Access to land for agroecological farming: a guide for setting up a land initiative and developing a land strategy
Reading guide
This guide is a publication of the Access to Land Network (A2LN) to support the genesis and development of land initiatives for Agroecological farmers and brings together the experience of several similar organisations throughout Europe.

The first chapter describes why there is a need for these kinds of initiatives. The second chapter helps groups of people to start from scratch, define their goals and create a solid basis. The third chapter brings more advanced information on how to proceed as a land initiative buying farmland, working with farmers, landowners and local communities and so on. The fourth chapter presents the Access to Land Network.
Access to land for agroecological farming:
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Welcome!

There is an agricultural crisis going on in Europe: rural areas are being deserted and farmland is being bought for industrial farming or other purposes. Small farms are disappearing at an alarming rate and with them important farming knowledge and traditions. Large industrial farms are having a negative impact on our environment, biodiversity, health and the social fabric of our rural areas. New generations who want to farm - often in an agroecological way and often starting on smaller areas of land - have real difficulties finding farmland.

Increasingly, across Europe, but also around the world, land initiatives are supporting agroecological farmers, often by buying farmland for them, but also by offering training, advice, and other services. In Europe, some of these initiatives are connected in the Access to Land Network.

Do you want to join our movement to support small-scale farmers access land for agroecological food production? Welcome!

Through this tool kit, we aim to help you ask the right questions and offer you examples and ways to build an initiative that corresponds to your needs and capacities.

Do not expect a straight road to a perfect plan! Every country is different and has different land issues. Moreover, every initiative starts in its own way: some start with an urgent question of a farmer, others with a land donation or with a group of concerned people wanting to make a change. So you will need to choose what steps are right for you.

If you are in the process of setting up your land initiative or if you are already established, this tool kit is also for you! You might like to skip straight to part 3 ‘Developing your access to land activities’ where you will find lots of information, experiences from others, ideas and resources.

So whether you are part of a group of dedicated people ready to start, a young land initiative still working on your options, or a mature organisation with experience in a related field and broadening your activities towards access to land, we trust you will find this tool kit helpful in supporting you in your mission.

We wish you good luck!
Who we are

This guide was written during 2019 as a resource for start-up organisations and groups seeking to develop their activities on access to land for agroecology and is complemented by other guides and resources of the Access to Land Network on land data, working with local authorities and engaging with new farmers. In 2020-2021, three more publications will follow: one on tools for measuring the environmental, economic and social impacts of agroecological farms, a second on land acquisition, and a third on public engagement.

This document is the first version of the guide, which we will circulate and test with different groups during 2020, so as to develop and improve it as a set of online resources in 2021. Please share your feedback on the content, relevance, style with us. Also let us know if there are major aspects which you see not covered. Please share your feedback through our online contact form, at: https://www.accesstoland.eu/Contact

About the authors:
This guide has been written by members of the European Access to Land Network, as part of a European Erasmus + partnership focused on developing a Learning Platform for supporting access to land for agroecology in Europe.

The European Access to Land Network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological farming and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 20 organisations. The Network’s main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land, and to put land issues in the spotlight. To that end, it organises information and experience-sharing, fosters cooperation between members, and facilitates broader communication.

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1. Being aware of current land threats

1.1. Agricultural land is under pressure in Europe

Throughout Europe, threats to agricultural land are becoming more visible. These are the most urgent ones:

- **Lack of family farmers and agroecological farmers**: farmers are growing old and there are few new entrants coming through. Many farmers do not have a successor. A growing number of farmers go through a financial crisis which sometimes forces them to close their farm. Their farmland might be abandoned, bought by an industrial farmer, or a non-farmer and thus lost for agroecological farming. Some rural areas are rendered unattractive by the lack of social services and social life, which leads new generations to migrate away from them and abandon farms and farmland.

- **Low income**: farmers often have to sell their produce at a very low price per unit. They are stimulated or even pressured by agricultural policies or banks to get bigger, to industrialise and to deliver commodities, rather than real products, which at the same time make them vulnerable to market forces. This system pushes them away from a more resilient agroecological way of farming and, in the end, often leads to overexploitation and exhaustion of the farmland.

- **Overall concentration in agribusiness**: the retail sector has taken a very big part of the food market, exerting enormous pressure on farmers to produce in an industrially intensive manner. This diminishes their autonomy and renders them dependent on certain industrial inputs for production, and on certain price-setting outlets for commercialization. They are locked in the agribusiness system.

- **Competing land use and land speculation**: in some European regions, other land uses are competing with farming: urban sprawl, infrastructure, industry. As farmland areas shrink, prices tend to increase, making it harder for small agroecological new entrants to access land. Some non-farming organisations such as banks and investment funds, are speculating with farmland.

- **Lack of public awareness**: many citizens are still not aware of the current crisis in agriculture, eating processed products produced by agribusiness without realizing their impact on the...
disappearance of small scale agroecological farming; most citizens also tend to ignore the impact of industrial food on their health, on our environment and our landscapes.

- **Land concentration**: in Europe 50% of the farmland is owned by only 3% of the agricultural enterprises. 80% of the farmers together only own 12% of the farmland. In other words: there are a few big landowners and farmland is being concentrated and increasingly owned and managed by non-agricultural players. This concentration destabilises rural areas, increases risks for food sovereignty and for European social and environmental goals. For farmers, it means that they have difficult access to land to farm.

- **Land and nature quality**: some of these threats lead towards soil erosion, loss of soil fertility, loss of biodiversity, pesticide residues in water, loss of pollinator species and so on.

These burning issues, which affect all of Europe, are alarming and should help motivate your team and your partners to start your initiative or land strategy.
What about your country context?

Finding information on the specific situation in your country will make your statements stronger. Depending on your situation, you should decide whether this research has to be done prior to any action or not. Here are some questions that you can try to figure out:

- **farmers**: What is the average age of farmers? How many farms are still operating? How fast is the number of farms declining (last 15 years)? Do farmers generally have successors or a succession plan in place?
- **agroecological**: What is the share of organic farms? How big are farms on average? What share of farms can be considered as small? What part of farms can be considered agroecological (mixed and/or diverse) instead of specialised monoculture, short chain, local marketing instead of long chain, autonomous in inputs (eg. own seeds, own forage)? Results can be expressed as % of farms and as % of area (ha). Are there schools/organisations where organic or agroecological farming is taught?
- **new farmers**: Are there new entrants? Is there a sizeable population of new/young aspiring farmers coming from outside of agriculture? What are their needs and farming models?
- **citizens**: Are citizens aware of above figures on farms and farmers? How big is the market share for organic and/or local and/or durable produce? Are citizens supporting organic/regenerative/agroecological farming and animal breeding? Are citizens informed about the negative impacts of industrial agriculture?
- **business**: How much do farmers earn compared to other professions? How many years does an average farm need to pay off its investments? How dependent are they on public subsidies? How indebted are they? Do they easily get access to credit and funds?
- **land & nature quality**: what quality is the land? Average plot size, land fragmentation, soil, climates relevant to different types of farming. What is the extent of land degradation/desertification? What environmental issues are caused by agriculture? What is the level of (cultivated, wild) biodiversity loss?
- **ownership of land**: How have land prices evolved over the last 20 years? How many farmers own their land? Is it possible to know who owns the land – is there a land register? What is the extent of land concentration? Are there big public landowners (like local government, churches...)? Are there big private landowners?
- **tenancy of land**: what is the share of farmers who rent their land? Do farmers who rent land also own land? Is land tenancy affordable? Do farmers rent land from one (or a couple) of landowners, or from multiple ones? Do farmers have written tenancy contracts? For short or long term? How secure is the tenancy for the farmers?
- **land size/structure**: How have the size of farms evolved (# ha/# animals) over the last 20 years? Are there legal minimum/maximum limits in terms of farm size? Are farms fragmented into a number of small plots? Do farmers have access to commons?
- **pension systems and inheritance rights**: how do inheritance rights and pension systems impact access to land for new farmers?
• **land use:** how has land use has changed throughout the years? what types of land use are diminishing the available land for farming?
• **policy:** Is there an organisation that registers land prices, land sales and/or land use? Are there legal maximum limits in terms of land sales or other relevant conditions in the land market? Can agricultural land easily be used or assigned for other purposes (like industry, urbanisation, infrastructure)? What are the policies regulating land sales and land rental?

Some useful information on land structure, size of farms, age of farmers in your country, etc. can be easily found on in the European database Eurostat. You may also consult your country’s agricultural ministry website or try to obtain information from other national or local agricultural institutions (agricultural chambers, etc.). However, this will probably not be enough to paint a complete picture of the agricultural situation and it may be quite time consuming to find information. We highly recommend that you try to find partners to work with on this. Think about universities (students), research institutes, government, NGOs... If you wish to do it yourself, try to find financing for it.

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**Learn more**

- Transnational Institute, Extent to Farmland grabbing in the EU: https://www.accesstoland.eu/Extent-of-Farmland-Grabbing-in-the-EU
- Eurostat, Agriculture database: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/agriculture/data/database
1.2. The agroecological alternative

Many experts and organisations have studied the benefits of agroecological farming to achieve quality food production, environmental and biodiversity protection, increase resilience to climate change, and preserve rural jobs and economies. The international expert panel IPES Food arguments that a radical change towards agroecology is needed, all over the world. And the recently published report, Ten Years for Agroecology by the French think-tank IDDRI shows how such an approach is possible.

Agroecology means in a nutshell:

- as farmer, working with and respecting nature: making use of ecosystems, recycling nutrients, investing in building soil fertility naturally, stimulating biodiversity, building a resilient agroecosystem
- organising food production and food consumption locally and regionally
- as society, paying fair prices to farmers ensuring their autonomy and independence
- as a consumer, choosing a sustainable diet with local, seasonal produce produced in a sustainable way

The principles of agroecology at a glance
Knowing that experts from all over the world support our analysis of the agricultural crisis and more importantly, the change towards agroecology that we want to be part of, is really encouraging. Keep the benefits and the great potential of agroecology in mind while making steps forward in protecting and securing agricultural land!

