



# A territorial approach to organic farming – the case of eco-regions in Austria

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# Background of the Concept

## Definition:

- Eco-Region (Bioregion) in the Austrian context means a sustainable regional development approach where the principles of organic farming are transferred and applied also to other economic sectors.

## Empirical evidence:

- 2002 a survey of regional development initiatives with organic farming as a component resulted in over 30 groups in 23 (micro-)regions

# Background of the Concept

Eco-regions meet the interests of different stakeholders:

- Organic farmers hope to reduce the exchangeability of their products in indirect marketing channels.
- The institutional agricultural sector wants to avoid the separation of food production and maintenance of a cultural landscape
- Retailers want to increase trust into their products
- Environmentalists support the decrease of food miles, the integration into protected area management,
- Regional development agencies want to increase the regional added value and strengthen regional identity
- Tourism managers seek possibilities to single out their destination from the increasingly exchangeable range of attractions offered.

# Scope and Material

## **Scope** of the presentation:

- To analyse the processes of transforming the farm approach of organic farming into a territorial approach

## **Material** used:

- A national funded Austrian project monitors four regions 2005-2006
- The regions vary in structure, geographic location, size and degree of development. Two of the regions use the term "Bioregion" already the other two were still in the preparatory phase.
- Material from
  - ➔ workshops to discuss the specific objectives and scope of the concept.
  - ➔ Monitoring of concrete actions to follow the processes of social network development.

# Results: Preconditions

- The presence of a high percentage of organic farmers (above the national average)
- A regional organisation of the organic farmers is necessary to defend their interests against regional or conventional farming actors
- This organisation should be a networking organisation in order to team up with non agricultural stakeholders.
- The delineation of the region has to be clear. (administrative, cultural historical or natural boundaries)

# Results: Process

- Organic farmers have to develop a clear, commonly shared vision not only for the development of the organic sector, but for the development of their region.
- Based on the organic value system the farmers group can work out a territorial vision for development.
- Building on this vision other stakeholder groups can be actively involved.
- New networks are forged not only vertical along the supply chain but also horizontally to actors who are not primarily market partners.

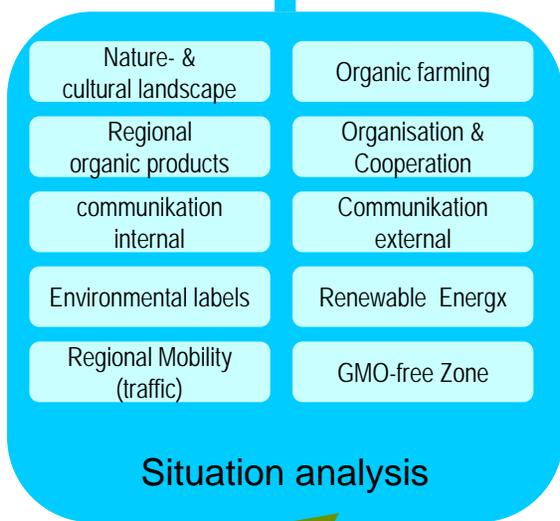


# Activities for the implementation of Objectives

(with constant self-monitoring and periodical evaluation)

Development of common objectives and visions for the region

Development of **konkret Objectives** accoring to criteria



Tourism

Commerce

Gastronomy

Policy

Civil Society

Etc.

Establishment of **Cooperations with Actors from other economic sectors**

**AIM: Contribution to territorial Regional Development** (Basis: value of organic farming)

**Organised organic farmers in a Region**



# Results: Strategies

- Eco-regions can be proposed to provide a framework for sustainable regional development across various economic sectors or
- Eco-regions can be placed into an existing territorial development frame (e.g. a Leader region or a biosphere reserve).

# Conclusions

- Eco-regions have a potential for farmers to integrate more into RD
- Eco-regions have a potential to make sustainable RD operational
- Eco-regions need clear visions
- Eco-regions need a strong organic community on regional level
- Eco-regions depend on networking structures