

## **The World Forum for a Responsible Economy Arras 2016**

### **Third agricultural revolution: Towards a sustainable, connected and inclusive agriculture**

#### Session 1: Sustainable agriculture

The different speakers of the first forum session were Mr Godfrey NZAMUJO (Director of the Songhai center in Benin), Mr Bertrand PATENOTRE (an Agro-ecology expert, a farmer and a breeder in France) and also Mr Mathieu SAVADOGO (the Association director of research and agro-ecology development, ARFA in Burkina Faso)

The session was first introduced by the CFA Director of the Institute of Genech Stephane Baillet with the topical presentation, the speakers presentation and then the session progress. Mr baillet, CFA director of the institute of Genech first explained the schedule of the conference and introduced the public to the different speakers.

Mathieu SAVADOGO is the ARFA director research and training in agro ecology Created in 1995, the association was at the origin of a lot of projects in Burkina Faso with the goal of improving the living conditions of communities and of protecting the environment. The association has a lot of agro-ecology educational training courses Mathieu SAVADOGO has participated in many national and international meetings in relation with agro-ecology and organic agriculture. The association was built 20 years ago with 25 farmers and there are almost 1000 farms today.

During the conference Mathieu SAVADOGO explained the difficulties encountered in his country, first in general and secondly more specifically in agriculture. The poverty line is really high and many suffer from food insecurity. Regarding agriculture, the soil impoverishment is continuous because of harsh weather conditions, extreme dry seasons followed by heavy rains. The problem is enhanced by the soils difficulties to absorb water but also to keep water, the latter fact being a major problem for farmers, thus soil exhaustion is the first consequences of soil capping.

“Water is a scarce commodity in Burkina Faso” added Mr SAVADOGO. To answer this problem, ARFA has a lot of projects to improve the farming practices to increase yields, to diversify productions and to keep animals inside to prevent them from destroying crops. The projects which have already been done are the field boundaries to avoid the water from running off during heavy rainfall, the digging of wells to store water, the supply of organic matter to improve the agronomic capacity of soils. The increase in membership since 20 years inside the association has showed a real awareness of the population and especially of the farmers.

“Everything has to be done” Mr SAVAGEDO said and he drew the public attention to the importance of knowledge sharing if sustainable, profitable and environmentally cropping systems were to be present.

Bertrand PATENOTRE (a mixed farmer with sheep and crops productions) has been involved since many years in the development of simplified cropping systems with low inputs. During the forum, he briefly explained how he was running his 176 hectare farm by emphasizing that he was personally environmentally involved but above all economically involved for financial reasons. Indeed, he mentioned that he gets the same gross margin, sometimes even better than his neighbours’ margin through applying conventional farming systems. Then he talked about the creation of his sheep breeding starting in 2007 showing that this activity was bringing a lot of assets to his business. Indeed it brought cheap and organic fertilizers on the farm that he is now using to maintain and improve the agronomic capacity of his soils with the new objective to be soon a 100% self-sufficient in food for his sheep, He clearly said that the future of farming needs to include more environmentally friendly cropping techniques and a better vision of agriculture among citizens.

He concluded in saying:” Every time I have visitors on my farm, I give them a shovel and ask them to dig a hole. If they don’t find any single worm in the hole, I give them the shovel back as a gift. Worms are the testimony of life and activity in the soil, and I have had the same shovel for more than 7 years. people have always found lots of worms. This is my work and contribution to the respect of the soil.

The forum was also very glad to welcome Mr Godfrey NZAMUJO, an engineer in microbiology coming from Benin. He wanted to present us a project called ‘shongai’ that he built with his own hands It is a kind of functional socio-economic model based on a farm and on the respect of the African agronomic capacity of the continent to fight against poverty and starvation. Created in 1985 with only 1 hectare of agricultural land, this project is now including 17 profitable farms which are self-sufficient from production to consumption. their motto is “AFRICA IS RISING UP”, this project gathers 5 essential words: Synergy, Symbiosis, Complementarity, Collaboration and supplementary. Those centers of production are now present in different countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The preferred values always are human cooperation and knowledge sharing.

The most important aspect in Mr NZAMUJO’ point of view on the third agricultural revolution is that a real worldwide collaboration has to be done in order to focus more on long term projects rather than on short term profits . According to him, intensive export productions have to be better managed in order to stop the exhaustion of our energetic, agronomical and environmental resources.

Supported by Mr PATENOTRE, the conservation of our soils and the protection of the environment are 2 very important challenges that the farmers of tomorrow will have to fight for. But it would be compulsory to collaborate altogether throughout the world in order to decrease the power of the markets as Mr SAVAGEDO explained when answering Mr BAILLET: "Because if the food chain links are not shortened soon, we will witness a fast exhaustion of our energetic resources."

It is also very important to add that according to Mr BAILLET, in 2050 about 70% of the world population will live in cities. This means that sustainable farming is not the only challenge of the farmers of tomorrow.

Isn't agriculture too much devoted to rural areas? Shouldn't it go closer to citizens and consumers in urban areas?