



From Agribusiness to Food Democracy

December 19th 2018

Maison Suger,

16 rue Suger, 75006 Paris

13:00 - 17:00

Mandatory registration at ffj@ehess.fr

Agribusiness giant Monsanto was ordered to pay a colossal sum to a plaintiff who accused its herbicide of having provoked his cancer. This sentence might be the prelude of the beginning of the end of agribusiness.

Agribusiness is a branch of industry that has expanded during the 20th century. Since the 1990s its success and wealth are due to the invention of genetically modified crops. France and European Union, on the contrary, recommend a different mode of agriculture, imposing restrictions on these crops. Its basic concept consists in “multi-functionality”, meaning that agriculture is not purely economic, but economic, social, and environmental activities.

Relying on the Government, organic agriculture is developing quickly in France: from a ratio of 1.9% in 2007 it increased to 6.3% in 2017 (whereas in Japan it represented only 0.1% in 2007 to 0.2% in 2017). There are also practices like farmers’markets or community-supported agriculture (AMAP), which, generally linked with organic farming, value direct relationship between farmers and consumers. These practices can be qualified as “food democratic”, for they have some common features to grass-roots democracy: disclosure of information concerning food production, connection of trust between food producers and consumers, and self-determination of the two.

Program

13:00 - Opening Speech

Sébastien Lechevalier (EHESS, President of FFJ)

13:10 - Keynote Speech

Florence Pinton (AgroParisTech, UMR Sadapt, UNESCO DEBATS) & Francois Léger (AgroParisTech)

13:50 - Japan's Agricultural Policy and Organic Farming: Toward a Food Democracy

Shoichiro Takezawa (EHESS)

My presentation consists in two parts. The first one is to trace the agricultural policy and status quo of organic farming in Japan in comparing with those in France. The organic farming remains underdeveloped in Japan. Its ratio is only about 0.5% despite the increasing interests of consumers and young farmers. In examining the Japanese agricultural policy and different stakeholders engaging in agri-food system, I try to answer why it remains so underdeveloped in Japan. The second part is to present some activities to change the situation in Japan. I depict some activities like those realized by the patients of Minamata disease who reconstructed their life in engaging in biological agriculture. This part is also dedicated to explaining why I qualify these activities as "food democracy".

14:30 - Coffee break

14:45 - Our Experience of Self-Managed Food Cooperatives in 9-3

Philippe Raulin/Jean-Claude Richard (AMAP Court-Circuit de Saint-Denis)

The AMAP short circuit began in Saint-Denis in 2010, which currently distributes 250 weekly baskets from peasant agriculture. The Diony-Coop was created in 2015 also in Saint-Denis to offer its 600 cooperators 900 references of organic food and household products with its two stores. The objective of the creation of these organizations is to provide the inhabitants wishing to join the collective with varied products of high quality without any added margin and to set up a functioning based on the values of popular education.

Our spaces operate according to the principles of individual responsibility. There is no collective space for decision-making. I will explain in my presentation how these voluntary and non-hierarchical organizations work.

15:25 - Stork Makes Us Solidary: Cooperation of Farmers and Administrative Officials to Reconstruct Environment Friendly to Storks

Itsuki Nishimura (Secretary of Agricultural Extension Division, Hyogo Prefecture)

This presentation has three parts. First, I describe the history of the extinction and rebirth of stork in Toyooka city in central Japan. Second, I retrace the cooperative works realized by farmers and administrative officials to realize the organic rice farming in this city. As one stork eats every day about 500g of living creatures like fish, frogs, insects, reptiles and rodents, it is necessary to promote natural environment as well as to extend organic rice farmlands to supply sufficient feed for it. Third, this transition from conventional agriculture to organic agriculture was a very difficult task. I try to make it clear how the farmers have changed their consciousness and self-identity through this cooperative work.

16:05 - Comments

Francois Léger (AgroParisTech)

16:20 - General Discussion

17:00 – 19:00 - Cocktail