

# The Future of the Biodynamic Movement:

## Report on initial wisdom-gathering session at 2016 Biodynamic Conference

On Sunday, November 20, the final day of the 2016 North American Biodynamic Conference, the Biodynamic Association (BDA) and Demeter USA hosted an interactive session to explore the future of the biodynamic movement. The session was facilitated by Thea Maria Carlson, Co-Director of the BDA, and Elizabeth Candelario, Managing Director of Demeter.

Thea and Elizabeth shared that the BDA and Demeter have been meeting frequently over the past year to strengthen the communication and collaboration between these two core organizations in the North American biodynamic movement. Through those conversations we have identified a pressing need to collaboratively vision the future of biodynamics so that both organizations, as well as many others working in the biodynamic field, can create greater alignment in our work moving forward and find the most important ways we can collaborate to maximize our impact.

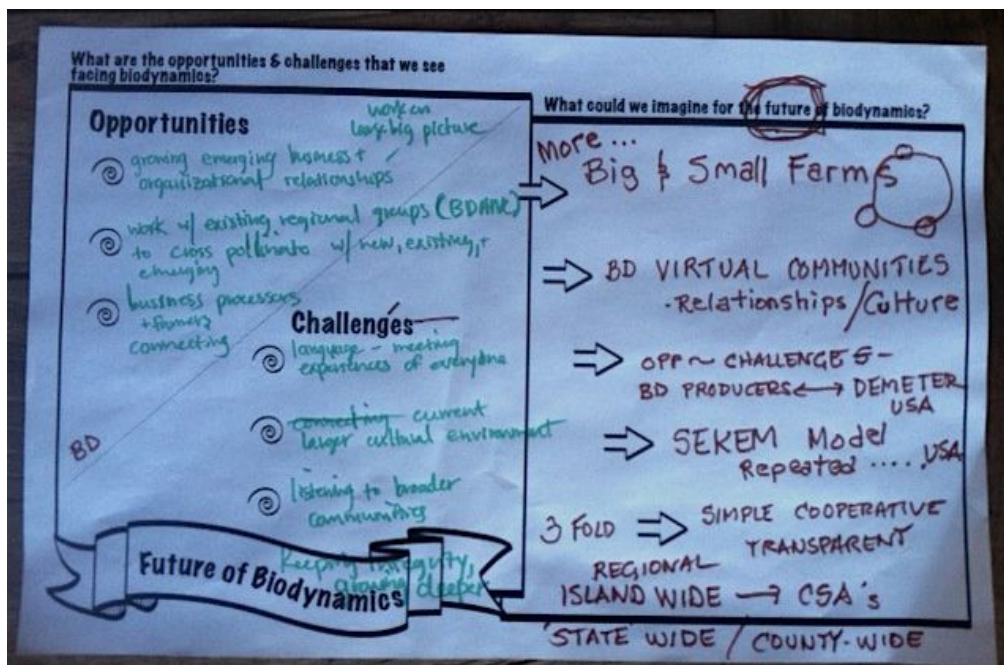
In the coming year, BDA and Demeter will be launching and stewarding such a visioning process, inviting a number of other key organizations and individuals to participate in various ways. Although this process is still in the initial planning stages, we wanted to take the opportunity at the 2016 conference to harvest the wisdom of participants who traveled to the conference from around the world and all over the United States, representing many different aspects of the biodynamic community. The five rich days of keynotes, workshops, and conversations that preceded this session set the stage for a very dynamic interactive activity.

About 250 of the more than 800 conference attendees were able to stay for this session. Participants gathered at tables in small groups to discuss the opportunities and challenges currently facing the biodynamic movement, and share ideas for the future of the biodynamic movement. Three key questions framed these conversations:

1. ***What are the opportunities and challenges that we see facing biodynamics?*** What are you seeing now on the ground? What's missing?
2. ***What could we imagine for the future of biodynamics?*** What do we want to keep doing? What new impulses do we want to bring to life? Where would we like to be 100 years after Steiner's agriculture course (in 2024)?
3. ***What is my personal role and how would I like to contribute?*** What have I been doing and where do I want to be going? What are my next steps?

