Fair trade and collective approach to serve the agroecological transition: the ACE farm group example (AGROECOLOGY AND FAIR TRADE – regenerative agriculture in Mediterranean area)

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Abstract

Background. Agriculture in the Mediterranean is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Agroecology provides solutions through implementation of plant cover and getting trees back in the fields. However, those practices are poorly documented and agroecological transition is a long time process.

By 2025, L'Occitane is committed to get six supply chains certified according to fair trade standards, implying guarantees but also obligations:

- Producers must get organized in a collective and democratic way;
- Part of the price paid is dedicated to finance collective projects.

Methods. 11 producers thus decided to create a fair trade and agroecological group, with the support of L'Occitane. The collective organization aims to facilitate implementation of small-scale experimentations.

Two years after the creation of this collective, we question what roles did the collective organization and fair trade approach play in getting the farmers involved into agroecological transition and how does this transition materialize.

Results.

- The complying process with fair trade specifications ended up in the creation of a non-profit organization dedicated mainly to agroecology deployment.
- Farmers of the collective engaged in their transition towards agroecology, through first experiments.
- Through the collective organization, farmers could access specific trainings and improve both knowledge and skills.
- Financing field tests costs is a necessary condition to get farmers involved.
- Crucial points were identified to pursue further on on agroecological deployment.

Conclusion. The collective of farmers have thus taken fair trade certification benefits and constraints on board to use them as a real lever in agroecological transition.

Keywords: Agroecology; Regenerative agriculture; Fair-trade; Collective approach; Sustainability

1. Introduction.

Mediterranean territory is particularly vulnerable to climate change and so is South of France. Average temperatures in the Mediterranean are already 1,5°C above preindustrial era and are expected to keep increasing. (1) Moreover, since the past 40 years, changes in biodiversity and species disappearance have lead to an homogeneisation and general simplification of biotic interactions. (1)

Agriculture is strongly linked to climate and biodiversity.

Indeed, agriculture plays a large role in causing climate change and biodiversity loss. According to IPCC, agriculture, sylviculture and other land use activities represent 22% of worldwide greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. It is the second economic sector which emits the most. (2). The sector is also the biggest water consumer in the Mediterranean. (1) Finally, it has been proven the actual agricultural system, despite being able to produce food in quantity, is a major cause of biodiversity collapse in France, as it acts on the principal direct erosion causes as described by IPBES (3) : territory homogeneisation, pollution… (4)

Agriculture is also a victim of such changes, because it is especially vulnerable to it. Especially in the Mediterranean, water shortage, soils degradation and erosion are already at stake. (5) Such issues are meant to increase globally and locally due to climate change impacts.

But agriculture can be part of the solution. As it was enhanced by IPCC, adopting widely new agricultural practices, regrouped under the denomination Regenerative Agriculture, or agroecology, can make a difference regarding the climate change crisis. (6).

According to the French Ministry of agriculture : “Agroecology is based on a systematic approach to the farm (an overall reflection incorporating all aspects of the farm at the same time). (…) Agroecological systems are based primarily on fostering positive biological interactions within the agricultural ecosystem. Encouraging functional biodiversity (using hedges and grass strips, etc.) and appropriate crop rotations, for example, will help to encourage natural regulation of populations to manage bioaggressors or encourage seed predation to avoid adventitious crops. (…) As a result, the two main principles underlying

agroecology give the system a number of characteristics that help it to improve its sustainability and increase its resilience. By diversifying income sources, it also improves farmers' economic resilience and supports local development." (7)
Agroecology provides solutions to improve resilience to climate change and to mitigate its impacts, as well as to regenerative biodiversity, through regenerative practices in particular: implementation of plant cover and getting trees back in the fields. (8)

However, agroecology development is limited by several types of constraints.
Agroecological practices are innovant and poorly documented. Moreover, there is a lack of accompaniment for farmers, both technical and monetary. (9)
Farmers need to become "scientist-farmers" in order to progress on this topic. Indeed, small-scale experiments, monitoring and tracking of achievements and sharing of knowledge are necessary before scaling up. And farmers need to actively endorse these roles because of the lack of technical accompaniment and research and development structures, especially on small sectors such as the ones sourced by L'Occitane. (10)
Besides, farmers experimenting new practices are taking a financiary risk. Regenerative practices induce indeed some set up costs. It is also possible they create a shortfall in income in case they are not conclusive. This monetary risk is today mainly supported by the farmer itself.
Finally, agroecological transition and achieving a new equilibrium in the fields ecosystems, especially regarding soil fertility that will impact the yield, is a long-term process. Transition accompaniement must thus be done on the long-term.