Learn more:

- Declaration of small-scale food producers’ organisations and civil society organisations at the II international symposium on agroecology convened by FAO, April 2018, https://viacampesina.org/en/declaration-at-the-ii-international-symposium-on-agroecology/
1.3. Solutions and inspiration from others

*Being aware of the obstacles brings you to a next step: you can now start asking what can be done about it.*

For your inspiration, we give you some **examples of land initiatives** that are working in Europe, how they managed to secure access to land for agroecological farmers or how they support agroecological farmers. We found it important to note which legal status the initiative chose: buying farmland together with a lot of citizens is usually done as a cooperative, whereas receiving donations (money or land) typically means a Foundation. You will also observe that some land initiatives combine several legal statuses, as they combine several kinds of actions. In 2.4, you can read some testimonies on why different land initiatives chose one or other legal forms.

We also started to list **what knowledge and tools might be needed to work on land issues**, according to existing land initiatives. It is not an exhaustive list, but it helps you to consider the range of different qualities, information, tools and knowledge you will need to develop.

The following table brings together a lot of information and you might want to come back to it several times. Obstacles are often intertwined, or mutually reinforcing - land initiatives therefore also develop intertwined or complex solutions to address them, sometimes through a double or even triple legal status.
1. Crowdfund gifts or loans for the farmer to buy the land
2. Find shareholders to buy land and rent it out to the farmer
3. Find landowners who are willing to donate or lease land and then rent it out to farmers

High land price

Possible solutions

1. 1 campaign
2. 2 crowdfunding platform
3. 3 campaign to support the crowdfunding
4. 4 register of shareholders (check national requirements and data needed for registration)
5. 5 ownership model
6. 6 long-term leases on common land
7. 7 knowledge of national legislation concerning the buying and renting out of farmland
8. 8 knowledge of national shareholder cooperatives and relevant legislation
9. 9 knowledge on land donations and pledges
10. 10 knowledge about national legislation on renting out farmland
11. 11 people able to advise landowners on donations and pledges

Lack of new entrants & new tenant training
Offering training, in particular direct farming practice

1. Teachers, teaching facilities
2. Internships, experienced farmers as mentors
3. Policy officers, advocacy

Inadequate land policy
Lobbying

1. Policy officers, knowledge of applicable laws concerning land use
2. Knowledge of which authority to approach for which aspects

Farm succession
Surveying and mapping the potential needs for farm succession on a local level

1. Farming, cooperation with local authorities in land use
2. Knowledge of which authority to approach for which aspects

Non-optimal use of private land
Giving advice to landowners on sustainable agriculture

1. People, able to give advice on several aspects of sustainable agriculture and in sustainable tenancy contracts
2. Knowledge of sustainable agriculture and tenancy contracts and new ownership or management models

Examples and approaches from existing initiatives and new ideas

2. Terre de Lian cooperative: https://www.terre-de-lian.org/
6. Scottish Farm Trust, Land Trust, Scotland: http://www.scottishfarmtrust.org.uk/
7. Ecological Land Coop, Cooperative, UK: https://www.ephengland.org/coalitions/
8. Biobouw, cooperative (NL): www.biobouw.nl
10. Terre de Lian, foundation (FR): www.terre-de-lian.org

Refurbishment, non-profit association (AT): http://www.earth5rices.de

Farming, non-governmental organization (NGO), Spain: http://www.asocamp.es/


Terre de Lian, association (FR): www.terredeliand.org

ECO Ruralis, association (RO): www.ecoruralis.ro

Soil Association, charity (UK): https://www.soilassociation.org

UK Land Justice Network, non-hierarchical network (UK): https://www.landjustice.org.uk

Perspektive Landwirtschaft, non-profit association (AT): www.perspektive-landwirtschaft.at


Traktorenhaven, Association (NL): http://www.traktorenhaven.nl

FNCAvar, Federation of associations (FR): http://www.fncavar.org

FAO/SEAN, federation of associations (FR): http://www.earth5rices.de

De Landgarten, cooperative (NL): www.de-landgarten.nl

Terre de Lian, association (FR): www.terredeliand.org

Shored Itineris, UK: http://www.shoreditineris.org

De Landgarten, cooperative (NL): www.de-landgarten.nl

Terre de Lian, association (FR): www.terredeliand.org

Shored Itineris, UK: http://www.shoreditineris.org

Public unaware of land issues
Campaigns to raise awareness

1. Campaign to raise awareness
2. Communication tools (website, newsletter, flyers, …)

Lack of access to information about land availability
Tools and services to survey land availability and land needs, and to match them

1. Survey of land needs in the area
2. Survey map of available land for sale/purchase
3. Use online tools to make land offers and land searches public
4. Service to help match land offers and demands

Lack of access to information about land markets
Tools and services to analyze land offers and facilitate land deals

1. Advice to new entrants about land prices, soil quality, commercialization options, etc.
2. Advice about the different legal landowner/tenant contracts (types of rent, share-farming land partnerships, …)

Environmental degradation
Offer public and private landowners options for nature conservation and natural resource preservation, through agroecological farming

Study the issues and map the strengths of a given territory

Xema da Castilla del Territorio, or IACT Land Stewardship Network in English, Spain: http://www.xemadICASTI.org

Terre de Lian (specifically through cooperation with water agencies, environment associations)

All members of the Access to Land Network require agroecological farming on their farmland.
Learn more:


2. Setting up a new land initiative

*Part 2 helps you with setting up a brand new land initiative. If you are a mature organisation or if you want to learn about possible land strategies, go directly to part 3.*

Now it is your turn. In what way would *you* like to facilitate access to land for agroecological farming? What do you have capacity for? What will you need?

2.1. Core Group

**Getting started**

We assume, hopefully, you are not alone in your mission. If you are, get people around you to help: cooperation makes things easier. So, we assume that you are part of a group of people that are concerned about farmland issues in your region or country. If you want to make a change, you will need to *create a core group* to get started. Working together for a common goal makes work easier. Here are some tips to make the most out of your core group.
Make sure you have **several farmers on board.** It is worth a lot to have them sharing their knowledge with you. Farmers will see opportunities, threats or needs that you are not yet aware of! If possible, attract different kinds of farmers from different regions at different stages of development.

- Find **people with different skill sets** that complement each other in order to achieve a well-rounded core group. You will need many skills and experiences: communication, legislation, people management, finances, agriculture, policy, business planning, etc.

- Make **clear agreements** about what each of you will do or will be responsible for. Be clear if there is any reward, and communicate your expectations for volunteer work. If there is no plan to turn volunteer work into job positions at a later stage, try to be clear on this point at the outset.

- Find an online **workspace platform** to store your research, internal documents, work progress, etc., preferably with search options, calendar, etc. Such tools can be used for free (up to a certain storage capacity) and require only creating an account for each team member: Basecamp, Slack, Asana, etc. are some of the ones we use.

- Make time for **regular meetings** of the core team - based on an agreed agenda to communicate work progress and future steps. Create summary reports from each meeting. This will help you to see the progress in your work, which is useful not only for the current members of the core team but also for new members. Don’t hesitate to use online platforms/meeting apps for your meetings. Some can be more user-friendly than Skype, so make sure you find the one that most suits all the participants and which can technically bare a larger crowd, if needed: zoom, gotomeeting, etc.

**Examples to inspire you**

**Genesis of Alpa (2016-2019, Romania)**

In 2016, Eco Ruralis, an organisation that represents the interests of peasants and small agroecological farmers in Romania, hosted The Nyeleni Forum for Food Sovereignty. The Forum was a great opportunity to meet similar organisations from Europe and to learn from them. Within Eco Ruralis, the working group on Land Rights had undertaken previous research and investigation work on the issues of land grabbing and farm succession in Romania. These were good theoretical building blocks, which, together with increased contact with access to land examples across Europe, built up the determination to start Alpa.

Alpa was formally registered as an NGO in 2018, and has been run voluntarily since its inception. In 2019, after a long internal debate, it was proposed that Alpa be integrated formally in Eco Ruralis and act as its land stewardship instrument for agroecology. The implementation of this process is ongoing.
From the original idea to 2019, regular online and in-person meetings were held, an online workspace (Basecamp) started being populated with documents, to-do’s and milestones. In 2019, three volunteers joined the board of four, and started contributing their time and energy. The mix of experiences and skills in Alpa is good: agroecological farmers, community organiser, project manager, fundraiser, but so far lacking key skills, like business planning and legal expertise.

Alpa will access the knowledge and experience of members of Eco Ruralis engaged in the Land Rights Working Group, where people with other skills are active.

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**Creating a core group for Nadace Pro půdu (NPP) (2014-2016, Czech Republic)**

In 2014, several people from different backgrounds and environments met in a seminar focusing on protecting agricultural land. There was a roundtable which was a chance to talk about various approaches on how to secure land for agroecological farmers, and discuss existing land initiatives in Europe. Various seminar participants, farmers, researchers and activists expressed and shared their ideas, and found out they had the same goal: to create an initiative which could support these ideas and motivate others.

After this seminar, regular meetings of the core group continued based on voluntary work. The core group was established by a farmer, a food activist, a gardener, an urban and landscape planner and a farmer’s adviser with the support of a political activist and candidate for presidency, a researcher and teachers. The core group work was fruitful, leading to setting up a new foundation, Nadace Pro půdu (Foundation For Soil) in 2016. Our advice is to spread the word about your idea to set up a land initiative at every occasion: it is the easiest way to motivate people to join you.
2.2. Who are your allies?

The following questions should help you decide who can assist you with your initiative and what may already be covered by others.

- What is the ‘ecosystem’ of relevant actors? Who are the main players - both public and civil society actors - on land issues, from agriculture related activities to education and marketing?

- Is there a network in your country, or organisations involved in improving rural livelihoods, access to land, access to food, food sovereignty, land conservation, agroecology training for farmers, ethical finance or crowdfunding for community benefits, etc?

