environment and animal welfare (fair prices along with effective and considerate methods of organic production).
- Building a stable market for organic foods with a significant proportion of foods of Czech origin (produced from domestic organic raw ingredients). This will raise consumer confidence in and consumption of organic foods.
- Functional cooperation within the entire supply chain (functional sales).

There are a large number of farmer groups, but in the medium term there are opportunities for one of the most vulnerable groups - small scale farmers. These farmers can, for example, engage in short consumer chains, direct sales and other alternative forms for selling organic products and foods (although they need particular support for regional farm processing and direct sales).

Various alternative food sovereignty movements²³ (CSA, cooperatives) can also inform consumers about how to access organic foods. These can connect consumers with supply by creating regional groups of organic farms (mostly CSA), providing additional information for consumers and farmers, support meetings and opportunities to engage in these alternatives, even alternative quality rating systems such as Participatory Guarantee Systems²⁴ (PGS), which can help to bridge inflexible market rules.

There is also an opportunity for the younger generation (often new entrants), which is more concerned with an ecological approach to farming, and climate change. A younger generation of farmers, many of whom have lived much of their lives on family farms, are taking over farm management. This renews and strengthens the bond between people and farmland. They farm more considerately, with regard for their environment.

However, small scale farmers still face several challenges, such as:

1. Poor integration and coordination within the organic farming sector, fragmentation of involved organizations with no synergy in cooperation.
2. Absence of a common vision and gaps in related activities, meaning much fundamental information and data does exist, but is not processed.

21) Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Action Plan for Development 2016 - 2020 (Prague: Ministry of Agriculture, 2016), 96, http://eagri.cz/public/web/file/442986/Akcni_plan_CR_pro_rozvoj_EZ_Czech_Action_Plan_for_Development_of_OF.pdf

22) Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, (Prague: Ministry of Agriculture, 2018), 68, http://eagri.cz/public/web/file/581592/publikace_MZe_210x210mm_ENG.pdf

23) European CSA Research Group, CSA Movements in Europe (Prague: Ekumenická akademie, 2016), 52, <https://kpzinfo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/evropsky-vyzkum-kpz-2015.pdf>

24) PGS Standards & Certification, is a concept introduced by IFOAM as an alternative and complementary tool to third-party certification within the organic sector and advocates for the recognition of PGS by governments. PGS initiatives are serving thousands of small organic producers and their consumers all over the world, and numbers are increasing every year. IFOAM EU, accessed July 5, 2020, <https://www.ifoam.bio/our-work/how/standards-certification/participatory-guarantee-systems>

3. The Closed nature of this farming sector across all scales, both at the institutional level and further – the conservative nature of the sector means new approaches are introduced with difficulty and instead stays focused on the same topics.
4. Gaps in professionalization - there is a need to shift from the category of “farmer movement” to professional “farmer management”.

On the other hand, there are still opportunities:

1. Inspiration comes from neighboring countries. Society can now see what works differently and better abroad, and the Czech Republic can learn from and share good practices.
2. New means of selling are increasing direct sales from farms, such as the boom in farmers markets and new sales networks such as cooperatives.
3. A new type of consumer has emerged, interested in using alternatives inclined towards sustainable agroecology, principles of CSA, family farms, consumer sales cooperatives, farmers’ markets, and supporting a particular farmer.
4. There is a clear increase in changes of lifestyle, accompanied by an increasing demand for quality, oriented to local foods, premium foods and organic produce.



South Bohemia - Bemagro organic farm credited @ Alena Wranová for AMPI, 2020

Farmland in Świętokrzyskie region in Poland
credited @ Dariusz Bałuk for SIE, 2020



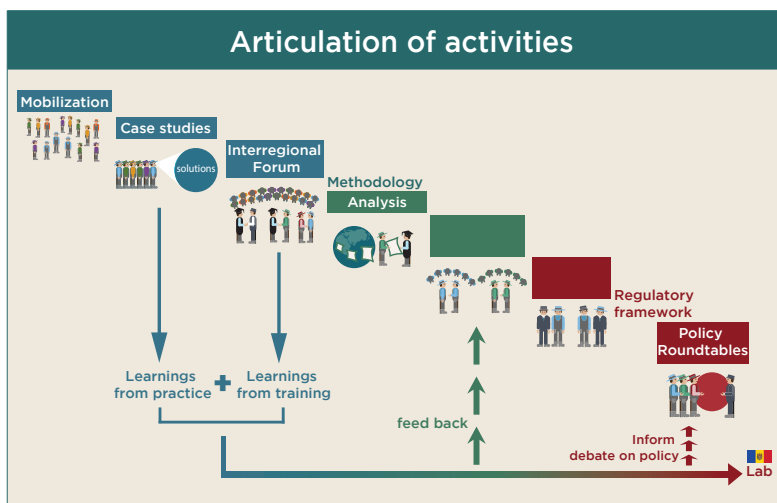
3 Methodology BOND Regional Flow of Activities

Methodology – BOND Regional Flow of Activities

Across its networks, BOND's activities followed a three-stage methodology: SEE, LEARN and TELL.

The project's implementation strategy in our region was grounded in three mutually reinforcing pillars:

1. *Learning From Success* involved identifying, documenting and visiting case studies with proven solutions, and was the **SEE** section of the project.
2. *Understanding Attitudes - Overcoming Weaknesses and Constraints* involved the broad review and analysis of attitudes, weaknesses and constraints, including needs and problems, of groups in the selected countries. The dedicated methods and tools used helped groups build the capacity and similar conditions for effective collective action, and was the **LEARN** section of the project.
3. *Affirming a Position in the Policy Landscape* involved exploring, through serious gaming, new ways for farmers and land managers to interface and interact, with policy-makers to establish common thinking, alliances and coalitions around special areas of interest, and was the **TELL** section of the project



BOND Project Diagram

Together these 3 pillars allowed us to find solutions to problems, better understand attitudes to cooperation and networking, provide recommendations to policy-makers with an improved mutual understanding, and build the basis for higher levels of collective action in countries where the level of organisation is low.

