



GOOD SOIL

A thematic program produced for the AMARC project “**Stories from the soils**”

author: Toni Dimitrov

genre: radio documentary / reportage / soundscape / field recordings

length: 26' 31”

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coordinator and interviews: Biljana Filipovska

Synopsis of the sound work:

Talks, interviews and statements about the first food cooperative in Macedonia 'Good Soil', a non formal group of people and households that are getting organic products directly from the producers. There are maybe a lot of food cooperatives in the world, but this is the first one in Macedonia. Cooperatives are organized in order not only to procure healthy organic food, but joining them is a way of expressing criticism of the current way of growing food and the current system of agriculture, which is dominated by the major manufacturers. This resulted in environmental pollution (heavy use of pesticides in order bigger and faster yield) lost of interpersonal relations (creating a greater distance between the consumer and the manufacturer - filled with marketing among others), pollution by transport (Macedonia imported products which are in large quantities or has a very favorable climate for their production), non equality - large producers and companies dominate and pollute and small producers collapse and cannot fight and survive.

Food Cooperative is an alternative to the current system because there is autonomy in the relationship between producer and consumer and there is direct communication, directly negotiating prices, direct interpersonal relationship of trust - products are seasonal, regional and environmental - in accordance with natural principles. Joint decisions are taken by the group in a sociocratic way - everybody should agree for bringing a decision. It also creates a relationship of trust with the manufacturer, and the food no longer represents only necessary, but getting closer with the nature and manufacturer is looking differently on the production process appreciating it more. This informal cooperative is a voluntary non-profit initiative and exists since the second half of 2013. The idea was initiated by the representative of the Croatian network of such groups, accepted by people interested in Macedonia to commit to the development of the idea.

Transcript:

1:49

Buljana Filipovska (founder)

I'm Biljana Filipovska one of the founders of the first consumer cooperative of organic food in Macedonia 'Good soil'. I'm a big fan of organic food and believe in a sustainable way of producing food.

Recently, since three years im actively dedicated to the study and development of the organic sector in Macedonia. By sector I mean visiting the manufacturers, connecting with like-minded people with similar values. In order to form a viable platform that will continue to provide access to organic products to certain customers and will perform the expansion of knowledge and the concept of organic production. Apart from what we know about organic production, not treating with chemical agents, there is another different value, and that is to be closer to nature and knowing of its processes by getting to know the personalities who produce our food, as opposed to being part of a materialistic and capitalistic system of chains and miscommunication between stakeholders and people in society. We do not even know who produces our food and for that we pay higher margins to retailers and brands, instead of making us closer to nature they rather distance us more from it, and fill that space with plastic, waste that is thrown into the nature and high margins.

In this regard before three years, on volunteering basis several people initiated and successfully realized already for three years, volunteer group of consumers of organic food which abroad are also known as food coops. In the Macedonian law are known as cooperatives. Our cooperative is an informal, voluntary and currently is in the process to formalizing and registering because there is interest to include more members and our capacity to grow.

4:44

Nikola Horvatovic (user, founder)

Iam Nicola Horvatovic, computer expert by profession and owner of IT company, also one of the members of the Advisory Board for the establishment of the first cooperative of users of organic food 'Good soil'.

I joined the 'Good soil' cooperative of several reasons. The first is that there is a very beautiful sincere honest atmosphere between members. On the other hand I personally met producers who through work and trouble are trying to care for organic production and treatment of the soil that they have. I liked their attitude and honesty that they have towards us and the production of the food and perhaps a third and the most important thing is a level of prevention, a new way of eating and living that have will return us to normal, active life. Food is our fuel that make us move, and this affects our mood...

6:18

Buljana Filipovska

The registration process involves certain agreed amounts before the season in order to know how much products will be purchased and we know that we will have this products this season

that we promised to our members. it is an intro for community supported agriculture (CSA), which involves an advance purchase of seasonal organic products, which is very favorable for the manufacturer because the biggest trouble, distribution and collection are determined in advance. Regarding to how we established relationships and atmosphere in the group, the goal is to be transparent to all members and each member with its stake to contribute qualitatively to the group.

