

Abstract

Since a couple of years, agriculture has been singled out by climatologists and environmentalists, who often even rank it first among the accused. And for good reason, as industrial agriculture which developed based on petroleum and the chemical industry, caused innumerable environmental damages. The soils are less and less fertile, the rivers more and more polluted, the insects disappear, bringing with them a drastic reduction of birds, the CO₂ emissions explode, and all this for a type of agriculture which consumes seven times more calories than it produces. Fortunately, solutions exist in the form of small autonomous agricultural structures. These structures commonly called microfarms, use techniques that consume little fossil energy and are usually selling their products in their local environment. However, beyond the reductive micro prefix, they are the vehicles of considerable changes in the agricultural world. They go against the dominant system by preferring smallness to gigantism, by promoting strong links between consumers and producers, by cultivating diversity and refusing specialisation, and finally by giving back a place to aesthetic, pleasure and collective well-being.

However, although requiring little investment and being profitable very quickly, these new agricultural practices are struggling to find their place in classrooms. If there are training in neighbouring countries, there is none in French-speaking Switzerland. However, no country has yet taken the step of offering microfarm training in its vocational courses. This study demonstrates, using methods of occupational analysis (DACUM) and instructional design (SCID) that current agricultural training only covers 38% of the objectives of a microfarm training. The aspects least covered by the current training are mostly the economic models, the integration in the social and economic local fabric, and the construction of strong relationships with consumers. The results suggest a collaboration between vocational schools and active microfarms in order to develop courses offering alternatives to declining industrial agriculture.

This study also sought to determine the profiles of people interested in such training. The results show that the majority are women. It shows as well that the majority of interested persons are tertiary educated in the field of agronomy. Following these results, a proposal for a communication concept was developed. The latter proposes to disseminate messages in the written press (newspapers, specialised magazine), in the digital world (social networks, mailing list), and to create or participate in live events (conference, round table).

Finally, the last part of this study aimed to develop educational content in the form of a technical and economic planning tool. This tool gives information on the recommended selling prices, amount of working hours required for the areas and crops cultivated, as well as the expected yields according to the soil and climatic criteria of the production site. The tool was then evaluated by professional microfarmers who commented on the results. They all noted the significant lack of tools to help them in their planning tasks.

Keywords: agricultural training, alternative agriculture, direct marketing, decision support systems