

BINGN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

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HANDBOOK - DESCRIPTION OF THE BINGN PROGRAM

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1. ABOUT US

The BINGN (Biodynamic initiatives for the next Generation) program warmly welcomes you. We hope you will find your time spent studying with us both rewarding and a satisfying but also always heart-fulfilling experience.

The purpose of this handbook is to inform you about the program and to give you a guideline through the program. It contains information about the background of BINGN and this education. It also contains a description of the structure of the program, the content of the seminars and the guidelines for a logbook and the program-portfolio.

We hope you will find it to be a useful reference and we are open for any comment, suggestion or correction.

For your benefit we recommend that you familiarize yourself with the contents. The team will always provide assistance and answer any questions you might have about the training.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the BINGN Apprenticeship Program is to:

- Enable the apprentices to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to work as a confident and independent worker within a biodynamic farm.
- Create a foundation for developing an independent understanding of the role of agriculture for earth, nature and the human society.

3. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE BINGN PROGRAM

During a Forum for farmers in Norway 2012 some enthusiastic women raised a few questions about the future of the biodynamic movement in Northern-Europe:

“Where are the future farmers? Who will carry the bio-dynamic impulse into the future? Who will take over the bio-dynamic farms in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark?”

These questions engaged them to start up the bio-dynamic initiative for the next generation Nordic – **BINGN**,

In most Nordic countries, the number of bio-dynamic farms is stuck or decreasing. There are a few good examples of mainly theoretical schools for bio-dynamic and organic horticulture and agriculture. But in addition to these educations there is missing an education for practical biodynamic agriculture. That is why the initiative BINGN decided to start building up a new practical education for biodynamic agriculture.

BINGN began with the first class in 2014, and from February 2016 the Biodynamic Association in Norway runs the BINGN program and have the administrative and legal responsibility.

4. ANTHROPOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF ANTHROPOSOPHY

The BINGN Apprenticeship Program is inspired out of the biodynamic movement and therefore out of an anthroposophical impulse. All the people working within BINGN are consciously working out of their individual perspectives on the anthroposophical impulse. The BINGN Apprenticeship Program understands itself not as an anthroposophical education, but claims to work explicitly out of the anthroposophical background. To avoid any misconception about this fact there will be given a short outline of the history of anthroposophy below.

Anthroposophy was founded and developed by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Anthroposophy aims to extend the intelligibility and methodological approach of the recently developed natural sciences into the phenomena of the subtle realms of nature, along with the realms of soul and spirit. As such it is a spiritual philosophy and path of practice that embraces a profound and multi-leveled understanding of the human being, society, the natural world and the wider cosmos.

Through the development of methodologies founded on Goethe’s work, Rudolf Steiner conducted ongoing research into the spiritual world. In presenting the results of his research, Steiner sought to awaken individuals to their own spiritual experiences and life questions and to encourage attentiveness to the expression of spirit in daily life. Steiner studied science, edited Goethe’s scientific writings and cultivated an extensive range of interests. Along with his spiritual research this led him to innovate in many fields including the philosophical, educational, medical and cultural. He founded the Anthroposophical Society in 1912, making headquarters in Dornach, Switzerland. Today the principles of Anthroposophy inspire the work in many fields and institutions including schools, homes for children and adults with special needs, biodynamic farms, medical practices and educational centers for the visual and performing arts all over the world.

5. HISTORY OF BIODYNAMIC AGRICULTURE

Biodynamic agriculture has its origin in a conference organized by a group of farmers in 1924 in Breslau (Poland). At this conference Rudolf Steiner gave eight lectures out of his spiritual and scientific perspective regarding questions he received from young farmers who were concerned about the future of agriculture. This “Agricultural Course” is seen as the main starting impulse of the biodynamic movement. During this conference, the inspired farmers initiated a research group called the

“Versuchsring anthroposophischer Landwirte”. Together with the “Reform” movement the biodynamic impulse forms the very first impulse of organic agriculture in general. Out of this “Versuchsring” many people were inspired and founded later the so called *biodynamic associations* and *Demeter* organizations in different countries. Through the umbrella organization *Demeter-International* and through the national biodynamic and Demeter associations the farms, gardens, food processors, packers, importers and distributors of biodynamic food can guarantee via the Demeter trademark that they follow the Demeter Production and Demeter Processing Standards.

6. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

General guidelines for accepting applications:

- **Age**
The applicant should be over the age of twenty-one. However, if all the other criteria are met, the individual farm where the applicant will live and work on, together with BINGN may make a decision that someone under this age is eligible for the BINGN Apprenticeship Program.
- **Physically able**
The applicant should be physical able with the potential of carrying out such tasks as are demanded by the nature of the work at the particular farms where the applicant will live and work on.
- **Interest and motivation**
The person applying should have the interest and motivation to work with the different aspects of organic and biodynamic agriculture like soil, plants, animals and machinery. This requirement may differ from farm to farm. The applicant should also carry a serious interest in farming as a profession and in an education based on creative initiative and independent activity.
- **Language**
The person applying should be able to understand and speak English and be willing to learn the language in the country they work. The applicant should be aware that the program is a multilingual program, mainly using English.
- **Experience**
The applicant should already have made certain experiences regarding practical agriculture like small internships. This requirement is to be consulted with BINGN.
- **Attitude** The person applying should be able to work practical as well as independently and as part of a group
- **Citizenship.**
BINGN accept students within EU and EES countries.

