



# Green Harvest

Czech-Norwegian Exchange on Organic Farming and Community Engagement

— 2024





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# Introduction

Welcome to the booklet of innovative practices for supporting sustainable food systems!

The state of the environment and biodiversity, soil quality, climate change, and even loss of local livelihoods in small villages are ever-growing concerns both in Europe and also globally. While there may be many possible remedies, the project *'Establishing the concept of a BIO region as a supporting network for biodiversity in the Czech landscape'* has focused on how organic and small-scale food systems might slow down the aforementioned trends.

Organic and small-scale farming has a positive impact on the ecosystem, as (among other things) it protects soil, retains water, and reduces erosion. It also positively affects regional socioeconomic development by strengthening local demand for organic products, reinforcing local connections, and developing social enterprises. Local farmers have closer ties to the environment in which they operate. Their businesses and activities are interconnected with the region, which supports local resilience.

The project, of which this booklet is a part, is funded by Norway Grants, and this booklet was created in Czech-Norwegian cooperation to support the international transfer of knowledge and the sharing of inspiration. Therefore, it presents six locally embedded cases of alternative approaches to food production, distribution, and consumption in the Czech Republic and Norway.

This booklet aims to inform and inspire by describing existing good practices.

The booklet presents six cases that show fresh interventions into food systems in Norway and the Czech Republic. These two countries have different climates, policies, and cultural practices connected to food production and agriculture. Nevertheless, as we worked on creating this booklet, we observed how the present cases are

built on the same foundation: building relationships and creating connections is essential to bridging the knowledge gap and enabling more sustainable practices in our food systems.

The foundations behind these practices and innovation within food systems is also known in other countries. Most revolutionary is the fact that there are people who care and dare to keep these initiatives, practices, and projects alive.

The cases in this booklet are different in their scale and position in the social structure, but all of them have in common the following: they contribute to more efficient organic agriculture, strengthen local workplaces, and ultimately support healthy interpersonal relationships, maintenance of local stories, traditions, and authenticity.

To explore these cases of good practice in a meaningful way, the chapters are structured as follows: firstly, the challenges that we are facing are described; secondly, we identify the applied innovation; and, finally, we examine the observed change. With each case, we also aim to identify relevant stakeholders in the pursuit of better practice.

Sharing experiences, knowledge, and good practices is essential for strengthening sustainable food systems. This booklet aims to connect and inspire farmers, supply chain actors, sustainability organizations, and local government authorities. Together we can broaden the market for sustainable food and create more viable and healthy choices for consumers.

# Mapping Farmers

## Adresář farmářů

A free digital interactive map of local food producers and distribution points covering the whole Czech Republic. It was created by means of a large collaborative process and is available at [www.adresarfarmaru.cz](http://www.adresarfarmaru.cz). The map contains over 500 places where customers can buy fresh local farm products directly from farmers by various means – directly from the field, at a market, from a farmer's shop or by finding the closest farmer in the network of community supported agriculture.

### Stakeholders

- The digital map was initiated and created by local NGO Friends of the Earth Czech Republic together with local action groups, who collaborate to continually update the map's content
- The map was developed in cooperation with private companies and funded via public financing. It is used by the public, farmers, actors in gastronomy, the tourism industry, and others



Ester Dobiášová, Friends of the Earth archive

### Challenge faced

Although the Czech Republic is a country with a rather high population density and relatively small overall area, the public often lacks information about where to buy produce from local food producers. For example, in the Tišnov region, residents in the area knew producers in their close vicinity, but they were not aware of other producers offering fresh food in the surrounding villages.

Additionally, farmers and small-scale producers often struggle to access short supply chains and lack the methods to bring their products directly to consumers with minimal intermediaries. This direct approach ensures that the food remains fresh, and customers are aware of and can support the source of their purchases. However, a significant challenge for many small-scale and organic farms is a lack of visibility and market access, which can adversely affect their economic viability. Consequently, a primary challenge lies in bridging the gap between supply and demand, effectively connecting the public with these farmers.

