



# Nos Campagnes en Résilience

Collective Reflections within  
Socio-Ecological Transition

**2020-2022**



*We are very grateful to all those who have contributed to this project, near and far: volunteers, farmers, rural actors. Without you, it would not have been possible. Thanks to you, people are at the heart of this project.*

Cover photo: Actors on the ground break bread with participants from 12 European countries during the Farmhouse Banquet at Ferme des 7 Chemins, France, during the Rural Resilience gathering, October 2022.

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Meeting with farmers in Savoie, July 2021

# About the Project

ARC2020 has a long history of supporting organisations and initiatives that cultivate a rural *art de vivre* in harmony with people and planet. From 2020 to 2022, we embarked on a new challenge in rural France: to seek out projects and actors on the ground who, day after day, are building new ways to live in the countryside.

Through “Nos Campagnes en Résilience”, we have had the chance to explore French initiatives in agroecological transition, and the resilience of rural territories in France and in Europe.

## Building resilience collectively

Our goal, in going to meet farmers, is to establish relationships of trust, and to understand how peasants organise their lives and work, and collectively build resilience. The

intention of the project is to bring these farmers together, and to help give them a voice in European conversations.

We wanted to understand the relationships between these new projects and agroecological initiatives. How do they share experiences? How have farmers and rural inhabitants organised and mobilised to prepare for new challenges? How do they broach, collectively, concepts of well-being, solidarity, and changes of practices?

We are persuaded that every initiative is unique. There is no one “correct” model; every territory is specific. However, we are convinced that every experiment can contribute to another.

## Farmers speak up and take action

The project gives voice to farmers and allows them opportunities to discuss their experiments, at local and European levels.

We work to spotlight these farmers and their lived experience, to reflect with them on common questions, and foster dialogue with European policymakers on these matters.

It's a long road to building a new way of imagining life in the countryside. Consequently, this project is a journey of regular exchanges and our milestones are larger gatherings.

As we complete this first phase of the project, we are ensuring its continuity. From 2023 “Nos Campagnes en Résilience” will be renamed “Rural Resilience” to reflect the shift of focus from France to the wider Europe: zooming out to zoom in on more territories.

The project continues to be an opportunity to contribute to societal change and to envisage an evolution of rural territories. This evolution belongs to all of us; it will be whatever we decide it will be.

Farmer Pierre Gachet takes part in a working session on “Access to land: Finding a fair balance in land use”, during the Rural Resilience gathering in La Ducherais educational centre, September 2022







# Project Timeline

<b>Winter 2020</b>	Project launch Framing and planning Soup and Talk (DE)
<b>Spring 2021</b>	Farm visits and meetings with rural actors (Drôme)
<b>Summer 2021</b>	Farm visits and meetings with rural actors (Savoie, Loire-Atlantique, Finistère, Côtes-d'Armor)
<b>Autumn 2021</b>	Day of workshops at Ferme des 7 chemins (Loire-Atlantique)
<b>Winter 2021</b>	Analysis of interviews Soup and Talk (DE) Lecture in University College Cork (IRL)
<b>Spring 2022</b>	Salon de l'Agriculture (industry fair in Paris) Salon à la Ferme (counter-event organised by Confédération Paysanne, the French chapter of Via Campesina) AlterRurality conference (DK) Visites in Luberon Visites in Mayenne
<b>Summer 2022</b>	Online gathering of participants to present learnings so far
<b>Autumn 2022</b>	Rural Resilience Gathering (Loire-Atlantique)
<b>Winter 2022</b>	Conclusions Preparations for the next phase of the project



Postcard designed by young illustrator Jules Briand for the Rural Resilience gathering





Day of workshops at Ferme des 7 chemins, September 2021

# Introduction

*Dear Reader,*

*Over the first two years of this project, we were keen to tell compelling stories of enthusiastic experiments, to support the transition, and to show that new practices in rural territories are possible and livable.*

*We hope this will be a source of inspiration to be pursued, in France and beyond, by each of us at our own pace (albeit not too slowly) and in keeping with our specific set of circumstances.*

*Against a grim backdrop of successive crises, a vision of the future that is not always optimistic, nature challenging humankind day after day, and humankind choosing individualism and ultra-liberalism over solidarity and kindness – we wanted to offer some small rays of hope.*

*“Utopia is possible” – Participant at the Rural Resilience gathering*

*The French countryside is a hive of initiatives that are building a different kind of society – one that cares for people and planet, thus ensuring a fair and sustainable socio-ecological transition.*



*Each of these actors, in their own way, is taking part in this transition that is difficult to define. Every initiative is unique and tailored to its own territory and needs. Yet we've noticed a number of factors that are key to envisaging this transition.*

*"The alternative of today is the normal of tomorrow" – Hugues VERNIER*

From all these vulnerabilities, these women and men have created a richness, which they use as a force to live their ideals.

Stereotypes are hard to shake and can sometimes make life hard. However their ideas are slowly gaining ground. They are all imagining new ways to inhabit their territories, new forms of work and political engagement.

*"It's society that makes individuals vulnerable" - Morgane Large, participant in the Rural Resilience gathering*

*"How you feel at work is no longer a subject for coffee with the girls" – Sylvie Chapeau*

"What does socio-ecological transition mean to you? To us?" Collectively assembling a socio-ecological transition puzzle at the Rural Resilience gathering





Farm walk at La Ducherais, the venue for the Rural Resilience gathering in autumn 2022

# *Meet the Participants!*



## Stéphane Airault

*Vegetable grower. GAEC Le Jardin des Pierres Bleues, Vay, Loire-Atlantique*

- 6.5 ha with a pond / unheated greenhouses
- Horticulture, cca. 50 different vegetables
- 5 associates + 1 part-time worker to cover holidays
- Direct sales (markets/CSA)

Stéphane loves numbers. Armed with his calculator, he's figured out a viable way for 5 associates to share the work and harvest the rewards in their 6.4 ha farm. By keeping costs down, making strategic choices, not outsourcing tasks, and reflecting together on their priorities, this cooperative farm proves that you can live well from a small market garden. It's about using the space wisely. Discreet and determined, Stéphane communicates strong political messages for societal change.

## Julie Auger & Vincent Peynot

*Vegetable growers. Ferme de Pitoué, Campbon, Loire-Atlantique*

- 4.5 ha cultivated land (in total 7.5 ha + small plots to make up the minimum 10 ha)
- 2 associates, 3 workers, 1 seasonal worker
- Horticulture, 45 varieties of vegetables, sheep for land management in a valley
- Direct sales: CSA / Organic cooperative / Markets

Julie and Vincent have been market gardeners for the past dozen years. For them, the farm is a place for seeding their values. Whatever they put in place must be coherent with their lifestyle choices. It's not always easy! They are very active in their local network, which is a powerful space for discussion, sharing and moving forward – although without the help of three workers on the farm, they wouldn't be able to be so involved. Aside from production, Julie and Vincent believe the farm should be a place for coming together, and want to open the farm gates. There is no shortage of innovative ideas for new activities.





## Gilles Avocat

*Volunteer*

A retired farmer, Gilles is still very active in farmer networks: you could say it's in his DNA. A writer in his spare time, he also devotes a lot of time to local development. He created a non-profit, "For a desirable future", that puts at the heart of the debate societal issues in connection with farming and citizenship. He refuses to let things go round in circles. Curious and intuitive, Gilles is not afraid to stick his neck out and make decisions to live harmoniously with his environment.



