

The Terreau I project - agroecology training supports newcomers to French farming

An agroecology cooperation project provided a series of digital tools and training programmes to support those with no prior sector experience to establish farming activities.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Montreuil, France

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P1 - Knowledge transfer and innovation

Focus Area: Innovation and cooperation

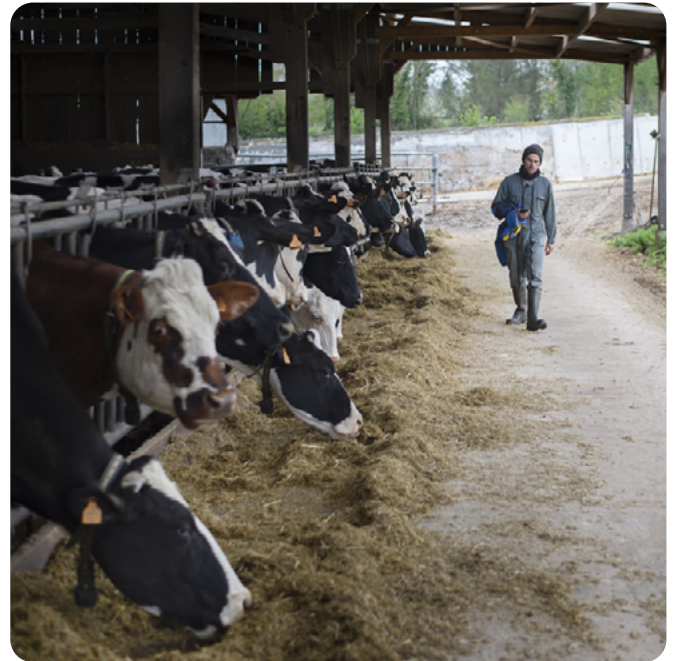
Measures: M16 - Cooperation

Funding:	Total budget	887 819 (EUR)
	EAFRD	376 435 (EUR)
	National/Regional	333 820 (EUR)
	Private/own	177 564 (EUR)

Timeframe: 2018 - 2021

Project promoter: Terre de Liens

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Summary

Food security relies on countries having enough well-skilled farmers, and farmer numbers are decreasing in some areas. The project Terreau I supported the installation of new farmers who are embarking on their first agricultural business activity without any rural and/or agricultural background. Led by the French association 'Terre de Liens', the project enabled an analysis of newcomers to the sector, and from this the creation of tools, resources and practical actions that could provide tailored support at the local level.

Among other outputs, Terreau I has created three freely available online platforms that provide information to farms in support of the transition to sustainable agroecological practices. The project also reinforced the support capacity of local associations working with agricultural stakeholders, and has provided the basis for Terreau II, a nationally financed project that will carry the work forward.

Project results

- The material and online tools developed under Terreau I, which continue to be operational via the Terreau II project, are made available to around 1 400 project participants throughout France who receive support from Terre de Liens each year.

Key lessons and recommendations

- Food security relies on having access to enough well-skilled farmers.
- Developing tools such as platforms, resources, and training programmes based on stakeholder needs identified at the grassroots level can play key roles in supporting the development of agriculture. Their efficiency relies on wide dissemination and stakeholder uptake.
- Using agroecology as a training framework builds holistic capacity for sustainable farming practices that are science-based, environmentally positive, and socially popular.



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Context

Food security relies on countries having enough well-skilled farmers, and farmer numbers are decreasing in some areas. It is estimated that in France about 65% of newcomers to agriculture have no agricultural background. To respond to their needs and build their skills, a series of multi-stakeholder projects were implemented, with the aim of developing online platforms, tools and training programmes. The first of these projects was 'AGIS - agriculture open to society: enlarge participation to support the installation of new farmers', and this was followed by 'Terreau I'.

Terreau I brought together five partners who represent associations and farmers' networks across the territory. The project was supported by the EAFRD within the framework of the French Rural Network's national call for projects 'Collective Mobilization for Rural Development' (MCDR), which took place from 2018 to 2021. A continuation project in this series ('Terreau II') ran from 2022 to 2024.