Due to the diverse nature of organic and biodynamic farms, each farm may stipulate variations in those requirements. For example, some farms will require apprentices to hold a valid and current driving license. Others will require of apprentices to work and live with people with special needs. Potential apprentices are asked to approach individual farms to find out the detailed criteria. Should it be that the apprentice has special needs (disability, dietary, or living needs) these are to be negotiated with the individual farms in question.

7. APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply for the BINGN Apprenticeship Program you need to fill out the BINGN application. You will find this form either on the internet (www.bingn.org) or via the BINGN team.

The BINGN team will provide you with addresses and support in finding a suitable farm if needed. You need to inform the BINGN team about what farm you want to live and work on. A preliminary visit is recommended.

It is possible that the BINGN team will advise you to search for a different farm together with them. Together with the farm of your choice you need to sign a working contract. A copy of this working contract must be sent to the BINGN team.

Conditions

As an apprentice, you are expected to participate fully in the work of the farm and the household where you are living in return for food, accommodation and educational guidance. You may receive a small wage for your work force. Individual variations can be discussed with the BINGN team and the responsible persons at the farm.

8. STUDENT FEE

The fee for the program is 20.000 NOK per year. Fees are payable at the beginning of each year or you may choose to pay twice or three times a year, including accommodation and meals at seminars. The fee does not include travel costs to and from the seminars.

You will sign a paying-agreement in the beginning of each study-year.

9. CONTACT

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Email: elizabethwirsching@gmail.com. Phone: +47 47623744
www.bingn.org

10. STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

1. LEARNING AT FARMS

The main part of the BINGN Apprenticeship Program is based on farm work. The farmer or the person that is responsible for the apprentice at the farm is actively guiding the apprentice through the work he/she is supposed to do in a way, that after three years of such training the apprentice has gained insight in the practical work that is to be done on an organic or biodynamic farm on /her his own.

2. LEARNING AT SEMINARS

The apprentices will come together 5 - 6 times per year for 7-9 days in a row. The locations are shifting within the Nordic countries. At the seminars, the apprentices will learn different theoretical subjects regarding organic and biodynamic agriculture, as well as social science, spiritual science and arts. Besides this teaching the apprentices will go out on field- and farm-trips to witness different methods in practice and to collect diverse and theoretically guided experiences and impressions.

The apprentices will also receive guidelines to work out practical and theoretical research projects and to document and reflect their practical experiences at the farms.

3. INDIVIDUAL STUDIES

During the seminars, the apprentices will receive guidelines and a follow up coaching to work out practical and theoretical research projects and to document and reflect their practical experience at the farms. Each student will present a project every year, thematically related to the topic of the year. The last year's project is part of the final graduation.

4. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The personal development of each student is an essential part of the BINGN program. The students are asked to reflect on their own learning process and their personal development in several ways: through individual tasks and projects, in mentor talks, through reflections with the farmer and with other students at seminars. This process is documented by each student in his/her personal development portfolio.

11. THE BINGN PORTFOLIO

It's the apprentice's task to work out a portfolio/book that documents the learning process. BINGN will provide the apprentice with guidelines to work out these portfolios. The four portfolios will form the main **evidence of learning** for the BINGN Apprenticeship Program. It shows the learning process, learning progress and the learning results and will form the *BINGN Portfolio*. Besides being the main *evidence of learning* these portfolios will form your personal **book of reference** for your possible future life as a farmer.

The guidelines for the different portfolios/books is worked out in separate documents.

12. BINGN - AIMS

The BINGN Apprenticeship Program enables the apprentices to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to work as a confident, independent worker within an organic or biodynamic farming enterprise.

This means that the apprentice:

- Can perform all regular work on an organic and biodynamic farm independently, without close control of management and on his/her own initiative.
- Is able to find and consult resources to find solutions to unknown situations
- Can plan, coordinate and monitor specific practical farming activities and can organize and instruct co-workers.
- Can take responsibility for his/her labor, tools, machines and the health of people he works with.
- Possesses good communication skills and is able to improve his/her own learning performance and problem solving.
- Has a conscious, reflected and self-aware approach to anthroposophy and biodynamic agriculture.

The BINGN Apprenticeship Program aims to prepare the apprentice for the vocation of the biodynamic farmer/gardener.

This means that he/she:

- Learns to develop and organize themselves in such a way, that soil, plant, animals and the wholeness of nature becomes his/her teacher.
- Takes up and understands the vocation of the farmer as one that is born out of love and commitment to take care of and develop the soil, plant, animal and human being.
- Acquires the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to develop, design, plan and implement with confidence an organic or biodynamic enterprise.
- Understands the world around us as both, a material and spiritual reality.

13. ATTENDANCE

Your attendance at the seminars will be monitored throughout the year and used in the overall assessment. An attendance level below 80% is considered insufficient to meet the requirements. BINGN will take into account extenuating circumstances. A doctor's note should be included.

Examples of extenuating circumstances that may be considered are:

- Long-term illness or chronic conditions
- Severe mental or emotional problems during the training
- Special kind of family circumstances.

The BINGN team may wish to meet with you if your absence is below 80 %. Together with you they will decide about your progress the next year. These may include extra coursework or attendance.

14. APPRENTICE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

The first point of contact is the BINGN team. Each class will have their own contact person. He/she will be available to answer your questions about your education but also about your personal development and private issues. You will receive his/her contacts during your first seminar.

Since your training is primarily practical and situated on a farm, most of your learning will take place while working with, or being guided by a farmer. He/she will be available for answering the questions you may have on your journey into organic and biodynamic agriculture.

Living on the farm and with the family is usually a warm and social experience. Most apprentices make lots of friends during their stay. If human difficulties do arise it is always best to speak directly with the person concerned. The same is true for any other questions you may have about your training.

29.10.2018