



Annual report 2016

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1 ASEED Europe in 2016

1.1 Legal and general information

Registered name:

A SEED Europe (Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Diversity Europe). Often the organisation is simply called ASEED.

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1.2 History and background

ASEED Europe (Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment, and Diversity Europe) is an international campaigning organisation, giving importance to involving youth in direct democracy activities. ASEED Europe targets the structural causes of environmental destruction and social injustice.

We do this by campaigning on multinational corporations and their national and international influence spheres and control tools. At the same time we promote sustainable alternatives. Currently ASEED Europe focuses on issues related to the global food chain: the decline of biodiversity in agriculture and the availability of seeds, genetic engineering and power concentration by global agro/biotech giants. Our general agriculture campaign goal is to promote food sovereignty. In the recent past we have been campaigning on the massive production and imports of soy, climate change and international financial and trade institutions.

ASEED was established by young engaged people in 1991 in response to the UNCED Earth Summit proceedings in Rio de Janeiro and aimed to forge alliances among young people committed to social and environmental justice. Since 1992, the ASEED decentralised network grew and regional "hubs" were created in Europe, Asia, North America, Africa, Latin America and Japan. Each hub had its own level of activity, linking youth groups and individuals in their region. By now each hub has developed in its own way, working independently from each other.

ASEED Europe works with about 6 people in the interactive office in Amsterdam, and together with many contacts in the rest of Europe and abroad on the following objectives:

- ◆ Initiating and coordinating actions and campaigns on environmental, development and social justice issues;
- ◆ Promoting discussion and disseminating information about critical emerging issues;
- ◆ Empowering local youth groups and grassroots organisations via trainings, joint projects, and knowledge sharing;
- ◆ Establishing partnerships between various organisations and groups worldwide and facilitating international cooperation and networking;
- ◆ Preparing projects from the ASEED Europe office and working with local grassroots organisations.

1.3 Mission statement

ASEED Europe believes that people have the potential to change their lives and communities for the better and we aim to support and empower both groups and individuals who are striving to do so. We believe that the roots of the ecological destruction and poverty which is ravaging our planet today can be traced back to the colonial and imperialist past when the populations and natural resources of entire continents were ruthlessly exploited.

We see today's profit-obsessed 'free' market globalisation which is fuelled by the increasing mobility of capital as a continuation of this phenomenon. Our campaigns are based on the need to act in solidarity with the millions of people in the Global South whose already precarious livelihoods are being ruined by unfair competition and disastrous privatisation programmes imposed by bodies like the International Financial Institutions and trade agreements in the name of 'free' trade and globalisation.

So far, globalisation has led to more inequality and the concentration of resources into fewer hands. ASEED Europe believes that everybody counts and that decisions that can make or break lives should be taken locally, not on the stockmarkets of New York and London or behind the closed doors of international financial institutions.

We support the rights of individuals and communities to determine their own lives and so we work with groups which promote local democracy and social justice as well as taking these principles as a starting point in our own campaigns.

Our commitment to equality is reflected in our non-hierarchical working practises, whereby decisions are made by consensus. One of ASEED Europe's most fundamental standpoints is that humans are a part of nature, not apart from it. Modern economic systems, regardless of their political hue, continue to regard nature as a resource to be exploited and recent treaties aimed at slowing down ongoing environmental degradation, climate change and the alarming loss of biodiversity are doomed to failure because short term economic growth is always given precedence over the long term future of the planet.

It is imperative that we develop new, sustainable alternatives to our current consumption patterns. ASEED Europe's campaigns focus on exploring alternatives and networking with groups working to promote viable alternatives and sustainable development. ASEED Europe strives for the preservation of both cultural and biological diversity. We reject and work towards ending discrimination based on age, class, disability, gender, race, religious beliefs and sexual preference. Vital tools that we use to realise our aims are: the promotion of grass root organisation, education, mobilisation and non-violent direct action so that people can act to achieve social justice and environmental integrity on both the local and global level.

1.4 Team and functioning

The office team consists in a core group of 7 people:

Flip Vonk: campaigner

Sonia Conchon: communication

Egle Draugelyte: communication

Alex Reuter: financial administrator

Finn Mewton (United Kingdom), Jonny Beirne (United Kingdom) and Beate Hoehne (Germany): European volunteers who are part of ASEED through the European Voluntary Service programme, under the "Youth in Action" 7-year plan.