### Innovation applied

Mapping Farmers (Adresář farmářů), a free digital database of farmers and distribution



points for locally grown food, was created to directly address these challenges. It provides detailed listings of farmers, shops, markets, and community-supported agriculture groups. The platform's user-friendly interface enables users to filter distribution points by type, distance, and rating, enhancing accessibility for both web and mobile app users. Each farmer's profile includes a brief description of their farm and method, contact information, and the current offerings. Consumers can also rate the seller or share a photo of the goods after making a purchase.

The tool has been developed in collaboration between the environmental organization Friends of the Earth Czech Republic and the company Mapotic. In some regions of the country, information and material for the map were developed in a participative process with the local community and action groups, creating connections and a network of like-minded people who want to support rural development.

**Komunitou podporované zemědělství (KPZ).** Community Supported Agriculture are groups that operate on a mutually beneficial partnership between food consumers and producers. The groups ensure the regular delivery of fresh local food to the consumer throughout the seasons and provide the farmer with a guarantee of sales and fair compensation for their work. As a consumer, you know the farmer who grows vegetables or raises animals for you, and you share the actual risks and benefits of farming.

## Change observed

Mapping Farmers (Adresář farmářů) is designed to benefit both the consumers and the farmers. It bridges producers and consumers, shortening the supply chain, and thus plays a pivotal role in supporting rural development and sustainable management within the Czech landscape. This mapping initiative has also expanded the network of contacts and a community of sustainable food producers. Friends of the Earth works further in the regions by hosting round tables and making personal connections with local stakeholders.

To effectively match consumers seeking fresh local fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy

products with the farmers who supply them, regular updates to Mapping Farmers (Adresář farmářů) are essential. Efficient resource allocation is key to ensuring the database is continually refreshed and that it remains in sync with producer offerings. The map is run and updated by Friends of the Earth and AMPI (The Association of Local Food Initiatives). In addition to the dedicated resources that are available in these organizations, the collaborative process of adding new verified farmers and updating their offerings also involves volunteers in the regions and the farmers themselves.

Mapping Farmers (Adresář farmářů) has simplified the process for people to discover and purchase premium local ingredients. Offering a straightforward digital tool for those in search of fresh, seasonal, and healthy produce, the project has gained positive feedback from both the farming community and the public.

## Resources:

- [Mapping Farmers / Adresář farmářů](#)
- [Friends of the Earth Czech Republic improves Mapping Farmers for consumers](#)



Ester Dobiášová, Friends of the Earth archive

# The Eco Week in Agder

ØKOUKA Agder 

## A regional organic food festival

ØKOUKA Agder (The Eco Week in Agder) is a regional food festival celebrating local, organic food and farming in Agder since 2017. Over the course of a week, various events are held across the whole country, such as seminars, webinars, garden tours, gastronomic experiences, lectures and workshops. "Open Organic Farm" is an important part of the festival, where people can visit the organic farms in the region. Typically, there will be a small farmer's market and a pop-up café with homemade food. Frequent events include guided garden walks, vegetable harvesting and family friendly activities.

ØKOUKA Agder is held in the last week of September. The aim is to showcase diversity in the agricultural sector, spread knowledge and inspiration on sustainable farming, and connect consumers and organic farmers.

### Stakeholders

- ØKOUKA Agder is organised by Organic Agder (Økologisk Agder), part of Organic Norway (Økologisk Norge)
- The whole value chain: From CSA (community supported agriculture), farmers and producers to restaurants, shops, cafés and consumers
- Educational institutions and schools
- The county council (Agder fylkeskommune) funds ØKOUKA Agder



## Challenges

General knowledge about farming is poor among consumers in Norway. The Institute of Consumption Research Norway (SIFO) estimates that one out of nine consumers knows a farmer, meaning comprehension in all aspects of food production is low.

Organic food is often more expensive due to several factors, and therefore price is not an area where the farmers can compete.

The above, combined with a scepticism towards organic farming, is perhaps the biggest challenge faced by ØKOUKA Agder. Organic farming for many years has had a tainted reputation, labelled "alternative" by many and ridiculed as the wrong way to farm. Unfortunately, this is a view shared by both consumers and the majority of conventional farmers.

The concept of ØKOUKA Agder as a regional food festival also has some challenges. Without a set location and with different partners from year to year, the events are spread across the whole region. This makes it harder to tailor marketing to specific communities and gain a place-specific impact. This goes hand in hand with



other barriers such as distances and lack of accessibility. Most of the small-scale producers are situated in the countryside, meaning consumers have to travel quite far to get to them.

