

Living Farms

The magazine of the Section for Agriculture

100 YEARS
BIODYNAMIC

On familiar turns with your farm
Ueli Hurter

Transforming – healing – awakening
Tho Ha Vinh

The Agriculture Course as a source of inspiration
Tom Saat, Martin von Mackensen

Encounter with Persephone
Edith Lammerts van Bueren

Biodynamic training in Ukraine
Interview mit Jean-Michel Florin

Healthy eating for a healthy future
Jasmin Peschke

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You can view the recordings of the individual lectures from the Agriculture Conference 2024 on goetheanum.tv.



Some of the articles from the Agriculture Conference 2024 in this edition of the magazine are reproduced in cooperation with the periodical "Das Goetheanum".



Dear Reader,

The new Living Farms magazine has arrived right on time for the 100-year anniversary of biodynamic agriculture! We lay it in your hands and also your hearts, as we want to create a connection between readers and writers and to prepare a fertile soil for the continued expansion, deepening and development of biodynamics.

The year 1924, when Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course took place on the Koberwitz estate, was a time of great upheaval. It was the dawn of a new era for agriculture, with the use of industrially manufactured synthetic nitrogen. Neither the soil nor the plants and animals were able to cope with this strong cocktail, resulting in many diseases and poorer quality foods. Some farmers asked themselves if this was to be the future of farming. Was there no other option? So they asked Rudolf Steiner for his opinion and he gave the eight lectures of the Agriculture Course, which form the basis of biodynamic agriculture to this day. He drew a broad picture, opening the view into the cosmic dimension, into the depths of the earth and into the innermost interactions in nature. But above all he created connections between human beings and agriculture, for example he compared the soil with the human diaphragm and created the concept of the agricultural individuality. The human being was made the basis, with the aim of producing healthy food. This was the birth of a human agriculture, as a counter image of industrial agriculture.

The course fascinated the listeners and they set to work immediately. Soon the first biodynamic farms had been established in a few European countries, followed by other continents including in sub-tropical climates. There is now a truly worldwide biodynamic movement, with an estimated 30,000 farms of which 7,500 are Demeter certified. Research institutes, plant-breeding initiatives, training courses, processing and marketing companies, etc. have been set up. This all bears witness to the fact that we can truly speak of a cultural impulse in the realm of agriculture.

This first issue of the magazine contains contributions from members of the biodynamic movement worldwide who came together at the Agriculture Conference from 7 to 10 February 2024 at the Goetheanum. The conference, entitled "Sun – Earth – Human," was dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course. Added to this are articles from the working areas of the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum.

We wish you all an inspiring read,

Ueli Hurter

Co-leader of the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum



The three big tasks of agriculture

Transforming – healing – awakening

Can we as farmers and human beings find a way to alleviate the suffering in the world? This was the question pondered by the Buddhist teacher and ambassador of Gross National Happiness, Tho Ha Vinh, at the 2024 Agriculture Conference. And his answer is yes – if we restore the dignity of agriculture and understand its big tasks as tasks of humanity.

Farmers across Europe are protesting. The suffering that so many farmers – not just in Europe – have to endure is just a symptom. The cause of the suffering is that the actual mission of agriculture and its dignity have been lost. The situation is similar in the education and healthcare sectors. The profoundly human endeavours to transform, heal, nourish and teach have been reduced to purely economic activities. Now we have to give agriculture back its dignity.

Transforming: Reshaping the earth

Firstly, of course, agriculture has the task of feeding the world. Nutrition takes place on different levels – physical food is one of them. The task of humans is to transform the earth, to make it into something more noble, more spiritual, more transparent, so that the spirit can permeate the earth.

Steiner gives three exercises in the Foundation Stone Meditation. The first reads: “Practise spirit recollection / In depths of soul.” What is the depth of the soul? It is the will. When we work with our limbs, when we plough the earth, we are doing something very material; we are working with the physical dimension. Can we recollect the spirit when we work in the depths of the earth so that our action is indeed a process of transformation? When a child is born, they receive a physical body. The entire development of the child consists of gradually taking possession of this body and reshaping it. Together, as humanity, we do this for the earth. That’s a big part of what agriculture is about: transforming the body of the earth in such a way that it can become a vessel for the spirit.



Tho Ha Vinh is the former programme director of the Gross National Happiness Centre Bhutan and former head of the training, learning and development department at the International Committee of the Red Cross. He is founder and chairman of the Eurasia Foundation, Buddhist teacher, visiting professor for adult education and humanitarian work at various universities and author of several books.

Healing: Growing in community

In all cultures of the world, we have the idea of a god-like figure who gifted agriculture to humanity. Interestingly, in almost all traditions, the god or being that brings agriculture is also associated with healing, because this is to do with knowledge about plants and how they act and can heal. Agriculture also gives meaning to time. For farmers, time is not just a clock, but the cycle of nature. Time becomes rhythm, and rhythm is healing.

The second exercise that Steiner suggests – “Practise spirit contemplation” – is about transforming our natural emotions into something that is balanced and in harmony with the rhythm of the cosmos. This allows us to be mindful in dealing with the present. And what is the effect of this? It is the building of a community. Farms are communities.

“If we really experience deeply in agriculture that inner and outer processes are one, then we can connect with others and transform the earth.”

We used to live in dualities. Those who were different were considered enemies or inferior. But rice and wheat are not competitors, they are the two great cultures of the world: the rice culture and the wheat culture. Related to the moon, related to the sun. And we need both, the sun and the moon. The time has come in which we have to realise that we are an interdependent family of eight billion.

Awakening: Finding our true nature

How can we ultimately connect directly with the spirit? In perceiving the spirit in the stillness of thought, Rudolf Steiner says in the Foundation Stone Meditation, “Practise spirit beholding / In stillness of thought”. When the inner noise calms down and an inner stillness sets in, we can perceive the spirit directly. That is the awakening.

The first movement is from above to below: the spirit illuminates matter and the latter is transformed as a result. The second is a horizontal movement in which we can perceive, contemplate the spirit or be mindful in the balance of our transformed emotions. And the third movement is the awakening to our true, authentic being. If we see the task of agriculture as part of the task of humanity, which has these three basic functions – transforming matter, healing on the soul level, and awakening on the spiritual level – then we truly recognise the dignity of agriculture as the dignity of being human.

Dissolving suffering

We suffer because in our materialistic culture we have lost the connection with our spiritual being, with our true self, and we feel disconnected from ourselves, our fellow human beings and the earth, indeed lonely. If we do not connect with our being, we cannot perceive the being of others and of the earth. If we really experience deeply in agriculture that inner and outer processes are one, then we can connect with others and transform the earth. If in doing so we manage to integrate our existing spiritual heritage and modestly contribute to the positive development of our earth, we will create a biodynamic movement that in a true sense is universally human.

The agricultural individuality

On familiar terms with you, your environment, your farm

The concept of individuality is missing in the general understanding of agronomy. This is not so in biodynamic agriculture: Rudolf Steiner introduced this idea, so broadening the perspective in a surprising way. Understanding this concept continues to be a challenge – and putting it into practice even more so. Ueli Hurter, co-leader of the Section for Agriculture, describes a way forward.

