



Progress report 2017/2018 relevant to the Leadership Commitment for the 'Biodiversity in Good Company' Initiative

Biodiversity is the basis of life and human wellbeing. It is an essential prerequisite for healthy ecosystems, which can consequently provide us with fundamental services such as oxygen, water, raw materials, fuels, fibres, food, ingredients for pharmaceuticals and much more. Biodiversity, the genetic diversity of species and ecosystems, including ecosystems types, is the key to a functioning natural system. The richer biological diversity is, the more stable ecosystems can be. A massive biodiversity loss has been sadly caused in the last years by human activities, degrading ecosystems und causing very tangible negative impacts in many regions. Biodiversity management is therefore a major societal issue in which companies and businesses play a crucial role.

Acknowledging this, the Erlebnishof Gertrudenhof supports the goals of the International Convention of the Parties on Biological Diversity (CBD), is a member of the 'Biodiversity in Good Company' Initiative and feels bound to its Leadership Commitment.

Leadership Commitment

All signatory companies acknowledge and support the three objectives of the International "Convention on Biological Diversity" (CBD):

- conservation of biological diversity
- sustainable use of its components
- fair and equitable sharing of the benefits that arise out of the utilisation of genetic resources

and commit to:

1. Analyse impacts of corporate activities and current operational dependencies with regards to biological diversity.
2. Integrate the protection of biological diversity, the sustainable use of components and the equitable sharing of benefits derived from use (the three objectives of CBD) into sustainability management systems.
3. Appoint a responsible individual within the company to steer all activities in the biodiversity sector and report to the Managing Board.

4. Define realistic and measurable objectives to improve the protection of biological diversity and its sustainable utilization, to be monitored and adjusted every two to three years, and identify challenges.
5. Publish activities and achievements related to biological diversity in the company's annual, environmental or sustainability report.
6. Inform suppliers about the company's biodiversity objectives and integrate suppliers accordingly and step by step.
7. Explore the potential for cooperation with scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations and/or governmental institutions with the aim of deepening dialogue and continuously improving the corporate biodiversity management system.

To demonstrate ongoing commitment, member companies shall provide the Initiative with a progress report every two years.

1. Analysis of the impact and dependencies of corporate activities and current operational dependencies with regards to biological diversity

Quantitative impacts on biodiversity produced by our company are fundamentally difficult to measure. Even instruments such as ecological balance/life cycle assessments can achieve results only to a restricted extent. Getrudenhof concentrates therefore on actions and tools protecting and supporting biological diversity rather than analysing effects.

2. Integrate the protection of biological diversity, the sustainable use of components and the equitable sharing of benefits derived from use (the three objectives of CBD) into sustainability management systems.

Nature and biodiversity close up at Getrudenhof

Fresh and healthy: that is how vegetables and fruit from Getrudenhof must be. Farm to table is furthermore part of our strategy: produce is transported from our fields straight to our kitchen and then the plate of our visitors, not through out faraway national regions or other European countries.

At Getrudenhof 30 different produce varieties are farmed on around 100 hectares. We farm following particularly diversified and sustainable methods. We of course aim at customers' satisfaction but our goals go beyond it.

Together with our partner Stiftung Rheinische Kulturlandschaft we run the project "Summendes Rheinland – Landwirte für Ackervielfalt" (summing Rheinland, farmers for field diversity"), which aims at improving habitats for pollinators in the Cologne-Aachen-Lowland, an intensively farmed region.

Honeybees as well as other insects such as hoverflies, butterflies and wild bees (same family as bumblebees) deliver through pollination an important ecological service for agriculture and for the conservation of wild plants, which is essential within ecosystems. The use of blooming catch crops not only makes fields more colourful, it also provides various insects with nutrition until autumn. Through the project local farmers place nesting sites for insects selectively, showing that collaboration with local actors can contribute to effective nature conservation measures for pollinators.

The project also concentrates on the revaluation of field borders, often narrow, mainly presenting only grass and little or no blooming plants. If once properly managed or revaluated and regularly maintained, field margins can have a strong habitat potential for pollinators on a long term. Furthermore, additional sites for brooding and overwintering, so-called gabions baskets filled with nesting material, are placed to suitable fields and provide with an appropriate home for various insects.

The project was funded until 2019, nevertheless Erlebnisbauernhof Gertrudenhof continued applying all measures successfully or even improved them. Particularly relevant for biodiversity is, for instance, the introduction of additional perennial plants next to trees and bushes at field borders. This is a source of nutrition for insects and birds, as well as hiding places for partridges, hares and other autochthonous species. Besides these measures, we could convince our commercial partners (farmers and producers, suppliers of our farm shop) to set blooming catch crops and/or to reevaluate field borders.

Far-reaching marketing measures

In the farm shop we work constantly on reducing packaging and plastic. We run successfully the campaign “Gib Plastik einen Korb” (Give plastic a basket) which rewards with home-made waffles customers bringing their own basket and avoiding disposable packaging for their shopping. Produce in the shop are sold unpacked and customers can help themselves directly from fruit and vegetable baskets. This led to an almost zero use of plastic in the shop. Also we use reusable or fair trade palm-leaves-based tableware in the farm restaurant and do not have disposable plastic crockery.

Sustainable energy production

Being a farm, energy plays a big role in our activities. We only use LED for all light sources. Furthermore, we installed a photovoltaic system on the roof of our farm halls, which produces sustainable energy on the numerous square meters of our rooves.

