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PRESS RELEASE

VII. World Organic Forum | 1 – 3 July 2024 Future Food Systems: Organic – Regenerative – Agroecological?

Looking to the future: pathways towards resilient land use systems

At the World Organic Forum 2024 at Kirchberg Castle, more than 120 participants and over 50 speakers discussed solutions for tomorrow's land use systems. The numerous guests from all over the world agreed during the lively discussions that no single concept can provide the answer to all questions, but rather a synthesis of concepts that is fit for the future.

The discussion focused on ecological, regenerative and agro-ecological farming. What is understood in German-speaking countries and in Europe as certified and strictly regulated organic production, as soil revitalization and as the sustainable transformation of the entire agricultural and food system, is not as clearly defined for experts in other countries. For them, the differences between the individual buzzwords are blurred. For Rudolf Bühler, initiator of the forum and chairman of the Bäuerliche Erzeugergemeinschaft Schwäbisch Hall (BESH), one aspect is paramount: "Future food systems can only be able to survive if they are based on our natural resources, if they manage rather than mismanage mother nature." Organic products avoid the use of chemicals, but they are more than that: "Organic farming must increasingly lead to climate-friendly agricultural practices." However, the ecological practices used to date are not enough: "Organic must be more. Organic must fulfil further concepts that we have known for some time from the agroecological and regenerative movement." Rudolf Bühler wants to combine the organic with the regenerative. "This must be our focus and our goal for future solutions: certified organic farming as a basic model, including valuable regenerative practices and agroecological solutions, in order to achieve sustainable future food systems." He is sure that all participants of the forum have the same dream: "We want to fight for a better world, peace with nature, peace between people – let's do it!"

In a final discussion moderated by Josefine Herz, host of the Academy Schloss Kirchberg/Jagst, several speakers summarized their impressions. The Canadian Jean-Martin Fortier, who has fundamentally changed the industry with his books on the cultivation and direct marketing of organic vegetables, believes that the differences between the terms must be overcome. "It is

really important that we fight for the movement and what it stands for in the future.” This includes many aspects: for him, healthy soil is the basis of organic farming in the truest sense of the word. But it is also about cooperation, mutual respect, listening and encouraging each other. “We are a big movement, we just have to stay on the organic track and not let ourselves be divided.” Jean-Martin Fortier emphasized that organic farmers “must be a strong voice against the big corporations that are trying to take over the organic industry”.

Nora Taleb has worked with agricultural cooperatives around the world. “I am fighting for the right food system, and that should be organic.” She is looking forward to the process of working out the strengths of each approach, rather than immediately finding a compromise. Otherwise, you would agree to something you don’t agree with just because you want to reach an understanding. To do this, people must come together and exchange ideas honestly, as they did at the World Organic Forum.

For Frenchwoman Charlotte Dufour, Advisor at the Conscious Food Systems Alliance Secretariat of the UNDP, love and joy are more important than material wealth. She works worldwide in the field of food systems and nutrition. She is working worldwide in the realm of food systems and nutrition and advocates listening to nature: “The problems we face are so complex that we cannot solve them with our rational minds alone. We need to tap into the wisdom of nature and let it guide us.” People have come together in Kirchberg. They are humble, want to learn and grow together. Many farmers around the world suffer from a lack of dignity and respect. “How can we invite them to join us on our journey?”

This is exactly the approach taken by Lauren Tucker. She focuses on the further evolving of the food system in her work by integrating living systems thinking in working with food businesses and has founded an innovation center in California for this purpose: “We must take the opportunity to engage in dialogue and achieve reconciliation in order to create a food system that is fair to all living beings, animals, land, people, culture and our unique places.”

The director of the Academy Schloss Kirchberg, Prof. Dr. Franz-Theo Gottwald, summarized his impressions of the conference very emotionally: “We like to feel and smell the soil. When we farm, we like to hear and feel animals”. In this way, “we have a deep relationship with all forms of life”. He felt the energy during the forum, “almost like a living consciousness”. It was the decision of all participants “to choose a future food system that keeps our environment viable”. He wanted to change the perspective for this: “It’s not about us healing the world, but about the world healing itself and allowing us to be part of that process”. He wanted the guests to remember the beautiful atmosphere, “take this peaceful gratitude, this energy, this love and this tolerance home with you”.



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