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MASS CATERING AS A DRIVER FOR AUSTRIAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Isabella Gusenbauer*¹, Markut Theresia¹, Stefan Hörtenhuber¹

¹Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL, Vienna, Austria

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Abstract: In Austria, around 1.8 million meals are consumed daily in public and private mass catering facilities. The aims of this study was (1) to show and assess the current status and (2) to calculate the potential of public catering procurement regarding Austrian organic food. The central question was which share of organic food in mass catering would lead to what increase of organic agricultural area in Austria. These growth potentials were calculated with two scenarios: a monetary organic share of 60% and 100% in food procurement. The results show that 4.9% of the total Austrian agricultural area (132,139 ha) is already consumed by public catering facilities in 2017 and thereof 1.3% for organic food. An increased organic share of 100% in terms of monetary procurement in the public catering sector would theoretically lead to an only slight increase in the total utilized agricultural area need for catering food (from 4.9% to 5.3%). Concurrently, this would mean 3.8 times more demand of organic area.

Introduction: In Austria, around 1.8 million meals are consumed daily in public and private mass catering facilities (such as canteens in schools, hospitals, nursing homes or company kitchens). With an expected increase in the restaurant and catering industry, catering facilities play an important role for a nutritionally balanced diet for the public - not only because of its high demand of food, but also for the supply of high-quality food.

The aims of this study was (1) to show and assess the current status and (2) to calculate the potential of public catering procurement regarding Austrian organic food. The central question was which share of organic food in mass catering would lead to what increase of organic agricultural area in Austria. These growth potentials were calculated with two scenarios: a monetary organic share of 60% and 100% in food procurement

Material and methods: The restaurant and catering industry are characterized by a diversity of institutions (public and private, individual or by central purchasing institutions) and by a diversity of catering systems (for example outsourcing of parts or all of the food preparation to third parties). In addition, the price and availability of food plays a key role in procurement. These factors and the lack of a data basis (there are currently hardly any representative or robust data available for public procurement) already give an indication of the challenges of determining the current quantities consumed and origins of food in the individual institutions (especially in the short term of this project). In order to gather

the necessary data as well as to gain a deeper insight, an online survey was started for this project. The response rate was unexpectedly low, so that only two concrete case studies are included in the calculations.

Therefore, the calculation the nutritional recommendation of the 'The German Nutrition Society' (DGE) for children and adults was used to determine the status quo and support the two scenarios.

Since the amounts of these nutritional recommendations represent an "ideal consumption", the following two factors were additionally taken into account: (1) the actual per capita consumption of meat of the Austrians today and (2) the avoidable food waste of Austrian canteen kitchens. For the data concerning the share of national and organic sourced products, expert knowledge as well as secondary literature had been collected. The results refer only to ingredients of Austrian origin that are currently used in the catering sector.

Results: The results show that **4.9% of the total Austrian agricultural area (132,139 ha)** is already consumed by public catering facilities in 2017 and **thereof 1.3% for organic food.**

Interestingly, experts say that for almost all product groups (except for fats and oils) the average organic share per product group of Austrian goods is on average quite high (figure 1) - even though there are non-negligible differences within each product group: For meat products, a higher organic share is obtained from beef (about 20%) than from pork (about 3%), also between vegetables (e.g. for carrots or potatoes it is over 30% and for tomatoes it is below 10%) this difference can be seen. This reflects the current supply situation in Austria with Austrian products.

