

C OF FARM



CASE STUDY: Bio-Schaukäserei Wiggensbach eG

Introduction

The organic cheese dairy at Wiggensbach is a registered cooperative and it has a membership of 16 farms and a delivery community consisting of 24 regional Demeter farms. The members are also milk suppliers to the dairy. All the milk suppliers based around Wiggensbach operate ecologically and in accordance with the organic associations criteria. All the cows are reared on pasture and in winter, they are fed high-quality hay from species-rich meadows.

The company Berchtold is one of the companies which co-founded the cheese dairy in 2003. Previously, it was a limited liability company.

The concern of Franz Berchtold from Legau was to produce higher added value on the basis of the high quality of the dairy products; and due recognition for the work associated in producing organic products.

Basic information



Bio-Schaukäserei Wiggensbach eG; Kempter Straße 9; 87487 Wiggensbach

Name Bio-Schaukäserei Wiggensbach eG

Year of establishment 2003 (GmbH); 2016 (eG)

Kind of cooperation Cooperative, Producers group

Number of farmers/ landowners/ entrepreneurs/ enterprises involved

16 family farms and community suppliers consisting of 24 companies

Internet links <http://www.schaukaeserei-wiggensbach.de/index.php?id=3863>



Farm Data

Area approx. 60ha

Description

The Betriebsbeschreibung was located on the Legauer plateau in Germany. After a fire in 1981, THE farmer moved to Berchtold-Hof, a pure grassland farm with dairy farming. For their eight children, the farmers wanted to take responsibility for the long-term sustainability of the farm and ensure the succession of the enterprise from one generation to the next.

Shortly after the farm was handed over in 1992, a biogas plant based on manure started operation and in 1999 the conversion of a stable to a free run stable was carried out.

In 2001, the farm switched to organic hay and milk production and joined the „Biokreis“ association. Since 2005, the system of short-grass pasture with seasonal calving is in operation , which supplies high-quality ruminant-based forage of the highest quality for the 65 cows. Thanks to this grazing system, the annual milk production is 330,000 kg based on the basic feed.

Franz Berchtold is a partner and one of the two managing directors of the organic dairy Wiggensbach. He is an agricultural master and has visited the „Landvolkshochschule Wies“ for 12 weeks in order to further enhances his knowledge, skillsets and competencies.

For the future expansion of the enterprise, there is a requirement to create additional space which he hopes to secure through cooperation initiatives within the dairy sector; and also through hiring a employed worker on his own farm holding.



Cooperation Process Data

Without the cooperation and the merger into one company, a comparable development of added value would not have been possible for either the Berchtold family or the other members and suppliers.

According to the farmer: 'the way to the current situation was also a big challenge and by no means easy. At the beginning, there were several years of brainstorming and research, which were necessary in order to embark on a successful merger'.

Around Mr. Berchtold existed a group of seven farmers within the dairy, which supplied organic milk. The motive and goal was always to increase the added value, thereby generating additional profits from the farming activities.

This goal was reached in 2003 through a co-operation activity with a cheese-maker vis-à-vis the establishment of an independent cheese dairy. A former carpentry workshop building in Wiggensbach was selected as the most appropriate site for the enterprise. The GmbH with 8 farmers and a cheese maker as a silent partner and managing director was the initial legal structure of the enterprise.

This type of project is considered unusual within this region of Germany and therefore, it is considered very innovative. The project aroused a high degree of interest amongst farmers; agricultural producers; and policy-makers.

The company has grown significantly in the past 15 years. According to the farmer, the management team have developed significant expertise insofar as they know:

- What works, what does not work?
- Which works are delegable, which are not?
- How does the company ensure its continued existence through transparency, pragmatism, innovation and down-to-earthness?

The Farmers and shareholders today know that not everyone has to do everything, but everyone should be fully informed about what is going on in the farm. In order to achieve this, there needs to be regular communication; structures to allow the shareholders / members to have an input in the decision making process; and forums for intensive dialogue and discussion.

The shareholders and managing directors gladly accept external advice where necessary and delegate areas such as press relations, social media maintenance and design of the corporate identity to external providers.

The cheese dairy uses high-quality organic hay and milk from the „Allgäu“ region as a basis for the cheese dairy. The sourcing of products from the local region is very important. The production plant sells the cheese directly in Wiggensbach to numerous farm shops; and organic wholesalers / traders. The products are also sold to organic supermarkets throughout Germany.

Due to effective and efficient processing procedures / technique and marketing, it is possible for suppliers to accrue a higher return price for their milk in comparison to supplying the milk to an alternative dairy in the locality. This

makes the business model very sustainable.

Fundamental decisions of the enterprise are made by members at the Cooperative Assembly. In order for each member to have sufficient influence on the decision making process, it was important to cap the number of members in the co-operative activity.

Accordingly, the company is well positioned today for further development - both in terms of processing and marketing.

The positive experiences and the chances of cooperation are dominant. In particular, in the area of processing and marketing, it seems doubtful whether all of this can be achieved on a single farm alone.

With regard to the necessary skills and competencies for successful cooperation, Mr. Berchtold outlined the following:

- Human attitude should match between the partners
- Everyone has to be able to express their opinions, and every voice has to have equal weight
- Mutual acceptance
- Criticism: accept criticism and appropriate implementation
- Constant communication
- Transparency

Advice/Recommendation

“ The most important thing: everyone involved must have entrepreneurial vision, just doing what everyone does is not enough for long-term market success! If you're an entrepreneur with vision and if it fits, then plan the future going forward! ”

“ You need everything in the company: the quiet, the ambitious, the one who gets ahead, the brakeman! That leads to good decisions! ”

Queries/Questions

- Even if the farmer is very successful in all his / her cooperation activities, the selection of partners is critically important. Can you identify procedures for the careful selection of partners?
- The farmer has shares in the enterprise processing and selling milk products/cheese. How can a farmer become actively involved in the operations of this enterprise?



Key Words

Cooperation Key Words

Cooperative
Marketing/sales
Processing
Producers group

Farm Key Words

Dairy farm(s)
Direct sales/short supply chain
Organic/integrated/certified farming

Partners



Limerick Institute of Technology:
(Ireland)
www.lit.ie/rdi



Hof und Leben GmbH
(Germany)
www.hofundleben.de



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soukromého
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Ceske Republiky (Czech Republic)
www.asz.cz



On Projects Advising SL
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www.onprojects.es



Union de Agricultores y Ganaderos-
Jovenes Agricultores de Jaén (Spain)
www.coagjaen.es



Biotehniški Center Naklo
(Slovenia)
www.bc-naklo.si



Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori Toscana
(Italy)
www.ciatoscana.eu



European Landowners' Organisation
(Belgium)
www.europeanlandowners.org

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Project Website

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