Since many years, L'Occitane has been developing ethical and sustainable sourcing policies, working in direct and with long-term commercial relationships with its producers of iconic ingredients: verbena, lavender, almond, rose…
A dedicated department in the company, the Biodiversity & Sustainable Ingredients Department, employing 8 agronomists, was created especially on the purpose to accompany the creation of these specific supply chains.

L’Occitane soon got intereted in fair-trade certification to ensure its supplies sustainability and to be able to inform consumers. By 2025, L’Occitane is committed to get 6 supply chains in Corsica and Provence certified according to fair trade standards.

Fair trade certification implies guaranties for farmers but also obligations: (11)

- A fair price must be established, that takes into account the costs of crop production and guarantees decent wages for producers;
- Pluri-annual commercial relationships (at least 3 years);
- Producers must get organized in a collective and democratic structure;
- Part of the price paid by the client goes to a development fund dedicated to finance collective projects.

L’Occitane’s iconic ingredients are small agricultural sectors, specific and with little surface. Even if some of them a well represented such as lavender, others aren’t and lack dedicated accompaniement structures. There is thus a need to set up a specific accompaniement for these sectors.

Regarding such stakes, L’Occitane decided to take its part in the accompaniement of farmers towards agroecology and fair-trade. As fair-trade specifications request a collective structuration, it was decided to create a dedicated organization and to use it as a way to support farmer’s agroecological transition.

Two years after the creation of this organization, the question we explore is the following:

What roles did the collective organization and fair-trade approach play in getting the farmers actively involved into agroecological transition, and how does this transition materialize?

This paper aims to demonstrate the interdependences between economic equity, agroecological transition and knowledge sharing in a group. It also aims to testify about agroecological transition experiments supported by a fair trade and collective approach.

2. Materials and Methods.

The used materials and methods is described below for each phase of maturity of the collective's structuration.

To conduct this research-action program, L'Occitane dedicated two agronomists from Biodiversity & Sustainable Ingredients Department to accompany the collective approach structuration and animation (1 full time equivalent per year since November 2019).

2.1. Phase 1 : Impulse

November 2019 – September 2020

This phase is characterized by two aspects:

- The commitment of L'Occitane to buy Fair Trade certified raw materials from its iconic partners in Provence and Corsica (Almond, Cade, Immortelle, Lavender, Verbena, Rose):

  First, a feasibility study regarding the transition of L'Occitane to fair trade was lead. This study was lead with the accompaniment of an external structure, Agriéthique, so that it could be a guaranty of the conformity of actions with fair trade specifications and possible reglementary evolutions. Two trainees were also involved in this work. Focus on feasibility study's detailed methodology is presented below.

  An internal pluridisciplinary taskforce was created. It regrouped people from different services at L'Occitane (purchase, supply, reglementary, agriculture, marketing). The mission of this taskforce was to be key resources to participate in the study plus to steer the orientations which were given.

- A workshop with 11 farmers on Regenerative Agriculture:

  In order to probe the interest of farmers for Regenerative Agriculture, half a day was passed in February 20 with L'Occitane Biodiversity & Sustainable Ingredients Department and agroecology expert on 11 farms (Lavender, Immortelle, Mint, Verbena, Rose, Almond, Cherry, Flowers).

  Soil observations and informal discussions about crops successions and farming practices made it possible to establish a first diagnosis of the system key issues.

This tour was closed with a collective session, where the key principles of Regenerative agriculture have been presented to farmers. At the end of the session all of them concluded that they wanted to change their practices for regenerative practices.

