Farming for a More Peaceful Future

How Biocyclic Vegan Agriculture Connects Ecology and Nonviolence

By Axel Anders, Alina Gieseke, Dr. agr. Johannes Eisenbach, Dr. Kerstin Anders

At a time marked by escalating ecological crises, rising violent conflicts worldwide, and growing ethical awareness regarding avoidable suffering inflicted on humans and animals alike, the question of nonviolence in agriculture is gaining increasing relevance. Vegan organic farming – relying entirely on purely plant-based cultivation principles – and especially its certifiable form described here, Biocyclic Vegan Agriculture (see Box 1), offers new perspectives by fostering biodiversity and soil life without relying on the exploitation and killing of farmed animals. In this sense, it may currently be regarded as the most peaceful form of organic farming – and perhaps of agriculture as a whole.

Violence in Agriculture: An Underestimated Category

Violence in agriculture is expressed not only through the killing of animals, but also through broader structural dimensions: the systematic destruction of habitats, the exploitation of animal bodies, the loss of biodiversity, and the poisoning of entire ecosystems. Much of this violence remains invisible, yet it is very real – in the application of water-soluble nutrients that suppress the naturally occurring symbiosis between plants and soil microbiomes, in the use of environmental toxins to control pests that are often symptoms of ecological imbalance, in the degradation of arable soils by heavy machinery, in herbicide-based "weed management", in industrial monocultures, and in slaughterhouses and their centralisation, which frequently entails long and painful transport routes for animals.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that every form of agriculture interferes with natural processes. No cultivation system exists without transforming habitats. The decisive question is how far such interventions can be minimised – and with what underlying attitude they are carried out.

© Biohof Hausmann, Saxony, Germany,



In this context, Albert Schweitzer's ethic of Reverence for Life becomes particularly relevant. His famous statement, "I am life that wants to live, surrounded by life that wants to live", expresses a profound reverence for all living beings. This ethic recognises that life often depends upon other life, while at the same time calling for a continual effort to avoid suffering wherever possible. Biocyclic vegan agriculture stands in this tradition: not as a perfect solution, but as a conscious and self-reflective attempt to minimise violence.

The Violent Logic of Industrial Agriculture

Industrial agriculture operates according to a logic that regards nature as something to be conquered. It is based on control, maximisation, elimination of disturbances, and efficiency – rather than coexistence, harmony, or regeneration. This logic is deeply rooted in a technocratic worldview shaped by military organisation, industrial planning, and chemical control.

Historical Roots: Agriculture and the Arms Industry

Modern industrial agriculture is closely intertwined with the history of the arms industry. Two historical developments are particularly significant:

- During the First World War: The Haber-Bosch process for synthesising ammonia, developed for fertiliser production and industrialised at BASF Oppau in 1913, was turned to explosives manufacture.
- After the Second World War: Chemical research into nerve agents and insecticides, including organophosphates, was redirected towards civilian applications and marketed as "crop protection products".

Zyklon B, initially developed for so-called "pest control", was later used in the Holocaust to murder millions of people. These developments reveal the deep connections between chemical-technological control over life and the logic of violence embedded in industrial systems.

Biocyclic Vegan Agriculture: Farming Without Violence?

In contrast, biocyclic vegan agriculture represents a conscious rejection of every form of violence towards animals and ecosystems:

- no agricultural use or exploitation of animals and no use of animal-derived inputs;
- no synthetic fertilisers and the creation of cultivation systems that render plant treatment products largely unnecessary, including those permitted in organic farming;
- no hunting or fishing on farm premises,

wherever legally possible;

• contribution to climate protection through greenhouse gas reduction and enhanced carbon sequestration in soils - for example, through practices of plant-induced carbonisation in the generation of Biocyclic Humus Soil (see Box 2);

• active promotion of biodiversity above and below ground; and

• the deliberate development of permanently humus-rich, regenerative, entirely plant-based circular systems.

These principles are rooted not only in ecological reasoning but also in an ethic of nonviolence ("Ahimsa") towards all life. The aim is not the utopian elimination of all violence, but the daily effort to cause as little harm as possible. "As little as possible, as much as necessary" becomes the guiding principle – accompanied by an ongoing willingness towards self-criticism and further development.

The ethical dimension regarding animals is addressed with particular consistency in biocyclic vegan agriculture, distinguishing it from other organic farming systems. The use of animals themselves, as well as their excretions and slaughter by-products such as horn shavings, bone meal, blood meal, feather meal, or bristle meal, is excluded. This approach is based on rejecting a logic of use and exploitation in which animals are viewed primarily as production tools and economic resources rather than sentient fellow beings.

As philosopher Tom Regan argued, animals are "subjects-of-a-life" with their own needs,

Permakulturpark in Lebensgarten Steyerberg, Germany
© Dr. Kerstin Anders



perceptions, and emotional experiences, and therefore possess inherent value deserving moral consideration. Biocyclic vegan agriculture consciously breaks with traditional systems of exploitation and offers the basis for a new and more peaceful relationship between humans and animals – one that moves beyond instrumentalisation and commodification.

