



LET'S PUT THE RIGHT SEEDS ON OUR PLATE! A GROWING MOVEMENT OF CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS IN FINLAND



Jukka, a family farmer from Tuusula, Finland, is thoughtful, but if you just pronounce the magic word “*biodiversity*”, his face will immediately start to shine. He will lead you to the spelt field, and tell you that this local variety was actually brought from far away 150 years ago, before being forgotten. Finally, it was reintroduced a couple of decades ago, without any intervention of academics. Jukka will tell you with a smile: *“Generally, a farmer starts by bringing a variety back to Finland, only then do the academics start getting interested and writing articles... Otherwise, it wouldn't work very well...”*. Jukka will show you the rustic crops he managed to get through *Maatiainen*, an association promoting the use of landrace varieties. He will lead you to the still nascent orchard, a new Garden of Eden, where hazelnut trees are protecting pear trees, and where one can find plum, quince,

pear, apple and cherry trees, with bushes climbing around them. Some trees are “*native*” to Finland, especially some pear and apple trees, and are highly resistant to the frost (one has been used widely in Russia). There are even mini kiwis planted outdoors (in Finland!), grown from a variety developed in the colder parts of China. Jukka will lead you to the brand new greenhouses, where a self-made, artisanal heating, heat-collecting and water-collecting system will attract your attention, once you have observed the different kinds of tomatoes.

Jukka will also show the maize-zucchini-beans combinations in the field. He will tell you about an Amerindian variety of maize that has been further developed in Finland, a variety that does not need a lot of water; but Jukka does not make up stories: he will be frank, this variety is very resistant, but not very productive.

Jukka will recount how this blossoming biodiversity is fed through encounters with other farmers, not only from Tuusula, not only from Finland, not only from Europe, but also from Brazil, Nepal, West Africa, Asia...

Once he will have shown what “*cultivated biodiversity*” means to him, Jukka will look concerned again. The fact is that even the most committed consumers, those who are pre-paying their shares still need to be fully

convinced. Ruby, a Dutchwoman living in Finland, has made the jump from being a conscious consumer to working in the fields. She also recalls the difficulty she encountered in involving consumers: *“It is the key point: to get the consumers to understand what it is all about”*. Ruby explains that there have been many different attempts to communicate widely on the farm: *“We have organized dinners at our downtown Oma Maa restaurant, we have been active on social media... Also, at the beginning, the farm's share was advertised as covering all nutritional needs for a family with 2 parents and 2 children! This involved a little bit of calculation, but it was a pedagogical tool, showing how surprisingly with local fava beans, for example, the needs in terms of proteins could be met. This is still a starting point when we are planning the next shares”*.

The 1st national meeting of the Finnish CSA network was organized in May 2019, under the name of *Kumppanusmaatalous* (Companionship Farming). The communication on cultivated biodiversity has already been identified as one aspect for further co-operation. This was a clear sign of recognition of the importance of agro-biodiversity and perhaps the result of Ruby's, Jukka's and many others peoples' efforts.