- Who could be your partner(s)? For what (awareness, crowdfunding, education, lobbying, providing working space...)? What can you offer? How could you have joint visions and activities?

- Who could become your opponent? Why? What do you have in common? On what do you differ?

- What is the main narrative on agriculture in your country (is agroecology well-known or not)? Will it help you or hinder you?

Once you have answered the above, it is important to take time to analyse what’s already well covered, where there can be synergies with others and what you can focus on. Once you have mapped potential partners, go talk with them. Tell them about your vision and mission and see if they are prepared to support you in some way. Make your plan and go back to them with concrete requests.
Examples to inspire you

**AMPI: An umbrella organisation of A2L in the Czech Republic**

Access to land for small scale farmers and new entrants is still a very understudied topic in the Czech Republic as in recent decades the focus has been largely to support conventional intensive agriculture. This is mainly due to the fact that the Czech Republic has the largest agricultural production blocks with the highest proportion of rented land in Europe. However, access to land is currently becoming an important issue in the context of sustainable food production and protection of landscape stability in the Czech Republic. Non-governmental initiatives have started raising awareness about the importance of a more responsible way of farming, its positive impacts on the environment, accessibility of farmland for Agroecological farmers and affordability of fresh and organic food through their campaigns and programs.

A first initiator of debates and actions around access to land in the Czech Republic was AMPI which is a non-profit organisation founded in 2014, focused mainly on the development of local food, solidarity-based initiatives and food sovereignty in the Czech Republic as well as throughout Europe. It stands behind the development of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the Czech Republic. On the international level, AMPI plays an active role in the URGENCI network and Access to Land Network in Europe.

AMPI helped to establish Nadace Pro půdu (NPP) and since the beginning transfers knowledge learnt from European projects connected with access to land. The main goal of NPP is to focus on direct action in the Czech Republic, therefore AMPI serves as an umbrella organisation that not only initiates the debate about access to land but also collects inspiration from other European organisations and facilitates international networking.

**The allies of the Scottish Farmland Land Trust (SFLT)**

“Allies were essential in helping us set up SFLT. There is a big gap for this work in Scotland and a clear need, but there is a lot of work to do to persuade people that our model is important and useful. Having support from other land trusts really helped to make our case for setting up the organisation.

It's been also really useful to highlight the example of Terre de Liens, as Terre de Liens has had a significant impact in France. We have also had direct support from Terre de Liens in strategic planning, and in publicity, for example Terre de Liens attended events that we ran in the Scottish Parliament and attended a conference on Land Reform in Scotland, which helped to raise our profile.”
De Landgenoten (Belgium): finding 17 organisations as founding shareholders

When the idea of a land initiative was growing, the core group went to talk to several organisations working on environment, agroecology, nature conservation, ecological gardening and living, social entrepreneurship, north-south solidarity and so on. In the end, 17 organisations and even farms were ready to be a founding shareholders and to bring together the finances that were needed to start up the cooperative. Moreover, one of the founding partners, BioForum Vlaanderen (the sector organisation of organic farmers, food processors, retail and shops), offered to be host for the employees of the new initiative, giving them a working space and helping out with payroll administration. A few of the founders also take responsibility by being part of the Board.

Having these supporting organisations was important in allowing us to get started. On the other hand, being associated to BioForum Vlaanderen, an organisation that already received subsidies from the Flemish Government for developing and supporting the organic sector, the government was not eager to also support us financially.
2.3. Defining your goals and mission

It is time to decide what you want to do and what resources you will need to do it. We advise you to write down the main goals that you want to achieve. Make sure they are realistic and adapted to your local context.

Choosing concrete actions also means choosing a specific legal status, a certain budget and business model, attracting certain people with specific qualities, etc. You might want to jump back to the table at 1.3. to refresh the available options.

Don’t forget to formulate a clear mission as well as the broader vision that forms the framework of your actions. Both will help you to move faster towards your goals, to make clear decisions, to reach out to funders, and to respond to unforeseen opportunities. In your mission statement also decide on your territorial scope. Most of the existing European initiatives operate only in their own country or region.

Debate your mission widely with your key stakeholders and take time to finalise your aims and objectives. Once approved, make sure you keep your mission at hand: it will keep you on track. It’s definitely worth reading from time to time!
Some organisations decided to conduct a feasibility study in order to properly explore the following questions:

a) what are the issues you want to address and how best to address them  
b) what is the need for a new organisation  
c) what forms of farming will you support and what criteria will you use  
d) what will be your social mission, motto and object  
e) what will be your main modes of action: advising farmers or owners, training them, buying land, engaging with citizens, advocating for land access…  
f) who will be your beneficiaries  
g) who will be your stakeholders and how will you engage with them

Conducting a feasibility study often requires ad hoc funding and/ or may receive external support, from charitable organisations supporting community businesses in the food sector, or social innovation.

Examples to inspire you

**Scottish Farmland Trust, UK**

**Vision:**
We want to see a food system where farms are connected to their communities and produce nutritious food in a way that makes a positive contribution to the health of communities and the natural environment. This can be achieved by supporting small-scale Agroecological farms. We want to see our farming system thrive, with a greater diversity of farmers and business models. Improving access to land and widening participation in the ownership of land is essential for this to happen.

**Aims:**
Advance rural regeneration by enabling land use that more directly benefits local communities, fostering local food systems that generate training & volunteering opportunities and promote good quality & healthy food.  
Advance education about sustainable land use, access to land, and the need for a more equitable food system.  
Advance protection and improvement of the environment by enabling small-scale agroecological farming that improves soil health and reduces chemical use.  
Advance animal welfare through non-intensive and free-range methods of husbandry. Remove the barriers that currently prevent a more diverse range of people from entering farming.
Kulturland, Germany

Vision:
The use of agricultural land must not be determined by the rules of financial self-interest self-propagating flows of money. On the contrary, agriculture should preserve the fertility of the soil in the long term, produce plant products in conjunction with the greatest possible biodiversity and thus create a livelihood for humans and animals. It maintains and preserves cultural landscapes as a place and home for human communities.

Mission:
Against this backdrop, we acquire agricultural land in order to keep it in communal ownership in the sense of a modern "commons". In doing so, we support farms that operate ecologically and, moreover, open up socially and consciously integrate them into their region. Our members have the opportunity in the cooperative to take personal responsibility for land and to participate in the life of the enterprises. We also want to contribute to the development of new and future forms of ownership for sustainable agriculture. The Kulturland cooperative is a bridge between citizens and farmers, through which different intensities of participation on the ground can be lived through to donation and donation."

By "regionally oriented organic farms" we mean farms that have a lively social circle of customers and supporters. In addition to pure food production, they provide diverse environmental and social services for their region - for example through nature conservation and landscape management, direct or regional marketing, visits and guided tours, educational work with school classes or the care of people in special circumstances (social agriculture).

Find more examples of the mission, vision and goals of land initiatives described in the members' section of our website (see the "history and mission" heading for each of our members) on https://www.accesstoland.eu/-Members-. Or have a look at their respective websites for the current versions; you will find several partners and websites in the table of part 1.3.
2.4. Deciding your legal status

When you are defining your mission, you will be looking at options for your legal status. Each legal form has advantages and disadvantages, often depending on country specific legislation. Moreover, a legal form also reflects your business model.

Your legal status is very important, not only because you, as founding members create a legal (juridical) new organisations recognised by the national and international courts, but also because it translates how you would like to position yourself in society. It shows whether you see yourself depending on subsidies or grants, or more like a social entrepreneur. It tells if and how you accept people to get involved. It also gives the opportunity to employ staff, acquire property and be subject to certain tax regimes. As stated earlier, a legal status often comes with a mission: buying farmland together with a lot of citizens is usually done through a cooperative, whereas receiving donations (money or land) typically moves a land initiative towards a foundation. You will observe that some land initiatives combine several legal statuses, as they combine several kinds of actions.

Here you can see what legal status some of our partners choose: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZW4eydOvQhHSt7n2cQ3jrw5Ca3WzVd5S8IRGa4MDnZU/edit?

Now it is your turn. Check the specific legislation in your country and make sure you know all the commitments that a legal status brings. There may be less well-known legal statuses, specifically adapted for not-for-profit enterprises, or community benefit organisations. Write out the things you want to include in your legal documents as in addition to your mission they will make clear the governance structure. How many people will be on the Board, for example, and for how long? How will they make decisions, how often will they meet? etc. Will you have a general assembly, how often will it come together, what can it decide? What other governing bodies will you install?
It is useful to ask an expert to review your draft legal documents and make sure they comply with legislation, but also that they make sense from a fiscal point of view (tax exemptions for your organisation, tax rebates for donors/investors in your organisation). Model legal templates might also be available so it is worth checking that that too. In order to choose the right legal form, you may also need to carry out a reflection on the future growth of your activity and try to anticipate the needs tied to the governance of a larger organisation. In some instances, a legal status can be the prefiguration for another, more complex one. For instance, Terre de Liens first established an endowment fund, in order to have time to develop the governance and capital needed to get recognition as a public interest foundation. Once approved, you will also have to register your new legal organisation with a public authority.

Examples to inspire you

**De Landgenoten, cooperative & foundation (Belgium)**

We chose a combination of two structures: a Cooperative and a Foundation.

**Cooperative**: we think it is important to own farmland in common and to actively involve people. A cooperative structure is good for that. We decided to give each shareholder only one vote, regardless of the number of shares they buy. One share costs 250 € which is affordable for a lot of people. Our General Assembly (GA) comes together once a year to decide on budget and plans for the next year. The GA chooses the members of the Board.

**Foundation**: it is our aim - in the end - to free farmland from the market. Farmland owned by the Foundation is freed from the market and can only be used for organic farming forever. A Foundation is also ideal for receiving donations of land and money, as it brings fiscal benefits for the one who donates. Finally, as from May 2019, a Foundation is considered to be equal to an Association, which makes it a good structure for a movement raising awareness and bringing people together - which we consider an important task to support our other actions.

We decided to have practically the same Board for both the Cooperative and the Foundation as they share the same mission and vision.