SEE

Some of the first activities of BOND were study tours to select countries, which presented examples of excellent collective actions in the farming sector. The tours were also the first pillar of the BOND project fostering the participants to SEE best practices and to give participants new impressions, ideas and solutions.

Five Polish participants and four Czech were mobilised as BOND representatives and took part in the following study tours: France – Jacek Bender and Katarzyna Wrona (who left the project due to health reasons); Norway – Wioletta Olejarczyk and Anna Page Vejvodová; Spain – Vojtěch Veselý and UK – Ewa Czap, Tomáš Franěk, Martin Rosenbaum and Marcin Wójcik.

France

The first study tour was organised and hosted by French partner, the Coopérative d'Utilisation du Matériel Agricole (CUMA), a collective of male and female farmers who buy farm machinery in common. On their own, the investment would be enormous, but together they share the costs and access to new technology and therefore improve their work conditions.

Our representatives - Katarzyna and Jacek – visited several sites:

- Le Gerموir, a collective project that fosters organic farming by offering people who want to become farmers a chance to experiment with four hectares of land, a farm building and a farm shop. The aim is for them to become autonomous in farm management. Facilitators can help them by proposing training sessions when needed. This collective project aims to create jobs, set up new farmers, foster food sovereignty, develop activity in rural areas, and strengthen the link between producers and consumers.
- The CUMA Nord'Oignon, where the farmers have shared investment in packaging for their onions
- The vegetable research centre of the French Chambers of Agriculture, a network of local economic actors for maintaining and fostering dynamic vegetable production.
- Au Panier Vert, a cooperative which processes and sells food through a local farmers' shop, with 27 farmer-members and 18 employees. The farmers take turns to sell, so they can meet their consumers. Farmers also process the meat and prepare ready-cooked dishes in the cooperative.

Norway

Wioletta Olejarczyk from Poland and Anna Page Vejvodová from the Czech Republic went to Norway and was hosted by their BOND partner, the Norwegian Agricultural Co-operatives (Norsk Landbruks-samvirke, NAC). She had the opportunity to see:

- TINE SA, which is Norway's largest producer, distributor and exporter of dairy products, with 11,400 member (who are also owners).
- A 'Green Care' farm – 'Green Care' refers to individually adapted and quality-assured welfare services on farms, which stimulate coping skills, development and well-being.
- Norsvin, a co-operative owned by Norwegian pig producers. This project combines a breeding company with research, innovation and dissemination of genetic improvement as the cornerstones of the company.
- The Norwegian Farmers Union (Norges Bondelag), which is the largest Norwegian interest organisation for farmers.
- The Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Union (Norsk Bonde- og Småbrukarlag), a farmers' organisation.
- Geno, the breeding organisation for Norwegian Red, Norway's main dairy cow. This farming cooperative has been conducting research and development for cattle breeding.
- The Farmers Market Norway (Bondens marked Norge), an umbrella organisation for local units that hosts farmers' markets.
- The Norwegian Royal Society for Development (Norges Vel), which develops sustainable businesses based on natural resources, both in Norway and internationally.

United Kingdom

The study tour to United Kingdom was a combined trip for Ewa Czap and Marcin Wojcik from Poland, and Tomáš Franěk and Martin Rosenbaum from the Czech Republic. They spent two busy days hosted by the Landworkers' Alliance, a BOND UK partner, where they visited:

- Two projects by members of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Network UK, a member-owned cooperative run by and for CSA farms. It grew out of the success of a five-year Big Lottery-funded Soil Association project called Making Local Food Work, which encouraged farmers and consumers across the country to take an active part in reforming the food system. Our participants learnt more about the phenomenal rise in popularity of the CSA approach to small scale farming.
- Bristol Food Network, a community interest company. supporting, informing and connecting individuals, community projects, organisations and businesses who share a vision to transform Bristol into a sustainable food city.
- The Pasture-Fed Livestock Association, which brings together British farmers committed to producing high quality food in a more natural way.

- Fivepenny Farm, an off-grid organic smallholding in South West Dorset that has been farmed by two families for the past two decades.
- This was also the base of the Peasant Evolution Producers' Cooperative (PEPC), a network of small scale farms in the area working together to share resources, make higher-value products, and strengthen short supply chains in the local market.
- Tamarisk Farm in West Bexington, a model for cooperation between government and NGO environmental initiatives related to biodiversity and the coastal ecosystem.

After the study tours, representatives were asked to sum up their impressions and share their feedback. They were all satisfied with their travels, the organisational conditions and the content of the information provided, such as presentations and lectures.

LEARN

There were four main activities in the second phase of BOND. First, there was a major gathering in Córdoba, Spain, for representatives from all the BOND partner countries. This was followed by three Training of Trainer (ToT) events.

Four Polish representatives took part in the Interregional Forum in Córdoba in September 2018, where they had the opportunity to meet 60 representatives from other countries participating in BOND. Over two days the representatives shared their impressions from the study tours and what they had been working on after their trips. Some presentations were performances, showcasing the awesome creativity of the BOND people. There was also a seed swap table and a collective work in groups to share the experiences and knowledge for strengthening collective action.

Immediately after the Forum, Córdoba hosted the first ToT led by MariaGrazia Rocchigiani from the FAO. The ToT focused on teaching and improving skills of governance, management and leadership for activists who were already leaders or wanted to become future leaders of farming sector organisations.

The second ToT was in February 2019 in Coventry. This used serious gaming techniques to facilitate exchanges between participants.

The third ToT was in December 2019 in Poland, and focused on “Farmer empowerment through the creation of social capital”. The specific learning objectives of the training programme allowed participants to:

- reflect on and engage in discussions of values and principles for farmer organisations;
- acquire knowledge of the role of leaders;
- understand the importance of building a shared vision;
- understand organisations as complex systems;
- learn to balance people, objectives and group processes;
- analyse an organisation's performance, by identifying strengths and weaknesses in relation to its mission, and formulating strategies and an Action Plan.

TELL

The third BOND pillar, involved events where we shared what we had learned with each other. We hosted a National Thematic Workshop, a Policy Round Table and produced Memoranda of Understanding.

