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Sustainable Agriculture – Producers & Consumers in Germany

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
1 Introduction.....	2
2 The Role of Agriculture in the Society.....	3
2.1 The Function of Agriculture - The Producer's Point of View.....	3
2.2 The Agriculture's Image.....	4
3 Sustainable Agriculture	10
3.1 What is it?.....	10
3.2 Eco-Production – The Consumer	11
3.3 Eco-Production – The Producer & The Legal Framework.....	17
4 Conclusion.....	19
5 References.....	20

1 Introduction

“The damages of our present agriculture all come from the determination to use the life of the soil as if it were an extractable resource like coal, to use living things as if they were machines [...]” (Berry, 2002) – A quote which almost cries out to be finished with “[...] and has to be counteracted with a change in attitude and practice – with the change towards SUSTAINABLE agriculture.”.

A change towards sustainable agriculture - this is what is needed to work against *“the damages of the present agriculture”* (Berry, 2002) – and a big part included in the overall goal 'Sustainable Development', topic of the Brundtland Commission. According to the Brundtland Report this term is to be defined as the *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* (WCED, 1987). Many more definitions of this term can be found and I claim that most people know at least the broad sense of it as it is nowadays a widespread term in almost every niche of our society. Used in the media, from politicians, economists, proprietors and also explained and subject of debate in school, the term is in everyone's lips and ears. But what is behind all this? Even though this term is used everywhere and everyone seems to be familiar with it, it will be interesting to know how settled it really is.

Sustainable practice in agriculture should not just reduce its damage to the environment and slow down climate change, it should also ensure the food supply for the growing world population and therefore *'the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'* (WCED, 1987) – short: the ability to eat one's fill. Of course there is no uniform way leading to sustainable agricultural practice as differences in biological, economical, political and societal conditions in different countries (but also regions within one country) require different procedures.

This essay will inform about the engine towards the change, the crowd whose buying decisions influences the progress – the consumers - and the people directly involved in transforming agriculture to sustainable agriculture – the producers – in Germany. Of course not only producers and consumers play an important role since agricultural politics and (global) competition are acting as the speed limit in this comparison. However, the essay's focus is set on the producer and consumer, thus chapter 2 deals with the farmers opinion about their own work and the image of the agriculture in the society from the consumers point of view. The next chapter will then again deal with the consumers

demand, opinion, expectations and imaginations on the basis of empirical studies, this time with the focus on ecological food production. Furthermore, the attention is drawn to the producers site and informs about German legislation as well as the EU Agricultural Policy and barriers for the change from conventional to ecological agriculture.

2 The Role of Agriculture in the Society

2.1 The Function of Agriculture - The Producer's Point of View

Agriculture fulfils many functions which are according to different respondents weighted differently and can also change and develop with time. Probably the most important points to mention in this relation are the functions: Producing food to ensure the society's food security, care of landscape and cultural area and environmental protection (Canenbley et al, 2004). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development it is to say that "*Agriculture in addition, to producing food and fibre, produces a range of other non-commodity outputs such as environmental and rural amenities, and food security and contributes to rural viability*" and is therefore a multifunctional industry (Canenbley et al, 2004).

The BIOGUM research paper 'Functions of Agriculture in Germany' from Canenbley et al focuses amongst others on the functions of agriculture for the society from the farmer's perspective. For this purpose, interviews with 15 agriculturists (8 male, 12 female; with and without agricultural training) of the metropolitan area of Hamburg, Germany have been carried out and gave the result that for these persons, agriculture has the primary function of producing food to create food security for the population, which also seems to be the main incentive for their own work. Simultaneously, farmers feel that this basic and actually obvious function of agriculture is falling into oblivion, or rather taken for granted. Reason: The Germans are doing too well (Canenbley et al, 2004). Since this feeling, or rather this development is closely connected to the image of farmers and the appreciation of their work from the consumers point of view and therefore at a later time the consumers buying decision, this point will be discussed more precisely in section 2.2. Sticking to the agriculturists opinions of their own work within the society, preservation of the cultural landscape through landscaping via active handling of nature is seen as a provision of service for the commonality and a significant function as well. Protecting and wisely using the natural resources should be ensured with their methods of production which secures

their own existence as well as the common good 'Nature'. Environmental regulations and protection measures are therefore not seen from the positive side, but as limitations to their work (Canenbley et al, 2004). Furthermore, securing their own subsistence, being part of the rural culture as well as communicate skills about agriculture, plants, animals and nature are also named functions. The latter is seen to be of great importance in regard to the mentioned problem of taking agriculture for granted. Canenbley et al argue that the agriculture need to present itself in a modern way, create a social capital and therefore considerably contribute to the people's knowledge of agricultural production processes (Canenbley et al, 2004). Communicating those informations to the consumer is therefore also very important in context of environmental awareness and sustainable agriculture in form of 'sustainable consumption'.

2.2 The Agriculture's Image

With regard to climate change, the role of agriculture has a great share in societal and political discussions since it has a influential part on the overall green-house-gas-emissions as well as it is very vulnerable to climate change itself. This means that besides efforts for environmental protection and the reduction of green-house-gas-emissions, adaptation measures to climate change have to take place in order to achieve sustainability (NABU, 2010). Nevertheless, agriculture is not only part of the discussion concerning climate change, several food scares in distant and near past made agriculture to a big topic. Influenced by this and other factors, a certain image of agriculture is created and will be subject of the following section.

The latest sampling on the image of the German agriculture which was conducted by the TNS Emnid in May 2007 in Germany, is based on the opinions of 1.000 persons aged 14 and over which where chosen randomly and interviewed by telephone.

Concerning the general attitude towards German agriculture, 49% of the respondents answered with a neutral comment when asked 'What comes spontaneously in your mind when talking about German agriculture?', whereas 18% answered with a positive and 23% with a negative association. Even though the negative answers exceed the positive ones, compared to the findings of the study from the year 2002, the attitude in 2007 got more positive as the negative comments where reduced by six percentage points, whereas the positive comments raised with seven percentage points. Negative answers had a slightly higher percentage (8%) with regard to subsidies, followed by answers concerning genetic

engineering, environmental and soil pollution as well as overproduction and sales difficulties, each with 4%. Intensive animal husbandry was, as in year 2002, content of 3% of the responds, whereas in the year 2007, hormone and feed scandals as well as the BSE affair did not play a significant role anymore as in the case of 2002. Positive associations where preferential connected to ecological agriculture (21% of the positive answers), meaning that according to the study, every fifth German appreciates it or is looking forward to its further development. In the year 2002 just 10% of the positive associations where connected to this topic, hence this doubling means that 'ecological agriculture' seems to get more important for the population (TNS Emnid, 2007).