2.2. Phase 2 : Emergence

September 2020 – May 2021

In September 2020, an other meeting was organized with farmers and processors linked to L'Occitane.

They were presented the proposition of linking fair trade to Regenerative agriculture and the possibilities of formalizing a collective structure.

It was decided to create a non-profit organization (French status 'association Loi 1901').

Focus on collective structures possibilities study and structuration accompaniement detailed methodology is detailed below.

From September 2020, L'Occitane commissioned a lawyer to write down the status of the association.

Besides the work on Regenerative Agriculture begun with simple acts:

- Encouraging farmers to observe their soil;
- Distributing seeds to farmers to cover their soil.

The Biodiversity & Sustainable Ingredients Department was in charge of these operations, each farm has been visited twice at the minimum.

This step's objective was to give farmers the will of observing and experimenting.

2.3. Phase 3 : Formal structure

May 2021 – Now

In May 2021, the first assembly of the association occurred, which initiates on the one hand the transition plan of L'Occitane towards Fair Trade and on the other hand the transition of farmers towards Regenerative Agriculture.

Since then, work has been done on formalizing work methodologies on the field (trials conception and monitoring methodologies) and first field results were obtained. A group of 3 students was involved to help on this topic. First obtained results and formalized methodologies are presented in the 'Results' section.

Table 1: Focus on fair trade feasibility study methodology

- Establishment of the state of the art on fair trade through:
    - Studying fair trade principles, guarantees and implications, as defined in the law;
    - Studying other companies' strategic positions and projects related to fair trade;
    - Questioning internal and external stakeholders on their perception of fair trade and level of knowledge.

- Training on fair trade to key stakeholders - L'Occitane internal taskforce and farmers. Objectives were to ensure everybody is at the same comprehension level of what fair trade consists in, and to arouse support to get them involved.

- Diagnostic of actual situation and gap analysis to comply to fair trade standards:
    - Questioning internal and external stakeholders on provisional impacts (economics, etc.).
    - Technical and economic diagnostic of farms to understand their production system, be able to propose relevent accompaniement, understand economic dependency on L'Occitane contracts and gather first data of production costs.

- Study of certification schemes possibilities:
    - Fair trade schemes study and comparison;
    - Structuration scenario study of future fair trade supply chains.

- Design of roadmap to get to fair trade certification:
    - Transition calendar for each supply chain;
    - Roles and responsibilities definition regarding audits;
    - Presentation of roadmap to farmers and processors.

- Study of collective structure creation possibilities:
    - Analysis of preexisting similar farmers groupments;
    - Comparison of juridic statutses;
    - Functioning of development fund payment and utilization process.

Table 2: Focus on collective structuration methodology

After the feasibility study which delivered recommendations on the collective structure, an operational work was done to get to create it.

L'Occitane accompanied emergence and structuration of the actual collective, as well as its action plan. Three topics were particularly worked on :

- The independant juridic entity creation and its governance modalities, aligned with fair trade specifications;
- The financing set up based on the development fund;
- Conception of the organization's action plan: definition of a 'raison d'être' and of working topics on fair-trade and agroecology. For this las point, the logical framework approach was used, a methodology mainly used for designing, monitoring, and evaluating international development projects.

In order to work efficiently on the collective structuration, and before it was officially created and functional, referents were appointed among the future members on the following topics: the Agroecology part, and the Structuration and fair-trade part.

3. Results.

3.1.RESULTS LINKED TO COLLECTIVE STRUCTURE CREATION

The work resulted in the creation of an independent juridic entity, with the status of a non-profit organization named “Agroécologie et Commerce Equitable, Agriculture Régénératrice en Méditerranée” (ACE).

The statutes were officially submitted to prefecture in July 2021.

3.1.1. « Raison d’être »

The structure’s “raison d’être” is the following:

Figure 1: ACE collective's raison d'être

3.1.2. Organisationnal and governance structuration

Based on the fair-trade guidelines, the organization’s different bodies were designed to guarantee its democratic governance.

The majority of the structure’s members is composed of producers. This is a requirement of fair trade standards.

