

Case study: Goschelbauer Farm

Another Austrian farm with young people at the helm is in Altengbach in the hills about 20 miles west of Vienna.

Here 30-year-old Michael and 24-year-old Nicole Goschelbauer, run a 125-hectare (309-acre) organic dairy farm, which is made up of 100ha (247 acres) permanent pasture and 25ha (62 acres) of forest. They run it together with Michael's parents, who bought the farm more than 25 years ago.

The Goschelbauers have 55 Fleckviehs with 75 followers, producing about 2,000 litres of milk every two days, which they also sell to the NOEM co-operative.

Recent milk prices are about €0.41/kg (32p/kg), while the production cost is €0.35/kg (28p/kg). Besides producing milk, the family also sells wood, hay and beef, thanks to the dual-purpose nature of the Flekvieh breed. Typical beef prices are €3.94/kg (£3.10/kg) (bull) and €3/kg (£2.30/kg) (cow). But changes to the milk quota system have hit the Goschelbauers particularly hard.

Edith Klausner, from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, explains how it has impacted locally in recent years. "In Austria, no official price statistics concerning the quota prices are available. But, informal information shows, coming from a relatively high price level of about €1/kg in 2004 until 2006, milk quota prices have steadily declined in the last few years to the current level of about €0.07-€0.15/kg.

"In the year 2009, the strongest decline was noticed, which was due to the fact Austrian farmers did not have to pay any Super Levy in that year."



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MICHAEL GOSCHELBAUER

Michael is philosophical about the financial losses though. "Our grandparents invested a huge amount when they bought their milk quota, so it is difficult to see

what has happened to the value in recent years.

"But we, as the next generation, cannot dwell on the losses this represents, but must move on and make our farm the best it can be today and in the future."

With this positive attitude in place, the family have invested heavily in the farm over the past six years, spending €700,000 (£552,000) on renovating buildings and buying new machinery, for which they got 25 per cent funding from EU and domestic Rural Development funding.

Organic

To understand the success of organic farming in Austria, it needs to be understood in the wider context of how organic food is regarded in the country as a whole.

Here, and indeed in much of the EU, it does not have the elitist stigma attached to it as in the UK. Edith says; "It is seen as the healthy choice, and we have strong



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support from the public who seek-out locally, domestically-produced organic food.

"We also have a very unambiguous labelling system which makes buying choices simple too."

They say adversity breeds innovation, and this is clearly

being played out in Austria. The mosaic of small-scale family farms which stretch through the mountains are collaborating through co-operatives which share machinery, marketing and knowledge.

Families are encouraging the

next generation, giving them the freedom they need to innovate, progress and think creatively about how to make their farms as productive as possible. There is optimism and hope among the community and best of all, it is reaching all the way to their accounts books.

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