



GUIDELINES EMAS AND BIODIVERSITY – POSITIVE EXAMPLE OF BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Company: Rheinsberger Preussenquelle, Germany

Seller of natural organic mineral water. Medium-sized company with 21 employees.

Aspects of biodiversity of importance for the company

At first glance, biodiversity is not relevant for the selling of natural mineral water and the specific requirements for organic mineral water. This impression is however deceptive, because water and the preservation of its source must be seen as the result of a healthy ecosystem. The protection of the natural soil qualities is the central mechanism ensuring the quality of the water. Intact organic soil with all its microorganisms and processes is however only possible with a high level of biodiversity. Active protection of the water quality, especially in the catchment area of the source, is especially important for PreussenQuelle. This demands the general application of ecological cultivation including the rejection of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, but also the increasing of biodiversity through the minimisation of monocultures and industrialised farming. The requirements of biologically dynamic cultivation as a holistic approach and solution for the preservation of biodiversity – and in turn soil fertility and conservation – conform to the aims of Rheinsberger PreussenQuelle.

Concrete (measurable) aims regarding biodiversity

Rheinsberg and its surroundings are characterised by wide swathes of water and forest. As a result of the nature park, there is a high level of affinity to the idea of nature preservation. An unimpaired and natural landscape is also important for tourism. The importance of ecological farming for sustainable regional development has not yet been sufficiently recognised. Increasing awareness and at the same time improving the protection of the soil and water is the long-term goal of the company in the Rheinsberg region. Every year at least one nature protection project is to be supported, an aim that is imbedded in the environmental goals. Monitoring of the land and the corresponding projects is undertaken by the nature park authorities. The plan is to nurture additional catchment areas by working with the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development.

Increasing biological diversity in the catchment area is an additional long-term goal of the company. PreussenQuelle can indirectly influence this process in several ways:

- ➊ Improved information on and increased awareness of the relationship between soil quality and water quality by means of public relations (e.g. open house days), reports in the media as well as the implementation of an annual sustainability day (2015 to 2017)
- ➋ Strengthening the issues of water and water protection as well as organic farming at the political level. From 2017 direct contact is to be made with farmers in order to bring about a rethinking on, for example, the use of pesticides and the protection of the natural landscape in our region

- Intensification of the cooperation with important stakeholders such as Stechlin-Ruppiner Land Nature Park, Fördergemeinschaft ökologischer Landbau (ecological farming support association), the Association of Organic Processors (BNN), Ökofilm-tour and the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU)

Realised and planned measures

Realised:

- 2015: Project with Stechlin-Ruppiner Land Nature Park: construction of a rock ramp in Lake Schulzen near Zühlen (to prevent the lake from drying out and thus to protect the amphibian population)
- 2015: Development of the 'WasserWertSchätzen' ('treasure water') school project in cooperation with the nature park
- 2016: Project with Stechlin-Ruppiner Land Nature Park: construction of three osprey eyries for the protection of the species
- 2016: First sustainability day at PreussenQuelle (platform for the topics of sustainability, ecology and regionality)

Planned:

2017: PreussenQuelle becomes CO2-neutral

2017: Implementation of further projects in cooperation with the nature park

2017: Intensification of the cooperation with the ecological farming support association and in this way also of the political will for ecological agriculture

2017: Continuation of the cooperation in the field of education with the government department for Education for Sustainable Development (BNE) and Ökofilmtour in Potsdam. Training courses on the subject of organic mineral water in cooperation with the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development are planned.

Results and experiences

Initial experiences show that it is a huge challenge to bring the foodstuff perhaps taken most for granted into the focus of consumers.

Water is an outcome. With the conventional, intensive use of the land, every negative influence or contamination materialises years later in the (drinking) water. Making the consumer aware that they have a huge influence on this valuable resource through their conscious decisions – even if only through their purchasing decisions – is the focus of our 'treasure water' initiative.

Feedback from our tours and talks highlight how amazed and sometimes even shocked visitors are when the consequences on water quality of misguided land use through the application of chemicals are made clear.

Further information:

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