## Sébastien Blache

*Mixed farmer. La ferme du Grand Laval, Montélier en Drôme*

- 45 ha, including 2.5 ha of orchards
- Horticulture / Orchards (15 varieties of apricots, apples, peaches, kiwis, figs) / Sheep / Cereal crops for the production of flour / Beans / Pulses / Chickpeas / Wheat (20 varieties) / Turkeys / Hatchery / Cockerels and laying hens
- 2 associates
- On-farm sales / School visits (1 day of work per week)/ Luxury grocers in Paris
- Founder of the non-profit Fermes sauvages et paysannes ("wild and peasant farms")

Sébastien is passionate about 'wild nature'. On his farm, he's made this passion his work. The farm is designed to provide a home for wildlife: birds, foxes, rabbits are all welcome, with respect for the crops nonetheless ! Nothing is left to chance; biodiversity is factored into every new production. There is no doubt on this farm that cohabitation is possible.



## Céline & Benoît Blet

*Wine growers. Les Terres blanches, Oiron, Deux-Sèvres*

- 10 ha
- Viticulture
- 4 people working on the farm
- Direct sales + sales to buyers worldwide (Japan, USA)

Céline and Benoît moved into a small wine-growing domain a dozen years ago. In their wine cellars in the heart of the village of Oiron, warmth, wine and poetry are in plentiful supply. Both are passionate about their wine, and bubbling with stories that bring their work to life. Céline's laugh is infectious, Benoît's anecdotes are fascinating, and he brings more than one bottle with him wherever he goes!



## Cédric Briand, Mathieu Hamon, Hervé Merand

*Dairy farmers. La Ferme des 7 chemins, Plessé, Loire-Atlantique*

- 63 ha
- 3 associates + 1 worker
- Bretonne pie noir dairy cows, on-farm dairy
- Direct sales, eatery, farm shop

Mathieu is a farmer and singer. Mathieu, Hervé and Cédric are a terrific trio of dairy farmers. The milk from their herd of Bretonne Pie Noire cows is made into Gwell, butter, cheese and crème fraîche in their on-farm creamery. Activists at heart, they try to push boundaries and are keen to experiment and drive change. Their farm is a lively place for debate and welcoming to visitors. These three smiling faces, always ready to share new, people-centred ad-

ventures, are a ray of hope for transition. If you're lucky, you might get a song from Mathieu, farmer and singer!



## La Caillasse

*Food justice association*

We met Clément and Arthur, two members of the non-profit La Caillasse, in Cucuron in the Luberon mountains. Farmers and activists working to improve ties between the countryside and nearby Marseille, they put all their spare time into this pet project.

Between growing vegetables and maintaining olive groves and vineyards, they organise monthly collections with other farmers in the sector to supply disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city. They also bring city dwellers to help out on the farm.

It's their way to "participate in collective engagement for solidarity and a better life."



## Olivier Cartier Moulin

*Rural actor*

Olivier is a man with a thousand ideas a minute. A force of nature, in his village he has started a CSA, third spaces, incredible edibles, and more. He also co-steers the food and agriculture group within the Council for Territorial Development.

At the beginning of lockdown, he spearheaded the purchase of a van ("Le p'tit camion") to support small farmers and deliver food to vulnerable and house-bound people.

A dedicated changemaker committed to environmental causes, he works day after day towards an ecological and just transition.



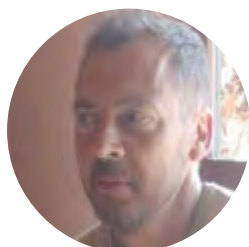


## Sylvie Chapeau & Fabrice Gouin

*Dairy farmers. GAEC La Ferme de Camonteau, Campbon, Loire-Atlantique*

- 77 ha and 50 dairy cows (90% grassland + 10% maize and cereals)
- 2 associates
- Sales to AGRIAL cooperative
- Cross breeding

Sylvie and Fabrice have a dairy farm cooperative (GAEC). They've made the choice to not do direct sales but to join a dairy cooperative. On their farm, they've had to make compromises to achieve a good work/life balance. Sylvie is very involved in the local CIVAM (centre for farming and rural development initiatives). Fabrice is involved in the CUMA machinery cooperative. Sylvie is very interested in well-being and working conditions, and had the opportunity to address this topic with CIVAM as part of a TRANSAC European project.



## Fabienne & Sébastien Corbé

*Farmer-bakers. Le fournil de la barre, Sainte-Anne-Sur-Brivet, Loire-Atlantique*

- 48 ha distributed between two different municipalities
- Farmer-bakers / Poultry (capons, ducks, chickens) / Processing / Cereals including 5 ha of buckwheat for flour
- 2 associates + 1 worker on 28 hours/week
- Direct sales (markets/ on the farm / 2 CSAs)

Passionate about bread from a young age, and shaped by a farming background, Sébastien and Fabienne are farmer-bakers. Their activity is shared between the bakery, growing grain in the field, and poultry. Their land is distributed over two municipalities at some distance from where they live, which does not facilitate their work. They are very involved in a collective abattoir organised by the CUMA machinery cooperative. One worker helps lighten their load on the farm. In their spare time, they are involved in a cultural association, « Le Barouf dans la taupinière ».



## Julien Van Ee

*Sheep farmer. EARL La bergerie de Roizonne, Nantes-en-Ratier, Gers*

Julien is a sheep farmer in the uplands of Isère. He's an active member of the National Predators Commission, responsible for wolf issues, and updated us on the situation. Bringing his experience and expert eye, he is helping to build proposals for the development of a viable farming system that includes new predators.



## Amélie Fouillet

*Pig farmer and charcuterie maker. EARL La Ferme des Cochons du sillon, Campbon, Loire-Atlantique*

Amélie processes the meat from her Porcs blancs de l'Ouest on the farm, and sells it locally. While land swaps and solidarity between small farmers help to ease her workload, every minute of her time is precious. Still, she is very happy to share her convictions and her work with us over a glass of apple juice.



## Katel & Pierre Gachet

*Teacher and farmer. GAEC Gachet, Beaufort, Savoie*

Katel is a German teacher and, together with her husband Pierre, is helping to build the world of tomorrow. Pierre used to be a dairy farmer in Beaufortain. As a member of the Beaufort cheese-making cooperative, he worked for a long time to safeguard traditions and know-how. When the cooperative began to develop in a direction that did not correspond to his aspirations, he decided to quit livestock farming and teamed up with his sister Marielle to take on a new challenge: an upland horticulture farm.

Pierre and Katel are visionaries dedicated to preserving farmland and mountainous areas that are under threat from the tourism industry.



## Sabine Girard & Sylvain Thevenet

*Wine growers. Ferme Saint Maurice, Saillans, Drôme*

- 10 ha
- Wine and grape production
- 2 people working on the farm
- Direct sales of wine, part of the grape harvest sold to the Diois cooperative

Sabine and Sylvain are agronomists. After travelling around South America, they decided to buy a small 1.5 ha vineyard to create a “domaine” in their native village. Sabine served a mandate as a councillor in Saillans, one of the first municipalities to experiment with participative and citizen-led approaches. Both are involved in the local community, and in the quest for an ecological and just transition in their valley, and they stress the need for a more territorial approach to this question.





## Gilbert Gourraud

*Volunteer with Terre de Liens, Savoie*

A grassroots activist, Gilbert is one of the first people we met in this project. He told us, in his simple and modest manner, about his work for Terre de Liens (Access to Land). He shared with us his questions, his doubts and his achievements within the organisation. Access to land, it seems, plays a crucial role in so many issues.

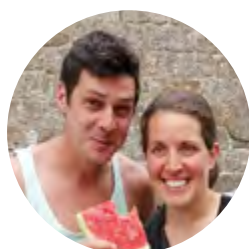


## Xavier Hamon

*Artisan cook*

President of Alliance des cuisiniers (Cooks Alliance) from 2016 to 2019, Xavier now devotes his time to training, research and practice at the Université des sciences et des pratiques gastronomiques. Xavier wants to shake up the food sector and to reinvent know-how, to make the art of cooking fit for its era, history and surroundings.