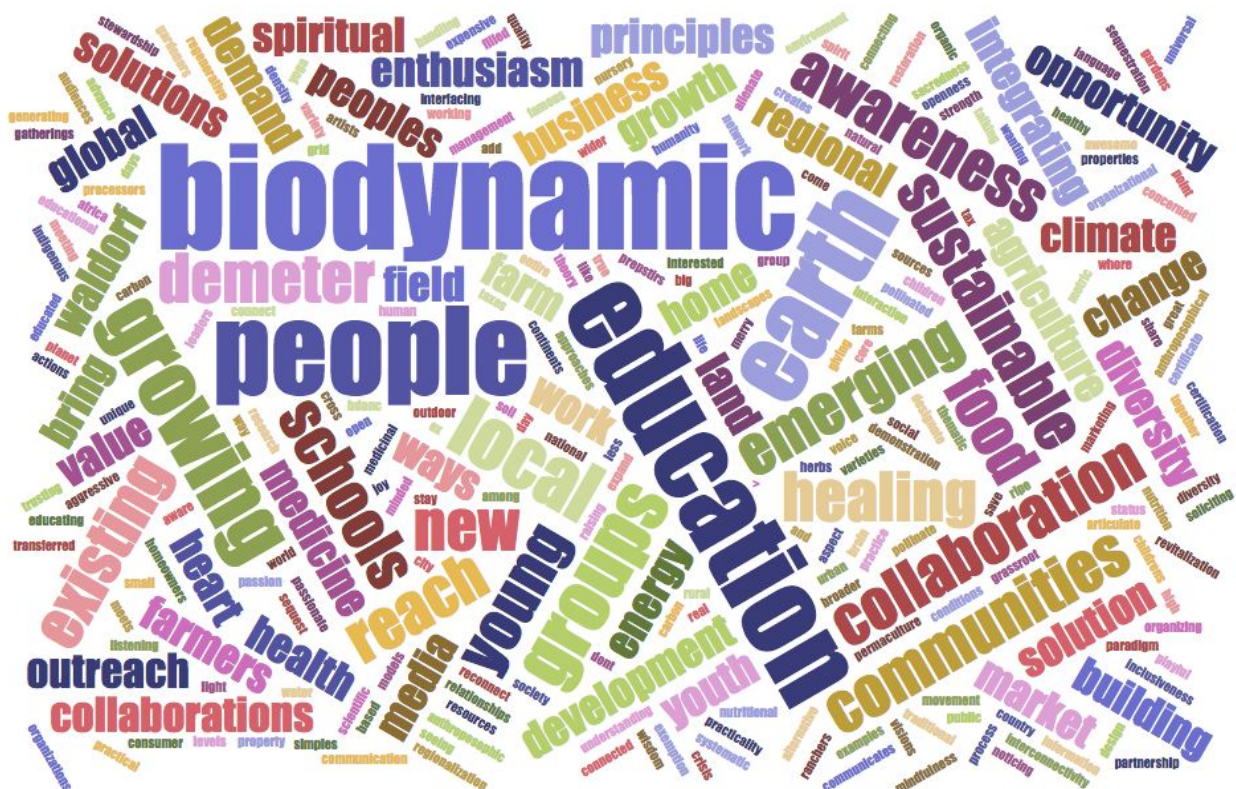
After an initial round of conversation about each question, participants were asked to distill the key points of their conversation on a paper template, and then a few people were invited to share remarks verbally with the group before we moved on to the next question. In total, 43 groups completed the template, and what follows is a compilation of what all the groups wrote down. Answers to question number three about personal role and contribution were not noted on the templates, but participants were encouraged to write down their reflections in their own notes.

One of 43 completed templates:



To get an overall picture of emergent ideas, the following word clouds represent all responses to each of the three sections of the template.

### Opportunities Facing Biodynamics





[illegible]

All of the unedited responses received are shared below. We look forward to continuing to harvest the fruits of these important conversations as we move forward with visioning for the biodynamic movement.

