Organic Beekeeping in Germany – Standards and Inspection System of Bioland

Berthold Schrimpf

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Outline

- Bioland Association
- Bioland Beekeeping Standards
- Bioland Beekeeping Inspection System
- Achievements and Challenges
Bioland since 1971 -> more than Bio

Convinced of organic farming

Convincing organic farming

with personality & profile

and regional production.
Effective Promotion

- 200 Regional groups
- Region - Berlin - Brüssel

Germany wide OF extension

- For basic and special consultations
- About 80 competent consultants

Well known OF trade mark in Germany

- Premium quality
- Regionally produced organic products

All above pictures by Bioland e.V.
Largest Organic Farming Association in Germany

Bioland in Numbers: Farms and Acreage

Number of Farms

Acreage in ha

- 2000: 257,019
- 2010: 257,019
- 2009: 5,233

Graph showing the number of farms and acreage from 2000 to 2010.
210 Bioland-Beekeepers (2009)

Imkerei-Größen

- 153 Einzelhühner (1-49 Völker)
- 27 Völker (50-99 Völker)
- 20 Völker (100-199 Völker)
- 6 Völker (200-399 Völker)
- 6 Völker (400-599 Völker)
- 6 Völker (600-799 Völker)
- 6 Völker (800-1000 Völker)

Bioland Logo
Bioland is a farmer led association with democratic structures

- >5,000 producers and 900 processors,
- 200 regional groups,
- regional associations (incl. Boards, chairs and offices) in 8 federal states
- Numerous comitees of experts (incl. bee-keeping) on federal level
- Elected presidency and president
- 200 delegates as final decision makers

❖ Offsprings:
   - independent organisations (e.g. marketing, publishing, extension and certification)
Aims of OF are to optimize health and productivity of soil, plants, animals and humans

- Bioland perceives its commonly held task mainly in:
  - Caring for the natural basics of the life of the soil, water and air
  - Keep animals according to their specific needs
  - minimize environmental pollution
  - Production of healthy foods
  - active protection of nature and species
  - Enhance the developing and maintaining of free small scale farmer structures
Organic farming can not:

• Guarantee, that all products are always free of pollutants.

• It is rather concerned to ensure that the methods used are not harmful to the environment and minimal pollution from the environment occurs in the products.
Bioland

Standard development

- Bioland perceives its way of work contributing to a healthy environment (healing aspect)
- As principle with Bioland, the farming and beekeeping must be promoted for and in any environment
Standard development
Bioland Beekeeping

• In general all Bioland standards have been / and are still developed further by Bioland farmers (as principally organic farming):
  – Through democratic bottom-up processes with final decisions on standards being made by elected farmer delegates from the 200 groups
  – Its about a continuous improvement process seeking to strike a balance between ecological concerns, animal needs & Bioland farmers being able to implement

• Bioland beekeeping standards since 1994
  – Developed and further amended by Bioland beekeepers
Standard development
Bioland Beekeeping

• In addition to the obligatory EU-Regulation, Bioland focused on:
  - Avoiding contamination through treatment residues
  - High wax quality – free of contamination
  - Sustainable beekeeping management practices, e.g.:
    • provisions for natural honeycomb construction on several combs during the breeding season
    • natural breeding and reproduction processes are preferable - the swarm instinct is to be considered in this
  - Limiting the Varroa treatments to the following acids: lactic, formic and oxalic acid
  - No AI (except for specific research purposes, authorization needed)
  - Pollutant free paints/glues for hives & suitable locations of apiaries
    • Consumer information recommended: "Bees are flying in a wide area. They are thus not only or predominantly foraging in organic fields"
Standard development
Bioland Beekeeping

• Later-on came standards for mead and pollen
• Currently discussions and initiatives around:
  – Bioland Beekeeping & energy balance / audits (awareness & action)
  – Ethical considerations in Bioland beekeeping
WAX as most important: Natural & non-contaminated

- Wax surrounds bees and bee products
- Wax reduces lipophile residues
- Wax is the “memory” of the bee colony
Aiming at surplus of natural non-contaminated wax

- Continuous renewal of wax in the colonies
  - Provision of several frames without foundation sheets

- Wax from decapping in addition
Old Wax to go out – or the “open wax flow”

Pictures by Albrecht Pausch
Different wax qualities have to be separated and labelled

- To be used for foundation combs:
  - Naturally build combs (wax)
  - Wax from decapping of honey combs

- To be removed from the system:
  - Wax that comes from combs that were built out of foundation combs
  - No foundation comb is allowed to become a foundation comb again!
Inspection System

Yearly inspections of all Bioland Beekeepers (inspectors with beekeeping background)

• At least one regular announced inspection, looking a.o. into:
  – General aspects of Bioland apiary, sites & hives
  – documentation & financial accounting,
  – stocktaking & plausibility,
  – Labelling, processing, etc.
Inspection System

Regular samples for analysis

- **Wax:**
  - One sample per 400 colonies - or at least every three years

- **Honey**
  - One sample per 4 tons of honey harvested - or at least every three years

- Ensuring compliance with standards and being free of residues that might indicate the forbidden use of chemicals
Inspection System

• Yearly at least 20 % not announced spot checks:
  – Random sampled
  – Market relevance
  – Risk classification
  – Suspicion

  – Includes honey yield checks during honey flow
    • esp. for apiaries of migratory beekeepers during e.g. Acacia or Chestnut honey flow
Achievements

• Focus on wax as „the bee colonies memory“ obviously a good indicator for checking compliance with standards

• The excellent quality & reputation of Bioland Beekeeping & products – also a result of relatively high analytical efforts

• Increasing the % of spot checks, and incl. migratory sites proofed to be effective

• Active contribution of Bioland beekeepers towards more effective inspections
Challenges

• Enhanced internal control systems of Bioland beekeepers
• Sampling and analysis costs carried by bee-keepers – smaller beekeepers at disadvantage
• Certification costs prohibit more (small) beekeepers to become members
• Enhance/maintain lobby for meaningful EU standards & implementation
THANK YOU!

Pictures by Kerstin Walther-Hellwig