

Annual report 2019

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1 ASEED Europe in 2019

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.

Inschrijvingsnummer Kamer van Koophandel / Registration number Chamber of commerce: 41212969

RSIN (Legal Entities & Partnerships Identification Number) / Tax number: 803284342

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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 Fossil Free Agriculture campaign goal is to bring together the climate justice movement and the agriculture movement, to build a powerful emancipatory movement from below for a sustainable and just food system. 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 seven 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 office and working with local grassroots organisations.

1.3 Mission statement

Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Diversity (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 stock markets 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 nonhierarchical working practices, 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 grassroot 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 levels.

1.4 Financial information

As a non-profit organisation, ASEED relies on income from various sources such as project grants (European Solidarity Corps, Patagonia, Lush Netherlands, Het X-Y Actiefonds, Alert Funds, Frederik Hendrikschool Actiepot...), contributions from participants at events and donations from private donors.

ASEED's financial overview for 2019 can be found here on its website.

1.5 Team composition

In 2019, the international office team consisted in: a core group of 'permanent' staff members; volunteers who joined ASEED for a one-year period through the European Solidarity Corps, as part of the Erasmus+ program; and interns who joined for a period of six months each.

In addition, other volunteers regularly or punctually contribute to ASEED's activities in the fields of research, event organisation, fundraising and actions. Many of them are students, farmers, former ASEED staff members and experienced activists.

'Permanent' staff list:

- Elizabeth Knight, general coordinator, campaigner
- Eduard Hernández Nualart, volunteers coordinator, campaigner
- Alex Reuter, financial administrator

Volunteers list – European Solidarity Corps				
September 2018 – September 2019	September 2019 – September 2020			
Dea (Greece)	Oscar (Ireland)			
Mandy (Germany)	Sarah (Germany)			
Annie (UK)	Toby (UK)			
	Livia (Germany)			



Interns: Jula (student in environmental studies, Germany) and Berend (student humanistic studies, the Netherlands).

Permanent staff members design and run the campaign, ensure continuity in ASEED's work and take care of all financial and administrative matters. ESC volunteers and interns all bring ideas, perspectives and working methods influenced by their diverse background. Their contribution to ASEED is invaluable, both on professional and personal levels.

ASEED's employees get a minimum hourly wage according to the 'CAO Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening'. European volunteers are compensated for their contribution

following the rules of the European Solidarity Corps programme. While we would love to be able to offer compensation to the interns for their work, we are financially not able to do so.

1.6 Board composition

Our board consists of the following persons:

- Anne Jessica Assehn Chairperson in the board since 04/07/2007;
- Philip Schols Treasurer in the board since 25/11/2019;
- Tjerk Dalhuisen Secretary in the board since 27/10/2014.

The board members do not get paid for their activities, although their travels expenses to join our office-council meetings (twice a year) are reimbursed.

1.7 Safer Space Policy

In 2019, ASEED has developed its Safer Space Policy, finding inspiration from the Climate Justice Action Network. Indeed, people and collectives working together towards similar goals sometimes tend to rely on assumptions and underestimate the importance of clear, written agreements. Therefore, the team felt the need to set a series of agreements on behavioural attitudes to abide by as a collective. The discussions leading to the adoption of the Safer Space Policy was an invaluable learning process for everyone involved, and for the organisation itself.

ASEED's Safer Space Policy can be found <u>here</u> on its website. It is now communicated to all new potential team members (in job or volunteering ads), as well as to participants in ASEED's events.

2 ASEED's Campaign: Fossil Free Agriculture (FFA)

2.1 Background: why this campaign?

The FFA campaign was started in 2018, on the basis of the following considerations.

The industrial food system heavily relies on fossil fuels: from chemical fertilisers for large-scale monocultures to farm machinery, food processing and long-distance transport. All of this contributes to a speculative global commodity market dominated by a small group of very powerful corporations.

The devastating consequences cannot be ignored any longer: runaway climate change, ecological collapse, impoverishment of farmers and the destruction of rural communities. While it claims the opposite, it is clear that fossil fuel-based industrial agriculture cannot feed the world, because it relies on a variety of finite resources and is destroying the very foundations of life itself: healthy soils, biodiversity, agricultural diversity, and a stable climate.