Persuaded that culinary transition will require collective and cooperative efforts with all actors in the food sector, he brings to the table all the ingredients needed to concoct menus rich in exchanges, sharing and creativity... With one bite we find ourselves transported to the transition of the restaurants of the future!



## Marion & Benjamin Henry

*Livestock farmers. La Ferme du buis sonnant, Plouguernével, Deux-Sèvres*

- 60 ha
- Porcs blancs de l'Ouest pigs/ Cereals / Bretonne pie noir dairy cows / On-farm breakfasts / Dairy and meat processing
- 4 associates
- Direct sales (market/ on the farm / retail and school canteen / Contract for surplus milk with Biolait)

A highly driven couple, Marion and Benjamin are a breath of fresh air. Their energy is contagious as, smiling, they invite us to reflect with them. In the farm cooperative (GAEC) they run with another couple, they question their practices and structures. No danger of them resting on their laurels. Dairy farmers, they process on-farm the milk from their Bretonne Pie Noire cows. They love Breton culture and are ambassadors for their territory. They mobilised their local community to buy land through a community business (SCI), raising awareness about land and the concept of ownership. With a background in international solidarity, they share freely and love to live from day to day. Their motto: “Feed our neighbours”.



## Marine Huaux & Loïc Perriaux

*Sheep farmers. GAEC de la Fontaine, Beaufort, Savoie*

Loïc and Marine are sheep farmers. They transform their milk into magnificent tomme cheeses. On their farm in a charming hamlet, life follows the rhythm of the seasons. In the summer the sheep are out on the *alpage* (mountain pasture). In recent times they have had to adapt and learn to live with wolves.



## Emmanuel Huguet

*Farmer and mayor of Villard-Sur-Doron, Savoie*

A farmer in Beaufort, Emmanuel is also mayor of his small village in the French Alps. Additionally he is Vice-President of the conurbation authority with responsibility for agriculture and forests, and President of the Commission for Agriculture and Climate Plan in the federation of local municipalities.

Emmanuel is interested in all facets of socio-ecological transition, and regularly confronted with issues related to tourism, economic and agricultural development. A key challenge for him is to manage pressures between actors, and to help raise awareness in order to make the right decisions for the future.

## Eric Magnet

*Farmer and local councillor in Soyans, Drôme*

- 30 ha and 30 goats
- Cheesemaking, herbs
- 2 people working on the farm
- Sales to supermarkets in Paris and shop

Initially a livestock farmer, Eric retrained as a grower of aromatic herbs, garlic and pulses. A local councillor, he is highly engaged and involved in the national network of CUMA machinery cooperatives. Thanks to his perseverance, together with that of Hugues Vernier (another participant in this project), a Commission for Agriculture was created in Val de Drôme en Biovallée, a federation of local municipalities that calls itself an 'organic valley'. The commission represents a big step forward for the local economy, and progress in finding the right place for farming. Eric believes in collective values, despite the obstacles connected to new ways of operating and the limitations imposed.



## Au Maquis

*Food justice association*

*"We realised that we could be useful, here, in trying to reduce inequalities: we wanted to do political education, awareness raising around us and ourselves to do things differently."*

Growing and eating together to restore human dignity. This is the mission of Au Maquis, a non-profit based in Lauris in the Luberon mountains. We met Fanny and Maud, two farmers working for the association, in a little shack in the garden tended by Au Maquis. Among the many exciting projects brewing is a community canteen in the nearby town of Cavaillon, with the goal of getting more people thinking about food, and to create new urban-rural ties.





## Gisèle Molliet & Thierry Bochet, Jean Yves & Bérangère Rochaix

*Goat farmers and cheesemakers. GAEC La Ferme de M. Séguin, Beaufort, Savoie*

- 180 goats in mountainous terrain
- Goat farmers / Production of cheese (Tommes de Chèvre Sérac, gratarons d'Arêches, raclette) and sausage / Ski instructors in the winter season (2 of the associates)
- 4 associates
- Direct sales and different points of sale in the valley

Working together for several years, the four associates on the cooperative goat farm (GAEC) produce Grataron, a rare local cheese that only three producers are still making. In their organisation, nothing is left to chance! Every aspect of the farm is designed to save labour and maximise their free time. Thierry needs a lot of time to indulge his passion of running in the mountains to recharge.

In the summer they take turns staying in a little chalet on the *alpage* (mountain pasture) with the goats, where passing hikers are welcome to stop for a drink. In the winter, Jean Yves and Gisèle keep the goats nice and cosy in the shed, while Thierry and Bérangère work as ski instructors in the small family-run ski resort in the village.



## Cécile Pasquier, Youry Colinet & Ludovic Boulerie

*Farmer-bakers. Fournil de la Billardière, Cérizay, Loire-Atlantique*

- 20 ha
- Farmer-bakers, small crops of aromatic herbs
- 3 associates and 1 worker on 10 hours/week
- Direct sales at markets and on the farm, CSA

Cécile, Youry and Ludovic (pictured with farm worker Rosy) are happy farmers and bakers. Between the fields and their cosy bakery, the days are very full and sometimes very long. But the pleasure of shaping and seeing their beautiful bread, and satisfied customers at the markets, makes it all worth it. They are delighted with the life they have chosen. Three years in, they're finding their feet and envisaging new projects, new ways of organising their work. There is no shortage of ideas. A wonderful story to explore.



## Plessé municipality

Aurélie Mézière, Thierry Lohr and Rémi Beslé are members of the municipal council of Plessé in the West of France. So-

cio-ecological transition is just one aspect of the council's vision. They contribute to democratic transition by putting in place another way to do politics in their village. They give ample space to participation and citizen engagement. They are aware that change will only come about if the inhabitants are involved, insofar as possible, with the projects.

Among their originalities is their Local Agriculture and Food Policy (PAAC), a mechanism to set objectives for food and farming. Make sure to ask them about it, as they can describe it best!



## Inès de Rancourt & Daniel Gilles

*Goat farmers. GAEC La Chèvre qui Saoûrit, Saoû, Drôme*

- 60 goats
- 2 associates
- Goat farmers / Farm walks / Farm stays / Vineyard / Kitchen gardens in schools / Bed & Breakfast / Godiveau and Picodon cheesemaking / Forest
- Sales: markets / on the farm / local restaurants / activities with schools / farm stays

Inès and Daniel are goat farmers in the little village of Saoû in the Drôme region. They produce a local cheese, Picodon, and process their meat. Both are very involved in village life, as a councillor and volunteer firefighter. They also host farm stays for young people, children, migrants and holiday-makers. A very close couple, and very complementary, it was a pleasure to meet them in all simplicity.

## Cyril & Sylvie Sarlabou

*Horticultural farmer and school teacher. Les Bou de Jardins, Lauraët, Gers*

Cyril is a market gardener in the Gers region and Sylvie is a school teacher. A few years ago they decided to start growing vegetables around their yurt, and selling produce direct from their garden.

We were welcomed with dishes expertly prepared by Sylvie, a feast for the taste buds and for the eyes alike: the colours were mouthwatering. Cyril loves to chat: once he starts talking he can't be stopped, he has so much to share!





## Fanny Serralongue

*Mixed farmer. GAEC La Ferme de l'Auberge, Divajeu, Drôme*

- 20 ha and 40 sheep
- Seeds / Diversity of vegetables / Fruit trees
- 3 associates
- Sales at markets / school groups / sales of lambs

Fanny is a new arrival in this farm cooperative (GAEC). With an enthusiasm that is infectious, eyes sparkling, she shows us around the gardens, from seedlings to vegetables, explaining every detail with precision. On this small farm of 20 ha, the key word is diversity. Seeds, seedlings, vegetables, livestock, crops and trees, the entire farm is designed to minimise effort. Thanks to their activity, the associates manage to find a good work-life balance. Self-sufficiency is one of their points of pride. The farm is a picture of happiness: Fanny gets up happy in the morning!