The board members are the following:

Anne Jessica Assehn – Chairperson – in the board since 04/07/2007

Johanna, Katharina Jager – Treasurer – in the board since 31/10/2006

Tjerk Dalhuisen – Secretary – in the board since 27/10/2014

In addition, other people regularly contribute to ASEED's activities in the fields of research, event organisation, fundraising and actions.

In the end of 2015, ASEED has welcomed a new intern from Ireland, Eadaoin De Faoite. Eadaoin has supported ASEED with research and writing on different topics regarding the preparations and the follow-up of the COP21 in Paris.

Another intern joined ASEED in the summer 2016, Louisa Baecker, from Germany. She has been doing research in addition to providing practical help with daily office activities and the Monsanto Tribunal.

Our internal document, the ASEED Guide, has been updated in order to make the office run more smoothly. It compiles all useful information for newcomers, volunteers and regular team members, from protocols and practical tips to lists of resources for every campaign topic.

2 ASEED's Campaigns

In 2016, ASEED has engaged in **two main campaigns under the umbrella topic of food sovereignty and climate: seeds and the impact of the current food system on climate change.** Besides activities connected to these campaigns, ASEED has kept on organising other smaller activities and participating in various networking events.

2.1 Seeds

2.1.1 Background: why this campaign?

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported in 2010 that 75% of the world's crop diversity had already been lost. Meanwhile, commercial 'high yielding' varieties are proving less effective with climate change, resulting in greater farmer vulnerability. In fact, the advent of industrial farming with its push for commercial seeds has been responsible for a great loss in agricultural biodiversity. Additionally this dynamic has brought both farmers and consumers to be dependent on large corporations and the agro-industry whose aims are to make profit and not to feed people in a sustainable way.

On the other hand, for thousands of years, generations of farmers across the globe have been observing, selecting, nurturing, breeding and saving seed. Farmers have creatively cultivated ever more crop varieties to deal with many different challenges of soils, climates, nutrition, flavour, storage, pests and diseases. Women, in particular, play a critical role in their communities as the custodians of seeds.

Urgent action is needed to ensure that farmers can grow resilient crops and nutritious food for us all, in the face of climate change and other challenges. Farmers' complex farming knowledge and their right to save, adapt, exchange and sell seed must be recognised by regulations and protected in pro-active policy and practice. Otherwise who will feed us in the future?

2.1.2 What are our goals?

Our goals with the Seeds campaign are the following:

- ◆ To inform consumers, farmer community and policy makers about seed issues.
- ◆ To denounce the strategies of transnational corporations, which are to take over global seed production and influence Dutch and EU policy making.
- ◆ To promote alternatives to save the biodiversity of vegetables, fruits and grains.

2.1.3 Seed campaign main activities

Reclaim the Seeds, Wageningen



On the 13th of February, the Forum Building of the University of Wageningen (WUR) accommodated the annual seed fair of Reclaim the Seeds, organised by ASEED together with the students' organisation Boerengroep. This was the fifth edition, following on from previous events in Amsterdam, Den Bosch, Haren (Groningen) and Driebergen. The seed fair offers a wide range of interested parties the opportunity to exchange seeds and knowledge about seeds, sustainable agriculture and the current threats to seed diversity.

Apart from people who came especially for the seed fair, visitors of the Voedsel Anders Conference passed by as well. The stalls, where one could swap or give away home harvested and selected seeds, remained very busy all day. The programme was full of interesting lectures and discussions. One of the highlights was the announcement of the Monsanto Tribunal, an event supported by ASEED and described in the third part of this report. The series of workshops on how to cultivate, reproduce, save and store one's own seeds, was very popular. Gardener and

permaculture teacher Linder van den Heerik made a presentation about the basics of seed saving. Foundation Omslag presented the DVD From Seed to Seed, a 7-hours movie compiling very detailed information on how to grow, harvest and save the seeds of over thirty varieties of crop plants.

It is important to note that the University of Wageningen did not agree with the political messages conveyed on the banners placed in the venue during Reclaim the Seeds. Banners displaying texts against Monsanto, patents on life or the agroindustry were considered too critical and as a consequence, some of them had to be removed. That in spite of the fact that the banners clearly belonged to Reclaim the Seeds and did not reflect the WUR's point of view. People were also forbidden to distribute fliers at the



entrance on the pretext that it would be messy. Those issues show the increasing power of big agrochemical companies on the university's research, finances and political line. They also strengthen ASEED's motivation to pursue its activities and show that they are needed more than ever.

