

FARMERS' DIALOGUE

FRANCE

As a young man interested in farming Gérard Barbé was influenced by the attitudes of a group of young Catholic farmers. “To See – To Assess – To Act”. Later, he met Initiatives of Change and Farmers Dialogue; this expanded his understanding of world agriculture.

In the 1970's Gérard met British farmers in France and later in their homes in the UK. ‘The quality of their welcome calmed his aggressiveness, this helped him gain a wider knowledge of the issues facing British farmers’ and his professional responsibilities followed a more constructive approach!

More recently, Gérard met with his British colleagues to show his support because of the difficulties they faced. These discussions reinforced his commitment and he gained “A broader understanding of initiating changes through honest conversation.” This helped him understand why British farmers are less militant, but he knew that they supported the actions of their French colleagues in developing sound agricultural policy.

In the early 1990's contacts developed with the farmers in the Southeast of the Poland, this was an important period as Poland was emerging from the former communist system. Shared farmer to



Gérard Barbé, agriculteur à la retraite (à gauche) a invité Troy Roush, vice-président des producteurs de maïs aux Etats-Unis sur son exploitation à Tréméry.

farmer experiences helped Polish farming to develop. In May 2004 Gerard and a group of people from Lorraine celebrated with colleagues in Poland as they joined the European Union.

In 2008, an exchange took place with an American farmer; this was a new and enlightening experience. He says, “I had visited farms in the USA, but superficially. This time we shared our difficulties. These are on a different scale but identical in many ways”. Free Trade agreements seem to have done much damage to American and world farming. Understanding the impact of this is a challenge for us all. We must protect and restore viable farming practices, enabling us to stand up to and work with agro-industrial power and to complete our global mission.”

Dialogue between farmers promotes development in each continent. Farmers can bring their experience to improve relations with others in the food chain. Exchanges between farmers are essential: sharing experience (To See) and common reflection (To Assess) to propose solutions (To Act) that will guide policy makers.

Gérard Barbé
Tréméry, farmer