## Jeanine Sochas

*Volunteer*

A volunteer with a number of organisations and international NGOs, Jeanine is very involved in “Nos Campagnes en Résilience”. Originally from the Loiret region, she worked for much of her career in various farming and local development organisations. Interested in food sovereignty and short supply chains, she enjoys meeting actors and envisaging with them the bridges to a future that is more respectful of nature.

Jeanine finds it hugely important for everyone to have their place, and for projects to be constructed collectively. She is always ready to help and to hit the road to explore the four corners of France.



## Anne Tesson & Claude Veyret

*Co-founders of a local environmental non-profit, Rencontres de Die*

Living in the Diois region, Anne and Claude are two of the citizens behind the European gathering *Ecologie au quotidien* (Ecology Every Day) which happens every January since 2003. The event brings together non-profits, political representatives and businesses.

Anne and Claude are involved in a lot more than these events. In their day to day lives they are advocates for an *art de vivre* grounded in sufficiency. Warm and welcoming, they love to listen, and every anecdote shared by Claude is captivating. A very modest couple, they encourage you to question yourself and to remember that the future is built on the foundations of the past.



## Sonia Tonnot & David Peyremorte

*Mixed farmers. GAEC Ferme du Roubion, Bonlieu-sur-Roubion, Drôme*

- 60 ha
- 2 associates + equivalent of 4 full-time workers + 1 equivalent of full-time seasonal worker plus seasonal workers and a shepherd for the summer alpage.
- Pulses / vegetables / sheep / hiring out of buildings to artist companies / Compost for the local distillery / 600 m<sup>2</sup> of solar panels
- Sales of meat boxes / Sales to 2 wholesalers and 3 market vendors / Electricity sales

Over the artichokes, David tells us about life on his farm. Today they have the equivalent of four full-time workers, each with their own area of responsibility. They produce electricity on their buildings, which is a means of diversification and additional income. David is involved in the local ADDEAR development agency. For him, succession is an essential question, which is why he's set aside a small part of his land as a test space. Young people can come and try out farming for a few years before starting out on their own. Another topic he holds dear: the social justice charter. He is also part of a European think tank.



## Hugues Vernier

*Head of Agriculture, Communauté de communes du Val de Drôme*

Hugues is brimming with energy – you have to be in form to keep up with him! With his team, he has been involved in the development of the Organic Valley for several years.

Bringing knowledge and expertise, he manages to anticipate and propose actions to get a head start on the question of socio-ecological transition.

The Biovallée is a living lab that offers a host of creative ideas in terms of agriculture and territorial dynamics. And no better ambassador than Hugues to tell you about it.







Gabriel Molina Garcia, rural actor from Spain, at the Rural Resilience gathering in October 2022

# *I. A Collective Adventure*

*“Alone we go faster, together we go further” – African proverb*

*None of us can do it alone. Socio-ecological transition requires collective reflection, collective work, collective building and collective wellbeing. In this project we have encountered various structures and setups. In all cases, the collective is a strength: a source of ideas and creativity that allows space for the individual.*



## Forms of collective

*“That’s the principle of cooperation: You need this, I need that, but we pool our means of investment. But it’s also accepting that people do things differently to you.” – Mathieu Hamon*

In recent decades, individualism has pitted us against one another, in competition. Collective structures offer a promising antidote.

*“There’s three associates, meaning three bosses on the farm [...]. I find it makes you want to go to work, it’s a source of motivation” – Fanny Serralongue*

The strength of the collective spearheads new practices. Individuals flourish; shared work is valued. In the agricultural sector, we see this strength in cooperative farms (GAEC - *Grouperment Agricole d’Exploitation en Commun*). In the social and solidarity economy, it takes the form of producer cooperatives (SCOP - *Société Coopérative Ouvrière de Production*). In rural territories, third spaces are another form of collective.

*“From the moment you become an associate, you’re sure to be more involved. Right away it’s easier.” – Stéphane Airault*



*“You’re part of a group that takes you and your needs into account, that wants to know where you’re at.” – Vincent Peynot*



## The organised collective

*“We must have the capacity to make time to think out the structure collectively without losing the political thinking. [...] We have to learn to work together.” – Xavier Hamon*

Collective organisations need structure, new skills and a lot of flexibility. Organisational systems are negotiated and shared by the initiators. Skills are pooled to be put at the service of the project, with an emphasis on quality of life.

*“We have to go back to cooperatives; otherwise it puts everyone under pressure” – Pierre Gachet*

The collective bolsters actions and shares responsibilities. Each member is fully engaged. Key to the success of a collective are its organisational structure, ability to question ways of working, and guarantee of a process that is regularly checked and reaffirmed.

*“We all try to be more versatile to have more time off” – Fanny Serralongue*



Members of the Cooks Alliance travelled from all over France to prepare a farmhouse banquet at La Ferme des 7 Chemins as part of the Rural Resilience gathering



## Prerequisites

*“Everyone shares responsibilities, everyone feels engaged” – Aurélie Mézière*

For the collective systems we encountered, one prerequisite is autonomy in work. Autonomy allows each member to take their share in the project underway. It also allows the skills of each member to be recognised. This autonomy is linked to mutual trust. In most cases, it comes with sharing of responsibilities.

*“Everyone is autonomous in almost all the tasks” – Stéphane Airault*





## **A common project**

A collective organisation shares a common project, one that is regularly re-assessed. Each member plays a part, in keeping with their preferences and skills. It starts with the will to work together and put forward different ideas. Central to this is the shared work, which is presented as an asset, a common good.

*“Instead of more money, we’ve chosen to bring in more farmers.” – Stéphane Airault*

More associates instead of more earnings, for greater solidarity, to ensure a place for everyone in these territories.

*“With any kind of cooperative structure, like the Beaufort cooperative or producer shops, you can come together around a common project.” – Gilles Avocat*

*“We’re proud of what we manage to do together” – Inès De Rancourt*

## The participative collective

Acting as a collective means participating, in different ways, in building the rural territories of tomorrow. It means pooling tools and work, as in the CUMA machinery cooperatives (*Coopératives d'Utilisation de Matériel Agricole*). It means forming processing cooperatives, or creating new spaces to work together. Every form of collective is enriching, and gives strength and energy to its individual members. Which is very much needed if we are to adapt and change our paradigms!

*“Finish with participative democracy but... participate together in democracy” – Participant in the Rural Resilience gathering*

The participants in this project are members of the many networks in France. Bringing people together to exchange and to learn, each network is specialised and complementary. On the ground is the network of CUMA machinery cooperatives, and the CIVAM network of local groups working towards agro-ecological transition (*Centres d'initiatives pour valoriser l'agriculture et le milieu rural*). Political networks and networks of cooperation include the AMAPs (*Association pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne* - akin to Community Supported Agriculture). All have a role to play in this transition by initiating ideas, pooling resources, stoking debate, valuing actors and initiatives. Networks are an essential driver for all of the rural actors we met.