A presentation about 'The Population's Image of the Agriculture – Expectations and Judgements' held by Werner Süßling, project manager of the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, in February 2011, gives information on the consumers imaginations about agriculture which are based on a opinion poll. One part of the results of this opinion poll are shown in the figure below.

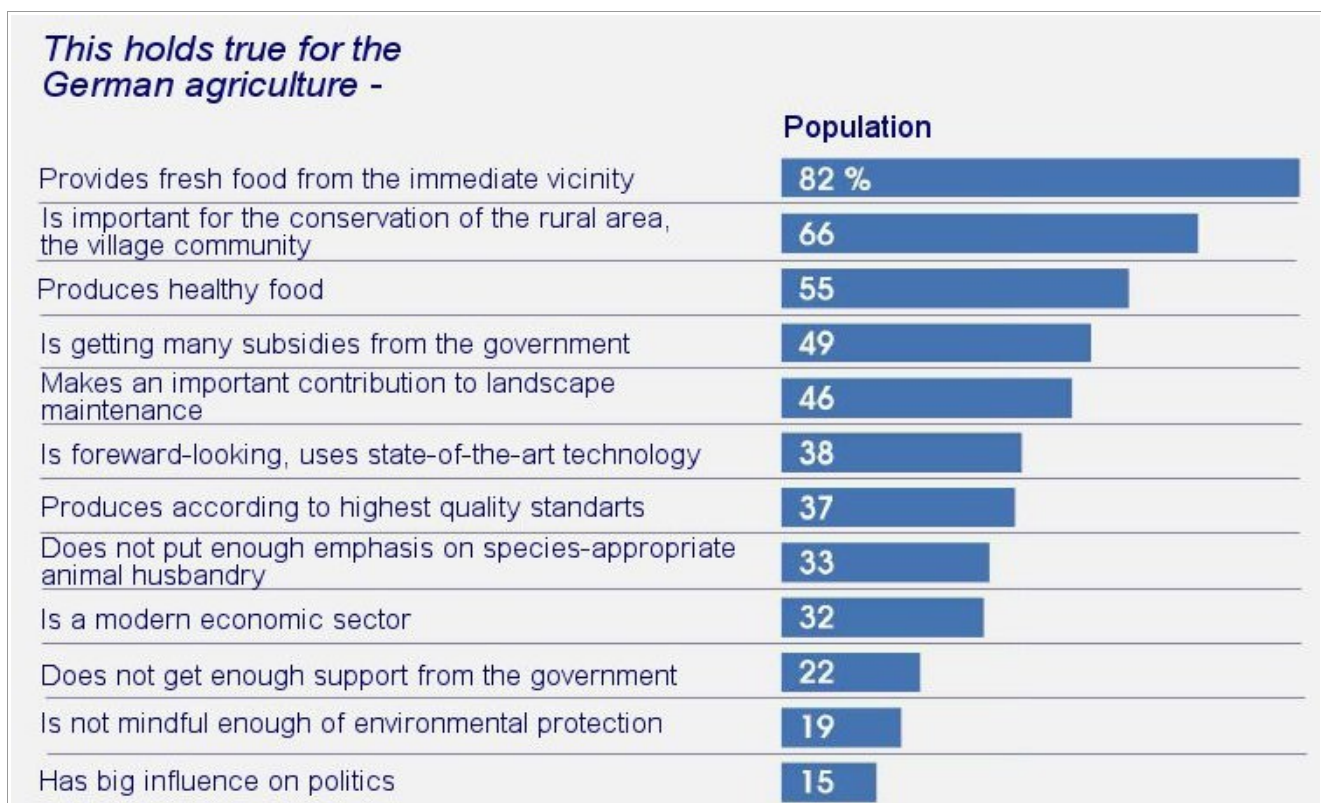


Figure 1: Imagination of the German Agriculture (Süßlin, 2011)

According to these results, the biggest share of the population has the imagination of fresh food from their direct environment when talking about German agriculture. Interestingly only a little more than half of the population connects the production of healthy food with the German agriculture, even though one could assume a positive attribute to 'fresh food' likewise to 'healthy food' which then brings up the question why there is such a big percental difference between the linkage of 'fresh food from the immediate vicinity' (82%) and 'healthy food' (55%) to the German agriculture. Obviously, people do not predominantly associate 'fresh food' with 'healthy food' (and vice versa?).

Coming back to the results, 2/3rd of the population think that agriculture contributes significantly to the conservation of the rural area and the village community and even so 46% believe this for landscape maintenance, both of which correspond to the functions of agriculture mentioned in chapter 2.1. Almost 50% of the population associate subsidies with the German agriculture and even though in this case the statement 'Is getting many subsidies from the government' does not bear a judgement, it reminds of the slightly higher percentage of negative associations with the German agriculture (8% of the negative associations were connected to subsidies) found during the TNS Emnid sampling in 2007 as mentioned previously. In the range between 30% and 40% of the populations consent are statements concerning advanced technical level (38%), high quality standard (37%), insufficient species-appropriate animal husbandry (33%) and agriculture as a modern business branch (32%) (Süßlin, 2011). These numbers show that about 60% to 70% of the population have a more positive image about the German agriculture which at the same time is also connected with an imagination of a more or less 'old-fashioned' way of agricultural practice.

This tendency of the populations more positive image of agriculture as the classical romantic farm idyll (literally translated from the German word 'Bauernhofidylle') was also finding of research of the Department for Agricultural Economics and Rural Development of the Georg-August-University Göttingen. People seem to have this distorted image of agriculture but at the same time, a latent suspiciousness towards the food industry exists. According to Spiller, this has to be traced back to the quality of media coverage and thematisation of predominantly negative contents regarding this industry branch (Spiller, 2007). Another study conducted by this Department took place between the 1st of January 2007 and the 31st of December 2009 and analysed 5.309 articles concerning the food industry of the so called quality press (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Tageszeitung, Die Welt,

Frankfurter Rundschau, Die Zeit, Der Spiegel). Most of these articles dealt with the topics on 'Green Genetic Engineering', 'Agriculture/Environmental Protection' and 'Agricultural Politics'. Also 'Scandals of the food industry' belong to the top ten topics (Spiller, 2011) .

Figure 2 shows the proportion of positive and negative reporting of the press concerning productivity and naturalness in the food industry. Figure 3 shows this proportion with the 'Social Web' as source of information. For better understanding, 'Naturalness' and 'Productivity' will be described in the following. According to Spiller, productivity is connected with: constant availability of food and low prices, fresh fruits also in winter, up to date and innovative food industry whereas naturalness is attributed with: nature and animals are centre point of agriculture and food industry, the use of less technologies during production of food and the possibility to buy food from smaller farms.