## Innovation applied

The cocktail of generally poor farming knowledge, price as the prime food buying factor and organic farming's tainted reputation is the foundation for ØKOUKA's approach to connecting producers and consumers.

In terms of events, marketing and communication, less use of the term organic has been a strategic decision to reach new partners and target audiences. Instead, the term sustainable is being used, and a holistic focus is placed on Norwegian produce and food quality, animal welfare and local food with a transparent and short value chain. Collaboration across the value chain is key. ØKOUKA Agder therefore facilitates strategic match-making and organises events to help establish relations.

What is most important: Creating meeting places and positive activities where food, farming and nature intersect.

## Change observed

To foster change, the importance of good experiences, sharing knowledge and the power of connecting people are clearly demonstrated in ØKOUKA's events. In addition, the effects of Open Organic Farms are instrumental in driving change in consumer practice. During ØKOUKA Agder, people drive to different farms due to several factors: They can buy a variety of food and even harvest vegetables themselves, as well as partake in farm activities. As a result, some of the visitors become acquainted with their local farmers. Some become customers and ultimately ambassadors as a result of the connection and increased knowledge of food production. Every year, new farms take part in ØKOUKA Agder, and many farmers expand their potential customer base and increase sales by having several hundreds of people visiting their farm during the festival week.

ØKOUKA Agder has become a platform for recruiting organic small-scale producers, and it provides an arena in which these producers can obtain free marketing, reach new audiences, access a network, and be seen within a relevant context of food and sustainability in an environment in which they can test their concepts.

There has been an increase in collaboration across the value chain. This has led to the strengthening of some of these rural businesses. Organic is seen in conjunction with sustainability and is becoming more mainstream. A concrete example of this was the event "The farm as an ecosystem". The organisation advising the farming business, NLR (Norsk Landbruksrådgiving), contacted the Prestegården i Froland farm after the event and requested a tour of the farm with students and farmers as part of their program, soil testing and learning about their holistic farming methods, in which the animals are part of the circular system.

The pioneering nature and degree of innovation that small-scale organic entrepreneurs represent with the aim of producing sustainable food helps these organic farmers to be taken more seriously. Things take time, but there are several positive projects and initiatives in which ØKOUKA Agder is only one tiny part of the big puzzle.

### Resources:

- [Overview of Eco Weeks in different regions in Norway: https://www.okouka.no/](https://www.okouka.no/)
- [The Eco Week in Agder's Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/okoukaagder/](https://www.facebook.com/okoukaagder/)
- [The Eco Week in Agder's Instagram page: https://www.instagram.com/okouka\\_agder/](https://www.instagram.com/okouka_agder/)



# Farming School

Farmářská škola 

Farming School is the only Czech vocational college specializing in organic farming. The school's unique curriculum is designed to cultivate the next generation of skilled organic farmers. The innovative study concept focuses on building both practical skills, theoretical knowledge in agroecology and a community of sustainable farmers. The opportunity to influence educational programs engages talented and dedicated students of all ages, making both the education and agricultural sector more attractive.

## Stakeholders

- The Farming School was developed by a team of engaged experts who form the school board
- The Farming School collaborates with a multitude of teachers, experts, and farms both in the Czech Republic and abroad
- Further supported by the Association of Local Food Initiatives, the Biodynamic Education Network, Erasmus+, Czech-German Fund for the Future, and various other foundations, non-profit and for-profit organizations



## Challenge faced

In the Czech Republic, only about 3% of total employment is in agriculture, with a limited number of young farmers. As of 2020, a mere 11.9% of EU farm managers were under 40 years old. The Farming School seeks to increase young people's involvement in agriculture by offering an in-depth program in organic and biodynamic farming. The school views agriculture as a future-oriented craft. Despite growing interest in land and sustainable food production driven by ecological campaigns and climate discussions, the agricultural workforce is often overlooked. The Farming School's program, emphasizing practical training on organic farms both domestically and abroad, aims to equip a new generation with the skills and experience needed in this vital craft.

