

## **Introduction:**

The Strüber family started managing this farm in 2005. The main activities carried out together with a second family living on the farm are:

- Biodynamic production (certified by Demeter since 1977)
- Vegan products (raw products and processed cereals for self-supply and members)
- Work and on-farm courses with Draught Horses
- Social Therapy linked with agricultural living and working

## **Promoter Profile:**

Full name: Klaus Strüber

Age: 40

Gender: Male

Marital Status: Married

Number of children: 2

Education and Training: Gardener, Specialist in social therapy

Years of professional experience: 4

## **Farm Data:**

Name: Hof Hollergraben

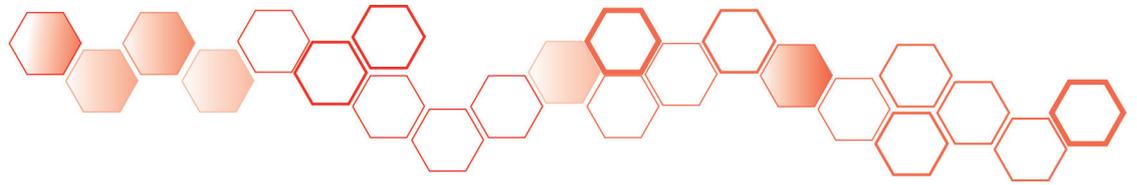
Address: Hollergraben 4, 23744 Schönwalde

Website/Email: <http://www.hof-hollergraben.de/> ; [info@hof-hollergraben.de](mailto:info@hof-hollergraben.de)

Year of Establishment: 2005

Hectares: 22,5

Family Farm workers: Mr Strüber and his wife



## Previous situation:

The farm was originally a dairy farm with poor profitability. Since 1977 the farm is certified by Demeter for biodynamic production.

## Multifunctional Experience:

Activities promoting multifunctionality started in 2005 when Mr Strüber took over the farm and started the restructuring of the farm activities.

The main reasons why Mr. Strüber decided to pursue this new project were the poor profitability of the former farm and the desire to explore and learn new ways of farming.

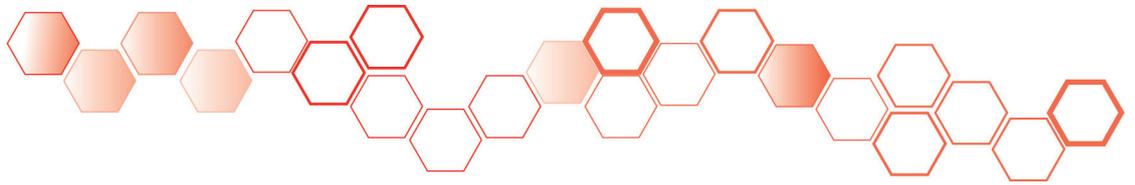
After a planning phase, with the cooperation of an external consultant, the first steps were:

- to stop dairy production and use cows only for production of livestock manure;
- to start field work with draught horses (60% of the whole field work);
- to start the cultivation of biodynamic vegetables and fruits;
- to buy a mill and an oven to bake bread;
- to link social therapy with living and working on the farm.

In 2007 Mr. Strüber started the trial of Community Supported Agriculture with 7 consumers. The members of the Community Supported Agriculture cover the running costs of the farm per year and in return get farm products. In return for paying 70 € per person/month, consumers receive fresh, seasonal food (bread and over 40 varieties of vegetables and fruits), knowing where and how it's produced while saving marketing and distribution costs.

The farm's main marketing channel in direct selling today is through this Community Supported Agriculture. The Community Supported Agriculture currently consists of 60 consumers; the consumers cover about 30% of the annual turnover, pre-financing farm production costs.

Mr. Strüber carries out on-farm courses for field work with draught horses. He participates in research activities and, since March 2005, is involved in a project called "Humus Sphere". This project aims at studying the impacts of using draught horses instead of machine in



agriculture on soil. It concerns the following aspects: soil fertility, soil structure and hummus content, economical and environmental sustainability.

The whole project has been self-financed mainly with the revenues of social therapy and products selling.

## **Results:**

Nowadays more people – two families: 4 adults and 4 children – live off the farm income.

Income security is higher as a result of the Community Supported Agriculture, pre-financing farm production costs.