**ALPA, NGO (Romania)**

Alpa was formally registered as an NGO in 2018 for practical reasons and as an intermediary stage until a more robust structure will be created by the founding members.

After analysing different forms of legal statuses for access to land organisations, the founders of Alpa were very inspired by shareholder companies with a cooperative
structure. But to start a cooperative, according to the Romanian law, a social capital of 25,000 € is needed, and this sum was not available in the budget at the time.

In contrast, the social capital required for an NGO is 50 €. The NGO can thus serve as a springboard for the future shareholder company. Also, all of the founding members were much more familiar with the legal form of an NGO. A land-owning cooperative structure does not exist for any other purpose in contemporary Romania, thus the NGO is instrumental in pooling money as donations, subsidies or grants, but also in communicating to the public the vision of owning agriculture land as commons in a voluntary and participative manner.

Unfortunately, during the totalitarian regime that ended in a bloody revolution in 1989 in Romania, “common land” was the One-Party State policy of expropriating private land for industrial agriculture. Alpa now needs to make sure its mission is understood as the opposite of that. Through the future shareholder company, Alpa wants citizens in Romania to buy shares in order to offer agroecological farmers the land to manage resilient farms. These farms will be reliable food sources and providers of healthy ecosystems.
2.5. Deciding your business model

a) Listing your expenses...
Whatever your mission or your legal status is, you will need money: money to buy farmland, to communicate, to hire people, to pay taxes etc... It is important that you estimate your costs and make a budget. Not for just one year, but also projecting possible expenses and revenues for the next five years. Things like: start-up costs, annual expenses, legal fees, tax fees, rental cost, etc. We warmly encourage you to calculate your idea! And don’t worry if you need to adjust your goals after a few years. That’s quite understandable.

b) ... and your income
Where do you plan to get money from? Will you be selling services or trainings? Will you convince shareholders to invest? Will you ask for gifts and land donations? Will you apply for grants or subsidies? Will you rent out farmland? Do you know how much farmers are willing to pay for it and how much income that will bring you?

Many land initiatives need several years to come to a business model that really works. Some combine several business models in order to realize their mission. In particular, if your organisation owns land, you are likely to have different business models for:

- acquiring land and managing land and buildings in the long term. Here your income will include the rent, possibly subsidies and donations. Your costs will include legal and financial costs (taxes, notary fees, etc.) as well as maintenance (e.g. building repair), and are likely to be overwhelmingly investment costs.

- Running the organisation (paying the staff, office rent, etc.) which are operational costs, which most not-for-profit organisations cover through donations, membership fees, etc.
Tip: The business model canvas

It is not always easy to decide on your business model. Business Model Canvas is an interesting template that helps you to describe your different ‘customers’ and their needs, your value proposition to each one of them, your main activities, the main resources that you need, the way you will build a relationship with your customers and so on. Filling this in thoughtfully, will give you a clear vision of your cost structure and of the revenue streams.

You can try it out yourself here:

In developing your business model, and testing various channels to generate income, you need to be clear about your proposal: why is it that people/ funders should support you and/or use your services? Some of the options for business models will directly relate to legal statutes and governance models. For instance: do you want to engage with people / local communities as a source of income, or do you plan to involve them in your activities or governance? Are there services for which people are or could be ready to pay you, and if so, which part of your activity would be profit-oriented?
Here are some ideas and tips for possible revenue streams

| Receiving grants / subsidies | Make an inventory of the possibilities. Think of national government, local governments, Europe, (inter)national donors...
| Make sure you are well informed on new funding calls. Think of subscribing for relevant newsletters |
| Receiving gifts / land donations | Make a communication plan.
| Create some communication tools.
| Find a network that can help you with spreading your message.
| Decide whether you will accept donations from anyone/any corporation
| Decide whether you are prepared to offer visibility to those who give and how (much) |
| Selling services / training | Find out whether there is a need for the service or training that you want to offer.
| Find out whether your offer and the price you want to ask for it, are acceptable for your goal audience (including thorough benchmarking) |
| Receiving investment from shareholders | Decide how much one share should cost.
| Decide whether each share brings a vote (so people with a lot of shares, will have more decisive power) or will you give each shareholder just one vote
| Decide whether you would like only individual shareholders, or both individuals and legal organisations (e.g. local cooperatives, organic associations, farmers' union, etc.)
| Ask if some partners want to be shareholders to get you started.
| Ask yourself on what you will be spending your shareholders money: only farmland (which means a share will most probably keep its value) or also wages and other costs (which could quickly lower the value of a share)?
| Will you try to realise some financial profit for your shareholders or will you communicate from the start that the profit is the ecological and social values that you realize? |
| Other ideas and funding opportunities | Organise a fundraiser party, farm fair, or activities to raise your first donations
| Launch a crowdfunding campaign
| Ask for enterprise sponsorship (in kind - for equipment, business advice or pro-bono staff help - or in cash)
| Ask for interest-free loans (e.g. for investment on a farm)
| Be creative and try new ideas!
Examples to inspire you

De Landgenoten (Belgium): from subsidies to consultancy

De Landgenoten started with the idea of buying 100 hectares of farmland in 5 years. It was calculated that the income of these 100 hectares (rents) should bring in enough money to pay a small team of employees.

After a few years, we realized that our business plan for the first 5 years was not working. We were simply not capable of finding farmland for sale at a price that we could afford and at the same time appropriate for one of the farmers for whom we were looking for farmland.

So each year we needed to find again subsidies or grants which sometimes lead us away from our core business.

In order not to depend on grants and subsidies, we developed an offer for public authorities, and thus a second business model built on consultancy.

The Terre de Liens (TDL) Foncière: the success of citizen investment

In 2003, the national TDL association was created. After 3-4 years of studying the land market, different solutions, and building local groups of volunteers, the investment company “La Foncière” was created with an initial capital of € 57,000 (150 shareholders). This allowed investment in three farms, as a first experiment with farm purchase. The trial was successful. In November 2008, the Foncière launched a public call for investment with the goal to raise € 3 million in a year. It raised €4 million from 2200 shareholders in only 5 months!

There were various keys for this success. First, there was (and still is) a very strong mission at the core of the Foncière’s action: preserving farmland for agroecological farming and involving citizens. No investor is given preferential status. Second, a pragmatic approach to collecting citizen investment: France is a country of small savers and Terre de Liens’ shares, around €100 per share, are affordable. This also allowed a large base of citizens to be involved in the project and to become aware about the need to save farmland. Finally, there was a lucky conjunction: the creation of the Foncière coincided with a time where favourable laws were in place for State support to social investments (25% tax rebate on capital invested in the company, if left for minimum 5 years). At that moment, the financial “subprime” crisis also sparked demand for ethical investment solutions. Interestingly, in the following years, several changes in the tax system reduced the scope of this tax rebate. Some years, it slowed down the pace of share issues, but did not result in shareholders withdrawing their investment or stopping to invest.

See: Terre de Liens Removing land from the commodity market and enabling organic and peasant farmers to settle in good conditions, case study, 2011, https://www.accesstoland.eu/Terre-de-liens-France
Kulturland, a growing cooperative, Germany

Kulturland was founded in 2014 as a cooperative, unusual as a lot of farms are owned by associations. But Kulturland did not want to be a single farm association: its ambition was to be a system that could be used for several farms. A share costs 500 euro (+ 5% joining fee) and as a shareholder you are supposed to remain for at least 5 years. Kulturland gives no interest and is very clear about that in its communication. It is about creating added value for the whole society, not about creating financial profit for the shareholder. The cooperative is offering its shareholders a very flexible way to get their money back (except for the initial joining fee).

Kulturland asks its farmers to help to find the shareholders they need for their land. This process can take as long as 12 to 24 months and is based on multiple activities such as film evenings, press releases, farm visits etc. The sole income from the rent and the entrance fee from the shareholders, is not enough to finance everything. Kulturland is still working on its business model.

Learn more

- Plunkett Foundation, online resources on business planning for community businesses: https://plunkett.co.uk/inspire-resources/
- Workshop on Financing Farmland Acquisition, hosted by the Soil Association and Biodynamic Land Trust, June 2013 - series of presentations: https://www.accesstoland.eu/Financing-Land-Acquisition

See examples of crowdfunders:

2.6. Communicate!

Get yourself and your mission known

After you’ve defined your mission, decided your legal status and calculated your business plan, it is time to come out and present yourself to the world.

Make a website and a flyer. Send out a press release. Organise a public event. Tell the world who you are and what you want to do. Explain why you are needed. Remember we asked you to find partners? Convince your network to help communicate.

If you want to know how experienced partners communicate about their activities, go back to the table at 1.3. and take a good look at their websites.

Training day for ambassadors. Copyright: De Landgenoten
### How to Create your Communication Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Goals</strong></th>
<th>Why are you communicating?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>Who do you want to talk to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message</strong></td>
<td>What are you going to say? How are you going to say it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactics</strong></td>
<td>Which tools will you use to tell people what you want to say?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Effective Message Technique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tell a story</strong></th>
<th>Hook your audience on an ongoing narrative about your mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solve a problem</strong></td>
<td>Offer a solution to your audience’s wants and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer a question</strong></td>
<td>Provide information your audience is seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use testimonials</strong></td>
<td>Find supporters who are part of your target audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples to inspire you

**AgroEcopolis, Greece - starting up**

When we contact people to help us, they always ask us for written information. So we have started working on our communication strategy. We are trying to communicate what we want to accomplish. The communication that we are thinking of will be in two stages.

On our first reach we will include people that are familiar with access to land issues, people that will help us communicate our purpose, lawyers and legislators, landowners willing to donate land in order to be farmed with ecological principles, local authorities that could provide use of common land, and churches since they own a lot of land.

The second stage will include people familiar with CSA and Agroecological farming in order to support possible new entrants and to ensure that when access to land will be granted, the land will be safeguarded.

