

INTEGRATED PROMOTION OF REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

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Abstract

The paper is aimed at presenting the concept and development of the rural development initiative “Genuss Region Österreich” in Austria from 2008 until the year 2010. It is based on statistical data provided by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the initiative’s operational organisation GRM GenussRegionen Marketing GmbH and GBI Consulting, one of the evaluators of the initiative. Through the initiative installed in 2005 and during its first three years of activities, impressive results have been achieved: 113 regions have become members of the initiative by 2010; over 3.000 licenses for producers have been issued; 180 regional events with official participation of GENUSS REGION ÖSTERREICH took place in 2010; over 2.000 restaurants participated in 2010 in the seasonal promotion weeks of the initiative, over 160 retail enterprises are partners and offer regional products of the member region; over 100 touristic packages involving the member regions are available; a higher awareness of the consumers for regional products has been achieved; at the same time the awareness and proficiency, with which the producers market their products has become much higher and the cooperation with tourism, gastronomy, retail and with other regional producers has risen; quality as a key factor for sustainability and registration process of at least one product in all regions for a PDO (protected designation of origin) or a PGI (protected geographical indication) has been started or accomplished.

Keywords : rural development, regional development, regional products, traditional products, rural initiative, sustainability, Austria

INTRODUCTION

GENUSS REGION ÖSTERREICH was created as an initiative by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management in 2008.



Photo 1. GRÖ Logo

The cooperation between agricultural producers, small and medium sized processing companies, tourism facilities, gastronomy and the retail sector was established to encourage consumption of regional and traditional food products. Quality standards and requirements regarding origin of products and processing are essential elements of the initiative.

Special attention is put on the social capital built in the rural areas to encourage local actors to establish co-operations along the food value chain.

The initiative is financed under the Austrian Rural Development Program 2007 – 2013.

Its objectives are:

-To make Austrian agricultural products and regional services visible to consumers and tourists.

-To provide up to date and specific information on local agricultural raw materials and products.

-To promote the cooperation between agriculture, manufacturing, gastronomy and the tourism.

-To promote shorter transportation distances for fresh products while creating and ensuring added value and working opportunities in the regions. [1]

The core criteria for a region to become part of the initiative were:

-The region must be geographically defined.

-The region must have a typical regional product that is traditionally produced in the region.

-Raw materials must come from the region.

-The product must have a recognized high quality or a unique specification in its production and processing that ensures the quality of the product.

-The product must at least have requested a PDO (protected designation of origin) or a PGI (protected geographical indication) on a national level.

-Typical cultural events with regional relevance, where regional food products are promoted, are regularly organized in the region.

-A non-profit-organization must be created and a regional profile building process must be introduced to obtain the final approval. [2]

The protected brand GENUSS REGION ÖSTERREICH is owned by the Ministry of Agriculture.

GRM GenuSSRegionen Marketing - GmbH is responsible for the operational development of the initiative. [1]



Photo 2. GRM logo

The shareholders of GRM GenuSSRegionen Marketing GmbH are:

-Umbrella Association GenuSS Region Österreich

-Touristic and Gastronomy Initiative: Beste Österreichische Gastlichkeit

-Association Regional Management Austria (Regionalmanagement Österreich)

-Agricultural Organizations of the province-governments (Direkt vom Bauernhof, AGRAR PLUS BeteiligungsgmbH). [1]

The initiatives organization was defined as follows:

The *umbrella organization GenuSS Region Österreich* unifies and represents all regional associations. It is responsible for the strategic development of the initiative.

The *advisory board* consists of members from the Ministry of agriculture, AMA Marketing, the umbrella organization GENUSS REGION ÖSTERREICH, the Ministry of Work, Family and Youth and the agency *Regionalmanagement Austria*. It controls that the licensed regions observe the

rules of the initiative and if the initiative itself is moving towards the goals accorded by the association.

