BEST PRACTICES

Resilient sustainable agriculture
(by Greenpeace Germany)

125 character limit

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Region and Country where the case study took place: Germany, Hamburg and Stuttgart
Website: https://www.greenpeace.de/themen/landwirtschaft/nachhaltige-landwirtschaft-vielfalt-statt-einfalt

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Logo

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Summary

Explain your case in one or two sentences

Greenpeace offers a broad-based awareness raising and educational program on resilient and sustainable agriculture, farming, horticulture and forestry with a focus on agriculture with goal of food production.

Background information: How was the situation previous to your actions?

In Germany, organic farming developed in the twentieth century in response to industrial agriculture, which was increasingly generating problems. His goal: to produce healthy food in an environmentally friendly and animal-friendly way.

The basic idea is disarmingly simple, namely - closely based on the example of nature - to operate in such a way that your own resources are sufficient. In concrete terms, this circular concept means that agriculture and animal husbandry must be coordinated. So that only as many animals are kept as the company can feed on its own feed. And the amount of animal manure used as fertilizer must also be adapted to the nutrient requirements of the arable land.

What were the needs you identified?

Organic farming: what's different?

Fertilization: In addition to manure, organic farmers use plants that bring nitrogen from the air into the soil - legumes such as peas, beans or alfalfa. The aim is to improve the quality of the soil - soil fertility - in order to increase yields. In conventional agriculture, on the other hand, synthetic nitrogen fertilizers are primarily intended to supply the plant. An energy-intensive matter - the production of the artificial fertilizer consumes a large part of the energy requirements of conventional companies and causes high CO2 emissions.

Crop rotation: Another difference is the crop rotation: In conventional farming, this is severely restricted and, in extreme cases, is not carried out at all. The soils lose fertility with the nutrients. Instead, organic farming relies on diversity and changes the types of crops in one area. For example, potato is followed by sugar beet and then rye. This protects the floors and does not leach them out. In addition to improving soil fertility, well-thought-out crop rotation ensures that pests and weeds are kept in bay.

Pesticides: The European corn borer, for example - as the name suggests - is targeting corn. But if wheat grows in the field instead, it has no chance of spreading. Weeds are more difficult to assert if vegetables are grown in between that suppress weeds. Pure grain crop sequences, on the other hand, promote the spread of unwanted grasses. And summer weeds can be countered by growing winter crops. Together with mechanical weed control, chemical pesticides can be dispensed with.

Diversity: In organic farming, every wild plant is by no means an enemy. Who should have ever wondered about sunflowers on the edge of the field: Like other flowers, these are there to attract beneficial organisms and stabilize ecosystems.

Animal husbandry: One of the principles of ecological agriculture also includes animal husbandry that is as species-appropriate as possible. This includes more space, regular exercise and better feed. Feed that is solely geared towards fattening and performance is also prohibited, such as keeping cages for laying hens or fully slatted floors for pigs. This attitude makes the animals less sick. The prophylactic administration of drugs such as antibiotics to all animals via the feed is not permitted in organic farms. If animals get sick, they are treated individually. This means that soil and water are not contaminated with medication and the risk of developing resistance to pathogens is reduced.

Genetic engineering: And last but not least, organic farming and GM crops are incompatible. The genetic engineering industry produces few high-yield varieties - mostly for feeding animals that are grown using enormous amounts of pesticides. The organic farm relies on robust varieties and diversity. Because only a variety of genetic resources enables the breeding of new varieties that are able to meet the diverse future requirements.
Good for people and the environment

What solution you found to cover those needs?

This way of doing business leaves good ground for the production of our food for future generations. Drinking water and water are not polluted and the oceans are not over-fertilized. Organic farming protects biodiversity and produces healthy food without toxic residues. The carbon footprint is significantly better than that of conventional agriculture. In a report, Greenpeace showed how the ecological restructuring of agriculture can massively reduce CO2 emissions.
Can organic farming feed the world?

Yes! In the long term, only sustainable agriculture can ensure global food supply. Because industrial agriculture lives above its means: resources and soils are so exhausted - in order to achieve high yields - that fertile arable land is destroyed. A system that cannot be maintained for long.

Organic agriculture may deliver lower yields than conventional in industrialized countries

What actions did you take to reach the solution?

- *A combination of a political actions and awareness raising program in combination with training programs for farmers and agricultural experts on sustainable and resilient agriculture.*
- *Promotion of new delivery networks and food-chains for resiliently and sustainably produced food and produce.*
- *Creation of networks of farmers and agricultural experts for training and exchange of knowledge, expertise and heritage*
- *Support for "labels" for consumers to identify sustainable produce at markets such as "Demeter",*

If any, which partners or other organisations did you involve during the process?

In addition to networks like Demeter, Allnatura and other, they closely work with political lobby groups on national and European level and educational institutions such as agricultural universities and training centers.

What were the main problems or difficulties you had to face?

Costs of food is still to low in order to pay correct money to farmers. People need to learn that good food has its price.

What is the situation now, after your actions?

Public awareness has improved tremendously and need for organic food etc. has developed its own market share.

Main lessons learned along the way? *

n.a.

Annex:

Max 3 Images

Other related resources

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