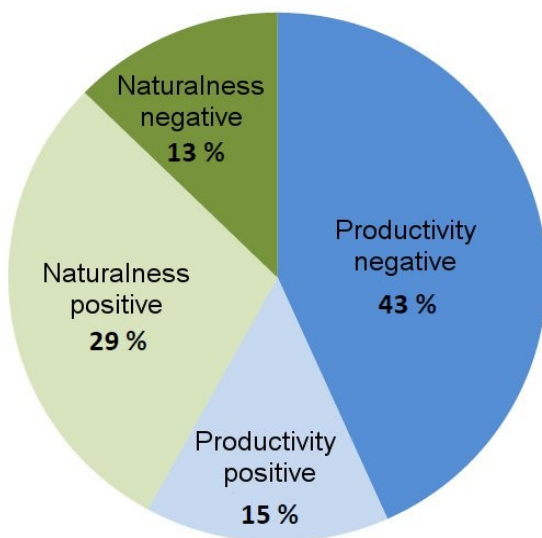


Figure 2: Reporting and Judgements
The Press (Spiller, 2011)

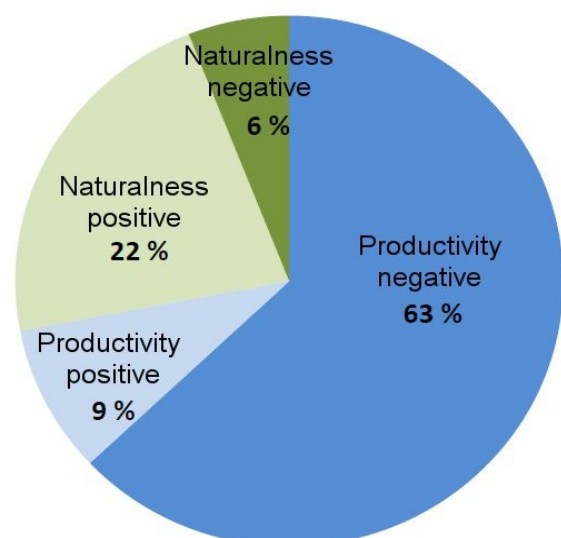


Figure 3: Reporting and Judgements
The Social Web (Spiller, 2011)

As one can see from figure 2, most of the reports are connected with negative judgements. This is even more intensive when analysing the 'Social Web', which was also part of the study mentioned before. Between August 2007 and August 2009, 50.931 posts released in different forums (www.blogs.taz.de, www.spiegelonline.de, www.landtreff.de etc.) where analysed and the results can be seen in figure 3. In this case, there is a lower percentage in negative releases concerning naturalness, but a significantly higher percentage in releases concerning productivity when compared to the results of figure 2. Obviously, negative reports exceed positive ones which highly makes itself felt during the communication between the consumer, for which it is assumed that they speak their minds

in those forums subject to the analysis.

In this context it is also interesting to look at the 'GPRA – Trust Index', which visualizes the trustfulness of Germans in enterprises and institutions (Pfeffer, 2009). The following figure shows the trend of the Germans trustfulness in the period from the fourth quarter in 2009 until the third quarter in 2011. In the context of this essay, one should focus on the red line, indicating the trustfulness in the food industry.

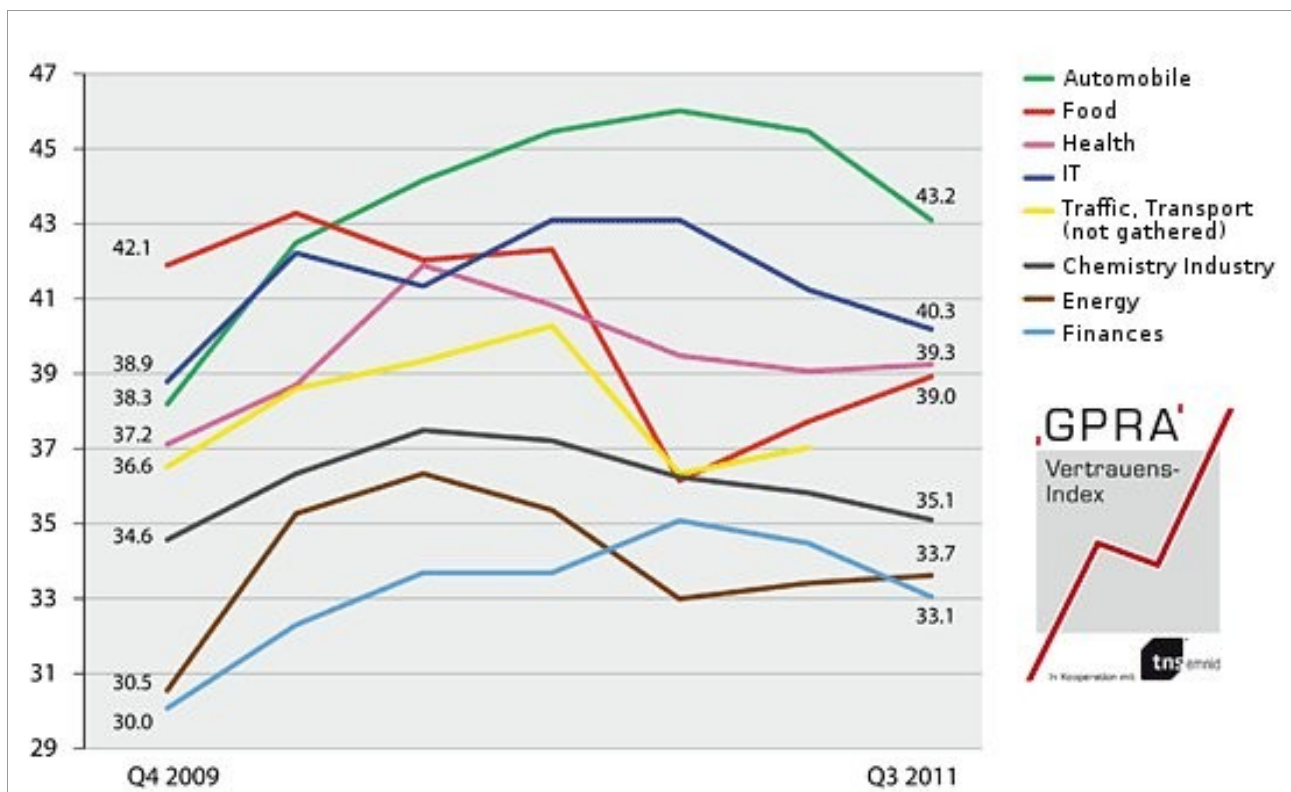


Figure 3: The Trust Index 2009 – 2011 (GPRA, 2011)

The trustworthiness of the German food industry had obviously a significant breakdown in the first quarter of the year 2011. Responsible for this is the so-called 'Dioxin Scandal' in January 2011 and the issue on the *Escherichia coli* agent (EHEC) in May 2011. Understandably, those issues in the food industry influence the image of it and agriculture in this regard is therefore also affected. Nevertheless, Spiller claims that the media has a big influence on the consumers' image of agriculture and reasons this with a growing paucity of the direct contact with agriculture and therefore the growing dependence on the media when information is required. Thus a more or less distorted image is created. Negative associations are directed towards the processing food industry (Spiller, 2011).