## **All compiled responses:**

### ***What are the opportunities that we see facing biodynamics?***

Market demand	Forming like minded, regional groups
Openness and inclusiveness	interfacing with other sustainable groups
Collaboration with other groups of sustainable approaches (rural and urban)	Growing emerging business and organizational relationships.
Research metrics for Earth, soil health, and nutritional density	Work with existing regional groups (BDANC) to cross pollinate with new, existing, and emerging business processors and farmers.
Reach the human aspect of life.	Aggressive marketing to reach wider variety of people
Developing interaction with our local landscapes and outdoor home environment	Growing demand and awareness for biodynamic and natural food
Giving opportunity to reconnect to the real through working with the earth	Can be leaders in climate change
Education for children our society and humanity, connecting with the sacredness of the earth.	Youth, diversity, enthusiasm, and growing movement
People passionate about biodynamic with the resources	Media (anthroposophic and famous artists can voice)
More young people who are wanting to farm	Regenerative Agriculture as a solution to carbon sequest.
Homeowners	More people aware of core strength of this group
Meeting awesome people from all over the world and country	> educational communities
Agriculture status for properties and tax exemption. That way young people can farm and save people's property from high taxes.	Unique global solutions
The entire US under biodynamic management	Enthusiasm energy passion for healing the earth
biodynamic outreach to all continents	Educating the youth
Community building	Thematic field days, connect with broader audiences.
Network collaboration	Articulate an alternative social paradigm
Education of the young	Planet restoration and carbon sequestration
More people interested in new ways of growing	Market opportunity: don't alienate with biodynamics
Demonstration farms	Demeter local less expensive certificate than organic
Health healing	Growing awareness among public for healing earth
Designate a national biodynamic field day	Education: Biodynamics add to nutrition for healing and children's brain development
Expand the reach of the Merry Prepstirs	People who come from heart, who're concerned with food as medicine.
Theory into practice	EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION: To share models, scientific understanding, building of community, biodynamics practicality.
More with medicinal herbs	
Open Pollinated varieties	
Integrating off grid and sustainable energy sources	
Integrating with anthroposophical medicine and waldorf education, permaculture, schools, communities and the media	

Collaboration with Indigenous peoples and traditional land based people, listening to their ways of seeing, talking, their visions.  
 Value small gardeners biodynamic principles transferred to home gardens.  
 True stewardship of the land is through grassroot organizing and raising awareness of biodynamic principles and actions through training.  
 Work with existing organizations to bring simple examples of biodynamic design ex: we have a great local nursery that has biodynamics.  
 Bring together community through water and earth revitalization.  
 Big city growth  
 Education through gatherings and more waldorf schools (and all schools).  
 Light filled, playful joy as process  
 Universal and systematic healthy interconnectivity through trusting spiritual wisdom.  
 Regionalization diversity forming communities  
 Generating information on food quality with biodynamics.  
 Stay connected with the spirit of the earth  
 More communication,  
 biodynamics as solution to climate change.

New language emerging from the heart noticing  
 Global outreach AFRICA  
 Education for all levels  
 More partnership and more diversity  
 Demeter certification communicates value and demeter local creates an educated consumer  
 Conditions are ripe with advance of yoga, mindfulness  
 Training for how the spiritual meets the practical  
 Growth, collaborations with farmers and ranchers  
 Crisis point soliciting solutions and collaborations  
 Collaborate with Weston Price, climate change groups, Rodale Dist.  
 Make Steiner social ideals in a pamphlet  
 Shift to organics, open to new forms of food raising  
 Land to table, what happens in building community through that  
 As scientific articulation from biodynamics is revealed and we see it is relevant (climate change) we can see the wisdom of biodynamics.  
 The earth cannot wait! Get it ready (sensitize it) for the Beings who are coming!  
 Networking unification: not merely spiritual but practices and principles.

### ***What are the challenges that we see facing biodynamics?***

Supply (lack) raw material  
 Education (Farmers Consumers Retail)  
 Money to support the effort  
 Prep materials  
 land and farm succession  
 Drought  
 Too expensive? Not seeing value  
 Sick bees  
 How to make growing food cool for young?  
 Lack of consumer awareness  
 Governmental and agency certifications  
 Lack of media support  
 Perceptions  
 Funding  
 Connecting to other demographic groups  
 Connecting education resources to those in rural areas wanting to learn biodynamic practices  
 Articulating itself to the masses without demystifying it's core values and spirituality

Staying connected to one another and forging new connections  
 Regulatory agencies, media, pharmaceuticals  
 Organic cert has lost it's core. Not biodynamics.  
 Remaining open minded and interested in other modalities.  
 Moving from the depth of biodynamics to the periphery without losing the essence.  
 Language meeting the experiences of everyone  
 Listening to the broader community  
 land finance  
 Vegan community (involving animal parts and animals on the farm)  
 Keeping integrity while growing deeper  
 Not scaring away secular people  
 Clarifying misconceptions  
 Lack of awareness of biodynamics in America  
 Economics and land access

Keeping biodynamics "Dynamic" growing the work of RS into the 21st century.

\$\$, Crime, Poverty

Co-creating with indigenous and local nonwhite community

Perceived as woo woo and hard entry to movement

Consumers willing to spend more on food and support regenerative agriculture and biodynamics ag.

Fracking

Need to distinguish between organic, biodynamic, convention, soil quality. etc.

Need management in state system's push in pesticides and herbicides.

There are only 160 certified biodynamic farms

Understanding it's science

Agribusiness models, politics.

We need to do our inner work, research and development, funding for different groups corroborate their work and study.

