

Bio Weide-Beef, Switzerland

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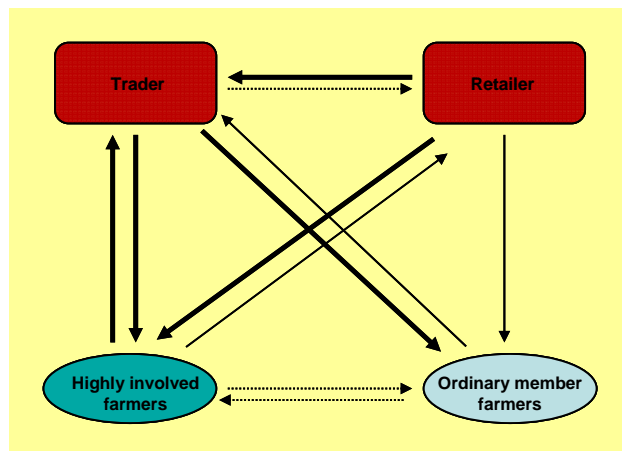
The initiative

In 1997, a core of innovative farmers and farm advisors started trials for feeding cattle on a pasture basis in Switzerland. Soon, a cattle trader became interested and engaged in developing the idea of Bio Weide-Beef together with the farmers and advisors. In 1999 the Bio Weide-Beef label was created, and in 2000, it was sold to one of the two large retailers in Switzerland. Today, 200 farmers deliver 45-50 animals per week to a trader who resells them to the retailer.

Organization

- Individual contracts between each producer and the trader
- Strong involvement of the trader and the retailer in discussion about prices and quantities
- Little commitment of most of the farmers to the initiative Bio Weide-Beef
- Powerful position of the retailer due to its ownership of the label

The organizational structure of Bio Weide-Beef



The thickness of the arrows illustrates the importance and intensity of influence of the food chain partners on each other. The relatively strong influence of the trader and the retailer thus become visible,



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Collective Activities and identity

- In the start, there was a strong feeling of collective identity, partly in response to a fairly sceptical environment
- Today, many farmers are attached to Bio Weide-Beef largely for commercial reasons, which is also due to the individual contracts between producers and the trader.
- Farmers who are or have been a member of the management board have a higher commitment to Bio Weide-Beef than 'ordinary members'.
- Still, Bio Weide-Beef managed to build up trust among food chain partners

Challenges

- The different member groups of the initiative have partly diverging quality conventions: For the producers it is most important that the meat is produced organically based on pasture. The retailer is first of all interested in a high quality product.
- In addition, we find different commercial interests: The trader is paid by volume independent from price, thus interested in trading as much cattle as possible, regardless of the meat price. The farmers are paid by quantity of meat, and therefore primarily interested in a good meat price.
- The strong dependency on one retailer inhibits a farmers' driven development of the initiative. The little strategic interest in niche marketing of the retailer might be limiting the further development of Bio Weide-Beef.
- However, the trust of the producers in the other food chain partners ensures satisfaction of all Bio Weide-Beef members with the initiative
- Activities are undertaken mainly by the farmers who are board members to strengthen the collective identity despite the large geographical dispersion and lack of finances and time.

