



Niche Market Farming

Module 2

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MODULE 2 - Organic and biodynamic food and niche market rural chains

INTRODUCTION



The demand for high-quality food creates niche markets and enables farmers to produce sustainably and market their products directly.

Organic and bio-dynamic food

- Essentially **Organic Farming** is the practice of producing food with limits to the use of synthetic chemicals or genetically modified organisms (GMO's).
- **Biodynamic Farming** is a step above Organic Farming by working with the “life force” of Mother Nature to heal the earth and grow nutrient-dense foods without the use of chemicals. The concept was developed in the early 1920s by Rudolph Steiner — most famous for his contribution to the Waldorf schools. The premise behind biodynamic farming is the interconnection between all elements of the farm.

Niche market rural chains

- There are Challenges and opportunities for inclusive **rural value chains of niche farming** products.
- Basic for success is excellence in production/ processing/ selling embedded in the concepts of **Sustainability and Multifunctionality**
- For European farmers the framework of European Green Deal including strategies of farm to fork as well as ESG sets the regulative framework



MODULE 2 - Organic and biodynamic food and niche market rural chains

INTRODUCTION

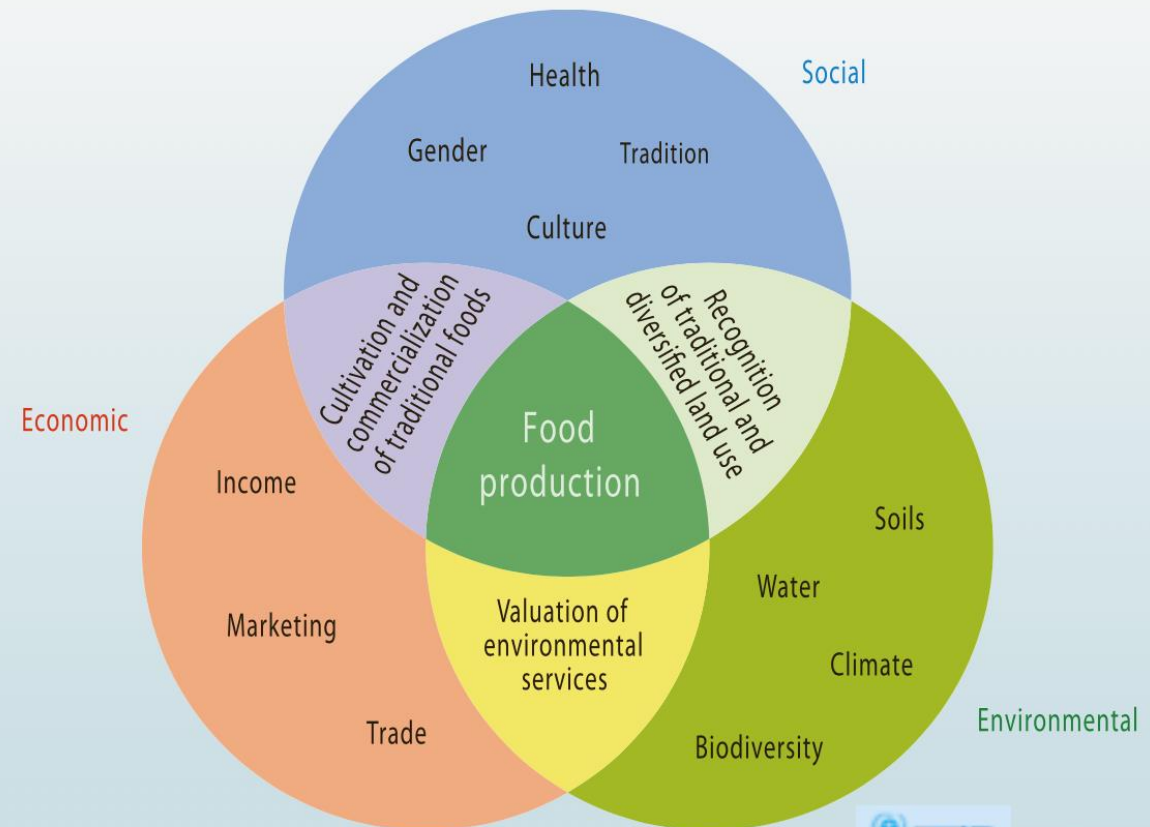


More than „just“ Food Production

Land use & Landscape

Environmental services

Culture & Tradition





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Organic and biodynamic food

*Unit 1
Farming/ Processing &
relevant organic/ biodynamic
certification adressing Niche
Markets*



From the Brundtland report to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20, or World Earth Summit, in Rio in 2012: Member States decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which built upon the Millennium Development Goals and converged with the post 2015 development agenda.



Practitioners of sustainable agriculture seek to integrate three main objectives into their work:

- ✓ **a healthy environment**
- ✓ **economic profitability**
- ✓ **social and economic equity**



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

According with the Guidelines of Organically Food Produce of the Codex Alimentarius (2007), an **organic production system is designed to:**

- Enhance biological diversity within the whole system;
- Increase soil biological activity;
- Maintain long-term soil fertility;
- Recycle wastes of plant and animal origin in order to return nutrients to the soil, thus minimizing the use of non-renewable resources;
- Rely on renewable resources in locally organized agricultural systems;
- Promote the healthy use of soil, water and air as well as minimize all forms of pollution that may result from agricultural practices;
- Promote the careful processing methods agricultural products in order to maintain the organic integrity and vital qualities of the product at all stages;
- Become established on any existing farm through a period of conversion, the appropriate length of which is determined by site-specific factors such as the history of the land, and type of crops and livestock to be produced.



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

According with IFOAM (2002), the **organic agriculture practices are based on** the following principles:

- **Health:**

the role of organic agriculture, whether in farming, processing, distribution, or consumption, is to sustain and enhance the health of ecosystems and organisms from the smallest in the soil to human beings. In view of this, it should avoid the use of fertilizers, pesticides, animal drugs and food additives that may have adverse health effects.

- **Ecology:**

organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustaining them. Organic management must be adapted to local conditions, ecology, culture and scale. The reduction of inputs by reuse, recycle and the efficient management of materials and energy will contribute to improve environmental quality and will conserve resources.

- **Fairness:**

This principle emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties – farmers, workers, processors, distributors, traders and consumers.



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

- **Care:**

This principle states that precaution and responsibility are the key concerns in management, development and technology choices in organic agriculture.

Organic Agriculture, Sustainability, Markets

The aim of organic agriculture is to contribute to sustainability. In the context of agriculture, sustainability refers to the successful management of agricultural resources to meet human needs while maintaining or improving environmental quality and conserving natural resources for future generations. Sustainability in organic farming must therefore be seen in a holistic sense that includes environmental, economic and social aspects.

The demand for organic products creates market opportunities. Organic products are sold at higher prices than products from non-organic farming. However, entering this lucrative market is not easy. Farmers need not only good agricultural practices, but also organic certification to annually verify and confirm that their farms and enterprises comply with organic standards.



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

During the conversion period to organic farming, which lasts 2 to 3 years, farmers cannot sell their produce as "organic" and thus cannot obtain price premiums. The reason for this is that consumers expect organic products to be free of residues. However, according to the Codex Guidelines for Organically Produced Food (2007), produce that has been produced on organically farmed land for at least one year but less than the required two to three years can be sold as "transitional" produce, but very few markets have developed for such produce.

Organic Agriculture, Sustainability, Markets

The goal of organic agriculture is to contribute to the enhancement of sustainability.

In the context of agriculture, sustainability refers to the successful management of agricultural resources to satisfy human needs while at the same time maintaining or enhancing the quality of the environment and conserving natural resources for future generations.

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Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

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Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

Integrating sustainability considerations into financial management strategies can lead to improved financial performance and long-term value creation while addressing environmental and social challenges.

FINANCIAL STABILITY
Maintaining a balance between income and expenses to ensure financial stability

FUNDS
Availability of sufficient funds

Financial Management

ROI
Ensuring efficient and high ROI

GROWTH
Creating and executing business growth and expansion plans

MARKET UNCERTAINTY
Safeguarding the organization against market uncertainties through ensuring buffer funds



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

Sustainable Finance

Achieve **economic growth** while encompassing wider **environmental, social, and governance (ESG)** objectives.



