

HANDOUT

# CREATING A TERRITORIAL 'CITIZEN' FARM

INNOVATION  
IN ACTION  
SERIES

Visit at Orbois Farm © TDL Normandie - Maurice Ballue

Terre de Liens



## CONTEXT

The Terre de Liens (TDL) Auvergne association works to preserve and provide access to agricultural lands to a new generation of farmers. Operating around the Clermont-Ferrand metropolis, a highly pressured peri-urban environment, TDL Auvergne has difficulty finding land suiting the demands of aspiring farmers for small, irrigable, and accessible plots. Since most farms in the area are large-scale monocultures, the association imagined as an alternative solution to acquire a large holding, restructure, and rehabilitate it to allow the establishment of several small farmers. In 2017, an unhoped-for opportunity materialised as a family of five heirs approached TDL Auvergne to transfer a large land plot (about 80 ha located on the "Sarliève" periurban plain). Part of the land would be donated and the other part sold to TDL.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Such large land opportunity provides TDL Auvergne and its local partners (Îlots Paysans, Bio 63) with the possibility **to develop an innovative agricultural model, able to meet multiple territorial needs and demands** such as preserving the landscape and environment, providing local food, and boosting the economy, all while preventing further urbanisation and sensitising citizens to agriculture issues. Yet this requires **balancing many and sometimes contradictory political stakes** (economic, environmental) as well as **federating a large number of actors** around an unprecedented project, for which there was no prior model nor identified candidate farmers at the start.

*"Innovation in Action". In 2020-21, six RURALIZATION partners conducted eight-month-long participatory action research projects to explore new solutions to leverage farmland in favour of agroecological transition, generational renewal, and rural regeneration. The results of their actions are presented in this series.*



### INNOVATIVE

- ✓ Develop new governance models to involve citizens & partners in a territorial farm project
- ✓ Devise farm restructuring & re-naturing solutions to go from a large monoculture (one holder) to a diversified farm (several farmers)
- ✓ Use research to document the process step by step, reflect on and foster appropriation of the model



### IMPACTFUL

- ✓ Contribute to local food security, resilience, and sustainable development of a periurban territory
- ✓ Successfully collaborate with academics, allow research and field action to mutually enrich each other
- ✓ Involve many citizen actors and increase their capacity to engage on political topics such as land preservation & legitimate land uses

## OBJECTIVE

Creating a territorial citizen farm and documenting the experience for increased impact

## ACTION PLAN

### Operational tasks:

- Forge a strong operational collective to carry out the project
- Meet strategic actors and secure financial and institutional support
- Structure the project governance and a citizen dynamic
- Begin local actions (land purchase, re-naturation of the site, etc.)

### Research action tasks:

#### Task 1: Building the methodological framework

- Design and validate with stakeholders and researchers the "Chronique" method

#### Task 2: Acquiring data

- Compile and organise the data, realise the Chronique through participatory working groups

#### Task 3: Analysing and producing resources

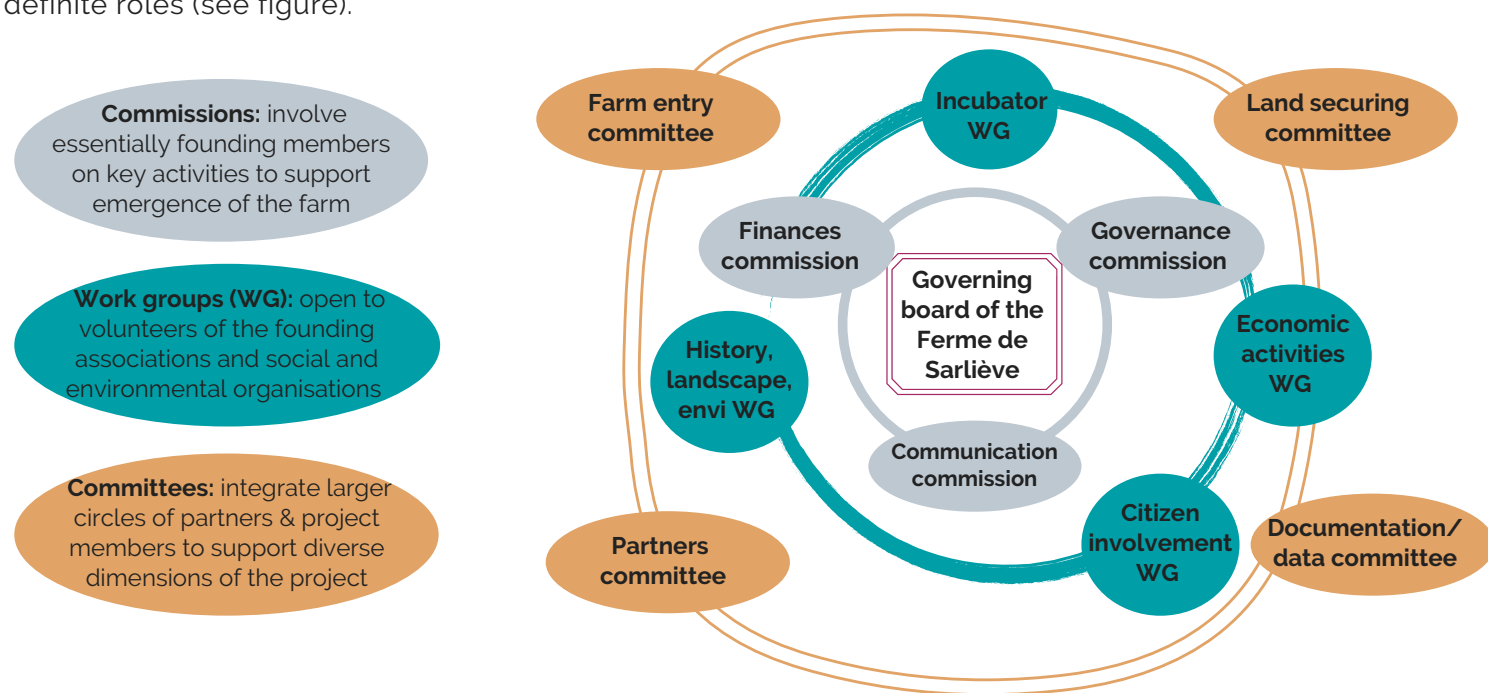
- Formalise the Chronique (synthetic timeline), governance diagram, and its evolution