One amazing discovery was the gaming techniques we learned – Lego™ Serious Play® and Card Play – which were presented to representatives during the second ToT and later the whole BOND consortium in Coventry. These techniques are training games which improve skills or encourage engagement with a product or service, and they are usually found in education, business and life coaching.

Finally, we held further BOND actions in Poland. Two workshops in December 2018 focused on participatory processes, for analysing constraints on farmers. These workshops were conducted with a group of organic farmers, some of whom are farmers' movement activists, and are aware of various problems and barriers to agriculture, and at the same time are trying to counteract these issues.

Farmland in Świętokrzyskie region in Poland
credited @ Dariusz Bałuk for SIE, 2020



4 Participants' Stories

Participants' Stories

The BOND project brought together more than 60 representatives from almost all European countries. Among them were four people from Poland and four from the Czech Republic. Here we share the stories of seven of them, their experiences and knowledge, to inspire others working for better an agricultural situation across the world.

Poland

Marcin Wójcik

Marcin is a cattle farmer. His farm is located in the picturesque Low Beskids mountain range, in the south of Poland and next to the Slovakian border, which means it is hidden away from regular 'civilisation.' This is the story of how Marcin began his cattle breeding in 2003, when he decided to buy a former 'PGR farm' (a farm which belonged to the state during communist times).

There in his newly renovated farm buildings, he started breeding horses and later cows - the limousine breed. This breed is not widely known in Poland and the meat is considered a delicacy. In the summer, his cows spend most of their time outdoors and they only eat food grown on the farm.

Agroecology is for him a philosophy, a way of life. He talks a lot about the farmer-land relationship. He does not destroy nature with pesticides and other chemistry, or grow monocultures. He is building biodiversity on his farm.

After his UK study tour, Marcin had the following impressions:

If someone asked me how to sum up our visit, I would describe it in one word: agroecology. To tell you the truth, I expected to see large farms and cooperatives and meet people and communities. We saw how they work, function and produce in accordance with the principles of agroecology. I did not expect that - this aspect of agriculture is not taught at agricultural universities in Poland. The issue is, an agricultural community in Poland does not exist at all, and only the first birds sing about connections between individual links in the production chain under the short carbon footprint.

The two most important conclusions of our working group were as follows:

*- **Community** - creating an agricultural community may turn out to be key solving some of the problems of agriculture in Europe, and help to develop and improve the profitability of small family farms.*

*- **Make farming sexy again** - that is, let us persuade young people to stay and work in the countryside.*

Reflections on BOND:

I think the most important thing I saw while taking part in the project was the farming community. Participation in the workshop in Córdoba was fruitful for me because I came with some plans in mind, and what I learned there allowed me to refine the details and gave me energy to take the first step.

Thanks to this, the Pasture Farm Association was established. I emphasize the word "association" because it was only thanks to the workshop with Sara Vicari that we adopted the form (and not the foundation or cluster I had previously assumed). The association allows building communities, works inclusive of members, and does not rely on the leadership model.

In addition, participation in the project allowed me to meet many very inspiring people and gave me a broader point of view on the perspectives and problems of agriculture in Europe.

Ewa Czap

Ewa lives in one of Poland's largest cities, Lodz. She was interested in ecology and natural lifestyles since her childhood. As a teenager she joined an NGO, where she met awesome people who shared their passion and knowledge about the nature with her. She started to work for them while also developing her own way of living.

Then Ewa joined the course in the Ecological Folk University in Grzybów. She also became active in the natural building movement and started to make clay roughcasts. She dreamed about running a little city farm.

Ewa, who visited the UK with the BOND study tour together with Marcin, shared the following impressions:

On the trip to Bristol to the city farms, I learned that the city authorities are striving to increase the city's autonomy in food production, i.e. it cares about producing food in green areas and near Bristol.

It was inspiring to see the farms are open and conduct educational activities. Families with children can come and see, take part in classes. This openness to the local community is a great role model. I also remembered a visit to one farm because of its location at a crossroads. Cultivation was carried out in tunnels, but the large amount of exhaust fumes raised my doubts as to the value of food grown there.

Most initiatives are bottom-up activities with leaders who are followed by people. There was no top-down imposing solutions, although regulations exist. All these activities were ordered and thought out.

Reflecting on the Córdoba Interregional Forum and ToT event, Eva reports:

The stay in Cordoba was organizationally a little chaotic and underdeveloped, although the classes were very interesting, professional, factual and brought out specific values. The exchange of experiences with people from different countries, meeting BOND participants and not only farmers, but also activists and people involved in various initiatives, including educational ones, was very valuable.

I loved running Training of Trainers with MariaGrazia - she was orderly, logical, very professional. First of all, I learned from them that you should create an action plan and be determined in the implementation of the planned activities.

Outcomes:

Participating in BOND has been a very valuable experience and led to concrete actions resulting from real needs, e.g. in terms of food sovereignty on both a local and global plan.

The project increased my awareness of threats to agriculture, e.g. large-scale crops, legal complexities limiting small farmers, and at the same time enabled me to try to respond to these restrictions - through work on the Declaration of Peasants' Rights or a workshop on seeds. My Action Plan from ToT was about creating an educational city farm in Łódź on my plot - I still have it in my mind.

Jacek Bender

„This is the beginning of my story, of how I transformed from a unhappy crane builder and a dad without a beard into a happy and fulfilled farmer and a dad with a beard,” he says.

Before he settled down Regulice near Cracow, Jacek lived with his wife in the Netherlands. He spent most of his time behind a desk, designing cranes – and not just any cranes. Jacek was part of the team behind the construction of the Chinese Skyhook, the most powerful land crane in the world: three thousand tons of steel, one hundred meters up and a lifting capacity of 2400 tons. That's about the weight of 120,000 giant pumpkins filling six Olympic pools.

Designing this beast took a lot of work and overtime. Despite this, Jacek found time to bake his first bread - spelt and sourdough. Then he found out that he was going to be a father. From friends, he got hold of a book by John Seymour called, The new complete book of self-sufficiency (about how to live in a self-sufficient way). The book became a bible to him, and the idea of a farmer's independence propagated in his dreams. He began to implement these dreams remotely, on a plot in Poland, with the help of his parents.