**Nadace Pro Pudu, Czech Republic - working in silence on our project**

It took almost 2 years before NPP started working on a proper communication plan. Why? Everyone who was involved in establishing NPP has another job and other activities. It took us a significant amount of time to work on internal strategy (legal form, organisation structure, mission and goals etc. before starting to communicate properly). Nevertheless, we have tried to introduce the mission of NPP at every occasion.
So far, NPP still does not have an office. The members of NPP have a regular meeting every 2 months and we are still working on becoming a more stable organisation. We already managed to build a website with a few describing sections and to design a logo and promotion materials. In the summer of 2019, NPP launched its first small fundraising campaign and decided to set up a Facebook profile so as to be more in touch with supporters after this. It was worth being patient.

De Landgenoten (Belgium)

Developing a communication strategy step by step
The need for a land initiative was felt clearly by Landwijzer, an association offering education specifically for new entrants. Landwijzer became one of the founding partners, giving not only great inspiration but also space on a webpage for the first communication on our project. That made it possible to make the outlines of our project known by several organisations and interested people.

As soon as De Landgenoten was founded, a group of volunteers built a small website, designed a logo and started to collect email addresses for the monthly newsletter. Early on, we set up a Twitter account and Facebook page. Our first website and logo lasted for 3 years. When a new strategy was then decided, the logo was restyled and the website restructured.

We use mainly online communication, except for local activities and crowdfundings: for those we make a printed flyer. We have a printed folder and policy paper for important contacts.

As with so many land initiatives, we focus on storytelling: we have portraits of our farmers on our website and flyers and ask our farmers to be the face of our local crowdfunding campaign. That often engages people to buy a share or donate for a specific farm. Citizens that are not involved within a local farm project, seem to be convinced mostly by a small financial reduction offered during a limited period of time.

Learn more

- Check out websites of land initiatives for inspiration
- Examples of videos or “whiteboard-style” animations:
  Terre de Liens:
  Video on the meaning of our work: https://terredeliens.org/-le-sens-de-notre-action-.html
  Infographics of why and how we act: https://terredeliens.org/-les-chiffres-clefs-.html
  DLG: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2v16-SNtG54&list=PLKnkrMShH7y1QhiePT125IUxg4S763zJ
  Kulturland, 2019: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvLSmp4FwPU&feature=youtu.be
  De Landgenoten, why we need to act, in less than a minute, 2015:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzzPeblSWWM

Examples of internal magazines:

- See also examples of crowdfunders (see 2.5) and dedicated platforms like https://crowdinvest.ackerilla.de/
  https://www.opencrowdinvest.org/de
3. Developing your access to land activities

In this chapter, we offer you insights in how to develop your own access to land activities.

Land acquisition often appears as the main route to protect farmland and support access to land for agroecological farmers and new entrants. But owning farmland also entails many challenges and hurdles. In certain contexts, working with public or private landowners instead of purchasing land yourself, may prove more efficient to influence the way land is used.

In any case, you will be working with farmers: here’s some ideas on how to develop a respectful and balanced relationship. Whether acquiring land or not, be sure to also engage with local citizens as they can directly help and support your organisation.

If you choose to acquire land, you will be responsible its good management and for reporting about it to your stakeholders. As an initiative supporting access to land for agroecology, you may want to adopt a nature management and conservation strategy and a land stewardship approach for sustainable use of your farmland may be something you would like to explore.
3.1. Acquiring farmland through donation & purchase

Land acquisition often appears as the main route to protect farmland and support access to land for agroecological farmers and new entrants. Indeed, ownership rights guarantee the fullest and longest rights on the land and the way it is used. By being landowners, you can most directly preserve land and ecosystems, maintain farmland in farming use, free land from the market, and ensure it is being used agroecologically, in a way that sustains job creation, peasant farming and local food provision.

Some European countries have a history of charitable or community ownership of the land, whether farmland or housing. In the United Kingdom and the United States, many charitable trusts and funds – most notably the National Trust in the UK - own land, including farmland, for conservation, heritage and sometimes farming purposes. In the UK, the movement of community land trusts was initially started to address housing needs, which gave inspiration and tools for developing community farmland trusts. In Germany, from the 1980s, many large biodynamic farms turned to their local communities for support and to preserve land in the long run freeing it from the market. These farms (land and buildings) are now in community ownership and the farm businesses too through CSA-type arrangements.
Acquiring land can result from:

- **purchasing land.** Usually this means raising money from public or private sources: private sponsors, committed consumers and local inhabitants, CSA groups, organic businesses, farmers, etc. Money can be received as donation, or as an investment - i.e. the money collected becomes a share in the community trust owning the land. The latter is sustainable only if you can keep the investment long enough, or have more investment coming in than going out.

- **receiving land (or whole farms) in donation.** Donations are likely to come from individuals or charitable organisations which have a very strong commitment to agroecological farming, small-scale farming, or environment protection. Ageing farmers who have no successor(s) may also prefer to donate (part of) their farm, than see it close down or be farmed in a non-agroecological way.

But owning farmland also entails **many challenges and hurdles**: collecting money to buy the land, developing skills and tools to adequately manage land assets, finding the right ways to contract with farmers and support them in the long run, facing the challenges of farm succession, bearing the costs of maintaining farm building, etc. It is good to be aware of all aspects before you start.

When planning to acquire land, you need to ask yourself some **key questions**:

- Do you want to own land forever, or as a transition phase until farmers can buy the land from you?
- Which legal status best suits your purpose?
- Who will be the main groups from which you will raise money or donations and with what narrative will you convince them? What guarantees will you give them?
- Will you aim to rent out the land to farmers or to community groups? Or will you farm it yourself?
- If you rent out the land, are you aware of the roles and responsibilities of farmland owners?
- What kind of landowners will you aim to be?

In our experience, becoming a landowner also means developing the approaches, skills and tools to:

- **find farmers** and develop a **constructive relation** with them in the **long term**
- **manage land assets** and, where they exist, related buildings (farmhouse, farm buildings)
- ensure **good land stewardship approach** of the land
- **study and communicate about the impacts** of the farms you own, in social, economic and environmental terms
Examples to inspire you

The Soil Association Land Trust, UK

The Soil Association Land Trust was established in 2007 to protect the countryside by acquiring and managing farmland sustainably and to connect the public with the stewardship of the land. It is part of the Soil Association, the UK’s leading food and farming charity. At its start it was gifted four farms from another charity, Land Heritage, whose origins date back to the 1950s. It has since received several other land pledges, including a large estate, comprising 10 farms and associated residential and commercial properties.

The Land Trust owns 374 acres (151 ha) with a further 2690 acres (1089 ha) pledged. The greatest challenge is that the Land Trust was established through the donation of farms, with little accompanying capital to support them. The farms in the Trust’s ownership are small scale, mixed enterprises on marginal land and are lower income generating. Some of the farms have old farm buildings requiring expensive repairs and maintenance. In at least one case, the farmhouse and buildings are listed (registered for historical note) adding an extra layer of management and sometimes cost. The Trust was also donated an 8 acre field (3,2 ha) in Scotland which is now home to a thriving community growing enterprise, The Field. Although there are a number of farms pledged with greater income generation potential, and some potentially with accompanying funds, these will not be formally incorporated for a number of years. In the last few years, the Land Trust has embarked on a period of investment in renewable energy projects on its farms, three schemes of which are now operational. This investment helps support the sustainability of the farm businesses for its tenants but also provides income for the Trust through a government supported renewable energy fund.

The extremely high value of land in the UK remains a significant barrier to either purchasing land and sometimes to land being donated, which limits the development of the ownership model. The Trust is exploring other ways to help protect land for agroecological farming other than outright ownership.

Learn more

- Presentations of a range of community land trusts on the Access to Land website:
  * Members: https://www.accesstoland.eu/Members.

Other useful resources:

- International Biodynamic Association (IBDA), Releasing the true value of the land: the land market and new forms of ownership for organic agriculture, 2014 (original, comprehensive version in German - 2012), https://www.accesstoland.eu/Releasing-the-true-value-of-land

3.2. Working with public landowners and/or local authorities

In certain contexts, where land is very expensive or rarely goes for sale outside of the family or on the public market, aiming to own land maybe a hard, if not impossible, way to go. Working with public landowners may prove more efficient to influence the way land is used.

In many countries, public bodies, such as local authorities, national and regional parks, or the State, own farmland. Working with public bodies can be easier than working with private landowners, because they have a public interest to serve. If you can convince them of the value of using publicly owned farmland for agroecological farming, you might have won a powerful partner. There is a variety of reasons why local authorities are getting interested in farmland:

- Some are developing a vision and policy for developing local food systems, through supporting local production and short supply chains
- Others aim at supporting small-scale farmers, to maintain jobs and local activities in rural areas;
- Some like to support forms of agriculture which will contribute environmental benefits to the local community, e.g. promoting organic agriculture on water catchment areas;
- Others may be fighting the closure of farms and land abandonment.

It can, however, prove full of challenges, as you need to make contacts with these public bodies and gain knowledge of how they function. Besides, most public landowners are strongly influenced by the political agenda and election calendar. In our experience, finding a political ally within the public body is key. Also key is to build, or be part of, citizen mobilisation for local food systems, peasant farming or environment protection. The stronger the community voice, the more likely you will be heard.

There are many ways in which public authorities can act:

- They play a key role in preserving farmland as they are in charge of spatial planning, defining the contours of agricultural, industrial and residential areas. Historically, farmland has often been viewed not for its own functions and value but as a mere reservoir to develop industries and services - we need to reverse that approach and value farmland for its vital benefits!
• They can **develop local land policies** to make farmland accessible for agroecological farmers and new entrants. Public landowners can map who are the ageing farmers, those nearing retirement, and engage them into thinking about farm succession. They can create tools to make the land market more transparent (e.g. a registry of land sales), tax land speculation, or stimulate the regional or national government to do so if they lack this jurisdiction themselves.

• They can provide **direct support** to agroecological farmers and new entrants: by renting out public land, establishing incubator farms or starter farms, selling public land under favourable conditions for community businesses, facilitating access to housing, etc.