A New Model for Agriculture

Biocyclic vegan agriculture is therefore more than an agricultural innovation; it represents a paradigm shift – away from the violent logic of domination and towards a cooperative, life-serving relationship with nature. At a time when planetary boundaries are becoming increasingly visible, it offers a model for the agriculture of the future: ethical, ecological, and peace-oriented.

continued on page 8

Background and Potential of Biocyclic Vegan Agriculture

As a standard-based approach, biocyclic vegan agriculture can largely be traced back to the work of the German organic pioneer Adolf Hoops, who as early as the 1950s developed and practised a plant-based, humus-building agricultural system known as the "Walsrode Bio-Model". Yet precursors to these ideas emerged already in the early twentieth century, particularly within the German-speaking life reform movements, which promoted holistic and nature-oriented agriculture often linked to vegetarian, vegan, and pacifist convictions.

From the 1980s onward, Hoops further developed the concept together with agricultural scientist Dr. agr. Johannes Eisenbach. After Hoops's death, his son Arne and Dr. Eisenbach continued the work and formulated the findings into the "Biocyclic Guidelines", an independent organic standard. In close cooperation with vegan organic initiatives in Germany initiated by Axel Anders, the vegan dimensions of the standard were further refined. This process culminated in the publication of the "Biocyclic Vegan Standard" in 2017 – the world's only independent stand-alone vegan organic standard recognised by IFOAM – Organics International and included in the IFOAM Family of Standards under the name "Biocyclic Vegan Standard".

Today, biocyclic vegan agriculture offers an internationally applicable model that combines ecological resilience with an ethically consistent approach to farming without livestock use. Through a dedicated standard, certification procedures, and its own quality label, it can be professionally certified worldwide. International dissemination is coordinated by Biocyclic Vegan International. Practical feasibility studies and pilot farms in Germany, Greece, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and other countries demonstrate that biocyclic vegan agriculture is both ecologically and economically viable.

Although international dissemination still occupies a niche position, its future potential is considerable – particularly in light of the growing acceptance of plant-based diets, increasing environmental awareness, and heightened sensitivity to ethical responsibility. Biocyclic vegan agriculture therefore offers not only a solution for farming itself, but also an ethical framework for a new food culture. ***www.biocyclic-vegan.org***

Farming for a More Peaceful Future (*continued*)

Beyond its agricultural principles, biocyclic vegan agriculture can also be understood as a field of learning in which people gain experience in building a fundamentally peaceful system together – experiences that reach far beyond the agricultural context itself. In doing so, it opens the possibility of transferring its underlying principles to human relationships on a broader level, independent of political, cultural, or religious differences that so often divide societies.

At its core lies the attentive observation of natural processes and laws – of "cycles of life," - reflected in the term "biocyclic" (from the Greek bios = life and kyklos = cycle). These cycles provide orientation for human action. By analogy with the balancing processes that operate in nature, patterns of behaviour can emerge that aim at creating stable and life-supporting forms of equilibrium.

In this interaction between different elements, healthy growth, renewed fertility, and regeneration become possible. Such experiences may also inspire processes of inner clarification and renewal within human beings themselves, thereby contributing to new foundations for more peaceful forms of coexistence.

Biocyclic Humus Soil

Where Soil Fertility Emerges Through Cooperation

Biocyclic Humus Soil emerges through the active interaction between plants and soil life. Through their roots, plants release energy-rich compounds into the soil and stimulate microbial processes that make nutrients available from natural sources.

Unlike conventional systems, nutrient supply here is not based on external control through highly soluble fertilisers, but on a self-organising dynamic of plant-induced nutrient cycling. Under suitable conditions, highly stable carbon compounds can develop within the rhizosphere, which, according to recent findings, appear to play a crucial role in improving the natural productivity and resilience of soils.

This understanding exemplifies a fundamental shift in perspective: away from control and intervention – towards cooperation, balance, and the "peaceful" interaction of all participants within the soil ecosystem. Could plants, through the way they form relationships and share resources, perhaps even serve as models for the development of a more peaceful world?

For further details, see:
www.biocyclic-vegan.org/Background/#Humus



© Biocyclic Park, Kalamata, Greece

A balance of this kind benefits humans, animals, and the environment alike and may provide the basis for forms of living together grounded in mutual support, respect, and long-term resilience.

Further Reading

- *Hirth, S. (2021): Food that Matters: Boundary Work and the Case for Vegan Food Practices, in: Sociologia Ruralis, Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 234–254.*
- *Mann, S. (2020): Could We Stop Killing?—Exploring a Post-Lethal Vegan or Vegetarian Agriculture, in: World, 1(2), pp. 124–134.*
- *Rahmann, G. (2023): Es geht auch ohne Nutztiere. Ein agrarphilosophischer Diskussionsbeitrag zur Zukunft der Nutztierhaltung. Trenthorst: Thünen Institute of Organic Farming.*
- *Regan, Tom (1983): The Case for Animal Rights. University of California Press.*
- *Schweitzer, A. (2025 edition): Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben. Edited by Hans Walter Bähr. See also the introduction in English: www.schweitzer.org/en/discover/timeline/reverence-for-life/*
- *Schwerdtner, U. (2019): Gutes Essen für alle! Grundlagen einer antispeziesistischen Landwirtschaft von morgen, in: Zeitschrift für kritische Tierstudien, Vol. 2, pp. 155–179.*



© L'Acadie Vineyards, Nova Scotia, Canada