

Strong Partners – Powerful Regions

Net-work-shop 14. - 15. 9. 2010, Graz

Handout

„Good Food: Organic farming and marketing in Austria, especially in Styria“

1. THE ORGANISATION

Austria is the leading country in Europe in terms of organic farming. More than 21,000 organic farmers work on an area of 408,162 hectares. This represents 15.5% of farmers and 17.4% of farming land in Austria. Most organic farmers are members of **BIO AUSTRIA** that was founded in 1980. BIO AUSTRIA uniting more than 13,000 member farms is not only the biggest association for organic farming in Austria, but in whole Europe.

Styria is one of nine Federal States in Austria with 57,766 hectares organic farm land that is farmed by about 3.611 farmers. **Bio Ernte Steiermark** is the biggest Styrian association for organic farming and possesses 2200 members. Bio Ernte Steiermark cooperates with BIO AUSTRIA and with the Styrian Chamber of Agriculture. In Styria we have a team of 17 professionals for different parts of organic farming and marketing e.g. specialists for grass- and arable-farmland, animal husbandry, pig and poultry farming, organic vegetable and fruit farming, but also for marketing and public relations. *Core (advisory) tasks* of Bio Ernte Steiermark comprise

- offering basic courses and further education in organic farming,
- consulting in production and business development,
- providing information and advice regarding to organic regulations and certification guidelines,
- cooperating with organic research institutes,
- arranging professional field trips and expert workshops for farmers
- developing the innovative anti gen technique project „map of a gmo-free Styria“.

2. MARKET AND MARKETING

BIO AUSTRIA is an important partner in the organic market. Sales of organic products in Austria's food trade have constantly grown in the last few years. The market share has increased from 3.9% in 2003 to 6.7% in 2010. The organic sector is still one of the top growing segments in the Austrian food market (on average 5-10% per year). BIO AUSTRIA has more than 250 market partners. 30 are in Styria e.g. dairies, butcheries, bakeries, feed stuff companies, oil and grain mills plus partners from the tourism industry. These partners purchase predominantly organic products from our members.

BIO AUSTRIA is a strong partner for commerce and retailers and has following **responsibilities:**

- Establishing the brand „BIO AUSTRIA“ and BIO AUSTRIA quality standards.
Those standards are higher than that of the EU and of AMA standards.
- Pooling raw organic material (grain)
- Developing and realising BIO AUSTRIA advertising activities

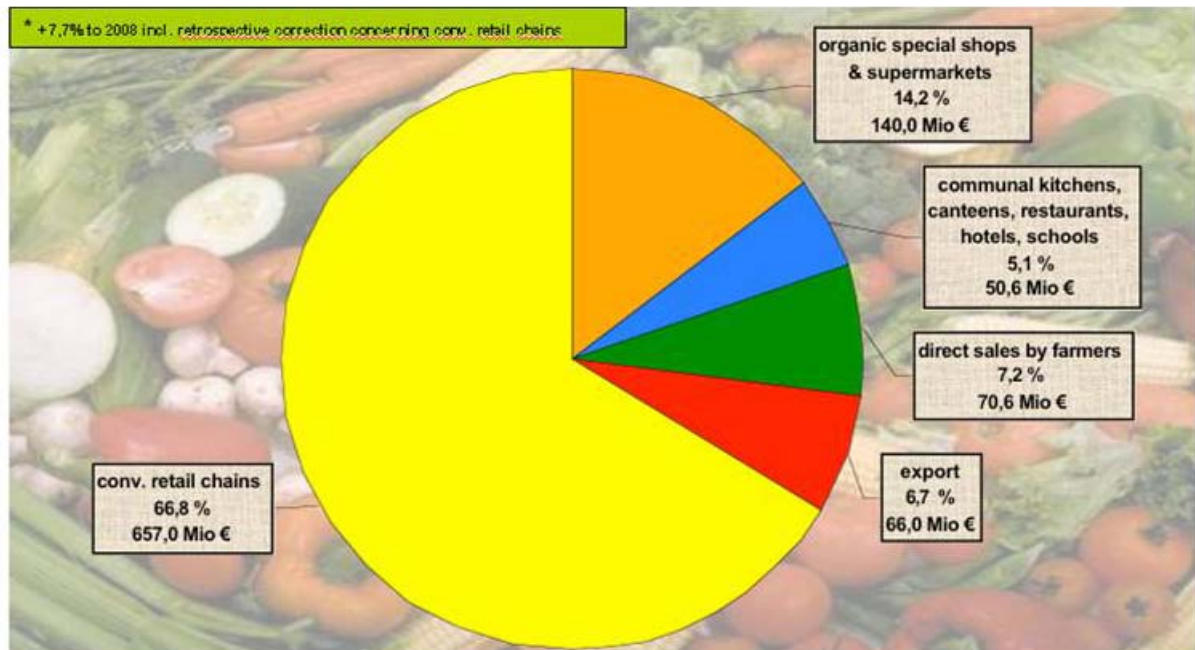
Bio Ernte Steiermark is responsible for following **sales and marketing tasks:**

