Organic Farming in Austria 2003

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1 Introduction

Austria is still one of the leading countries in Europe concerning the share of organic farms and organic farmland. After a great wave of conversions to organic farming in the mid-1990s and a decrease of about 1.800 farms around the year 2000, another boom of conversion followed. From 2001-2003 especially the area of arable land has increased by more than 50%, the number of farms by about 700.

Three main factors contributed to the rapid conversion of farms in the mid-1990s: the federal subsidies that were introduced in 1991; the agri-environmental programme, which was introduced in 1995; and favourable conditions for the conversion of many grassland farms. The decrease of the number of organic farms was caused by problems in marketing, especially in the alpine regions in Western Austria. This situation showed, that incentives concentrating on the production side are not sufficient to develop a production chain from the farmer to the consumer.

During the recent years (2001-03) another period of conversion started. About 700 farms and 30.000 hectares have been converted, primarily in Eastern Austria, where producers of cereals and vegetables decided to change their way of agricultural production. Young and innovative farmers, with a different future perspective, took over their parents' farms and realized, that a change has to be made, both from the ecological and the economic point of view.

Figure: Development in the Number of Organic Farms in Austria, Including Farms in Conversion -1970-2002

Click on graph for enlarged version.
2 History and Development of Organic Agriculture in Austria

The first organic farms were established in Carinthia (Kärnten) in 1927 and 1935. Organic farming was brought to Austria by newly-arrived farmers and has been sustained by consumer demand. These farmers heralded organic farming as a new lifestyle and as a reform of life in general (Pirklhuber and Gruendlinger, 1993). In the following years, the example set by successful organic farms and by both new and experienced organic farmers in all parts of the country slowly but steadily led an increasing number of farmers to convert to organic farming. Since most organic farms were mixed farms, many of the organic farmers began to market their products to consumers directly on the farm or through farmers’ markets and organic food shops (Pirklhuber and Gruendlinger, 1993; Vogl, 1999).

Without a doubt, the organic farming boom in Austria was caused by government subsidies distributed on a federal scale:

- 1989 Three Austrian provinces (Upper and Lower Austria and Styria) provide subsidies to individual farms converting to organic agriculture.
- 1991 The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry introduces subsidies for farms converting to organic methods.
- 1992 Subsidy programme for converting and certified organic farms.
- 1995 Start of the agri-environmental programme (OePUL 95).
- 1998/2000 Follow-up programmes (OePUL 98, OePUL 2000)

The volume of subsidies for organic farming increased from ca. 145.000 Euro in 1989 to 15.5 million Euro in 1994 and to 76 million Euro in 2002.

In 1995 the introduction of the agri-environmental programme "OePUL - Oesterreichisches Programm zur Foerderung einer umweltgerechten, extensiven und den naturlichen Lebensraum schuetzenden Landwirtschaft" ("Austrian National Aid Programme for the Promotion of Extensive Farming Which Protects the Natural Living Conditions"), a national aid programme in compliance with Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2078/92, caused the number of organic farmers to increase again by about 5,200 farmers within one year. In 2002 95% (about 17.900 farms) of all the organic farms participated in the OePUL-Programme. Organic farming represents the highest level of the OePUL programme. In 2002, more than 136.000 Austrian farms with 2.257 Mio. hectares participated in this programme. They received in total 605 Mio. Euro, of which 76 Mio. Euro were dedicated to organic farmers (measure "Biologische Wirtschaftsweise").

The shift to organic farming systems was accompanied by intensive advertising by the large food chains and food processors, which first...
introduced organic brand names to their assortments in 1994. These industries launched intensive promotional campaigns through the media, emphasising not only the merits of organic products and their brand names, but also successfully linking them to positive attributes such as "well-being", "pleasure" and "Austrian landscape and culture". This resulted in greater public awareness of organically produced foods and created a greater demand for organic products. As it could be seen all over Europe, the BSE-crisis created a boom in consuming of organic products, but this boom has also levelled off and turned into a stable demand for organic products.

In February 2001 the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture presented the first Action Plan for Organic Farming, in July 2003 the second Action Plan. This concept includes recommendations for improved consumer information, marketing training, advice and research.

The Action plan is available at the Information Portal for Austrian Agriculture:

- Aktionsprogramm Biologische Landwirtschaft 2003-2004
- Info on Organic Farming on the Austrian Agriculture Information Portal

3 Statistics

An overview of the Austrian general agricultural statistics is given in the table below.

