ORGANIC FARMING
From the market niche to a regional development potential

Two research areas

Agricultural trends in conventional farming

By the increase of the milk yield more feed concentrate (e.g. grain) is fed. Certain alpine pastures and grassland areas excluded from production – leading to a changing landscape

Through increasing specialisation agriculture areas increase in size and animal husbandry becomes more intensive. This leads to a reduction of biodiversity, soil compaction, nitrate and phosphorous load of waters

Two research areas

LIEZEN Grassland

At present: 30% organic farms in the region

WEINVIERTEL Crop farming region

At present: 1% organic farms in the region

Production engineering

How does crop production change?

What is the effect of the conversion on animal husbandry?

What is the effect of the conversion on the environment?

Regional economy

What does a conversion mean for the development of a species-rich and landscape-specific biotope diversity?

What is the role of the regional farmers in the region?

What value does organic agriculture have for regional development?

Strongening the carrying capacity of the rural area

Encouraging regional marketing and cooperation in the region

Protecting and maintaining competitive ability and employment in future markets

On the way to a regional conversion to organic farming

Obstacles

- Fastidious production engineering: higher dependency on natural growth fluctuations, smaller correction options, higher expenditure of work
- Insufficient marketing structure for organic products
- Limited knowledge of both consumers and farmers about the different production methods (ideas, potential, effect on animals and environment)
- Farmers mainly understand themselves as raw material producers for anonymous markets
- Certain skepticism in relation to the organic agriculture with associations, processes and regional politicians
- Co-operation potentials are not used

Effects

- Reduced surplus and lower energy application, rationalisation of the organic phosphorus supplies
- Loss conflict between agriculture and nature protection
- GMO-free farming
- Multi-functional agriculture (production and sales of regional food, landscapes in regional typical varieties, environmental protection, regenerative raw materials etc.)
- Sustainability through system-dependent recycle flow economy
- Inclusion of the dynamics of product emergence and resolution and inspections as well as largely closed circulation of materials

Organic farming is based on system thinking

A conversion of all farms in a region is considered unrealistic – due to conflicting interests

Women more likely do support a conversion

Not every consumer is prepared to pay a premium

Economic considerations, subjective perceptions and non-standard value attitudes determine the conversion decision

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Lower-risk produce due to strict government regulations and inspections as well as largely closed circulation of materials

Inclusion of the dynamics of product emergence and offset (process quality), instead of fixed view at final product

Higher transparency of production and processing methods by recordings

Food quality

What affects does organic agriculture have on the produce in terms of biodiversity, hormone- or antibiotic-resistant or BSE?

Is a redefinition of the term “quality” necessary?

Is food safety affected?

Biodiversity - nature conservation

More wild species with high number of individuals in the agricultural areas and broader spectrum of biotopes which depend on a certain level of use

Small structures such as field margins and hedges are important for pest control

Further development of organic-farming guidelines for biodiversity protection