In 1924, when farmers in need of help asked Rudolf Steiner for an agriculture course, they had no idea of the concept of the “agriculture individuality”. It was something totally new! The concept is broadly defined – as is the understanding of biodynamic agriculture: it creates connections between natural and spiritual sciences and tries to see everything in context.

Individuality as a double gesture both inwards and outwards

When considering human beings, individuality means becoming oneself: we can make our own decisions and are responsible for the consequences of our actions. The development of the child and young person show that individualisation takes place in stages. It is a way that leads us from being one with the surroundings towards self-determination. Our individuality develops through the primal experience of loneliness, but also through the experience of love – we take individualisation into our own hands.

The same applies in society: from ancient times up to the Renaissance, we developed via many stages from a group

consciousness to an individual consciousness. This process of becoming our own person also means that we become more generalised. We increasingly become representatives of humanity, for example of a village, a region, even of a whole generation. It is a double gesture: we become more ourselves, but at the same time represent the whole.

Nelson Mandela is an example of this. A person of colour, he fought the apartheid regime and was imprisoned for 27 years. He did not allow this to break him, but worked on developing his individuality every day. As a result, people knew about him, even during his captivity! He was released and elected as president – as the representative of the people. In his inauguration speech, he cited the American freedom activist Marianne Williamson: “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.” At this moment, when as president he outwardly became a representative, he was inwardly at his full power and his individuality was expressed or, in other words, his “inner sun” shone.



Ueli Hurter has been co-leader of the Section for Agriculture since 2010 and on the Executive Council of the General Anthroposophical Society since 2020. Up until 2020 he was a biodynamic farmer and part of the management group of the Swiss pioneering farm L'Aubier with its farm, cheese dairy, eco hotel, organic shop and housing development.



What has the concept of individuality to do with farming?

How can the concept of individuality be applied to agriculture? To answer this question, we must go back to the year 1924, when Rudolf Steiner held the eight lectures making up the Agriculture Course at Whitsun in Koberwitz (Kobierzyce). A picture was created in the first lecture of a small circle surrounded by a large one – Saturn’s orbit with its

“In this way Rudolf Steiner set the course for a new way of looking at agronomy, one that included the whole – the earth, human beings, the cosmos!”

30-year period: a dramatic opening, looking at the big picture! In this way Rudolf Steiner set the course for a new way of looking at agronomy, one that included the whole – the earth, hu-

man beings, the cosmos! In the second lecture he introduced the concept of the “agricultural individuality” – so it was there from the start. “A farm is true to its essential nature, in the best sense of the word, if it is conceived as a kind of individual entity in itself—a self-contained individuality.” This means that the farm must itself create what it needs for production – the manure, the means of production i.e. soil, plants and animals – as far as possible. This is not just an outline of a small farming idea, but the foundation of a new form of agriculture. Being self-contained is the first aspect of the agricultural individuality. The second relates to the soil. Steiner compared the soil to the human diaphragm, so turning everything upside down: “In the individuality with which we are here concerned, the head is beneath the surface of the Earth, while we, with all the animals, are living in the creature’s belly!”^{**} How puzzling!



* Rudolf Steiner, Agriculture Course, GA 327, Rudolf Steiner Press, Forest Row 2004, Lecture II.

** Ibid.

“For the deep topics I need the community”

“This is my second time at the Agriculture Conference. It is the exchange of ideas about anthroposophical topics that attracts me: the intensive work over four days in this special place, the penetration of the topics, the many different perspectives ... I can expand my knowledge about greenhouse crops on my own if necessary, but for the deeper topics I need the community.

For me, the preparations and the farm as an individuality are the central content of the Agriculture Course and actually the core of biodynamics. The work with the preparations is also very important for me personally. I am touched by it, I perceive it as a graceful activity. At the same time, it is a matter of the will: you have to be present and focussed for an hour and dedicate yourself exclusively to this task. The joint production of the preparations is also a lovely experience that brings people together.”

Rebekka Halbig is a farmer and trained at the Freie Landbauschule Bodensee. She is currently employed on a dairy farm with its own milk processing facility in Appenzellerland (CH).



The third aspect is the “ego tendency” that the cow carries within herself as the world champion of digestion. What is meant by this? Unlike the human being, the cow has not developed an ego-consciousness, but remains in a “dreaming consciousness” while she digests her feed and excretes it again. So the potential of the “ego tendency” is not exhausted but is made available to the whole farm in the form of manure, giving this an “ego potential”, which develops into the farm individuality over the years. The three aspects of the agricultural individuality interact with each other: the whole which is standing on its head, and whose parts support each other down through the years. What is the meaning of this?

Becoming human – looking at individuality as a whole

In order to understand this image of the agricultural individuality standing on its head, it is helpful to shed light on the different levels of the concept of individuality.

Physical level – embracing: become the person you are. What you now are is not what you actually are. Through studying the Agriculture Course, Rudolf Steiner invites us to start on a path of self-discovery.

Living level – becoming conscious: if we concentrate on our own “I”, then our personality appears as a point. Everything that we have ever gone through or experienced is now collected in this point. It is a gesture of huge proportions! This gathering place now becomes the eye of the needle through which to pass into a new space beyond materiality, into a counterspace, an inner expanse, where the world of the elements, the atmosphere, takes place. We experience our peripheral ego. To what does this shift in the agricultural individuality correspond? The inversion of up and

down, the agricultural individuality on its head! We tend to think that the plant has its roots in the ground in order to absorb nutrients, and has its leaves in the air in order to perceive. However, we could look at it the other way around: it perceives with its roots and in the air and atmosphere it absorbs nutrients and digests them. Then everything which is light and air is actually absorbed metabolically. We see the plant growing from the bottom upwards, but in fact it also grows from the top downwards. The formation of substance takes place in the green leaves. Naturally the mineral substances come upwards from below in the flow of soluble salts. But they are the result of a process of perception and not due to the plant’s desire to feed itself.

Feeling level – connecting: we now live in a relationship of the centre to the periphery. How can we join the one to the other? From the point to the periphery. I am in the great whole. And the great whole is in me. I am ex-centric. This is the experience of reality: becoming ex-centric and at the same time meeting the counterpart, the other. I am, because you are. Everything becomes its opposite: the minerals and the stars, the plants and the animals, a branch moved by a breath of wind. I enter the world that exists because it is a conversation between different beings. In terms of the farm, this means that it needs to be self-contained so that this conversation can take place. The self-containment creates an inner warmth, inner light, an inner conversation. The familiar force of self-organisation emerges. After three years a developmental step takes place, after seven years the next one, and suddenly this agricultural individuality starts to maintain itself on its own. If you are able to develop a farm over a long period, this individuality starts to become a true partner. Peace, stability and internal autonomy arise.

Spiritual level – developing: this conversation is also concerned with before and after, in other words, what was in our lives up until now and what will come afterwards. The conversation contains everything. It is another intertwining of the individual and the general. In this sense, every person is in the process of development along their path but is also united with all other people who are also in a process of development.

