

## Consumption : promote the urban fringe agriculture and the economy of proximity

In the mid 1990s, The Nantes Conurbation Urban Development Agency (AURAN), the District, The Loire-Atlantique Chamber of Agriculture and several town and villages districts, including the town of Bouguenais, created an informal grouping called "Fertile Towns" (Villes Fertiles). Their thinking was based on the shared observation of significant losses of farmland due to urban sprawl as well as on their intention to maintain a strong 'farming belt' to encourage a policy of higher density development in towns.

The Chamber of Agriculture views this approach as an option to support a sector of the economy in difficulty while strengthening its influence in specialised or less well-known systems of production in the urban-fringe.

In 2000, this thinking manifested itself in a partnership protocol between Nantes Métropole and the Chamber of Agriculture which was updated in 2006 to highlight 4 strategic priorities:

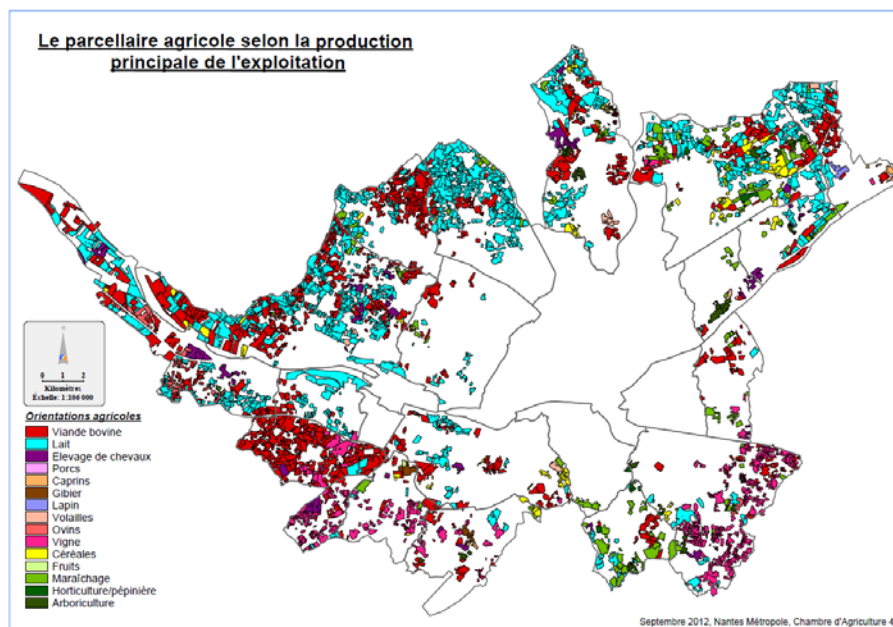
- > Land management and promotion of farmland;
- > Preservation of biodiversity in wetlands;
- > Economic diversification and improvements in rural-urban links;
- > Priorities for research and improvements in energy and phytosanitary products.

The growth of AMAPs (Community supported agriculture), direct sales and other forms of local supply chains encourage essential cohabitation between producers and consumers. Urban demand for healthy products actively contributes to the growth in organic farming to such an extent that Loire-Atlantique has become France's leading Department in this sector. This process can also be seen with young farmers looking for land to start up a business.

### Understanding the local farming context

Farming in the Nantes area takes place in a perfectly representative context of urban-fringe issues with its specific advantages and constraints. However, it also displays specific features amplified by several phenomena:

- > Some of the cheapest farmland in France (ranging from 1,500 – 2,000 €/Ha, excluding market gardening and vineyards)
- > Significant demographic pressure manifested by the high cost of land suitable for building;
- > A wide range in crops and farming landscapes suitable for the development of local supply chains in local markets;
- > Some emblematic products and/or those with high added value such as Lambs Lettuce, Lily of the Valley, Muscadet, etc.



## Supporting local supply chains: illustrations

To provide direct support the local economy, Nantes Métropole and the Chamber of Agriculture have invested in supporting business people.

Today, their activities assume several forms:

Using land for local production and consumption also requires the local authority to promote processes put in place for local people.



Organisation of the Plans: "Saturday at my local farm" event



Map : discovering local products

## Promoting local agriculture: the three approaches

The action plans identify support for urban-fringe agriculture as a strategic orientation with three operational objectives:

- > Encourage access to available land for farmers;
- > Support local farming as an economic activity and improve urban-rural links;
- > Develop a "clean" agriculture that contributes to environmental protection and the climate plan.

This cross-cutting action plan is implemented at three distinct levels:

### The economic development approach / social economy:

- > Employment, access to labour market through farming, seasonal work; > Develop new farming activities;
- > Local supply chains, AMAPs, markets, school canteens, etc.;
- > Financial support: start-up/relocation, bringing land back into cultivation, educational support, direct sales.

### The territorial development approach and tackling urban sprawl

- > Revision of Local Plans: identification of A and Nx-classed zones (commitment over 20 years);
- > Protecting places of business through the rule of reciprocity, regulations limiting accommodation provided by the employer, support for start-ups/relocations, etc.;

### The environmental approach

- > Respect the guidance established by the national government, especially the French green and blue infrastructure initiative;
- > Wetland management: inventories, protection in Local Plans, management guidance;
- > Preservation of water resources linked to the "Neptune" Programme;
- > Tackling pollution: "Towards zero phytosanitary products" Programme;
- > Growth in different sectors of the wood industry: agroforestry, management of hedge landscapes;
- > Managing energy and the growth of renewable energy;
- > Encouraging a culture of environmentally friendly practices (organic).