Each member is either given either a deliberative voice or a consultative power, depending on its status and its implication in a fair-trade supply chain. The organization’s governance is described below.

The designed governance aims to give adequate power to every member in decision-making processes.

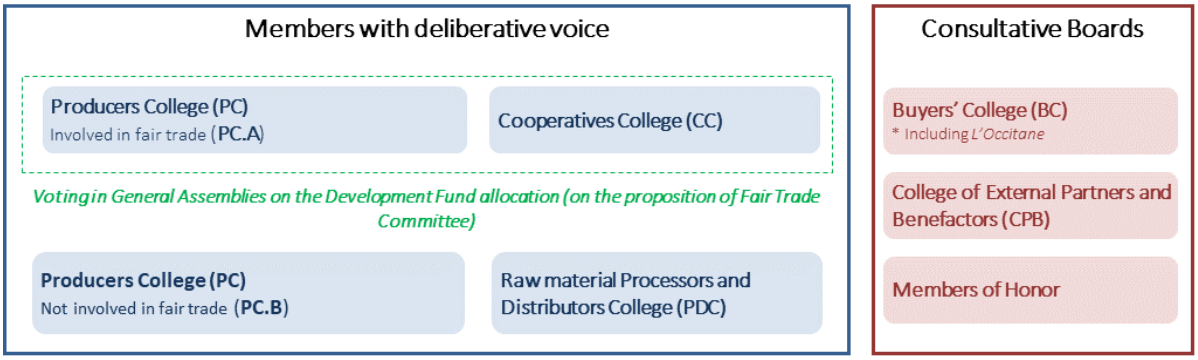

Figure 2: Organization's structure

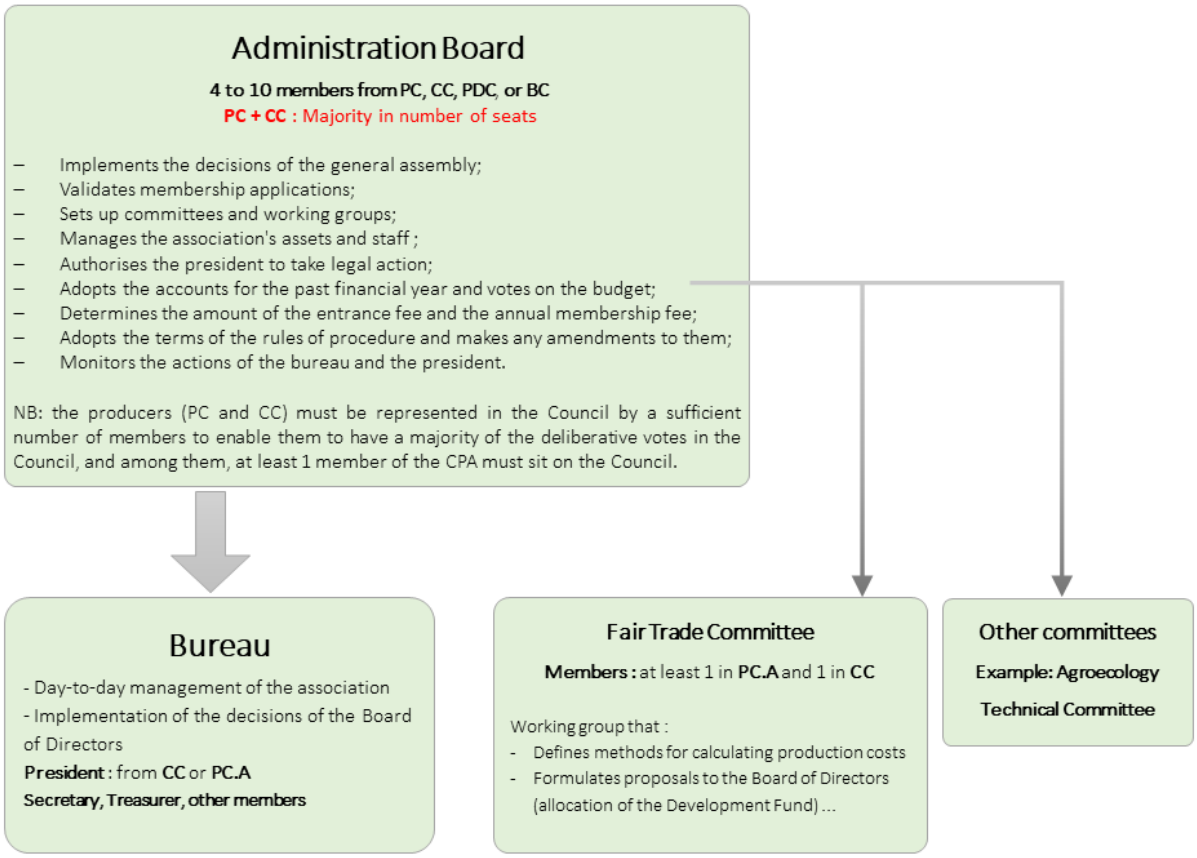

Figure 3: Organization's governance rules

3.1.3. Structure composition

In June 2022, the organization counts 13 producers, 1 cooperative and 1 raw material processor (distillery), the majority of them involved in fair-trade supply chains. All members signed the constitutive general assembly's official report and thus got engaged in the process.

PRODUCERS		
Producer 1	Juniper	Valvignères (07)
Producer 2	Lavander	Lagarde d'Apt (84)
Producer 3	Centifolia rose	Roumoules (04)
Producer 4	Sunflower	Roumoules (04)
Producer 5	Almond	Valensole (04)
Producer 6	Prospective plant	Saint-Jurs (04)
Producer 7	Verbena, Geranium	Jouques (13)
Producer 8	Peppermint	Le Puy-Sainte-Réparade (13)