The fossil fuel industry and corporate agribusiness are not there to provide people with healthy and sustainable food or to protect our climate, but to make profit and to increase their domination over the food chain. We need to unite and organise against these structures that lie at the root of our problems! Our actions should educate the public and trigger more and more people to confront those organisations that promote and profit from a food system that serves neither the people nor the planet. We are targeting big business and the politicians that support them, not the farmers that are victims of a corrupted system. Our goal is to help build a powerful emancipatory movement from below for a sustainable and just food system.

2.2 Why the focus on Fossil Fuel Free Agriculture?

By focusing on the use of fossil fuels in the corporate controlled industrial food system, we aim to expand the concept of climate justice to include agricultural justice. We do this by connecting the fossil fuel focused climate movement and the food sovereignty movements, while opening a conversation about the structural links between the agro-industry and the fossil fuel industry, and the major role it plays in the escalating climate, ecological and social crises.

What role does the Netherlands play in this? The Netherlands functions as Europe's most important distribution centre for both fossil fuels and industrial agriculture. The largest factory of the biggest nitrogen fertiliser company in the world (Yara) is located in Sluiskil, Zeeland. To make things worse, this country is hosting a huge and ruthless industrial livestock industry and performs as a European hub for the distribution of genetically modified soy imports. On the political level, the Dutch government is enthusiastically promoting the intensification of industrial food production, harmful and undemocratic trade agreements and risky new GMO techniques. Taking action here, in our own back yards, is clearly both urgently necessary and of strategic importance.

Fortunately, the real solutions are already all around us: food sovereignty, agro-ecology and peasant agriculture, which feed the planet and cool the earth. Agro-ecological farms that produce local and seasonal food can promote biodiversity and soil health, use less water resources, are resilient for the shocks of a changing climate, offer the possibility to capture carbon in the living soil and can provide dignified compensation to farmers. We urgently need to dismantle the fossil fuel powered industrial food system.

We should also nurture people's connection with the food they consume, for example through food cooperatives and community-supported-agriculture projects. People that want to stay on the land or go back to the countryside should be encouraged and supported. Working alternatives to capitalism through cooperative, collective, autonomous, real-needs-oriented and small-scale production initiatives already exist and have to be expanded further. Industrial scale meat and dairy production have to be eliminated.

2.3 Mission of the campaign

Our goal is to help build a powerful emancipatory movement from below for a sustainable and just food system. By focusing on the use of fossil fuels in the corporate controlled industrial food system, we aim to expand the concept of climate justice to include agricultural justice, connecting the fossil fuel focused climate movement and the food sovereignty movements, while opening a conversation about the structural links between the agro-industry and the fossil fuel industry, and the major role it plays in the escalating climate, ecological and social crises.

The industrial food system heavily relies on fossil fuels: from chemical fertilisers for large-scale monocultures to farm machinery, food processing and long-distance transport for a speculative global commodity market dominated by a small group of very powerful corporations. The devastating consequences cannot be ignored any longer: runaway climate change, ecological collapse, impoverishment of farmers and the destruction of rural communities. While it claims the opposite, it is clear that fossil fuel-based industrial agriculture cannot feed the world, because it relies on a variety of finite resources and is destroying the very foundations of life itself: healthy soils, biodiversity, agricultural diversity, and a stable climate.

The impact of what we do here can be felt in many places, since the Netherlands functions as Europe's most important distribution centre for both fossil fuels and industrial agriculture. The largest factory of the biggest nitrogen fertiliser company in the world (Yara) is located in Sluiskil, Zeeland. It is one of the largest users of gas in the country, consuming about 2 billion cubic metres of gas annually, of which a quarter is coming from the Groningen gas field. On top of Yara more

synthetic fertiliser companies are active in the Netherlands. The greenhouse horticulture sector is also a major user of Groningen gas, consuming approximately 3 billion m3 per year to grow and export tropical flowers and tasteless tomatoes in winter. To make things worse, this country is hosting a huge and ruthless industrial livestock industry and performs as a European hub for the distribution of genetically modified soy imports. On the political level, the Dutch government is enthusiastically promoting the intensification of industrial food production, harmful and undemocratic trade agreements and risky new GMO techniques. Taking action here, in our own back yards, is clearly both urgently necessary and of strategic importance.