He slowly gets tired of his job, and more and more he sees his colleagues suffering burnout. He begins to read more and to talk about gardening, social innovation and anarchism. With a friend, he starts a small project based on freeganism: they collect good products that have ended in the dustbin after market days and eat them. Jacek increasingly opposes consumerism and tries to limit his needs and do more things on his own.

Finally in 2014, Jacek goes to live in his microfarm, which is called Gospodarstwo Brodaty (Bearded Farm), where he produces baby salad leaves, herbs, makes preserves and bakes bread.

Jacek was on the BOND study tour to France. He wrote this about his experience of BOND:

The BOND group was selected appropriately. A lot of people from all walks of life. At the end, the so-called “group spirit” appeared.

France was a very interesting experience. Good examples of cooperatives. Small communities forming a local cooperative store; agricultural para-school, where you can check whether agriculture is for us or different forms of cooperation at different levels and with different formal structures. The program is very tight, certainly, because of this a lot of chaos crept in, but I personally did not suffer, except for huge fatigue :). Lots of networking and new contacts with group members and organizers. This is very important.

Wioletta Olejarczyk

Wioletta is a farmer now. She runs a farm called Słoneczna 25 (Sunny 25). She cultivates plants naturally to serve the Mother of the earth and all its inhabitants. The ideas closest to how she works are about agriculture supported by the community, so she is creating a community and practicing ‘active culture’: “the miracle of hard work as a ritual of everyday life”

She has lived in the countryside for a several years and has about 1 ha of land (2.4 acres). She is learning to grow plants in a way that serves the land, its people and animals. She is also interested in edible weeds. Natural development is a priority for her.

She tries to give people gifts of land and involve them in caring for the land and cultivating plants. She misses exchanging experiences with and learning from other farmers. She also wants to gather a group of people around the farm who can be involved in its creation. Her interests and work are focused on nature and culture.

Wioletta lived in Norway for seven years so she can speak Norwegian and knows the country and the lifestyle there. She visited Norway as a BOND representative and had the chance to see its farming sector and to meet farmers and listen their stories.

She had this to say about her visit:

The greatest attention on this trip was focused on the cooperation of farmers, cooperatives. Much time was also devoted to making the specifics of Norwegian agriculture clearer.

Agriculture in Norway is heavily supported by the government, is protected by law and heavily subsidized.

What describes the work of farmers is cooperation, which is somehow caused by geography and climate. Great emphasis is placed on minimal use of antibiotics. Instead, animal welfare has been taken more seriously since consumers have become interested in it in recent years.

We visited several farms. The most memorable was my visit to a farm that cooperates with drug addicts with a criminal past (Green Care Cooperative).

As Norway is not in the European Union, the challenges facing Norwegian agriculture are different to Polish.

I was very interested in the functioning of the TINE dairy cooperative. It has existed for over a hundred years, consumers trust it. This brand is recognised in Norway just like Coca Cola. At all decision-making levels there are farmers who have been trained to take up the function. TINE hasn't had a single scandal.

Despite the historical differences and different laws, I can certainly draw inspiration from Norwegian

experience, and take from it an example of the trust on which they base their cooperation: transparency at every stage of food production.

Reflecting on BOND, Wioletta says:

Today, agriculture is a niche in which few people have reliable knowledge.

Consumers, by cutting off direct contact with farmers and their farms, succumb to trends and are susceptible to greenwashing. When choosing products, they are guided primarily by price, appearance, dietary values, and fashion for superfoods.

Large corporations contribute significantly to information manipulation, support industrial agriculture, and take over the seed market.

Being a farmer, in addition to the skills of how to produce food, is today associated with a maze of legal regulations, including sales, sanitary requirements, etc. Institutions designed for this often do not fulfill their supporting and advisory roles. Excessive bureaucratization takes a long time and causes a sense of powerlessness and confusion. Many small farms feel legal changes as well as the current food trading and super-supermarketisation system as having a negative impact.

My parents' generation mainly worked on the farm, and sales were not a problem. There were local markets, e.g. for strawberries, sugar beets, dairies, etc., which ensured they sold their produce.

Nowadays, apart from dealing with food production, a farmer spends a lot of time looking for sales methods and often has several distribution channels, such as food cooperatives, (CSA - RWS / Community Supported Agriculture - Rolnictwo Wspierane przez Społeczność), mail-order sales, local stores, markets, restaurants and farm sales, which takes up a lot of time and needs a multitude of competencies.

The farmer's profession is associated with high workload, high risk, a lack of financial stability and difficulties in distributing produced food at a fair price. It is still associated with low social status. Many farmers have no prospect of passing their farm on to their loved ones, or their knowledge to the next generation who could benefit from it and continue their work.

The farmer's profession is not attractive or prestigious and few people choose it voluntarily, consciously. I observe there is a positive phenomenon of interest from people from the city in the production of food in the countryside, living in and co-creating a contemporary village. Usually these people have many non-agricultural competencies that enrich local potential.

The challenge for modern farmers is the amount of competencies and skills necessary to run a farm and distribute their products. Farmers need continuous training, including how to adapt a farm to climate change, and there is little support from institutions, so it is difficult access to such knowledge.

The emergence of new food cooperatives - like CSA - RWS, which performs many functions - is a positive phenomenon. In addition to direct farmer-consumer contact, relationships are created, small and local supportive communities are created, and above all, access to knowledge about agriculture and products is created.

The agro-ecological farmers' environment is a minority in Poland, but it is growing and strengthening, creating a space for knowledge exchange and cooperation. They are farmers working with passion and love for Mother Earth, adapting to climate change. I see the potential for agricultural development in grassroots initiatives such as Nyeleni Polska, Living Earth Coalition, organizations supporting ecological, agro-ecological farmers, cooperatives, and CSA - RWS.

Czech Republic

Vojtěch Veselý

An independent organic farmer, Vojtěch has been running educational programs at his farm for 9 years, as well as coordinating the Czech WWOOF network for 8 years, introducing social farming and employing socially excluded people. In 2007, he created Biostatek, a small-scale organic, social, community-supported educational farm located in Valeč, Western Bohemia.