Becoming earth – understanding the other

In visualising the great timeless whole – the creation, if we want to call it that – we need to develop ideas and powers that are still totally unknown at present.

“So we can say that every farm can be a representative of the whole earth in the sense that it contains a future germ of the earth.”

We need to make sure that the life of us human beings on earth can continue, also in the physical sense. We visualise that we are one or “kin” with everything, that minerals, plants and animals are our siblings. The earth is there for all of us. We have experienced centuries when people have taken more than they have given. On the one hand this is right, because it enabled us to develop and gain freedom, but on the other hand it gave rise to an imbalance that we now need to redress.

Becoming sun – dedicating ourselves to the healthy development of the earth

How can this relationship be turned around? It requires a major development dimension: a reversal of the direction of

development. We can find an analogy in the figure of Christ. Christ as a spiritual being, a sun being, left his home, became human, died, overcame death and connected himself to everything on the earth. This gave rise to a new consciousness on the earth: the awareness of transformation, healing, forgiveness; an awareness of co-operation instead of antagonism. And in this way the earth starts to germinate, like a seed. The earth contains new germinating forces. Plants, animals and the earth carry early germinating forces in order to shine anew. This is the deed of the sun being, the Christ being, which should not be confused with the naming of Christ as it is done in an ecclesiastical religious context. Anthroposophy respects all religious beliefs.

This inner experience of the “sun’s warmth” can be very personal and at the same time very unifying – here we again see the double nature of the individual. Our common human responsibility is now to include the earth in our human destinies. The earth is the “substance of our destiny”, individually and jointly. How can I give expression to this? When we turn our attention to a piece of the earth, take it into our care so that it can develop towards individualisation as an expression of the whole earth, then this results in agricultural individuality. So we can say that every farm can be a representative of the whole earth in the sense that it contains a future germ of the earth. This is where new forces of germination are at work. Nature here is not merely regenerated but generated. This is where we can work creatively out of the future, on and with the earth.

Living with the farm organism

How does this work in practice?

What does Rudolf Steiner's term "farm organism" mean? And how can it be put into practice? Vesna Forštnerič Lesjak and Matjaž Turinek discuss this with each other. Both run their own farms in Slovenia.

Matjaž: A farm is independent, autonomous, interacting with customers, the environment, the cosmos, plants and animals. Every biodynamic farm is different. The life of a farm organism is similar to the phases of human life. It has a birth, a youth, an adulthood, but also an end. Vesna, how many incarnations has your farm been through?

Vesna: My ancestors lived on our farm as far back as the sixteenth century, always independently and autonomously. During the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, we were a so-called free farm, free from the church and aristocracy, and the farm was always handed on to women.

My questions today are: how can we understand the farm as a living organism? On top of that, it should still be an individuality, Rudolf Steiner said. These two concepts, organism and individuality, must be shaped and realised by people. An organism is an integrative, biological system. The structure of the whole determines the activity of individual parts and is much more than just the sum of the individual parts. The second characteristic of an organism is interdependence, the mutual or reciprocal dependencies. This means that everything is both cause and effect for something else. The third characteristic of a living being is development. The functions of the farm organism are maintained through cycles. Then there is time autonomy and the management of energy as two further characteristics of a living organism, as well as sensitivity and adaptability. Every living being is in dialogue with their environment

and at the same time perceives their inner states. In this way, the organism emancipates itself on the one hand and connects with its environment on the other. A farm does that too, which is why it is an organism. What about the incarnation process on your farm, Matjaž?

Matjaž: Our farm came about 17 years ago with the question of what we wanted to grow. This matured to the point that the farm was born. We started out as a community-supported farm with three customers, and after 12 years we now have 150 customers and 18 hectares of land. As a farmer, you need to have patience. You have to have faith, commit yourself to the farm and look to the future with hope, even though it is sometimes difficult. Community building has many levels in the social organism of the farm. It is important to communicate openly and honestly with each other. We ask ourselves: are we slaves to the farm organism or co-creators? We keep observing, exchanging thoughts and reflecting. It is important to look for people who can create different perspectives. It is also important to be grateful: for the people who help. The essential thing for me is that we create relationships – interpersonal relationships and relationships with the farm organism.



Vesna Forštnerič Lesjak is a biodynamic farmer, pharmacist and co-leader of the Natural Science Section at the Goetheanum.



Matjaž Turinek is a biodynamic farmer and gives lectures on biodynamic topics such as medicinal herb cultivation or soil fertility.

“The life of a farm organism is similar to the phases of human life.”

“There is an incredible energy here”

“This is my very first time at the Agriculture Conference. The trip here marks the end of our training in organic and biodynamic agriculture in the Czech Republic. We are here with the whole class. During the three-year training course, we also read Rudolf Steiner, studied anthroposophy and visited many biodynamic farms. Everything is concentrated here at the conference, there is an incredible energy, it is ... wow! I can really immerse myself deeply and see how biodynamics and anthroposophy can be implemented in life and in agricultural practice.

I also experience how big the biodynamic movement is and the energy that arises when people from all over the world come together out of the same interest. I will take this energy with me.”



Petra Kymetalikova recently completed the new training course in organic and biodynamic agriculture at Farmářská škola near Prague, Czech Republic.

“Are we able to move from the material into the spiritual?”

“I’ve probably been to the Agriculture Conference 15 to 20 times. It has been a fixed date for me, to see what is going on in the biodynamic movement and to receive new impulses. After all, you become barn-blind and have to keep broadening your view! After a longer break, partly due to coronavirus, I wanted to make time again for the 100th anniversary. Where are we today? Are we able to move from the material into the spiritual? Can we manage to solve the social question and work together? The turmoil of the current times demands personal responsibility, independence, honesty and truthfulness from us. We can gain strength from each other here for that.”



Josef Tinzl is one of the Demeter pioneers in apple growing in the Val Venosta (South Tyrol, Italy) and 23 years ago co-founded the international specialist group for biodynamic fruit growing.

“The Agriculture Course is a source for meditation”

“These hundred years of biodynamic agriculture are a very special moment. You are forced to reflect deeply on your own agricultural work. And the conference offers a wonderful opportunity to do so.

I always pick up the Agriculture Course when it comes to the spiritual connection with my farm. For me, it is a source of inspiration for meditation, for the meditative exploration of the spiritual foundations of the farm, which is located in an ancient cultural landscape. In recent years I have been very involved with holistic landscape design. To do this, I need to familiarise myself not only with the

history of the cultural landscape, but also with the various entities at work within it and learn to understand them better and better. I always read the course in German. In this way I feel very close to Rudolf Steiner; it feels like a conversation with him.”



Christian Vera Ponce is a journalist and artist in Lima and looks after his family’s ancient fig trees in the remote Siguan Valley in Peru. He researches and documents fig culture in various countries and eras.

The Agriculture Course as a source of inspiration

Old knowledge rethought

Agriculture and society have changed greatly over the last 100 years. Can Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course of 1924 continue to inspire us? Biodynamic farmers Tom Saat and Martin von Mackensen explore this question and reach the same conclusion: yes, if we as humans learn to understand the role accruing to us in agriculture.

