



biodinamicnakmetija-cernelic.si

https://youtu.be/Pr1ZT7H2U_0

28th September 2020

Text for the video, prepared for the Meeting of ENRD Thematic Group

A little about our farm

We began 26 years ago, with the purchase of a small 2,5 hectar farm. Today we care for 40 ha, of which 6 hectares are owned and 34 hectares are rented, half of them in 10 hilly villages in the surrounding, where cattle is grazing to prevent overgrowth.

24 years ago we stopped using chemicals for production of strawberries, and this was the turning point towards organic agriculture.

The farm is organic for 17 years. We are officially in biodynamic agriculture since 2012 and from 2014 we have got the Demeter Certificate.

More than 30 varieties of vegetables are grown on 0,7 ha and strawberries on 0,3 ha. Vegetables and strawberries are grown mostly in greenhouses.

We sell our vegetables and strawberries mostly directly, on the market in the capital of Slovenia – in Ljubljana, which is 110 km from our farm. We are on the market two days in the week during the season, from April to December. Some quantities are sold to schools and other public institutions and 30 % to consumers who come to our small shop on the farm.

39 hectares are for our 40 heads of cattle, they are outside for 8 months, grazing on pastures in 8 villages in the surrounding.

Why do we apply these practices?

Our main ambition is to produce healthy food with the best flavor and taste, of course with the right attitude towards nature and consumers and with the lowest carbon footprint possible.

I have chosen the biodynamic approach, because it is the best for members of our family, the best for our consumers, the best for our neighbors, and the best for our land. Also because I want to preserve the farm in the best possible condition for the generations in the future.

I want to prove that it is possible to farm this way and live good from the incomes, using the know-how learnt on farm, from other similar biodynamic farms in Slovenia and from biodynamic farmers from abroad.

Our biodynamic farming is environmentally friendly and sustainable

Main concern in biodynamic approach is formation of living soil, humus... Therefore, we use compost, biodynamic preparations 500, 500 prepared and Maria Thun preparation, green manure crops and no-till cultivation.

These methods increase the proportion of organic matter in the soil and contribute to its ability to provide a sink for carbon.

We use no-till cultivation, mostly rippers and cultivators in greenhouses already 25 years and on fields more than 10 years. No-till cultivation provides aeration of the soil with fewer disturbances than ploughing, increases the soil's microbial mass and the soil's carbon sink capacity.

Soil aerated in this way retains more water and prevents crop losses during droughts. During heavy rain, such soil with good structure and humus also absorb more water and prevent floods.

We give special attention to cultivation of the soil, when it is not too wet, with appropriate tools, gently as possible, with tractors as light as possible...

We also use diversified crop rotation and ensure that the soil is never bare.

We sow green manure crops, with a wide range of plant species, which contribute important to humus production. We use a mixture of 15-30 different grains, legumes, brassica and other plants...from Camena Samen Company from Germany, which has many mixtures for organic farming.

The green manure crops are mulched when they are flowering and then worked in the soil with the ripper. The most important is of course the use of the preparation 500, or 500 prepared, or Maria Thun preparation, after ripping.

500 and 500 prepared = horn manure, works primarily on the soil and roots of plants:

- strongly help build soil structure,
- stimulates microbial activity and the formation of humus and
- stimulates growth of root system.

Horn silica, preparation 501 is complementary to horn manure. It works on the growing plant, brings light that helps improve vitality of the plant and quality (taste and flavor) of the crop.

.

We control disease and pests not only with two main preparations 500 and 501 but also with other biodynamic preparations and herbal teas made from healthy and resilient plants gathered around the farm. All preparations are prepared within the biodynamic association.

For fertilization of the arable land, we use only compost made from cattle manure prepared with six biodynamic compost preparations (made from oak bar, yarrow, dandelion, nettle, chamomile and valerian). These preparations not act only on the compost and regulate the process of composting, but work especially on the soil. They mobilize elements in the soil and the vitality of the plants.