Personnel advocacy

Every three months we organise a one-day workshop to advocate and inform new employees (in total around 60) on sustainability and biodiversity, so to introduce these concepts in a tangible way in the daily working routine at the farm.

3. Appoint a responsible individual within the company to steer all activities in the biodiversity sector and report to the Managing Board.

Mr. Peter Zens, Getrudenhof CEO, lays strong value on the constant development of a sustainable company, so he is directly responsible for all aspects related to biodiversity. Mr. Zens is also a member of the Council Regionalbewegung NRW, the Cologne Food Policy Council, Fair Trade Town Hürth as well as involved in diverse regional and national networks around regionality, sustainability and biodiversity.

4. Define realistic and measurable objectives to improve the protection of biological diversity and its sustainable utilization, to be monitored and adjusted every two to three years, and identify challenges.

We are currently examining to switch our 120 farmland hectares to organic farming methods. Our vision is to create in a medium-term a “model farm” which demonstrates how a farming company in city surroundings can switch to organic production. We aim at increasing the quality of farming but also to becoming pioneers in the protection of biodiversity and sustainability within the agricultural sector in the strongly industrialized region around the city of Cologne. One important overall objective is the improvement of catering standards in day care centres and schools in the Cologne region. Being able to provide them with locally produced organic food, also including produce of further local food producers, could represent a big change to the current situation.

Furthermore, we plan to expand our sales (fresh produce and meals/food to go) at market stalls in the Cologne area (Abend- und Naschmärkte). This could give impulse to the regional food supply system, focussing on biodiversity and sustainability.

Through a strong communication campaign for local citizens, constantly specializing personnel and increasing activities at the didactic farm we shall be able to reach more and more people and advocate them on relevant topics.

5. Publish activities and achievements related to biological diversity in the company’s annual, environmental or sustainability report.

Activities relevant to biodiversity are listed in this report as well as on the company’s webpage.

6. Inform suppliers about the company’s biodiversity objectives and integrate suppliers accordingly and step by step.

We value the collaboration with our suppliers and constantly inform them on biodiversity related aspects. With apple suppliers, for instance, an agreement was signed to secure the production of old varieties, which we guarantee to purchase from them. Further biodiversity activities shall be introduced on these fields. Mr Zens also attends specialists’ events and conference on regionality, sustainability and biodiversity to share his knowhow with other companies as well as to search commercial partners for the marketing of local produce with a special focus on biodiversity protection.

7. Explore the potential for cooperation with scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations and/or governmental institutions with the aim of deepening dialogue and continuously improving the corporate biodiversity management system.

One of the core goals of the didactic and pedagogical farm Gertrudenhof is the advocacy for sustainable acting of children and youth of all societal and cultural backgrounds. Through adventurous and playful experiences young generations can rethink and change behavioural pattern as well as train new skills, becoming themselves sustainability models in their families and communities. Around 1000 guided tours are organised yearly at Gertrudenhof, providing around 20000 children with a first contact to biodiversity and sustainability.

2019-2020 the project “Europa Miniköche” (European mini cooks), a new and inspiring collaboration with the Ernst-Mach-Gymnasium school in the city of Hürth, was started. The goal of the project is to sensitize and inspire children on good nutrition and intact nature. Children are taught to cook recipes using local produce with the help of a starred chef and are also taken to field trips to the didactic model farm Gertrudenhofand to learn more on the concept and practical meaning of biodiversity.

Enlargement of the didactic farm with the 2000 m² “Regionalacker”

A superficies of 2000 m² represents the dimension of a field statistically needed to produce enough food for one human being. On our Regionalacker (regional farm field) a wide variety of vegetables can be found, all seasonally and environmentally friendly produced as well as locally sourced from the Rheinland and Cologne-Bonn region. Visitors can experience this variety and how this type of farming can contribute to biodiversity. Our environmental education programs target children and youth, as well as adults and regional educational institutions such as NUA (Nature and Environment Academy).

“Our farm shows how colourful and diverse nature can be. With regional, seasonal fruit and vegetable varieties we can feed ourselves 365 days a year: this is local “super food”, which grows here close to us and we just need to rediscover.” Peter Zens

Cologne Food Policy Council kick-off

Tasty, healthy and sustainable: that is how food should be in daily-cares and schools in Cologne. This is the goal of the Cologne Food Policy Council, which advises kitchen and housekeeping personnel in children and youth institutes on how to introduce more local produce in canteens. Tangible support is provided in management of food purchase, canteen planning, meals portioning and sourcing of fresh and regional produce.

The project for kitchen and housekeeping personnel begins with a day dedicated to sensitization at Gertrudenhof. After a short theoretical introduction, participants are brought to the fields to experience directly what biodiversity means and how sustainable, local farming contributes to it. After the kick-off personnel participate for several months to cooking classes where they learn how to integrate local produce in daily recipes in school canteens.

The Cologne Food Policy Council educational committee is directed by Mr Peter Zens.

Collaboration with Fair Trade Hürth

The sustainable use and protection of biodiversity is not only a core task to be fulfilled within own regional boundaries, instead it is a global issue. For this reason, Peter Zens works on the creation of a Fair-Trade steering committee in the city of Hürth.

At Gertrudenhof products such as cocoa and coffee as well as palm-leaves based tableware are 100% fair trade. This is only one contribution to the Hürth strategy for the Agenda 21. We furthermore inform and advocate citizens with natural flowered areas and plan a competition for biodiversity front gardens, so to motivate the city to avoid “concrete front gardens” and play an active role for biodiversity protection.



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