# RESULTS

**The project involves a large ecosystem of partnerships and actors.** The founding organisations (TDL Auvergne, Bio 63, Îlots Paysans) created the collective structure "Ferme de Sarliève". Innovative governance allows to facilitate the participation of diverse audiences (citizens, researchers, environmental organisations, etc.) in the project through a structure of "thematic commissions", "working groups", and "committees" with definite roles (see figure).



By Fall 2021, the Ferme de Sarliève project had succeeded in securing finances to hire two staff members. This is the result of intense collaboration, where **TDL, Îlots Paysans, and Bio 63 worked to build a shared discourse and achieve recognition from local authorities and funders.** They also forged relationships with traditional agricultural and land actors. Some had a key role, e.g. the land heir who convinced the family to sell to TDL, or the current Sarliève farmer who associated with the project to convert the land to organic agriculture and maintain plots waiting to be taken up by candidate farmers.

Another key aspect of the project was the partnership with researchers and the **unprecedented effort to document the innovation process.** A tool called "Chronique" was built to report on the experience. Based on systematically collected and categorised data, it establishes a timeline that highlights 1) contextual elements influencing the project, 2) events in the project life (meetings, actions, etc.) and their results (decisions, partnerships, access to resources, etc.), 3) the actors involved in these events. The Chronique had several impacts. As it was implemented in a participative way, it **initiated a dialogue between different members of the group**, allowing each one to take "distance" from their own point of view. It also **created a common narrative**, and visually synthesised a complex story, thus **facilitating both decision-making and project dissemination.**

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE!

### BUILDING LEGITIMACY

- **Strong initial will to work as a collective** allowed presenting a united front to partners and financiers, as well as to draw on the complementary forces of founding organisations.
- Project legitimacy was **strengthened over the long term** through concrete actions ("learning by doing"), partnership building, and structuring of a citizen dynamic.
- **"Go-between" actors able to connect different networks and social circles** were key in the project's success.

### LEVERS & OBSTACLES FOR ACTION

- The action was implemented by experimented actors with **important project engineering capacity.** One needs to anticipate **the difficulty to muster support and funding** for unprecedented projects. In this case, resources and institutional support had to be secured even prior to identifying farm successors or formally securing the land.
- In addition to helping communicate externally, documenting the work supports **inner project dialogue, strengthens collaboration**, and provides **keys to solving difficulties** (by making divergences and controversies explicit).

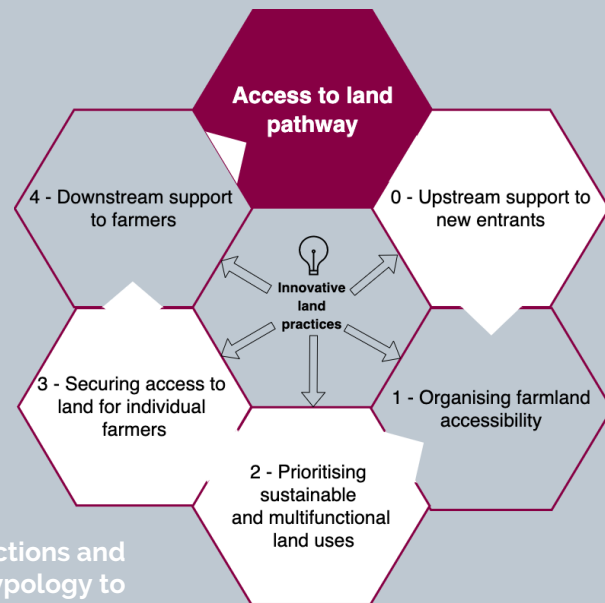


## AN ADAPTED RESPONSE TO LOCAL LAND CHALLENGES

This action results in secured land for new entrants but also much wider goals. The Ferme de Sarliève ambitions to become a territorial hub of diversified and environmentally-friendly agriculture and artisanal activities contributing to food security, economic development, lively communities, and increased territorial resilience (climate, landscape...).

Furthermore, the farm will host an incubator, thus providing training options to new entrants (upstream support to farmers). The farm functions more and more as a platform to carry out a larger effort to preserve agricultural land threatened by urbanisation in the Sarliève plain. This helps to preserve land and its future accessibility for a new generation of farmers.

What is the "Access to land pathway"? Innovations use a wide range of actions and strategies to provide effective access to land. The pathway provides a typology to categorise innovative practices' different modes of action.



## WHO WE ARE

### TERRE DE LIENS

Terre de Liens is a civic organisation which promotes land preservation and facilitates access to farmland for organic and peasant farmers in France. One of TDL's modes of action consists of collecting citizen investment to purchase farms and make them accessible to farmers through long-term leases.

Learn more at: [www.terredeliens.org](http://www.terredeliens.org)

### ACCESS TO LAND NETWORK

The Access to land network brings together grassroots organisations from across Europe to share experiences and promote the significance of access to land for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 15 organisations.

Learn more at: [www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu)



Lumigny farm © Marc Ségur

## CONTACT

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Learn more at : [ruralization.eu](http://ruralization.eu)

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