## Innovation applied

Originally modeled on the German system, where the Farming School curriculum provides students with recognized qualifications, the Czech version initially started as an informal educational initiative. This approach stemmed from the challenge of syncing the academic calendar with the natural agricultural cycle, where peak farm periods often conflicted with academic summer breaks. The informal structure provided the school with



flexibility in its focus, partner collaboration, and the structure of the academic year. However, it also meant that students missed out on receiving an official degree that would, for example, qualify them to apply for various subsidies.

In response to these challenges, the founders of the Farming School in the Czech Republic embarked on a journey to formalize their innovative program. After navigating a year-long accreditation process, they achieved official recognition from the Ministry of Education, making it the first formal vocational college for organic agriculture in the Czech Republic. Despite formalization, the school has retained its unique study program, which is predominantly practical and hands-on, accounting for over two-thirds of the curriculum. This development has positioned the school as a pioneer in agricultural education, continually trying to effectively combine the educational system's schedule with the agricultural cycle and opening opportunities for new organic agricultural education.

## Change observed

The practical experience gained at the Farming School is invaluable. Students can tailor their focus, from animal husbandry to viticulture, and undergo apprenticeships at various farms during the three-year program. This includes training at operating farms in the Czech Republic and abroad, with some students traveling to Latin America to study during Europe's low season. The Farming School makes it possible for anyone to become a part of organic agriculture. Farming is not limited to those with a family background in this occupation; even newcomers to agriculture can acquire hands-on skills and knowledge. The immersive nature of the training fosters openness, flexibility, and collaboration between the students and a wider network of farmers. Students have significant input in shaping their learning experience based on their particular interests within farming.

### Resources:

- [The Farming School's website](#)
- [The Farming School on YouTube: what is the school like?](#)
- [The Czech Association of Local Food Initiatives \(AMPI\)](#)



Martin Matěj



Martin Matěj



# Food Forum in Agder

FÔRA MATREGION AGDER 

## A state-led project to increase local food production and consumption

FÔRA Matregion Agder is Agder county council's (Agder Fylkeskommune) ambitious three-year venture to stimulate the use of local food within its schools, canteens, in their meetings and on events. This is rooted in a resolution passed by county politicians to increase the use of local food by 50% by 2025. This resolution is a follow-up to the national strategy aiming to strengthen Norway as a food nation (Matnasjon Norge).

Recognising the need for systemic change within the local food system and how this requires complex solutions and cross collaboration, the project is divided into three different work packages:

Work Package 1 (WP 1) is **Knowledge**: Working for healthier and more sustainable food in kindergartens and schools through knowledge sharing and innovative public procurement.

Work Package (WP 2) is **Short Value Chains**: Working to improve the regulatory framework and possibilities for producers and distributors of local food in the region of Agder.

Work Package (WP 3) is **Recruitment**: Working to recruit future chefs and bakers by strengthening and showcasing the diversity and multiple possibilities in the food industry.

### Stakeholders

- Agder county council's new canteen
- High schools, schools and kindergartens
- Producers, distributors and restaurants



## Challenges

The aim of the FÔRA Matregion Agder project is to mobilise across sectors. As a facilitator for change and with an ambitious project scope involving many stakeholders across the whole value chain, the challenges tied to using more local food are therefore numerous.

The titles of the Work Packages (WP) reflect the ambition to make changes on a systemic level.

WP1 pinpoints the lack of competency and small budgets as barriers to choosing and cooking sustainable food in kindergartens, schools and the canteens in high schools.

WP2 sees the discrepancy with the county council's aim to buy more locally and the difficulties in doing so due to many factors such as logistics, distribution and strict public procurement rules to name but a few.

WP 3 recognizes the lack of skilled workers in the food industry and the role of educational institutions and the food industry itself.

## Innovation applied

To gain knowledge and foster cross-sectoral collaboration, FÔRA Matregion Agder



both organises and co-creates meeting places, workshops and events related to food and agriculture in both urban and rural areas, as well as participating in seminars, festivals and conferences.

New guidelines when ordering food to their meetings, seminars and conferences are being put into place. Currently, their new canteen is undergoing a change to model the use of local food. This will serve as a pilot, whereby they will test and influence the guidelines tied to buying routines, where requirements are linked to sustainability and mark of origin.

