

**Lynda Brown, executive director of the Biodynamic Association, on farming's best-kept secret**

What do Wholefoods USA, top chef Skye Gyngell, Compassion in World Farming's Philip Lymbery, Michel Roux Jr, the Hemsley sisters and the world's most influential wine critic, Robert Parker, have in common? They all advocate farming's best-kept secret: biodynamics.

But now the secret's out. The number of top wine critics flying the flag for biodynamic wines is on the rise, as is the stable of chefs who lust after fresh biodynamic produce that sings with health and vitality (the new benchmark of quality). Weleda Skin Food, like so many of the green beauty pioneer's products, is made from plants homegrown in Weleda's biodynamic gardens. Lauded by top models and fashionistas alike, a tube's sold every 30 seconds.

Headlines like 'Long story short: biodynamic is the new organic, and you need to get behind it, like, yesterday' are bringing biodynamics and its quirky practices out of its esoteric shadows and into the limelight. Which means we'd all better find out a bit more about it (like, yesterday).

#### HOW IT ALL STARTED

Biodynamic farming began in Europe almost a century ago; it's the oldest form of what we now call organic farming. Both began as a reaction to the intensification of farming, and were fuelled by the unshakeable belief that our health begins and ends with healthy soil. Like organic farming, biodynamics forbids the use of synthetic fertilisers, harmful pesticides and GMOs; its standards are regulated in exactly the same way as those for organic produce.

But biodynamic farming goes further – up to the heavens and back, in fact. Inspired by the visionary philosopher Rudolf Steiner, the biodynamic approach is holistic and spiritual.

#### 'THOUGHTFUL AGRICULTURE'

The interconnectedness between Nature, human consciousness and the 'realm beyond the material' lies at the heart of everything biodynamic. That and a deep reverence and respect for all life forms. The quest for harmony and the ever-changing dynamic that creates and sustains life shapes its approach.

Dubbed 'thoughtful agriculture' by *Vogue*, biodynamics advocates a more intimate 'mindful' connection with the land, and embraces not

# Biodynamics



## BIODYNAMICS: THE ESSENTIALS

**Rudolf Steiner:** Austrian visionary, philosopher, educationalist, social reformer and polymath. Founder of spiritual science (anthroposophy).

**Biodynamic farming:** emerged from eight agricultural lectures

given by Rudolf Steiner in 1924 – now a worldwide movement.



**Demeter:** Greek goddess of agriculture, presides over the harvest, grains and fertility of the Earth. International logo for

certified biodynamic food (see picture, left). One of Europe's leading organic brands.

**Biodynamic Association (BDA):** membership charity that supports and promotes biodynamic farming and gardening in the UK.

just earthly but the more subtle planetary and celestial forces and rhythms. Anyone familiar with eastern philosophies, complementary therapies or the mind-bending aspects of quantum sciences will find much in biodynamics that feels familiar, too.

Biodynamics thus views farming (and gardening) as a living, dynamic two-way conversation between ourselves and the Earth for the mutual benefit of both.

#### A SENSE OF PLACE

On a practical level, a couple of other concepts define biodynamic farming. First and foremost it seeks to produce the highest quality food that is

full of vitality and has a taste that resonates with a sense of place – *terroir* in wine-speak. That's why winemakers practice biodynamics.

Second, it's regenerative. For a biodynamic practitioner, the question is not so much 'what will my land produce and how can I get it to produce more?', but 'what does my land want to give, and how can I understand it better so I can help it realise its full potential and allow it to become self-sustaining and self-sufficient?' By any measure of sustainability, that's awesome.

#### YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

What else? Biodynamic practitioners use specific natural remedies (known as 'BD preps') to enliven biodynamic soils, composts and crops. They use lunar planting calendars, emphasise observation and focus on a farm's individuality.

If, like me, you feel there's more to life than reductionism – that you are what you eat, body, mind, and soul – then biodynamics may prove an interesting and fruitful journey of discovery.

#### FIND OUT MORE

- More on the Biodynamic Association is at [biodynamic.org.uk](http://biodynamic.org.uk)
- Find out why biodynamic cows keep their horns at [biodynamic.org.uk/why-cows-have-horns/](http://biodynamic.org.uk/why-cows-have-horns/)
- See a great range of biodynamic wines at [vintage.roots.co.uk](http://vintage.roots.co.uk)