By engaging with a local authority or public landowner, you can help them develop a new positive vision of farmland as key for local food provision, job creation, environment sustainability and local development. You can also ask them to use public policies in favour of agroecological farming and local food systems. You can even ask them to specifically intervene in favour of a specific farm or farmer. In many instances, you will have to help them map local challenges, and identify possible solutions. You may even have to tell them about some of the policy or legal levers they have at their disposal but ignore, which have been used in other parts of your country or Europe!

**Examples to inspire you**

**Prague looking for organic farmers**

Prague, the capital city of the Czech Republic, has given notice (end of 2019) to all conventional farmers working on city land. From 2020, Prague wants to start to work with tenants who farm organically. Existing tenants can choose to make a transition to agroecological farming or Prague will search for new farmers. The municipality is trying to find different ways to financially support the transition.

Several conventional city fields are already in the transitional process. They are often managed by young people interested in the ecology and biodiversity of the urban landscape and with a strong interest in promoting local food sovereignty (Pole U Sv. Prokopa, Farmar Jezek). These new entrants face new challenges as they learn to become new farmers.

Prague is also starting to support local production and seeks inspiration from the approach of the municipality of Nuremberg (https://www.stadt-land-beides.de).

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**Learn more**

- See other good practices of local authorities: https://www.accesstoland.eu/-Good-practices-
3.3. Working with private landowners

Private landowners are the main group owning farmland in Europe. They are very diverse in form, size and approach to farmland ownership. Private landowners include:

- **farmers** and farming families owning land: in many countries, they remain the main category owning farmland

- **large landowners**: owning large areas some of which are aristocratic families who historically own farming estates, or wealthy individuals

- **companies**: some food and farming companies, but also non-farming companies (e.g. banks) who view land as a good investment, or own land for practical reasons (for future infrastructure or compensation land)
• Charitable organisations, such as churches, charitable trusts, foundations and community land trusts like some of the Access to Land Network members.

When collaborating with private landowners, be aware of the distinction between farming landowners and non-farming landowners - farming landowners are usually strongly attached to their land and their farm and would like to see their farm continue. If the non-farming landowner is keen on realising ecological and social added value, they might be open to a cooperation with organisations working on access to land for agroecological farmers.

Here are some ways you can help or advise landowners:

1. Assess the situation and potential of their land

Some landowners will approach you, or you can approach them to discuss the situation and potential of their land:

• What is their current situation: are they farming or non-farming? With or without a successor? In individual or collective ownership? With or without children? Are they satisfied with the way the land is used? Do they need to realise any finance from the farm (by selling all or a part of it)?

• What are the features of their property: land and buildings, tenanted or available farmland, peri-urban or rural, water and road access, environmental challenges and opportunities, etc.? Assessing the situation is a first step to developing a vision for the future. Quite often landowners do not think strategically about their land, and start planning too late for the transfer or future use of their land.

2. Identify available options for the future of their land:

There are three main options:

a) they can sell their land - in that case, you are likely to engage with them so as to preserve the existing (agroecological) farm and to ensure that the land is sold in preference to new entrants and/or for agroecological farming

b) they can lease their land: you can help define priority criteria for making the best use of the land and help find prospective farmers. You can also act as go-between between landowners and farmers, by facilitating contact, helping define the conditions of collaboration, and writing the contract (farm tenancy or other form of land partnership).

c) They can transfer ownership, leasehold or usufruct of the land to you (e.g. through donation or long term emphyteutic lease). This might facilitate a smooth farm transmission as it lowers the financial threshold for the new generation, even when the successor is a member of the family.
3. Help ensure good environmental practices

You can advise **how to include environmental considerations**, through specific farm tenancy contracts, land stewardship agreements or environmental easements. Some of these can remain attached to the land, even when it is sold (environmental easements). You can also help landowners find support from nature conservation organisations to identify the environmental challenges and potential of their land. You can also help private landowners **opt for certain types of farmers** who will best respect local ecosystems and biodiversity.

**Engaging with landowners as part of a local food strategy**

In some instances, you won’t be advising landowners, but you will come into contact with landowners as part of local food and farming strategy, often in connection with local authorities. These contacts may occur while:

- **mapping local farmland** to identify possible farming opportunities, researching who owns the land and describing the land features
- **looking for new land opportunities**, asking landowners to sell or lease their land, particularly in areas where there are high levels of land abandonment, underuse or a great demand for land by new entrants
- **offering voluntary land swapping** in order to enable local farmers to group together farming plots and improve their farming systems.

**Learn more**

Farm succession partnership, Farm Succession: tools and methods to promote a successful farm succession, 2016: https://www.accesstoland.eu/IMG/pdf/farm-succesion-brochure_1_.pdf


- Terre de Liens, Ma terre agricole pour la transition écologique: guide de la propriété foncière responsable (à paraître – 2020)

- Xarxa per a la conservació de la natura (XCN), The agricultural stewardship strategy: https://www.accesstoland.eu/The-agricultural-stewardship-strategy

Examples to inspire you

**Nadace Pro půdu - Land donation by a farmer**

Nadace Pro půdu was established due to the generous gift from farmer Miloslav Knížek and his wife Zuzana Knížková who owned the biodynamic farm Bemagro. They wanted to ‘relieve their soil from the burden of private ownership’. Originally they planned to establish a Foundation for their own land (i.e. to create something similar to Buschberghof in Germany - [http://buschberghof.de/](http://buschberghof.de/)) but then they got in touch with AMPI and agreed to establish a Foundation with a broader national scope. They withdrew 200 hectares from their 2000 hectare farm and donated the land together with €20,000 in cash into the newly established foundation Nadace Pro půdu.

3.4. Working with farmers

Farmers are the primary and most important users of farmland. They are central to all that we do. **All access to land initiatives are working with farmers** and future farmers seeking to get access to land, or to keep or expand the land they already farm, so you will too.

Organisations that **own land**, such as community land trusts, charitable trusts, or community businesses, and rent it out to tenant farmers, also have to manage a **landowner-tenant farmer relation** with those farmers.
1. Advising and supporting farmers who seek to secure access to land

You can help farmers and future farmers in many ways, in particular through:
- advising on specific land offers (who is the owner, what are the features of the land, etc.),
  organising a land exchange platform, or acting as intermediary with land owners;
- offering information and advice on the land market (“normal” local price, key land opportunities, etc.) and options for land tenure (buying, leasing, types of tenancy contracts, etc.);
- advising on farming plans and business models, as well as agronomic advice or help to find new ways to commercialise their produce;
- supporting farmers to enter the local social and professional networks, which is particularly key for new entrants to farming - through contact with other local farmers, community groups and so on;
- training and on-farm practice, particularly through internships, mentoring or farm incubators.

In order to best advise farmers and future farmers with regard to their land needs, it is important that you:
- survey the needs of farmers and future farmers who contact you;
- map other advisory services (organisations providing training, advice on business models, etc.), to identify when to address the needs yourself, and when to channel (future) farmers to partner organisations.

2. As a farmland owner: develop a balanced relationship with the farmers

The organisations of the Access to Land Network, who own and/or manage land, aim to be ‘better’ landowners and landlords providing good tenure conditions and tenure security, affordable and predictable rents, community support, etc.

If you own land, you will need to develop a respectful and balanced relationship with your tenant farmers in:

• Establishing the tenancy contract: the contract should offer a long-term agreement and sufficient security to the farmer. The rent should be affordable and predictable so as to allow for long-term financial planning. The contract is likely to define acceptable farming practices (e.g. organic, extensive livestock farming, etc.) and may also reflect the environmental commitments of the farmers and the landowner.

• Organising the respective land management responsibilities: Who is responsible for remarkable natural heritage features? Who will finance/make the necessary investments (water
well, irrigation, improving access to the land, etc.): you or the farmer? If the farmer, how will you compensate them at the end of the lease? Will you compensate the farmer for improving soil fertility or local biodiversity (e.g. planting of new trees)?

- Organising the **respective building management responsibilities** in case there are buildings or constructions: What building rights (barn, polytunnel, house, mobile home) does the farmer have on the leased farmland? Who will be the owner at the end of the lease contract? Who will undertake or finance the maintenance? How do you value improvement works done by the farmer? For both land and buildings, these questions are likely to be largely defined by law, but some grey areas may persist, requiring a shared vision and agreement.

- **Improving their farming systems**: you can help farmers choose or improve their farming practices, develop new routes to markets, host voluntary workshops so that local volunteers can help with farm work or building maintenance (repairing a wall, cutting hedges, etc.), or collaborate with a nature conservation organisation to make a biodiversity inventory or soil assessment, etc.

- **Monitoring the benefits of farmland use**: Most probably, you want to show your stakeholders the many benefits associated with the farms you support or own, in terms of biodiversity, food production, job creation, etc. Because this is directly related with farming practices, you need to collaborate with the farmers. For the farmers, it is useful to assess their farming practices and impacts. Various impact assessment tools exist, some of which involve your local supporters.

- **Planning for farm transmission**: will you allow the farmer to propose a successor for your farmland when he retires or quits? If you own the farmhouse, do you feel responsible for finding a new house for the retiring farmer?

In order to develop a mutually beneficial relationship, it is important to create a space and process for sharing information, exchanging and agreeing matters, which respects the farmers’ needs and autonomy, while fulfilling your mission. Keep in mind that a farmer already needs to fulfil many roles. If you would like the farmer to organise open days, participate in a crowdfunding campaign or get involved in a participatory farm diagnosis, make sure they agree with it and that you have shared goals. In some instances, you may want to reward or compensate the time farmers spend in activities which mostly aim at building the profile or activities of your organisation.

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**Learn more**
Survey of farmers’ needs:
- Beacon Farms and Bristol Food Producers, Land Seeker’s Survey Report, 2016, https://bristolfoodproducers.uk/
- De Landgenoten, survey of needs of farmers (upcoming publication - 2020)
- ER/ ALPA, survey of needs of farmers (upcoming publication - 2021)

Advice to farmers on leases, land access options and land markets:
3.5. Working with local communities and citizens

Building a strong support base is key to raising the profile of access to land and to develop your impact. People are increasingly willing to get involved and give their help: some want to support organic farming or environment protection, CSA members will be keen to help 'their' farmers keep their land, other people may be keen to help maintain local farms and jobs, others to donate or invest their money in accordance with their ethics. Some will also be family and friends of the farmers and future farmers you are helping. All are likely to be attached to supporting...
agroecological food and farming, very few will know much about land issues and their local or national land context.

