

Implementation of hygiene rules for local and small-scale production: the Austrian example

Christian Jochum

Austrian Chamber of Agriculture

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Background

personal

- studies of agricultural economics
- working for Chamber of Agriculture in Austria

professional

- national: in charge of agricultural marketing and special crops
 - member of Austrian marketing boards
 - specialist for quality assurance, HACCP, aspects of logistics and distribution, traceability, certification schemes, quality seals
 - member of Austrian Codex Alimentarius
 - juridical and practical experience regarding food labeling, food safety, quality certification, hygiene package, direct sales

Background

professional

- Copa-Cogeca: member WPs „Quality“, „Food chain“, „Foodstuff“, „Promotion of agricultural products“
- Commission:
 - president of Advisory Group „Promotion“ 1999 – 2007, since 2007 vice-president, since 2013 again president
 - member of Advisory Group „Quality of Agricultural Production“
 - member of Coordination Committee for Rural Development

Contents

What I want to tell you

- The societal background – understanding consumer habits
- Direct sales in Austria – facts & figures
- The Austrian food reality
- Food processing on farm sites, photos
- The Austrian model
- The Austrian experience

The societal background

Mega-trends of the 21st century (according to Matthias Horx):

- The century of women
- The century of the elderly
- The age of health
- The age of mobility
- The segmentation of the markets
- →
- What is the role of local food?

The societal background – understanding consumer habits

„Tell me, how you are living, and I will tell you, what you are eating“

- eating, cooking, purchasing food is part of lifestyle
- driving forces:
 - demography
 - new technologies (mobility, ICT,..)
- criteria:
 - time → share of life
 - money → share of income
 - knowledge → share of interest
- food in modern life
 - preference for everything, which makes life simpler, quicker, cheaper
 - → convenient food
 - but: emotional factor of eating and drinking

Direct sales in Austria – facts & figures

Long tradition for direct sales due to political role model

- small scale structures:
 - mountainous regions
 - less favoured areas
 - historical background (physical splitting up of agricultural holdings)
- adding value through processing and direct sales
 - in the 70's and 80's: factory outlet at the farmgate (big quantities, reasonable prices)
 - turn to specialities: meat products, cheeses, bread, juices, jams, fruit and vegetables
- specialisation, intensification, eco-orientation →
- direct sales, livestock breeding, organic agriculture

Direct sales in Austria – facts & figures

In total 173.000 agricultural holdings

- 46.000 holdings for which direct sales are relevant; of which
 - 23.000 holdings gain up to 10 % of their overall income from d.s.
 - 12.000 holdings gain between 10 and 50 % income from
 - 11.000 holdings depend on d.s. (more than 50 % of their income from direct sales)
- importance
 - high in wine, fruit, pigmeat
 - low in milk, beef (many holdings with direct sales, but little importance per unit)
- distribution:
 - primarily at the farmgate, farmers' markets
 - gastronomy, direct delivery minor, but growing

The Austrian food reality

Small is beautiful, but big is reality

- Austria is the country of the supermarket format (600 to 1.000 m²)
- 85 % market share of the big three (Rewe, Spar, Aldi)
- strong competition, price is dominant
- grading up of food by traditional quality
→ AMA quality seal
- food diversity in the supermarkets
 - organic
 - „back to the roots“ → tracking and tracing to the regional origin as a marketing tool
 - sustainability → CO₂, Pro Planet,...
 - animal welfare













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The Austrian model

You have to understand EU food legislation →

- legislative framework (Reg. 852/2004 and Reg. 853/2004):
 - official exemptions for slaughtering and cutting in the same premises
 - rules for the delivery of small quantities of certain food (fish, game, eggs, raw milk, poultry,...)
 - legal definition of marginal, localised and restricted activity
 - → consequence: registration instead of approval (approval only for slaughtering, pasteurization of milk, delivery to whole salers)
 - clear national rules for raw milk (forbidden for schools and nursery schools), apart from that mandatory hint „heating before consumption“
- legal background: EU hygiene package (+ guidance documents!), national food law

The Austrian model

You have to understand EU food legislation →

- national guidelines for good hygiene practice (Reg. 852/2004, art. 8):
 - for milk processing
 - for meat (slaughtering, cutting, processing, cooling, storing)
 - for the slaughtering of poultry and rabbits
 - for the slaughtering of farmed game
 - for fish
 - for eggs and egg sorting facilities
 - for fruit processing
 - for honey
- initiated by the Chamber of Agriculture, elaborated by experts and civil servants, adopted by the Codex Alimentarius
- adopted and published by the Ministry of Health

The Austrian model

Key elements of the guidelines

- „risk based approach“ → trigger
 - reducing red tape and laboratory costs
 - solutions with common sense
- compensation by education, hot line and train the trainer programmes →
 - better and focused information and motivation instead of stupid daily documentation → focus on the very sensitive parts of the process
 - example: omitting all references to articles and regulations
- principle:
 - definition of standard work flows → standard form, checked 1x/a
 - + separate form for failures
 - laboratory analysis only of the most risky product per category
 - cleaning and disinfection plans (no protocols)

The Austrian experience

Understanding the law, pressing politics, cooperation with authorities

- broad agreement with administration:
 - on the interpretation of EU legislation
 - on the field for national flexibility
 - on the technical definition of hygienic risks
 - on the solution oriented approach of combining less formalism with advisory activities
- resources to develop guidelines, training programmes
- lots of activities for the same level of understanding
 - between advisory services and local authorities
 - among practitioners (by training courses, seminars, papers etc.)
- practical tools for practitioners (handbooks, videos,...)

The Austrian experience

The elements of success

- consequent and close cooperation with authorities
- The quality seal „Gutes vom Bauernhof“
 - private quality assurance scheme for professionals
 - six criteria, assessed with points
 - special training of the farmers
 - 1.600 participating holdings in 5 counties
- marketing activities
 - enforced use of ICT → website
 - pilot projects for new distribution channels (cooperatives, supermarkets, Apps)
- advisory service and rural development funds as backbone





Thank you for listening!