In the search for organic products we personally visit manufacturers often repeatedly and are in contact with them. In this process we ourselves learn to produce and what we know we pass on to producers.

8:30

User:

I love it when I take food from 'Good soil', because I know that is chemically untreated and I know the manufacturers, which is it also called food with a face. I know who cared to get the product to me. We regularly use it every Wednesday and Thursday. Manufacturers deliver us products which are previously ordered. And it is repeated continuously. The food is varied; we have vegetables, cereals, flour, honey, eggs and cheese, so we are all happy. Not only organic and chemically untreated food is what connects us, it is the first desire to come to the group, but the energy in the group make us come back. It is something that makes us happy, there is a subtle energy, fine communication, and it is a plus why I am a member of this group.

9:48

Buljana Filipovska

How do I perceive the organic and what is the definition of what is organic: organic is what used to be wild. What our ancestors our grandparents had consumed on a daily basis and was normal in everyday diet. Today we label it and certified it to ensure that there are no pesticides, chemicals... my goal is our group to go back into the channels of connection with nature, and would not like to form a group or business idea, a company that will not be another supermarket chain just entitled 'Good soil'. Rather even the certificates which are to certify organic products which offer a guarantee to the consumer that the manufacturer complied with any standards in the production, for me is still a kind of mediator, making the society and myself again distanced away from what I believe in. And what I believe in is finding manufacturers who understand this cause and this value and are willing not to treat their food production, and our trust in them is based on the provided hand, do not need a certificate to demonstrate confidence in each other.

11:40

User :

I was always interested in healthy organic food and the idea that it can be done here in Macedonia excited me and then I joined the group ...

11:53

Trajkov Bozidar (organic farmer)

I am Trajkov Bozidar, graduated forestry engineer, born 1956, from the village Drazovo, Strumica, and I live in Novo Village.

We had an idea with my cousin from New Zealand to plant kiwi, and the government of the Republic of Macedonia in 1997 had a project of the EU for planting citrus and kiwi in Strumica. They came from the Institute of Skopje, Mrs. Spirkovska with the collaborators. Saw the soil, climate, altitude, and said that is ideal for kiwi. Immediately they gave 130 seedlings and planted them and to this day I have them for 16 years.

The kiwi as a new southern culture, we don't have a lot of professional development seminars about the kiwi in our country, and we say we are self-taught from the experience doing. We have seen that there is profit and good results.

Why Organic? You see... These modern diseases, cancers, strokes... everything is poisoned by pesticides, the soil and the food... Macedonia should already wakes up... and its wakening up... and there are already people who know what's organic farming without chemicals, clean food. For this I decided already 8 years to deal with organic production. Balkan Biocert is the association which gives certificate. Every year they come to explore the soil and fruits and are pleased that we stick by their Swiss standards.

I am pleased and the price and the production. I hope that the price will be better. Now I started with the aronia too. It is rich in iodine, antioxidants; it cures many diseases, such as sugar pressure, thrombosis, thyroid gland, so people are looking for it.

14:36

Buljana Filipovska

Between organic and conventional production they is integral production as it is called by producers and the science. With the note that I equate the integral and the organic from the perspective of what can and what cannot be used in the cultivation of products. Humanity with all its force imposes to the nature to draw more resources as soon as possible in order to meet their own needs. All of this behavior and imposing nature, without taking into account its natural processes, biodiversity, energy and natural connection, fits to inorganic production. Organic regulations have already been brought to the mainstream, the certificate and known processes, procedures and regulations to be followed and the main practical difference is in the list of products which are allowed to be used in the conventional versus organic or vice versa, or in the organic agents that are not from natural origin are not allowed or chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and is strictly controlled or at least should be strictly controlled production. Main principle that should be followed are the sources of pollution or other farms

which are treated with chemicals, active roads with vehicles, factories, and the source of water is also important, examining of the soil, so that all aspects of the production should be as close to the natural process. Also the crop rotation should be observed and changing of the culture in order to prevent pests, so the whole organic production in general is based on prevention.