To revisit the topic on the agriculture as a matter of course, it is now drawn on an article released in 'Der kritische Agrarbericht' from 2011 which broaches the issue out of that. In this article it is actually said, that negative reports do not influence the people's positive image of agriculture that much. Pre-condition: those people stay in closer contact to agriculture and are able to observe it by themselves and make it a usual topic in their lives. This gets even more support if a farmer is known personally. On the contrary, agriculture eludes more and more out of the observable area and people have a great distance to it even though they perceive it unwittingly via fields or livestock they see when passing by. This is actually the point where agriculture becomes a 'non-topic', something which is there and will always be there, something which is taken for granted. In this case the media definitely has a big influence as agriculture is then just perceived via this channel and a differentiated image of it can not be made (Helmle, 2011).

For the agriculture's non-distorted image, its general appreciation and hence also for the progression towards sustainable agriculture, a qualitative use of the media and more professional public relations has to be carried out (Helmle, 2011; Spiller, 2011).

3 Sustainable Agriculture

3.1 What is it?

As mentioned earlier, sustainable agriculture should ensure the food production under certain ecological and sociological frame conditions, meaning that highest output alone is not the main focus anymore but environmental and societal concerns play also an important role (Maeschli, 1999). This very general description of what it should be does not clarify how it can be achieved. This in turn can not be summed up into one single predefinition as many regional differences in ecological, economical and societal conditions require different procedures. Nevertheless, the following objectives can be applied in general (Maeschli, 1999):

- Ensuring food supply with healthy and high-quality food
- Environmental and resource saving production processes
- Conservation of biotope and species diversity as well as the public landscape
- Advancement of the usefulness, the protection and the recreational function of the cultural landscape
- Adequate income for economical efficient and environmental sound farms

Sustainable development – interaction between ecological production, economical efficiency and social compatibility. When looking at the objectives mentioned above, one can easily see the goal conflicts between these three fields as it exists for example between economical efficiency and ecological goals. As previously mentioned, the consumer plays a great role in this process/conflict as its buying decisions influences the demand on sustainable produced food: Just if there is a relatively high demand on sustainable produced food it is interesting for the producer to meet this demand. On the other hand, these products need to be in the price range affordable for the consumer. Likewise, on the one side the expectations towards farmers to produce in an environmental and climate sound way, promote the sustainable development of the rural area and guarantee the food safety, and on the other side the farmer's need to adapt to changing market conditions (such as globalization), technological progress and national policies reveal another goal conflict (IAMO, 2011). Without certain compromises between these three ranges (ecological production, economical efficiency and social compatibility) a

development is thus not possible (Maeschli, 1999).

3.2 Eco-Production – The Consumer

Sales data reveal that the demand on ecological produced goods in Germany is increasing (Figure 4). Between 2000 and 2009 the turnover of ecological products increased by 180%. The estimated overall turnover of ecological products in the year 2010 was 5.9 billion EUR and relatively stable compared to 2009. In the first half of 2011, whole-food stores could register a growth of 8% of their revenues (Zeit Online, 2011).

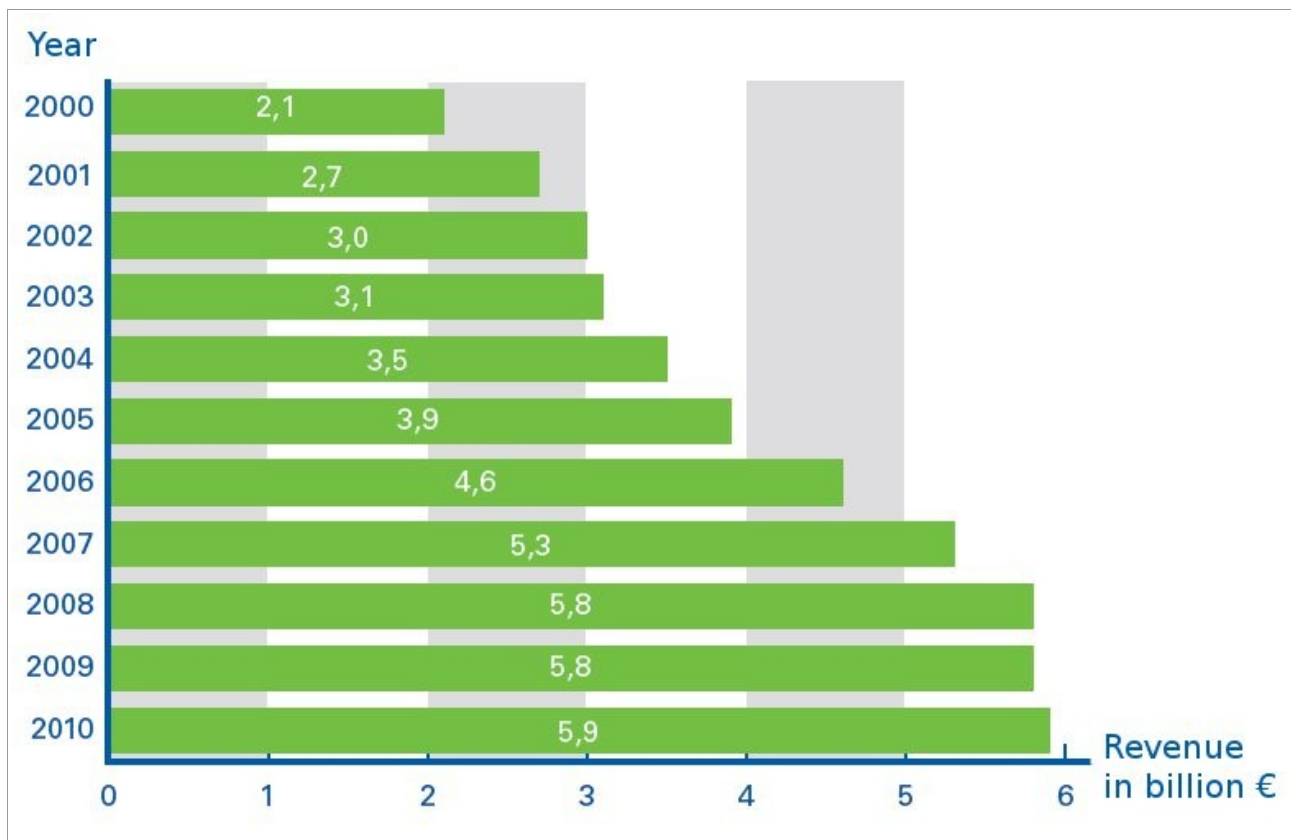


Figure 4: Sales on ecological products over the years (BÖLW, 2011)

Also the number of ecological farms and the area used for ecological agriculture is increasing but grew in between 2000 and 2009 just by 75% to 22.000 farms and by now about 6% of the total area. At this point we reach the problem of the unbalanced ratio of demand and supply: German eco-farmers can not satisfy the consumers demand on these products and the import ratio is increasing (Zeit Online, 2011). The imports on eco-products almost doubled within the three business years 2007/2008 to 2009/2010, imports of grain increased by 65%, root crops by 30% (BÖLW, 2011) and the local agriculture is

more thrust aside as foreign suppliers enter the German market to satisfy the demand. Evidently, the consumer reaches for eco-products more often. Reasons for this and the settlement of the reputed increased environmental awareness (BMU, UBA 2010) in buying behaviour should be revealed based on several studies which are subject to the following.

