Annual report 2017

Table of Contents

1ASEED Europe in 2017....2
1.1Legal and general information....2
1.2History and background....2
1.3Mission statement....3
1.4Team and functioning....4
2ASEED's Campaigns....4
2.1Seeds....5
2.1.1Background: why this campaign?....5
2.1.2What are our goals?....5
2.1.3Seeds campaign main activities....6
2.1.4Other related activities....6
2.2Food & Climate....7
2.2.1Background: why this campaign?....7
2.2.2What are our goals?....7
2.2.3Food and climate campaign main activities....7
2.2.4Other related activities....9
2.3ASEED and the Monsanto Tribunal....10
2.3.1Background of an historical event....10
2.3.2ASEED's role in the Monsanto Tribunal....11
3Towards 2018....11

1 ASEED Europe in 2017

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: 41212969

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

Contact details:

Plantage Doklaan 12a,1018 CM Amsterdam,
The Netherlands
Tel: +31-20-668-2236
Fax: +31-20-468 2275
email: info@aseed.net

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/aseedeurope

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 7 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 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 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 bio-diversity 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, made of "permanent" members and of 'EVSers' who have joined ASEED through the European Voluntary Service, as part of the Erasmus+ 7-year program.

- Sonia Conchon: communication
- Egle Draugelyte: communication
- Alex Reuter: financial administrator
- Flip Vonk: campaigner

EVSers	
May 2016 - May 2017	September 2017 - September 2018
Finn Mewton (United Kingdom)	Sarah Chabane (France)
Jonny Beirne (United Kingdom)	Louis Gémot (France)
Beate Hoehne (Germany)	Eduard Hernandez (Spain)

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

In January 2017, Mariana Debernadini joined ASEED to volunteer for 7 months before starting to study in Wageningen.

In September 2017, we welcomed Mathilde Jimenez, a political science student from France for a 5-months internship.

Both Mathilde and Mariana have contributed to ASEED's work with social media, outreach and communication, event organisation and daily office tasks. In addition, they also helped with the Monsanto Tribunal work (newsletters, website updates and social media).

Our internal document, the ASEED Guide, is regularly 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.

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

2 ASEED's Campaigns

In 2017, 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 Seeds campaign main activities

Reclaim the Seeds! (RtS!), Nijmegen

On Saturday March 4th, the annual seed fair Reclaim the Seeds! took place at de Vasim in Nijmegen. The former textile factory was buzzing with activity: every year, the event attracts more and more participants since the interest for food, climate issues and sustainability is growing among the general population.

Besides market stalls and a seed exchange table for individuals, RtS! featured a workshop programme including sessions providing background information, practical activities and presentations on inspiring projects: from 'open-source' seeds to food forests and urban farming projects in Syria. RtS! puts forwards many alternatives to the industrial seed market; with the announced merger of Monsanto and Bayer, they are needed now more than ever before to face the dangers of monopolization. Almost all workshops reports are listed on RtS!'s website.

In 2017 again, the event focussed on facilitating exchanges between many different participants: experienced and novice gardeners, young and old people, doers and thinkers. This sometimes resulted in concrete initiatives such as the collective production of organic seedlings for small gardeners in Nijmegen. Discussions about the future Food Autonomy Festival (FAF) and the conclusions of the Monsanto Tribunal also took place during this edition.

At midday, participants gathered for a 'flash-mob' in order to attract attention on patents of crops. The EU Member-States have declared they do not want them, but it is not sure the European patent Office will actually listen. At this point, no one knows yet what will happen to the nearly 200 patents already granted, including those on broccolis, paprika, tomato, hop and even on the beer brewing process.

On Sunday, the second day of the event, about a hundred people got together to take part in local activities. Among them were tours around sustainable gardening projects, a food forest, and a rescued orchard. There was also the opportunity to start cultivating the public space dedicated to permaculture in the new green neighbourhood around IEWAN and the Eikpunt in Lent.

It is worth noting that past RtS! events have helped starting or facilitating seed saving networks in the Netherlands. This is the case of the Noordelijke Zadennetwerk, which started after RtS!' 3rd edition in Groningen. In 2017, it has organised its own regional event in Valthermond. Another seed fair also took place in Den Bosch, where the RtS! 4th edition was organised.

2.1.4 Other related activities

Following and spreading news on seeds, seed laws and patents

All year long, ASEED kept on analysing the news regarding seeds, seed laws and patents on crops in order to keep the public informed on the latest developments. To do this, ASEED closely follows official institutions (European Patent Office, European Commission) and several organisations and coalitions (No patents on Seeds!, Bionext, Plantum, Open Source Seeds Initiative).

Updates and analysis are posted on ASEED's website and social media pages.

Collaboration with The 15th Garden

The 15th garden is 'cross-border movement for Food Sovereignty in Syria', a country where many farmers have been pushed to the city over the last years. In war-torn cities, The 15th Garden supports locals starting gardens in empty lots, teaching them skills, and provides assistance to existing urban and rural farms. Two main goals of this movement are to get food to those trapped in cities while raising awareness about food sovereignty.