The buying routines in 10-12 municipalities have been mapped and rated by experts. Their analysis of the data highlights the existing potential for more sustainable food. A project with 4-5 high schools is due to start soon, encouraging their canteens to make more sustainable food choices.

Several projects related to matchmaking between farmers and relevant actors in the value chain are currently running. These include 4 facilitated meetups in the region, the aforementioned Jordnært fra Agder network and collaboration with farmers' associations Bondens Marked (Farmer's Market) and REKO (marketplace for local food). Another two pilot projects aiming to connect the producers with the food industry are underway: One project focuses on local food from the Setesdal valley, known for its rich culinary tradition, involving 24 producers, and the other project connects farmers to restaurants and hotels. A digital cookbook is planned in which food-related storytelling from the Agder region will play a part, and a small scholarship was given out to a person with ambitions to market local food and tourism.

To increase recruitment, the project leaders of WP3 are present at trade fairs and events; they initiate and facilitate meetings for schools and the food industry and match-make apprentices with potential employers. Their main partner is the joint partnership of food education Agder (OKRM - Opplæringskontoret for restaurant-, resepsjon- og matfag i Agder), a collaborative effort for educating a skilled workforce of trained chefs and bakers working in canteens, institu-

tions and restaurants. The partnership has 68 members with approximately 100 apprentices.

A team of ambassadors has been established, aiming to recruit young people to choose food careers, culminating in the grand event "Høyt, herlig og inspirerende" in November 2023, celebrating makers, producers, bakers, chefs and restaurateurs.

Together with four other counties, FÔRA Matregion Agder will make their mark during Arendalsuka in August of 2024. The agenda includes governance innovation for transforming the agricultural and food system. Arendalsuka is the largest national gathering and annual democratic event in which politicians, NGOs, industry and the public meet to debate and develop policies for the present and future.

## Change observed

Kari Kleiveset, the Project leader of FÔRA Matregion Agder has stated the importance of "cleaning up their own houses first", which means that they lead by example and use their power to mobilise. Systemic change requires time and is gradual. Measuring results early on in this project is therefore not possible. For transformative food system innovation to take place, cross collaborative platforms are necessary. The importance of sharing knowledge, mapping challenges, gaining insight and establishing relations to overcome barriers and accelerate innovation are vital tools for a sustainable food system.

## Resources:

- [An overview of the FÔRA project and the Work Packages: https://agderfk.no/prosjekter/fo-ra-matregion-agder/](https://agderfk.no/prosjekter/fo-ra-matregion-agder/)





# Self-service stores

## Bezobslužné prodejny

Self-service stores are a concept and IT solution for grocery stores. The self-service technology allows for longer opening hours (up to a “24/7” basis) and reduces the necessity of staffing stores. The solution is becoming popular in particular in smaller villages and towns, where it is enabling greater food accessibility without the necessity of commuting for grocery shopping. Self-service stores make it possible to launch new collaborations and business practices.

### Stakeholders

- The technical solution is provided by a private company
- Collaborators are local municipalities in villages, towns, and cities, and/or food producers, farmers, and individuals
- The solution impacts the everyday life of local inhabitants



### Challenge faced

Shops and stores are the main distribution points for food and goods. Small villages have been losing their local marketplaces, thus limiting local food accessibility as grocery stores have become less economically sustainable in rural areas. The disappearance of brick-and-mortar shops in many remote places in the Czech Republic has been primarily caused by growing operational costs and a lack of local manpower. Local municipalities aim to provide civil facilities for their inhabitants. However, they struggle to attract employees, store managers, or companies to take responsibility for the business.

At the same time, small-scale farmers and local producers face challenges with securing contracts with large customers. In order to sell to retail industries like supermarkets, they are often required to provide large amounts of their products, and their prices might be further influenced by listing fees.

Both local consumers and local producers can positively contribute to the sustainability of rural communities. Sustainability here involves economic stability, self-sufficiency, cultural preservation, and the maintenance of social ties, which are crucial factors for the community's long-term resilience.



