

# Biodiversity.

## Rudolf Steiner and the biodynamic farming.

### **What is biodynamic agriculture?**

Biodynamic farming is based on the spiritual scientific research carried out by Rudolf Steiner, founder of anthroposophy (wisdom of Man).

The concept of “dynamism”, which characterises this farming method, is drawn from the belief that everything that is alive is a process undergoing a constant transformation.

Compared to organic farming (in common they have: a holistic vision, a closed cycle farming organism, no synthetic chemicals, use of species that are native to the region, no extreme specialization), biodynamic agriculture is based on a way of thinking and acting that respects both the physical world and the non-physical, spiritual and cosmic realities acting in it.

This is achieved through: use of biodynamic preparations.

Awareness of biological and cosmic rhythms. Man is seen as part of nature and not as working against nature: the fundamental aim of biodynamic agriculture is to restore balance and its purpose does not leave things to Nature, but goes beyond Nature, helping it, by supporting its evolution, to obtain a more fertile land that is richer with life.

To farm biodynamically does not mean to farm mechanically with a fixed method, nor does it mean to fantasise in pseudo-religious beliefs.

Instead, to farm biodynamically means to apply universal principles, ideas, thoughts and feelings, depending on the circumstances, the conditions and the problems one is confronted with at the time on the field and respecting the originality and freedom of those who apply this method.

As a rule, the act of farming commits you to refrain from causing damage and to focus on grasping Nature’s wise laws and morally respect them.

### **The origin and history of biodynamic agriculture**

The birth of biodynamic agriculture dates back to 1924. At the time, many farmers were concerned with the degeneration of food quality.

The recent evolution of chemical agriculture of the time, which began as a result of Justus Liebig’s research, had resulted in some improvement in crop yield but had also started to cause a long-term deterioration in agricultural practises.

Notably, farmers noticed that the soil was losing its fertility, that seed vitality decreased and that livestock were less fertile. Furthermore, they complained at length that potatoes did not taste as they once did.

Thus they asked for some practical guidance on how to intervene from a renowned scientist of the day: Dr. Rudolf Steiner.

Through a course held in Koberwitz, Rudolf Steiner gave general guidelines for approaching and solving these problems.

Biodynamics follows Scientific–Spiritual principles that are founded on Anthroposophy.

### **Biodynamic preparations**

Biodynamic preparations do not replace any rational farming practice; they are not remedies for the irrational management of soil, plants or animals. They can only be integrated into a “vital” farm context that is able to receive and enhance their influence; in other words they have an effect only if the soil is alive and enriched with organic matter. The preparations are effective in infinitesimally small quantities; they transmit information to the plant and soil and have markedly apparent effects. Through their use one mainly influences the soil and plants; their vegetative and/or productive phases are enhanced and aspects of quantity and quality are reinforced. Biodynamic preparation use is inserted in a broad context and the results are obtained over several years through the integrated use of all the preparations and not as the simple sum of the effects of the single preparations. Each soil responds differently, precisely because it is alive and will have specific needs. Preparations are either sprayed on the field (Spray preparations) or used in compost heaps (Compost preparations).

#### *Spray preparations*

1) Preparation 500 or horn manure preparation. It is made exclusively with fresh manure without straw, preferably from cows that have been put out to pasture. The manure is placed in cow’s horns and is composted in fertile soil during a specific season of the year. It is only after this transformation process that it is used as a microbiological activator and an energetic starter for the soil’s life processes. It influences the connection processes of roots and their development with soil and water; it also influences the soil’s internal processes favouring humus genesis.

2) Fladen Preparation or Barrel Compost. It is made with fresh manure without straw, basalt dust and calcareous eggshell powder. It promotes the transformation processes of the soil’s organic matter. Its use is a strong

stimulant for the colonisation and reproduction of earthworms.

3) Preparation 501 or horn silica preparation. It is made exclusively with quartz powder (whose primary component is silicon oxide), finely ground and mixed with rainwater. The quartz powder is placed in cow horns and buried in a sunny place from April to October; thus in the ground, microorganisms permit carbon and silicon to mingle, enriching the silicon powder, which acquires an ability to stimulate photosynthetic activity. Its use benefits the ripening processes, vegetative balance and increases fruit quality.

*Compost preparations* are used in the transformation process of organic matter into humus. They are prepared from plants that, before being inserted into the compost heap or other substance to be transformed, have each in turn been associated with an animal organ (with the exception of the stinging nettle) and undergone a composting process in the soil: their activity is similar to a starter that is used to activate particular enzymaticvital processes; in the transformation process of organic matter, they are capable of releasing useful substances for plants. There are six compost preparations, namely: preparation 502 based on Yarrow flowers, preparation 503 based on Chamomile flowers, preparation 504 based on Stinging Nettle flowers, preparation 505 based on Oak bark, preparation 506 based on Dandelion flowers, preparation 507 based on Valerian flowers.

### **Giving back to the farmer the opportunity to be creative**

Biodynamic agriculture is the farming method that gives back to the farmer the opportunity to respond to his plants' bearing in a way that goes beyond the simple physical dimension. When you start asking yourself how to help a vine to fully express itself, it is as if you had a sudden artistic inspiration. The vintner will be able to put his creativity to the test and express his land through a "pure" wine. The grapevine is a sensitive living organism and to believe that it will automatically carry out its duty is a mistake. To work with Nature and not against it also means to leave room for agricultural practices that allow the farm organism to express itself in its entirety; above all it means to pay attention to nature with humility.

