

Converting from conventional farming to organic production



Background

In March 2021, the EU Commission presented an action plan for the promotion of organic agriculture, with the overarching aim of boosting the production and consumption of organic produce. Under the plan, organic farming should account for 25 percent of agricultural land by 2030, a target which Germany's three-way coalition also incorporated into its coalition agreement. The federal government plans to significantly increase organic agriculture and has set itself the ambitious goal of converting 30 percent of agricultural land by 2030 and replicating this percentage on the supermarket shelves, according to Federal Minister of Agriculture Cem Özdemir. Consumer demand for organically produced products, particularly for fruits and vegetables, is increasing all the time. However, the conversion to organic farming is fraught with challenges for producers. Products already produced under organic conditions cannot be sold as organic because of the two or three-year period of transition that must elapse before they can be sold under the appropriate organic label. This means that it is virtually impossible to sell fruit and vegetables during the transition period, other than as conventional produce, which is not commensurate to the cost and effort involved in its production, however, and does not provide an incentive to embark on the conversion process.



Our approach

Launched in April 2018, PENNY's 'Naturgut Junior-Helden' range supports producers who have converted to organic but have not yet received organic certification, due to the legally stipulated transition period. By selling 'Junior-Helden' produce, PENNY gives farmers a platform to market their in-conversion products, thus increasing the incentive to convert to organic farming.

However, there is no logo to designate in-conversion produce, and it is currently sold with the label 'product under conversion to organic farming'. It is often difficult to position that amount of text on fruit and vegetable packaging. Moreover, we do not consider it particularly consumer friendly.

Australia has a logo for in-conversion produce that provides quick and easy information to the consumer. It features a shaded version of the actual organic logo with the short text 'in conversion' and is assigned to products in their second year of conversion.



A similar approach in Germany would make it easier to communicate with customers about these particular products and highlight their additional value. This would allow us to increase the popularity of this produce and convince more farmers to join us on the path to organic farming. This would be a step towards achieving the ambitious target of 30 percent by 2030.

Our view on the appropriate way forward

- A standard EU label for in-conversion food products would increase the popularity of produce from farmers converting to organic methods and help to achieve the ambitious organic agriculture targets.

Your Public Affairs contact on this topic



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About REWE Group

The cooperatively organized REWE Group is one of the leading trade and tourism groups in Germany and Europe. In 2020, the company generated a total external turnover of around 75 billion euros. Founded in 1927, REWE Group operates with 380,000 employees in 21 European countries.

The sales lines include REWE, REWE CENTER and BILLA as well as BILLA PLUS and ADEG supermarkets and consumer stores, the discounter PENNY, IKI, the drugstores BIPA and the toom Baumarkt DIY stores. The company also operates convenience stores REWE To Go and the e-commerce activities REWE Lieferservice and Zooroyal. The Lekkerland Group comprises the wholesale activities of the business group in the area of on-the-go consumption. Travel and tourism under the umbrella of DER Touristik Group includes the tour operators DERTOUR, Jahn Reisen, ITS, Meiers Weltreisen, Travelix, Kuoni, Helvetic Tours, ITS Coop Travel, Billa Reisen, Koning Aap, Apollo, Exim Tours and Fischer as well as more than 2,300 travel agencies (e.g. DERTOUR, DERPART, Kuoni, Exim, Fischer and cooperation partners), the hotel brands Sentido, Aldiana, Calimera, Cooe, and the online travel portal Prijsvrij Vakanties.