The *113 GenuSS-regions* are the heart and core of the initiative. They are encouraged to continuously work on their development and new regions are welcome to be a part of the initiative. [1]

The following 6 action fields of the operative unit GRM GenuSSRegionen Marketing GmbH are:

1. Profile Development

The objective of profile development is to achieve a tailor made development concept and action plans as well as potential analysis for each region. This tools make it possible to exploit their potential in a more efficient way and expand their position in the market. [3]

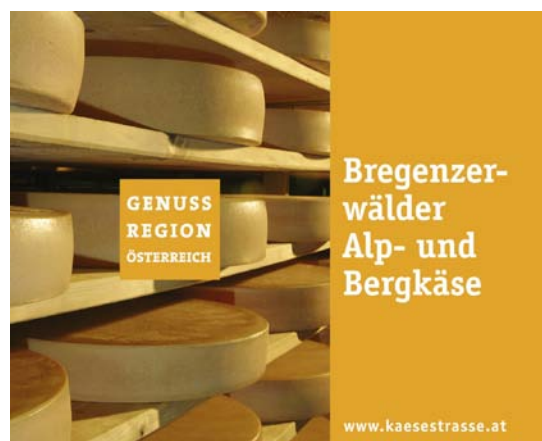


Photo 3. A GenuSS-region

2. Season's Calendar

In the GenuSS-events, both the products and services of the regions as well as the Initiative itself are presented in the frame of the seasonal character of agriculture and its products, which are shown through the typical and traditional celebrations and activities around them. [3]

3. Gastronomy

The seasonal component is prominent in partner-restaurants during the GenuSS-weeks, where they have the chance to promote regional products as a market advantage. Cooking workshops and support through gastronomic advisors, as well as expert trainings round up the activity.

The award Genuss-Restaurant of the Year motivates gastronomy to use and present products of the regions to a wider public.[1]



Photo 4. Genuss-restaurant of the year

1. Tourism

The regions are supported in creating touristic packages for national and international travelers, which can be booked through the usual touristic channels.

An intense network building between producers and the touristic sector and the establishment of the image of the regions as touristic-gastronomic destinations throughout Europe are promoted through cooperation and advertising campaigns. [7]

2. Retail

Regional products are offered through the channels wholesale, stores, special partner stores and direct sales. Additionally, the best partner in retail enterprises are awarded every year.

Every store that includes regional products form the initiative in their stores is awarded with a plaque declaring it „Genuss Partner Handel“.

An educational and training program is offered for efficient sales and to rise the know how of producers in their marketing efforts towards retail. [4]

3. Culinary Packages.

They can be purchased through retail, gastronomy, hotels or specialized stores, over the internet, in the regions and outside.

They are highly appreciated gifts, presents and souvenirs for visitors and consumers.

Every year, the best culinary packages are awarded (Goldene G-Nuss). The award is

preceded by seminars for producers to help them prepare attractive packages and succeeded by a media campaign to promote the award and the packages. [1]



Photo 5. Culinary package

Additionally, the following supportive functions for concrete organizational issues in the regions were installed:

-Database with internal (producers, customers, licenses and cooperation partners) and external (marketing and information on purchasing, partnership gastronomy, contact information and homepage). [1]

-Quality and origin assurance training system: The objective is to install a quality management and origin certification system in every single region and support them in the process of achieving a registration for an EU certificate of origin. Support consists of training and educational activities as well as concrete support in the solicitation process for EU-certificates of quality and origin. [1]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The *Profile Development* and its seminars was completed in all 113 member-regions. The data and information collected is being used as a basis for the creation and application of concrete action and measure plans in each region.



Photo 6 . The regions within the initiative 2012.

The licensed producers within the 113 regions went up to 3.063 in the year 2010 (Table 1). [1]

Table 1. Progress achieved in action field *Profile Development*

2008	2009	2010
1698 licenses issued	2296 licenses issued	3063 licenses issued
45 regional associations formed	86 regional associations formed	101 regional associations formed

For the action field *Season's Calendar*, a central database of all culinary and regional events taking place in the regions during the year was successfully created. All events on the calendar are promoted to achieve a wider participation. [1]



Photo 7. Thanksgiving celebration in Vienna

Table 2. Progress achieved in action field *Season's Calendar*

2008	2009	2010
25 regional events	105 regional events	180 regional events
5 nation wide events	5 nation wide events	8 nation wide events
5 fair participations	6 fair participations	8 fair participations

The brand GENUSS REGION ÖSTERREICH is always clearly visible on all

products offered on this events, as well as the events themselves and has become well known throughout the country.