Agricultural Statistics Austria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total area</td>
<td>83,858 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (1996)</td>
<td>8,058,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per km² (1996)</td>
<td>96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP in billion Euro (1999)</td>
<td>195.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP: Share of farming, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of farmland of total area (1997)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total farmland without forests</td>
<td>3,132,424 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land utilisation (2000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Arable area</td>
<td>1,365,290 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Permanent crops</td>
<td>60,676 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grassland</td>
<td>1,643,490 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of farms (1999)</td>
<td>217,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average size of farms</td>
<td>16.6 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural employment (1998)</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organically cultivated area (31.12.2001)</td>
<td>296'154 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of organically cultivated farmland</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of organic farms</td>
<td>18'576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The importance of agriculture in Austria is comparable to that in many other western European countries. The number of organic farms and their share of the total area is high. Currently the number of organic farms amounts to 18,576 managing 296,150 hectares. This is 11.6% of the agricultural land and 9.2% of the Austrian farms (31.12.2002).

4 Organic Agriculture Organisations

4.1 ARGE-Biolandbau

Before the organic farming boom, Austria’s organic farmers belonged to various associations that had been founded over the years. The spectrum of organisations reflects their different approaches to organic agriculture, regional differences and different marketing strategies. According to the Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Förderung des biologischen Landbaus (ARGE; http://www.bioinformation.at), 64.5% of Austria’s organic farms were organised in farmers’ associations in 1999. The remaining 35.5% are mostly extensive grassland farms in western Austria in the provinces of Tyrol and Salzburg. They are not organised and farm only according to Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 and the Austrian Codex Alimentarii. Their products (meat and milk) are marketed through traditional marketing channels.

At present, there are eleven organic farming associations in Austria. The largest of these is Ernte, which comprises nearly ninety per cent of all organised organic farms. These associations have established their own standards, some of which are stricter than the existing legal standards in Austria (Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 and the Codex
4.1 ARGE-Biolandbau

The umbrella organisation ARGE Bio-Landbau (http://www.bioinformation.at) was founded in 1984. Its aim is to represent the common and special interests of all member associations. Due to differences of opinion between association representatives, ARGE was non-functional for a prolonged period of time. However, after a new beginning in 1990, ARGE established its position as the main representative body for organic farming in Austria.

Some associations did not agree with ARGE’s new agenda and founded a second umbrella organisation, the Oesterreichische Interessensgemeinschaft fuer biologische Landwirtschaft, OeIG ("Austrian Association for Biological Agriculture"; http://www.oekoland.at), in autumn 1994.

Today (2001), seven farming associations are members of ARGE Bio-Landbau. ARGE thus represents most of the organic farmers organised in associations. Its main function, aside from basic PR work, is to represent the interests of organic farming before authorities and political interest groups, and to organise public activities such as organic festivals and farmers’ markets.

In 1998, the BIO CLUB was founded, a consumer service, that offers information about organic agriculture and organic products (www.information.at).

ARGE is the umbrella organisation of:

- Ernte fuer das Leben (http://www.bio-ernte.at), founded in 1979;
- Oesterreichischer Demeter-Bund (http://www.demeter.at/), founded in 1969;
- Foerderungsgemeinschaft fuer gesundes Bauerntum, ORBI, founded in 1962;
- Biolandwirtschaft Ennstal, founded in 1988;
- Verein der biologisch wirtschaftenden Ackerbaubetriebe, BAF, founded in 1986;
Freiland Verband, (http://www.freiland.or.at), founded in 1987, organic producer association since 1992, marketing of certified KT-Freiland Products since 1994 (via the deliveryservice "Frisch und Frei-Hauszustellung").

Hofmarke (http://www.hofmarke.at/), founded in 1996.

4.2 Oesterreichische Interessensgemeinschaft fuer biologische Landwirtschaft, OeIG

Five farming associations and four marketing associations are members of the second umbrella organisation, OeIG (http://www.oekoland.at).

Its members advocate the development of regional infrastructure for the processing and marketing of organic products (on-farm processing, producers’ co-operatives, direct marketing to consumers, organic food stores) and the development of organic brands. They take a critical view of the current trend towards marketing organic trade names via the supermarkets\(^\text{12}\). In accordance with the statutes of the OeIG and its emphasis on promoting distribution facilities, its membership not only includes farming associations, but distribution groups and individuals as well.

