

Particularities of Demeter

Biodynamic farming is a holistic approach to agriculture

in which vitality has the highest priority. Its origin lies in the agricultural course held by Rudolf Steiner in 1924. Biodynamic farmers return more to the soil than they remove in the process of cultivating crops and animals; the farm is considered as an organism in which plants, animals and human beings are integrated together. The significant difference is that the Biodynamic method attempts to work with the dynamic energies in nature and not solely with its material needs. One aspect of this is the use of cosmic rhythms, for instance cultivation, sowing and harvesting are scheduled if possible on favourable days.

Animal husbandry

Animals consuming roughage must be present on arable farms. Fodder must be derived predominantly from on farm (at least 90% of the fodder ration for ruminants must originate from Demeter production and at least 50% from on farm.) Conventional fodder is excluded.

Horns

belong to the cow just as beaks do to chickens. Horns are important organs for cattle. They have an influence on the animals' energy balance and on the digestion performance which subsequently has a decisive effect on the quality of manure.

Entire conversion

The entire farm is to be converted to Biodynamic agriculture.

Parallel production

It is not allowed to cultivate the same variety on fields in conversion to Demeter and on fully certified Demeter fields.

Fertilisation

The amount of nitrogen that may be used per hectare and year is limited to 112kgs on arable farms. This is to originate primarily from stable manure produced on the farm. All organic fertilisers materials (dung, compost etc.) are to be treated with the Biodynamic compost preparations. Blood is not permitted.

Biodynamic preparations

Use of preparations made from healing plants, minerals (quartz crystal) and cow manure, sprayed onto the land or inserted into compost are used to enhance root growth and soil life as well as to fortify the plants. Small amounts of the spray preparations are stirred for an hour before bringing them to the fields. The process, parallel to dynamisation of homeopathic medicines yields healing for the earth. The DOC-experiment (Bio-dynamic manuring / organic manuring/ conventional farming) run for over 20 years, has shown increased soil fertility on the Biodynamic fields, as well as 85% more micro-organisms than on the parallel conventional plots.

copper

No copper may be used on annual crops.

Soils and substrates

A maximum proportion of 75% peat in propagating substrates is permitted (EEC: 80%), at least a 25% of potting mixes and substrates is to consist of compost treated with Biodynamic preparations.

composting

Use of the Biodynamic compost preparations are required and they contribute to better fermentation and maturation.

Seeds

Preference given to use of Biodynamic or organic seeds, conventional seed requires approval and must be untreated.

Priority given to breeding varieties of high vitality. Such seed lines lead to food products of high nutritional quality. Seeds in the breeding programmes originate partly from old, regional varieties. No use of genetically modified seeds or breeding methods.

(The EC Standards do not regulated breeding, therefore it is permitted to breed conventional plants for one year on organic fields.)

Cosmic constellations

are respected as far as practically possible. The moon and planets influence the growth of roots, leaves, flowers and fruit, - just like moon phases have an influence on sea tides.

Processing standards

The quality of the products should be maintained in the processed goods. The inner quality can be measured by the so called picture forming methods. In repeated blind experiments the products could clearly be classified according to their production method. Homogenisation of milk is not permitted.

Additives and processing aids

Positive list: the list of the permitted aid and additives in processing is appreciably shorter.

No use of caragen in milk products.

Ascorbin acid as an anti-oxidant is not allowed.

No use of nitrite salts in meat processing.

No use of natural aroma, only pure extracts as well as organically certified herbs and spices are allowed.

Social work

There are many enterprises with a social work component and training.

Political representation

There is a Demeter office in Brussels which is in constant touch with the EC commission.