**Environmental
Component**



**Social
Component**



**Governance
Component**

Environmental Component

Refers to the consideration of a company's impact on the environment.

It includes factors such as

- ✓ carbon emissions,
- ✓ energy usage,
- ✓ waste management,
- ✓ pollution control,
- ✓ and resource conservation.

Companies with strong environmental practices aim to minimize their negative impact on the planet and promote sustainability.

Social Component

The social component of ESG focuses on a company's relationships with its employees, customers, communities, and other stakeholders.

It considers factors such as:

- ✓ labor practices,
- ✓ employee diversity and inclusion,
- ✓ human rights,
- ✓ consumer protection,
- ✓ community engagement,
- ✓ and corporate philanthropy.

Companies with a strong social focus prioritize fair treatment, diversity, social justice, and community development.

Governance Component

Governance refers to the way a company is managed and controlled.

It includes aspects such as

- ✓ board composition,
- ✓ executive compensation,
- ✓ shareholder rights,
- ✓ transparency,
- ✓ accountability, and
- ✓ adherence to legal and ethical standards.

Companies with strong governance practices prioritize integrity, ethical decision-making, and responsible leadership.



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Organic and biodynamic food

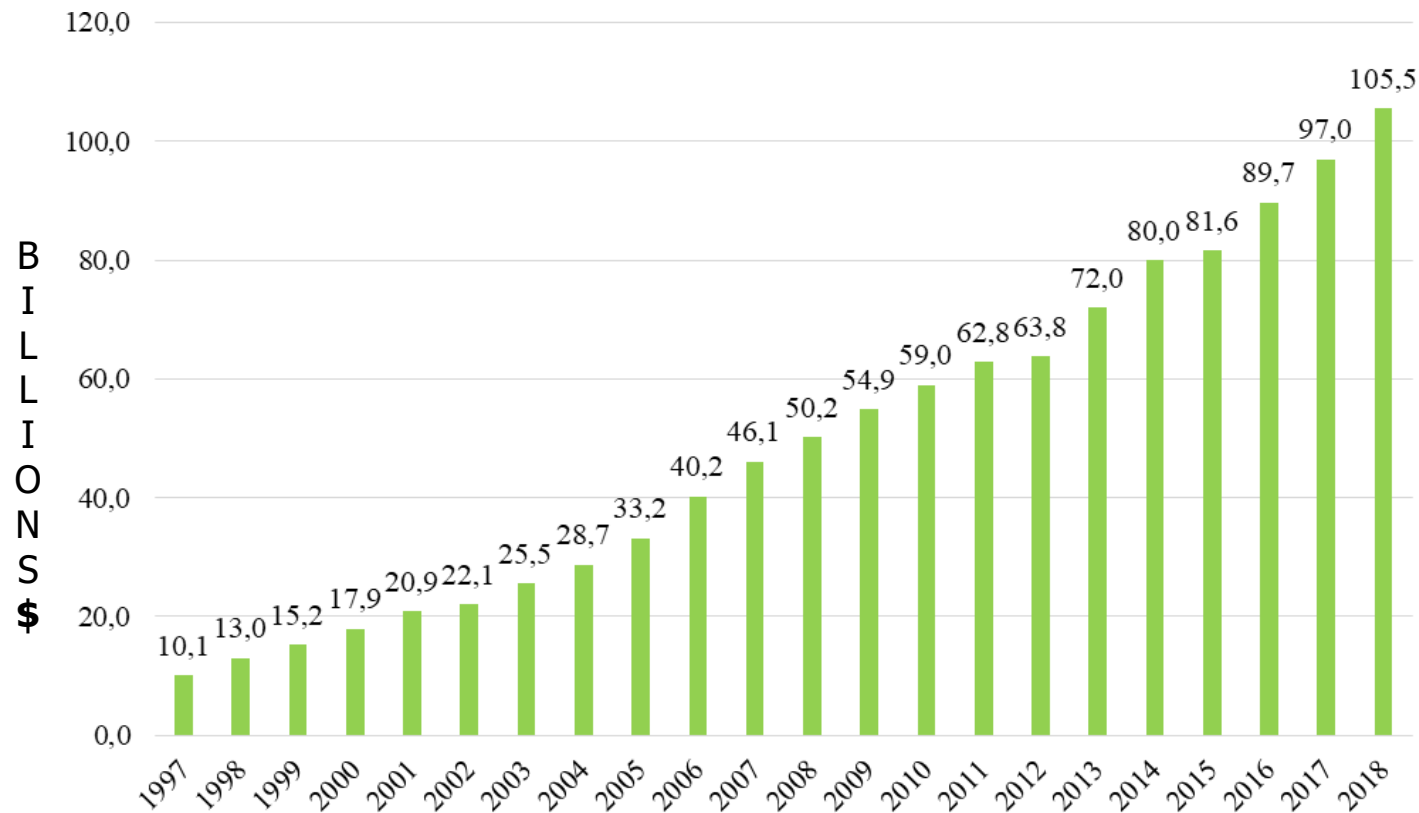
Unit 2

*How to promote organic
farming as a quality label
addressing the niche markets*



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

In the last two decades, the market for organic food products has undergone a very significant growth. Global organic food sales have gone from near zero in the early 1990s to **surpassing the \$100 billion in 2018** (Ecovia Intelligence, 2019).

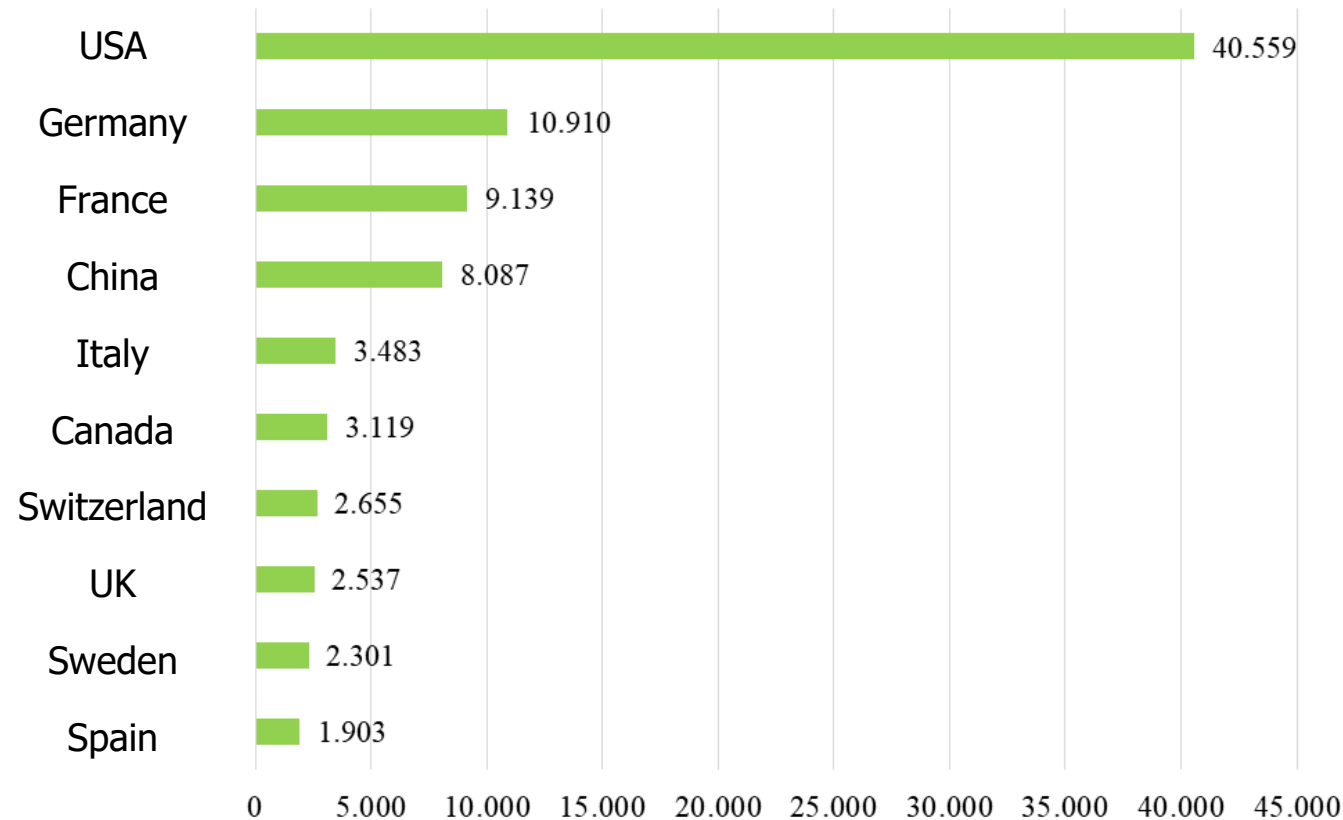


Source: Organic Monitor – Ecovia Intelligence 1997-2018)



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

The **global organic market** is dominated by the United States which alone account for almost half of the total value, followed by Germany and France. Italy in fourth position, after China, and Spain tenth.