Healthy nourishment is of growing importance and with it, the willingness to pay for it. In 2008 about 50% of the population claim that good nourishment is important in life, 13% claim it is very important. In 2010 the percentage of the people saying it is very important to them did not change but now 56% say that healthy food is important in their lives. Looking at the expenditures, good nourishment got the second place with 50% of people claiming there are willing to pay more for it. The first place is occupied by expenditures for the house, flat and the furniture. Travelling, clothes and hobby took the third, fourth and fifth place. The most popular criteria for food shopping with 86% compliance is 'as fresh as possible' followed by 'a low price' (60%), 'seasonal products' and 'regional products' (53% and 53%) and 'not genetically modified' (48%) but also 'species-appropriate animal husbandry' (45%), 'seals of quality' (44%), 'German products' (38%) and 'no additives' (36%). The criterion 'ecological products', 'environmental friendly packaging' and 'fair trade' got the compliance of 21%, 19% and 16% of the respondents. At the same time 79% of the consumers expect from the agriculture species-appropriate animal husbandry, that sustainable production processes are used (72%) and that low-cost production ensures low prices (57%). As one can see, there are several contradictions in shopping criteria and expectations as 'low prices' is number one criteria with biggest influence on buying decisions but the expectation towards the agriculture to ensure species-appropriate life stock keeping and sustainable production exceed the expectation of low price ensuring. Also the general statement if conventional agriculture should switch to ecological agriculture got 60% compliance, 24% where irresolute and 16% support agriculture aiming for maximum output also with the help of pesticides (Süßlin, 2011).

These percentages affirm the high amounts of imports on ecological products, but even though people seem to focus on regional or at least national products, the true reason behind the increasing demand on ecological products are in most cases purely selfish with respect to health concerns and the desire for high-quality food. The 'environmental motive' lies behind the egoistic aspect, nevertheless it is number one mention (90% compliance: species-appropriate husbandry) when asking in general for the reasons of buying ecological products (BMELV, 2010). However, figure 5 shows the peoples focus when they

where asked for their personal reasons. About 65% claim that quality and freshness of the products is the crucial factor and shortly after with 64% compliance 'Avoidance of pesticide traces' is named. Ranked third, one of the 'environmental motives', namely 'compliance with social standards, appropriate income for the producer' is named from 49% of the population. Knowing the producer, positive contribution to climate protection and trademark of an ecological producers association are also important reasons (BMELV, 2010).

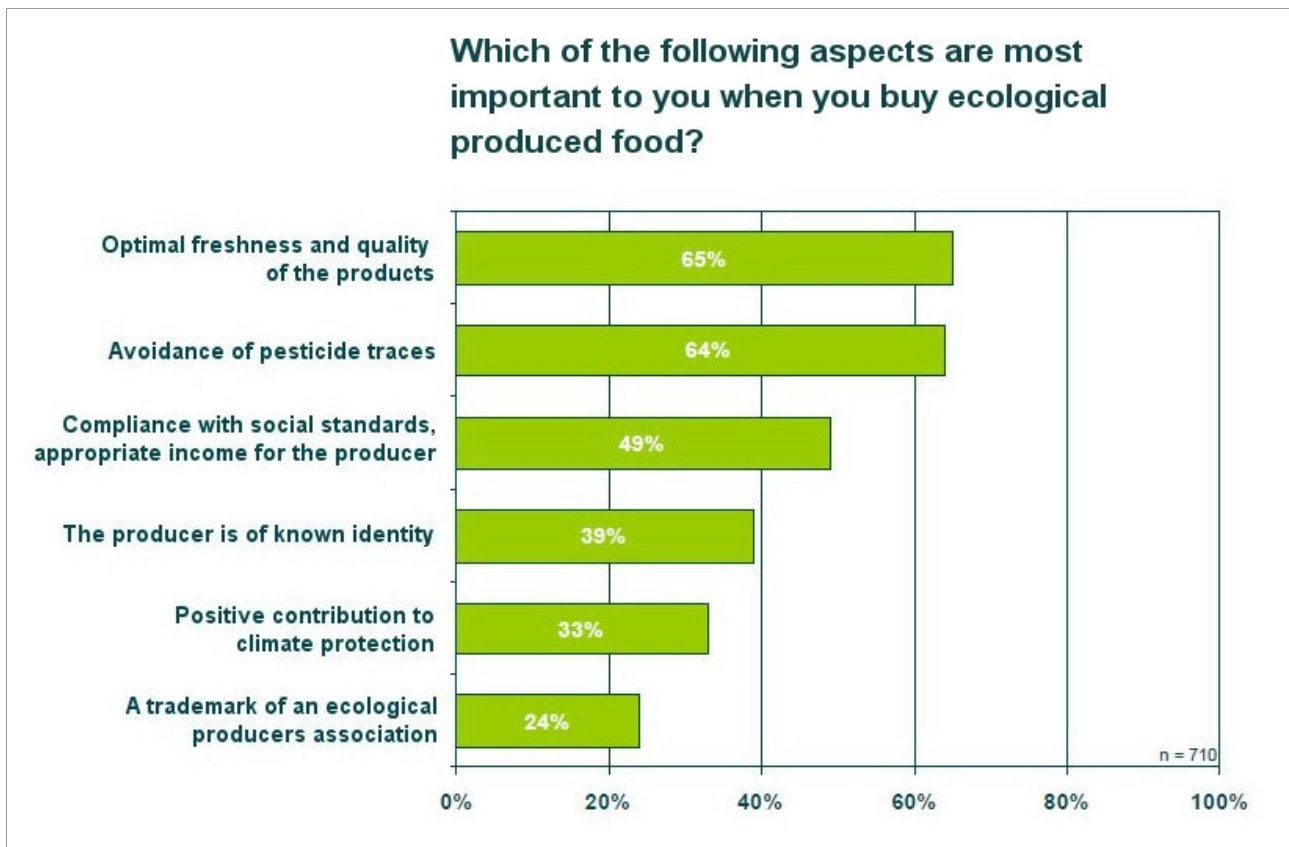


Figure 5: Buying Motives (BMELV, 2010)