On Sunday the 14th of February, there was the opportunity to visit local vegetable garden projects. Members of the Creative Garden at Hoge Born showed the participants around in their forest garden, aquaponics greenhouse and other projects in the beginning phase. Arriving at Ecovillage Ppauw, it started snowing, so everybody was sitting inside enjoying coffee, home made pastries and the rocket stove, while admiring the garden through the window.

This year for the first time, Reclaim the Seeds went international: on the 27th of February a local group from Belgium organized a Reclaim the Seeds event in Lier, close to Antwerpen in Belgium. The concept was the same, a mix of stalls with a diversity of seeds, and an interesting workshop programme. ASEED helped and advised the group in Belgium to create this event.

2.1.4 Other related activities

Action against 'philanthropic' corporate funding in Amsterdam

ASEED and friends gathered outside the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam on the 26th of January to inform those attending a debate with Bill Gates of some of the projects funded by the of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Our action was well received! We handed out fliers concerning the projects funded by the BMGF and its strong ties with Monsanto to those attending the event. Much interest was also received from passers-by. A student film crew showed up to interview our ASEED spokesperson and Louise Fresco, head of the Wageningen University Board.



Keep on rockin' in the "GMO-free" world



ASEED was invited to host the anti GMO tent at Neil's concert at the Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam on July 12th, 2016. Neil Young has a long history of directly confronting injustices. He is the co-founder of Farm Aid, which works to support small-scale farmers threatened by agribusiness giants and last year he made a \$100,000 donation to help the state of Vermont fight its GMO-labeling lawsuit.

His most recent albums, "The Monsanto Years" and "Earth" have strong anti-corporate messages, touching on issues including global hunger, pesticides, GMOs, seeds, and ecology. A logical extension of this is the "Global Village"

which has accompanied Neil Young and his band, Promise of the Real, on their US and European "Rebel Content" tour over the past year. At his European shows, the Global Village has been coordinated by Beyond GM, a campaigning group working to keep GMOs out of farms and food. The idea is to create a platform for grassroots activists, local to each show, to set up a tent in order to engage with an audience typically out of reach under one of six themes: GMOs, Earth Ecology, Energy & Climate, Global Justice, Future of Farming, and News You Can Trust.

Other organisations from around the Netherlands included the Transnational Institute (Global Justice), Bont voor Dieren (Earth Ecology), Fossil Free Culture (Energy and Climate), De Groene (News You Can Trust), and CityPlot (Future of Farming). Given Neil's fierce criticism of Monsanto,

ASEED happily took the opportunity to inform and involve concert-goers on the Monsanto Tribunal taking place in The Hague in October.

Action against Monsanto, Bayer and Syngenta

On Wednesday the 12th of October, activists from ASEED, along with allies, paid a visit to the Bayer offices in Enkhuizen, Bergschenhoek, Wageningen and Mijdrecht, carrying banners with a text based on the "Yes / No" sticker Dutch people display on their mailbox to avoid unwanted advertisement: "Nee, no Monsanto and no Bayer with their poison, monocultures, and patents // Ja, agro-ecology, bio diversity and climate justice".



2.2 Food & Climate

2.2.1 Background: why this campaign?

ASEED, as part of the climate justice movement, finds it absolutely necessary to include agriculture in the climate discussion. To start with, the current food system is responsible for a large part of total greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, healthy food is a vital necessity, and universal right, for everybody. We cannot allow the discussion on the future of food production to be dominated by large corporations that only aim to maximise profits. It is time to stand up for just and sustainable alternatives. By taking action together we can make this a reality.

2.2.2 What are our goals?

Our goals with the Food and Climate campaign are the following:

- ◆ to inform the public on the key role of industrial agriculture in causing climate change,
- ◆ to inform the public on the key role of agroecology as a solution to climate change,
- ◆ to promote alternatives,
- ◆ to build more connections between the actors, movements and organisations involved in the fields of agriculture and climate justice.

2.2.3 Food and climate campaign main activities

Two "Cooking the Planet" events

In celebration of the International Day of Farmers' Struggle April 17th, and in conjunction with the Climate Justice Movement, ASEED organised an **info-day on the 16th of April at the MKZ community kitchen in Amsterdam** to explore the destructive impact that food production has on our climate. In the same time this was the initiation of ASEED's new campaign relating to climate change the agri-food system and farmers' struggles.