Retail sales in million € - Source FiBL & IFOAM, 2020

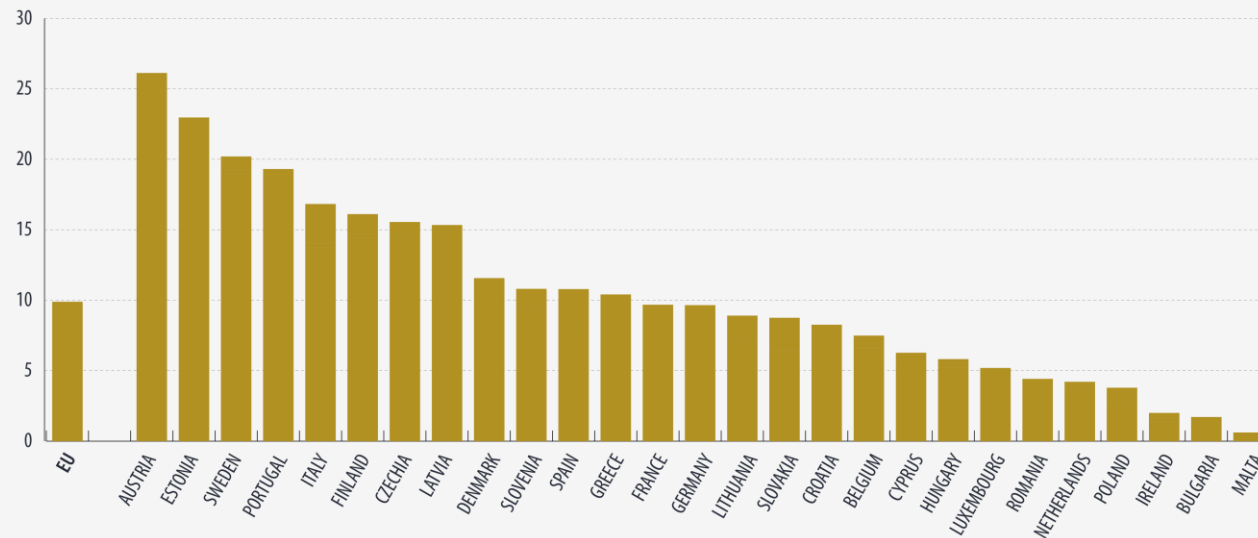


Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

In 2018, the **EU market for organic food products** amounted to **40.7 billion euros** (FiBL & IFOAM, 2020) and marked an increase of 7.8 percentage points compared to 2017, while this trend is still increasing. EUROSTAT indicates that, in 2018, the **total organic cultivated area** in the European Union (EU) was **13.4 million hectares**, corresponding to 7.5% of the total utilized agricultural area (UAA), an increase of 34% between 2012 and 2018. This trend has been continuing to increase, with **14.7 million hectares in 2020** to **15.9 million hectares in 2021**, which represents 9.9% of the total UAA, while a significant percentage increase is recorded in almost all European countries.

Organic area, 2021

(% share of total utilised agricultural area)



EU, France and Portugal: estimate. Cyprus: provisional.
Greece and Austria: 2020 data.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Two observations must be made about the facts and figures previously shown:

- the **organic products market** has consolidated itself as a **stable niche market** with significant annual increases;
- there is an obvious **convenience for a niche product to add organic certification** as an integral part of the added value and related quality guarantee.

Furthermore, **Europe** is the geographical region where **consumers are most willing to pay a higher cost for organic products**, as considered healthier for the consumer and the environment, according to several recent surveys, and trust in organic certification, as European Commission laid down in Article 1.1 of the EC Reg. 834/2007: 'This Regulation provides the basis for the sustainable development of organic production while ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market, guaranteeing fair competition, ensuring consumer confidence, and protecting consumer interests.' (EC, 2007).





Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Steps to Implement Organic Farming on your Farm

Analysis of the location of the farm

1. **Farm characteristics:** size, plots and crops distribution, which kind of crops, trees, animals are integrated in the farm system.
2. **Soil Analysis:** an evaluation of the soil structure, nutrient levels, organic matter content, erosion level, and/or the soil have been contaminated.
3. **Climate:** rainfall distribution and quantity, temperatures, frost risks, humidity.
4. **Organic matter sources** and management (manures).
5. **Presence of animal housing systems** and/or machinery.
6. **Limiting factors** such as capital, labour, market access, among others.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

The procedure of conversion of a farm consists basically of three steps:

1. **collect information** on appropriate organic farming practices
2. The most promising **organic practices should be tried out** on selected plots or fields to get familiar with
3. only organic procedures should be **implemented in the entire farm**. Support from an experienced extension officer or a farmer is usually very helpful to give guidance in the process.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

The procedure of conversion of a farm consists basically of three steps:

1. **collect information** on appropriate organic farming practices
 - How to improve soil fertility.
 - How to keep crops healthy.
 - How to best increase diversity in the farm.
 - How to keep livestock healthy.
 - How to give value to organic products and how to successfully sell them.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

The procedure of conversion of a farm consists basically of three steps:

2. The most promising **organic practices should be tried out** on selected plots or fields to get familiar with

- Mulching
- Intercropping
- Composting
- Green manuring
- Organic pest management
- Appropriate seeds and breeds
- Use of leguminous plants
- Farm-own animal feeds
- Terraces and bunds



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

The procedure of conversion of a farm consists basically of three steps:

3. only organic procedures should be **implemented in the entire farm**. Support from an experienced extension officer or a farmer is usually very helpful to give guidance in the process.

Implementation of organic practices throughout the entire farm should be considered, once sufficient experience with different practices has been gained. As soon as organic practices are implemented throughout the entire farm, a farmer can claim to be an organic farmer. Commonly, consistent application of organic practices marks the beginning of a long process of improving the production system:

1. **Improving soil fertility** based on the recycling of farm own organic materials and enhancement of farm own biomass production.
2. **Encouraging positive interactions** between all parts of the production system (the farm ecosystem) to enhance self-regulation of pests and diseases.
3. **Optimizing the balance between feed production and livestock.**



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Farming organically means continuously learning from personal observation, from outside experiences and sharing experiences with other organic farmers.

Certification as a need for entering markets:

Organic certification requires undergoing a process that guarantees consumers that production follows the principles and practices of organic farming. In most countries, certification is a service offered by nationally or internationally accredited private certification bodies. In a few countries, such as Denmark, certification is offered at no cost by a governmental body.

Farmers and processors attain third party certification for compliance with specific standards or regulations. The certification process can begin only after the **conversion period** has been completed and the requirements of the specific standard or regulation demanded by the market have been met.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

At the request of a farmer or a group of farmers, a CB (certification body) will send an independent inspector to visit the farm and verify compliance. Based on this information, usually compiled in an inspection report, the CB makes a decision whether the farm is being managed in compliance or not.

In some countries, organic products can be sold locally without mandatory certification, while in others certification is mandatory for the local market. **For export markets, no organic product can be traded without certification.** The main export markets (such as EU, Japan, US) have official regulations in place and imports of organic products must comply with them. In addition to the official regulations in the EU, different countries sometimes demand additional certification under specific private standards – both to fulfil organic requirements and to ensure good agricultural practices (GAP).