Must make trainings easy and encouraging for gardeners everywhere.

Complexity of understanding

Feelings of exclusion (only for the rich)

Public perception

Educational opportunities (formal, farmers, herbs)

Preparation supply, quality, sacred nature.

biodynamics has been misrepresented

Thinking of museum as education

Partnership, diversity, will

Consumer awareness

Language, storytelling, science

Financing for land grants,

Lack of direct educational opportunities

Tendency towards ingrowth (safety in bubble).

Education based on sound spiritual science

Labelling standards

Recognition of spiritual

Cost (currently) needs policy changes

Power conglomerates that suppress organic and biodynamic

Access to land for young farmers

Cost of certification and paperwork. Farmers need more support to certify.

Develop more markets for small scale producers who do not have local markets due to their very rural locations.

Education

Demystifying Demeter and biodynamic

Making biodynamic and Demeter accessible to farmers

Chemical companies and big business wanting profits

Bridging needs of landowners and farmers

Branding and new distribution model promote more direct market and more value added

Managing larger scale operations

Certification why, when, for who, how, and affordability. How and when does Demeter give exemptions

Literacy (public concepts)

Economic sustainability without compromising values.

Inclusions

Misinterpretation of TRUE ESSENCE and work of biodynamic

Education and lack of exposure

Connecting with mainstream

Communicate with barriers

Certification is complex

Educating the public at a spiritual connection to the earth

New administration big ag. is favored

Different levels of personal connection Need broader outreach

How do we hold spirituality strong without scaring people away

Need more land trust areas

Finances and land

Language and communication

Labor commitment and mindset

Communication

economics

Connecting people to food

BDA needs to know people who make prep

How do we measure and document vitality?

How do we quantify quality? Good soil v. unhealthy, feel, smell, color, life?

How can we influence healthy competition?



## ***What could we imagine for the future of biodynamics?***

Farmers connecting with local politics and creating networks of local change and ordinance  
Urban biodynamic farmer trainer  
Transiting organic farms into biodynamic by region  
biodynamic Reduces work for organic farmers by welcoming beneficial insects and elementals  
Linking communities through small scale food production  
community supported backyards, meeting people where they're at with a language that they can understand  
Joint collaboration to main voice in regenerative movements  
larger stronger community biodynamic centers (region by region)  
True transparency between growers and buyers.  
No longer having to explain biodynamics to everyone we meet  
Reawakening of reverence and respect for farmers  
Bringing education to the farm as part of the organism  
Villages full of animals, insects, and plants that nourish our souls by deepening our daily experiences with abundant life  
Less technology and more connection to the earth  
Easier for farmers to make it happen (marketable)  
More simple natural approaches less technology to bring balance  
More biodynamic gardens  
Create sanctuaries for cows and bees  
Early ecological education for young children  
Standing up to rollback government environmental laws  
Bringing clarity to the designation of way biodynamic is and how it is different from organic and sustainable  
Communicating concepts to the larger society need to figure that out.  
Healing of lawns and turning them into biodynamic gardens and groups to support that conversion.  
Form a multinational working group to address and help facilitate the formation of local groups.

An increase of educated consumers who understand the benefits of the biodynamic approach.  
Demeter and biodynamics need to collaborate better  
Training videos for farmers and vintners.  
A worldwide network of internship opportunities managed by a coordinator.  
Partnering with ANYONE who wants to work toward shared goals  
Creating regional workshops and conferences  
Local authority over farming. Farmers getting more involved in local politics and lobbying? and Lobbyists in DC to move agenda.  
Funding for biodynamic research and sustainable practice carried out by independent research. (SARE gives \$)  
Work with colleagues in sustainable and organic groups  
More big and small farms  
biodynamic virtual communities (relationships and culture)  
SEKEM model repeated in USA.  
Simple cooperative transparent collaboration with other aligned groups (Organic, permaculture, Health, universities, faith, real estate)  
Support for gardens and farms to have biodynamic ambassadors, educators, activists  
"lightning rod"  
Tiered certification and association with biodynamic brand. (baby step approach)  
More regional events and prep making (merry preps)  
Need to make more of a presence at other conferences  
Have Demeter replace organic certification (Oregon Tilth monopolizes land grant universities).  
Get more biodynamic food in market  
Offer our farms as education places for corporations, church organizations, and schools to pick apples and learn to compost. Cultivate generosity on your own farm to your community this opens biod farms to anyone.  
Get more wineries biodynamic.  
10 years from now: Elimination of food deserts.  
As organics became "normalized", biodynamics may become more familiar, but only through

education.