Tom Saat's perspective Not for lazy thinkers

Was hexaploid wheat a random cross between einkorn and Aegilops grass or a cultural act? Did the wolf become a dog by chance or as the result of a deliberate process? Today, the theory of chance is widespread, but Tom Saat considers this to be "lazy thinking". In his view, these are purposeful developments based on creative thinking. As Rudolf Steiner set out, thinking is not something secondary that depicts the world, but something primary, in other words, a generating force that creates living things.

The biblical image of the two trees, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, symbolises this: there are two trees and not one. This means that human cognition did not arise from the principle of life; it is something independent and is essential for life on earth to unfold. In the course of cultural development, human cognition has limited itself to knowledge of what is perceptible to the senses. Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course is a way of recreating the tree of knowledge, not as a divine but as a human product, as a progression in evolution. Human cognition can develop further and does not have to stop at the

"end products of nature", the animals and plants. It can penetrate to the actual creative processes of nature. The course helps with this. Its images are living and call for "living thinking".

The proximity of humic acid in the soil and protein in the plants

The concepts of "life" and "death" are a good example of the necessity of living thinking. Thus the Agriculture Course, for example, talks about dead oxygen in the air and living oxygen in the soil. It is important for humans and animals that the oxygen they take in through the air is dead. The life processes must come to an end so that space can be created for something higher: consciousness. Seen in this light, death is a condition for the resurrection of consciousness.

The situation is different for plants: the roots absorb the living oxygen. The formation of humic acids takes place underground as a generative process. A very limited amount of carbon dioxide is actively absorbed from the air. The formation of protein, the basis of plant development, takes place above ground. The humic acid in the soil and the protein in the plant have an interesting thing in common: the ratio of carbon (C)



Tom Saat studied philosophy and soil science in Amsterdam and worked as a lecturer and researcher at Wageningen University from 1982 to 1990. Since 1990 he has been working as a biodynamic farmer. In 1995 he founded the Stadsboerderij Demeter farm in Almere.



Biodynamic farmer **Martin von Mackensen** runs the Dottenfelderhof School of Agriculture, a full-time training programme for biodynamic farmers, and lectures at Geisenheim University.



to nitrogen (N) is almost the same for both: around 8–11 to 1. It is a close ratio.

Peat:	C:N	>60:1
Natural soil:	C:N	15:1
Cultivated soil:	C:N	12:1
Humic acid:	C:N	9–11:1
Protein:	C:N	8–11:1

Peat is dead organic matter; the C:N ratio is over 60 to 1, in other words, very high. If we look at the fertile cultivated soils, the relationship becomes ever closer. And the C:N ratio of the most fertile humus substance is almost the same as

We need the astral, in other words, the soul aspect, for the healthy control of life. This too is the responsibility of the people on a farm. The task of farmers is to “make the astral settled”. First and foremost, this refers to animals, especially ruminants. But the astral is also introduced into life through composting. Composting is an imitation of the animal process. This not only has an effect on the soil, but also on the insect and bird world, which also belongs to the farm and helps to shape the astral aspect of the farm.

The third task for farmers is to awaken the aspect of the I in the farm. “I” means to create from out of oneself. But this is only possible with a counterpart with whom the I has a relationship, not with something foreign. The farm is in a relationship with everything that grows and lives and circulates within the farm, not with the feed or manure that comes from outside or maybe even from far away. The individuality of the farm is created with the development of the farm through the actions of its people. It is a continuation of the vertical, divine impulse – now led by human beings, as creation, as a continuation of evolution: “So that human beings may become sun for the earth.”

“The individuality of the farm is created with the development of the farm through the actions of its people.”

that of protein. So when we make our soils more fertile, we bring them closer to the plant world. This addresses the handling of the etheric. After all, the farm has no etheric body, and the control of the etheric – in other words, the life forces – lies in the hands of its people.

Martin von Mackensen's perspective

A personal relationship with manure

What characterises humans and what distinguishes them from plants and animals? The I. Martin von Mackensen follows its traces. As Tom Saat mentions, the I derives meaning from what it relates to, what it connects with. We therefore have to ask ourselves, what have I connected with? What do I want to be connected with? It is about our personal relationship. An example: imagine a compost heap that is not completely covered. Without thinking twice, you set to work with a pitchfork. Everything you do is motivated by the feeling of how it should be. The goal that the heap should be nicely covered at the end is what guides you. The I grasps the goal from the future. A personal relationship with what specifically relates to manuring means connecting with it in such a way that it becomes clear to us how it should become.

Manure is not yet fertiliser

We have a cultivated soil that has been worked, that has come into contact with air and light. Here crop rotation, tillage and manuring are the three aspects that are important in biodynamic agriculture. This turns into the feed that the cow consumes as a ruminant. The animal has a perception of the whole from which the feed has arisen and connects with it. Digestion and rumination are a process that is like an activity of the I. The cow's I is not present, but it is active. The manure excreted by the cow is not yet fertiliser. Once the cowpat has fallen, the farmer must continue the process that began in the cow.

Breeding crops and animals with a feeling heart

Biodynamic plant cultivation is always also breeding. It is always about needing plants that are particularly suitable. And ideally, we find them in what we have. We have stock and we know it could be a bit better. So we have an eye on the future. It is searching for and finding what leads onwards. Breeding is a form of vision. It is about internalising and externalising again what we have found. Of course, we need the help of professional biodynamic breeders, and yet our perception as farmers is always part of it. When breeding domestic animals, the aim is to dissolve the perfection of the animal a little. We need animals that are healthy and vital, that are long-lived and as old animals have a youthful character. In order to get a sense of this and choose the right animals, we need to think and create with a feeling heart. Or to put it another way: our thinking, our will and our intentions are shaped by our feeling heart. We have to find ways to take back the will to create, and then we are gifted an insight. Suddenly it becomes clear how it has to become. Rudolf Steiner's Agriculture Course can



“We have to find ways to take back the will to create, and then we are gifted an insight.”

help us to find these forms and bring our thinking to life.





Seeds of the future in our hearts

Everyone is a farmer

Eduardo Rincon, who will become the new co-leader of the Agriculture Section in August 2024, has travelled throughout America and Europe over the last two years, visiting farms and leading discussions on the future of agriculture. He reports on what he observed in the hearts of the farmers and the hopes that they cherish.

Today we find ourselves at a very important point in the history of the biodynamic and anthroposophical movements: we have just completed one cycle of a hundred years. At the centre of all the commemoration events is the Christmas Conference. A hundred years ago Rudolf Steiner planted a seed for the future in people's hearts, in the "soil of the heart". Our task is now to nurture these seeds from the Christmas Conference with the warmth, love and light that come from our hearts and living thoughts. We have to help these seeds to germinate. Looked at in this way, everyone is a farmer.

Why at Whitsun?

