

BIO VOM BAUERN



Central Idea

When searching for appropriate marketing opportunities for organic food produced by an organic farmer in Southern Styria, we first studied the situation of organic farmers in general. What we noticed is that, even at supermarkets, organic food is gaining ground more and more. All parties involved benefit from this trend except for organic farmers who are still not rewarded in the slightest for their risk and their extra efforts.

In fact, grocery stores are the ones that benefit from a higher surcharge for organic food. Farmers have to conform to strictest requirements and do hardly have any efficient “weapons” against pests and diseases, and, for example, they need about 30% more tractor hours for farming than conventional farmers do.

The enormous consequential damage and costs caused by conventional farming are neither reflected in national accounts nor cost accounts for products and make organic products look expensive. However, when looking at organic farming in its entirety, it would be by far a much more reasonable alternative.



Food Service Industry Demands

At first glance, creating a brand and the corresponding logistics for final consumers seems to be too complex and risky.

Our analysis, however, showed that there is a high demand in the food service industry.

Far Better Utilization Possibility

The food service industry could process much more quality food than food retailers can provide. According to estimates, some 20 to 40% of biomaterials do not hit the stores for optical reasons. For agricultural surplus, the food service industry would be an excellent sales opportunity, as well.

The first thing to do would be to network about 200 caterers and 500 organic farmers via an online platform.



Platform Areas

The platform should offer not only a public area for guests but also a password-protected member area. The centerpiece is going to be some sort of organic product exchange, focusing not only on immediate action but also taking into account lead times of up to 2 years. Caterers purchasing their products from organic farmers shall be presented on the platform. Of course, this goes also for the organic farmers, their farms, their motivation, the added value they are creating, the challenges organic farmers meet, etc.

Organic Quality Products Made in Austria from Your Region

In the long term, “Organic Products from the Farm Store” could be operated in the form of a co-operative or an association. The integration of existing bio certificates is another prerequisite, as well. “Organic Products from the Farm Store” is definitely not an independent seal of quality. This is why only approved organic farmers can take part who have been rewarded their own quality seal.

Participating farmers are acting on their own responsibility and shall invoice their services on their own behalf.

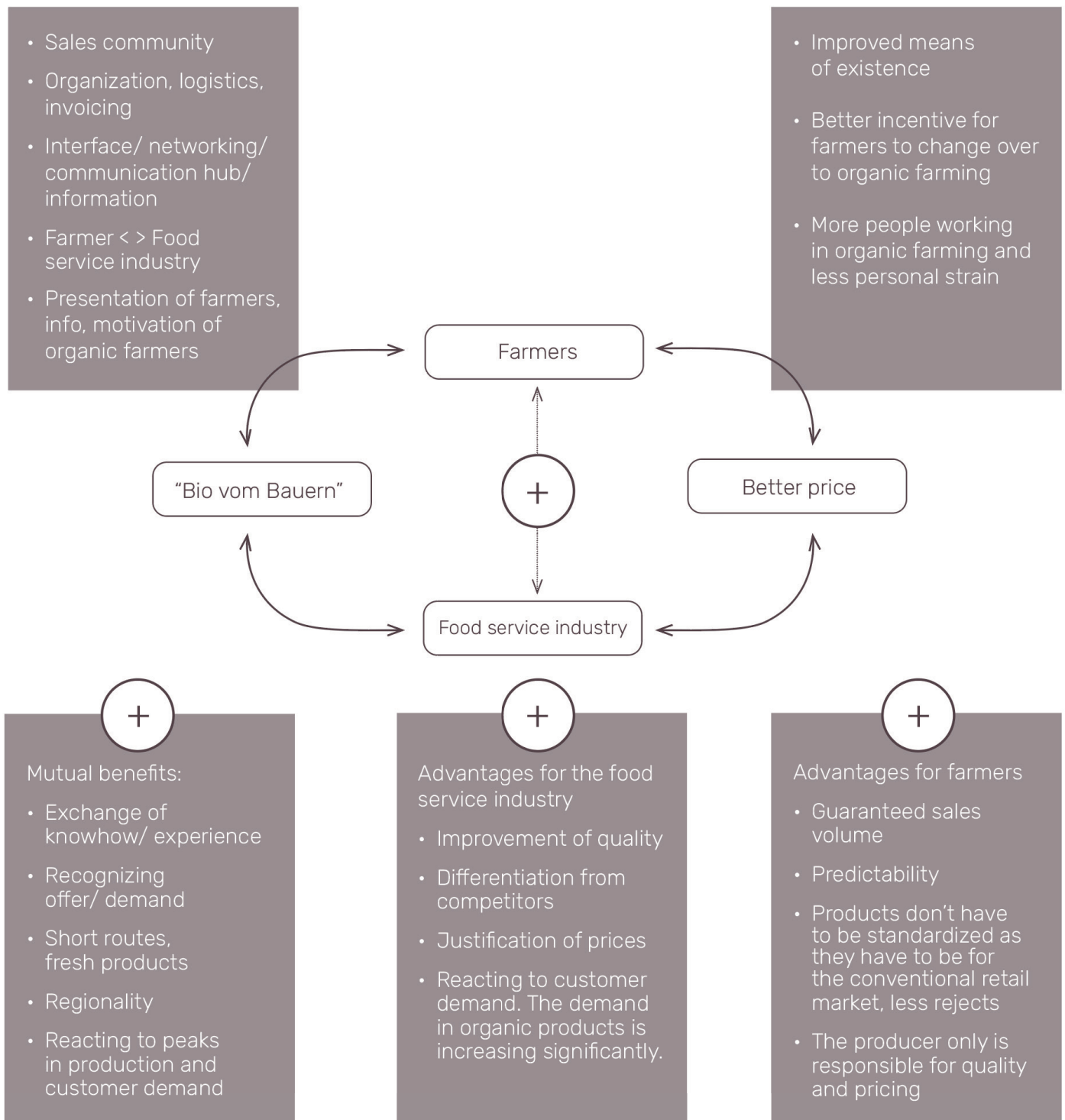
This label shall reflect reliability and delivery quality of partners and allow also to rate the platform.