*“Our network was able to mobilise to help us get started. We're here thanks to the network, so we stay involved.” – Marion Henry*



Farm walk at GAEC Le Jardin des Pierres Bleues, September 2021





Pop-up toilets for the Rural Resilience gathering at La Ferme des 7 Chemins

## *II. Cultivating the Human Spirit, Cultivating Nature*

*Cultivating is an ancestral practice that is sometimes forgotten in the frantic pace of today's society. Production takes its place.*

*Cultivating the earth. Taking care of the land, allowing it to feed us, with minimal harm.*

*Cultivating the human spirit. Taking time to fill our cups, to enquire, to take information on board.*

*Culture in the broadest sense. From the earth, to our spirits – so often neglected – culture is a key element of transition.*

## Back to the land: Agroecological practices

*“Our approach is to make the conditions favourable: we have a pond, hedgerows, fallow land, to give the farm every chance to be as diverse as possible and to reach a state of equilibrium.” – Vincent Peynot*

Changes in agricultural practices have distanced people from the land. Mechanisation and technological advances have doubtless eased the task of farmers. At the same time, these developments have given rise to excessive use of pesticides and fertilisers that are harmful in the long term to the earth and to biodiversity as a whole.

*“They are the environmental practices of humans, their relationships to nature and the environment, to the world in which they are evolving. But these environmental practices only make sense if they’re linked to two other types of practices.” – Claude Veyret*



An important heritage breed in Brittany: Bretonne Pie Noir dairy cows seen at La Ferme des 7 Chemins



Many of the farmers we met are returning to their agricultural roots, reviving practices such as land rotation, grazing systems, zero inputs and the preservation of heritage breeds and plant varieties.

*“The concept of this farm is diversity. It’s what’s called a small farm even though at scale, it’s still 20 hectares.” – Fanny Serralongue*

*“To go further with agroecological development, you need to sit back down and be sensible: go for produce that feeds people directly.” – Eric Magnet*



## Taking care of nature

*“It’s really important to share; we are companions of the Earth.” – David Peyremorte*

Instead of producing, these farmers are taking care of the earth so that we can feed ourselves. They are refusing practices that harm the Earth. Revising their methods of production, they are opting for the natural, and minimising their interventions on the land. They are protecting resources – not least water, which is increasingly precious. They are envisaging new crops, in favour of diversity, and turning away from irrigation-intensive crops.

*“Plant and animal have to be complementary and to make sense together, to feed human beings without destroying environments [...] For us to realise ourselves, professionally, and to play a role in the environment, in what we are, in what we’re leaving to future generations.” – Cédric Briand*

*“Be as respectful as possible for all things, to try not to do too much damage” – Sébastien Blache*

Biodiversity is at the heart of these farmers’ concerns. The association Wild Peasant Farms (*Fermes paysannes et sauvages*) is working to develop a space between agriculture and biodiversity.







The flock at GAEC de la Fontaine

In upland areas, farmers play an essential role in nature conservation, with practices such as land management and turning out to pasture.

*“For me, to respect everything you can imagine in nature, there’s nothing better than moving a herd to graze, instead of cutting fodder and bringing it in trucks. Grazing a herd on the basis of grass growth is the best solution to safeguard biodiversity and open landscapes, and to maintain grouse zones. We have to find a cohabitation that is acceptable for everyone. We’re going to have to live with wolves and put proper measures in place for a sustainable future.” – Loïc Perriaux*



The return of wolves is good news for nature, but in recent years has been a constant source of stress for sheep farmers. Despite the subsidies provided by the French state for protective measures, these farmers remain vulnerable to large predators.

“We’re not against wolves; they have their place in the natural environment. We work with forests, grass, the weather, fauna, and the presence of wolves demonstrates a certain biodiversity, a certain nature value. But how will we manage to co-exist in a single territory?” – Julien Van Ee



## Culture in the countryside

*“There is a huge culture of people in the countryside, a huge unknown culture, an oral culture”*  
– Mathieu Hamon

Culture is not just for cities. In the countryside, we met farmers who organise concerts and conferences on their farms. These events forge ties with the local community. We also met farmers who prefer to mix with their communities through local groups that host a variety of cultural events.



Day of round table discussions at La Ferme des 7 Chemins as part of the Rural Resilience gathering



*“The association Le Barouf dans la Taupinière creates events and culture in rural areas in unusual venues, often on farms. It might be open-air cinema, theatre, it’s very varied.” – Sébastien Corbé*

Culture is a vehicle for learning, appreciation and awareness. It’s a way for the rural world to pass on the rural *art de vivre*.

*“Culture for more awareness and a move towards more spirituality” – Participant of the Rural Resilience gathering*



Czech farmer Terezie Daňková shares some concluding remarks at La Ferme des 7 Chemins during the Rural Resilience gathering





Volunteers preparing the farmhouse banquet at La Ferme des 7 Chemins as part of the Rural Resilience gathering

# *III. Earnings, Yes – But What About Wellbeing?*

*Socio-ecological transition tries to take into account the needs of people and society: collective wellbeing, living in harmony with one another – and with ourselves. Income is one factor to be explored as actors examine needs, interactions and the concept of individual wellbeing.*

*Where is happiness to be found?*

*The social question is at the heart of political challenges to come. For rural territories, quality of life is a lever for development, as rural society imagines new ways of functioning, in which every person has a place, and their needs and wants are respected.*

*To achieve collective wellbeing for all, paradigm change seems inevitable. The weakness of our current models of society can be seen in the vulnerable state of people and nature. A social future is the only possible future.*



Hervé Merand, one of three farmers that run La Ferme des 7 Chemins



## Not just work

*“If you want to age well, work as little as possible.” – Stéphane Airault*

Being a farmer is a profession. But how do we consider a farmer's work-life balance?

*“The idea from the start was that on this farm, if we want to take holidays, we have to be versatile, and that's what we want to champion” – Fanny Serralongue*

The farmers we met often referred to work-life balance as essential. When joining a farm or taking on land, work-life balance is a factor as important as earnings.

*“One-third sleep, one-third leisure, one-third work. For your social life, you have to free up time. In farming you can have one-third leisure time if you work collectively.” – Pierre Gachet*



*“The image of farming is having to be there every day.” – Marion Henry*



*“If you reduce the working time linked to effort, that would make it sustainable.” – Vincent Peynot*

Free time is a part of farming life. It can no longer be just about work. These farmers are opening up to other interests and to other people: family, friends, and after-work activities.

*“We want to enjoy our kids today.” – Benjamin Henry*



## Decent earnings

*“Wellbeing in work also means not being stressed at the end of the month because you don’t have enough money. You get days off, you get holidays.” – Cédric Briand*

All of our interviewees claim the right to decent earnings that ensure their wellbeing. What qualifies as ‘decent earnings’ is subjective and varies according to a person’s individual circumstances.



*"A farm should be reliable, viable and livable" – Gilbert Gourraud*

Nonetheless, earnings are less a determining factor and more one of a range of factors that constitute the basis of well-being. These farmers want to live well from their work and not from subsidies, by earning a fair price for their product.

*"Producers have to be given the means to earn a dignified living from their work, and the population has to be made aware of the importance of food." – Ludovic Boulerie*

## **A quest for meaning**

The quest for meaning is a decisive factor. These farmers want to be useful and to stay true to their convictions.

*"Get back to farming that's a bit less about volume. That was a choice I made. When you have a big herd, even if there's two of you, it's like a business and it's a long way from peasant farming" – Eric Magnet*

The quest for meaning represents a personal ideal, a quest to thrive in a world where economics prevails. Instead of waiting till retirement, these actors are making the most of life now, in taking actions that have meaning for society. Contributing to the future in their own small way.

*"We have to imagine the workforce and the human dimension are creators of richness, not the accumulation of capital [...] It's the quest for meaning. I feel like I don't work in fact. I live the life of a peasant." – Hervé Mérand*





(left to right) Matías María Rubio, rural actor from Spain, Lucía Fernández, researcher from Spain, and Marina Guedon of Forum Synergies, at the Rural Resilience gathering

## A nice place to live

*“Create a space that showcases the territory” – Xavier Hamon*

Another aspect of the social question is the living environment. This is the place where they carry out activities, forge community ties, and avail of services.