The Christmas Conference and Rudolf Steiner's lectures "World History in the Light of Anthroposophy" took place over the same period during part of the Holy Nights. As the daylight length-

ened, Candlemas, the spring equinox, Easter and then Whitsun followed. And Whitsun was the time when the Agriculture Course came into being on 7th of June 1924. Every day after the course in Koberwitz in the morning, Steiner returned to Breslau to give the karma lectures and some days to meet groups of young people. On the one hand the meetings with the young people were taking place and on the other the Agriculture Course – and the karma lectures spanned over everything.

Whitsun recalls the moment when the Holy Spirit descended onto the twelve apostles and Mary, and through his act they formed a new community. Why did Rudolf Steiner give the Agriculture Course at Whitsun? We can consider the image of the apostles and what happened at Whitsun: each of the disciples recognized the spirit individually, and also recognized it is one and the same



Eduardo Rincon is a biologist, artist, teacher, researcher and advisor. He founded La Huerta de Vinci, a project dedicated to biodynamic training and practice, and the production of medicinal plants and remedies. He currently lives in Mexico where he was until recently president of the Biodynamic Association of Mexico (Impulso Biodinámico de México). In August 2024 he will become the co-leader of the Section for Agriculture.

for all humans. They spoke the language of the heart. The individualism that has played a very important part on our way to developing our ego, leads us in an extreme way to the question posed by Rudolf Steiner: how will the future individualised human being be in a position to live in a new community of free spirits? An answer to this is given in Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy of Freedom: "Only because human beings are individuals of the same spirit can they live together. The free human being lives in the confidence that the other free human being belongs with him to the same spiritual world and that he will somehow meet him in his intentions."

The inner sun

The work of a farmer is profound and requires great commitment and determination: caring for the animals, planting, all the activities that require attentiveness and above all the sincere devotion to enlivening the farm and

"There is no need to go somewhere else to find the spiritual connection: it is directly in front of you."

soil by working with forces from the earth and the cosmos. This requires meditation. When a farmer is able to bring consciousness into their own activities, then ritual processes take place that promote and support alchemical activities in nature. If, for example, a farmer feeds his cow, then the cosmic forces that act in the earth and the plants are brought together in order to feed the cow. The cow transforms this into dung that serves as compost to enliven the

land. Agriculture possesses the ability to transform the earth. When we do this, we also transform ourselves. There is no need to go somewhere else to find the spiritual connection: it is directly in front of you. In view of today's crisis situation it is necessary to think like this. It gives farmers the opportunity to become aware of their role as catalysts of forces and as active managers who can contribute to the transformation of the human soul towards the future. As farmers we have to constantly practice going further in our feeling life in order to perceive the earth and its whole being more deeply.

The seed carries the future

The hope for the future of biodynamics begins with the seed that has already been planted in our hearts. We are now motivated to change the way in which we bring biodynamics into the world, to find new ways of working together and to work increasingly in community, despite our differences.

When we sow a seed, the question is always: will it germinate? Will it survive? Will it produce a harvest? We have trust. However bad the harvest was last year. We close our eyes and do it again: trust. In Latin America and other countries in the world where there are still people who have inherited the traditions of the sentient soul with all their heart, planting is still a sacred practice requiring reverence and prayer. This is the consciousness for the future. We now have the possibility to immerse ourselves in a knowing, living thinking and at the same time actively perceive the spiritual world. This is the step into the future. After we have sown the seeds and asked the fundamental questions, the answer will come to us in a majestic way: in abundance.

* Rudolf Steiner, The Philosophy of Freedom, GA 4, Rudolf Steiner Press, Lecture IX.

Better living conditions thanks to biodynamic agriculture

Insights into six countries

What effects does biodynamic agriculture have on the people who practice it? Pioneers from six countries share their experiences.



Biodynamic agriculture has the power not only to improve soil quality, as it does in the Egyptian desert region of Sekem, but also to change people's mentality. This enables a sustained positive development in living conditions.

Forty-six years ago, Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish started biodynamic farming in Sekem. A few years ago there were already 500 farmers using biodynamic methods. The Economy of Love project aims to increase that number to 2,000 and eventually 40,000. A major goal! We are raising our voices, so that governments take notice of us and the living conditions in Egypt improve for many.

Naglaa Ahmed, Egypt
Project leader in Sekem



My parents were among the first to have established a network for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Québec. This now comprises 250 farms and is the largest CSA network in the world. Since 1990 we have been farming biodynamically. Our belief is that it is not just about what we do now, but also about what we are leaving to the next generation.

Fifteen years ago we set up an association. The association partners bought the land and established a Community Land Trust (CLT) that ensures that the land is not sold to others. However, it is still difficult to sell the vegetables at a price that covers the costs and to live from agriculture alone. So we are now working closely with the consumers. Just as we took the land out of the market, we are now removing the vegetables from the market.

Anne Roussel, Canada
Biodynamic farmer,
Ferme Cadet Roussel S.E.N.C.



Over 30 years ago I asked the cotton farmers in India what they earned and what they had to spend in order to be able to farm. It became clear to me that something was wrong with the system. They were not earning enough to cover their costs. My friends and I wanted to offer the farmers a chance to escape from their debt spiral. So we transformed the Remei company which was originally a yarn business and nothing to do with farming. We started out with 36 farmers, at times this reached 6,000 and is now 2,700. Some lacked patience and the willingness to persevere, others were totally convinced.

Nowadays you can sense something special about the atmosphere on the farms. Drought and floods produce less damage than on the land farmed conventionally. The lives of the farmers have changed in a positive direction. Remei developed into a networker with the aim of improving the social and environmental criteria in the textile industry. The cotton products are now sold, for example, by the Swiss wholesaler Coop.

Patrick Hohmann,
India and Switzerland
Founder of Remei AG



I grew up in a village community in South Africa. We lived with nature, worked our own land and provided for ourselves. The land belonged to the community. Our use of the land served to safeguard our livelihoods. Biodynamic agriculture reminds me of my childhood. It fosters the spiritual connection to the earth, it reminds us of times gone by when we all used our senses and trusted our intuition. Thanks to farming together and sharing ideas, family ties are strengthened and the quality of life improved for every member of the family. The result is that young people stay in the community and do not leave for the cities. Biodynamics also creates access to education and good food. It promotes relationship-building, exactly like the African principle of “ubuntu”: I am because you are.

Feya Marince, South Africa

Co-founder of the Indigenous Biodynamic Association of Africa



In August 2015 I bought some land that was totally eroded. The same year I attended a workshop on biodynamic agriculture and decided to farm this land biodynamically. The Chotiwan Farm was born, the first Demeter-certified farm in Thailand. Since then, the farm has become the location for the first biodynamic training centre in Southern Asia.

I believe that there is a spiritual agriculture in all of us and everywhere, but it is important to speak to the people in their own language, in order to really reach them. The impulse is stronger when someone who speaks the native language is able to link the biodynamic principles with the local agriculture.

Peerachote Charanwang, Thailand

Food scientist and founder of the Chotiwan Farm



When I was 24 I was responsible for 35 cows on a farm in Germany. One morning, when I went to get them in from the pasture, five were dead. I knew that there had been a nitrogen experiment carried out on this pasture and realised that I did not want to farm in this way. But what was the alternative? I visited various biodynamic farms and was convinced that this was how I wanted to work.

