

Multiyear business plan 2012-2019 + Business plan 2014

Avalon Foundation

Background

In pursuing a sustainable way of life, now and in the future, the world must go through various significant and critical changes.

Agriculture: The Axis of Sustainability

- *Agriculture is the vital axis of sustainable development.*
- *Without more environmentally sustainable forms of agriculture, sustainable development is impossible.*

Agriculture is unique in many aspects. It is a multiple objective activity producing much more than just food, feedstuffs and raw material for industry. By providing employment and income, agriculture remains the social and economic foundation of many rural communities. It also plays a crucial role in maintaining our natural resources.

Agriculture is also both the *source* and *victim* of pollution, environmental degradation and uncertain new climate patterns.

Environmental problems, land scarcity and an increasing world population exert pressure on agriculture. It has been squeezed between technology, economic targets and socio-political pressures.

In the last few decades, agriculture has been highly successful in increasing yields while reducing the labour required. However, in most cases this has been accomplished at the high expense of destruction of natural resources, in some cases causing irreversible damage. As a result most farming methods practiced today *are far from sustainable*. Major adjustments in agricultural practices and policies will be needed to create the conditions for truly sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Concepts and practices promoting more sustainable agriculture and food consumption are increasingly gaining a higher recognition¹. These include organic farming, agro-ecology, agro-forestry, food rights & justice, local food, slow food, food deserts & food-sheds, urban farming, etc. The need for maintaining a healthy soil and sound ecosystems is more and more seen as an important sine qua non in this respect. There is also an

¹ Examples of reports from large organizations among which the realization is slowly growing that 'Business as usual' in agriculture is no tenable option for the future:

International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, Involving FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, World Bank, and WHO and GO and NGO representatives:

http://www.agassessment.org/index.cfm?Page=About_IAASTD&ItemID=2)

Report from Prof Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food:

<http://www.srfood.org/index.php/en/component/content/article/1174-report-agroecology-and-the-right-to-food>

The Rural Poverty Report (<http://www.ifad.org/rpr2011/>) of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

The FAO's International Conference on Organic Agriculture and Food Security:

http://www.fao.org/organicag/ofs/index_en.htm

increasing awareness that people can be “food citizens”; in that by purchasing sustainably produced food (e.g. organic) consumers can “vote” daily for “multi-value content” in their shopping bag and sustainability – as well as address the fact that the price we currently pay for food does not include a number of ‘hidden’- though very real- environmental and social costs.

It is clear that changing to a system based on balanced ecological functions and agro-ecological intensification deserves full and urgent support in all possible ways. *This requires a fundamental paradigm shift of thinking, policy and practice.* A fast growing coalition of scientists, farmers groups, policy makers and organisations all over the world is ready to synergize to support this paradigm shift.

Role Avalon

Set against this background it is important to consider Avalon’s potential role in this process, also given the fact that Avalon is one among many other organizations active in the area of sustainable agricultural initiatives.

Avalon’s strengths are its substantial network of over 200 organizations in more than 30 countries and of many influential individuals, its large experience in implementing hands on, replicable projects and its team of international experts. Downside is its limited capacity which makes it logical to try and forge new alliances.

Avalon wants to evolve into or become part of a stronger and more influential organisation. In order to achieve this, Avalon will:

- a) Expand its network and create strategic alliances with like-minded organisations
- b) Act as catalyst and focal point for several regional and international initiatives. It will provide secretariat for various platforms, organise strategic events and facilitate dialogue on selected topics.
- c) The two topics that Avalon will focus in the coming 5 years are:
 1. Removing barriers for a wider adoption of agriculture and food systems relying on autonomous ecosystem management (=The Future Food Coalition see below under Road 1)
 2. Analysis of scenario studies facilitating policy decisions in the field of sustainable food and farming (see below under Road 2).
- d) Implement “low-hanging fruit” projects (see below under Road 3)

Mission

Avalon comes to the following mission which will direct its activities in the coming years:

“Promote an urgently needed paradigm shift² in thinking, practice and policy approach to food and farming”

What can Avalon’s contribution be in promoting this paradigm shift?

Because Avalon has been pioneering actual approaches to sustainable agricultural development for over 20 years in more than 30 countries, and keenly sees the growing urgency and momentum to contribute strategically to realising this paradigm shift. Avalon is a small, lean but exceptionally well connected organization, active in proven practice and lobby. It is well positioned to act effectively as a catalyst, coordinating and stimulating sustainable agriculture policy and practice in several areas.

Strategy and Activities

Avalon wants to shape its mission via these three roads:

Road 1: The Future Food Coalition

- a. The Future Food Coalition is a working title of a new platform to be facilitated by the Avalon Foundation. It involves a seven year programme focusing on removing barriers for a wider adoption of agriculture and food systems that rely on autonomous ecosystem management (i.e. which are sustainable). A global Avalon supported think-tank and platform involving top experts and opinion leaders seeks to effect this change with concepts and practical projects. The current network programme financed by DG Envi serves as a supporting activity, on the longer run it can be decided if it will need to continue in that form.

Actions:

- Co-establish a platform / think-tank with a clear mandate and fundamental membership in 2014.
- Organise a minimum of 7 events during a seven year program

² A radical change in underlying beliefs or theory, leading to a major change in thinking, planning and implementation. Expression coined by T.S. Kuhn (1922- 1996), philosopher of Science.

- Provide information /lobby politicians, international organisations, farmers and consumers in 2014 at least 5 events and 10 individual contacts

Indicators:

- We choose partners with whom we want to cooperate
- Participation in 5 lobby events realised in 2014

Road 2: Scenario Studies

Provide scenarios assessing environmental and economic consequences of large scale conversion to organic farming.

Avalon's foremost expert Darko Znaor has developed models to predict the results of countrywide conversion to sustainable agricultural practice at multiple levels. These models are a powerful tool and concrete service Avalon can offer to any government or interest group wishing to investigate large scale conversion to organic farming.

Actions:

- Assess interest for one scenario study for a country to be identified in 2014

Indicators:

- One country identified for scenario study in 2014

Road 3: Projects

Develop and implement a number of innovative showcase projects based on the main goal that are highlighting:

- the role of small farmers in developing countries in food security
- the need to link ecosystem restoration with sustainable farming (see example Loess plateau China- World Bank-John Liu)
- the effect of agri-environmental programmes (e.g. Croatia project)
- multifunctionality in farming (see example Thracian Gold project linking organic farming, nature conservation and sustainable tourism)
- the climate adaptation effects of sustainable farming practices
- the benefits of local, healthy, slow food and urban farming

During the years Avalon has built up a substantial network of organizations and people including small farmers all over Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which enables

Avalon to relatively quickly gain traction locally to implement sustainable agricultural projects

Actions:

- Implement second year South Africa organic training project in 2014
- Implement final stage Rhodopi multifunctional agriculture project in 2014
- Implement third year Croatia Natura 2000 project in 2014
- Identify donors /partners interested in further showcase projects

Indicators:

- Second year South Africa organic training project implemented in 2014
- Last stage Rhodopi multifunctional agriculture project implemented in 2014
- Third year Croatia Natura 2000 project implemented in 2014

Financing

Avalon needs to secure new sources of sustainable financing. Previous sources have dried up (e.g. Matra) or have become more competitive (e.g. DG Environment Life+).

Avalon will seek this funding in two ways

- Link with businesses interested in Avalon's mission
- Identify new private donors (e.g. foundations)

Communication

Avalon will increase the communication of its mission and activities by

- Improving its website
- Establish a portal for its network members
- Actively seek new means of visibility