

MINECROP: Case study of organic farming

About

Ewa and Peter Stratenwerth's farm is located in the village of Grzybów, 80 km west of Warsaw. Peter is a Swiss who moved to Poland in 1989 and bought a farm. From the very beginning, he farmed using ecological and sustainable methods. While still in Switzerland, he learned the farming profession and completed a four-year course in biodynamic agriculture. Ewa, on the other hand, was born and raised in Warsaw, she is a biologist-anthropologist. In 1992 she moved to the countryside.

Ewa and Peter's farm has been certified since 1991, from the beginning the certification body is AGRO BIO TEST. In total, Peter and Ewa manage 28 hectares, of which they own over 11 hectares and lease the remaining 17 hectares.

Problem

The big challenge for the Stratenwerths was to start an organic and sustainable farm business in a small village, where the technology and possibilities were the same as in Switzerland back in the 19th century. The land was not ideal, it was not fertile.

Intervention

Ewa and Peter worked hard and got their certification in 1991, from the beginning the certification body was AGRO BIO TEST. They obtained all the necessary documents and started their organic business from the beginning of the farm. Their previous experience played a huge part in their success. The vast majority of the farm area is occupied by meadows and pastures which are the basis for feeding animals on the farm: 40 goats, a horse, 8 cows and a heifer. Both cows and goats are raised for milk. Cereals, legumes, pumpkins, fodder beets and buckwheat are cultivated in the remaining area (8 ha). The farm has a tractor and machines for field cultivation and hay harvesting, including: a two-furrow plow, a seeder, a harrow, and a pre-sowing unit.

Comparison

Not only do Ewa and Peter farm their organic farm but they run two processing plants: a cheese factory, where they produce ripened yellow cheese using only organic milk, and a bakery. In total, they produce around 20 kg of cheese every week. The bakery, meanwhile, bakes about 1,000 loaves of Hruby Bread every week. There is also a mill on the farm where grains are ground into flour used for breadmaking and a wood-fired bread oven.

Outcome

Products made on the farm (mainly bread and cheeses) are sold in dozens of organic food shops in Warsaw and Plock. In addition, Peter Stratenwerth has been selling his products at the Warsaw Bio-Bazaar since its inception. Here he has the opportunity to meet and talk to regular customers, and to create awareness of the benefits of organic farming and produce, which he greatly appreciates. In total, Hruby Bread and cheeses from Grzybów are bought by around 1000 individual customers every week.

Ewa and Peter Stratenwerth are co-founders of the ZIARNO Ecological and Cultural Association based in Grzybów. Since 1992, together with the Association, they have been organizing workshops for children and youth from towns and villages, which they run on the farm and in the bakery. Together, they are socially involved in the activities of organizations associating organic farmers. In addition, they both take part in many conferences, workshops and study trips.

Resources

www.hruby.grzybow.pl