

ATELIER PAYSAN - FARM DRIVEN TECHNOLOGIES FOR SMALL-SCALE AGROECOLOGICAL FARMING IN FRANCE

By Kim Assaël

The [Atelier Paysan cooperative](#) in France is a collective of small-scale farmers, employees and agricultural development organisations gathered together to build a tool box of farmer-driven technologies and practices.

Based on the principle that farmers are themselves innovators, the Cooperative has been collaboratively developing methods and practices to reclaim farming skills and achieve self-sufficiency in tools and machinery used in organic farming.



Agricultural tools on the marketplace are often too costly or not adapted to small-scale organic farming. Machines are getting increasingly bigger and more expensive and complicated, thus inaccessible for many farmers who must choose between autonomy and over-investment, resilience and dependency. Producing farmer's tools through self-building methodologies make the machinery less expensive and above all it means more technical and financial autonomy of skilled farmers in their sustainable agro-ecological systems.



Since 2014, with a base in the Rhône-Alpes region and another base in Brittany region, the Cooperative *Atelier Paysan* have put in place a staffed organisation working to promote farm-based inventions, to collectively develop new technological solutions adapted to small-scale farming and to work on appropriate technologies for agro-ecology



Working in groups or networks, three types of farmer-innovations are identified:

- *On farm innovations* (inventions and adaptation tools created by farmers)
- *Collective farmer-led designs* (tools adapted to their agricultural practices and prototypes).
- *Replicable machinery* (designed with engineering expertise)

With tutorials and technical drawings to build 16 tools adapted to organic vegetable production, the [Self Build Guide](#) is an instruction manual for becoming self-sufficient farmers in terms of machinery. Included there are principles of self-building, methods and techniques, regulatory considerations and examples of tools tested by vegetable growers presented in the form of building tutorials, allowing farmers to develop their skills and expertise in the tools they work with.



The *Atelier Paysan* promotes these farmer-driven innovations [through their internet forum](#). To make these skills and ideas widely available through courses and educational materials, *Atelier Paysan* has also got three trucks equipped with the machinery and materials they need to run practical training courses on farms and workshops across France.



A series of very interesting technological innovations produced in the framework of the *Atelier Paysan* initiatives are presented in the different sections of the web site. The innovations are also presented by the videos [Les outils Atelier Paysan](#) published in Youtube and another set of different [videos published in Youtube](#)

Atelier Paysan is innovative on several levels: it offers a framework for farmers to retrieve appropriate technologies, it is based on a participatory process to co-conceive tools with farmers and to build tools themselves according to their shared needs. The farmers are directly involved in the decision-making processes and all the agricultural tools developed and disseminated by *Atelier Paysan* are collectively designed, and respond to a real need expressed by the farmers they work with.

The plans for the future of the *Atelier Paysan* Cooperative are to create an open source Encyclopedia where people can freely contribute and make use of the resources available, because they believe that farming skills are common goods, which should be freely disseminated and adapted. At this respect a *Database of farmers practical know-how* to favour the exchange of experiences and practical knowledge is available online.

Meanwhile, the *Atelier Paysan* is promoting the collective campaign *Innovation by users, an engine for agro-ecology and rural dynamics* (2015-2018). The initiative is part of national strategies for rural development in France and it is being supported by important organizations such as [FNCUMA](#), [FADEAR](#), [l'InterAFOCG](#), [AgroParisTech](#), [CIRAD](#), [Réseau Rural National](#) and the European Union.

The development of tools and self-built machinery adapted to small-scale farming, more focused on labour than on capital and enhancing local economies, is a technological, economic and socio-cultural way to provide a significant impact on the growth of organic farming. This innovative experience coming from France could contribute to improve organic farming practices in all the interested territories and countries.

To know more

[L'Atelier Paysan website](#)

[L'Atelier Paysan in Facebook](#)

[Technical drawings&tutorials](#)

[Videos Atelier Paysan en Dailymotion](#)

[Video Les outils Atelier Paysan](#)

[Conferences in Video](#)

[Blog.farmhack.org](#)

[Atelier Paysan in shareable.net](#)

[Atelier Paysan in notechmagazine.com](#)

[Atelier Paysan in apolitical.co](#)