OeIG is the umbrella organisation of:

- Erde und Saat, founded in 1987;
- Dinatur, founded in 1990;
5 Regional Distribution of Organic Farms in Austria

The largest concentration of organic farms is in regions with a high proportion of grassland (Tyrol, Salzburg, and Styria).

Experience has shown that grassland farms or farms with a high proportion of grassland are easier to convert to organic farming because they have always been cultivated extensively.

In the traditional arable regions of eastern Austria (i.e. the provinces of Burgenland and Lower Austria), the number of organic farms is considerably lower.

6 Land Use, Animal Husbandry

About two thirds of the certified organic farms in Austria are grassland farms, while about one third are predominantly arable farms. Approximately five per cent grows special crops (fruit, herbs, etc.) and wine. Presently, however, there is tendency for more arable farms to convert.

Austria’s organic farms are small and medium-scale, and the average size is approximately sixteen hectares. About 75 per cent of all organic farms comprise up to twenty hectares. Approximately ninety-seven per cent of all organic farms have cattle, on average between eleven and eighteen head. Organic farms without cattle are located almost exclusively in the arable regions of eastern Austria. The number of animals varies greatly from region to region.

The total number of livestock kept on Austrian organic farms in 2002 shows the overall importance of dairy farming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Number of Animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>319,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy cows</td>
<td>87,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suckler cows</td>
<td>62,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>77,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>38,921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Livestock on Organic Farms in Austria 31.12.2002
7 Standards and Certification

The minimum legal standards for organic farming in Austria are defined by the Council Regulation EEC No. 2092/91. Members of farmers’ associations must also fulfil the (usually stricter or more specific) regulations of their associations.

Organic farms are registered with the Landeshauptmann (head of the provincial government). The prerequisite for registration is a contract with an inspection body. Unannounced inspections are carried out once or twice a year, in accordance with the EU standard. Each inspection costs between 1,500 and 1,800 ATS (approx. 110 - 130 Euro). The largest inspection body, ABG (Austria Bio Garantie), inspects more than fifty per cent of Austrian organic farms.

In 1994 the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry introduced a label to guarantee product safety to the consumer. The "Austria Bio-Zeichen" ("Austria Organic Label", see figure) may be used by approved farmers, processors and trading companies. It guarantees that the food bearing this label originates from organic farming. In addition, the label certifies that at least seventy per cent of the ingredients originate from domestic organic farming.

Figure; The "Austria Bio-Zeichen"

There is also a supplementary logo for non-domestic organic products (12) (see figure).

Figure : The "Bio-Zeichen" Without Indication of Origin

Since January 1998, all inspection bodies must prove that they have established a quality management system according to the European
Norm EN 45011. Inspection bodies are monitored by the Austrian Accreditation Service of the Department of the Ministry for Economic Affairs.

The prerequisites for accreditation as an inspection body include: reading a quality management handbook, a two-day office audit and a one-day witnessed audit during inspection by the inspection body at an organic farm or processor's site. The audits are conducted by a team of four technical experts who specialise in the regulations and standards for organic farming, quality management, food processing and EN 45011. The accreditation requirement has reduced the number of certifying bodies from twenty-two to seven, and has significantly increased the quality of inspections and certification \(^{13}\).

The following inspection bodies operate in Austria:

- **ABG**, Austria Bio Garantie, Gesellschaft zur Kontrolle der Echtheit biologischer Produkte  
  Koenigsbrunnerstrasse 8, A-2202 Enzersfeld
- **BIKO Tirol**, Verband Biokontrolle Tirol  
  Brixnerstrasse 1, A-6020 Innsbruck
- **BIOS**, Biokontrollservice Oesterreich  
  Feyregg 39, A-4552 Wartberg
- **Lacon Privatinstitut fuer Qualitaetssicherung und Zertifizierung oekologisch erzeugter Lebensmittel GmbH**  
  A-4122 Amreit 13
- **LVA**, Lebensmittelversuchsanstalt  
  Blaasstrasse 29, A-1190 Wien
- **SGS**, Austria Controll-Co.Ges.m.b.H, Johannesgasse 14, A-1010 Wien
- **SLK**, Salzburger Landwirtschaftliche Kontrolle GesmbH  
  Maria-Cebotari-Strasse 3, A-5020 Salzburg

Certification is performed by the farmers' associations or by the inspection bodies for their own association's labels and by the Agrarmarkt Austria Marketing GesmbH; for the "Austria Bio-Zeichen".