- Organising public relation activities such as fairs, markets, tastings or info points to show the diversity of organic products to customers
- Organising press conferences and media events
- Creating flyers and information material for consumers, organic and conventional farmers

Marketing projects and associations in Styria:

- direct marketing from farm shops and local markets (about 800 members),
- organic products for hospitals, kindergartens and schools,
- a special organic market in the city of Graz (about 250 000 inhabitants),
- “Bio Schwein Austria” an association of organic pig farmers,
- “Bio-Qualitäts Getreide GesmbH” an association of arable farmers,
- “Styria Beef” an association of suckler cow husbandry farmers (800 farmers in Styria),
- „Von Herzen Bio Bauern“ an association of organic fruit farmers and
- „Bio Wein Steiermark“ an association of organic wine farmers.

The following graph illustrates (organic) marketing channels in Austria in 2009 in percent and Euros. Altogether we have a plus of 5, 0% in terms of organic turnovers compared to 2008.



3. INDEPENDENT CONTROL AGENCIES AND RELEVANT STANDARDS

Organic farms are **monitored by independent control agencies** that must be approved by the Governor of each Federal Province. Apart from the complete annual inspection of each farm, control agencies also check farms without prior notice. The controls of organic farms concern to the whole production process, which includes farmers and processing companies.

In addition to that, those organic farmers who receive national subsidies become also **controlled by “Agrarmarkt Austria”** (AMA) an agency of Austrians Ministry of Agriculture.

Members of BIO AUSTRIA have to follow **additional standards**:

- 100% GMO-free (max. 0,1% GMO instead of 0.9%)
- 100% fodder produced in Austria
- Not only parts but the whole farm has to be farmed organically
- The farmer has to follow special guidelines for the production of fruits, vegetables etc.

4. DIFFICULTIES OF ORGANIC FARMERS IN STYRIA

a) Related to the farm:

- Difficulties with weed (dock, thistle...).
- Difficulties with too strict guidelines regarding to animal husbandry. Building a new stable appropriate to the guidelines is very expensive, especially in mountainous regions.
- Difficulties with fungal infestation when producing organic wine
- 100% organic fodder for pigs and poultry, especially protein fodder is difficult to obtain.

b) Related to the market:

- The surcharge for organic products, especially for milk and meat is too low.
- Organic feed stuff is too expensive.

CONTACT DETAILS



Mag. Josef Renner

Managing Director of Bio Ernte Steiermark
Head of Department for Organic Farming/
Chamber of Agriculture Styria
E-Mail: josef.renner@ernte.at
Phone: 0676/842214-400

DI Wolfgang Angeringer

Consultant of Organic Grassland Production
Department for Organic Farming/
Chamber of Agriculture Styria and Bio Ernte Steiermark
E-Mail: wolfgang.angeringer@ernte.at
Phone: 0676/842214-413



Web: www.ernte-steiermark.at
www.lk-stmk.at