After Reclaim The Seeds! In Nijmegen, ASEED stayed in close contact with The 15th Garden in order to collaborate and to support the network in the best way possible from the Netherlands. One way to do so was to translate and to spread a document containing a list of seeds people could donate to support Syrian urban farmers.

2.2 Food & Climate

2.2.1 Background: why this campaign?

As part of the climate justice movement, it is crucial for ASEED 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 a 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?

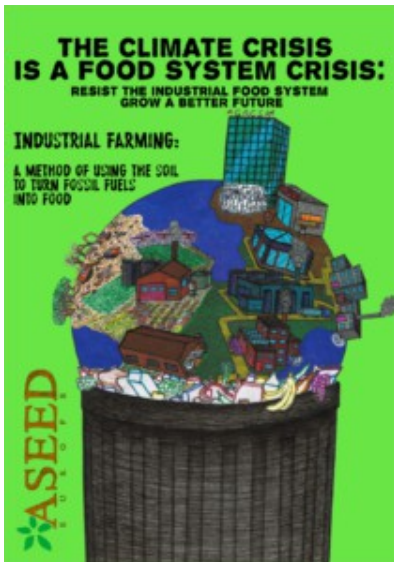
Our goals with the Food and Climate campaign are the following:

- 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

Brochure distribution across Europe



In December 2016, ASEED published a new brochure titled 'The climate crisis is a food system crisis'. This 36-page publication outlines the climate impacts of the industrial food system. It also considers food sovereignty and agroecology as urgent, alternative models for orienting our social, political, and economic relations away from the rule of capital, towards one focused on meeting human needs in harmony with our surrounding ecologies.

In 2017, this brochure was distributed at all the events ASEED participated in, from the the Reclaim the Fields annual gathering in FReiburg in January (see 2.2.4) and the COP23 UN summit in Bonn in December. It was also sent to many European organisations working on similar topics and spread across activists circles in the Netherlands via festivals, alternative book stores and community centres.

Research and writing

Two research articles were written by ASEED team members in 2017:

- Rainforest Conservation and Natural Capital: Putting a Price on Life with the Complicity of 'Progressives'
- Livestock & Anthropogenic Green House Gases in the era of the Capitalocene - How Industrial Livestock Production is Causing Climate Change and how to Organise Against it.

Both articles were printed and handed out all events ASEED organised or participated in. They served as basis for discussion during FAF, and were spread among organisations and collectives interested in the topics covered.

Food Autonomy Festival in Amsterdam

The Food Autonomy Festival (FAF) is a one-day event about presenting and celebrating alternatives and resistance to the state and corporate-controlled industrial food system. This first edition packed with talks, debates, workshops and music performances took place on May 6th in Bajesdorp, in the South-East of Amsterdam. Guests speakers and workshop givers came from a variety of collectives and organisations such as Transnational Institute (Amsterdam), Radical Allotment Gardens (Warsaw) , Grow Heathrow (London)... They discussed issues such as food sovereignty and agroecology, system unplugging by life hacks, autonomous collective farming and land struggles, and migrants, workers, and food. The FAF report is available on ASEED website, along with pictures and detail on activities.

The FAF attracted about 250 people from very different backgrounds. This event has shown that there is an appetite (so to speak…) for food and agriculture to be treated for what it is- a political issue at the heart of questions over social, economic, and ecological justice. To be continued!

ASEED at the COP23

As accredited observers, ASEED team members went to Bonn in Germany to attend events and activities related to the 23rd annual Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The 'Bonn' zone (where the formal negotiations took place) was not the most relevant to our work. The 'Bula' zone, where countries, institutions and NGO's presented their solutions to climate change, was more interesting as it enabled us to network with a few organisations working in the field of agriculture and food system (ProVeg International, IFOAM, GRAIN and smaller regional organisations). Once again, we saw that agriculture was not given the space it deserves in climate talks, and was quite frankly forgotten or ignored.

However, and just like every time at COP events, ASEED noticed many attempts of greenwashing from big companies and governments, which were trying to present themselves greener than they actually are in order to keep on doing 'business as usual'. This is why as an organisation, we preferred to attend to parallel events, such as the workshops and talks at the People's Climate Summit (PCC), a grassroots alternative summit taking place in Bonn from Nov. 3 to 7 to advance climate justice. There, the topics of agriculture, resistance to big corporations and land grabs, of migration and food sovereignty were extensively covered by farmers representatives from the global South.

Therefore, the PCC was the perfect place to network, to learn on the topics we are working on and to spread materials. ASEED also prepared a series of stickers designed for the COP23, calling attention to greenwashing and the uselessness of very slow official meetings sponsored by big polluters.