Certification as a need for entering markets:

In addition to the obligatory EU regulations, organic products often also must be certified under local private organic standards in order to access specific national markets. This system is a result of the perception that local consumers have more trust in organic products when they exhibit private standard labels.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

The most important **private standards for organic agriculture in Europe** are **Bio Suisse** (which is considered essential for the Swiss market), **Soil Association** (preferred in the British market) and **Demeter** and **Naturland** (for the German market). Demeter, however, is the main standard for biodynamic organic products and, therefore, is also essential for biodynamic products throughout the world.

Furthermore, fair trade standards are also popular, which are certified under the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International.

Certification-Process:

It takes **conversion time** to achieve **Organic or Demeter certification**.

The conversion time can be shortened in some cases provided requirements are met.

For details the respective standards of the certification scheme addressed should be read. It is recommendable to not only get in touch with the certification body but as well with other farmers who already have gone through the process.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

A **database on organic rules, control authorities and bodies, and technical means** is provided within the organic farming information system ([OFIS](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organic-production-and-products/organics-references_en)) on the link: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organic-production-and-products/organics-references_en The legislation connected to the Council [Regulation \(EC\) No 834/2007](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/legislation_en) is also provided and updated at the web link https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/legislation_en

Certification-Process: Usual and Basic steps

1. Farm Questionnaire & Documentation

- The farmer/ enterprise contacts the Certification Body and completes a Questionnaire, a conversion plan and a plot list, and returns these documents to the Certification Body .
- The conversion plan covers planned crops and crop rotation, the fertiliser programme, development of animal husbandry and feeding, appropriate measures to counteract cross-boundary environmental contamination threats and in biodynamic certification as well the production and use of the Biodynamic preparations.
- As long as needed for the conversion period the farmer engages an accredited Advisor.



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2. Conversion Contract

- The Certification Body checks the supplied information to assess whether the farm is sufficiently prepared to go into conversion.
- A conversion contract is prepared and signed between the farmer the respective Standards association or institution
- from this time at the latest, all relevant actions for certification of the standard on the farm needs to be documented.

3. Membership

Depending on the Standard and the Label the farmer/ enterprise applies for membership in the respective association.

4. Training

The farmer is recommended to attend an approved introductory and further courses in



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

5. Inspection

- Inspection takes place annually or/ and random. Additionally to EU-organic the organic Labels are checked by third person. Depending on the standard these are accredited inspection agencies. For Biodynamic standard as well as checking that the enterprise conforms to the regulation for organic agriculture with amendments, the additional requirements to meet the Demeter standards are inspected.
- All documents relating to the bringing in of materials from outside the farm (seed, fodder, manure, plant protection agents, etc.) as well as the farm plan, the management plan and documentation detailing preparation use must be available at the inspection.
- The inspection agency sends the inspection report for assessment and a decision



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6. Certification Decision

- If the farm meets the standards, but with some non-compliances, a conditions letter is issued with details of expected corrective actions and evidence.
- The farmer fulfils the corrective action and gives info with evidence. If the corrections are satisfactory, the certificate is issued.
- If the farm does not meet the standards in important areas, the farmer will be informed of this and the reasons why will be detailed. In this case, Certification Organization will decide whether the farmer can reapply or not.
- The applicant then has an opportunity to appeal against this decision as mentioned in the contract.

7. Processing and Licensing Fees

- The farmer will be charged by the Certification Organization a fee according to a fixed scale of fees for the use of the trademark and certification costs.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Certification: Options to distinguish, to decide, to take

There is a broad and divers offer of certification systems and certification bodies.

If you got to the conclusion that certification is basically interesting and of added value for you, your farm and your market approach, then you can find some exemplary criteria of comparison in the two following slides.

The systems, rules, and laws are on steady change.





Therefore the steps shown in the slides above as well as the comparison of the systems is an ongoing task for the entrepreneur:

- Are we still in line with the rules?
- Do we need to change?
 - our farm management
 - our produce
 - the certification



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Farming Numbers

Producers	Conventional	EU organic 	Naturland 	Bioland 	Demeter 
Criteria					
Maximum Number of Hens per building	no limit	20000	12000	6000	3000
Number of permitted food additives	>300	47	22	23	13
Pigs per hectare	no limit	14	10	10	10
Laying hens per square metre	10	6	6	6	4,4
Dehorning of cattle	Permitted without anaesthesia	Permitted	not recommended	permitted in exceptions	forbidden
Organic feed	no regulation	95%	100%	100%	100%
Use of genetic engineering	Allowed	< 5%	No	No	no

Source: <https://www.treff.bio/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Grenzwerte-Vergleich-Konventionell-Biodynamisch-1024x721.jpg>





Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Producing

EU organic label	organic associations labels
Partial conversion to organic permitted	complete conversion is mandatory
5% conventional protein feed for pigs and poultry allowed	only a few conventional protein feeds are allowed. With Demeter only organic feed
up to 14 fattening pigs or 580 chickens for fattening or 230 laying hens allowed per hectare of agricultural land	up to 10 fattening pigs or 280 fattening chickens or 140 laying hens per hectare of agricultural land
Use of conventional slurry and poultry manure allowed under certain conditions	Use forbidden
Maximum fertiliser quantity: 170kg nitrogen per hectare and year	Maximum fertiliser quantity: 112kg nitrogen per hectare and year
For herbivores at least 60% of the feed must come from the own farm, for pigs and poultry 20%.	For herbivores at least 60% of the feed must come from the own farm, for other animals 50%.
Year-round feeding with silage possible	Year-round feeding with silage forbidden

Source: <https://image.stern.de/9056504/t/PP/v3/w960/r0/-/bio-siegel.jpg>





Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Processing

Product	EU organic label	organic associations labels
Fruit juice	Production from concentrate permitted	Only pure pressed juices
Milk	UHT (UHT milk) and sterilised (condensed milk) permitted.	Ultra-high temperature is forbidden by Demeter, sterilisation is forbidden by all associations.
Bread and bakery products	Enzymes such as amylase and ascorbic acid are allowed in flour.	Prohibited
Meat and sausage	Nitrite curing salt permitted, in smaller quantities than in conventional methods	Prohibited or only permitted in small quantities for products that are not fried

Source: <https://image.stern.de/9056504/t/PP/v3/w960/r0/-/bio-siegel.jpg>





Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

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 - the certification



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Certification and its limits:

Private organic standards in the EU are usually more strict than official regulations and vary widely on specific issues concerning agricultural processing and marketing practices.

The main problems arising from the multitude of certification requirements are as follows:

- **costly** (direct and indirect costs related to multiple certification processes);
- **skewed** (tailored in favour of industry and other stakeholders);
- **duplication** (lack of recognition among different systems);
- **constantly growing demand** (certification is becoming more stringent and detailed).

While several certification bodies are aware of this situation and are making some efforts to remedy this situation for their clients, it is important to be aware that many of the above mentioned constraints are beyond the reach of single certification bodies.



Organic farming as an added value addressing niche markets

Case Studies from Italy, Spain and Germany

Without claim to completeness 8 case studies are included as additional learning materials focused on local biodiversity, organic agriculture and geographical indications, within different farming sectors, with aim to inspire the opportunities given by a niche market vision, keeping in mind some **basic criteria**:

1. **Excellence** in the practice of producing/ processing/ selling
2. Clear focus on **quality** along with transparency and authenticity
3. Scale is not key, but for sure there exist **minimum scales** for specific approaches
4. Usually the farming approaches are **extensive**
5. The higher the scale the more **efficiency** is needed not only in producing but as well in processing and selling.
6. The higher the scale the bigger the need for **certifications**.



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Niche-Market rural chains

Unit 3
Creating & Entering Niche Markets

Description of Unit 3

CREATING AND ENTERING NICHE MARKETS

This unit provides farmers and interested stakeholders with devices and resources they need to identify, create, and develop niche markets in agriculture. It describes which aspects should be considered at the beginning of entering niche markets and what you should keep in mind during the whole process. Also, the unit gives an overview of selling methods and distribution models in niche markets. For better practical relevance and understanding, the unit shows short examples from practice.