The day started with a screening of the documentary 'Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret' which exposes the facts relating to the destructive impact industrial animal farming has on our climate. Although the documentary did not necessarily represent ASEED's position, it was a very good start for the discussions. The info day was very well attended by a different range of people, some from the Urban Farm Restaurant De Kas Kantine, Sugar City, Halfweg; Toekomstboeren; Voedsel Anders; and Milieudefensie. After a short introduction on the links between food production and climate change, smaller groups were formed to discuss different aspects of this questions and possible solutions.

On September 9th, ASEED organised a second Cooking the Planet event at the Plantage Dokhuis in Amsterdam. The event was organised with Taste Before you Waste, who provided the food and joined in with the discussions.

After eating, a presentation was given covering the three action/event ideas we wanted to share with the participants. These were a climate meal, a large public meal that communicated the true environmental cost of industrial food production, particularly livestock, an action against soy-importer Cargill and a fake news action about livestock emissions. After the presentation the group split to focus on each of the three proposals separately.

The discussions gave participants the chance to share ideas and explore the proposals in more details. The result of the discussions were shared with group and plans were made for people to meet again.

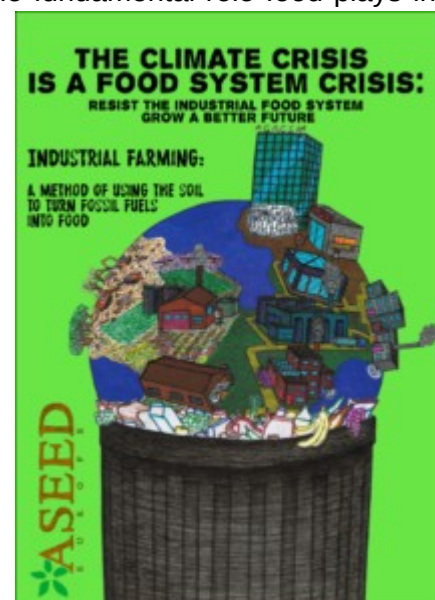
Research and writing: *The climate crisis is a food system crisis*

The industrial food system as a whole is responsible for around half of global greenhouse gas emissions. It destroys biodiversity, clears forests, depletes and pollutes increasingly scarce water sources, creates oceanic dead zones, and erodes our soils to dust. It decimates rural livelihoods, facilitates the ongoing genocide of indigenous peoples, and locks billions into a system where their survival (and liberty) is based upon their purchasing power. It turns people into consumers, farmers into factory workers, and livestock into machines.

There is no "solution" to our climate crisis without recognising the fundamental role food plays in the oppressive relations that have made climate change a reality.

The industrial food system is not able to grow its way out of the climate crisis, but we are.

You can find a digital version of the brochure [here](#)



Demonstration against EuroTier

On the 12th of November ASEED went to a demonstration taking place in Hannover (Germany). About 350 people demonstrated against EuroTier, a large business fair for the animal industry. With the slogan “*Tierproduktion stoppen! Klima retten!*” (Stop the animal production! Save the climate!) it was as well a protest against livestock farming in general and its contribution to climate change.



Guided by many nice banners, several slogans and a small samba band the crowd was walking through the centre of Hannover. Also the ministries of agriculture and environment of Niedersachsen were paid a visit to demand that Hannover stops hosting EuroTier. The initiative for this demonstration was taken by Animal Climate Action, a new action network in Germany.

EuroTier is according to the organisation itself, the largest and most important fair for livestock farming in the world. Companies present their newest products for the keeping, breeding, transporting, slaughtering and processing of animals. Obviously, the participating companies and most of the visitors are only interested in growth, reducing costs and increasing profits, not about scaling down and a transition towards a sustainable and just food production.

Animal Climate Action and this first large action organised by them are an outcome of the movement against the use of fossil fuels and the Ende Gelände mobilisations. The animal rights activists present at those large anti-coal actions thought that it would be important to get more attention for the role of agriculture and in particular the animal industry. To discuss how more people can be mobilised for this theme and what useful goals, targets and campaign forms could be, a network meeting took place after the demonstration and an ASEED member was present. This was a good opportunity to create new connections in our network. To be continued with further cooperation and future actions!

ASEED attends the European Civic Forum at Longo Mai

In August 2016 several members of the ASEED team attended the European Civic Forum at Longo Mai in the South of France. Approximately 400 participants joined the international meeting, which included a week of presentations, discussions and workshops on a wide range of contemporary and long-standing issues. The main themes included the crisis in the Middle East, struggles against capitalism, radical alternatives – including food sovereignty – and intersectionality. As ASEED, we attended the forum to spread information about our campaigns, find ways to support the campaigns and projects of others and to gain an insight into Longo Mai. The collective has been at the forefront of practicing and promoting agroecology, making the very place itself relevant to the work of ASEED. We returned from the forum satisfied that we had succeeded in our intention and with a new sense of optimism about the possibilities for building an ecologically and socially just society.

