

BINGN BIODYNAMIC INITIATIVE NEXT GENERATION - NORDIC

Handbook
Description of the BINGN Program
BINGN Year 2023

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1. About Us

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

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 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 has 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.

Physical Ability

The applicant should be physically 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 accepts students with EU and EES citizenship.

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 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. Structure of the Program

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.

Learning – Year 1

During your first year one day each week will be dedicated to study. This will include contributor-led content, on farm teaching and individual studies. During the year you will make study visits to farms in Norway, Finland and Sweden.

Learning at Seminars – Year 2 and 3

The apprentices will come together at least four times a year for several days. The locations will shift 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.

Individual Studies

Throughout the education, 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.

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.

9. 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 will be worked out in separate documents.

The Logbook

The Logbook is meant to draw a detailed picture of the farms the apprentice is working and living on. This will be done by a number of tasks the apprentice will be given by BINGN, such as mapping the farm, documenting different aspects of the practical work on a farm as well as observing and documenting different phenomena (weather, astronomy, animals, plants, ...)

The Study Portfolio

The Study Portfolio for the first year covers the topics brought by contributors, on farm teaching and farm visits. The Seminar Portfolio (year 2&3) is meant to document the content of the seminars and their topics.

The Project Portfolio

Each year the apprentice will present a project. The Project Portfolio is meant to contain a description of the decision process, the detailed task-setting and the final presentation of each project as well as an integral reflection on each project.

The Personal Development Portfolio

The Personal Development Portfolio is divided into two parts. One part is a private "diary" which is to be designed by the apprentice concerning form and content. The second part is a documentation of and reflection on the personal development of the apprentice. This includes a general documentation of the learning process and progress as well as a detailed personal development plan. The skills list helps you to keep an overview of the different skills you learned throughout the whole program.

In the graduation-week, or after the last seminar, there will be time to fulfill all your portfolios.

10. Seminars - Aims and Topics

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 can 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.

11. Units

The BINGN Apprentice Program offers the following courses, themes and units to the student:

Agriculture and Sociology

Content: History of agriculture, world task of agriculture, agricultural policies.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- Where agriculture comes from and what it meant for the history of mankind.
- What it means to work within agriculture in today's society and how that could change in the nearby future.

Soil

Content: Soil science, soil formation, soil nutrition, soil evaluation, composting.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- The physical, chemical and biological basic principles in and around the soil.
- The soil as a living organism and the different effects of manuring.
- The different types of farmland and their special needs and benefits.
- Different ways of agricultural soil cultivation.
- The soils intrinsic importance for every kind of agriculture.

Plant

Content: Plant science and phenomenology, agricultural botany, crop rotation, plant health and nutrition, the cropping plan and seed order, the growing crops, crop harvest, seed saving and breeding, arable cropping, grassland and fodder.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- The individual plant as a growing, living and dying organism between soil and sky.
- The different plants of agricultural importance and the organic and biodynamic way of cultivating them.
- Plants as food for soil, animals and humans - and therefore of the crop rotation.

Animal

Content: Animal anatomy and phenomenology, farm animals, organic and biodynamic milk-, meat- and egg-production, organic and biodynamic bee keeping.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- The individual animal as a growing, living, dying and soul inherited organism.
- The different types of farm animals and the different ways of “keeping” them inside of an organic and biodynamic farm - of animal husbandry.
- The importance of the farm animals as the link between nature and mankind through their enrichment of the soil and their production of food for humans.
- The importance of the honey bee and other insects for the plant at all and the agricultural cultivation of plants in special.

Weather & Astronomy

Content: Meteorology, agricultural astronomy.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- Different kind of weather phenomena and their influence on and importance for agriculture.
- Different kind of cosmic phenomena and their influence on and importance for agriculture.

Farm Economics

Content: Enterprise management, sales and distribution.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- How to calculate the different production processes.
- Elementary book-keeping.
- How to make a farm budget.
- How to start up an agricultural enterprise.
- How to plan sales and distribution.

Farm Organism

Content: The mixed farm, organism-thinking, biodynamic farming.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- The farm as a living organism.
- Different methods and “tools” for strengthening the farm as an organism.
- Biodynamic farming and its specific methods.

Machinery

Content: Farm machinery, workshop tools, safety and health requirements.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- The different kinds of farm machinery and workshop tools.

- How to use them appropriate.
- How to repair them and/or how to analyze disturbing factors.
- Safety and health requirements and how to react in first aid situations.

Food Processing

Content: Different ways of food processing and preserving, directly connected to the agricultural production.

Aims: Give the student knowledge and understanding of:

- Butchering & meat processing.
- Milk processing and cheese making.
- Food preserving.
- Baking.

12. Attendance

Your attendance at lectures and 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.

13. 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.

14. Student Fee

The fee for the program is 40.000 NOK for the first year and 25.000 NOK per year for the subsequent two years. Fees are payable at the beginning of each year and include accommodation and meals on the farm and at seminars.

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

15. Contact

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