The aims and objectives of the unit are:

- Offering important information to help people get started in niche market farming.
- Helping to recognize and identify niche marketing opportunities.
- Creating awareness of the chances and challenge of creating niche markets.
- Informing about different types of selling methods and distribution models



Index

1. Getting started

- 1.1 Identifying the market and target group and assessing the market potential.
- 1.2 Develop a unique selling proposition.
- 1.3 Research of the market opportunities, competition and the potential for profitability.
- 1.4 Create a marketing strategy that effectively targets the niche market.
- 1.5 Finding partners and building relationships along added value chain.
- 1.6 Planning and implementation of necessary activities and supporting cooperation's.

2. Keep in mind

- 2.1 Building and maintaining a good reputation
- 2.2 Maintaining transparent processes
- 2.3 Ensuring guarantee
- 2.4 Regular monitoring and revision/verification

3. Selling methods and distribution models in niche markets

- 3.1 Business-to-business (B2B) & business-to-consumer (B2C)
- 3.2 Traditional selling methods
- 3.3 Innovative selling methods

4. Example from practice

5. References-Links

6. Finishing Slide

7. Questions/Personal Testing



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

1. Getting started



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

1. Getting started

1.1 Understand the demand for the product in the market and identify specific customers.

Niche markets often involve specialized products or production methods. Farmers should consider what they are most interested in or have the most experience in and focus on that area. Does niche marketing fit the company's resources, capabilities and preferences?

One way to identify the potential for a niche market is to think about the products and services you need. There may be a product or service that you need that is hard to get in your area. Maybe others need that product and service as well and you can offer it to them, or you find that others are asking you to offer it to them as well. Do you seem to be recognized as an expert in something that everyone needs? Maybe others in your community come to you for advice, help, or a certain type of service.

It is helpful to identify a specific customer group with their specific needs and preferences. What do your customers need and want? What interests and buying habits do they have? Thereby communication is key: regular exchange with customers, preferably in practice.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

It is important to have very good knowledge of the target market in order to be able to respond to changing consumer preferences and market conditions. Understanding the target consumer segments is a crucial factor in determining whether an operation has the resources, interests, and business elements necessary to meet the needs of prospective customers.

1.2 Develop a unique selling proposition

In order to stand out in a niche market, farmers should consider what makes their products or farm unique and highlight those characteristics in their marketing efforts.

What is a Unique Selling Proposition?

- A Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is a statement that defines the unique benefit of a product or service that sets it apart from its competitors.
- It is a key component of a company's marketing strategy, and it is used to communicate the unique value that a product or service offers to the customer.
- A USP is typically a short, concise statement that highlights the key benefit of the product or service, and how it addresses the needs and wants of the target market.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

- It is important to note that a USP should be unique, credible, relevant, and communicated consistently throughout the entire customer journey.

What is meant by a USP along added value chain?

A Unique Selling Proposition (USP) takes into account the entire process of creating, producing, packaging, distributing and delivering the product.

Creating a USP along the added value chain can help a farmer to differentiate their products from those of competitors and increase the perceived value of their products.

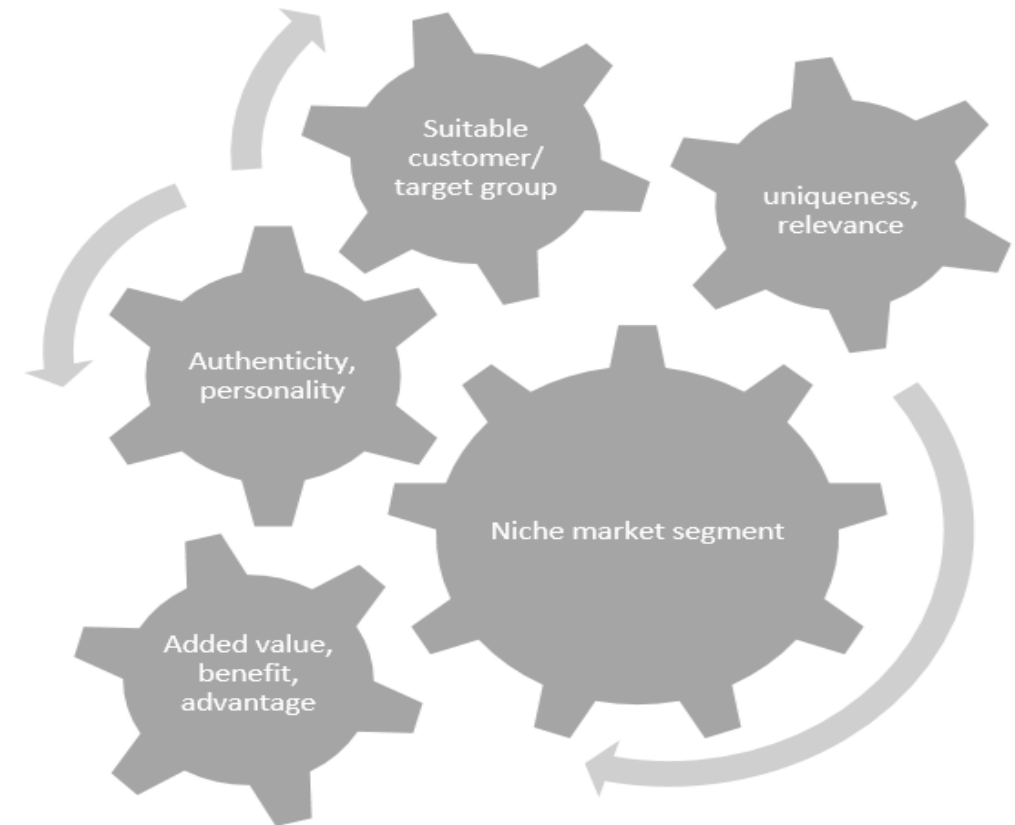
A USP along the added value chain can include, for example, the sourcing of sustainable and ethically-produced ingredients, eco-friendly packaging, fair trade practices, and transparent and traceable supply chains, as well as the traditional product benefits.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

For example, a USP for a small farm that sells artisanal cheeses made with organic and grass-fed milk, could be:

"Our farm provides artisanal cheeses made with organic, non-genetically modified organism and grass-fed milk, produced following traditional methods, and using sustainable and ethically-sourced ingredients, all of it, packaged in eco-friendly materials, guaranteeing not only the best taste but also the best for the environment and animal welfare."



Characteristics of a good USP



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

1. Getting started

1.2 Develop a unique selling proposition

How do you create your own USP along added value chain?

Here are some steps that a farmer can take to build and establish a USP.

With this diagram it should be noted that the sequence of steps is not authoritative and the order can be changed or should be changed to suit the goal, depending on the individual situation of the operation and the circumstances.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

1. Getting started

1.3 Research of the market opportunities, competition and the potential for profitability.

Niche market farming can be a way for farmers to increase their income and profitability by targeting a specific market with specialized products.

To begin, an inventory of internal resources, values, potential strengths/capabilities, and weaknesses/inadequacies of the current operation is recommended.

As with any business venture, it's important for farmers to understand the costs involved in producing and marketing their products, as well as the potential profitability. Conducting a thorough financial analysis can be helpful in determining the feasibility of entering a niche market.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

1. Getting started

1.4 Create a marketing strategy that effectively targets the niche market.

After the niche is identified, the next step is to get attention of the consumers. This takes thoughtful promotional planning and development of messages to connect with potential buyers. Marketing materials, such as websites, brochures, personal communications, packaging, public image, etc., need to integrate credible claims, motivational messages, and consistent images to connect to (and build loyalty with) niche market consumers.

Set clear goals and objectives for what the farm hopes to achieve by following a niche marketing approach: Reach new customer segments? Lower marketing costs? Secure premium pricing?

Any plan focused on niche markets should include the following:

- Clear and consistent image and themes.
- Alignment with farm structure and culture.
- Clear links between strategy and actions.
- Targeted attention and action where needed.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

1. Getting started

1.5 Finding partners and building relationships along added value chain

Building relationships with customers and other stakeholders (retailers, wholesalers e.g.) can be especially important in niche markets.