Besides, together with the German action group Animal Climate Action (AniCa), ASEED organised a demonstration denounce the role of the livestock industry and its lobby on climate change. On Tuesday November 7th, people gathered in front of the office of Deutscher Verband Tiernahrung, the German lobby representing animal feed corporations. The protesters then walked towards the location of the PCC, passing by the zone where the official summit was taking place. This was the opportunity to have interesting discussions with youths delegations, NGO members from various countries and other attendants.

Daily reports from ASEED's presence in Bonn can be found on our website and below:

COP23, update 1: Ende Gelände and more

COP23, update 2: coalfish and daisy world

COP23, update 3: resistance vs. business as usual

COP23, update 4: positive initiatives

COP23, final update: negotiations outcomes

2.2.4 Other related activities

ASEED attends Reclaim the Fields annual meeting

In a snow-covered Freiburg, in Germany, 50-60 people from across Europe gathered between January 18th and 22nd to share stories, learn from one-another and plan the future of Reclaim the Fields, a network of "people and collective projects willing to go back to the land and reassume the control over food production". ASEED team members joined the gathering to contribute to the discussions, to build new connections with other like-minded people and organisations, and to exchange news and ideas regarding campaigns and activities across Europe.

Flyer action against Unilever's involvement in 'greenwashed soy'

On March 31st, ASEED handed out flyers at the event 'Doe maar lekker duurzaam' in Pakhuis de Zwijger in Amsterdam. The statement of the evening was "Can food giant Unilever save the world and double the profits?". According to ASEED and Corporate Europe Observatory the first is certainly not possible as long they continue to participate in greenwashing projects like the 'Round Table for Responsible Soy' (RTRS), where companies such as Monsanto, Bayer, Syngenta, Unilever and Cargill gather around the table with a couple of NGOs like WWF and Solidaridad. And companies doubling their profits seems like a bad plan to us anyway.

The flyers were well received by most visitors. During the discussion in the hall, most present research activists also concluded that there wasn't much sustainability with the RSPO, a similar project for so-called sustainable palm oil.

The text from the flyer is available on ASEED's website.

ASEED attends to Code Rood

On June 24th, ASEED joined Code Rood, a civil disobedience action in the harbour of Amsterdam in order to block the coal terminal. Indeed, ASEED fully supports Code Rood and its manifesto: "As the the biggest petrol port in the world and the second-largest coal port in Europe, the port of Amsterdam is a symbol for the system that we resist. Through actions of civil disobedience, we will severely disturb regular operations. In so doing, we will force the Netherlands to close its gates to the biggest polluters, who currently face no obstacles, particularly in the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and the Groningen gas fields."

Participating in this action strengthened our connection with the Dutch climate justice movement, and opened the way for new collaboration possibilities in the future. See the picture gallery from ASEED here.

2.3 ASEED and the Monsanto Tribunal

In 2016, ASEED made a big contribution to the organisation of the Monsanto Tribunal, 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 and experts from 5 continents. The main goal of the Monsanto Tribunal was 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. 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 the parallel People's Assembly took place between 14 and 16 October 2016 in The Hague.

The Monsanto Tribunal judges were expected to deliver an advisory legal opinion following procedures of the International Court of Justice in the beginning of 2017. However, the combined material of the witnesses and experts on the damage caused by Monsanto was so extensive that the judges have delayed the public presentation of their conclusions to April 18th 2017.

2.3.1 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 favour, 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 Maï and the Forum Civique Européen. René Lehnherr, member of the Forum and co-founder of Longo Maï, 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.

2.3.2 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 made a lot of sense for our organisation. Over the course of the years, ASEED 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.

In 2017, 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.
- Working within the Monsanto Tribunal communication team on:
    - mobilising individuals and organisations to support the process and event,
    - spreading information on the process and event via social media, newsletters and the multi-language website,
    - inviting partners and supporters to attend to the public presentation of the advisory opinion in The Hague on April 18th,
    - livestreaming the public presentation on Monsanto Tribunal's websites and social media,
    - disseminating the advisory opinion to over 300 organisations around the world

(environment, law, social justice, universities...).

In addition, together with 200+ civil society organisations, ASEED has signed an open letter to the EU Commissioner Vestager (responsible for competition and for regulating the mergers) and other relevant Commissioners to voice its opposition to giant agri-business mergers.

3 Towards 2018

In 2017, several decisions have been made together by ASEED's office team, council and board in order to continue our activities in the best possible way in 2018 and beyond.

First of all, it has been decided to **start a new and ambitious campaign, accompanied by substantial long-term fundraising efforts.** To do so, ASEED has decided to hire a part-time campaigner who will focus on developing this campaign. This person will join the team in February 2018.

In addition, **a second edition of the Food Autonomy Festival will most likely take place** next years given the success of the first event. It may be adapted to the context of the new campaign.

Finally, ASEED will **continue to maintain or develop fruitful relationships with various collectives and organisations** from the Netherlands and Europe who value solidarity, grassroots empowerment and true sustainability.