

From niche to volume with integrity and trust CASE STUDY FACT SHEET

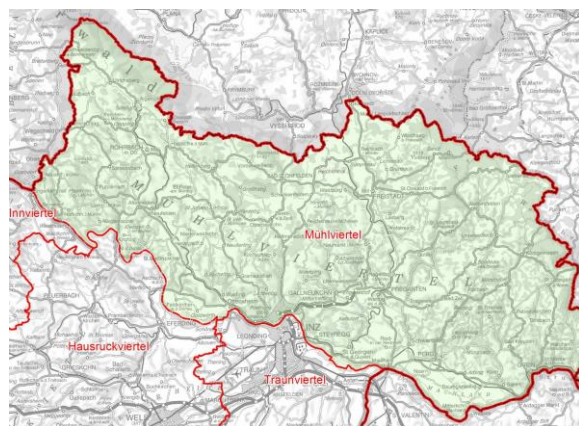
Bioregion Mühlviertel - Austria

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Basic facts

Contrary to other case studies investigated within the HealthyGrowth project, Bioregion Mühlviertel represents a territorial approach to regional development based on a strong and growing organic agriculture sector. The Mühlviertel is located in the province of Upper Austria (see image) and is made up of four districts: Freistadt, Perg, Rohrbach and Urfahr-Umgebung (with 122 municipalities). Across 3090 km² 270.000 people live in area at a density of 92 people per km². About one quarter of the agriculturally used area is cultivated organically and the proportion of organic farms (26%) is significantly higher than the national average (≈17%).



The geographical location of the Bioregion Mühlviertel.

Taking a closer look at the agricultural conditions, the Bioregion Mühlviertel has some climatic and topological disadvantages. The region is hilly, has a rather rough climate and the soil conditions (granite rock with many stones) are also not favourable. The agricultural structure of the region is characterized by a high percentage of grassland (about 50% of the agricultural land), combined with crop farming on the arable land. The farms usually include a substantial added forest area which contributes significantly to people's income.

"...we really want to live the organic ideals in their truest sense and establish a livable, natural and pristine region, that's the point.

That we do not only focus on organic farming and regional added value ..., but that we look at the Bioregion also from a cultural and touristic perspective.

Federal government representative/
Land OÖ

Of the product types, the biggest sector is dairy production, with the high amount of grassland being ideal for milk production. Beef and pork production is also important. On the arable land a variety of crops are cultivated ranging from cereal, potatoes and maize to herbs and hops. The combination of grassland and arable land with cereal and maize makes the region almost self-sufficient in fodder production.

Historical development

Despite a long tradition in organic farming, the actual process to establish the Bioregion Mühlviertel did not start until 2010. A publically funded project for setting up the Bioregion ran from 2010 to 2014 and can be subdivided into three stages. First, a participative process was started involving numerous

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Legal form:

Association

Date of foundation:26 November 2014
(project phase 2010-2014)**Homepage:**<http://www.bioregion-muehlviertel.at/>**Logo:****Area:**3090 km²**Population:**

270.000

Percentage - organic farms:

26%

External communication**examples:**

Travelling school exhibitions

Organic hiking guide

Flagship enterprises:

Sonnberg Biofleisch,

Köglerhof,

Organic bakeries (Mauracher,

Hörschläger),

Schlägl organic school

Facebook likes:

708 (2 April 2015)

Google hits:

53 200 (2 April 2015)

stakeholders. It also included farm visits, organic days, workshops, an online survey and a kick-off meeting to which representatives of the various LEADER regions of the Mühlviertel were invited. In the second phase, an operational structure was set up and a regional development concept drawn up which integrated the analysed results of the participative process in the first phase. The third phase was implementation. After completion of this development project, throughout 2014, in order to become independent from funding and to be able of entering into contracts, the Bioregion Mühlviertel changed its internal organizational structure to an officially recognized association. A new constitution was developed and agreed in a constitutive meeting on 26 November 2014. The 8 founding board members include one representative each of (1) the seven LEADER regions, (2) the Euregio Bayrischer Wald/Böhmerwald, (3) the tourism associations (4) the education sector (5) the hospitality & catering sector, (6) the direct marketing branch, (7) the organic farming association BioAustria and (8) the processing industry.

Membership structure

At membership level (as of 18 March 2014), the following organic actors are actively involved in the Bioregion and are now being integrated into the association:

- 72 direct marketing farms
- 16 processors (including bakers, butchers, brewers, a miller, a beekeeper, a mountain herb cooperative and a fruit processor)
- 12 restaurants & catering enterprises
- 6 public service providers (i.e. nature park, children adventure park, educational garden)
- 4 public canteens
- 4 artisan/handicraft businesses and
- 3 holiday-on-the-farm enterprises

One of the main challenges for the Bioregion Mühlviertel is balancing the expansion of the membership with maintaining its core values. Some members fear that the distinct profile of the Bioregion Mühlviertel might get lost if processors who also operate conventional product lines are included as members. The management of the Bioregion, however, pursues the strategy of including as many actors as possible along value chains as members and to motivate them to a gradual full conversion to organic.

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