The farm has 22 ha of biodynamic land, 60% of the work is done with horses.

They bake and sell bread and over 40 varieties of vegetables and fruit. The farm main marketing channel in direct selling through Community Supported Agriculture (actually about 60 consumers); the consumers cover about 30% of the annual turnover pre-financing farm production costs.

Mr. Strüber each year organises draft horses courses, on-farm social therapy and is involved in research with the project “Hummus Sphere”.

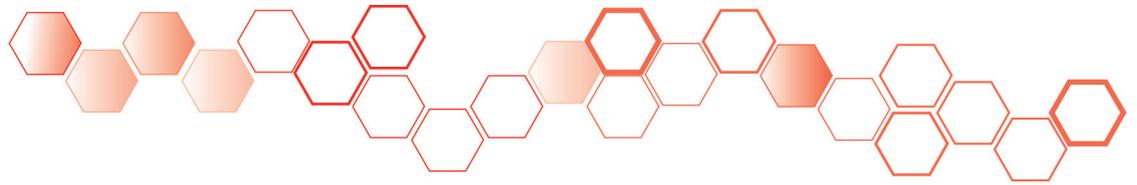
## **Promoter Competences:**

From 1997 to 2001 Mr. Strüber visited plenty of farms gaining field experience about new farming methods.

In addition to this practical training Mr. Strüber attended the following courses:

- Draught horse courses;
- Heart Awakening Courses (a spiritual concept for experiencing unconditional love for self and awakening the capacity of unconditional love for others with the goal of emotional freedom and mastery of life)

Mrs. Strüber is a specialist in social therapy.



## **Promoter Advice:**

‘First of all stop working in fields in which you don’t have fun. Only where there’s space you can create something new. Then try new things, ask good people and hold on.’

‘The key to the success of my project has been searching for the truth and believing in myself.’

## **Queries and considerations:**

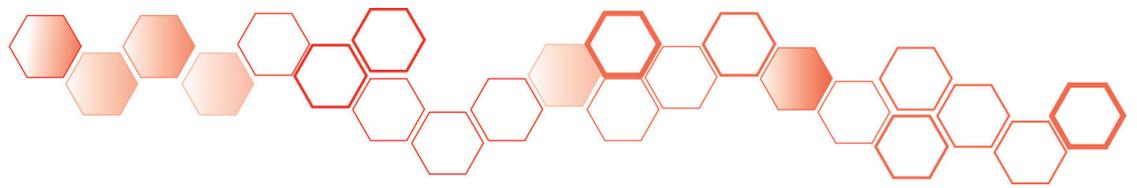
- What do you think about the short supply chain marketing system? Do you think it could be implemented in your farming context?
- This case study is an example of small/self financed investment. Do you think that it would be possible to carry out a diversification plan in your farm according to this financing principle?
- What do you think about the possibility of using draught horses instead of machines? Do you think that this farming practice is suitable for your farm?
- What do you think are the social, economic, environmental benefits of such a farm for the wider rural community?
- Which aspects of this case study draw your attention the most?

## **Recommended Training for farmers interested:**

- Business Management;
- Lecturing Skills;
- Basic English;
- Organic Farming;
- Draught Horses related training;
- Basic Computer Skills;
- Short Food Supply Chain Management;

## **Links:**

<http://www.hof-hollergraben.de/> (farm homepage)



[www.demeter.net](http://www.demeter.net)

(Biodynamic certification organisation)

<http://orgprints.org/about.html> (Article related to the “Humus Sphere” project)

### **Strengths and weaknesses:**

#### **Strengths:**

- Security for sales of agricultural products/ independence from speculation on agricultural markets
- Direct contact to and involvement of consumers
- Diversification of income through social therapy and courses with draught horses
- Practical experience in combination with university-supported research

#### **Weaknesses:**

- High amount of manual work
- Need of proximity to metropolitan area and/ or people in the region with interest for this kind of project to reach and involve a sufficient number of consumers for a functioning Community Supported Agriculture