Farmers should consider ways to connect with their customers and build loyalty, such as through direct marketing efforts or participation in community events.

Niche Markets also require a high level of coordination and collaboration among the participants, which can be difficult to achieve. The following slide provides advice and what to consider for finding partners and building partnerships along the niche market value chain. This can help to increase their market reach, share knowledge and expertise, and collaborate on new products or services.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

When looking for partners and building partnerships along the value chain of niche markets, **farmers should consider the following:**

- Identify the specific partners needed for the value chain. These may include other farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and end consumers.
- Compatibility: Find partners that share similar values, goals, and business models. This will help ensure that the partnership is aligned and that both parties are working towards the same objectives.
- Look for partners that have a good reputation in the industry and are well-respected by other industry players and can add value to the partnership.
- Evaluate the potential partners' capabilities and resources: This includes their experience, infrastructure, and ability to scale up or down as needed.
- Consider the partners necessary expertise and resources to help bring your products to market. This includes partners that can provide new customers, improve product quality, or increase efficiency in the supply chain.
- Partnerships require good communication and collaboration to be successful. Make sure that you find partners who are open to working together and are willing to invest the time and effort needed to build a strong partnership.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

- Create a strong and formal agreement: This should include the roles and responsibilities of all partners, the terms of the partnership, and a plan for resolving disputes.

By considering these factors, farmers and other industry players can build partnerships that are well-suited to their niche market products and that can help bring their products to market efficiently and effectively.

1.6 Planning and implementation of necessary activities and supporting cooperation's.

Niche markets may have specific distribution channels, and the farmer must identify these channels to ensure that their products reach the target customers. This may involve working with distributors or developing their own distribution channels. For a detailed insight, see Chapter 3

Marketing and promotion: In niche markets, effective marketing and promotion are essential to reach potential customers. The farmer should consider using targeted advertising, social media, and other promotional tools to reach the target audience.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

You will need advice and help to plan and build your niche marketing business. Look for reference material on the Internet, from counselors and professionals, and in the news media. Attend trade shows and exhibitions. Likewise, one of the best sources of information and support is people who are doing something similar. So, make contacts and put a focus on networking.

2. Keep in mind

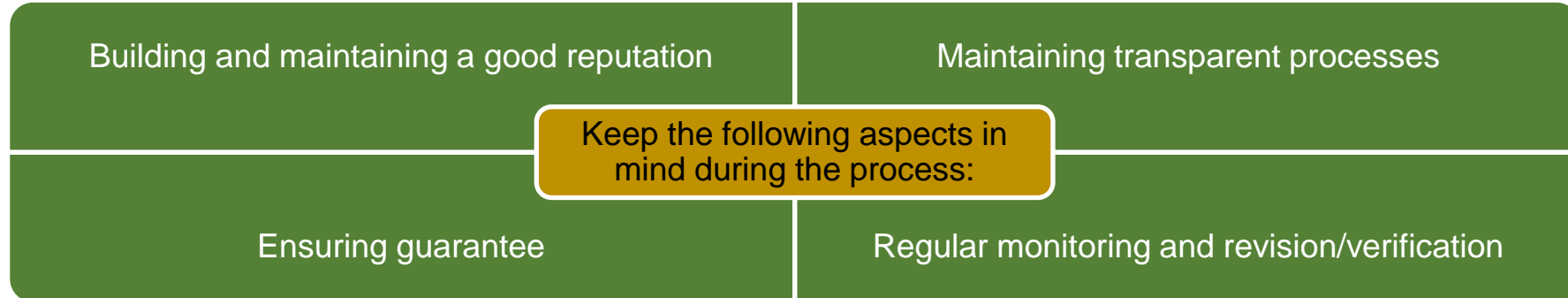
It's important to keep in mind that creating a niche market takes time, dedication and that it is a long-term investment. A solid understanding of consumer preferences, market trends and a clear marketing strategy will help to increase the chances of success. Additionally, niche market farming requires the ability to effectively market and sell the products to the target market.

The choice to pursue a niche marketing strategy will not guarantee success, and, similar to any business decision, requires critical assessment and ongoing learning. Exploring niche markets is representative of the set of management choices every agricultural operation faces.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

The four aspects shown in the diagram and described in detail below should be taken into account throughout the process of creating and entering a niche market.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

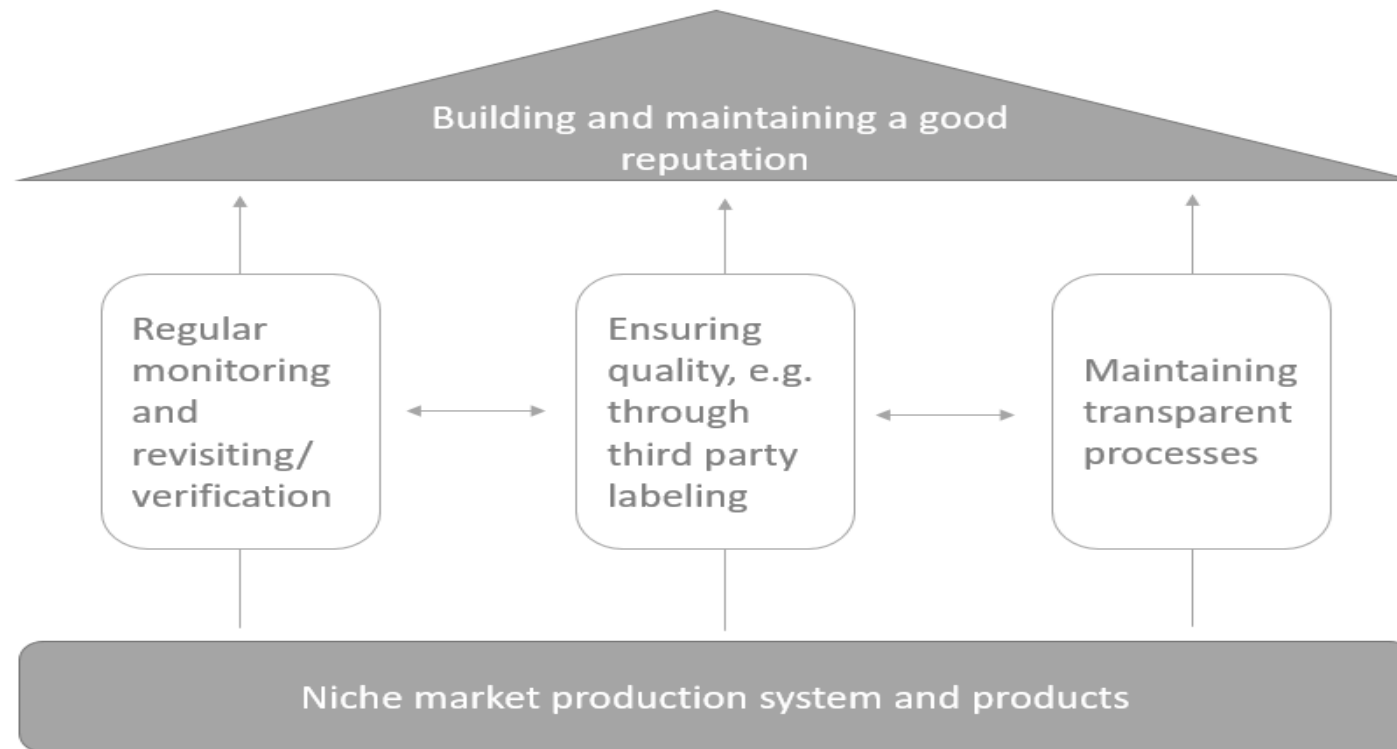
2. Keep in mind

The four aspects are directly and indirectly connected with each other and can condition and influence each other depending on the situation and characteristics:

Reputation is what the company itself communicates about itself and how this is received by other stakeholders and consumers. Transparent processes let customers convince themselves. Promises of guarantees, such as in the form of labels and certified production, are controlled by third parties and can also contribute to the formation of opinion. When building a good reputation, transparent processes or ensuring guarantees, can help or be used specifically to create a certain image of the company with its values and qualities. However, this image of the company can also be destroyed again by a negative incident/scandal. Regular monitoring and revision can help to ensure transparent processes and guarantees and thus maintain the good reputation.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

2. Keep in mind

2.1 Building and maintaining a good reputation

Reputation is extremely important in niche markets in agriculture, as it plays a key role in building trust and credibility with customers, and in differentiating the products from those of competitors.