Each inhabitant has a role to play in their territory. Everyone contributes to this dynamic, which benefits the local area. Rural territories are taking action to make villages attractive, highlighting the natural surroundings and the quality of local services. These are developed by France Services, a nationwide network of local one-stop shops. The “France Relance” recovery programme is another boon for rural territories. But above all, the attractiveness of a place is defined by community ties and a sense of belonging.

*“We’re more about participating, helping new dynamics to emerge. Our way of doing things is very tied to the territory.” – Mathieu Hamon*





Farm walk at GAEC Le Jardin des Pierres Bleues, September 2021

## *IV. The Local as Testing Ground*

*The countryside is full of life. A place for living and working, for community and business ties. Rural territories can't be reduced to definitions, conventions or administrative limits. We found that agriculture is one of the drivers of this territorial dynamic.*





Farm walk at GAEC Le Jardin des Pierres Bleues

## Experiments on the ground

Local territories are a testing ground for social and environmental innovations that seek to make the territory attractive.

*“You have an enormous field of possibilities. You can do things but at the same time stay true to yourself and the life you want.” – Vincent Peynot*





The farmers we interviewed play a key role in their rural territories. They provide services to local authorities: maintaining hedgerows and lanes, and shaping the local landscape. In some instances, villages acknowledge and support this work. For example, Saint-André-sur-Sèvre, a village in the West of France, has drawn up an environmental charter.

*“When I was on the local council, we started an association with the village to create a charter for the maintenance of hedgerows by farmers. All the residents benefitted. They were compensated by hour of work.” – Ludovic Boulerie*

In Campbon, another village in the West of France, farmers have come together, on the initiative of the municipality, to reflect on a better way to distribute land in order to reduce their impact in terms of transport. All of this with respect for nature, and especially the protection of hedgerows.



*“People drive the economic, social and cultural dynamic of the territory” – Claude Veyret*

These initiatives, among others, reflect the reality of rural life: the many ‘ruralities’ that vary according to circumstances, history, geographic location and the people who live there.

*“You won’t adapt it to the books you’ve read: You can’t compare one place to another.” – Stéphane Airault*

The actors we met – in their own way, according to their realities – are experimenting other possible ways to act in society. Rather than making demands or taking positions, they are changing their behaviour and initiating the inevitable transformation of society.

*“We’re not models. We’re just doing something that works.” – Benjamin Henry*



Farm walk at La Ducheraies, venue for the Rural Resilience gathering in autumn 2022. A site of socio-ecological transition in practice that incorporates strands of educational tourism, agriculture and local development.





Pop-up kitchen at La Ferme des 7 Chemins for the Rural Resilience gathering

# V. *Opening Up Farming*

*The future is transversal and complementary; the age of siloed approaches is nearing its end. Sectoral silos, while facilitating ties among peers, at times have created divisions between rural actors. It's a system that can't keep up with the current crises and emergencies. We met actors who are seeking new opportunities to create synergies and overcome isolation.*

*“Our difficulty is not the objectives; it’s the commitment to realise them. It’s getting all sectors involved which isn’t always easy day to day. [...] We need to get a taste of what others are doing, to look beyond the village and export what we’re doing.” – Aurélie Mézière*

Agricultural sectors have long functioned separately in order to structure and organise their activities. Each sector progressed at its own pace with little regard for other sectors, in a silo.

*“Our idea is to open up farming. If we want to shift mentalities, we won’t do it by keeping to ourselves.” - Benjamin Henry*



*((left to right) Julia Csergo, historian, Maëla Naël, farmer and author, Antoine Chépy, artisan cook, and Cédric Briand, farmer, during the round table “Rethinking our ideas of food makers: Small farmers? Big restaurants?” at the Rural Resilience gathering*



## Looking over the fence

In view of their strong interdependencies, porous boundaries between sectors, and changes in the job of the farmer, farmers are obliged to come out of their ‘bubble’, to look over the fence.

*“You can take a sectorial position or you can take a really open position, because there are things that don’t just concern farming. You reason differently, you include a much broader realm into your reflection. It’s a richness, it’s even a necessity.” – Gilles Avocat*

We met rural actors who are reaching out to others: to pool resources, innovate and energise emerging projects. They understand the need to compare ideas rather than keep to themselves in closed-off groups.

*“Organic farming also means having an approach to energy, an overarching territorial approach” – Sylvain Thevenet*



Emmanuelle Jean (right), miller at Moulin de la Bicane, presents a gift of flour to MEP Benoît Biteau at the Rural Resilience gathering



## Food, a transversal issue

*“It’s a question of food, not a question of farming, that we all have to answer.” – Xavier Hamon*

Food brings everyone to the table, from seed producer to consumer. Food is a lens through which to explore and address all other issues – agricultural, culinary and consumer-related. This cross-cutting approach helps to compare ideas, and to see the points of view and realities of different actors, while building solutions that work for all.

*“We thought it was important for consumers to also have a voice in farming” – Benjamin Henry*



French cheeses served at the European buffet at La Ducherais during the Rural Resilience gathering

In recent years, food is being explored in territories as a new transversal way to consider production, bringing in the entire chain from producer to consumer, as well as questions of health, the environment, social issues, access to food, local economy, etc.

Agriculture now appears as a link in the food supply chain, on par with other actors.

*“Agriculture is so important in rural areas because they produce food: What to feed the health of the biodiversity, the health of the water, the quality of hedgerows, the quality of the biodiversity.” – Rémi Beslé*

This transversal approach opens up possibilities for exchange. Actors can learn about each other's practices, and the challenges they each face. They can envisage collective efforts to work towards balanced rural development.

Food is a vector for new relationships between producers and consumers, with opportunities to weave closer ties and build awareness.



Cabbage grown at GAEC Le Jardin des Pierres Bleues

Food offers opportunities to overcome barriers between rural and urban actors. Discussions on the topic of food can spark rich two-way exchanges. La Ferme des 7 Chemins is working with restaurants in Paris that value products from the farm and are adapting their practices. Sébastien Blache's farm sells its fruit in a grocery store in Paris to make quality products accessible to city dwellers.



*“The relationship between urban society and farmers needs to change; we have to realise that the alliance between the two is the path to resilience” – Claude Veyret*



Simon, the village fisherman, seen during a visit to Finistère Nord, July 2021

One potential lever for change is France’s Territorial Food Plans (Plans Alimentaires Territoriaux, PAT) which are implemented under the Egalim law\*. In the eyes of the people we spoke to, however, these PATs fall short. Limited in focus, and usually designed around institutional catering, these plans can be exclusionary and fail to bring in actors across sectors. The onus is on the sectors themselves and municipal representatives to involve all actors.

\* The 2018 Egalim law purports to ensure a more sustainable food sector with fairer prices paid to farmers. It includes a stipulation that 20% of products sourced by public canteens must be organic.





*Ugo Bessière, councillor for the Loire-Atlantique department, takes part in a working session on “Access to land: Finding a fair balance in land use”, during the Rural Resilience gathering*

## VI. Getting Political

*Many of the initiatives we encountered are sources of inspiration and starting points for a dynamic in their territory. To nurture and spread these initiatives, political relationships are a crucial lever. Despite much reluctance to work with political representatives, it's clear that actions taken without their support are in vain. Instead of opposing politicians, it's important to build with them.*

*“Our territory demonstrates how far it’s possible to go when strong political will is at play” – Hugues Vernier*

## **A transition to new forms of governance**

*“The models have to change. It’s interesting to study it, to think about changes in policies and public funding.” – Marion Henry*

Transition can be a way to build new forms of governance, with a place and a role for everyone. This involves restructuring systems at several levels. Although local politicians seem to be moving to initiate new forms of action in the public space, the functioning at regional, national and European level remains very top-down. Transition shakes up the institutional models and ways of working. It requires changes in behaviour from all of us, and reexamining our social and ecological stereotypes.