8 Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91

The Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 stipulates the minimum requirements for organic farming in Austria. Additional regulations are determined by the farmers' associations. The farms are inspected according to the EU standard. Seven inspection bodies have been accredited by the Accreditation Service of the Ministry of Economic Affairs (see above).

9 Government Subsidies

The first Austrian agri-environmental programme was launched in 1995 (OePUL, "Oesterreichisches Programm zur Foerderung einer umweltgerechten, extensiven und den natuerlichen Lebensraum..."
The participating farmers were bound to the contract for five years. It ended in December 1999 and was followed by a new five-year contract with OePUL, which started in 2000.

About 17,500 registered organic farms (which is about 95% of all organic farms) receive government subsidies through OePUL. Almost fifty per cent of the subsidies are paid by the EU. The remainder is provided by the federal and provincial governments (sixty per cent federal, forty per cent provincial).

Subsidies per hectare (through OePUL 2000):

- **Arable land:** € 327
- **Grassland:** € 250
  - Multiple-cut permanent meadows and cultivated pasture
  - One-cut permanent meadows (x 0.5)
  - Meadows producing hay, grazing land and mountain hay crops (x 0.25)
- **Market gardens:** € 508
- **Vineyards, fruit, vegetables, tree nurseries, hops:** € 800

10 Marketing

10.1 The Market

According to estimates by Allerstorfer (2000), the annual turnover of organic products at the domestic wholesale level amounts to three billion ATS (218 million Euro). This in turn corresponds to a market share of approximately three per cent of Austria’s total food market. This figure is up to ten per cent greater in certain sectors. More than seventy per cent of the entire production is distributed via conventional food chains, approximately ten per cent is sold directly via regional marketing channels (restaurants, hotels, bakeries, schools etc.) and thirteen per cent is sold through organic and health food stores.

10.2 Marketing via Supermarket Chains

In the early 1990s, the explosion in the supply of organic products led to marketing via supermarket chains. The baby food producer Hipp had already begun to produce organic baby food and showed interest in converting his production completely. The supermarket chain Billa / Merkur launched the organic food brand “Ja! natuerlich” (“Yes! naturally”) in 1994. Austria’s biggest supermarket chain now (2000) offers a wide variety of dairy, meat and cereal products, ice cream, various deep frozen products and vegetables, baby foods, juices, and fresh fruit and vegetables under the “Ja! natuerlich” brand name. More than fifty per cent of the bread offered by Merkur is organic.
By now, all major supermarket chains (including discounters) such as Adeg, M-Preis, Maximarkt and Spar (“Natur pur” dairy products) have come to offer organic products.

Ernte has co-operated with bakeries since 1996. “Panda bread” and “Nimm natur” are well-known brand names for organic bread, which is sold in bakeries all over Austria. In 1999 Ernte started to co-operate with dairies and launched the “Bio+” brand for various dairy products that are sold in supermarkets (Magnet, Maximarkt, Unimarkt, Nah & Frisch) and organic stores.

The intensive marketing of organic brand names by the individual food chains has caused consumer demand to increase. Farmers, or at least their representatives, and not the wholesalers or packers, negotiate the prices with the buyers. Without these negotiations by Oekoland (Ernte’s marketing organisation), these buyers would have purchased abroad or from non-organised Austrian Codex farms. Since such farms have no representation, this would have reduced the price of organic products. The results of the price negotiations have not always met the producers’ expectations, which in some cases has led to discontentment among the organic farmers.

Organic products have improved the image of the supermarket chains. As a result, their turnover and their customer base have increased. It can be assumed that the customers do not limit their purchases to organic products, and that their overall turnover has increased as well.

Not all organic farming representatives view marketing the products via big supermarket chains as positive. While recognising the positive PR effect for organic farming as a whole, they fear that when organic farmers become suppliers to big corporations, they will lose out in the end.

In particular, members of the OeIG view developing intermediate marketing strategies between the two extremes of direct farm sales and the supermarkets as an important task. Representatives of the Ernte-Verband consider expanding regional distribution channels to be a desirable long-term goal. At present, more than ten people in the provincial associations are working on developing regional distribution and marketing strategies.