Objectives

The aims of the Terreau I project were to:

- Identify the barriers to and levers (cultural, social, political, etc.) for establishing farm start-ups by people who do not have an agricultural background.
- Provide a welcome to newcomers to agriculture by creating agricultural testing areas; training programmes; and other types of support that also reflect on topics related to housing, gender, etc.
- Support farming initiatives that are oriented towards agroecological and green / social practices.

- Improve cooperation between associations, civil society networks and institutional stakeholders (i.e., regional chambers of agriculture) and create synergies in favour of providing better support to newcomers in agriculture.

Activities

The activities implemented during the Terreau I project were structured around five axes:

A. Creating good conditions to welcome newcomers into agriculture. This involved:

- organising a seminar on generational renewal in agriculture (2019).
- publishing two brochures of tools to support new farmers and for local stakeholders to access support and counselling.
- publishing several factsheets on agricultural testing areas in French regions.
- supporting the 'PARCEL' digital platform, which is used to evaluate the agricultural lands and work that are necessary to feed a territory, as well as the ecological impact of those agricultural activities.

B. Consolidating support for the agro-rural setting-up of young farmers. This involved:

- developing the 'Passerelles Paysannes' (gateways to farming) platform which provides resources related to the installation of newcomers in agriculture.
- publishing guidance documents, podcasts and surveys on the ways in which women and farming collectives are being established.

C. Identifying possible transfers and building bridges. This involved:

- publishing two guidebooks on non-agricultural testing areas.
- producing a web documentary and disseminating seminar notes on the evolution of public policy related to the creation of cooperative and creative rural areas.

D. Creating a resource centre on agricultural land / property managed by the association 'Terre de Liens'.

E. Ensuring access to land as a key for the green transition. This involved:

- setting up a website that connects farmers and newcomers in organic agriculture, named 'Objectif terres'.



- publishing a guide to responsible agricultural land ownership.
- developing and disseminating training schemes based on mentoring (the 'pratiques paysannes'), as well as a companionship scheme.
- identifying and supporting the development of multi-stakeholder cooperations at the local level to better support newcomers in agriculture and to address gender and housing issues, as well as farm restructuring issues.

Main results

- The material, information and online tools produced by the Terreau I project are made available to the 1 400 project holders supported by the organisation Terre de Liens throughout France each year.
- To continue developing and operating the online tools and resources, a new project was launched using only national funds. 'Terreau II' was led by 'Terre de Liens', in partnership with the association SOL - Agroecology and Solidarity Alternatives, from 2022 to June 2024.

Key lessons and recommendations

- Sustainable resilient food security is entirely dependent on having access to enough well-skilled farmers.
- Using agroecology as a training framework builds holistic capacity for sustainable farming practices that are science-based, environmentally positive, and socially popular.
- The Terreau projects made it possible to better appreciate the added value of multi-stakeholder and cooperative methods in supporting sustainable farming systems.
- Developing tools such as platforms, resources and training programmes based on stakeholder needs that have been identified at the grassroots level plays a key role in supporting the development of agriculture. However, it can be difficult to create synergies and official partnerships with institutional organisations for a broader use of the resources produced.
- These projects aimed to go beyond the needs identified and to improve understanding of the different steps that newcomers must take to enter the agricultural sector.
- It is important to ensure that the resources and tools will be well understood, so as to be shared and adopted by local and/or national stakeholders.

"We wish to improve the conditions of farm installations and more broadly the conditions of life for new farmers. There is a challenge to make it attractive and to ensure an ecological and social transition of agriculture, through the development of agroecology and better support to newcomers".

Terre de Liens association

Additional information:

Project web page:

www.reseaurural.fr/page-mcdr-terreau

Web platform:

<https://passerellespaysannes.fr/>

Project objectives webpage:

<https://www.objectif-terres.org/>

Project resources:

<https://ressources.terredeliens.org/>

Online tool:

<https://parcel-app.org/>



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