*“The inhabitants must be included in the transition. New coalitions must be envisaged to reach a critical mass.” – Hugues Vernier*



*(left to right) Liliame Piot, co-president of Terre de liens, Ronan Dantec, French senator, and Leïla Thominaux, 2nd vice-president of the regional land agency Etablissement Public Foncier, three of the speakers at the working session on Access to Land at the Rural Resilience gathering, September 2022*

## Reinvesting the field of local politics

*“The municipal scale is a very good scale. We have control over the initiatives that we can do and need to bring forward” – Aurélie Mézière*

Over time, politics has become distanced from citizens and from the local arena. Transition interrogates this top-down positioning which no longer aligns with expectations.

*“We are persuaded that villages have real political power.” – Rémi Beslé*

The political sphere needs to re-appropriate local politics and put it to good use to build national and European policies that respond to the realities of as many people as possible.... in rural areas.

Local representatives have an overview of their territories. They can be proactive and initiate new policies. Thanks to their expertise on the ground and their political role within society, they have a significant degree of legitimacy and knowledge.

*“If you’re interested in your territory, if you want to safeguard your territory, in fact, you anchor yourself in it” – Cédric Briand*



Meeting with Plessé municipality, September 2021



## Local politicians as facilitators

*“We work with [the citizens] on the different projects to make sure they have a good sense of the overarching issues and the common good.”– Aurélie Mézière*

The local representatives we met in many cases shared with us their concerns about their role in their municipality and how this is perceived. As society changes, relationships with local councillors are changing too. Ideas of the role of local representatives are changing: they no longer decide by delegation, but are gradually becoming facilitators of ideas and implementation. They know the tools and mechanisms available to allow the community to realise projects. This is a revolutionary change for the world of politics.



## Shared governance

*“Our sole ambition was to change the governance, to invent another kind of democratic participation, not just to have genuine democracy but to apply it” – Aurélie Mézière*

In the various territories where transition is underway, we saw democratic ways of functioning being shaken up. New democratic spaces are giving free reign to exchanges and to new institutional structures. The municipality of Plessé calls its engaged citizens VIPs (Volontaires Impliqués à Plessé). The village of Saillans has set up citizen committees. These municipalities are adapting and creating possibilities to involve their citizens.

*“The legitimacy of an association with people who are militant, who are in the association to progress an issue, but that’s interesting too because here in the valley you have politics with the three communautés des commune [groupings of municipalities]” – Sabine Girard*

There is room for improvement in these new forms of governance. To gain legitimacy, they need to be secured and anchored over the long term.



Farmhouse banquet at La Ferme des 7 Chemins during the Rural Resilience gathering



## Political citizens

*“You get up in the morning, you do politics” – Stéphane Airault*

For the actors we met, daily life is political.

*“Our plate is very political. It has a huge impact on the way we grow, the way we address our health, and look at our planet” – Maud, Au Maquis*

Every choice, every personal commitment is an action that wields power. Every citizen can have a political role.

*“One of the effects of these events is the creation of the Biovallée association in 2012, like the yeast in the bread” – Claude Veyret, organiser of European ecology gatherings*

We each need to be aware of this role in order to play our part in this new society.

*“It’s in recognising the human being that we make progress in politics” – Ugo Bessière, councillor, Loire-Atlantique department*





## Changes needed in policies

At the heart of political concerns are the many laws and policies relating to agriculture and rural territories. These policies, seldom consulted, define frameworks and supports that fail to meet the needs of rural actors who seek another future.

Among these policies are the EGalim 2 law; the France Relance recovery package; the recovery and ecological transition contracts, and the CAP. While on some points they enable progress, changes are needed to improve the performance of these policies to benefit rural territories.

*“You call it supports for farmers, but it’s just a way to steer agriculture in the direction you want it to go. Because if a farmer says no to a standard or to new conditions, there’s the immediate threat of losing the supports” – Vincent Peynot*



The CAP provides the policy framework for European agriculture and is a source of financial support for the farming sector. However many farmers spoke to us of their dissatisfaction with the CAP, which they see as an obstacle to access to land, and thus a barrier to new farming activities.

*“The CAP pays with regard to the surface area cultivated; every time I put in a hedgerow, it becomes a natural, non-productive space and I lose surface area and money, it’s difficult” – Sébastien Blache*

This viewpoint confirms the findings of ARC2020’s research on the CAP Strategic Plans project: CAP favours the dominant model and leaves little room for other agricultural practices such as agroecology.

As with the CAP, various regulations – and the administrative system itself – hamper the move to a just transition. In favouring a model that is ever more competitive and productive, these policies can be discouraging and demotivating. Strategies are needed to sustain the dynamic of transition.

*“They want to introduce compensatory measures for services provided, supports for services provided, but if you’re organic you’re not eligible as it’s considered that because you’re organic, you’re doing a lot already” – Sébastien Blache*







Participants at the Rural Resilience gathering listening to a round table discussion at La Ferme des 7 Chemins

## *VII. Big Visions*

*No transition without vision. Essential to provide direction, a course to maintain and a goal to achieve, this vision of an ideal future must be clear and ambitious, with a broad horizon and a beacon in sight. Shared widely, the vision invites actors to come on board, to shape it to their understanding, and to envisage an engaged and engaging future.*



## A tool for cohesion and action

*“There’s a vision of the overall activity over the long term, and that’s essential” – Inès De Rancourt*

Key to the success of a consistent, long-lasting vision is a comprehensive view of all the components of the territory or farm.



Hugues Vernier shares his vision during a visit to the Drôme region, March 2021

*“The idea is to make it last. If you have no vision, it might not last very long.” – Vincent Peynot*

This vision is determined by the actors concerned, their background and values.

*“You make your project a little in your image.” – Vincent Peynot*

It’s non-standardised, and belongs to the people who shape it and carry it forward.

*“The system is very consistent as it’s been designed” – Fanny Serralongue*

The farming sector has a shared vision that evolves over time with every encounter and life experience. This vision acts as a conveyor between generations.

*“We’re not here by chance, we’re creating continuity.” – Sébastien Corbé*



Exchanges at La Ducherais during the Rural Resilience gathering



*“When we started farming, it was hugely helpful that since the previous generation they had a perspective of succession. [...] Joëlle and Robert had maintained an efficient farm, they were already in a system with less products, few overheads, less investments, an overall perspective of non-capitalisation.” – Sylvie Chapeau*

A tool for cohesion and action, to be appropriated by each actor, and to inspire!

*“They were afraid for us because it was a model that didn’t exist. But they trusted us.” – Marion Henry*



Farm walk at GAEC Le Jardin des Pierres Bleues, September 2021





(left to right) Julien Hita, Lucía Fernández and Gabriel Molina García at the Rural Resilience gathering, September 2022

## *VIII. The Struggle is Peaceful, Collective & Intergenerational!*

*The struggle is evolving. Instead of opposing one another, we can demonstrate, build, propose, hear new voices. This peaceful struggle is positive and optimistic. In the face of the current models, activism is taking shape. New actions bring uplifting new ways of mobilising. Anything is possible if we give breath to new ideas, go against the tide, and move in surprising and unexpected new directions.*

*“In a way what we’re doing is a political project. Instead of going behind the barricades to protest every few days, we do things that make us ask questions every day” – Cédric Briand*

*“It’s up to us to move, we have to go for it.” – Sébastien Corbé*

The actors we met are mobilising, in their own way, to show that change is possible. Step by step, initiatives are coming together and organising to mobilise new people, by informing, by action *with* and not *against*.