10.3 Other Marketing Channels

Organic farmers’ co-operatives are another way to market organic products. One example of this is “Die Hoflieferanten”, a group of organic farmers in Lower Austria who are members of the association Erde & Saat. They market a wide range of products under one label to organic shops in Upper and Lower Austria and Vienna, as well as to restaurants in the region. The marketing co-operative also owns two shops, in Waidhofen / Ybbs (Lower Austria) and in Steyr (Upper Austria).

The Molkerei Lembach is a different kind of co-operative. Twelve organic farmers, members of Erde & Saat, bought a small dairy in the north of Upper Austria. Various dairy products such as milk, yoghurt, butter, cream and cream cheese are produced in a highly professional way. The products are marketed to organic stores.

Several provinces and associations affiliated with the umbrella organisations ARGE Bio-Landbau and OeIG have started co-operative ventures between organic farmers and kitchens in the public and the private sectors, e.g. hospitals and nursing homes.
Home delivery services and organic shops have been established, especially around big cities. Organic markets can be found in cities and villages. There is a big organic market in the centre of Vienna every two weeks, where a wide range of regional products is offered.

Farm shops, the most direct form of marketing, can be found in every Austrian region. Some farm shops offer a range of Austrian and international organic products, such as "fair trade" coffee and chocolate, in addition to their own products.

Examples and addresses can be found at: http://www.bioinformation.at.

### 11 Training

#### 11.1 Agricultural Schools

Various agricultural schools (Landwirtschaftliche Fachschulen) and agricultural colleges (Hoehere Bildungslehranstalten fuer Landwirtschaft - HBLA) offer training programmes or individual courses in organic farming:

- Lower Austria: Tullnerbach, Edelhof/Zwettl, Giesshuebl, Gumpoldskirchen, Retz, Hohenlehen
- Upper Austria: Aigen/Schlaegl, Katsdorf
- Styria: Graz, HBLA Irdning
- Salzburg: Ursprung/Elixhausen

In addition, agricultural colleges constitute essential partners for co-operation in scientific experiments (on cultivation, varieties, etc.).

#### 11.2 Training Programme for Organic Farmers

The Association of Agriculture for Upper Austria in Linz offers a one-year specialised programme for organic farmers. It serves to train future opinion-makers and organic farming advisors. The programme covers theory and practice. It incorporates the links between animal husbandry, soil biology and agricultural ecology. Furthermore, it looks at important questions pertaining to species-appropriate animal husbandry, computer operation, legal aspects and business management.

#### 11.3 Magazines With Regular Articles on Organic Farming in Austria

- Ernte Zeitschrift fuer Oekologie und Landwirtschaft
  Newsletter of the farmers’ association Ernte. Articles cover ideas and information on organic farming techniques, processing, and marketing. ERNTE fuer das Leben (ed.), Europaplatz 4, 4020
12 Advisory Service

Most farmers’ associations offer advisory services to their members. Advice is also provided by the provincial agricultural associations and the regional farmers’ associations.

In addition, most organic farmers’ associations publish magazines with contributions on organic farming. The quality and frequency of the advisory services depend upon the requests, the availability of personnel and the advisors’ qualifications. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry offers a training programme for advisors specialising in organic farming. Agricultural schools with an emphasis on organic farming offer advisory services as well.

Since the sharp increase in the number of organic farms in Austria in the 1990s, there have often not been enough advisory staff available. Farmers who are not members of a farmers’ association often have no access to qualified advisory services.

Advisors of the Ernte-Verband specialising in viticulture, fruit-growing, vegetable gardening or pig production often work in several provinces. Small associations like Erde & Saat, Kopra, Freiland, Orbi, Dinatur and Hofmarke do not have sufficient financial resources to employ advisors. Therefore, the associations’ secretaries or experienced farmers usually provide advisory services. This work is often done on an honorary basis.

Farmers are also organised into regional and specialised working groups. Periodical meetings offer them the opportunity to discuss problems and exchange knowledge and experience. The average size of these groups is ten to thirty members. Meetings take place three to four times per year.
13 Research Situation

13.1 University Institutes

13.2 Private Research Institutes and NGOs

13.3 Federal Research Institutes

A slow but gradual increase in research on organic farming has taken place at the university level since 1992. A central institution for research on organic farming is the Institute for Organic Farming at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Vienna. (For addresses see address database).