### **Multifunctional Criteria:**

#### **Social/ Economic/ Environmental/ Cultural Aspects:**

#### **Social aspects:**

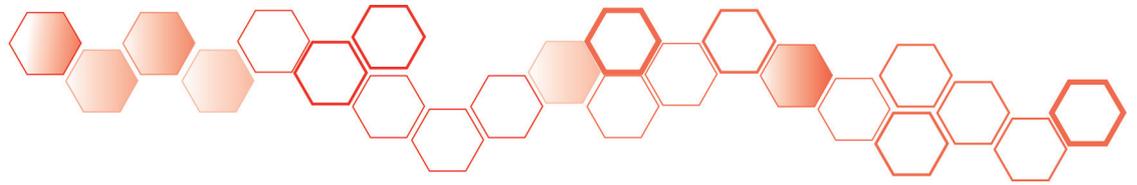
- involvement of society in agricultural production
- interpersonal (producers and consumers) and inter-familial (two families) aspects
- strengthening of the (rural and consumer) community through joint activities

#### **Economic aspects:**

- alternative ways of agricultural production and marketing (Community Supported Agriculture) which provide financial security for farmers
- higher benefits for farmers through short value chains

#### **Environmental aspects:**

- sustainable use of agricultural land (biodynamic production)

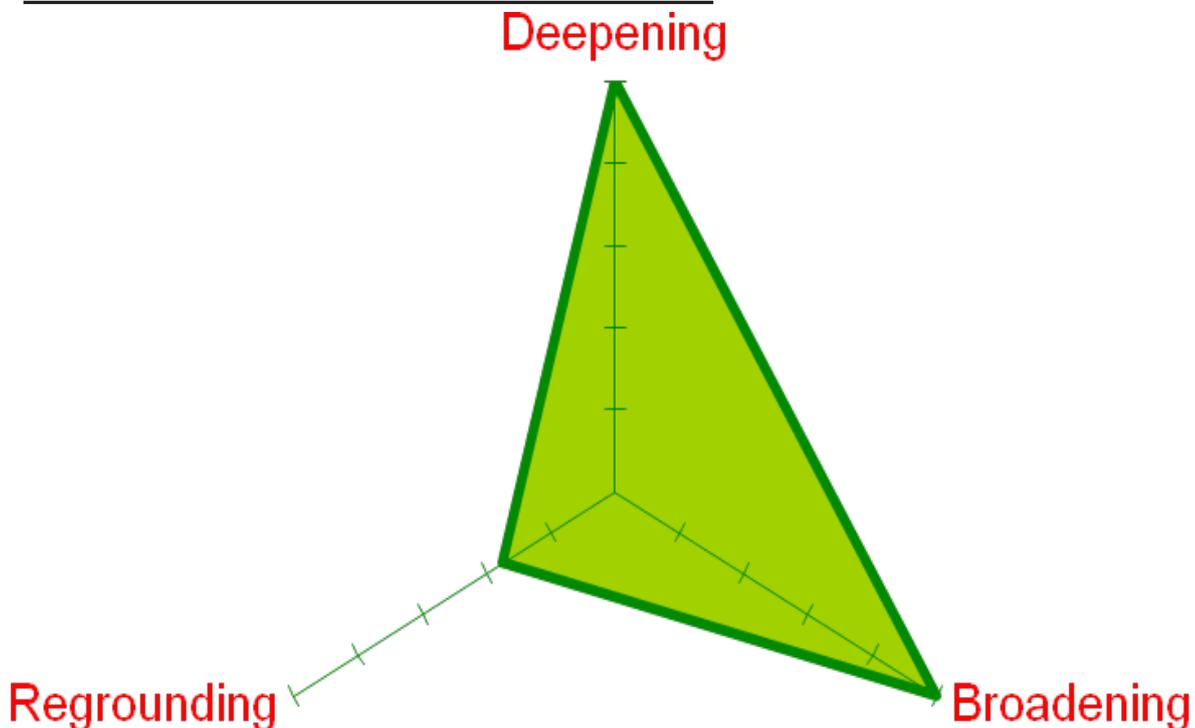


- benefits for biodiversity conservation through production technology
- maintenance of cultural landscape

### **Cultural aspects:**

- cultural heritage (draught horses use)
- fostering a sense of belonging to the land/landscape/farming sector even for those who are not directly involved in the work

### **DEEPENING/ BROADENING/ REGROUNDING**



### **Key Words:**

- Community Supported Agriculture
- Biodynamic Farming
- Social Therapy
- Draught Horses
- Cooperation