In 1957, aged 28, I took over my parents’ farm and converted it to biodynamics. The neighbours eyed this up critically. Some friends even turned their backs on me. I began to be plagued by doubts, and loneliness set in. Then the “Bäuerliche Gesellschaft” [now “Demeter im Norden”] took me in and, thanks to the regular discussions with other farmers, I regained my confidence.

In 1978 two big fires reduced three quarters of the farm to ashes. Many people helped me to rebuild. Then I understood that the soil and the people, these two sides of biodynamic agriculture, always belong together.

Dieter Scharmer, Germany

Biodynamic farmer (retired)

The biodynamic impulse in the world

There are now biodynamic farms, gardens, associations and research institutes on all the continents. Some of them used the occasion of the centenary of biodynamic agriculture to create a poster and present it at the 2024 Agriculture Conference.





Gaining inner strength despite the turmoil of war Biodynamic training in Ukraine

In times of war, biodynamic work with the earth can be helpful in gaining inner strength. With this hopeful idea, Cristina Lieberherr from the “Shiva Zemlya Potutory” farm asked the Section for Agriculture for a continuation of the training courses. Co-leader Jean-Michel Florin responded to the call and gave another course in spring 2024. In this interview, he reports on his remarkable experiences.

Introductory courses in biodynamic farming were held on the farm near Lviv as long as five years ago. In summer 2022, Cristina Lieberherr, who runs the farm together with Ivan Bojko, asked our Section to jointly launch a deepening course. Especially in times of war, it could be very helpful to immerse oneself in the essential work with the earth in order to gain an inner strength that counteracts the external terror – thus her motivation. The training courses for the first and second lectures of Rudolf Steiner’s Agriculture Course took place in spring and autumn 2023. Jean-Michel Florin gave the third course in March 2024.

Anna Storchenegger: All airports in Ukraine are currently closed due to the war. So it’s not that easy to get into Ukraine. Jean-Michel, how did you travel?

Jean-Michel Florin: A train from Krakow took me to Ukraine. The journey basically went smoothly, the destruction of the country remained invisible during the train journey, but it was noticeable that almost only women and children were travelling on the train and the passengers and their luggage were checked several times. When I finally arrived at the farm, I was greeted by peace and quiet. Cristina had prepared everything beautifully, especially the seminar room, and decorated it with flowers. She created a very special atmosphere that made you forget for a while that there was a war going on.



Jean-Michel Florin is co-leader of the Section for Agriculture, coordinator of the Biodynamic Association (MABD) in France, board member of the International Biodynamic Association (IBDA) and author of the book *Biodynamic Wine Growing* and other publications on biodynamics. Since 2021, he has been on the supervisory board of the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International (BFDI).

The training course took place on a weekend in March. How many participants attended the course?

Twenty-five participants in total. The mix was diverse: from a farmer who has just started the first biodynamic trials on his large farm to the owner of a small biodynamic garden.

What did you work on?

We immersed ourselves in Rudolf Steiner's third lecture of the Agriculture Course, which deals with the substances, particularly nitrogen. How can we use nitrogen for living soil instead of for bombs? Legumes bind nitrogen molecules. Quite simply. Completely without violence. There is no explosion in the ground. In this way, contrasting aspects of the same substance are revealed: peaceful, life-affirming and warlike, destructive. People have a choice as to how they want to use nitrogen.

What was the mood like during the course?

On the eve of the first day of the course, there were attacks on power stations near Kyiv. Consequently, the mood at the start of the course was depressed. Two participants had to leave the course due to the attacks. We started with a beeswax candle meditation and reminded ourselves of the archetype that the light of the burning candle and the blackness of the carbon that is produced belong together. After that, we were able to concentrate on the content.

We tried to structure the course to be as varied as possible: theory, observation exercises in nature, and practical exercises on the cowpat preparation alternated. And on Saturday evening there was even a piano concert!

During the course we enjoyed very good meals from the farm. Our mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing was therefore very well catered for, which had a positive effect on the mood of the participants. I was very touched by the joy and gratitude of the participants at the end of the course.

What do you think, how can biodynamic agriculture support people and farms in war zones?

As a person who has never experienced war, it is perhaps a little presumptuous for me to answer this question. But I can try to reflect the perceptions of the course participants and their stories. Some of the course participants intend to continue to immerse themselves in the Agriculture Course on their own following this training course – partly out of pure interest, but also in order to find resilience and uplifting forces. Engaging with the course content can dispel everyday worries. When they return, it is perhaps possible to look at them from a different angle. You gain sovereignty. After all, war also has an atmospheric dimension: fear and terror can totally engulf people. However, it was possible for the course participants to be fully present and concentrate on the learning content.

Does biodynamic agriculture harbour the potential for peace?

The mood of terror in Ukraine is currently far too strong for peace or indeed reconciliation to be considered. Biodynamics is unlikely to be able to influence these circumstances. However, as can be seen from the example of the "Shiva Zemlya Potutory" farm, biodynamic agriculture can time and again enable future prospects to be found despite crises and obstacles. The approximately 400-hectare farm, a former collective farm, has been worked biodynamically since 2007. It produces wonderful tea blends from its own herb garden, and the crop rotation includes wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, millet and buckwheat as well as field beans and vetch. The herd of native Chyorna Ryaba cows numbers around 80 animals, 45 of which are dairy cows. The farm has been certified in accordance with Bio Suisse and Demeter International guidelines since 2021.



The team of the farm Potutory



Course participants at the farm



Climate, cows and potatoes

The many aspects of biodynamic research

Is the cow really a “climate killer”? Why does biodynamic agriculture contribute to soil quality and hence the quality of potatoes? The research department of the Section for Agriculture looks into these and similar questions. It maintains an overview of current research publications, disseminates interesting results and builds up an international research network.

Research is carried out all over the world on biodynamic agriculture: basic scientific research, comparisons of conventional and biodynamic agriculture, issues related to adapting to climate change and much more. Interesting research results are often confined to specialist circles. So one of our main objectives is to disseminate these results and make them available to a broader public. Our aim here is to present relevant findings in an understandable form but without simplifying them unnecessarily. The resulting study reports are published at regular intervals on our website as well as on social networks.

In order to strengthen networking amongst researchers, some of whom are scattered all over the world, in 2023 we set up the international Biodynamic Research Platform. This enables researchers to communicate directly with each other, develop synergies and provide mutual support. Online seminars take place several times a year, where researchers can present their current projects to an interested specialist public, followed by open discussion. We also want to set up an online forum with the aim of enabling researchers to engage in closer dialogue in specialist groups.

A further objective of our specialist department is close cooperation with other biodynamic associations and research

institutes. This results in, for example, informative and scientifically supported brochures on the principles of biodynamics. We also support particularly promising research and training projects worldwide, in order to strengthen the biodynamic movement as a whole.



Do you work in biodynamic research but are not a member of the Biodynamic Research Platform?

