



## 10 Minutes For The Planet

### #Biocoop2017 campaign©

*by Valentine Rinner*

Hello everyone and welcome to this week's episode of 10 minutes for the Planet. Biocoop published a White Paper after turning ideas of hundreds of thousands of citizens into 21 concrete and detailed proposals to redesign our current agricultural, commercial and ecological models.

Biocoop is the largest network of organic stores in France. It works as a cooperative to influence social change. The campaign was launched last April, both online and on the ground, to build the collaborative project. When they released the White Paper, Biocoop published a tweet directly to Emmanuel Macron, two weeks after his election, with the hashtag #Biocoop2017.

Here are a few interesting proposals:

One of the ideas advocated in the paper is reducing VAT on organic products. Indeed, on the consumer side, organic products cost more than so-called "conventional products" not because of inherently higher costs of the methods used, but because of the installations required to protect products from chemical-agriculture contaminations such as water pollution or chemical residues. The high costs are also due to the expensive certification processes, and the much lower subsidies compared to subsidies for chemical agriculture. Consumers pay taxes supporting conventional agriculture on one side and taxes supporting protection of the environment from the impacts of conventional agriculture on the other. It only seems fair to lower taxes on organic products for consumers who already pay twice for costly practices they do not support.

The demand for organic products is skyrocketing in France while subsidies remain the same. Another proposal is to simply reallocate subsidies, with more funding for organic agriculture in order to support farmers who want to transition and produce more organic food in France instead of importing it from far away.

Another suggestion is to increase the transparency of labelling. Organic labelling is extremely strict and costly while there is still no legislation on labelling of the origin of ingredients from processed products, or the carbon footprint of our food, or the actual composition of the obscure E123-type codes. The Biocoop 2017 campaign also suggests mandatory labelling of products coming from "chemical agriculture".

Today, farmers are not in a position to grow what they want. Indeed, lobbies from the agricultural industry have implemented official seed catalogues and they control which

seeds are in and which are out of the catalogue, increasing farmers' economic and moral dependency. The catalogue seeds are more adapted to conventional farming and have no advantages for non-chemical farmers. The proposal here is to simply re-open a free market for seeds in France and allow investment in research on types of seeds other than those for lobbies. This will also have the significant advantage of increasing diversity on our plates.

Other Biocoop 2017 campaign proposals include the implementation of environmental education classes in schools, legislating against overwrapping to limit non-recyclable waste, encouraging bulk selling and economic bonuses for companies or initiatives that recycle instead of creating waste.

Hopefully the government will take into consideration and build on these proposals.

See you next week for a new episode of 10 minutes for the Planet.