

AUSTRIA

Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness

Location

Schön

Programming period

2014 - 2020

Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

Measure

M04 – Investments in physical assets

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 650 000

Total RDP funding 120 000*

(* EU & regional)

Project duration

2015 – 2016

Project promoter

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Schwarzenbach,
Niederösterreich

Contact

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Website

https://noe.lko.at/?+Bio-Eier-statt-Milchkuehe-Landwirtschaftskammer-Betriebsreportagen-Interviews+&id=2500,2457353,1570770,,_bW9kZT1uZXh0InBhZ2luZz15ZXNFXzEwJTl1X0FOQ0hPUiUyNQ

An Austrian family converted their dairy farm to produce organic eggs from laying hens in a barn after they saw an opportunity in the market.

Summary

The Oberger family in Austria decided to convert their dairy farm to produce organic eggs amid low milk prices and growing demand for organic products. They also wanted a less physical and labour-intensive production method as well as to farm using organic methods. The family converted the farm to organic in 2014.



The family built a modern barn according to organic guidelines to house 6 000 organic laying hens in 2015. They also created a covered outdoor area and measures for the hens' welfare such as dust baths. Conveyor belts transport the collected eggs, which are then marketed by the company 'Schlögl Ei'.

Results

An organic barn was constructed to house 6 000 laying hens including an outdoor area and measures for their welfare.

The family supplies 5 500 organic eggs per day to the company 'Schlögl Ei', which markets them.

The family expects the barn to pay itself off after 20 years, after an 830 000 euro investment (of which around 740 000 euros are gross costs for the project including 120 000 from EU and national level).

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ A key success factor for the employment change was the support provided by the work council of the agricultural chamber. Working groups include 10 to 20 farmers, each of whom is supervised by a consultant for several years.



Context

The Oberger family in Austria decided to change their dairy farm business in light of the poor market situation in the milk sector. The family analysed their accounting data and decided they could not continue the business economically and were already overworked. They looked at alternatives and saw an opportunity in the market to sell eggs from organic laying hens. The family was faced with the decision: to become bigger or do something else. They decided on the idea of producing organic laying hens.

Objectives

The family's goal was to safeguard the future of the company and increase their quality of life. They sought a less physical and labour-intensive approach and therefore decided to convert their farm from dairy cattle to organic laying hens. They decided that production of organic eggs was an obvious alternative in light of rising demand. They also wanted to manage the farm in an organic way.

Activities

The family converted the farm to organic in 2014 and Mr. Oberger developed necessary knowledge through courses. The family built a modern stable according to organic guidelines for a total of 6 000 organic laying hens in 2015. The stall is divided into two flocks of 3 000 hens each. They also constructed a covered outdoor area and six hectares of spouting. The barn has sufficient daylight and opportunities for the hens to use dust baths and play on surrounding straw bales, which is good for their welfare. The nests, which lie on a conveyor belt, are accessible to the hens at any time. When most hens have laid their eggs, the conveyor belt transports the nests and eggs to the collection point, where the eggs are printed with the production code. The daily egg collection takes about 1.5 hours. The eggs are picked up unsorted twice a week by the company 'Schlögl Ei' and marketed under the organic brand 'back to the origin'.

Main Results

Oberger supplies 5 500 organic eggs per day to Schlögl and the family is very satisfied with the marketing of 'Schlögl Ei'.

The farm faces extra costs from organic hens, amounting to a cover fee of between 10-11 euros per hen per year.

Investment costs amounted to 830 000 euros gross, of which around 740 000 euros are gross costs for the project. EU and national funding reached 120 000 euros without an agrarian investment loan. The family expects the barn to pay itself off after 20 years.

Key lessons

The change in farm work was accompanied by the work council of the agricultural chamber. The agricultural Chamber organises working groups of 10 to 20 farmers, each of whom is supervised by a consultant for several years.



The decision to produce organic eggs was obvious. *"Firstly, demand is rising. Organic eggs are appreciated by consumers. Secondly, I have always managed my areas very close to nature!"*

Michael Oberger

Additional sources of information

www.meinbezirk.at/wiener-neustadt/lokales/ein-bauer-mit-herz-und-hirn-d1780476.html?cp=Kurationsbox
www.zukunftsraumland.at/index.php?inc=project&id=1427