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Date: May 2019

NEuropa

Food system niches in Europe –
Nischeninnovationen in Europa zur
Transformation des Ernährungssystems

Project term: 01.05.2019 – 31.12.2019

Für Mensch & Umwelt

Umwelt Bundesamt

Background and purpose

Food systems in European countries exhibit much diversity and variance, shaped, among other factors, by their individual history, geographical location and natural resources. What links them is the current omnipresent lack of sustainability throughout the process stages in the food systems, causing a continuous loss of biodiversity, an advanced deterioration of soil quality, water pollution as well as climate change.

According to transformation research, the sustainable change of a system can occur inter alia, when innovative niche practices find the right momentum to advance and disseminate into the mainstream. The more they grow in quantity and connect with other niches and regime elements, the better the chance of their introducing sustainable adaptations into the food system. Although numerous social, institutional and technical innovations are sprouting in Europe, they are often little known in Germany and to each other. Due to this isolation, they miss out on cooperation, mutual learning and synergy potentials.

NEuropa aims, through the identification, collection and publication of niche innovations in the food system from all over Europe, to facilitate and accelerate this process. The project will focus primarily on researching and compiling an index of innovative practices that thus far are relatively unknown or not yet widely implemented in Germany. This information will then be shared and exchanged with partner organisations in Germany (via the *Ernährungswandel* online platform) as well as in Europe (via partner organisations and further media channels) in order to boost the knowledge (exchange) about the many times isolated, yet highly potential, transformative innovations. This dissemination of best practices allows for manifold adaptations in national, regional and local contexts across Europe and Germany. This way new actors can network, create synergy effects and urge regulatory adaptations, paving the way for more sustainable food systems.

Objectives

1. To identify a plurality of sustainable niche innovations in the food systems across Europe
2. To describe and summarise each sustainable niche innovation within Europe
3. To increase the knowledge and exchange of often isolated initiatives across Europe

Content

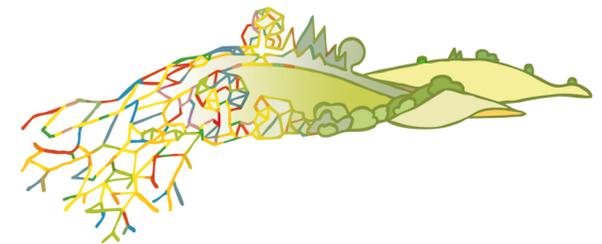
The following points summarise the main project steps:

1. Identification of niches from diverse process stages of the food system in various European countries based on research and exchange with European partner organisations.
2. Classification of these niches according to their sustainability potential (ecological goals, social goals and economic goals).
3. Creation of a comprehensive overview and summary of the European niches in the food systems. Thereby each niche is presented in the form of a fact profile, describing certain characteristics: description, aims, background, actors, recent development, examples, and sustainability potential.
4. Digital processing of fact profiles on the online platform.
5. Development of an interactive online map indicating diverse niche actors and initiatives across Europe.
6. Dissemination and exchange of findings on the online platform and with project partners across Europe.

Methods

NAHhaft will conduct interviews with civil institutions and scientific experts across Europe, with the contacts being provided by Friends of the Earth Europe and Nyéléni Europe, in order to identify innovative and sustainable initiatives in a large number of European countries.

Existing scientific literature will then be examined, and desktop-based research carried out in order to assess the potential of each niche to improve the sustainability of the food system.



Outcomes

- ▶ Fact profile on niches in the food system with their assessed sustainability potential
- ▶ Index summarizing niche innovations in European food systems
- ▶ Publication of an online, interactive map displaying visually the collected findings on different European niche innovations