EUROPEAN FARMERS DIALOGUE IN POLAND

October 19 to 23, 2026

Dialogue between farmers from France, Poland and Uganda

Report on an exchange of experiences regarding agriculture, organic farming methods, climate change, demographic and geopolitical shifts, and history.



At Stajnia Gostar, near Jelenia Góra, in a valley between the Karkonosze and Jizera Mountains and not far from the Czech and German borders, **the third Farmers' Dialogue meeting in Poland took place from 18–24 October 2026**, follozing a first meeting in Płońsk (1998) and another in Rzeszów (2007)

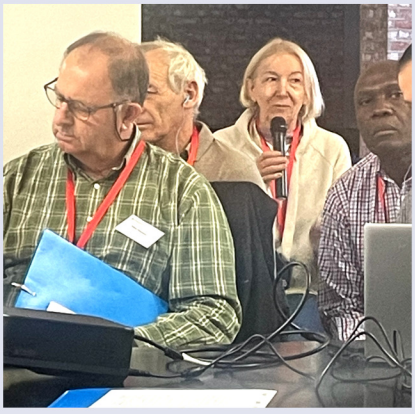
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Polish and French farmers, a participant from Uganda and a team of interpreters shared reflections and personal accounts, and visited local farms. The meeting was organized by Farmers' Dialogue International - FDI / Initiatives of Change, whose mottos are **"Reconcile differences, build trust"** and "**be the change you want to see in the world".**





Understanding agriculture in this region requires knowing its history. After the Yalta agreements, Poland's territory shifted from east to west, and families from the east had to leave for the west. The grandparents of our hosts were among those displaced people who had to rebuild their lives from scratch. Germans who had lived there for generations also had to leave for the west, and the agricultural buildings still standing bear the mark of their German origins. These dramatic upheavals and sufferings help explain the agricultural realities of today.





What did the French participants discover? Two large cereal farms, run organically by young farmers who had taken over from their parents, showed an excellent agronomic and technical standard despite being on land of average quality. The farmers were satisfied notwithstanding the challenges, glad to respect and improve the soil, produce quality food and make a living from it as a family, while seeking greater autonomy. Two other farms—one producing organic beef in difficult conditions but with passion, and another breeding the Polish Konik horse, with equestrian tourism as its main source of income—-confirmed the importance placed on animal welfare and closeness with nature.

The French also discovered the difficulties: very high land-purchase prices; many farmers without successors; land rented rather than sold, with favourable leases but no medium-term security; strong reluctance towards filling out European paperwork to obtain the appropriate organic certifications; little teamwork and limited exchange among Polish farmers; and the surprisingly absent role of institutions and Chambers of Agriculture.









What were the takeaways for the Polish farmers? They valued the French farmers' collective approach to thinking and moving forward together, the law requiring canteens in schools to source food locally and partly organically, and the active role played by the Chamber of Agriculture. Above all, they noted the human dimension of people's life journeys: working as a couple and relying on one another a source of support that has become rare, family and professional constraints, and succession that always respects the children's choices. One Polish woman farmer said that this was her first time taking part in an "open dialogue" and that she now wanted individual contacts. She asked the French farmers for comments and advice.







Shared reflections: Each day began with a time for silent reflection before breakfast: meeting oneself before meeting others. A presentation of the DEA and its history in Poland since the 1990s launched discussions of challenges: distortions of competition; the role of land in capturing carbon; being trapped in systems that are no longer under our control; health and chemicals; debt; climate change; resistance to change among farmers and political leaders; the rural-urban divide; and educating children about agricultural realities.

Organic farming was examined without glossing over its difficulties. Its benefits include healthier soils, biodiversity, autonomy, adaptation to the climate and food quality; challenges include lower consumer awareness, higher costs and prices, the need to find markets, complex certification, and a lack of understanding between conventional and organic farmers.

Two personal accounts made a strong impression: that of a French farmer involved in an association supporting pesticide victims after experiencing cancer, and that of the Ugandan participant, who spoke about the difficulties facing family farming in his country and the links between Poland and Uganda inherited from Anders' Army. The visit to Jelenia Góra, "the deer mountain", brought the region's history to mind. The interpreters praised the passion of the farmers present and the richness of the historical approach, as well as the possibility of Polish farmers trusting each other and collaborating more often with each other, based on what they observed.










A message from Jim Wigan (a former coordinator of FDI) about divisions in our societies shaped the final day: open ourselves to others beyond our differences, change consumers' perceptions, act with kindness and without judgement, and do not give in to political divisions or fear, including in the face of Ukrainian competition. The sensitive subject of Polish-Ukrainian relations was better understood. **"We have only one earth and our shared task is to take care of it"; "Where there is a will, there is always a way."**

Next steps include engaging the younger farmers we met, perhaps welcoming them in France in a year's time, with the Chambers of Agriculture and the multiplicity of farmers' organizations as a potential topic for further discussion.









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