Build and maintain a good reputation, by consistently providing high-quality products, transparent communication, and good customer service. **A good reputation can help farmers to:**

- Build trust and credibility with customers by demonstrating that the products meet certain standards or are produced in a certain way.
- Increase sales and profitability by charging premium prices for products that meet certain standards or are produced in a certain way.
- Attract new customers and retain existing ones through word-of-mouth and positive reviews.
- Enhance the reputation of the farm and the brand, which can lead to increased customer loyalty and repeat business.
- Build a loyal customer base and a positive perception of the farm and the brand in the market.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

Reputation is built over time. It can take a long time to build a good reputation, but it can be easily damaged by a single negative experience or bad product. Therefore, farmers should be proactive in building and maintaining their reputation.

Additionally, farmers can also build their reputation by getting certifications and guarantees, which can help to demonstrate that their products meet certain standards, and by being involved in the community and being active in promoting sustainable agriculture and fair trade practices.

2.2 Ensuring guarantee

Guarantee plays an important role in niche markets in agriculture.

Guarantees can help farmers to build trust and credibility with customers by demonstrating that the products meet certain standards or are produced in a certain way. Also guarantees can differentiate the products of the farmers from those of competitors and increase the perceived value of their products. Thereby it will be build trust and reliability with the customers and in the market. At the same time it can increase sales and profitability by charging premium prices for products that meet certain standards or are produced in a certain way. Often the reputation of the farm and the brand can be enhance.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

A guarantee can be a promise or a certification. Obtaining certification can be a great addition to a farmer's marketing efforts, adding value to farm products and attracting the attention of a particular niche market. The process for certifying farm products varies with each product and type of certification. The introduction of such a standard should be considered only after the farmer has gained some experience with quality production. For example, a guarantee can be a certification that a product is organic, non-GMO, or grown using sustainable methods, or a promise that the product meets certain quality standards.

However, it's worth noting that it's important for the farmers to be able to meet the guarantee they are providing, and that the guarantee is credible, verifiable and trustworthy. If the guarantee is not met, it can lead to a loss of customer trust and credibility, which can be difficult to regain. Be prepared for seasonality: Many niche markets are seasonal, and farmers should be prepared for this when planning their production and marketing efforts!



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

2.3 Maintaining transparent processes

Transparency is extremely important in niche markets in agriculture, as it helps to build trust and credibility with customers. Consumers in niche markets are often willing to pay a premium for products that they perceive as high quality, unique and sustainably produced, and transparency is a key factor in building this perception.

Transparency can be achieved through a variety of means, including:

- Clearly communicating the farming practices used to produce the products, such as whether the products are organic, or grown using sustainable methods.
- Being transparent about the entire supply chain and sourcing of the product, including what ingredients are being used, where are they being sourced from, and how they are being processed.
- Being open and transparent about the pricing and profit margins of the products, and how the money is being used by the farm.
- Information and clarification about changing qualities and quantities, such as abundance or shortage of products due to drought, rain etc., for example apple with hail damages.
- Constantly communicating with customers through various channels and being responsive to questions and concerns.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

- Using technology such as QR codes, NFC tags, or blockchain to provide customers with more information about the product and its origin: Farmers can use technology to provide customers with more information about the product and its origin, which can help to build trust and credibility with customers.

Transparency allows for better communication and understanding of the product, making it easier for consumers to make informed decisions about what they are buying and supporting. Additionally, transparency can help to ensure that the products are produced ethically and sustainably, which is important for many consumers in niche markets.

2.4 Regular monitoring and revision/verification

Monitoring here means that, on the one hand, one should keep an eye on one's own sales, processes, etc. in quantitative terms.

In addition, it is important to talk to customers in order to understand why something has been well accepted and liked, or why it has not.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

For this purpose, it is important not only to talk to your own customers or to analyze your own sales, but also to keep an eye on competitor products in order to include new products in your own range that are (not) available from the competition.

→ Continuous monitoring and review, at its best, facilitates adaptation to changing consumer preferences and market conditions.

3. Selling methods and distribution models in niche markets

In niche market farming, there are various selling and distribution methods that can be used by farmers to sell their products.

These models can have a significant impact on the success of a niche market farm.

The selling and distribution methods that a farmer chooses should depend on the specific product, target market, and the resources available to the farmer.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

Farmers should also consider the cost and logistics of their distribution model when deciding which one to use.

A combination of the different distribution models and selling methods could also be beneficial for some farms. In chapter 3 you will find examples from practice.

3.1 Business-to-business (B2B) & business-to-consumer (B2C)

Business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) are two different types of sales methods used by farms and can equally be applied in niche market farming.

Both B2B and B2C selling methods have their own unique challenges and opportunities. The most effective selling method will depend on the specific product, target market, and the resources available to the farmer.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

Business-to-business (B2B)	Business-to-consumer (B2C)
The sale of goods or services from one business to another.	The sale of goods or services directly to the end consumer.
B2B sales often involve larger quantities of product and longer sales cycles.	B2C sales often involve smaller quantities of product and shorter sales cycles.
The buying decision is often made by a team rather than an individual.	The buying decision is often made by an individual consumer.
B2B sales often require a higher level of technical knowledge and sales expertise, as well as a good understanding of the industry and the target market.	B2C sales often require more focus on branding, packaging, and marketing, as well as a good understanding of consumer preferences and behavior.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

3. Selling methods and distribution models in niche markets

3.2 Traditional selling methods in niche market farming include for example:

- Direct sales at farmers' markets: Farmers can sell their products directly to consumers at farmers' markets. This allows farmers to build relationships with customers and receive immediate feedback on their products.
- Direct sales through farm-gate sale: this includes many forms, such as the farm store with a trust fund, a farm store with a very extensive assortment, e.g., with products from other farms, or self-service vending machines at crossroads or in front of the farm.
- Sales to wholesalers and retailers: Farmers can sell their products to wholesalers and retailers, who will then resell the products to consumers. This allows farmers to reach a larger customer base, but they may have less control over the final price and branding of the products. Other forms in this context are the "regional shelf" or vending machines in supermarkets. In this model, the stores often get a share, but the control over price and branding lies with the individual businesses. Sales to restaurants and hotels: Farmers can sell their products to restaurants and hotels, which can be a stable source of income and can help to establish a reputation for the farm's products.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

- Sales to institutions such as schools, prisons and other public organizations: Farmers can sell their products to institutions, which can be a stable source of income and can help to establish a reputation for the farm's products.
- Sales to cooperatives and other collective organizations: Farmers can sell their products to cooperatives and other collective organizations, which can help to increase the bargaining power of the farmers and secure better prices for their products.

These traditional methods have been used for many years, they are widely known and accepted by farmers, retailers and consumers. They rely on personal relationships and trust, and they can provide a stable source of income for farmers. They also allow farmers to build a reputation for their products and to gain a better understanding of customer preferences and market conditions.

3.3 Innovative selling methods in niche market farming include for example:

- Online sales: Farmers can sell their products online through their own website or through online marketplaces, such as e-commerce platforms or social media platforms. This allows farmers to reach a larger customer base and to sell their products 24/7.



What should a farmer consider when creating and entering niche markets?

- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs: In a CSA program, customers pre-purchase a share of the farm's harvest. This allows farmers to receive a stable income and to build relationships with customers.
- Subscription-based models: Farmers can sell their products on a subscription-based model, where customers receive regular deliveries of products.
- Door-to-door sales and home delivery: Farmers can sell their products directly to consumers through door-to-door sales and home delivery.
- Pop-up shops and pop-up markets: Farmers can sell their products at pop-up shops and pop-up markets, which can help to increase brand awareness and reach new customers.
- Using social media platforms and influencers to market and sell products: Farmers can use social media platforms and influencers to market and sell their products, which can help to increase brand awareness and reach new customers.