*“I love these topics and sharing with others. Society needs to change.” – Stéphane Airault*

This mobilisation is taking encouraging new forms: more exciting, more constructive, more fun. More and more of these events are happening, and getting coverage in the media. Importantly, young people are very involved.

*“We have to invent something else” – Aurélie Mézière*



(left to right) Alison Brogan of ARC2020, Elisabeth Lukesch, rural actor from Austria, and Simone Matouch of Forum Synergies, at the Rural Resilience gathering

## Change begins with a change of outlook

The peaceful struggle requires a change of outlook and a change of behaviour. These initiatives are saddled with negative stereotypes that are slowly changing.

*“We’re exotic, that’s what the breeders call us. But we’re traditional local breeds. It’s funny.” – Marion Henry*

This transformation towards more consideration and recognition leads to a positive spiral and a lasting change towards happiness and a sufficiency mindset.

*“There are no good or bad peasants; everyone has their own journey” – David Peyremorte*

Quietly, gently, resilience is taking root. All of the actors in rural territories are organising for more resilience, taking care to keep their actions politically relevant.



Preparing the farmhouse banquet at La Ferme des 7 Chemins during the Rural Resilience gathering





Exchanges at La Ferme des 7 Chemins during the Rural Resilience gathering

*“We try not to be in resistance but to go with the flow of each others’ motivations, to push in places where there’s movement happening. It’s always about the participation of people.” – Fanny, Au Maquis*

Persuaded that there are not one but multiple solutions, these actors are adapting and innovating in every field, bringing a fresh outlook and taking into account the entire population of their territory.

*“Politics needs to be in the collective interest” – Aurélie Mézière*



Porc Blanc de l'Ouest, an outdoor pig breed found in the West of France

## Resilience, a force to move forward, to adapt

*“It’s the power-based relations that need to change.” – Xavier Hamon*

While these initiatives are growing, here and there, they are certainly not the majority. Relations of force remain unequal. Yet we see a groundswell of patience, perseverance, tenacity and cooperation that will gradually be able to balance out these relations of force, at the very least, with respect for human rights and nature.

*“We try to resist a little. We try to imagine another path or an alternative” – Thierry Lohr*



Legislation and provisions for new rights will allow these alternatives to find their place and gain recognition in the eyes of the public. Testament to this is Defending Peasants Rights, the platform of rural struggles in action.

*“There’s a tool that can protect us collectively, and that is our rights” – Céline Zoppello, Defending Peasants Rights*



Visiting the food justice association Au Maquis, June 2022





A festive mobilisation: Concert by the Hamon-Martin duo featuring farmer and singer Mathieu Hamon, at La Ferme des 7 Chemins, as part of the Rural Resilience gathering, October 2022

## A European struggle

While the local level is an ideal place to experiment, it can't develop without a larger framework: in this case, European agricultural and rural policies. Rarely consistent with the reality we encountered, these policies must be reinvented to adapt and embrace all of the actors who are building the world of tomorrow. The time is now for a bottom-up response to an urgent situation. Europe can only be resilient with the local level at its side.

*"It's global thinking about the local now" – Pierre Gachet*

A powerful dynamic is emerging in the European countryside. This is clear from the book *Rural Europe Takes Action: No More Business As Usual*, as well as the Rural Resilience gathering we co-organised in Plessé in October 2022, which made space for every actor to contribute. Another example is the annual Soup n Talk in Berlin, where thousands of people gather over a bowl of soup to learn about initiatives all over Europe.

*“We need to join forces for change, and find partners to influence the course of things.” – Gilles Avocat*

In all corners of Europe, a societal change is underway to build a more socio-ecological future. People are mobilised and slowly coming together to exchange, to build new bridges and to put forward new possibles.



(left to right) Lucía Fernández, researcher from Spain, Matías María Rubio, rural actor from Spain, Benoît Biteau, French MEP, Katerina Shelagh Boucoyannis, researcher from Greece, and Pierre Gachet, French farmer, at the Rural Resilience gathering



Céline Zoppello of Defending Peasants Rights, Hugues Vernier of the grouping of municipalities Communauté de communes du Val de Drôme, and Rémi Beslé, local councillor for Plessé, during the “fictional orchard” plenary at the Rural Resilience gathering

# Conclusion

*Territory, politics, peaceful struggle, collective, changes in agricultural practices and behaviours: these are the ingredients for a successful transition. In these encounters, we have experienced the concept of transition and what it means for each of the initiatives.*



*“It’s time to stop talking about transition and instead about a new society to build, with new, more respectful paradigms, more solidarity, where the economy doesn’t dominate” – Participant at the Rural Resilience gathering*



“What does socio-ecological transition mean to you? To us?” Collectively assembling the puzzle at the Rural Resilience gathering

Over the two years of this project, all of us wondered regularly about this socio-ecological transition. Transition, adaptation, non-adaptation... none of these words reflect exactly what we witnessed, the reflections we shared, the questions that arose among us.

As the first phase of Nos Campagnes en Résilience comes to an end, our collective reflections have brought us to the following conclusion:

Transition is urgent and essential. We need to move towards a society with more robust foundations – land, seeds, water, healthy food. We need new paradigms, new forms of political governance. A society in which the economy does not dictate activities, and where the environment and the human find their rightful place.



*Welcome to the Rural Resilience gathering at La Ferme des 7 Chemins*



*“It’s the whole system that has to change” – Pierre Gachet*

We need a revolution in society, to be sparked by a peaceful, enthusiastic and optimistic struggle, for a more socio-ecological future.

*“When we are willing to come together and there’s a sense to it, any initiative can take shape”  
– Olivier Cartier Moulin*





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**I. A Collective Adventure:** Adèle Violette / Jeanine Sochas / Adèle Violette / Christophe Milot / Christophe Milot / Hannes Lorenzen

**II. Cultivating the Human Spirit, Cultivating Nature:** Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Christophe Milot / Valérie Geslin / Valérie Geslin / Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette

**III. Earnings, Yes – But What About Wellbeing?** Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Christophe Milot / Christophe Milot / Christophe Milot / Adèle Violette

**IV. The Local as Testing Ground:** Hannes Lorenzen / Hannes Lorenzen / Hannes Lorenzen / Christophe Milot / Hannes Lorenzen

**V. Opening Up Farming:** Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Hannes Lorenzen / Valérie Geslin

**VI. Getting Political:** Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Courtesy of Plessé municipality / Christophe Milot / Adèle Violette / Jeanine Sochas / Christophe Milot / Jeanine Sochas

**VII. Big Visions:** Adèle Violette / Valérie Geslin / Adèle Violette / Hannes Lorenzen

**VIII. The Struggle is Peaceful, Collective & Intergenerational!** Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette / Valérie Geslin / Adèle Violette / Adèle Violette

**Conclusion:** Adèle Violette / Hannes Lorenzen / Adèle Violette / Jeanine Sochas

## About ARC2020

Since 2002, the Agricultural and Rural Convention (ARC2020) has worked towards a shared vision for sustainable farming and rural renaissance.

As a non-profit organisation, we animate a European network to try to make the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) more fit for purpose – more adapted to the real needs of people and planet.

As well as policy work, we try to keep our feet on the ground and our hands in the soil too. We see socio-ecological transition, involving real people in living places, as core to what we do. So finding and engaging with on the ground practitioners warms our collective souls. We give local actors a chance to share ideas and practices, concerns and opportunities at European level.

We try to meld the practical community orientated work and the debates we facilitate with policy proposals: we want what we learn from the communities we work with to feed into our submissions on long term visions and strategies for Rural Europe.

Another rural is possible!

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