2.3 Other related activities

Research on language and greenwashing

Besides that writing of the The climate crisis is a food system crisis, other research work has been done in 2016, such as a long article on the use of misleading language by big corporations. in order to greenwash their communication and activities.



"'Act Ethically and Responsibly' is one of Monsanto's principles, but is it ethical to obtain intellectual property rights on seeds for profit? The words of Chairman Hugh Grant are figurative chosen: 'Sustainability is a journey that presents a constant but welcome challenge: how can we push ourselves to achieve even more? How do we feed a growing planet in a changing climate?' To use 'sustainability' as a challenge can mean everything and as long as you ask a question, you are not lying."

The Profession Of Greenwashing by Monsanto - How companies use the language of food security to legitimize making profit is available on ASEED's website and is regularly printed and distributed during events ASEED participates in.

3 ASEED and the Monsanto Tribunal

In 2016, besides two main campaigns, ASEED has also made a big contribution to the Monsanto Tribunal project.

The Monsanto Tribunal is an international civil society initiative to hold Monsanto accountable for human rights violations, for crimes against humanity, and for ecocide. During two days, eminent judges heard testimonies from victims from 5 continents. They are expected to deliver an advisory legal opinion following procedures of the International Court of Justice in April 2017. A distinct and parallel event, the People's Assembly, was a gathering of social movements from all over the world that exchanged ideas and planned for the future we want. The Tribunal and People's Assembly took place between 14 and 16 October 2016 in The Hague.

The main goal of the Monsanto Tribunal is to get a ruling – even symbolic - against Monsanto by a bench of real judges, after veritable proceedings in an international court, and contribute to the establishment of international mechanisms to bring justice to victims of multinationals.



International Monsanto Tribunal In The Hague - October 2016

3.1.1 Background of an historical event

During the 2014 edition of Reclaim the Seeds! in Groningen, three Colombian farmers were invited to explain the direct consequences of free-trade agreements in their country. They told the public how Monsanto pressured the Colombian government to change the seed law in their favor, resulting in the destruction of millions of tons of traditional seeds by the authorities. Those farmers

and whistle-blowers were touring Europe to share their experience thanks to Longo Mai and the Forum Civique Européen. René Lehnerr, member of the Forum and co-founder of Longo Mai, was struck by this situation and collected a lot of information on the firm and its doings. Since it is currently impossible under law to bring criminal charges against a company like Monsanto or its management, for their crimes against human health and the integrity of the environment, he decided to start the initiative of a citizens' tribunal.

3.1.2 ASEED's role in the Monsanto Tribunal

Besides the fact that one of the steering committee member is part of the ASEED board, supporting the Monsanto Tribunal makes a lot of sense for us. Over the course of the years, we have been relentlessly campaigning against GMO's and toxic soy imports from Latin America, for a better seed legislation and for sounder food systems. ASEED's position has always been miles away from the industrial agriculture model embodied by Monsanto. A few years ago, people from ASEED even made some short movies in Paraguay, Argentina and the Netherlands about soy cultivation victims. They also tackled the issues raised by Monsanto's activities in that field.

ASEED has been supporting the Monsanto Tribunal in the following ways.

- ◆ Opening the office to Monsanto Tribunal's meetings and work sessions.
- ◆ Promoting the Monsanto Tribunal during every ASEED event organised since the start of the project in 2015.
- ◆ Working within the Monsanto Tribunal communication team on:
 - mobilising individuals and organisations to support the project,
 - spreading information on the project via a 6-languages website, social media, newsletters and during events,
 - coordinating the photo and video coverage of the Monsanto Tribunal and the People's Assembly for the MT social media and website,
 - sharing the results of the Monsanto Tribunal and the People's Assembly.
- ◆ Participating in the People's Assembly in the Seed workshop and with an info stall in the "market" area.



The Tribunal and the parallel People's Assembly attracted more than 750 participants from 30 nationalities. The Tribunal was covered by media from many countries and was in the evening TV news in Germany. In France only, the media impact was huge with more than 75 mentions in the press, on the radio and on TV. More than 10 000 individual connections to the livestream video of the Tribunal hearings were counted.