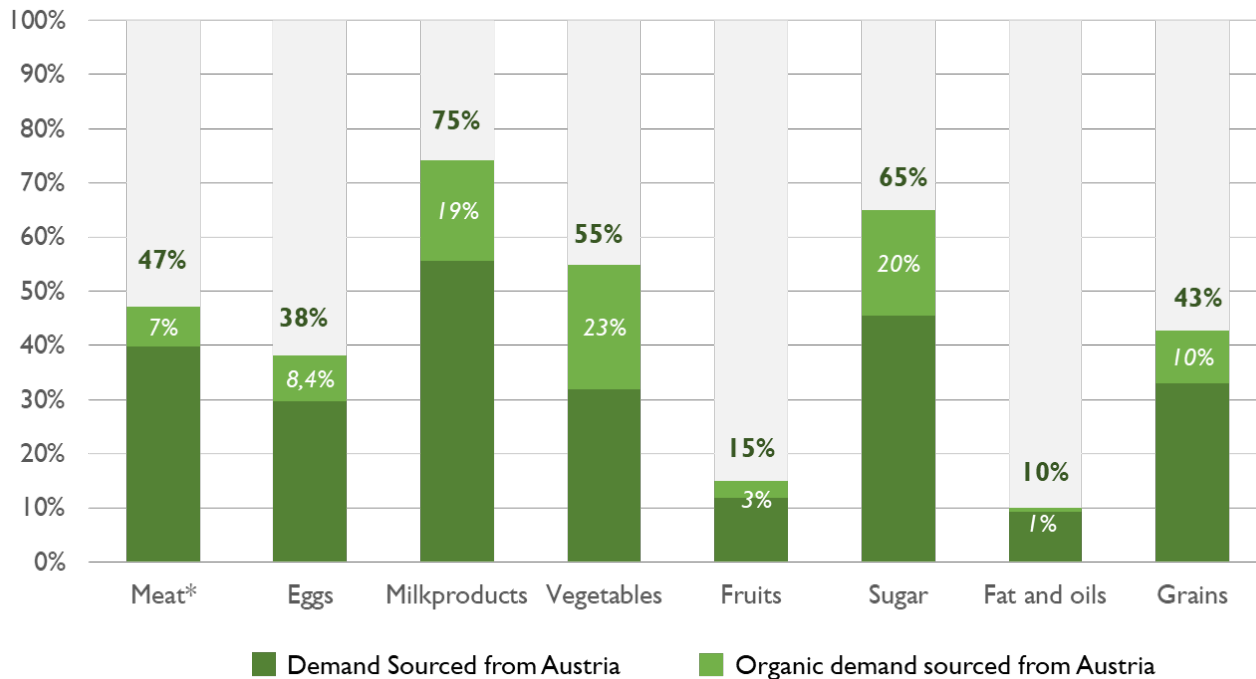


Figure 1: Required quantities for mass catering sourced from Austria; in % per product group ;* incl. animal fat, ecl. fish

An increased organic share of 100% in terms of monetary procurement in the public catering sector would theoretically lead to an only slight increase in the total utilized agricultural area need for catering food (from 4.9% to 5.3%).

Concurrently, this would mean **3.8 times more demand of organic area** (100% scenario compared to the current state).

These additional requirements for a conversion to 100% organic for Austrian goods, would (under the same / consistent market conditions) increase the costs of sales for catering companies under by 24%. It shows that an increase of the share of organic food from Austria would result in a high increase in the share of organic agricultural land.

The scenario calculations are based on the current agricultural situation, which is determined by the factors price and income as well as the current situation of the catering industry (number of menus and share of Austrian origin). The

proportion of food in the public catering that is procured internationally cannot be assessed in this project framework. This may affect another 10-50% (depending on the case study) of the quantities purchased which are not included in the current calculations.

Discussion: As the two case studies show, there are already efforts in the public catering sector, which are committed to a higher share of organic and an increased use of regional food products. The example of Denmark shows how a significant increase in organic share in the public catering can be implemented: There is one national target agreement of 60% organic products in the public catering, which goes in line with no increase in the costs for kitchens by for example meat reduction, reduced waste, conversion to fresh food and targeted training.

As these results include data uncertainties and relates only to the goods already sourced from Austria, a more comprehensive survey of the quantities used in the public catering and the examination of further framework conditions are recommended. For a well-founded political claim, further studies should also include feedback and market effects arising from an increased demand in organic products.

References: *Gusenbauer, I, Markut, T., Hörtenhuber, S., Kummer S., Bartel-Kratochvil, R., 2018.*

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