Fortunately, the real solutions are already all around us: food sovereignty, agro-ecology and peasant agriculture, which feed the planet and cool the earth. While large-scale agricultural production uses 70 percent of the global agricultural resources to produce only 30 percent of the total food supply, peasant-based food systems provide 70 percent of our food while using only 30 percent of agricultural resources. Agro-ecological farms that produce local and seasonal food can promote biodiversity and soil health, use less water resources, are resilient for the shocks of a changing climate, offer the possibility to capture carbon in the living soil and can provide dignified compensation to farmers.

We urgently need to dismantle the fossil fuel powered industrial food system. Instead, we should nurture people's connection with the food they consume, such as through food cooperatives and community-supported-agriculture projects. People that want to stay on the land or go back to the countryside should be encouraged and supported. Working alternatives to capitalism through cooperative, collective, autonomous, real-needs-oriented and small-scale production initiatives already exist and have to be expanded further. Industrial scale meat and dairy production have to be eliminated.

While individual consumer choices and reducing food waste are important, alone they will not be capable to address the problems of industrial agriculture because the causes are systemic. The fossil fuel industry and corporate agribusiness are not there to provide people with healthy and sustainable food or to protect our climate, but to make profit and to increase their domination over the food chain. As in other areas, agriculture is clearly showing a recurring pattern: people and nature are exploited for profit and power is concentrated in the hands of a few. We need to unite and organise against these structures that lie at the root of our problems!

2.4 Main activities under the FFA campaign

Since the launch of the FFA campaign in 2018, all main ASEED activities – including yearly events started before then - have been organised in relationship to the FFA themes. Reclaim the Seeds, the Food Autonomy Festival and other activities now fall under the umbrella of FFA. This has given ASEED a stronger sense of direction, both on the short-term and the long-term.

2.4.1 Reclaim the Seeds

Reclaim the Seeds started in 2012 as a protest against the new EU seed legislation. It is an annual event where the exchange of seeds and information is combined with discussions on political themes and practical workshops, each time in a different region. The goal is to get more and more people involved in the fight for agricultural biodiversity and a robust, sustainable food production.

After a successful edition last year, the biggest Reclaim the Seeds event took place once again in Amsterdam, at the Fruittuin van West on March 23-24. Alongside the Fuittuin and Pluk CSA!, ASEED played a role in the organisation and set up a rich programme. The list of activities featured presentations on various themes (link between the use of fossil fuel in agriculture and climate change, importance of biodiversity in agriculture...), an edible plants walk, hands-on activities (such as grafting) and discussions. About 400 participants joined the event to attend a workshop, swap seeds or stroll around the many stalls.

Over the course of the years, local groups of volunteers have set up seed networks and events in the regions where Reclaim the Seeds took place. In 2019, several decentralised events took place besides the Amsterdam edition, thanks to the motivation of volunteers groups and the expertise and support of ASEED when needed.

In Oudenaarde (Belgium, 02/02), Beuningen (09/02), Drachten (09/03), Wageningen (30/03) and Bergen (18/05), workshops covered themes as diverse as food sharing initiatives, agroforestry, research



on soil health, climate change, or the impact of pesticides on insect populations. These events were organised by Velt, the Noordelijk Zadennetwerk, de Boerengroep and motivated groups of volunteers who took part in previous Reclaim the Seeds editions.