Then please get in touch with Lukas Maschek at biodynamic.research@goetheanum.ch. Lukas is a scientific co-worker in the Section for Agriculture and leads research coordination and communication.

Read the current study reports and find out more about our projects!



Healthy eating for a healthy future

Aspects and suggestions

Everyone wants to eat a healthy diet. At the same time, food-related diseases are on the increase. A flood of cookery books, diets and advice merely adds to the confusion. However, it is not really so difficult. If we can relearn what is good for us, we will choose the right foods for our appropriate diet and contribute to a healthy future.

Enjoy food

Let us drop the belief that the most important part of eating is the nutrients. A much more important function of food is to stimulate our body. Our digestion has to be active so that the food is properly broken down. After all, when we eat a leek we do not want to turn into one. In addition, enjoyment is an essential part of healthy eating. A beautifully prepared, tasty meal that reveals how delicious it is as soon as we smell it, will stimulate our body. Preparation and presentation in a pleasant atmosphere express an appreciation of the meal and the cook. This makes eating in company into an experience and the meal into a place of encounter.

Cultivate quality

When growing fruit and vegetables, each sort can develop its own balance between growth and ripening. The farmer or gardener creates the growth conditions and cultivates each environment so that the vegetable can develop to the best that is possible. This results in vital, resilient vegetables which in turn stimulate our vitality. This is the sign of true food quality.

Cultivate relationship

What is needed is to develop a connection, in fact a relationship to your own nutrition and also to the foods and their origin. Conscious perception of the appearance, smell and taste when eating promotes enjoyment and digestion and awakens curiosity about the source of the food and therefore the people who have produced it. Do I want to support the farmers in the neighbouring village and buy their eggs, or would I rather make anonymous purchases from the supermarket? Which relationships do I cultivate?



Think about the whole

Foods support our well-being, but also that of others. Everything is connected. We all live on the same earth and when it is polluted everyone suffers. Everything belongs together, from growing via processing and trade all the way to the plate and the community at the table. We create our environment and our living conditions, for example through our choice of foods and our menu plan. Every day we decide how to make our meals and therefore what our world looks like.



Jasmin Peschke, who has a doctorate in nutritional science, leads the nutrition department at the Section for Agriculture. Her recent publication “From food system to food organism – Steps to a successful transformation” contains ideas and exercises for making large and small changes. With the nutrition advisor, Lea Sprügel, she writes regular articles on current nutrition topics.





Encounter with Persephone

How she connects the plant world with the cosmos

At a time when she was beset by despair, the Dutch plant breeder and researcher, Edith Lammerts van Bueren, had the surprising experience that her work was supported by the goddess Persephone, the daughter of Demeter. She discovered the existence of a close relationship between Persephone and the biodynamic preparations.

Around six years ago I attended a celebration for a colleague from the seed industry that began with a small symposium on seed production. My mood changed when someone from the audience shouted angrily that it was irresponsible for the organic sector to reject genetic engineering: "The world is starving – we need to use all the resources that we have!" Although I had heard such frequently, this time it hit me hard – I began to doubt whether my life's work was any use whatsoever. I talked to a good friend about it and exclaimed in despair: "For goodness' sake, who am I doing all this for?" To my surprise my friend took this question seriously and said: "Yes, who are you doing it for? Is it Demeter or Gaia?" After having meditated on this question for a few days,

the name of Persephone came to me. I knew immediately that this is who it is, without any doubt. But who is she?

In Greek mythology

The Homeric hymn to Demeter, written about 800 years BC, tells us that Persephone is the goddess and protector of the life forces on earth, particularly in the plant world. Her mother Demeter watched carefully over her. Persephone was permitted to invoke every god apart from Eros, the god of love, and to pick every flower, apart from the narcissus. But Persephone could not resist. She appealed to Eros whom she enticed into picking the most beautiful flower on earth, the narcissus. As she did this, the earth opened up and the powerful Hades, god of the realm of the dead, abducted her into his underworld. When Demeter discovered this, she was furious. The underworld was the only place where she could not go. In her sorrow, she neglected the earth and the plants withered. She found Triptolemus, the son of a king, who was able to descend into the underworld and find Persephone. This forced Zeus, the king of



Edith Lammerts van Bueren was born in the Netherlands and grew up in Indonesia and Venezuela. She worked for over 40 years in organic and biodynamic research and teaching, and specialised in plant breeding. She was a teacher on the Warmonderhof, worked at the Louis Bolk Institute and is Professor Emeritus of Organic Plant Breeding at Wageningen University. She was coordinator of the Science Section in the Netherlands and now leads the BioAcademy there.

“As a lofty being, Persephone also descends from the sun to the earth and connects the plants to its cosmic origin. Her task is to return the plant world to its original orientation between the cosmos and the earth.”

Olympus, to agree a compromise: from thence forward, in autumn and winter Persephone would be Hades' wife in the underworld and in spring return to the earthly world. In gratitude, Demeter and Persephone gave Triptolemus the art of farming.

In the School of Chartres

There is another account from many centuries later, which can be found in the books of the early Medieval teachers of the School of Chartres in France. Here Persephone appears as “Natura”, the divine creative power in nature. In the School of Chartres, Persephone-Natura refers specifically to Christianity, which does not normally recognise spiritual beings like Natura. However, the Cathedral de Notre Dame in Chartres was built on a site where there had once been a temple belonging to the Celtic druids. The Druids had a clairvoyant consciousness of Christ, the Logos, and they worshipped the Holy Virgin, who will one day give birth (Virgo paritura, the Madonna of Parturition). Centuries later, on the same hill, the spirit of the Celtic nature religion was combined with Christianity in the School of Chartres.

Persephone-Natura was troubled, because human beings were becoming separated from nature. She appeared to the famous teacher of Chartres, Alanus ab Insulis, in a dream that he recorded in Anticlaudianus. Here she complained that nature could not be saved if human action was not filled with the highest wisdom. She called a heavenly council with the other virtue goddesses and they agreed that a new humanity was needed. Sophia, the goddess of cosmic wisdom, represented the goddesses and travelled through the spheres of the planets until she reached the Trinity. She made her request, whereupon God created a new human being. Sophia received this human being and gave him to Natura, in order to give him a

perfect body: the being of Christ, whose earthly birth was accompanied by both Sophia-Maria and Persephone-Natura, in the Celtic tradition, Saint Bride.

In anthroposophy

Many of Rudolf Steiner's lectures mention the abduction of Persephone as a picture of humanity's early clairvoyance that disappeared into the subconscious. But he also said that such abilities do not simply vanish – they can return in a different form. In the picture of Persephone that Steiner gave in “The Logos Mystery” at Christmas 1924, in his last year of life, he placed Persephone in a new relationship to Christ.*

First he described how the human being turned increasingly away from the cosmos in the course of his development and concentrated on earthly phenomena in order to gain an independent power of judgement based on self-knowledge. The divine world allowed this to happen, by withdrawing. In this process the moment arrived when the connection between the earth and cosmos had to become possible again. For this to happen, the highest sun being had to descend to the earth in order to connect himself to the destiny of humanity and the earth, and to overcome earthly death out of love for mankind and the earth. This is what Steiner calls the “mystery of Golgotha”.