Over 750 restaurants which offered products from the regions were registered as Genuss-restaurants in 2010. Over 2.160 restaurants participated in the GenussWochen, a series of events in the action field *Gastronomy*, where they offer seasonal products from the regions. Trainings were offered to achieve best cooking results with the traditional regional raw products (Table 2). [1]

Table 3. Progress achieved in action field *Gastronomy*

2008	2009	2010
388 Genuss-Restaurants	606 Genuss-Restaurants	759 Genuss-Restaurants
601 Genuss-weeks participant restaurants	1705 Genuss-weeks participant restaurants	2161 Genuss-weeks participant restaurants
45 participants in culinary award	82 participants in culinary award	99 participants in culinary award

The *Genuss-restaurant of the year* has become an important culinary prize in Austria. 99 restaurants participated in the competition in 2010 (Table 3). [1]



Photo 8. Genuss-restaurant

The cooperation with *tourism* has been most positive. Between the beginning of activities in 2009 and 2010, 114 touristic packages in the regions were presented to participate in the competition for best Genuss-destination of the year. These packages came from over 60 touristic enterprises and organizations. The winners were promoted in cooperation with the Austrian Touristic Agency *Österreich Werbung*.



Photo 9. Tourism campaign

GENUSS REGION ÖSTERREICH also participated in the most important international touristic fairs for central Europe, the ITB in Berlin and started an online advertising campaign in Germany. [1]

161 retail enterprises were licensed as Genuss-partners in *retail* in the year 2010. A first cooperation with one of the most important C & C markets in Austria was implemented (Table 4). [1]

Table 4. Progress achieved in action field *Retail*

2008	2009	2010
32 licensed retail enterprises	90 licensed retail enterprises	161 licensed retail enterprises

Product innovation and quality were the key advances in the action field *Culinary Packages*. The packages are very successful and can be bought in the regional gastronomy and touristic sector, some even through the internet. The experience gained is used by the regions for the marketing of all their products. The competition for the best culinary package of the year attracts intensive media and consumer attention (Table 5). [1]

Table 5. Progress achieved in action field *Culinary Packages*

2008	2009	2010
56 culinary packages	116 culinary packages	100 culinary packages



Photo 10. Best culinary package prize

The database included in 2010 the data of all 3.150 enterprises which are already members or are applying to become members of the initiative. The product information of 5-10 products of 40 member regions are available to purchasers from gastronomy, tourism and consumers through the installed culinary and retail advisors. Also all information on quality assurance was included in the database form 2010 on. [1]

Trainings were offered and successfully implemented on all 6 action fields.

Most useful were tailored seminars for specific regions and networking seminars with producers from different sectors. [1]

A networking effect was achieved on a regional and national level, as producers and gastronomy, as well as tourism organizations now work together to promote their region.

The following organizations became active cooperation partners:

- Austrian Tourism (Österreich Werbung)
- Beste Österreichische Gastlichkeit (BÖG) (culinary Initiative)
- Destillata (an association for the awarding of best spirits)
- ARGE Rind reg. Gen. m.b.H. (a working group of the meat industry)
- Österreichischer Wirtschaftsverlag – Medium ÖGZ (Österreichische Gastronomie Zeitung) (the most important publisher in the Austrian food sector)
- AGRAR.PROJEKT.VEREIN (Association for Rural Development of the Chamber of Agriculture) [1]

CONCLUSIONS

The focus on the linkage of food products with their regional origin and their traditional production raised the awareness for the

linkage between agriculture and food production on the one hand and sustainable rural development as well as environmental and cultural preservation on the other hand.

A higher awareness for the importance of regional production in agriculture could be achieved as well as a raise of the value added of the products, thus ensuring a sustainable economic development of the regions.

The established cooperation between agricultural producers, small and medium sized processing companies, tourism facilities, gastronomy and the retail sector encouraged consumption of regional and traditional food products.

Quality standards and requirements regarding origin of products and processing were achieved and awareness of its importance was created.

Special attention was also put on the social capital built in the rural areas and local actors were encouraged to establish co-operations along the food value chain.

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All Photos: GRM-GenussRegionen Marketing GmbH, Vienna, 2007-2012

Photo 11. GENUSS REGION Homepage