These innovative methods can help farmers to reach a larger customer base and to increase their income. They also allow farmers to use technology to improve customer engagement and to increase their understanding of customer preferences and market conditions. Additionally, they can help to build trust and credibility with customers by providing more information about the product and its origin.





Co-funded by
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Niche-Market rural chains

Unit 4

Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

What kind of food niche markets?

In the era of **global commerce** commodities are dominated by big players determining food flows and markets.

Small farmers can not be comfortable within this dimension while **niche markets** are sometimes viable as market holes.

Successful stories, such as the case studies annexes to our learning materials, demonstrate how small family farms can be rentable and competitive as **seed savers** and **biodiversity hunters** part of the local community rural traditions, and well connected to **niche market channels**.

From local farmers' markets to big national and international exhibitions dedicated to sustainable, organic and natural world dedicated to **organic food, nature based care and beauty, green and healthy lifestyle products**, niche markets are moving on helping farmers survive and environment be more resilient.



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

Single Farm position & Perspective

1.

To address a niche as a specialized segment of the market for a particular kind of product or service isn't new as a concept.

2.

It is present even in nature as the match of a species to a specific environmental condition. It describes how an organism or population responds to the distribution of resources and competitors and how it in turn alters those same factors.

3.

It would make sense that our communities would face a similar question and to stay competitive a farm or local food business would need to answer it.



Farming/ Processing & relevant organic/ biodynamic certification addressing Niche Markets

Single Farm position & Perspective

1.

Successful marketing for any types of farming starts with authenticity and a genuine connection to people you're selling to.

2.

The key to any marketing strategy is communicating.

3.

Analysis of your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) is a place to start if there isn't a niche for you set yet.



Types of farming and the possibilities are endless!

Sometimes your niche is obvious, but others you just have to experience, talk to customers or other entrepreneurs to see what the needs are.

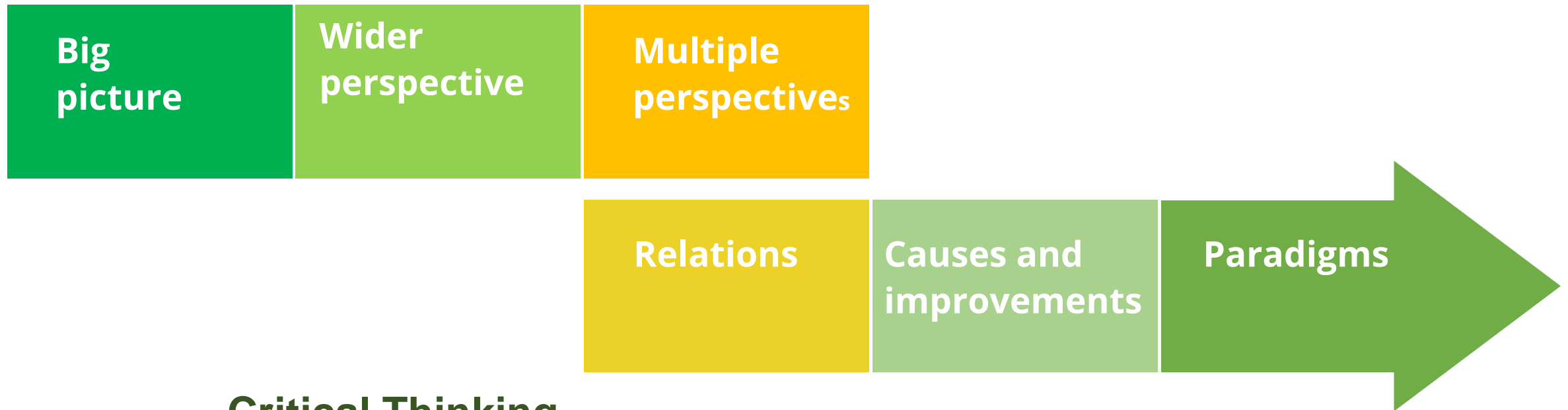
Whether you're just starting out, sell in a small market or have lifetimes of experience and live in an overly saturated market, having a niche for your farm is an important step!



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

System Thinking

Is the process of analyzing how a system's different parts interrelate and how systems work within the context of other bigger systems.



Critical Thinking

It involves assessing information and arguments, identifying assumptions, challenging the status quo, and reflecting on how personal, social and cultural backgrounds influence thinking and conclusions



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

Systems Thinking in Agriculture

Addresses the complex problem of improving agricultural productivity within ecological boundaries

More successful adaptation strategies under changing conditions

Better environmental decision-making in a number of environmental & cultural settings



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

Critical Thinking in Agriculture

Making choices
regarding crop
selection, land use,
irrigation methods, or
policy development

Enables stakeholders to
consider multiple
perspectives
and evaluate trade-offs

Make well-informed
decisions that balance
economic,
environmental, and
social factors.



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

Essence of the Case Studies from Italy, Spain and Germany

Basics:

1. Success is based on the entrepreneur and his decisions
2. Success goes along with focus on excellence in all steps of the farming and market approach
3. Single farm enterprises have good chances as well as cooperations and cooperatives
4. The whole picture and whole value chain needs consideration
 - farming/ processing/ selling
 - External effects
 - Whole input/ whole output



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

Essence of the Case Studies from Italy, Spain and Germany

Special Insights:

Even if the Cases studies show similarities there are variations. Most obvious are:

1. Market depth

- rather un-processed product
- processed, packaged and delivered product

2. Specialization/ Diversification

- Focus on only one produce
- Offer of a broad variety of produce

3. Cooperation

- Acting as a single farm
- Cooperating with other farmers and market partners



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

Essence of the Case Studies from Italy, Spain and Germany

5. Transparency and authenticity are key:

- On a local level: reputation may be sufficient
- On a regional/ national/ gloable level: certification can back reputation

Market depth - Specialization/ Diversification - Cooperation

- farms encounter challenges in reaching the optimum not only from a macro-economic, societal and environmental sustainability view but as well to find the farming system (intensive/ extensive, conventional/ organic/ biodynamic, smallscale/ largescale, B2C/ B2B, etc.) perfectly adapted to the given situaiton in the specific location.
- Within the polypolized structure of commodities mass market a race to the bottom can be diagnosed quite often. This race to the bottom is driven from standard quality produced at lowest cost.
- Depending on individual situation lack of family income and consumption of reserves is likely. Of course, being regional/ national/ continental cost leader can be an option. And there are many farms reaching good results



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

Essence of the Case Studies from Italy, Spain and Germany

- At the same time it can be an option to follow a different approach on single farm level or based on cooperation with other farmers or partners on the market along added value chain.

Market depth - Specialization/ Diversification - Cooperation

- The limits in single farm production factors can be overcome by combining on-farm and off-farm activities (**diversifying** activity), concentrating exclusively on one or several productions (**specializing** activity), or leaving one or several productions to secure family livelihood.
- Both, specialization and diversification can be combined with cooperation along added value chain to reach more depth in the market and therefore more added value that can be shared amongst business partners.
- The economic value varies depending on the farm type, the market type, the specific product and the quality of cooperation.



Addressing different farm and market scales of Niche Markets with organic produce

Market depth - Specialization/ Diversification – Cooperation

Exemplary calculation (no matter if conventional/ organic/ biodynamic)

1. B2B – delivery to dairy

- 120 cows; 10.000 kg milk/a/cow = 1.200.000kg milk/a
- 30 Ct net/kg milk
- 300.000€ turnover/year
- No efforts necessary in sales; full dependence of „the market“



2. B2C – own production and selling

- 15 cows; 8.000kg milk/a/cow = 120.000kg milk/a
- 10kg milk/ 1kg cheese; 25€/kg cheese incl. Distribution
- 300.000€ turnover/year
- Lot of efforts in sales; lower correlation with „the market“



6.Finishing Slide

Summing up:

1.
Niche Markets are basically interesting
2.
However the question is accessibility and financial viability
3.
Accessibility is based on acknowledged quality and transparency/ authenticity
4.
The bigger the scale and the wider the reach out the bigger the need for certification and the better the cost-benefit-ratio of it



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