Producer 9	Prospective plant	Hyères (83)
Producer 10	Peppermint	Vinon sur Verdon (83)
Producer 11	Helichrysum	Oletta (2B)
Producer 12	Helichrysum	Aléria (2B)
Producer 13	Helichrysum	Prunelli-di-Fiumorbo (2B)
COOPERATIVES		
Cooperative 1	Lavander	Sault (84)
DISTILLERY		
SARL Distillerie Bleu Provence	Aromatic plants	Nyons (26)

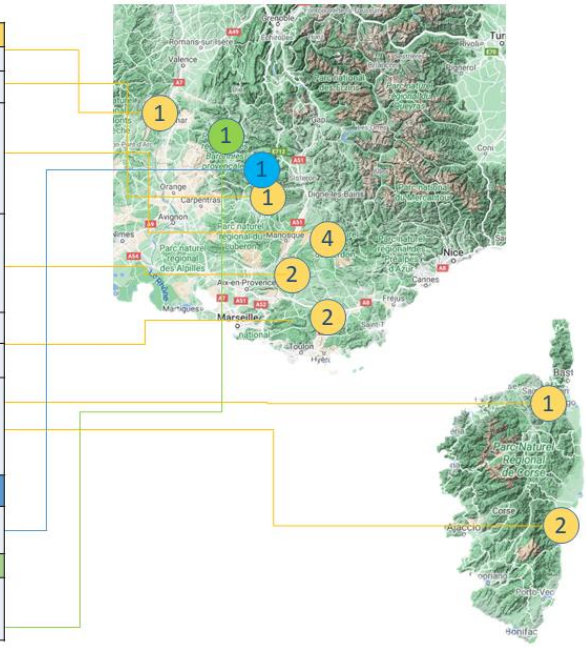

Figure 4: Organization's members and geographical repartition

3.1.4. Financing set up

The financing set up enables the organization to benefit from a functioning budget.

The receipts are:

- Entry fees for each member;
- Annual subscription for each member;
- Development fund of buyers involved in fair-trade supply chains.

The participation of each member was defined in adequation with its status. It was decided to ask for a financial participation from members each year to make sure each member keeps involved in the organization's mission.

Before L'Occitane supply chains are actually certified as fair-trade, it was decided to simulate a development fund. The amount was calculated taking an estimation of 1% of the actual turnover of sourced raw materials.

