

Small village in Alsace in transition towards the post-carbon era

Wood heating, solar energy, bio vegetable garden, horse transport, green spaces without pesticides: Ungersheim village (Haut-Rhin, France) seems to be in transition towards energetic and alimentary autonomy.

Since 2000, without speaking much about ecology, the mayor of this village of 2000 inhabitants has initiated a reconversion towards climate neutrality and climate change adaptation, through a series of green initiatives. Now in Ungersheim public illumination consumes less energy (40% reduction from 2000), the municipal pool is heated by solar panels, seven public buildings are heated by wood boilers, and all green spaces are maintained without pesticides. Moreover, Ungersheim promotes fair trade, bio and local food (through food festivals and other events), ecological cleaning products (through public procurement), solar energy (through a bonus of 200 Euro for people who decide to install solar panels), and sustainable transport. In 2008 the city hall bought a horse and a carriage, in order to ensure school transport for children living far away from the centre. This horse also helps with agricultural works. The city hall has also purchased a plot of land of 8 ha and transformed it into a market garden called the "Red clover garden". The vegetables grown there are 100% bio and they are used in the school canteen. They also established a 'market gardening' farm, where training in market gardening is provided to interested people.



Now the public authorities of Ungersheim are planning the building of an ecodistrict, which is aimed to produce zero carbon emissions, zero waste, to use sustainable transportation, sustainable local materials and food, to conserve water and local biodiversity, to promote fair trade, and respect the local culture. Apart from this, Ungersheim has attracted investment in photovoltaics. A company has started building here the largest solar plant of Alsace (40.000 m²), which will secure energy supply for Ungersheim, Feldkirch, and another 800 additional households.

The policies and initiatives of Ungersheim are so promising...they make me wonder, in how far are they transferrable to cities or city districts?

References

Ungersheim city hall <http://www.mairie-ungersheim.fr/?page=22&lang>

Article in press <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20121212.AFP7618/en-alsace-un-village-en-transition-prepare-l-apres-petrole.html>



