



# ACCESS TO LAND

A European network of grassroots organisations securing land for agroecological farming.

## *Organising farm succession and entry of a newcomer to farming :*

*Coordinating support for land acquisition and new farm business*

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# Pays de la Loire Context



- *2000 farms are lost every year.*
- *Paradoxically, numerous people of all ages would like to become farmers in the region.*
- *they are not from farming families, and have neither the strong social networks nor the financial means to take over a farm.*
- *banks and the majority of farmers are convinced that small farms are not profitable*



## Tools to foster farming



### ***Terre de liens Pays de la Loire (TDL PDL):***

***coordinates and supports initiatives to access and manage farm land***

***encourage ecological and socially responsible activity in rural areas.***

***The farms acquired through Terre de Liens will never be sold,***

***rent to farmers through a rural environmental lease.***

### ***CIAP PdL***

***(Coopérative d'installation en agriculture paysanne):***

***" Creative Peasantry" training program*** financed by the Regional Council, from the job-training budget.

***spaces to test the project operating investments***

# Le Houssais : Gérard, Odile and Marc's story



## Le Houssais



### Patrimoine

28,5 ha de terres agricoles, un bâtiment d'élevage de 750 m<sup>2</sup> et plusieurs installations (fumière...)

### Localisation

Pierric, Loire-Atlantique

### Production

Élevage de vaches laitières

### Partenaires

Coopérative d'installation en agriculture paysanne (CIAP 44), Accueil Paysan Pays de la Loire

### Propriétaires

Foncière Terre de Liens

### Contact

## *Background*

- **Gerard, who raised organic dairy cows, was close to retirement age.**
- **no children interested in taking over the farm,**
- **he started looking for a buyer** rather than sell the entire farm to his non-organic farming neighbours.
- **G rard wanted “neighbours, no hectares”** as a member of the trade union *Conf d ration Paysanne*,
- **very few neighbours believed in the viability of his 30-hectare farm.** Most thought the double was a strict minimum.
- **Gerard stuck to his guns, and contacted several organizations**

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# The action plan

**Transferring ownership of a farm means transferring two distinct entities:**

Terre de Liens is involved in the farm land and buildings,  
CIAP is involved in the farming business.

**Both aim to foster the territorial integration of newcomers** from Non farming backgrounds.

**This is achieved by building local support groups**, namely peasant farmers, local inhabitants and elected territorial officials.

**The two organizations:**

shortlist prospective candidates

determine if the farm site matched their future project.

accompanied candidates on visits to the farm.

# Odile and Gerard

**One name soon moved to the top of the list: Odile.**

Odile and Gérard launched a **local communications campaign to seek financial backing** from the region's inhabitants.

Thus, **Terre de Liens buy the farmland** that Odile would then rent long-term.

As she began working alongside Gerard **CIAP provide a "Creative Peasantry" training program** for Odile

**CIAP invested in a small pre-fab building** for cheese-making,

**Odile carried out a small market study** to determine the feasibility of direct sales.

**After 9 months, Odile decided not to take over Gérard's farm, and discontinued the venture.**

# Marc et Gérard



**CIAP and Terre de Liens began looking for a new candidate.**

**Gérard and Terre de Liens continued to solicit citizens' savings for the project.**

A new candidate, **Marc broke the deadlock.**

Marc lived in a neighbouring region. he wished to become a dairy farmer, but had **no access to family farmland.**

In early 2015, **Marc joined the " Creative Peasantry" program** and started working with Gérard on the farm.

**Gérard retired on schedule,** in summer 2015.

Marc had not yet finalized the administrative paperwork, **CIAP became the official farm operator. Terre de Liens became owner of the farm** and rented it jointly to Marc and CIAP

in early 2016 **Marc officially entered farming he took over CIAP's operating investments.** CIAP withdrew from this joint lease when Marc **officially took over, without having to sign a new lease.**

## Ways and means

- ✘ **Incubators:** The project and its perennity can be tested. Incubators also bear the administrative burden of the farm business until the new entrant officially enters farming and accesses public aid.
- ✘ **Citizens' savings:** By separating land ownership from the farm business, the newcomer avoids heavy investment costs.
- ✘ **Mobilizing funds from job training programs:** By seeking financing outside the agricultural sector, the newcomer can also hone his non-farming skills, like marketing and product transformation.

By " thinking outside the box" to adapt existing facilities to local needs, deadlines were easily met for the farm successions.

# Our approach and our values

***Support and back-up:*** Do WITH not FOR. Empower the players!

***The right to error, the right to failure:*** Fear of failing should not prevent action. However, make sure you have the financial means to face setbacks, and communicate with partners who may be tempted to bow out.

***Get everyone involved:*** The hands-on involvement of neighbouring farmers allowed Odile and Marc to learn valuable new skills. And, thanks to the financial commitment of local citizens, Marc acquired the land loan-free. Despite the small production area, he was able to earn an income immediately.

## Factors of success and difficulties

- **The close ties and mutual confidence** between CIAP and TDL
- **Gerard's involvement** and patience were all crucial.
- **Such complex administrative and financial packages** would have jeopardised the chances for success.
- **Searching for a second candidate for the farm was a risk factor for all the players:**
  - **G rard could have been forced to postpone his retirement.**
  - **Terre de Liens would have had to inform investors the deal was off;** it could have been compelled to return the savings collected.
  - **CIAP was able to use the laboratory for another project.** Otherwise, the investment would have seriously impacted its bottom line.
  - **With 2 successive candidates, the workload was doubled** with no corresponding increase in resources.

# Conclusion

**This project secured a long-term job in an environmentally responsible sector,** and strengthened social cohesion in a rural area. Beyond that, the project proved that despite widespread bankruptcies in the French dairy industry, small environmentally- friendly production units can be passed on. Small players may even fare better than big ones.

**the set-up used here is being reproduced.** To secure farms for other newcomers on 2 land acquisition projects by Terre de Liens Pays de Loire, in partnership with CIAP.

**This project could not have succeeded without the mobilization of a territory** to save a small organic farm. The show of citizen solidarity reflects the determination to defend, encourage, and foster a long-term model of food production that will assure food security and sovereignty.