Biodynamic farmers meeting with organic farmers and communities. (But how do they work together without aggression?)

Happy branding

More local identities

Make biodynamic into mainstream education

Honesty and transparency

Accessibility

Simplicity (more easy to understand)

More community outreach sharing wisdom

More training opportunities, both technical and in communicating biodynamic. (Ex: biodynamic ambassador program Goetheanum)

Reimagination of certification supported by quality product testing, effects of the farm on forming community and social wealth.

Organizational structure for the movement (commerce and community)

Individual farm organisms connecting to form a wider organism.

More people knowing about and involved in biodynamic.

Farm Individuality expanding globally and creating community of diversity and outreach.

Opportunities for children, consciously holding intentions for the Earth, etc.

Stand side by side with other organizations

Keep spirit in daily work fluidity and flexible language (not forceful but authentic).

Engaging in inclusivity create bridges, invite people to farms to experience biodynamic.

Making biodynamic accessible to ALL populations of people

How the farm organism looks is more flexible reimaged.

More educated consumers

Larger network of training and internship opportunities

Collaboration between BDA and multiple organizations

Publish more research in various other magazines.

Well articulated understanding of Biodynamics.

Acceptance into mainstream > through marketing

Deepening of experience and understanding of spiritual science

Supportive network community expanding model > inclusiveness

Make education available that is supported by experience and research so that it makes sense and doesn't feel like woo woo.

Regional educational task force to design the template for regions to implement in their space.

Educate doctors and healthcare providers of biodynamics' health benefits via research and outcomes.

Policy changes to shift and subsidize from big agriculture to organic and biodynamic to level the playing field.

biodynamic farmer in every community . The food facilitates spiritual awakening and the people eating it .

Reach out to women to create change.

Convert inner city lots to biodynamic gardens.

The BDA will educate a leader or co-leaders to organize the plots. Then connect the plots into a regional area. Teach about seed saving, Food could go to community, schools, access to farmer's markets = education and safe space for all residents.

Biodynamics as common knowledge.

biodynamic into university education PLUS scientific research.

biodynamic linked to helping poverty stricken neighborhoods, groups.

biodynamic community gardens in low income neighborhoods.

Distribution of preps to nonprofits, etc.

Consumer education

biodynamic ubiquitous in marketplace without government regulations

Private lending and large lending (new forms of socioeconomic lending)

Meet with people at their level in the organic and traditional mainstream fields.

Advocates: "Turn your farm over to biodynamic agriculture"

A flowing stream from retiring farmers to young biodynamic farmers

Benefits of biodynamic foods are universally understood and available everywhere.

Large growth in socially responsible businesses that support biodynamic farms to solve climate change.

Healthcare that is based on preventative health and biodynamic food is central to this new vision

Clean air, clean land, clean bodies

180 degree turn: commercial agriculture has



completely changed and turned into biodynamic farming.

A shift away from economics (capital gains to social gains)

Worldwide dissemination (including Africa) more of an effort to spread to sub saharan Africa

Powerful, new social movement in America.

Education, more schools and universities need to get involved.

Spirituality that is more welcoming to outsiders.

Membership in larger movements

Reconnecting and mainstreaming of

Biodynamics to public schools specifically in low income communities.

More associative economic model talks around and at the BDA

Public waldorf initiative

Educate about water in schools, institutions, big ag farms

PROVIDE BARREL COMPOST Prep for trial and self assessment.

Better communication, education, and connection

Through better nutrition and better understanding of life and the necessities thereof.

Biodynamics becoming a mainstream farming method

All schools and urban centers have gardens and food in their curriculums.

Concept of 'no separation' Food as medicine

Health of planet = Health of all life

Partner with organizations who have lobbyists and power

Have more people "popcorn" in to work on farms a couple of hours a week in exchange for more collaborative community

Transforming government agencies to support biodynamic ag

Integrating with existing conservation and food movement groups (stronger together)

Getting more biodynamic foods into public and private schools and facilitate more farm visits

Bringing biodynamic into public and community gardens (exposure by going where the people are!)

Universal health and thriving

Help develop a vision of what variables and activities support growth, cohesiveness and community.

More acres under biodynamic attention less "harmful" materials entering the environment

Greater awareness of benefits of biodynamics, thus tipping the market.

Government subsidies for support of beginning biodynamic farmers > public support

Full on BDA Demeter ecovillages in every state of the US, including waldorf education, agriculture , anthroposophy, regenerative economies

A presence at other applicable organizations, events , and conferences

biodynamic and Demeter national food distribution non cost prohibitive

Equipment sharing Regional preparation making Barn raising