As mentioned earlier, there are different reasons for the consume of ecological produced products. These reasons can be categorized according to three different motive types and therefore different consumer types. According to Faltns, the 'environmental motive' has altruistic reasons like environmental protection, species-appropriate husbandry and sustainability and implies a responsible lifestyle. Those consumers thus have a greater compliance with statements on social standards, fair income and the positive contribution to climate protection. The egoistic profile can be separated into the motives of health/safety and the motives of quality which are connected to the lifestyles health and wellness. The health/safety motive includes the reasons of less contaminated food, food

scandals or own children/pregnancy whereas the wellness motive include quality, taste, freshness and enjoyment of food (Faltins, 2010). According to the data, the two latter motives are obviously more common, whereas the altruistic motive is in general more accepted, a common courtesy or at least the public's assumption to be the driving force for the demand on those products (referring to the general question for the reasons of buying eco-products which was responded by a 90% compliance on species-appropriate husbandry according to the findings of the BMELV, 2010).

The target group can be named as LOHAS, people with a 'Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability'. An ethically correct, aware and sustainable life without abandonment of enjoyment and consume but instead of increased consume a better, reasonable and sustainable consume is important to the members of this type. This includes the special attention towards quality and health and therefore an increased demand on ecological produced goods. For overturn it is therefore very important to consider this new target group, as about every fourth German belongs to it by now and target-oriented marketing could exploit it further (Faltins, 2010).

In contrary, people which do not buy ecological produced food reason this with the fact that they just can not afford the additional charge or are not willing to. This is also reflected in the buying behaviour of people who occasionally or infrequently buy those products, the group which are expected to bear a further potential of growth in means of development from occasionally/infrequently buying to frequently buying. This group is very price sensible which can be seen in figure six, showing the preferential suppliers of eco-consumers and figure seven, showing the suppliers with highest trustworthiness.

According to this, more than 80% of the eco-consumers buy there products in the conventional supermarket, 60% buy them in a discounter and 62% at the weekly market. The whole-food shop and the eco-supermarket lay more behind with 44% and 35%. Also the health shop (in German the avowed notion 'Reformhaus') is not so popular with 29% compared to the supermarket and the discounter. This can have several reasons and can, according to figure seven, not be traced back to the level of their trustworthiness. In this case the discounter and the supermarket lay far behind with 9% and 13% standing for a median of 4,6 and 5,0 on a scale from 10 'Fulfil the strict criteria of organic farming thoroughly' to 1 'Fulfil the strict criteria of organic farming not at all'. Producer (65%, median 7,6) and whole-food shop (55%, median 7,1) are the frontrunners in this comparison (BMELV, 2010).

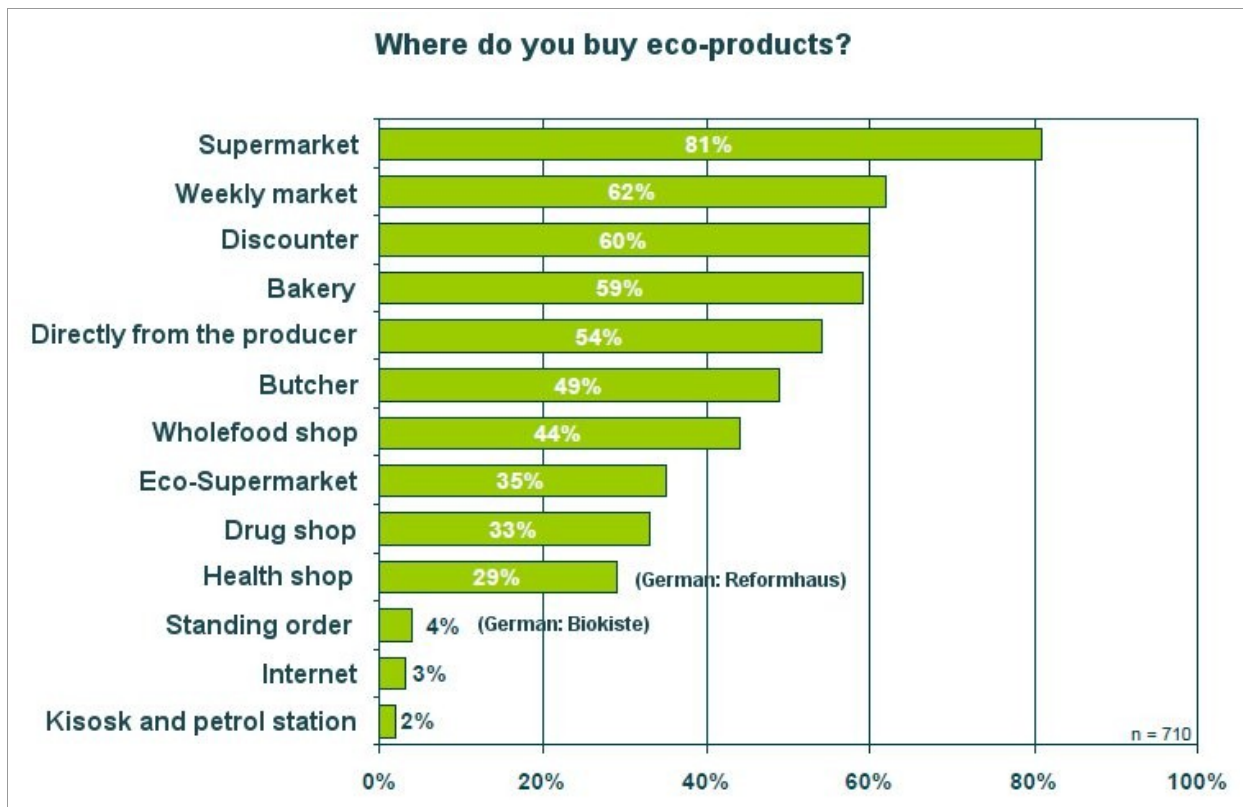


Figure 6: Preferential Suppliers (BMELV, 2010)