## Innovation applied

The new technology includes an IT system for self-service stores, featuring solutions for both the physical aspects such as entry and self-checkout and the software to handle price lists and more. The technology is flexible, offering several additional benefits. The system builds upon "BankID," a digital banking identity system that secures online identification and electronic signatures. BankID technology can be complemented by an employee managing the shop part-time, thus creating a hybrid operation. The shops can also accommodate citizens without smartphones or digital identities through a system of chip loyalty cards.

Furthermore, the technology facilitates new business models in food distribution. It realizes unused potential and creates collaborations that are otherwise impossible within the regular retail market. For example, self-service stores are more resistant to the seasonal loss of sales that farmers might experience. Self-service stores have lower operating costs, and as the technology ensures security in the store, opening hours can be extended. Additionally, the lower investment risk allows small municipalities to venture into the business of opening a grocery store with daily-use goods with the additional engagement of regional producers.

## Change observed

Self-service stores have the potential to considerably shorten the supply chain for organic and small-scale food products. Farmers can use this IT solution to diversify their distribution locations and reach the end customer directly through a self-service store. The solution also opens up new collaborations between municipalities and farmers or food producers. The municipalities benefit especially by creating low-risk civil facilities and infrastructure that further strengthen their community.

For example, Farm Pěnčín in the Liberec area, which previously collaborated with large food distributors, has opened a hybrid store close to their farm. The store serves the local community and allows the farm to sell its products directly to local inhabitants, people living nearby, or passers-through. The community benefits

directly from local resources, maximizing both efficiency and the value of the products while contributing to transparency in the food market. The self-service store technology creates opportunities for even smaller rural communities to establish a local grocery and drugstore. For instance, in Čejkovice, a small village of just 165 inhabitants, a local store was able to reopen after 17 years thanks to this operating model. Locals can avoid unnecessary commuting to the closest city and enjoy the comfort of this basic service. Visiting a store nearby can create more life in the streets. By providing a shared resource and meeting point, the presence of self-service stores can enhance the sense of community, fostering local resources.

The concept of self-service stores can also be applied in urbanized areas to help local sustainable food systems. The vision is a shared urban self-service store dedicated to diverse small and middle-scale farmers from the region who would sell their products directly to end customers. As in the other cases of stores in rural areas, local municipalities could also be involved as partners, providing farmers with a larger customer base without the pressure of high operational costs. Employing the principles of the sharing economy, the vision is to provide a service to both farmers and local citizens.

### Resources:

- [QR-code opens both door and cash register](#)
- [First self-service store in the Olomouc Region](#)
- [Shop without shop assistants in Visky](#)
- [Self-service systems by Contio](#)
- [Stores with the self-service system](#)
- <https://www.facebook.com/CeladenskyCorner>



Libuše Kolářová, [www.jcted.cz](http://www.jcted.cz)

# Down to Earth from Agder

JORDNÆRT FRA AGDER 

## A regional network of organic farmers and food entrepreneurs

Jordnært fra Agder (Down to Earth from Agder) is a regional network of organic farmers and food-related enterprises. The association, with a total of 17 members, was founded in 2022. Jordnært works towards a more sustainable food system with short value chains and a diversity of producers.

Jordnært was established due to several factors. Since 2019, trends of organic market gardens and farm entrepreneurs have been emerging. Due to their new line of profession, the need for a community of like-minded businesses was proposed on several occasions during numerous networking events arranged by ØKOUKA Agder.

### Stakeholders

- Small scale organic farmers, producers and bakeries, cafés, restaurants and shops
- Various farming organisations and research institutes
- County municipality, Innovation Norway and policy makers



## Challenge faced

More often than not, organic farms in the county of Agder are small. They have a radically different approach to farming, where diversity and local and renewable resources are the foundation and direct sales are the key. Their holistic focus on building soil, using regenerative practices and preserving nature stands in contrast with conventional farming methods.

These small-scale producers are part of an emerging global trend focusing on sustainable food production, using YouTube-videos, courses and other farm entrepreneurs as their sources of knowledge. Because of their newness to the agricultural scene, their innovative nature and because they farm differently, there has been a lack of understanding, strategic focus and investment in regard to organic small-scale producers.

A lack of business know-how: These farm entrepreneurs are confronted with the multi-faceted aspects of running a business.