If you are a community landowner, you can seek to involve communities (consumers, solidarity investors, local inhabitants, etc.). You may in turn have expectations that the farmers be involved in community activities, through open days, farm visits, crowdfunding activities, etc.

There are many reasons why you will want to engage directly with citizens:

1. They can directly support your organisation

   > they can share volunteer time, expertise and resources: some may know a specific village where you intend to buy a farm really well, some may help with the graphic design of your communication materials, some may have amazing knowledge about repairing buildings or legal expertise. They may cook for open days, help the farmer(s) with voluntary work on the farm, or provide a meeting room or other facility.
   > they can also support your organisation financially, either by helping cover the operating costs of the organisations (through membership fees, donations), or by donating or investing money so that you can acquire farmland. Fundraising and crowdfunding, often are a huge task, requiring qualified people and initial investments, but it can prove hugely successful, and will hugely influence your organisational growth.

2. They can help change food and farming systems

Beyond the people who will directly get involved and support your organisation, you may want to engage with broader groups of people so as to raise awareness about land issues, and how they directly influence types of farming that surrounds us, the way our food is produced, rural development, or environmental protection.

With the rise of the agroecology movement in Europe, an increasing number of people - consumers, rural and urban inhabitants - are rethinking the way they buy their food, and how their food is being produced. Your action can help them increase their understanding of the situation and of possible solutions. Your action can also empower them to call for change on a practical and/or policy level, by getting involved in a CSA, asking their local councillor to rent out public land to a new entrant, or signing petitions to ensure farming practices respect local water resources.

In return, the larger your support base, the better you will be able to make yourself heard, raise the profile of your organisation, and get direct support and funding.
Across Europe, land initiatives have tested many ways to engage with local communities, depending on their context, and their objectives. To harness support, you can ask your allies to help you communicate to their members and constituents, as it will be a good way to reach out to like-minded people. You may want to put leaflets or posters in CSA groups, organic shops and restaurants, or solidarity-based businesses. You can also have stands during fairs or conferences, or at farmers’ markets, organise public events, host open days and farm walks. You can host a public screening of a film, such as The Land for our Food, followed by a debate, organise informal gatherings or more formal training sessions. You can also produce short videos and use social media to reach out to a wider audience. There is a lot of space for action and creativity!

Learn more

- Martin Large, Common Wealth: For a free, equal, mutual and sustainable society, 2010, Hawthorn Press, chapter Land for People and Communities
- Plunkett Foundation, Planning a community event: A guide to organising an event to promote your enterprise, (date unknown), https://plunkett.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/planning_a_community_event_ebook_0.pdf

Examples to inspire you

Terre-en-vue: harnessing ambassadors to engage citizens and consolidate action

Established in 2011, Terre-en-Vue aims to facilitate access to land for agroecological farmers, through restoring the commons as a way of managing farmland. This implies a close collaboration between citizens, farmers and public bodies. From the start, Terre-en-Vue focused on raising awareness among citizens and mobilising their support. Soon, the association established “ambassadors”, inspired by a similar experience in Terre de Liens.

These ambassadors raise awareness of the issue of access to land, propose concrete solutions and encourage action by becoming a shareholder or member of Terre-en-Vue. They keep their ears open to find opportunities to communicate about Terre-en-Vue activities and find new co-operators. They freely choose the places and the audiences to whom they present the organisation in the way that suits them best: events, fairs, readings, public screenings, there are many occasions to speak about Terre-en-Vue in connection with public events on environment and agriculture!
Albeit self-organised, ambassadors can rely on communication materials and the support of other ambassadors, staff, local groups, board members and other volunteers. The staff may also occasionally ask them to represent the movement in specific events. Ambassadors receive a specific training, and are given an Ambassador Handbook.

See: https://terre-en-vue.be/groupes-de-travail/gt-ambassadeurs/

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**Massive crowdfunding support to a historic CSA farm, Germany**

Kulturland Genossenschaft, is a German-based cooperative purchasing farmland in order to permanently secure it for organic cultivation, leasing it out for a very low fee to farmers who are organic, but also socially engaged. In 2018, Kulturland, joined forces with the newly established OpenCrowdInvest.org, a crowd-investing tool specifically designed for community-funded and commons projects, especially agriculture-related projects.

As the Luzernenhof CSA farm was about to lose some if its land, Kulturland and OpenCrowdInvest decided to organise a rapid fundraising campaign. Through a diversity of communication materials - videos, social media, etc - they managed to raise more than 1 million euros within just one month!

This crowdfunding was aimed at the consumers and close supporters of the farm, but also went beyond to attract new supporters.

**See the video:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPMYrsPOjFM&list=PL93KrXFb5SHn_zl1Uyafh5nHVJpVgD07O&index=2
3.6. Managing land assets

If your organisation decides to buy land, receive it as donation or manage its leases, your role as an organisation will involve owning and/or managing land. For many organisations, this is a big step to take as it brings new, long-term responsibilities, which have important legal and financial implications. These need to be grounded in a clear vision of your role and the food and farming models you support: which land or farm will you choose to acquire and to whom will you entrust it? Under what legal, financial and practical conditions will you entrust it to farmers or community groups?

In addition, being a landowner requires a large set of skills, which may be new to you: how to assess the value of the land, how to write a farm tenancy contract, how to set the rent price, how to fix buildings, etc. You may already have some of these skills in your core group, and will likely find more as you grow your support base. You are also likely to engage more with a new group of experts: rural surveyors, notaries, insurance companies, land planners, builders, etc.

As a landowner holding land for the benefit of the various good it provides, land becomes not only a kind of commons, but also an asset which you have to manage well, abiding by existing legal and financial obligations for landowners. Regardless of the way you approach it, good management of your land assets will involve the following:

1. Reaching a financial balance

You need to cover the costs of owning and managing the land and buildings, while developing a good relationship with the farmer and local communities. The costs will include legal and
financial costs, such as notary fees, land value tax, land surveyor fees, etc. The main cost and issue, though will be to repair and maintain buildings (if you have them), as they can often be in a poor state, and repair costs are usually high.

Your sources of income will vary depending on your legal status and business model. They are likely to include not only the rent, but also some subsidies. Note that while buildings are expensive to maintain, they usually bring a better rent and additional income-generating activities (e.g. opening a guest house, producing renewable energy). You are also likely to rely on volunteer time and expertise.

In the long run, it is important that you develop a vision and business model that enables you to balance the costs and income of owning and managing land. This may take some time!

2. Ensuring good management of the land and buildings

To ensure that the way your land is managed fulfils your goals, it is useful to make an inventory when you first acquire the land. What are the specific physical, agronomic, built and environmental features of your land? What are the opportunities and challenges? You may want to do this inventory together with the farmers and local communities, as well as with the support of experts (e.g. surveyors, naturalists,).

Based on the inventory, you need to agree on objectives and define a management plan with the farmers, defining what will be your respective roles and responsibilities in implementing it. Some of the key objectives and roles - e.g. farming organically, or maintaining wetlands - may be inscribed in the tenancy contract. Others will go into a management plan or voluntary agreement.

To ensure compliance and to measure the impacts over time, you will need to develop a monitoring system or adopt an impact assessment methodology. What will you assess (soil quality, biodiversity, food production etcetera)? How often will you monitor the farm, and which tools and indicators will you use? Will you resort to an external expert? Again, you may want to involve your members at some stages of the monitoring process, as it is a great way to understand how a farm functions and raise awareness about farming and the environment.

3. Communicating to donors, local communities and shareholders

It is very important that you report to your stakeholders about how you manage your farmland and what the impacts are of land in your care. If you are a cooperative or shareholding company, it is your legal responsibility to report on the financial side of land management. In all cases, it is
also very important to show your donors, shareholders and local communities the beneficial impact of good land management, in terms of jobs, biodiversity, economic activity, etc. It is important that you share with your members not only your successes but also your difficulties and failures.

You will no doubt be faced with many challenges, from economic difficulties to the constraints of legal regulations made for more conventional landowners. Think hard and be creative about what it means for you to be a new type of landowner and how to find allies and tools which fit your needs. You are inventing new ownership and management models!

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**Learn more**


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**Examples to inspire you**

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**Richtig Rechnen: true cost calculation and impact assessment tool developed by the Regionalwert Freiburg**

The idea of developing Richtig Rechnen (right figures) arose from the fact that sustainably managed farms were putting time and effort into eradicating dependence on external inputs. By implementing measures like farming without the use of synthetic fertilizers, extensive animal husbandry, regional acquisition of resources (feed, packaging, tools), use of non-hybrid seeds and training, they accepted additional costs, costs which were barely compensated through the product price. A further disadvantage was the systematic neglect of these additional expenses in conventional accounting, or rather they are traditionally only shown on the cost-side of the annual accounts. The efforts to make the farm sustainable was not recognized on the asset or capital side of accounting.

A further motive for developing ‘right figures in agriculture’ was securing the existence of farm businesses on the basis of an extended proof of performance in sustainable management. The initial hope was to compensate the sustainability services of the Regionalwert Farms at least.