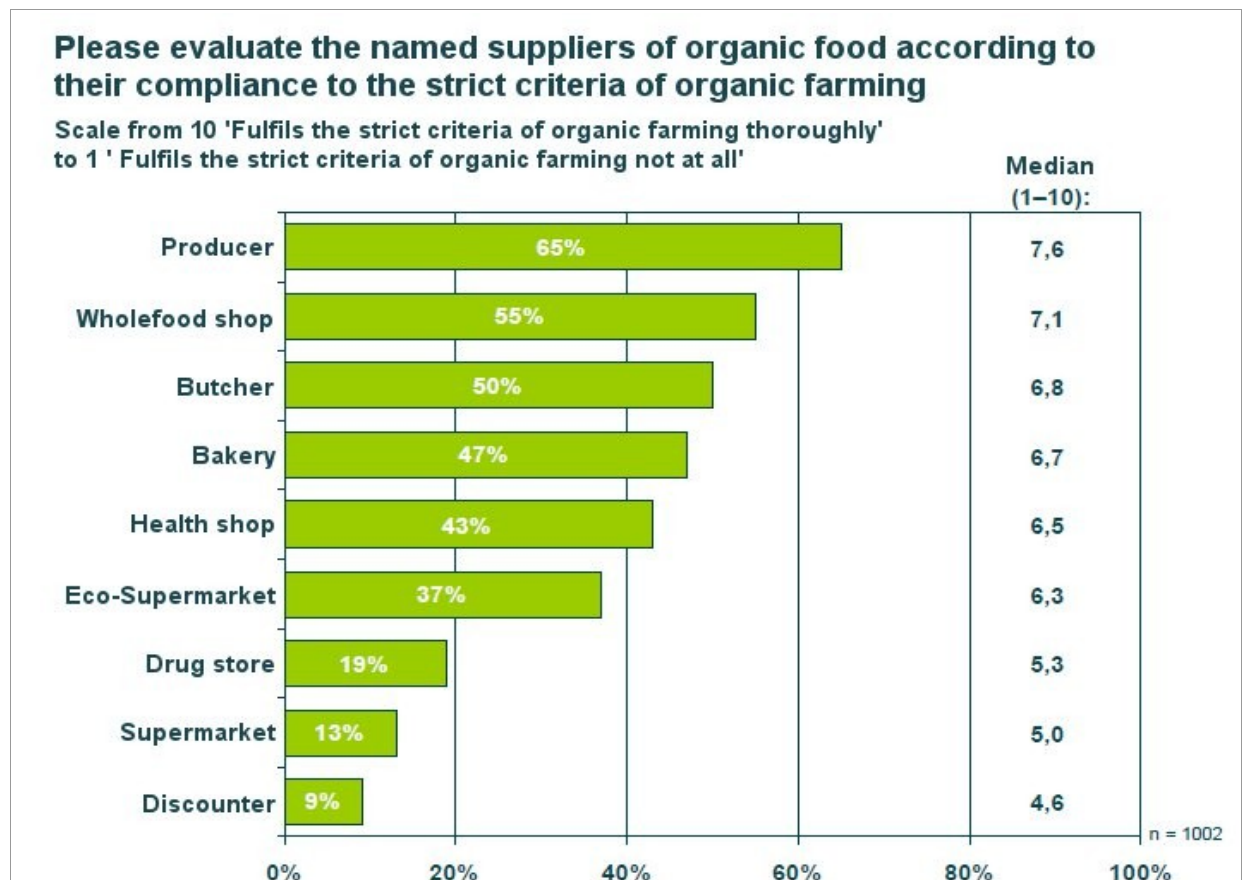


Figure 7: Evaluation of the Supplier's Compliance with the Eco-Criteria (BMELV, 2010)

The gap between the trustworthiness of the suppliers and where the consumer actually buys the products could be put down to the respective distribution of the suppliers. Supermarkets and discounters are accessible to everyone and the occasionally or infrequently buyer therefore also reaches for organic products during the normal shopping. It is easier to get shopping done in one place than splitting up the suppliers for different goods. Furthermore, the price also plays a role and since discounters are usually offering products for lower prices, people which are not able or not willing to pay much more for organic products might buy them there. On the contrary, whole-food shops are on the one hand more trustworthy, but usually also more expensive and even though they are relatively widely distributed, conventional supermarkets are still easier to reach. Very important is also the aspect that the purchase directly from the producer is just not possible for consumers living in great distance from farm shops.

Anyway, the occasionally or infrequently buyer is supposed to be the one who could get encouraged successfully to buy eco-products more frequently. For marketing it is therefore of importance to know how these customers can be reached (Faltins, 2010). The following figure shows the channels through which people got encouraged to buy organic products.

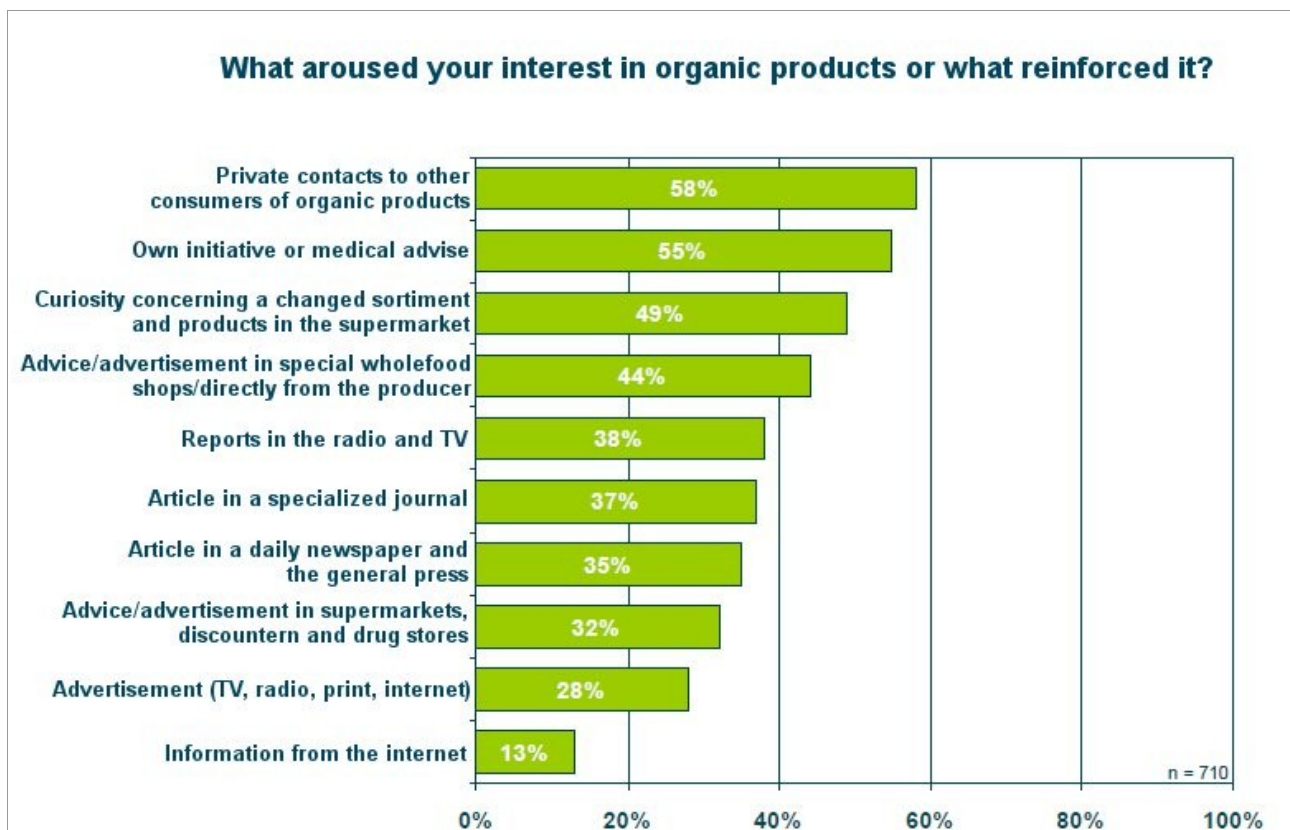


Figure 8: How Consumers Attention to Eco-Products is Attracted (BMELV, 2010)