Therefore, in addition to daily farm work, production and packaging, they have to work with brand strategy, marketing, sales and distribution, as well as maintaining a socially, economically and environmentally balanced business. Price and distribution is another challenge. In



Norway, three supermarket franchises dominate the food scene. They control the entire value chain, as they have established their own network of distribution. In large part, these three supermarket chains primarily focus on volume and price, meaning that small-scale producers are unable to compete.

## Innovation applied

The network's name (Jordnært) itself means Down to Earth and hints at the farmer's connection to nature. Because organic certification doesn't suit everyone, not using the term "organic" is intentional and aims at remaining inclusive and providing room for the diversity of food entrepreneurs. The network organises regular meetups called Grønn Kro (the Green Inn) on different organic farms in the region. This strategic move facilitates connections between small-scale farmers. Others working with food and agriculture are also invited to these dialogue-based forums, where participants get to know each other, gain knowledge and share inspiration. There Grønn Kro events, 10 in all, have relevant topics such as short value chains, innovative collaborations with farmers and restaurants, and business models. Matchmaking between producers and new farm shops and pioneering restaurants focusing on sustainability, building relations and expanding networks is necessary for transformation.

To highlight the sustainable small-scale farmers in the region as well as those challenging the current food system, Jordnært recently launched a web page with a guide to farmers, a calendar and articles on social media platforms. Currently, the Jordnært-network has a members-only group for the 17 businesses and an open group with 117 people.

## Change observed

The use of language has proven vital for mutual understanding and building bridges: The network not only communicates the notion of eating for pleasure and health, but also of supporting local farmers and animal welfare, strengthening rural communities and local economies, and ultimately: growing and eating organic food for the planet.

Jordnært has created a community for small, sustainable producers, leading to numerous collaborations.

The organisation advising farming business, NLR (Norsk Landbruksrådgiving), invited Brekkestø Hage, a permaculture market garden, to become a mentor in their farming program.

The Jordnært network has become a regional hub for local and sustainable food production, and is seen as a natural partner in several projects initiated by leading research institutes, organisations, by the county council, the state administrator and others working towards a resilient local food system. Jordnært fra Agder receives funding from the Agder county council (Agder Fylkeskommune) and has been included as part of their project to increase local food – Fôra Matregion Agder.

### Resources:

- The Jordnært fra Agder's webpage: <https://www.xn--jordnrtagder-bdb.no/>
- The Jordnært group on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1889391824589455>



Juliane Josephsen

# Conclusion

In this booklet, we have explored a range of compelling case studies that shed light on the various means that are available to us in supporting local and organic farming in our region. Each case study not only illustrates innovative practices – such as collaborative events, establishing new institutions and networks or the adoption of new technology – but also underscores the importance of forging partnerships and collaborations across disciplines and organizations.

The goal of knowledge sharing has been significantly advanced through the narratives shared. Throughout the booklet, we have seen that one of the keys to success for local farming is leveraging a short value chain. Being able to reach the end customer directly enhances openness about the journey of food products and fosters local resources and infrastructure. In addition, direct interaction between the original producer and the end customer strengthens human ties both with the landscape and with one another.

Changes in the food systems can also be aided by policies at both national and local levels. If policies facilitate specific projects and strategically unite all the stakeholders working toward a common goal, they can greatly benefit local small-scale farmers. After all, it is these smaller farmers who enhance the self-sufficiency of agriculture, as they care for the landscape and contribute to the motivation of local communities to stay in the region.

By promoting farm visits, we can invite urban residents to the countryside, where delicious and unique local food is produced. This allows consumers to meet the original food producer and gain a better understanding of the food production process and its pricing. While farmers can diversify their income by offering lodging capacity in addition to selling directly from their yard, the whole region enjoys an economic boost from the local activity. Once again, collaboration, strengthening networks and building relationships emerge as important factors in achieving sustainable and self-reliant agriculture for rural development.

These insights not only enrich our understanding of how to foster organic, locally-focused, small-scale farming, but also pave the way for broader systemic changes in food systems that have the power to positively impact the environment, nature and the health and wellbeing of our communities.

The experiences and cases presented here are the result of the driving force and collective effort of people united by their commitment to the environment, agroecology, good food, healthy soil and a fulfilling life. We hope they are an inspiration to you as well.



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