2.4.2 Food Autonomy Festival #3

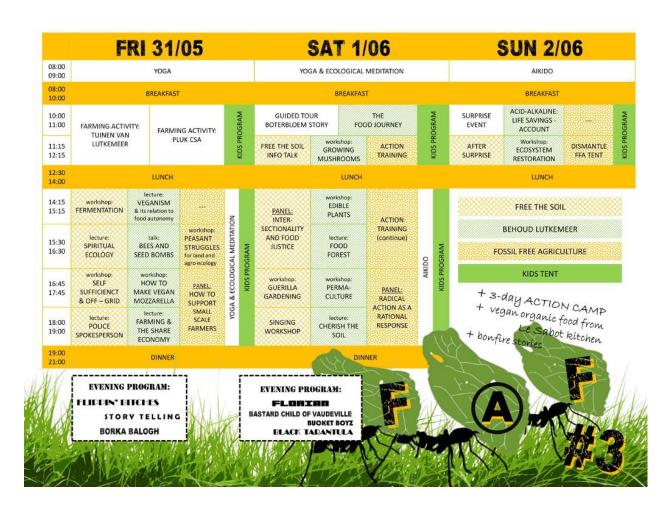


On Thursday, May 30, about 50 people gathered in the Lutkemeer polder, in Amsterdam West, to occupy a terrain for the third edition of the Food Autonomy Festival, until June 2. Activists chose to set up the festival on the same field where the action camp 'Kampeer in de Lutkemeer' took place in September 2018.

Indeed, having the FAF in this precise location was a way to bring attention to the struggle of De Boterbloem farm,

which intends to keep on producing healthy, organic food for local people, despite the threat of Schiphol Area Development Company (SADC) to turn the fertile arable land of the Lutkemeer polder into another business terrain.

This year, the FAF had three main themes covered in three discussion panels: how to support small-scale farmers; peasant struggles for land and agroecology; intersectionality and food justice. The program also featured hands-on farming activities to directly support Pluk! CSA (Community Supported Agriculture farm) and De Boterbloem farm, a guerilla gardening action, a presentation-mobilisation talk about the Free the Soil action camp and mass action scheduled in September, and many other workshops around food autonomy.



An estimated 800 people joined the festival throughout the weekend. This event was a beautiful opportunity to discuss and work together with farmers, students, activists, but also local, national and international NGOs, grassroots movements and (youth) groups around the topics of climate change, food autonomy, sustainability, agriculture, social justice and much more. ProVeg, Toekomstboeren (La Via Campesina network), Strohplatz, Boerengroup, Brigades d'Action Paysanne, Code Rood, Exctinction Rebellion, Stop the war on migrants, Free the Soil, Transition NL, Gastivists... for instance.

The FAF #3 was made possible thanks to the help of many volunteers and grassroots collectives, as well as the financial support of Het X-Y Actiefonds, Alert Funds, Frederik Hendrikschool Actiepot and Lush Netherlands... Not to forget contributions from participants on the spot.

2.4.3 Free the Soil camp and mass action

Between September 19 and 25, the 'Free the Soil Climate and Agricultural Justice Camp and Mass Action' took place in Brunsbüttel, Germany. ASEED, along with many other collectives, spent a lot of time and energy in 2018 and 2019 participating in several working groups in order to organise such an event: logistics, research, programme, facilitation... ASEED also organised transportation by bus from the Netherlands to the location, allowing activists to easily travel to the camp for a fair price.



Free the Soil was very successful on various levels. More than 1500 people joined from many countries, mostly from Northern and Western Europe. A wide variety of speakers was present to educate ourselves and others about agricultural justice, and the role of gas of fossil fuels in industrial agriculture and climate chaos. Before the camp, the research working group created two short and informative texts to help better understand what this campaign is about: the YARA company files and the Free the Soil Lexicon.





On September 23, 2019, 800 activists left the camp to block the production site of YARA, the world's largest producer of nitrogen fertilisers. In groups of several hundred people, they occupied the entrance gates. The action, publicly announced several months in advance, drew a lot of attention from the German press to the harmful consequences of synthetic fertilisers production on the climate. At all levels (coalition, organisations, groups, individuals), these actions were as always beautiful learning experiences, and offered us the opportunity to critically reflect on what went well, what not, and how we can improve and grow this form of resistance. As a reminder, ASEED first heard of the Free the Soil project from a flyer distributed in Paris during an alternative

event at the COP 26 in 2015.

2.4.4 Behoud Lutkemeer

In September and October, ASEED joined We Squash, Extinction Rebellion and many others in the Behoud Lutkemeer movement to fight back against the Lutkemeerpolder eviction by Schiphol Area Development Company. The aim of the Behoud Lutkemeer campaign is to protect Amsterdam's last fertile and organic farmlands, the Lutkemeer polder in Nieuw-West.