He participated in the study-tour to Spain and the Bond ToT in Córdoba in 2018. From the study tour in Spain, he was inspired by the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) and mobilized to increase awareness and training on PGS in Czech Republic as the right strategy for supporting local food communities interested in quality products.

He has been co-organizing events on his farm, such as Become Sherlock at an Organic Farm, for consumers, gardeners, farmers, NGOs and academics to trigger interest and learning on these methods. His intention is to support the transition to a society where organic farming is the norm rather than a niche.

He writes:

Nowadays at Biostatek we have been making a set of tips about what to pay attention to: that means a multifunctional farm with primary production, food processing and food distribution. We have created a set of instructional questions dealing with different details from our everyday praxis, as well as evaluating tables.

The next step may be a set of suggestions for the development of Biostatek, according to the wishes of experienced inspection-performing shareholders.

This was one of the first examples of a form of guarantee that generally fulfils the content of the PGS conception. It becomes fully autonomous in the world of regulations, for launching products on the open market.

This concept of a Czech variation of PGS is not a superstructure to state-guaranteed, or even certified production, as it usually is in New Zealand, North American or Western European systems. It is not an informational system for orientation of customers, as it usually is in so-called developing countries (Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Ecuador), which is how the PGS defines the IFOAM. For the introduced version of mutual guarantee, we spread the collocation of an autonomous²⁵ PGS.



Biostatek Valeč – Vojtěch Veselý presents the farm during the PGS visit as part of the “Become Sherlock at an Organic Farm” event, credited @ Šárka Krčílková for AMPI, 2019

25) The Czech Republic does not have a regulatory environment conducive to PGS and only third-party certified products are allowed to be labeled 'organic'. European PGS certified producers, unable to make organic claims on their products, can rely on their tight connections with their consumers, often an integral part of the PGS itself. This is why, despite legal obstacles, PGS initiatives are spreading in Europe as a complementary tool for certification particularly suitable to those groups of producers and consumers pursuing more meaningful relationships between production and consumption. Vojtěch and Czech representatives NGO Lovime.bio (<https://www.lovime.bio/projekty/pgs/>) researched the synergies that lay behind PGS and CSA systems. On one side they explored the ways PGS can contribute to the CSA approach offering a system to ensure quality and continued improvement of practices. On the other side, they showcased examples of how CSA can inspire PGS in building robust solidarity economy and cultivate relationships between producers and consumers. If you want to follow Vojtěch on his journey from the transition from organic certification by third parties to the independent, autonomous PGS certification in his group of farmers and his consumers, follow him on FB - <https://www.facebook.com/biostatek/>. The search for this participatory form of certification in the Czech Republic is currently being developed by organic flower growers. Others producers will follow, mainly from the ranks of small scale farmers.

Anna Page Vejvodová

Anna is an agriculture business advisor and young farmer interested in sustainable food, regenerative farming and environmental land management. She is renovating a small family farm in the Czech Republic.

The farm specialises in organic milk production from water buffalo and produces its own branded products, for example cheese and yoghurt, which they sell direct to consumers. Thanks to the BOND project, they chose to join the existing Prague CSA network in spring 2019.

Anna participated in the BOND study tour to Norway. She says:

We spent five intense days looking at different ways of cooperation, with the motto “Together we are stronger” applied to every sector. Organised cooperation has a very long tradition in Norway. However, the unique collaboration of cooperatives at all levels is made possible by strong motivation. I perceived three main points relevant to the Czech Republic:

- *Cooperation must come from bottom-up; it cannot be forced. It is optimal if the managers of the cooperative are the farmers themselves.*
- *In the case of more extensive cooperation, it is necessary to teach management and to provide information support to them.*
- *The aim of the cooperative must be better market positioning (financial aspect). Public goods can become a side effect. But they can never come first; it wouldn't work.*



Ohař Farm - Anna Page Vejvodová taking care of water buffalos, credited @ Jan Šipek for AMPI, 2019

Martin Rosenbaum

Martin is a small-scale family farmer based on the Lukava farm in northern Czech Republic. His interest and experience with organic farming is focused on promoting CSA, access to land²⁶ and training new entrants into Czech farming.

He was forced to close his first Lukava farm because of lack of access to land and because of this, since 2016, he has been collaborating with AMPI and NGO as CoolAND to promote peasant farming in Czech Republic. Through this collaboration he has teamed up with the Foundation for Soil and instead of dairy sheep milk production, he wants to use horse-power in his CSA family farm, and to establish an Apprenticeship training scheme for new farmers interested in agroecological principles.

Martin participated in the UK study tour and Landworkers' Alliance National Thematic Workshop in the UK, and he attended the BOND ToTs held in Córdoba in September 2018. Since then he has been actively seeking funds for a farm incubator programme and for the Apprenticeship scheme²⁷, despite the fact that he is a full time farmer and a father.

Martin explains how the BOND experience started a new phase of his life. He was refreshed and inspired, and he learned the importance of being more connected and of gaining a broader perspective. He now actively cooperates with other organic and biodynamic farmers and, in his farm incubator programme, he sees a big potential for change in Central Europe.

He writes of his BOND experiences:

Working horses are still used in logging and these loggers have some organization, but there are now not many horse-powered farms, and we don't have a group or any organization.

In September 2018, I attended BOND Project training in Córdoba, Spain, where I learned some methodologies on how to collaborate. So, in February 2019 I organized a meeting in the Czech Republic for anyone involved or interested in modern horse-powered farming.

People who do this sort of farming are usually very remote. It is good for them to have some connection and community, if they want it. Many people really appreciated the meetings.

I found out there are horse-powered farmers in the Czech Republic I didn't know existed! I thought I knew everyone in this particular world, but through the events I organized I've met some farmers who have been doing it in the Czech Republic for years. Although I'd had an idea to bring organization to the horse-powered farmers of my country, I never imagined I could stand up in front of them and talk and teach in this way. The training from the BOND project gave me the confidence to do it.



