

RESEARCH- AND DEMONSTRATION-FARMS

The major challenges of the future, like feeding the world and protecting climate, environment and biodiversity, cannot be the responsibility of scientists only, but does need the cooperation of all sectors of society.

To enhance this cooperation, the concept for the Research- and Demonstration-Farms was developed. It includes two important areas: Firstly, the joint investigation for solutions (Research), and secondly, the joint dissemination (Demonstration) of the findings and experiences resulting from the research activity. Participating farms are peasant family farms. In addition to their normal farming activity, they work together with scientists and make their ideas and innovations accessible to the researchers and other practitioners.

Each farm has a thematic priority for research. Still, it is not only a location for research, but also serves as a bridge in communication between science, practice and society. This is of enormous importance, because even if speaking the same language, more often than not it is difficult to understand each other. An associated network will support this form of organization in the future.

GRAND FARM

GRAND FARM is an organic farm where lots of on-farm research is taking place. As well as arable field farming, development is going on in grassland, agroforestry, horticulture and the livestock sector.

Vermicomposting (composting with the help of earthworms) started 20 years ago as an innovation. From there it has been developed through research. The outsourced VERMIGRAND Naturprodukte GmbH has become an independent and successful company. According to the GRAND FARM slogan – Innovation – Research – Demonstration! GRAND FARM is the first Research- and Demonstration-Farm of its kind.



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GRAND FARM

Innovation • Research • Demonstration



The thematic priorities for research and demonstration at GRAND FARM are:

1 SOIL-HEALTH

Soil is the most essential asset for all farmers and has to be preserved for the generations to come. Healthy soil is of enormous importance, because it allows the growing of healthy food, which is a vital key for healthy people. Using regenerative methods to manage soil, enables consistent yields even under harsh weather conditions. Such performance can often be achieved with reduced effort.

The importance of our soil in regard to food (quality as well as quantity), climate change, water quality, and biodiversity is enormous. Topics for ongoing research therefore are all regenerative methods to regain soil health. Research projects at GRAND FARM address organic farming, soil organic content, erosion, crop rotation, cover crops, mixed seeds, reduced tillage, and no-till.

**Healthy Soil =
Healthy Food =
Healthy People!**

cit: J.I. Rodale, 1898-1971



2 AGROFORESTRY

Agroforestry is the cultivation of trees and shrubs on an arable field, together with annual field crops. In addition to the crop yield, fruits from the perennials and the cumulative growth of quality wood is achieved. As well as a higher total biomass production (up to 1.4 times for a typical arable field), agroforestry offers a range of additional benefits. Lower wind speeds lead to reduced evaporation, the flowers of the trees and bushes support beneficial insects like pollinators and predators, provide habitat for wildlife and livestock and therefore stop the loss of biodiversity. CO2 is sucked out of the atmosphere, incorporated into the wood or stored in the soil. In this way, agroforestry serves to reduce climate change, increase carbon capture, as well as responding to changes in weather patterns, but also offers additional opportunities for the community.

The appropriate selection of tree or shrub species, including type of rootstock, spacing between and in the rows, as well as the type of cultivation, have to be carefully selected to achieve optimum results. Because such agroforestry systems are not very well known in Austria, there is an urgent need for this research and innovation.

3 MARKET GARDEN

A market garden serves to provide a local supply of organic vegetables to the community. Using this method productivity is maximized, and a market garden can grow heavy crops of healthy and diverse food even on a small area. Seeding, planting, cultivating and harvesting is nearly exclusively done by hand. No tractor is used.

At GRAND FARM, a market garden adopting the principles of Jean Martin Fortier will be established. He has developed the concept of the market garden to the highest standards in Canada. In Austria, this system will be investigated and combined with additional promising methods like movable polytunnels and winter vegetable production. Also, the energy supply will be changed and all energy for production, storage, as well as for distribution of the food will be generated on site. Such market gardens improve the regional availability of healthy food, protect soil, water, climate as well as biodiversity. This business model enables young people to get into food production, creates attractive jobs, adds to the local economy and slows down migration from rural areas.

Market gardens offer enormous opportunities and are the most regenerative vegetable production system for the future. Let's get started!



PARTNERS

The closest cooperation at GRAND FARM exists with **VERMIGRAND Naturprodukte GmbH**. Alfred Grand and Leopold Fischer produce organic fertilizer, soil amendments and peat free soil substrates with the help of earthworms. Further partners in Austria are several universities (**BOKU, TU-Graz, TU-Wien, Donau-Uni Krems**), **Bio Forschung Austria, FIBL, AGES, Chamber of Agriculture, Bio Austria, NÖ Agrarbezirksbehörde, HBLFA Schönbrunn, Arche Noah, Wagrampur, Klima- & Energie-Modellregion Wagram, Market-town Absdorf**.

At EU level, the cooperation with the **European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture (EIP-Agri)**, which has been initiated by the EU-Commission, is always a highlight, because Alfred Grand is member of several focus groups.

At the focus soil-health and market garden, the cooperation with **Rodale Institute from Pennsylvania, USA** has to be emphasized. The renowned organic research institute is planning to launch their first European regional resource center at GRAND FARM in 2019.

The collaboration between GRAND FARM and the Rodale Institute has been invited to join the Global Network of Lighthouse Farms, operated by the Farming System Ecology Group from **Wageningen University, the Netherlands**. Within this network, students and young scientists from Wageningen University will investigate directly at GRAND FARM.

Of primary importance is also the communication with our friends and partners **Ronald Gilchrist** and **Robby Gass** from Scotland, **Brian Oldreive** from **Foundation for Farming** from Zimbabwe, as well as **IFOAM EU** from Brussels.