Since 2008 the Regionalwert spent nearly 500 000 Euros to develop ‘right figures’. The bigger part of the expenses was funded through research projects, the other part was managed through internal contributions of the Regionalwert AG. Since 2016, the research association Die Agronauten was involved as well as four regional farms for on-farm testing of the developed tool. It consisted of two modules, the practical recording and evaluation of sustainability performance on the four farms and the social and ecological impact on the farms, the farm managers and their social environment.
The task of the project was to identify accounting data in which sustainability performance is hidden. The ‘cause-related allocation of expenses and revenues’ on the basis of accounting documents and their use in extended financial accounting makes ecological, social and regional economic performance values visible and makes it possible to draw up a sustainability balance based on ordinary accounting practices. The overall approach was to provide evidence of the operational added value that had been created and not to provide evidence of a reduction in expenditure with the consequence of economic risks and asset losses, as traditionally presented. However, at the end of the four years research phase it can be stated that the method as well as the instruments are also suitable for a risk analysis and evaluation in regard to sustainable operational management. Accordingly, the method could be used in the sense of the recently published obligation of the Federal Financial Supervisory Authority (Bafin) on the financial relevance of risks arising from non-sustainable management. The next milestone will be an on-farm testing phase on 100 farms. These will be found and trained in 2020 so that the actual testing and further sharpening of the tool can start soon.

3.7. Embracing a land stewardship approach

Broadly speaking, land stewardship refers to the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through sustainable practice. As a land initiative supporting agroecology, promoting land uses that contribute to preserving or improving biodiversity and natural resources should be part of your vision and mission.

More specifically, land stewardship, promoted by some of the Access to Land organisations, such as XCN and a range of conservation associations throughout Europe, is a nature management and conservation strategy led by civil society organisations. It revolves around voluntary land stewardship agreements signed between landowners and associations, Foundations or non-profit cooperatives, to agree on and implement a set of long-term actions aimed at preserving or improving the conservation state of natural values in a specific estate.

In the area of land stewardship, the challenge often is threefold:

- **demonstrating** how certain types of farming and food systems contribute to nature conservation and natural resources preservation better than others

- **defining specific conservation objectives** and implementing adequate farming and non-farming practices, together with farmers, communities, and other stakeholders, to contribute to the ecosystems functionality;

- **monitoring the impacts** of the farms and food systems, as well as the management effectiveness of nature conservation actions undertaken
Developing land stewardship approaches and tools will enable you to fulfil your mission, and increase the beneficial uses of the land: restoring soil fertility, preserving water resources, protecting fauna and flora, enhancing biodiversity, maintaining diverse landscapes and reducing the climate impact of farming. All these actions are also likely to receive full support of your members and stakeholders, and may attract additional donors.

There are different ways in which you can advance nature conservation through a land stewardship approach:

- Supporting certain forms of farming and local food systems when choosing tenant farmers or when advising or training farmers: organic/agroecological farming, extensive livestock farming, high nature value farming, local breeds and varieties, seeds production, resource efficient forms of farming etcetera as well as farmers’ markets, CSAs and other local food systems which reduce food miles.

- Advising farmers to help them adopt or implement farming and processing practices aligned with nature conservation and natural resource preservation. Engaging with a land stewardship organisation usually helps the farmer to identify the specific opportunities, values and threats regarding nature on their farm. These can include water use efficiency, conservation of semi-natural elements, (e.g. ponds, drystone walls) and identification of interesting species.

- Advising other landowners to help them give preference to users and uses of their land which will ensure nature conservation and natural resources preservation. To that end, you can undertake awareness raising or training sessions, share tools and approaches, or put them in contact with nature conservation associations. You can communicate the potential benefits: some are ethics-related, intangible but deeply rewarding. Others may give access to subsidies or other financial incentives.

If your organisation directly owns or manages farmland, you may list specific beneficial farming practices in the contractual agreements, or help the tenant farmers, through voluntary work, expert advice or specific investment (e.g. re-developing hedges). A major lever can also be to sign a land stewardship agreement with a land stewardship association; you will need to check the legal framework of your country for details about the binding conditions.

**Examples to inspire you**

**Fundació Emys: bringing food production, rural development and nature conservation together (Catalonia)**

Fundació Emys is a land stewardship organisation located in la Selva, a region in north-west Catalonia. This area has a great diversity of landscapes, ranging from the Mediterranean coast to the steep Montseny mountains, passing through an extensive inland plain, which used to be one of the main wetlands of Catalonia. Land uses are varied, and farmland represents the 12% of la Selva surface. The primary production mostly consists of fodder, cereals and bovine meat and milk, and to a lesser extent also
vegetables, hazelnuts and apples. Silviculture of poplars and plantanus is also a relevant economic activity in this region.

Fundació Emys' mission is contributing to nature conservation in La Selva region and its surroundings. Initially, the NGO’s goal was improving the conservation of European pond turtle (Emys orbicularis). Since this species lives in wetlands surrounded by natural wooded landscape, actions were specially addressed towards wetland habitats preservation and restoration. This continues to be a key approach for Fundació Emys, although their conceptual framework has broadened in a really interesting manner. Identifying wetland habitat preservation as closely dependent on the type of practices undertaken in the nearby farmlands, they begun getting in touch with farmers and working together with them in order to maintain or improve production while conserving the natural values and resources of the area.

Nowadays Fundació Emys maintains 39 land stewardship agreements. 7 of them are in a farming context and cover a total surface of 40 hectares of farmland. Usually, the agreements are based on a management plan that includes objectives and actions related to organic farming practices and the restoration of semi-natural habitats within the farmland.

Fundació Emys sources both public and private funding for the implementation of conservation measures in farmlands usually advises farmers on product commercialisation and added value. They also count on 64 volunteers who occasionally take part in the implementation of different management or monitoring actions, plus 6 volunteers who are involved on a more regular basis.

Fundació Emys has gathered expertise in agroecological practices, and they develop courses and other educational and demonstrative activities. In addition, they produce organic marmalades and manage a store and a restaurant where they sell and cook organic products, some of which are produced by the farmers they collaborate with or by farmers collaborating with other land stewardship organisations.

All in all, Fundació Emys is bringing together food production, rural development and nature conservation at a local level and in a socially innovative manner.

In Catalonia, the members of the nature conservation platform XCN have signed about 130 land stewardship agreements, covering about 8000 hectares.

Land stewardship approaches are great for engaging with citizens. Organisations that develop land stewardship initiatives usually involve local communities and a wide variety of stakeholders in the process, through volunteering actions or environmental education activities, amongst others. Communicating to the public is key. Your members, allies and local communities will gain from better understanding the issues and solutions, as well as being directly involved in supporting land stewardship and monitoring the results. You may also discover on that occasion that you have great expertise within your network!
Humus: a participatory soil assessment tool developed by Terre de Liens

Terre de Liens’ mission includes considering land as a common good, preserving its agricultural use and soil fertility. From 2013, Terre de Liens decided to analyse its results and impact and identified the need for a regular diagnosis of the environmental condition on the farms.

In conjunction with the Nancy Agronomy School, Terre de Liens then created Humus, a participatory diagnostic tool to assess the state of the soils of its farms. True to its commitment to popular education, Terre de Liens chose to design an easy-to-use tool, accessible to all, and to promote the direct involvement of citizens.

Humus carries out a scientific approach of soil analysis, based on three pillars:
- a description of the farm: cartography of the territory and landscape analysis;
- a soil analysis, both at the surface and at depth, through direct observation and by taking samples that are analysed in the laboratory;
- An analysis of biodiversity: bioindicator plants, inventory of agroecological infrastructures, and observation of soil microfauna.

The citizens, members and supporters of Terre de Liens, are involved in the actual diagnosis, and in the analysis of the results. They are always supported by an external expert, trained in using the tool, and often link up with environmental organisations invited for their expertise. Humus provides the opportunity to open up the soil issue to non-experts and to connect agricultural and environmental organisations in a local territory.

Since 2013, Terre de Liens has carried out about 15 Humus diagnoses involving more than 20 farmers and 150 citizens. Carrying out Humus diagnoses often questions the monitoring of the environmental clauses of the lease on Terre de Liens farms. It also highlights the added value of strengthening our collaborations with environmental organisations.

A User Manual to carry out Humus diagnoses is available in French: https://terredeliens.org/la-notice-du-diagnostic-humus-fait.html
Environmental requirements emerge in Czech Republic

Landowners in the Czech Republic are currently being encouraged by research institutions to include environmental agreements into their contracts with farmers. A template for such a contract has been prepared: http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/puda/dokumenty/vzory-pachtovnich-smluv/vzor-pachtovnii-smlouvy.html and some big cities, like Tábor and Příbor, have started to demand environmental agreements on their land. It is pioneering work. Moreover, there is a new document in Czech for non-farming landowners helping them to understand land protection and sustainable farming: https://www.nadacepartnerstvi.cz/Adaptterra/Pro-vodu-v-krajine

Learn more

- Access to Land Network, A review of tools to assess the impact of agroecological farms (to be published - 2021)
4. Making the most of the Access to Land Network

You are not alone

In Europe, the Access to Land Network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological farming and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 20 organisations. The Network’s main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land, and to put land issues in the spotlight. To that end, it organises information and experience-sharing, fosters cooperation between members, and facilitates broader communication.

The Access to Land Network has members in several countries. If you want to start a new initiative in one of those countries, it might be interesting to contact the local member. You can find all members here: https://www.accesstoland.eu/-Members- and more land initiatives in the Access to Land directory here: https://www.accesstoland.eu/-Directory-

You can also read case studies and good practices from many countries on the website to inspire you. Most people find it useful to learn about concrete examples near them so as to better
anticipate and analyse levers and obstacles for action. In addition, the Network provides a number of free educational tools available from its website under the ‘Resources’ section: a quiz, videos, infographics, land data, and more.

Network members are usually long-term partners with whom trust relationship has been built over time. If you are interested in becoming a member, we will want to know you better. A first step could be to write us an email or sign up to our newsletter to know more about our activities, news, reports and publications. You may spot an open event you are interested in and be able to come meet us!

If you are not based in Europe, you should also look for resources specific to your own region and contact local partners or networks. For instance, our friends at the Agrarian Trust have excellent resources on how to start a land initiative in the United States: https://agrariantrust.org/ or check Land for Good: https://www.landforgood.org.

Wherever you are based and whatever you plan to set your mind and energy to, we wish you well with developing your local land strategy. Your path may be bumpy, but it will be worth it! We hope this tool kit has given you relevant insights into the experiences of others, given you inspiration and helped you to decide how to proceed.

We wish you well!