Martin Rosenbaum using the horse-power on Lukava family farm, credited @ Alena Wranová for CoolLAND, 2017

26) For more information on the topic of access to land (A2L) not only in the Czech Republic, follow the European A2L network, <https://www.accesstoland.eu/>

27) Martin and AMPI have decided to build connections with the reliable Apprenticeship programme, which is ready to train people interested in organic farming through long-term internships and, if interested, to provide them with advice on starting their own business. During the educational process, theoretical training alternates with practice. <https://www.asociaceampi.cz/co-delame/ucime-nove-zemedelce/>

Farmland in Świętokrzyskie region in Poland
credited @ Dariusz Bałuk for SIE, 2020

5 Issues/Outcomes

Issues/Outcomes

This chapter captures some of the main issues that emerged from the dialogue triggered by the BOND activities in the two countries. We will also outline the concrete outcomes and recommendations our collectives focused on.

Local workshops

A series of local workshops were held in 2019 to analyse, in a participatory way, the constraints and barriers to collective action and to identify major areas of action. The local workshops were also an opportunity to identify key topics to be taken forward during the national thematic workshops.

In Poland, small scale farmers gathered for discussion and highlighted several barriers to cooperation, among which these were key:

- lack of trust and confidence among farmers
- the weakness of farmer organizations and their limited loyalty in collective producers groups
- the lack of collaboration between small scale and large scale farmers
- lack of trust in the certified organic products

Economic and policy factors voiced during the discussion were no less important. For instance:

- the lack of capital/money
- the need for subsidies to production
- the restrictions and limitations on food processing in farms
- no sale production guarantee to the market or long distance between organic farms
- the low awareness/knowledge of organic farming certification rules among customers
- several political divisions.

A second workshop was held on mapping the main social actors who could support small scale farmers. The major conclusion was that interesting relations were mapped to different actors and the starting point for engagement was to find common points for commercialization. Many actors turned out to be excluded from of the discussion, like trade unions. However, there was a high potential for building networks.

The Czech small-scale organic farmers involved in the project used the opportunity for local dialogue to define their “Value framework for agroecological farmers”, which is summarised in the following propositions:

- to take care of crop rotation and varied crop plans, improve the soil by their farming, and grow own seeds
- to produce food for themselves and for those around them, not for the anonymous market, but instead be involved in short, local distribution chains (CSA, farmers’ markets, cooperative shops)
- to pass on their experience to other people interested in agriculture (e.g. through an incubation farm, WWO-OF, environmental education, etc.), alone or through people or organizations closely linked to the farm
- to care actively for the environment and promote biodiversity (landscape, species and genetic) by restoring shrub wood, hedge and hedgerows, and similar habitats to support a diverse landscape and forms of life
- to be actively involved in improving the conditions for sound farm management by informing society about the benefits of agroecology and having the possibility to share with other agroecological farmers.

National workshops

Poland

The National Workshop in Poland (24-26 June 2019) was dedicated to the Declaration of Peasants’ Rights (UNDROP) and allowed the creation of an important space for dialogue and exchange among farmers, civil society organizations and academia on an extremely important document. Paula Gioia, a member

of the International Coordination Committee of La Via Campesina (LVC) illustrated the process for the creation of such a Declaration at the international level and proposed examples for its implementation.

The participants, inspired by the inputs from LVC and from exchanges during the event, agreed on a way forward and developed a road map on how to communicate the content of the Declaration with policy makers and people involved in its implementation within the Polish legal system. The major areas of action envisaged in the roadmap concern:

- raising awareness about the Declaration within the peasant society in Poland
- engaging in joint dissemination activities with non-governmental organizations and movements dealing with human rights, ecology, agriculture, food sovereignty and sustainable development as well as scientific and research units
- gaining broad public support through the realization that, indirectly, the Declaration applies to all people (e.g. with respect to the issue raised during the workshop about the availability of good local and seasonal food at a reasonable price)
- efficient initiation, coordination and evaluation of targeted communication activities.

An important highlight of the workshop was the application of Lego™ Serious Play® - a gamification method to create cohesion and to foster dialogue among the participants. One of these groups developed a common vision for the future, which illustrates the importance of the problems raised during the workshop:

“We, people living in harmony with nature and cooperating with each other, use new technologies and share knowledge; being aware of the dangers of access to food, we care for soil and water and we care for biodiversity”.



Lego Serious Play during the National Workshop in Poland, credited @ Łukasz Nowak www.nowespojrzenie.pl, 2019

Czech Republic

Two follow-up national thematic workshops took place in the Czech Republic.

The first was held 11–12 May 2019. The goal of the workshop was to kick-start a discussion with small-scale farmers, stakeholders and NGOs about the fact that the Czech Republic should define a process and course of action leading to the formulation of a comprehensive manifesto inspired primarily by the People's Food Policy²⁶, and other Food Policy documents. A guest from the Landworkers' Alliance, Dee Woods, introduced the concept to participants, who broadened their horizons of opportunities for strengthening food sovereignty.

The second workshop, held on 30 September 2019, focused on CAP after 2020 in the Czech Republic and the vision for the future.

During this workshop, the debate focused on how best to support and protect Europe's small farms, which are increasingly more endangered than large farms because a farm of five hectares is still recognized as economically risky.

The debate identified the following key challenges that need to be overcome to protect the future of small farms in our regions:

- Distribution of subsidies - up to 70% of payments are not prevented from heading towards environmental measures; this connects to discussion of a redistributive payment per hectare. The problem includes a warning about the disappearance of small farms caused by concentrating payments to large enterprises under the CAP.
- Competition between large and small farms (small farmers/farms under ten hectares, which is over 80% within the EU).
- Environmental vs. economic needs - the importance of public money for public goods, which should be perceived sensitively by the CAP.
- Common food policy does not replace CAP but can develop. Farmers will then be able to choose their eco-schemes.
- Fairer acknowledgment of the importance of farmers and farming in society.

Overall, it was clear from the National Thematic Workshops that greater participation of society was needed. The new CAP will be mostly coordinated by individual EU countries, so there will be a greater need to talk more about the topic and its impact and importance. Broader frameworks such as the UN Decade of Family Farming or the UNDROP must be taken into account.

All groups of participants represented, including from the Ministry of Agriculture, agreed that this should be a way of reducing the size of farms. This is a successful agreement given the current average size of farms in the Czech Republic. Likewise, the change in thinking to support the reduction of the maximum acreage for the cultivation of one crop shows that 30 ha will be a significant determining figure in this country in the future.