It was decided during the first general assemblies the budget would be principally dedicated to financing the agroecological experiments and trainings.

Since 2021 the first simulated fair-trade allocations and membership fees were granted to the organization which used it to start experimenting on the field.

Figure 5: Focus on the organization's budget

Finally, our project resulted in the creation of an operational organization.

Since 2021, 3 administration councils already took place.

In April 2022, an application form was submitted to French authorities to get the ACE organization an official recognization of its statuts : agroecological collective structure. Response hasn't yet be delivered.

3.2.RESULTS LINKED TO THE STRUCTURE'S TECHNICAL PROJECT

The first common will of producers which appeared according to agroecology was to set up small scale trials to experiment new practices on soil cover crops and on agroforestry. However, the focus was quickly reoriented on soil cover crops. Indeed, agroforestry experiments require more engagement on the long term and did not arise interest among all producers. The reasons are the following : trees are long to grow and results thus appear later, and local climate requires to water young plants periodically.

3.2.1. Cover crop experiments

Individual technical accompaniement was designed on an annual basis, with several meetings and field visits dedicated to trial conception, and field data monitoring.

3.2.1.1.Two levels of experiments

The more mature the farmers on agroecology topics, the more ambitious the experiments. Two levels of experimentation have thus been designed:

- The first level of experimentation (Cover crop experiment) consists in assessing the growth of a cover crop in order to get basic data on the potential this cover can bring to the cultural system.
- The second level of experimentation (Alternative crop itinerary) is considered at the whole scale of a culture on a larger time scale. The aim is to get a complete vision on the performance of a cultural system.

Table 3: Focus on methodology of each level of cover crop experiments

	Cover crop experiment	Alternative Crop itinerary
Designing the experiment	In order to design the experiment, an individual exchange is done between the technician and the farmer in order to determine the aims pursued by the farmer and the issues ecountered. A soil analysis is done to determine its characteristics. Then the experiment is designed defining: - The species to be implanted with the density; - The growing calendar specifying the cultivation operations.	
Realizing the experiment	The farmers are autonomous on the realization of the experiment. They monitor their practices in a farming diary.	
Monitoring	The technician goes to the farm to do with the farmer the technical monitoring.	
Expected results	- Biomass produced by the cover crop	- Effects on soil - Economic performance - Humic assessment

	- Simulation of fertilizing benefits (NPK nutrients) - Simulation of carbon storage - Effects on soil	- Fertilizer assessment - Pesticide assessment - Water assessment

As a remark, on the pathway to define this methodology, complexity has been faced to find the good balance between monitoring relevance and time required.

Once alternative crop itineraries identified and proven to be conclusive, the final aim will be to engage the whole farm in regenerative practices. Progress will have to be monitored at farm level by defining relevant key performance indicators.

3.2.1.2.Technical Monitoring

- **Soil quality**

The soil quality is assessed with analysis and with simple protocols:

Table 4: Cover crops monitoring indicators and protocols

Indicators	Protocols used
Michorizes abundance	Beaker test
Soil aggregate stability	Beaker test, Slake test (USDA Method)
Structure	Beaker test
Worms abundance	Beaker test
Water infiltration	Beerkan test

- **Cover crop yield**

Just before destroying the plant cover, 3 samples of vegetal biomass were collected for each field.

One sample is equivalent to all the aerian biomass on one square meter.

This biomass was dried with a dryer and weighed in order to measure the productivity of the plant cover.

In case of mixed plants in the cover. The data recorded was recorded for the mix and not separately.

- **Crop yield**

The crop yield is measured on the dried biomass and sometimes estimated on the transformed product.

For example concerning essential oils two data are measured : the yield in biomass (kg dried biomass / ha) and the yield in essential oil (kg essential oil / ha).

- **Growing calendar and Balance of inputs**

An interview is made with the farmer to sum up all the cultural operations and to do a balance of inputs for puissance the test and the control modality. These are the data collected:

- Date
- Operation name
- Mechanical or manual
- Tractor used (power)
- Tool(s) used
- Number of workers
- Time spent (h/ha)
- Type of fertilizer and Dose (kg/ha)
- Type of pesticide, name of pesticide and dose (kg/ha)
- Water used

Figure 6: Example of produced biomass quantification process

3.2.1.3.Results and discussions

The alternative crop itinerary experiments should begin in September 2022 whereas the cover crop experiments have begun in September 2020.