Steiner stressed how this was a unique event in the development of humanity and that Persephone carries out a similar gesture for the world of plants, though in an annual rhythm, because this rhythm is the key to plant development. As a lofty being, Persephone also descends from the sun to the earth and connects the plants to its cosmic origin. Her task is to return the plant world to its original

* Rudolf Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts, Christmas Contemplation: The Logos Mystery*, GA 26, Steiner Books, New York 1984.

orientation between the cosmos and the earth.

Persephone and the biodynamic preparations

In the 1980s I applied goetheanistic phenomenology to weekly plant observations in order to demonstrate what differences occur in the growth dynamics in time and space when applying biodynamic field preparations. I also left some rows of lettuce to allow the flowering to progress as an expression of the potential life forces in the harvested plant.

I experienced the horn manure and horn silica preparations as a harmonising influence, irrespective of the growth conditions. If the vegetative spring tendency was too strong, only few plants were able to flower or set seed. Using the preparations slowed the growth a little and most plants were able to reach their full development. If the growth impulse was too weak, for example during a very cold spring, the preparations stimulated growth considerably. In all cases I found that the preparations contributed to a better typical lettuce-like quality, for example in taste, so that the full plant potential was able to develop.

At that time I had not yet connected the preparations to Persephone. Only 33 years later when preparing my teaching on phenomenology, did it occur to me that one preparation is buried in winter and one in summer. To my great joy I discovered that the biodynamic preparations are first and foremost instruments of Persephone.

As a metabolic product, cow dung has a summer quality. It is filled into the cow's horn and buried in winter in order to penetrate it with the winter forces. The horn silica preparation is based on hard crystalline rock that represents the winter quality, and is buried in summer, in order to penetrate it with the summer

forces. The preparations contain natural substances, but this integration of the seasonal forces is based on the spiritual findings of Rudolf Steiner and elevates the plant. It suddenly dawned on me that the preparations are the polarity of each other and also contain polarity within themselves. There is no other being who integrates such polarities into her being like Persephone.

Persephone and the elemental beings

When the preparations act on plant growth they also have an effect on the work of the elemental beings who are connected to plant development. These elementals are Persephone's helpers and they rely on moral leadership from higher spiritual beings and, increasingly, from us human beings. If we can see the biodynamic preparations as outstanding instruments of Persephone, then we can also understand that they provide the elemental beings with nourishment and a new direction. New, because the preparations do something that is not present in nature but is made possible by human beings in order to integrate earthly and cosmic forces.

I think that it is now time and is important that we learn to include the elemental beings in our consciousness. From my experience working with biodynamic farmers we are able to learn to connect to elemental beings through meditative attentiveness and to work with them by asking: what is needed on the farm or on a particular field? How can we help? And then to pay attention to what they whisper to us. Some of us receive these answers in words, others through sounds or colours and images. In such a way we can learn to become Persephone's helpers.



Events

5 June 2024	Online network: “Dynamic Nutrition – Exchange for professionals in nutrition” with Dr. Jasmin Peschke, languages: English, Spanish
10 June 2024	Monthly online seminars: “Agri-culture: Rhythms and Rituals – Conscious co-creation and resilience”, language: English
14–16 June 2024	Summer excursion 2024 for professionals in Healing Herbs, Aromatic Herbs and Cosmetic Plants in Dornach
7–10 July 2024	Summer meeting for the Biodynamic Fruit-growing professional group in southern France
8 July 2024	Monthly online seminars: “Agri-culture: Rhythms and Rituals – Exploring the soul of the earth”, languages: English, Spanish
1–4 August 2024	Magical plants between the Norwegian mountains, excursion for experts in herbalism
12 August 2024	Monthly online seminars: “Agri-culture: Rhythms and Rituals – Dialogue between earth and the cosmos – what is the role of the elements?”, language: English
30–31 August 2024	100 years of biodynamic quality: An art and senses experience with top chefs Elif Oskan and Selassie Atadika at the Goetheanum, Dornach
4 September 2024	Online network: “Dynamic Nutrition – Online exchange for professionals in nutrition” with Dr. Jasmin Peschke, languages: English, Spanish
9 September 2024	Monthly online seminars: “Agri-culture: Rhythms and Rituals – The active role of the farmer”, language: English
7 October 2024	Monthly online seminars: “Agri-culture: Rhythms and Rituals – Cosmic influence on plants”, language: English
4–8 November 2024	Online seminar: “The Earth as a substance of our destiny – Contributions of anthroposophy to sustainable development” with Johannes Kronenberg, language: English
4 December 2024	Online network: “Dynamic Nutrition – Online exchange for professionals in nutrition” with Dr. Jasmin Peschke, languages: English, Spanish
5–8 February 2025	Agriculture Conference at the Goetheanum, Dornach

Detailed information on the various events as well as on the biodynamic movement’s centenary events around the world can be found at:

www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/upcoming-events



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Through people in the worldwide biodynamic movement, the Section encounters current issues and challenges. We take these up in projects and create spaces that provide sources of inspiration – for all who are involved in agriculture and nutrition. We work on topics such as associative economics, nutrition, holistic health, the farm organism, climate resilience, the agricultural individuality, sustainability, and animal welfare in a number of professional groups and specialist fields for training, advice, nutrition, research and sustainability development.

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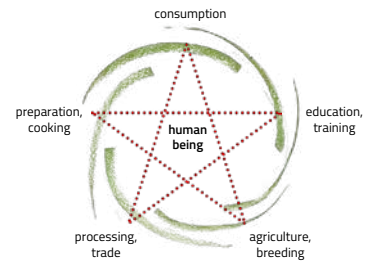


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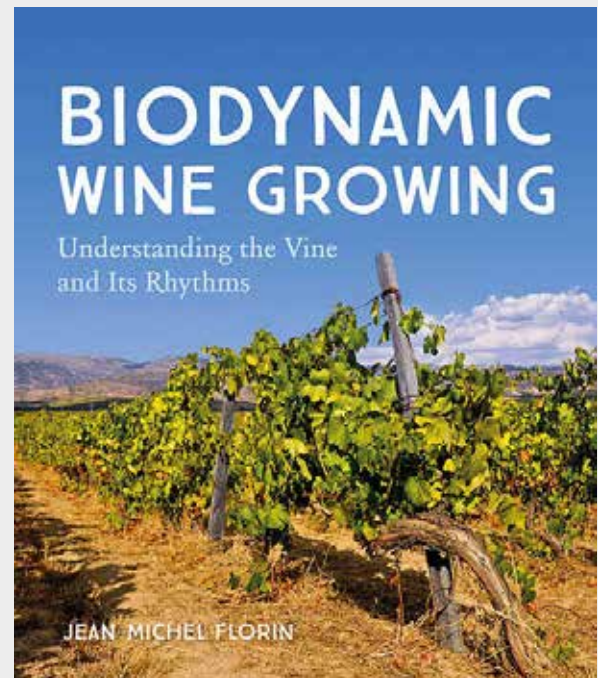
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