Training of Trainers (ToT)

The ToT on “Farmer empowerment through the creation of social capital” was carried out in Poland from 2-3 December 2019 and preceded the Policy Round Table.

Participants analyzed the dimensions of organizational performance and collectively formulated strategies to strengthen the performance of a hypothetical organization in order to practice the methodological framework. They also developed individual action plans to apply acquired knowledge and disseminate it in their own country. In doing so, participants will also help to catalyze and support the potential for networking and improved performance within their own organizations and communities.

26) A People's Food Policy aims to map out what an integrated food policy would look like if people were put at the heart of decision-making. A growing group of people from different civil society organizations, unions and community groups working across the food system have come together to develop the ideas and positions in this document. <https://www.peoplesfoodpolicy.org/>

From the results of the written evaluations of the participants, there was a large consensus on the high relevance of the topics and tools received.

Policy Round Table

The Policy Round Table gathered farmers, NGO representatives, a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture, legal experts and farm sector members from Poland and from eight European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia). It began by recalling the results of the national thematic workshop held in Poland in June 2019 on the UNDROP and the specific definitions it carries on the rights to seeds, right to land, right to use traditional medicinal plants, and highlighting the content of Article 19 of the UNDROP.²⁹

From the three presentations at the event, three main areas for seed management emerged:

1. Legal aspects of the declaration in relation to access to seeds, raised by Mrs Sonia Priwiezienczew (Fondation AgriNatura).
 2. Seed policies, legal standards and regulations for organic production, raised by Dorota Metera (BIOEXPERT - certification body in agriculture in PL).
 3. Seed policy impacts on Peasant rights in relation to market rules, derogations, conservation of seeds, seed reform and Intellectual Property Rights, raised by Mrs Fulya Batur (Arche Noah, Austria/Belgium).
- Group activities were also carried out for sharing ideas and experiences (led by Monika Styczek-Kuryluk) of the participants on the practice of exchanging seeds between entities (farmers' and other organizations, for example), availability of organic seeds, strengths and weaknesses of marketing organic seeds and access to knowledge on this topic.

After the group activities there was a wide space for debate with the active participation of all participants, and exchange of opinions and knowledge. During the discussion several topics were raised and led to the final results of the Policy Round Table, which are a series of recommendations at a national and at European levels.

On the national level created by the Polish working group, emphasis was put on the need to provide:

1. Support for creating and protecting a peasant seed system, including farmers' models of low cost seed production (BOND collective seeds initiative), as well as community seed banks to allow farmers to exchange seeds and strengthen networks of seeds producers at a national and regional level (in order to make more organic seeds available through national markets).
2. Support to farmers' associations to register as operators for plant passports.
3. Education opportunities about seeds by public sector institutions and supporting various forms of knowledge exchange on seed production.
4. Creation of a network at a national level to produce and consume good quality organic food; provision of trainings for consumers about organic farming; financial support for farmers' organic seed production.
5. Support to the creation of new forms of collective action promoting advisory services.
6. Links to the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, helping people to collect more information about and connect effectively with this important strategy.

On the European level, there were calls for:

1. Creation of a database on seeds at EU level.
2. Creation of opportunities to establish a diverse, commercial seed market.
3. Financial support for farmers' organic seed production.
4. Creation of a working group who can react to law Reg. 2018/848³⁰ and seeds law acts.
5. Clear and stable rules and laws on organic farming.

29) For Article 19 of the UNDROP, see: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/165>

30) Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 PE/62/2017/REV/1



Orłowiny - a vegetable organic farm in Poland, credited @ Tomasz Włoszczowski for SIE, 2020

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Another important result from the BOND project was the conclusion of Memoranda of Understanding as an example of the new forms of cooperation that derived from this process.

Poland

In Poland, the MoU was signed in February 2020 by six parties: Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny, Fundacja Rolniczej Różnorodności Biologicznej AgriNatura, Jurajska Kooperatywa Spożywcza, Związek Stowarzyszeń Polska Zielona Sieć, Fundacja Mała Wielka Zmiana, Ekoland Lubelski.

The Polish MoU had two main purposes: to set out objectives and a framework for cooperation between farmers and stakeholders around all aspects of seeds; and to lay out the terms and conditions for collaborating parties, strengthening their joint actions and helping them gain greater success in advancing the common agenda on seeds.

Czech Republic

The Czech MoU, also signed in February 2020, is another good example of the successful involvement of one of the BOND farmers in collective action.

Martin Rosenbaum from Lukava Farm, AMPI and ČTPEZ (Czech Technological Platform for Organic Agriculture, member of IFOAM Organics European) demonstrated one possible example of a new model for supporting a more independent functioning of small and medium-sized (family) farms in the Czech Republic and not to focus solely on CAP and subsidies.

The main objective of the first of Czech MoU is to support the development, scope and outreach of the

organic farming sector in the Czech Republic, by:

- ensuring the long-term development of sustainable agriculture through the development of a strong network of farms that will educate and inspire new farmers with an apprenticeship scheme
- the marketing of organic products (mainly through CSAs and other solidarity-based systems)
- the collaboration and dissemination of good environmental practices for new farmers involved in the apprenticeship scheme.

The second Czech MoU focused more on cooperation in campaigns to promote sustainable agriculture. The idea of the collaboration between AMPI and Hnutí DUHA – Friends of the Earth Czech Republic – emerged during the September Czech National Workshop. This cooperation aimed to transform the discourse about farming in the Czech Republic towards agroecology, as a touchstone of activities for both organizations and their networks.



Zaręby Kościelne a farmland landscape in central Poland, credited @ Tomasz Włoszczowski for SIE, 2017

Farmland in Świętokrzyskie region in Poland
credited @ Dariusz Bałuk for SIE, 2020



6 Conclusions

Conclusions

The BOND project activities terminated in October 2020 with an enormous number of experiences, stories, bonds, bridges and links between the people from 34 European countries. Thanks to the BOND community, any farmer, policy maker, academic, customer - anyone interested in collective action - can benefit from the legacy of BOND³¹.

