

IF - Food diversity for all: an interactive workshop

Theme: Agroecology
Moderator: Frank Mechielsen (Hivos)

Report

The workshop started off with an icebreaker in which everyone mentioned where he or she came from (North, East, South or West of the Netherlands), favorite food groups were identified (fruits or vegetables, fish or meat, chocolate or biscuits) and type of work: do you work for an NGO, the government, do you have your own business or are you still studying? After that, three groups were created with approximately eight people and Frank continued with a short presentation about Hivos, the dimensions and diversity of food, and a short movie about the Food Change Labs in Zambia. Frank explained the prototyping exercise and highlighted the two main questions: 'what will your plate look like in 2030?' and 'where does the food come from?'.

In each group, a bag was present with all kinds of prototyping material: beans, pills, feathers, plastic plates, clay, colored paper, apples, nuts, corks etc. Each group had a facilitator supporting the process. After 30 minutes, the outcomes of each group were presented by the 'observer' (one in every group). This person explained in short which food dimensions were discussed (health, income, environmental, cultural or political), which food dimensions dominated the prototyping, general observations about the group work (individual or did a few participants drive the process) and interesting thoughts and remarks.

The first group discussed issues regarding food transport, overfishing, energy, crisis, and oil dependency. Should we import products from Africa to support income generation for small scale farmers? They created a colorful plate where all these topics were clearly visualized. Remarks that the observer wrote down: 'people will not change their eating habits so quickly', 'transport issues will be much more taken into account, more focus on local production and shorter food chains' and 'energy crisis will result in a change in the food system: oil dependency is crucial even for small scale production'.

The second group did not really construct a plate and were more discussing and dreaming about local food supplies and how habits could be changed. Interesting remarks written down by the observer: 'do people want pesticides and medicines in food' and 'how should we change the demand for foreign food'.

The third group created an ideal and realistic plate where clashes amongst diverse food and monoculture food was discussed. They discussed about water and fuel crisis as well. Remarks by the observer: 'plastic should be banned', 'different crises will come together in 2030 (e.g. oil and water)', and 'when will the tide turn?'.

Frank summarized at the end of the workshop what all three groups have said and mentioned that, in general, the groups did not address the health and economic dimensions but mainly the environmental, cultural and political dimensions. All groups mentioned the importance to create more awareness among consumers, based upon evidence-based information. Consumers are currently confused, so many options in relation to sustainability: what should they choose? The prototyping constructions were taken down stairs and the workshop was finished.

Outcomes

1. Create more awareness for consumers using evidence-based information;
2. Address all food dimensions: health, economy, environment, culture, politics;
3. Dilemma on international value chains. Should we replace oranges and chocolate by local products?