17:25

Trajce Iliev (farmer)

I am Trajche Iliev from Injevo village. Im working the production, and this year I want to try organic production. The area of organic production will depend on the agreement with you. If we agree that you can buy 3 tons per week for example, your agreement would regulate the field. I can put 3-4 foils from early gardening plants, and late gardening plants, it depends. If you say that you will come here or I will deliver you 500 pounds, I would make an area of 5 to 10 acres to cover, taking into account the risk of spoiling the culture itself, but will try to satisfy the needs. About the way of safety it is better that you come and adjust that section to see what fertilizer I will use etc. we will adjust that together. I will stand to what I say that will not spray with conventional protection, but I need support from you because I have no experience. I do not put fertilizer, this is a cattle region and we can find home compost.

19:08

Discussion: Buljana Filipovska and Trajce Iliev

- Peas do not require treatment and does not need special protection. Now we need to know about the current treatment of land that was sprinkled last year, to conclude in transition, not as organic, to tell to the people... there are people who have specific health issues. And that's all fine; we just need to know what parcel we'll treat fully organic. We do not need a certificate; we just need to know which part is for our production where will only grow our organic from now on. Organic has a crop rotation, crop rotation for natural fertilization, before winter you need to plant legumes and then you dig to keep nitrogen in the soil, etc... For that we can provide information from our side that we will provide to you for the organic production, procedures and practices in organic... in some measure we can provide that.
- Are we going to talk specifically now or next time when soon when we'll have the specific products and quantities after we arrange all that? We now visit the producers and check what we are short in, and we're short in such and such products, and if you are willing to produce we will tell you the amount and product and will sign the contract if you want.
- It is not contentious to me, I will tell you again, we can do it as you wish, it is all same to me, and I mostly go on trust and a word...

21:15

Buljana Filipovska

И сето тоа кое ќе го исцрпиме од почвата како ресурс за да се задоволиме себе си со своите потреби, работиме интензивно на план и акција како ќе го реализираме враќањето кон земјата за сето тоа што сме го исцрпиле. Дали преку садници или компост, рециклажа, реупотреба и сл... сите тие сегменти ги работиме во Добра земја.

It takes millions of years to create one cm humus soil, and we are able in a few years to destroy it. The idea with 'Good soil' is to create a small piece that will understand more than the pure interest to feed cheaper, because someone pays for that cheap price of products that we get conventionally. It is not our idea to make many acres of fields with monocultures which will provide us with the so-called organic products. The idea is to change the way of thinking and seeing things and values within society. There are many alternative ways of social organization and communication and exchange of goods and values so that 'Good soil' covers all the field of sustainability of resources including soil. And all that we will exhaust from the soil as a resource to satisfy ourselves with the needs, we are working intensively on the action plan how to realize the return to the soil for all that we have exhausted. Whether through trees or compost, recycling, reusing, etc ... we are work on all these segments in 'Good soil'.

22:58

Nikola Horvatovic

I think that one thing should be clear to all. Soil is a limited resource. It can't be produced, can't be added. On the other hand the large amounts of so-called conventional food is thrown daily around the world gives us the right to say that there is mass production of something that is not usable or meet basic human needs. From that perspective, this movement, with this energy, probably is just trying to return things to normal. We need to understand that food is our main asset, our life, our health, and should all be aware. Organic food is the thing where it all started and should not fall under the influence of the mass media and the mainstream.

24:30

Discussion with a farmer

- - ... Sweet potato, that much we will take for sure.
- If it makes it secure for you that you'll have a secure market
- I do not know about these cultures. First if I will succeed. I plan for larger areas and quantities. Im Working with machinery, larger plots and surfaces. The amount that I would provide to you would not be a big problem.
- Sweet potatoes will be further this year or...