

ATELIER PAYSAN - FARM DRIVEN TECHNOLOGIES FOR SMALL-SCALE AGROECOLOGICAL FARMING IN FRANCE

By Kim Assaël

Since 2009 [the self-building cooperative Atelier Paysan](#) continues to support farmers in autonomously designing and prototyping machinery and construction tools adapted to the needs of agroecological farming.

With the participation of small farmers, agricultural workers, organizations of agricultural development, and based on the principle that farmers are themselves innovators, the Cooperative has been collaboratively developing methods and practices to recover farming skills and achieve self-sufficiency in relation to the tools and machinery used in organic farming.

Agricultural tools available on the market are often too costly or not adapted to small-scale organic farming. Machines are constantly bigger and more expensive and complicated, thus not accessible for many farmers who must choose between independence and over-investment, resilience and dependency. Producing their tools through self-building techniques, farmers can manage sustainable agroecological systems, obtaining a higher technical and financial independence while reinforcing their local communities as a whole.

The *Atelier Paysan* Cooperative has managed to create an extraordinary organization of skilled workers to promote farm-based inventions, to collectively develop new technological solutions adapted to small-scale farming and to work on appropriate technologies for agroecology and small-scale agriculture; at the same time, it actively participates in a nationwide cultural campaign for rural development in collaboration with a wide range of partners.

Specifically, the *Atelier Paysan* Cooperative carries out the following activities

- It identifies and ensures the free dissemination of inventions (tools, agricultural machinery, buildings in the farms) created by the farmers themselves. [More than 1.000 farmer-driven innovation have been recovered](#) and are presented one by one through technical factsheets describing their features, in a way that other farmers can use them, by adapting to their specific needs.
- It supports groups of farmers, breeders, winegrowers and others to create tools adapted to their needs. [More than 80 tutorials](#) have been produced with technical drawings, instructions and prototypes to build machineries and tools that can be adapted to different agricultural practices. The tutorials are produced on the basis of technologies and tools successfully experimented by the farmers, allowing others farmers to develop competences and expertise to make their own work tools. The [mobile greenhouse tutorial](#) is an example of these materials.



The Cooperative has also produced [8 Catalogues by sector](#) (Viticulture, Vegetables, Breeding, Alternative motorisation, Animal traction, Seed production, Flour mill and bakery, Farm buildings) and others will be published as they are produced. These materials include [the Self-Build Guide](#), an instruction manual with tutorials and technical drawings to build 16 tools adapted to organic vegetable production.

- Taking advantage of all these educational materials, the Cooperative offers farmers a wide range of [practical training courses](#) on self-build machineries and equipment. The website presents the courses undertaken for different production chains, which include the construction of tools using metals or the construction of wooden buildings in the farms. These activities include training initiatives called [Residence at the farm](#): 5-day workshops of collective self-construction on the farm, aimed at manufacturing a defined range of specific products of interest for the participants. These on-farm training workshops are held throughout France, contributing to build communities of know-how in self-construction for agroecology. [12 partners associations](#) collaborate with the *Atelier Paysan* to involve new farmers of their respective territories in these self-construction practices.

All innovations proposed by the farmers within the framework of *Atelier Paysanne* activities, are presented in the different sections of the web site. The Cooperative also promotes these farmer-driven innovations through the [internet Forum](#) and through expositions realized across the country in collaboration with different partners. The innovations are also presented by various videos published on Youtube.

The initiatives of *Atelier Paysan* are supported by the [National Rural Network](#) (French National Network for Rural Development) and by the European Union. The *Atelier Paysan* is also promoting the collective campaign *Innovation by users, an engine for agroecology and rural dynamics* that is being supported by important French organizations such as [FNCUMA](#), [FADEAR](#), [InterAFOCG](#), [AgroParisTech](#), and [CIRAD](#).

The development of self-build tools and machinery adapted to small-scale farming, more focused on labour and on the enhancement of local economies, is a technological, economic and socio-cultural way to provide a significant impact on the growth of organic farming and in supporting rural development as a whole.

Within the framework of the global initiatives taken by the international community to promote organic and sustainable food systems, such as the [United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028](#), the innovative approach of the *Atelier Paysan* Cooperative that collectively mobilizes producers to recover their practical knowledge and know-how about agricultural work tools, could contribute to improve organic farming practices in all the territories and interested countries.

To know more

[L'Atelier Paysan website](#)

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