BOND also anticipated the newly announced EC policy on the food system *A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system*,³² and allowed for thorough reflection and debate across several countries on key topics such as the sustainability of agriculture, the new role of farmers, the importance of agroecology and organic farming for healthy food systems.

The last year of the BOND project implementation, 2020, opened a significant new phase. The EU Commission published its work programme, where, under the priority of a European Green Deal and the policy objective of establishing Sustainability of Food Systems, it confirmed the launch of the Farm to Fork Strategy, while the COVID-19 coronavirus crisis was hitting Europe.

The EC's proposed architecture for the CAP 2021-2027³³ is built on 9 ambitious objectives, focusing on rebalancing the power in the food system and setting clear environmental and climate change goals. However, although the EC has set up the vision, for the first time in the history of CAP it will be up to individual member states to draft their own criteria, priorities and establish evaluation mechanisms. This creates a window of opportunity to both set up and implement very ambitious criteria and mechanisms.

At this point, the themes of food sovereignty and self-sufficiency have suddenly become much more crucial than in the past. Thanks to this process, the need for agroecology, of which even small farmers are an integral part, is more strongly emphasized. From China to the US, consumers' interest in local foods has grown, and for example, the CSA season has seen tremendous potential for demand, and new entrants in consumer groups in many countries.³⁴ The need for short consumer chains, as well as the desire of people to be able to live closer to nature, maintain the biodiversity of life during quarantine and lockdown has become extremely important.

From politicians to the general population, people are trying to find a recipe for preserving the opportunity to feed their communities with, ideally, organic products that respect natural resources, people and democratic principles. Many of these processes began by building the farmer movement from below, and are still a major inspiration for Central Europe. You can read this inspiration in the collected statements of BOND farmers.

Still, many farmers' voices have not yet been heard. This is true for Jyoti Fernandes, an agroecological smallholder farmer based in Dorset, UK, whose statement indicates more than just common agreement: "For a long time our political voice has been marginalised, but I witness daily how we have influenced how the people in power view agriculture."³⁵ After the years of shouting, the not-always audible voices and arguments of small farmers and peasants, may perhaps be fulfilled.

31) The BOND website offers a wealth of material encompassing stories, training materials, publications and methodologies: www.bondproject.eu

32) *Farm to Fork Strategy*, European Commission - Food Safety, accessed July 4, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en

33) European Commission, "Future of the common agricultural policy", last modified, May 28, 2020 https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap_en

34) CSA is a Safe and Resilient Alternative to Industrial Agriculture in the Time of Covid-19, Urgenci, last modified, 8 April, 2020, <http://urgenci.net/community-supported-agriculture-is-a-safe-and-resilient-alternative-to-industrial-agriculture-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>

35) Farmers unite against corporate giants", Atlas of the Future, Landworkers'Alliance, last modified 28 May, 2019, <https://atlasofthefuture.org/project/landworkers-alliance/>

Jyoti is a member of the Landworkers' Alliance in the UK and is on the coordinating committee for the European Coordination of Via Campesina. Her current work with Landworkers' Alliance is researching a Post-Brexit alternative agricultural subsidy regime for the UK that promotes agroecological farming, food sovereignty and localised food systems.

Likewise, many organizations and stakeholders have not delayed making public statements in support of moving in this direction. This is the case, for example, with the representation of IFOAM as a promoter of organic farming. Jan Plagge, IFOAM EU President, recently stated in a press release³⁶:

“Proposing an EU target for organic land is a landmark decision that puts organic farming at the core of a transition of European agriculture towards agroecology. Organic farming is a successful economic model for farmers with proven benefits for the environment. Making it a cornerstone of a future EU sustainable food system is the right decision ... We need to transform EU agriculture, if we want to address the climate and biodiversity crisis and make our farming systems more resilient.



Farm to Fork EU Strategy

In his statement Plagge identified how crucial the negotiations over CAP reforms are to in achieving the EU’s Farm to Fork and Biodiversity goals. By integrating these strategies into CAP, the EU will incentivize a program that rewards farmers for their contributions to the public good and our shared future.

According to IFOAM³⁷, the EU goal reaching 25% of organic land by 2030 is achievable if the CAP provides necessary remuneration for the benefits of organic conversion and maintenance, through existing rural development policies or innovative tools like eco-schemes. Including demand-side measures like promotion schemes and increasing the share of organic products in schools and hospitals through green public procurement is a smart choice, as this push-pull approach has proven successful at increasing organic farming in countries like Denmark, as well as for small farmers representing good examples from Poland and the Czech Republic.

This forthcoming strategy could support many essential areas, ones that farmers have discussed and defined through their three-year journey on the BOND project. And, step by step, the strategy can succeed in bringing the operation of the agricultural sector in Central Europe closer to recommendations that would meet the needs of all people, including respecting the needs of the small farmers involved.

This could be one of the paths that everyone takes, at their discretion, even in the case of the two countries to which this publication has been dedicated. They have cooperated and still devote time not only to the creation of common recommendations, but also to spreading their learning from the BOND project and from their own, often local, activities. These activities, and those of the many other inspired BOND participants, will contribute to the creation of a farmer movement inspired by the principles of agroecology for a healthy food system.

³⁶) Press Release: IFOAM EU welcomes landmark decision to put organic at the heart of future European food system, IFOAM Organics Europe, last modified 20 May 2020, <https://www.organicseurope.bio/news/press-release-ifoam-eu-welcomes-landmark-decision-to-put-organic-at-the-heart-of-future-european-food-system/>

³⁷) Organic is a part of the solution, speakers of European Organic Congress agree”, News Press Release IFOAM Organics EU, las modified, July 3, 2020, <https://www.organicseurope.bio/news/press-release-organic-is-part-of-the-solution-speakers-of-european-organic-congress-agree/>



THIS PROJECT HAS RECEIVED FUNDING
FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HORIZON 2020
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME
UNDER GRANT AGREEMENT N° 774208

This document reflects only the author's view and
the Agency and the Commission are not responsible
for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



**Bringing Organisations
& Network Development
to higher levels
in the Farming sector in Europe**

www.bondproject.eu

D O C U M E N T