Since this date, 60 ha of cover crop have been implanted in 11 experiments in 5 farms producing an average of 3,3 tons of dryed biomass per hectare.

These first results gave us the opportunity to identify adapted species to Mediterranean conditions. Nevertheless, it appears that one of the big challenge to reach economic performance, is to get sovereignty in seeds. Some seeds are produced by local farmers but others not. This working axis will be studied further on.

3.2.1.4.Farming tools

The firsts experiments of covercroping have demonstrated the incapacity of farmers to set up Regenerative pratictices with conventional farming tools.

There is a common need to get access to three new type of tools to minimize the use of tillage :

- Direct seeder under crop
- Cover crop roller to create a good quality mulch
- Strip till and planting machine

Two alternatives are considered to give access to those machines to the farmers:

- Purchase
- Self-building

A document of specifications describing the farmer's expectations is being drafted in order to facilitate the discussions with vendors and facilitators.

3.2.2. Agroforestry projects

Despite all farmers recognize trees' importance in agricultural systems, not all of them were ready to plant.

All the volunteers were accompanied by an agroforestry expert to design plantation projects. Since the beginning of the collective of farmers:

- 4 farmers planted trees on their farms, and 6 of them could get technical support for plantation.
- 1250 trees have been planted between September 2020 and September 2021 : 2 ha have been planted in agroforestry, the rest are hedges representing 800 linear meters.

In September 2021, it was decided to stop temporarly the support on that topic to concentrate on cover crops.

3.2.3. Set up of specific technical trainings

As part of the agroecological program, trainings were organized and transmitted, in adequation with farmers needs.

Farmers were encouraged to participate to a generalist training on agroecology, focused on soil gestion and fertility. The main goal was to set up a common knowledge socle to work on.

On the demand of farmers, an *ad hoc* training was organised on vole gestion. Indeed, first trials showed the vole could be a real problem for farmers who are engaging on the path of soil conservation. Reduced tillage favours vole installation which can generate damages on crops.

3.3.RESULTS LINKED TO FAIR TRADE

3.3.1. Certification framework choice

The farmer group was given the mandate to collectively choose a common certification framework.

Different frameworks were studied on a comparative analysis basis.

The final choice was Fair For Life certification. Main reasons for this choice are :

- International recognition of the label;
- Possibility to certify organic and non-organic crops;
- Certification high-level of requirement.

3.3.2. Production costs calculation

The first production costs study were conducted on verbena and lavender.

The considered expenses posts are the following :

- Mechanization fees
- Workforce
- Inputs
- Processing expenses
- Structure expenses

While doing these studies, some difficulty were faced and some questions were raised :

- There is no reference price on such small sectors as the one sourced, making it impossible to compare results to national averages;
- For such small quantities sourced, production systems can be encouraged to optimize environmentally-friendly or top-quality practices more than on economic performance;
- There is heterogeneity in results which makes it hard to establish a unique average production price.

It is thus important to try to apply the methodology on a pilot crop to be able to adapt it to local context.

Collective ambition is to define a common methodology which would be shared and accepted by all members of the organization. Secondly, this methodology could be publicly released in an open-source and knowledge-sharing philosophy.

4. Discussion.

4.1. Conclusions regarding the role fair trade played in getting agroecological results

Taking a step backwards, fair trade specifications enabled to engage a group of farmers in the path to agroecology deployment on their farms in several ways.

First, the collective structuration required by fair-trade standards ended up in creating a non-profit organization dedicated mainly to agroecology deployment. The creation of an independent entity able to receive the development fund from fair-trade supply chain and to relocate it democratically where producers need permitted to generate a budget to fund field trials, a necessary step to progress on agroecology transition pathway.
It is important to note that financing field trials' costs is a necessary condition to involve farmers more largely. It is however not enough: technical support and specific trainings are also necessary.