As Steiner said these preparations are the most important for the health of the humans.

The biodynamic compost is fundamental and very important because it helps to invigorate the soil and increase its health and fertility. Only healthy – vital soil gives vital plants, which give vitality to animals and people.

Therefore we give a lot of attention in the preparation and taking care of the compost.

The cattle are outside for 8 months grazing on pastures. During the winter months they are fed only with dry hay, without any cereals or soya beans. This results in healthy livestock and good fertility. The biggest contribution for the nature is: no plastic for silage production, no transport for cereals, therefore less energy - fuel consumptions.

The cattle with horns are very important also for good manure which is necessary for the biodynamic compost.

In winter the cattle is also free in the stable (on deep litter), which is very important from the aspect of animal welfare.

In 2017 we have invested in a pond with capacity of 2.200 m³, to collect all rain water from our buildings and greenhouses. The pond is important for irrigation and also for

biodiversity as it is very rich on plants and animals, which are important for the balance on the farm.

With the soil obtained from digging for the pond, we have gained new arable land for vegetable production on the plot which was very wet and unsuitable for vegetables before.

Rural Development Program support and subsidies

We get direct payments for organic production and farming partly on land in the hilly region (area with natural constraints), approximately 420 Euro per hectare every year.

Together with 3 other organic farmers we got an investment EU support for no-till cultivation equipment and other equipment for modernization of our organic practices, with the lowest environmental impact possible.

According to our experience: how could we ensure that more farmers start farming in a nature friendly and sustainable way?

With good example, because it is the most efficiently!

For five years I'm the president of the biodynamic association with 120 members, who are mostly gardeners and some farmers in the region Posavje, south east of Slovenia. For 4 years I was also a president of an association of organic farmers in our region. I'm very proud, that we have organized many courses, seminars and farm visits (cross visits) with topic biodynamic farming, also with very well-known biodynamic farmers and practitioners from Austria, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Australia. Some of these seminars and farm visits were organized in collaboration with advisors working within public agricultural advisory service.

We have learned a lot from Pasquale Falzarano who runs the Demeter Farm Agrilatina (250 hectares big) in Italy and had a seminar for 220 participants from all the Slovenia and even some from Croatia.

From my experience the most important would be that advisors of public advisory service who have good contacts with all farmers in their region would organize farm visits (cross visits) for conventional farmers. Farmers could in this way have a chance for a practical exchange with successful biodynamic or organic farmers.

This learning process for conventional and also organic farmers should be financially supported, of course. The farmer who would offer his experiences and time should be paid and transport for the group also.

In this work regularly educated advisors (with the topic organic and biodynamic farming) should be involved. Also additional number of public advisors who would help by the conversion to organic farming should be engaged.

EU should give investment support only for investments on organic and biodynamic farms.

Higher direct payments should be given for organic farming and lower for conventional.

Also investments in the animal welfare should be supported. And of course from the aspect of better soil fertility which is crucial for food production in the future and from the aspect of climate change, only stables on manure should be supported and composting equipment too.

Also the production of more fruits, vegetables and grains should be supported, so that more people could be fed with this vegetarian food per hectare in comparison to meat food. Such mostly vegetarian food is healthier for consumers.

The education system of future consumers is also very important, from kindergarten to university. In all the programs, on not only agriculture schools, pupils and students should get practical experience about advantages of organic farming and organic food (farm visits, degustation, preparing healthy food...).

If we will follow this direction, a lot of money which is used for medications, could be transferred for the production of healthy organically produced food.

Zvone Černelič, biodynamic farm Černelič

Translation: Vesna Čuček, B.Sc. Agronomy, B. Economy, Head of Agriculture advisory Service Department, Agriculture and Forestry Institute Celje

Video production: Primož Černelič

Speaker: Eva Černelič

.

ENRD, Rural Inspiration Award 2020

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/project/attachments/ria_2020_gp_si_cernelic_6.pdf