Les espaces-test agricoles, the French example of incubator farms

Oxford Real Farming Conference, 5th January 2018
« Creating a network of incubator farms for the UK »
2010: almost 600 000 farmers.
2000 to 2010: loss of 200 000 farmers.
Almost 10 000 farmers fewer every year.
More than half of the farmers will retire within the next 10 years.

- **Sharp decrease** of the number of farmers.
- **No renewal** of the farming generations.
Why? One reason: **steady decline** of the family farm successions.

But...

- In 2014, 35% of the new entrants into farming were over 40-year-old.
- **Hors Cadre Familial** (HCF) ~ **Newcomers**: more than a third of the new installations.
- Newcomers ⇒ new projects, new agriculture (small surfaces, local food systems...), new way to enter into farming (progressive process).
A stage in the process of **progressively** starting a farm business.

It enables prospective farmers to develop their farm business **autonomously** in a **full scale**, over a **limited period of time**, while providing a **protected environment**.

At the end of the trial period, the candidates evaluate their project and themselves...

... so as to decide whether to continue, adjust or abandon their project.
A **coordinated** organisation or system offering the conditions necessary to implement a trial farming period:

- Providing a **legal framework** to enable each candidate to carry out their farm business in autonomy.
- Providing **production facilities** (land, equipment, buildings...).
- Providing a multifaceted **support and mentoring system**, adapted to the needs of each candidate.
• First incubator farm: 2007 (Le Germoir).
• A network established in 2012.
• A community of practice.
• A huge diversity of actors: cooperatives, public entities, associations, agricultural schools and colleges, Chamber of Agriculture…
• The members of the RENETA cooperate and mutualize their work, based on a Charter and common values: social and solidarity-based economy, and people’s education.
The incubator farms members of the RENETA

**79 members**, including 49 functioning incubator farms and 24 in project phase, as well as 6 associate members (national networks).

June 2017
The national network RENETA aims to promote farming trial periods. Its main activities consist in:

- **Experience-sharing and capacity building:** meetings and seminars, training courses, development of collaborative tools, publications...

- **Peer-to-peer learning and expertise:** foster the development of new farm incubators through peer-to-peer learning.

- **Research and social innovation:** capitalisation of experiences, research projects...

- **Communication and advocacy.**
Results so far:

- In 2017, 250 people are doing a farming trial period (estimation).
- Since 2007, 400 people have completed a farming trial period (estimation).
- 66% started a farm.
- 10% became farmworkers.
- 15% chose to change their plan or return to their previous job.
- 9% have not yet defined their professional project.
Incubator Farms, an answer to the current challenges facing agriculture and local development: producing quality food in a preserved environment and creating jobs.

Thank you for your attention!

--- Contact information ---

**Address:** RENETA - Maison des Agriculteurs – Mas de Saporta – 34875 Lattes – France

**Contact:** Jean-Baptiste CAVALIER, national coordinator

**Email:** contact@reneta.fr

**Website:** www.reneta.fr