Following on this idea, fair-trade specifications about ensuring buying price covers production costs and pluriannual contracts are key to securize producers on the long term.
A lot of questions are being raised on production costs. The interest of having a collective of farmers working on this topic as well as on agroecological transition in the meantime is that we can ensure that if production costs are to evolve along with cultural practices, this can be taken into account and supported by the downstream supply chain.
The collective structure that was created provides an exchance space for such questions with an equilibrium of power in decision-making between producers and buyers.

Finally, internal policy within L'Occitane has evolved during the whole process. Fair-trade and agroecology trainings helped to raise awareness among the different teams. Decision-making processes were impacted and rearranged to better take into account farmers economic and technical constraints upwards the supply chain.

Thus, within the scope of this project, constraints and guarantees brung by fair trade specifications were used as a lever to catalyze agroecological transition of the farmers group.

4.2. Conclusions regarding the role the collective organization played in getting agroecological results

The collective's structuration was set up in a context where :

- Organization members represent several sectors as they grow different crops from one another;
- Organization members are geographically spread among different French Regions.

Human accompaniement had thus to take these constraints into account to generate a dynamic. Group animation is a key condition of success. It was necessary to have dedicated persons to manage it, especially on the beginning to impulse dynamic. Moreover it was necessary the organization's facilitators mastered technical issued related to agroecology. L'Occitane having a dedicated department composed of agronomists was thus a big factor of success.

Finally, as agroecology is centered on soil management, which is a shared question among all farmers, the fact different crops were taken into account didn't end up in a limit to the general dynamic.

Besides, through the collective organization, it was possible to mutualize technical accompaniement modalities. Farmers could access specific trainings adapted to their needs and issues. They could improve both their knowledge and skills.

Trainings are fundamental to ensure everyone speaks the same language on agroecology which remains an innovant discipline. Strong agronomic skills are required to understand soil ecological processes which underly agroecological crop production.

Collective approach also played a key role in enhancing farmers' motivation. By facilitating experience sharing, farmers were more likely to get involved in the experiments themselves.

Finally, farmers were mobilized on an annual dynamic. Technical group meetings were organized to give rythm, along with individual meetings.
As a perspective, we can underline the importance of knowledge sharing within the group but also with other players such as other local farmer groups and technical organizations. L'Occitane doesn't aim to keep managing the organization on the long term, of to substitute to technical institutes. It is thus important the group gets autonomized, and the animation delegated. The group will also have to be networked locally to share results in an open-source mindset with other players.

4.3.Conclusions regarding the group's agroecological transition dynamic

Farmers of the collective ended up in being engaged in their transition towards agroecology, with their first experiments conducted.
It is important to note all farmers began with different levels of sensibility and knowledge on the subject and today they are still engaged in different maturity levels on their transition.
Our project demonstrated some crucial points:

- The importance of adapted equipment to deploy trials and alternative crop itineraries more widely. This means farmers can't act alone but it's the whole sector that needs to tackle agroecological transition's requirements (including equipment manufacturers).
- Agroecological trials can encounter difficulties: for example, a problem was encountered with vole in almond orchard. In this case, it is important farmers can be accompanied technically to find solutions and securized financially on the long term.

5. Conclusion.

As a conclusion, the project lead to the creation of a functional non-profit organization, provided with democratic governance functioning, substantial budget and roadmap to experiment and deploy agroecology.

The collective of farmers have thus taken fair trade certification benefits and constraints on board to use them as a lever in getting involved into agroecological transition. Thanks to the collective organization and the economic resources generated by fair trade certification, farmers could implement plant cover and agroforestry trials, and take their first step on agroecological transition pathway.

In France, legal definition of fair trade has recently evolved to include the valorization of biodiversity and environmental-friendly production techniques, such as agroecology. (12) This result seems to confirm the tight link between the two approaches our study aims to demonstrate.

Project enabled us to conclude that human, technical and financial accompaniement are key conditions of success for launching a group dynamic on regenerative agriculture topics. This dynamic needs to be rapidly transformed to get autonomized, so that the organization can take its own place and open to other buyers.

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