

# A French community supported agriculture form: AMAP - Alliance for maintaining small farming

Gerald Assouline, gerald.assouline@qap.fr, QAP, France

## Main principles

- The 1<sup>st</sup> AMAP appears in Spring 2004 in France
- AMAP model is not *stricto sensu* a farmers marketing initiative; it is a hybrid form: consumers build a collective form (association) to take the control of their own food marketing and involve producers. This relationship between consumers and producers is made possible because consumers and producers are keen to share a common "vision of the world"
- AMAP focus is *local food* and agriculture. The project is originally related with the defence of small farming. This defines the web of relations between consumers and producers: mainly local and the national political orientation and positioning
- The objectives are:
  - To struggle against land speculation and desertification of rural space;
  - To propose to producers alternative marketing channels and an income guarantee;
  - To try to limit the domination of retailing companies on the food system;
  - To consume local fresh, of the season and quality products, not automatically organic;
  - To propose to consumers to develop their awareness to environment, taste and agricultural production issues.

## Solidarity

- The principle is to pre-fund farmers production by constituting a group of consumers or an association. This group defines with farmer(s) the kind of productions needed by consumers, quality, organises the weekly delivery. Risks are shared as well as advantages. Farmers can limit their losses and plan their productions. Producers do not spend too much time in packaging or in being present at open markets. AMAP members do it
- There is a strong resistance of AMAP leading actors to possible evolutions towards softened specificity and principles. It recalls that AMAP dynamism is based on its radical discourse on consumption and agriculture

## An alternative model to conventional agriculture and consumption

- AMAP development corresponds to a double crisis:
  - A crisis of intensive agriculture legitimacy, which generates a blossoming of alternatives, whatever economic, social or technical;
  - A crisis of consumption, with a search for meaningful consumption and quality: this concern finds expressions in responsible, ethical or fair consumption.
- Another strong characteristic is the political visibility of the Alliance, supportive network to AMAP: the Alliance is an alternative actor, promoting another discourse on globalisation, on agriculture – society nexus and on the relation between agriculture and environment.
- Beyond the many local initiatives, there is a strong organisational networking dynamic, driven by farmers organisations, alter-globalisation organisations (ATTAC), environmental organisations... This configuration has a very political visibility, with clear stand-points on CAP, GMO, sustainability, environment...



## A common vision of agriculture

Consumers and producers share a vision of food and agriculture, as a common heritage. Focusing on food quality, sustainable agriculture, support to small farming and rejection of the dominating retailing system are key criteria for attracting consumers and producers to work with AMAP.