13.1 University Institutes

- Institute for Organic Farming, University of Vienna  
  [http://www.boku.ac.at/oekoland/](http://www.boku.ac.at/oekoland/)
- Institut fuer interdisziplinare Forschung und Fortbildung at the Universities of Innsbruck, Klagenfurt and Vienna
- Institute for Agricultural, Environmental and Energy Techniques at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Vienna
- Institute for Animal Husbandry at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Vienna
- Institute for Agricultural Economics at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Vienna
- Institut fuer Tierhaltung und -schutz (http://www.vu-wien.ac.at/106/index.htm) at the Veterinaemedizinische Universitaet Wien (http://www.vu-wien.ac.at)
- Institute for Alpine Agriculture at the University of Innsbruck

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces / Associations</th>
<th>Ernte-Verband</th>
<th>Official Bodies (Chamber of Agriculture)</th>
<th>Demeter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burgenland</td>
<td>1 advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Austria</td>
<td>2 advisors</td>
<td>1 advisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Austria</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 advisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salzburg</td>
<td>1 advisor</td>
<td>1 head of organic agriculture section 5 advisors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrol</td>
<td>1 secretary (Ernte-Verband)</td>
<td>1 co-ordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vorarlberg</td>
<td>1 advisor</td>
<td>1 head of organic agriculture section 6 advisors</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1 head of organic agriculture section 6 advisors</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1 co-ordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1 advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Groess, 2000)
13.2 Private Research Institutes and NGOs

The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute in Vienna is one of Austria's oldest research institutions for organic farming.

13.3 Federal Research Institutes

- The Federal Agency for Agro-biology in Vienna, Department of Organic Farming; e-mail: office@agrobio.bmlf.gv.at
- Bundesanstalt fuer Bergbauernfragen in Vienna; e-mail: office@babf.bmlf.gv.at
- The Federal Agency for Alpine Agriculture in Irdning

14 Challenges and Outlook

During the recent years, Austria has known several ups and downs in the development of organic agriculture.

In the years 2000/01, the end of the first five-year agro-environmental programme OePUL 95 brought new challenges. 1,800 farmers (especially in the western alpine regions) reconverted to conventional farming because of problems in marketing their products. A fact that showed, that governmental subsidies aiming on the production are not sufficient to develop the organic chain from the farmer to the consumer. On the other hand, starting in 2000/2001, farmers in the arable region in Eastern Austria converted to organic farming. Meanwhile (2003) the area of arable land grew from 60,000 ha in 2000 to 100,000 ha in 2003. The reason for this second boom in Austria is not only the market for cereals and vegetables (potatoes, onions, carrots), but also the new generation of young farmers that took over their parents’ farms and decided to work in a different, more ecological way.

Challenges for the future include developing ways of co-operative management that take into consideration the interests of organic farmers, processors and traders as mediators between producers and consumers.

Another central challenge still remains consumers’ education in organic agriculture. Considerable educational and public relations work is needed to increase the consumers’ understanding of and interest in organic farming. To this end, ARGE Bio-Landbau founded the BIO CLUB in 1998. The idea was to maintain close contact between organic farmers and consumers. In the meantime, the project has been accorded to the consumers’ needs and has been developed from a “club” with the opportunity of membership into a consumers’ information centre – “Bio Info”. Information is offered via Internet (www.bioinfo.at), a telephone service.

Comparable to other European countries, during the past 20 years, lots of different organic associations developed, either on a regional level or with a different understanding of “organic culture”. This lead to a difficult situation of differing and competing interests, which even weakened the importance of organic agriculture's associations in Austria. Since beginning of 2003, organic umbrella organisations (ARGE Bio-Landbau, ÖIG, Bio-Ernte Austria's federal organisation) and their member associations are working on a complete change of the situation in
Austria. The umbrella organisations will be united and replaced by one new association "Bio Austria". Advisory, quality management, information, marketing, etc. should be organised in a better, much more efficient way, which will give farmers and processors better service and consumers more security and quality. Thus, for the moment, is the biggest challenge in Austrian organic agriculture, because it's a chance for a sustainable development in the future in Austria and in Europe.

Of course, challenges are also caused by the situation of agriculture in the European Union in general and by EU Agricultural policy: GAP reform, GMO-coexistence, enlargement of the European Union put important questions, that have to be answered and to be kept in mind for the future development in the European Union.

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