

Workshop 4: The new role of agriculture

What do olive groves in Sicily, paddy terraces in Bali and small-scale farming in the Emmental have in common? They are all an expression of the agriculture of their countries and are now under serious threat because today's consumers demand ever cheaper food with the result that only rational, highly industrialised agriculture will be able to survive and many farmers will face ruin.

What, for example, has developed into a **variety** of choice thanks to the efforts of farmers from Sicily to Scandinavia over the past 1000 years and ripened through history will very quickly wither under the conditions imposed by industrial production to a mono-culture **similarity**. Forcing farmers to abandon the production of food and at the same time allotting them a new role as guardians of the landscape demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of what agriculture is. For the landscape as we see and admire it today is the product of the farmers' efforts. A farm is not simply a farmhouse surrounded by fields but an expression of an agricultural service: the intensively cultivated garden, fields of rape and cereals, an orchard, pastures, sometimes used more intensively, sometimes more extensively, forest, etc. make up the image of the landscape that we treasure so much today. Through food production, farmers construct their environment in a dynamic process that cannot suddenly be stopped and converted into a "guardianship role"! What would be the consequences if, with Swiss farming dying out, or more euphemistically put "being restructured", that very sector of society disappeared through whose untiring efforts nature has been transformed into a cultivated landscape?

In another sense, tourism is also under serious threat through such a development. For globalisation and free trade, the destruction of local existence on the land and the consequent migration of rural populations to the towns and cities result in hunger and poverty and thus dissatisfaction and a tendency towards violence. The worldwide increase in terrorism will have disastrous effects on tourism.