The classical way of advertising through the media TV, radio, newspaper and internet is here obviously not the most successful trigger. Personal contacts and the own initiative are of greater importance and also the gain of deeper information about those products motivate to buy (BMELV, 2010).

3.3 Eco-Production – The Producer & The Legal Framework

As an answer to chapter 3.2, demand on organic products is not the problem in the way that it is not existent. The problem is that German organic farmers can not meet the demand since their supply is not sufficient, meaning that increasing imports reduce their market share. This chapter will therefore deal with the problems German farmers are facing when shifting to organic agriculture, German policy as well as the EU Agricultural Policy.

The change-over to organic agriculture can be a big or a relatively small step for a producer and depends on its former production processes and operational circumstances. During a certain change-over phase, farmers can not sell their products as 'organic' yet and have to exploit the new market. The expenses in this phase might be relatively high whereas the earnings can be still very low which yields a high financial burden. The governmental financial support is therefore needed and support during the change-over phase is of great importance. Agricultural subsidies are declared in the EU Agricultural Policy and within Germany further allocated to the respective federal states and organised within the particular agricultural action plans. The importance of subsidies, not only for eco-farming but in the whole agricultural sector can be seen by recognizing that about one third of the German farmers are having a second occupation in order to hold their living standards (Dierig, 2011).

Coming back to the topic of organic agriculture, subsidies should enhance more conventional farms to change-over to organic farms, helping to reach the 20%-organic-agriculture goal from the EU until 2020. Also the maintainance of existing organic farms is subsidised, albeit with a less amount of money. For receiving these subsidies and the allowance of denoting the products with the EU organic label, the farms have to fulfil certain minimum standards, compliant with the respective EU legal regulations. Individual agricultural associations like 'Bioland', 'Demeter' or 'Naturland' set higher standards, which go beyond the EU standards and regulate the production and processing in stricter ways. Their members are allowed to denote their products (in addition to the EU eco-label) with

their label. In general, those standards set the framework for animal husbandry with respect to number of animals per area unit, fodder and feeding, breeding and rearing etc., crop farming with respect to crop rotation, the use of fertilizers etc. as well as the further processing of the products and determine prohibitions concerning certain processes and exhaust emissions. Besides subsidies for the farmers, also research in this field is subsidised in order to improve certain production processes with new technique and ecological findings for more efficient working. With respect to the demand of organic products, improving the efficiency is an important topic besides increasing the amount of organic farms if the further replacement of regional products with products from abroad is not wanted.

The EU Agricultural Policy itself is highly controversial, as is its reform, which will set out the new EU Agricultural Policy after 2013 and is subject of debate right now. Regarding the content of the legislative proposal for the redevelopment, the general direction is regarded to yield a positive development as direct payments to farmers should be more connected to environmental friendly measures and therefore support those who produce sustainable (Walter, 2011). Also the support of research and knowledge as well as experience exchange between generations, the financial support of young farmers, fair allocation of the funding between the member states as well as the increased recognition of regional differences are part of the proposals. Critique on the part of associations and NGOs are especially concentrated on the criteria which have to be fulfilled in order to get direct payments. According to the associations, the criteria are not set strict enough as for example a 70% monoculture regulation is proposed, meaning that only those farmers will get the 'sustainability subsidies' who cultivate a single fruit on only 70% of their farmland. Critics claim that it is necessary to bind this regulation for 50% and crop rotation practice in order to really slow down the trend of monocultures (Bio-Markt.Info, 2011). Another point of criticism is that the legislative proposal does not respond to development policy in an appropriate manner. The export subsidies which are enshrined in the EU Agricultural Policy should be further developed and increase the focus on securing and expanding the agricultural market share of the EU in the world trade, which will have negative influences on developing countries (Reichert, 2011).

The Federal Organic Farming Scheme (BÖL) is a German program which should support the development of organic agriculture in Germany and started at the end of 2001, was extended several times and should run until the end of 2015. It was also further developed

and includes now in addition other forms of sustainable agriculture. The available budget for this program in the first two years was 35 Million Euro, in the following years about 20 Million Euro and since 2007 16 Million Euro per year (BELV, 2011). This development is criticized from many sides since the budget reduction does not aid an increasing development of ecological farms, thwarting the expansion and therefore misses out to make the most out of its potential (BÖLW, 2011). In addition to the reduced governmental support, also rising prices in tenancy for agricultural land is slowing down a positive development. Increasing competition about land for feed crops on the one hand and land for energy crops on the other hand prolong the growth of eco-agriculture (Zeit online, 2011).

4 Conclusion

Sustainable Agriculture – to judge by the demand for eco-products in Germany, one could say that it is located on a promising path. Nevertheless, the fact that the biggest share of this demand is met by imports, is making it to a problem for the local farmers. Also the consumers alienation from the agricultural sector, the lack of reliable information and the lack of interest makes it hard to lead to consumers focus on the local agriculture. The media has a relatively high influence on the consumers believe concerning the agriculture if no personal contact to this sector is existing. This is why it is very important for the agricultural sector to draw the consumers attention to them by themselves with targeted marketing and communication. Integrate the consumer in their work and clarifying it, making the production process of the final goods more understandable could clear up the consumer and could have a positive influence on the buying decision.

Also the German agricultural policy bears a problem for the local development for sustainable agriculture. Cutbacks of the funds for a further development, but more subsidies which support the farmers actions towards energy production shift the focus. Rising prices for leased land and possible problems with changing from conventional to ecological agriculture are also further barriers. With respect to the global wish for a sustainable agriculture which would bear a significant improvement for the life quality especially for people in developing countries, the European agricultural policy should shift it's focus. Supporting Europe's market strength means the weakening of other countries and comes hard to developing countries.

Improving the communication between the consumer and the farmers on local level, enhancing the support for the farmers to switch to sustainable practice and to maintain it on national level and recognising the development of sustainable agriculture as a global goal on European and international level would be a step towards success.

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