Logistic Challenges

This project aims at networking farmers and the food service industry via an appropriate web-based solution.

Its centerpiece is some sort of organic food exchange where caterers post their inquiries and organic farmers can respond to these inquiries. In doing so, it is necessary to develop a classification that takes into account proximity, time, volume, and type of inquiry (farming, growing of fruit, herbs, animal farming...) and quality.

The following sketch illustrates the advantages of a cooperation between organic farmers and the food service industry.



„Bio vom Bauern“ and Consumers

The web presentation shows the caterers and organic farmers involved. Depending on the company, farmers will organize “Open Shed” or “Open Barn” days, and it will be possible to visit the participating companies to get a better understanding of the value of food.

Some of the caterers could also be offered a shop-in-shop system. The identification of restaurants and presentation in the menus are essential in this.



Technical Implementation

On the one hand, the web platform is to network organic farmers with consumers of organic products. This means that an organic farmer can use the platform to present their products while the consumer of organic products can advertise for suppliers. The orders should then be handled by various producers (within the network in most cases). Consumers (caterers), too, shall have the opportunity to make use of the platform to present their business.

An important aspect of feasibility is scalability and expansion to other industries and subject areas.

There is a great number of industries that have to cope with the same problems and that could benefit from this portal, as well.

How it works. Roughly.

1. Development of a community portal (login, registration, profile administration, presentation pages)
2. Product presentation / e-commerce based on a multi-shop solution (for the final customer)
3. Database for advertising
4. Backend quotation module
The supplier confirms to handle either the entire order or only parts thereof. The order remains open and other suppliers can join in to confirm partial deliveries.
5. Rating area (every customer can rate the supplier / producer)

The central module will be a “database for advertising”. It provides buyers with various options allowing them to specify advertising in a way that the system can assign demands directly to certain profiles and notify profile users by e-mail of the call for proposals. For this area it is necessary to plan a highly flexible system that can be adapted also for other industries.

Example:

A producer / farmer specifies in his profile “Strawberries”, “Potatoes” and “Wine” as his products / services. A buyer now advertises for 100kg of potatoes per month and 500l of wine per year. The farmer receives this call for proposals and can answer it directly.