

YOUNG FARMERS IN SERBIA ON RESILIENCE OF FOOD SYSTEMS

A PRESENTATION BY RADIVOJ LAGUNDŽIN, SERBIAN ASOCIATION OF YOUNG
FARMERS

SUMP is associate member of CEJA -
the European Council of Young Farmers

About CEJA

The European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) is the voice of Europe's next generation of farmers to the European institutions. CEJA acts as a forum for communication between young farmers and European decision-makers. Its main objective is to promote a younger and more innovative agricultural sector across the EU-27 and to create good working and living conditions for young people setting up in farming and those who are already "young farmers". CEJA was established in Rome (Italy) in 1958 by organisations representing young farmers from the six founding members of the European Economic Community. The organisation represents around 2 million young farmers in Europe. Our membership spans across 22 EU Member States and 31 national member organisations, including an associate member from the UK and an observer member from Serbia. We remain in regular contact with young farmers' organisations, agricultural institutions and associations throughout Europe and worldwide.

About me:

- Radivoj Lagundžin, in agriculture my entire life
- 11 years as an entrepreneur
- Owner of forest tree seedlings and ornamental plants nursery
- Crop farmer, vegetable producer and orchard grower
- Winner of the Young farmer of the year 2022 in Serbia award

How can young farmers in Serbia contribute to food resilience? This topic is hot right now in the face of current climate crisis in our region, where we were faced with worst drought in the last 500 years in Europe. Young farmers are ready to contribute more, by changing their agricultural practices, learning new skills and adopting new technologies.

Our association helps young people by connecting them with other young farmers across Europe, by meetings in person, visiting agricultural fairs and farms abroad. We are current and future producers of food in this county, and therefore we must learn how to protect and improve our food systems.

- ▶ **Overuse of pesticides and fertilizer, without real control, combined with simplification of crop rotation, and even no rotation of crops, has led to deterioration of our soil and loss of soil fertility.**
- ▶ **Can we change that? Only with deep understanding of the complete food cycle, monitoring from seeds to final product. Education of young farmers is a key in food systems resilience, because they are future in food production. We can see that more and more people are eager to buy food products that are from responsible agricultural practices, but for now, that food is still expensive to produce, and that leads to higher prices for customers. Here is place for researchers to find new and improved technologies, to make them easily reachable for farmers, to educate them in resilient food production. SUMP is here to be a bridge between science and those young farmers.**



What are the things that we can do to change our practice?

If we are to survive obstacles that the current crisis has put to us, we must change the way we think and do. EU and governments are making changes in the way of more ecological food production, but the farmers are faced with impossible tasks of economic sustainability of their business.

Farmers need help in understating new regulations, in growing their farms in this new direction, because ecological production is expensive and does not bring high yields. Young people understand that, but they are only a small percent of active farmers in Europe.

More and more of farm income is made from subsidies, which on one hand helps, but on another makes agriculture not profitable.

We must find balance between ecological production, higher yields of our products, fair prices for both the producer and a consumer of agricultural goods.

Thank you for attention!
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