This local struggle has been going on for many years, but the threat of eviction has come closer this year. The transformation of periurban organic farmland into a 'circular economy' distribution centre in a city run by a Green-Left mayor is a perfect example of greenwashing and lack of transparency. It shows that the climate crisis is not seriously acknowledged in Amsterdam, a city that tries to present itself in a very progressive and green way. Behoud Lutkemeer is a very important campaign for ASEED because it shows at a local level what is happening in countless places around the world.

ASEED participated in other actions and demonstrations that followed in the autumn, and we continue to closely collaborate with Behoud Lutkemeer and other groups involved in defending the polder.



2.5 Other related activities and content production

ASEED (co-)organised or joined other activities all year long, including trainings, fairs and international events. In addition, the team developed new formats to spread content and to stimulate fruitful discussions.

2.5.1 Trainings

ASEED members attended to several trainings in 2019, including one on Non-Violent Communication, together with the Cityplot collective. This was an opportunity to learn new communication skills and to integrate some tools into our daily working methods.

Another training took place in Mura, a small village in Catalonia. The youth exchange programme GENERA (Gender Empowerment in Rural Areas) gathered youths with a wide expertise and belonging to organisations from Greece, Catalonia, Azerbaijan, France, Portugal, Netherlands and Italy. Some were seed savers, anti-fracking activists, urban gardeners. Some participants also ran autonomous spaces in rural areas, started local (rural) feminist movements or were part

of a CSA.



Bringing our experience as a city-based activist group and expanding our network with all these collectives was very rewarding for ASEED. In addition, the entire group visited several local initiatives connected to the topics of the training, including a shepherd school for women, a seed-saving network and a horizontally organised food cooperative run by women.

Two ASEED members also travelled to Strasbourg, France, to take part in a study session on youth activism. The

week-long session was organised by the Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG) and titled: 'Actions Speak Louder Than Words – Youth Engagement, Grassroots Activism and the Future of Democracy'. FYEG is an umbrella organisation for all youth groups working in the area of green activism from all around Europe. The aim of these events is to connect groups working on similar struggles from east to west, and from north to south. For ASEED, this was another opportunity to learn from other activists' stories and to expand its European network.

2.5.2 A new podcast and articles series

In February, ASEED started producing a series of monthly bulletins to highlight some successful examples of agroecological practices – and therefore free from synthetic fertiliser. The aim of the 'Successful Agroecology Case Studies' is to spread information on different <u>projects</u> where we can see the relationships between agriculture and environment, but also between food systems and society.

In November, ASEED launched its first interview podcast with a first episode on the theme of 'Violence vs. Non-violence through Frantz Fanon and Albert Camus'. For ASEED, this podcast serves several objectives: to get people thinking about the topics we work on from various perspectives; to attract new participants into our group activities such as discussions and reading groups; and to develop our capacities by learning new skills and new ways to reach our audience.

ASEED's podcast episodes are available on its website and on Soundcloud.

2.5.3 Reading groups

In 2019. ASEED also started to experiment with a new activity format. Reading groups are а social. communicative, creative way learning, exchanging ideas and thoughts, rising awareness and coming together. The reading group is usually organised and facilitated by two or three members or volunteers from ASEED who choose literature, think of some stimulating auestions facilitate the discussion process. Afterwards the discussion is reflected in



form of a report and uploaded to our website. The readings are chosen based on the topics we discuss surrounding our campaign, current interests and passions connected to our campaign and often entail anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist and de-colonial approaches. In 2019, the first two reading groups were held around the theme of 'Non-violence & Violence' and 'Indigenous Resistance'.

3 Towards 2020

ASEED is looking forward to continuing the Fossil Free Agriculture campaign in 2020, as well as to diving deeper in coalition work within the Netherlands and Europe.

We will, of course, remain involved in the struggle to save the Lutkemeer polder in Amsterdam, while working on organising another edition of the Food Autonomy Festival.

In 2020, ASEED is also planning to run the 'Community Food Solidarity Project' in order to connect migrants, students, local farmers, and free open cultural spaces around the themes of agroecology, community and solidarity. This project will be funded by the European Commission under the European Solidarity Corps programme.

We would like to thank all the people, organisations and groups who have contributed to ASEED's activities in 2019: volunteers, participants, donors, funders and enthusiastic partners. See you in 2020!