



EXCELLENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau
Institut de recherche de l'agriculture biologique



Organic beekeeping in Switzerland

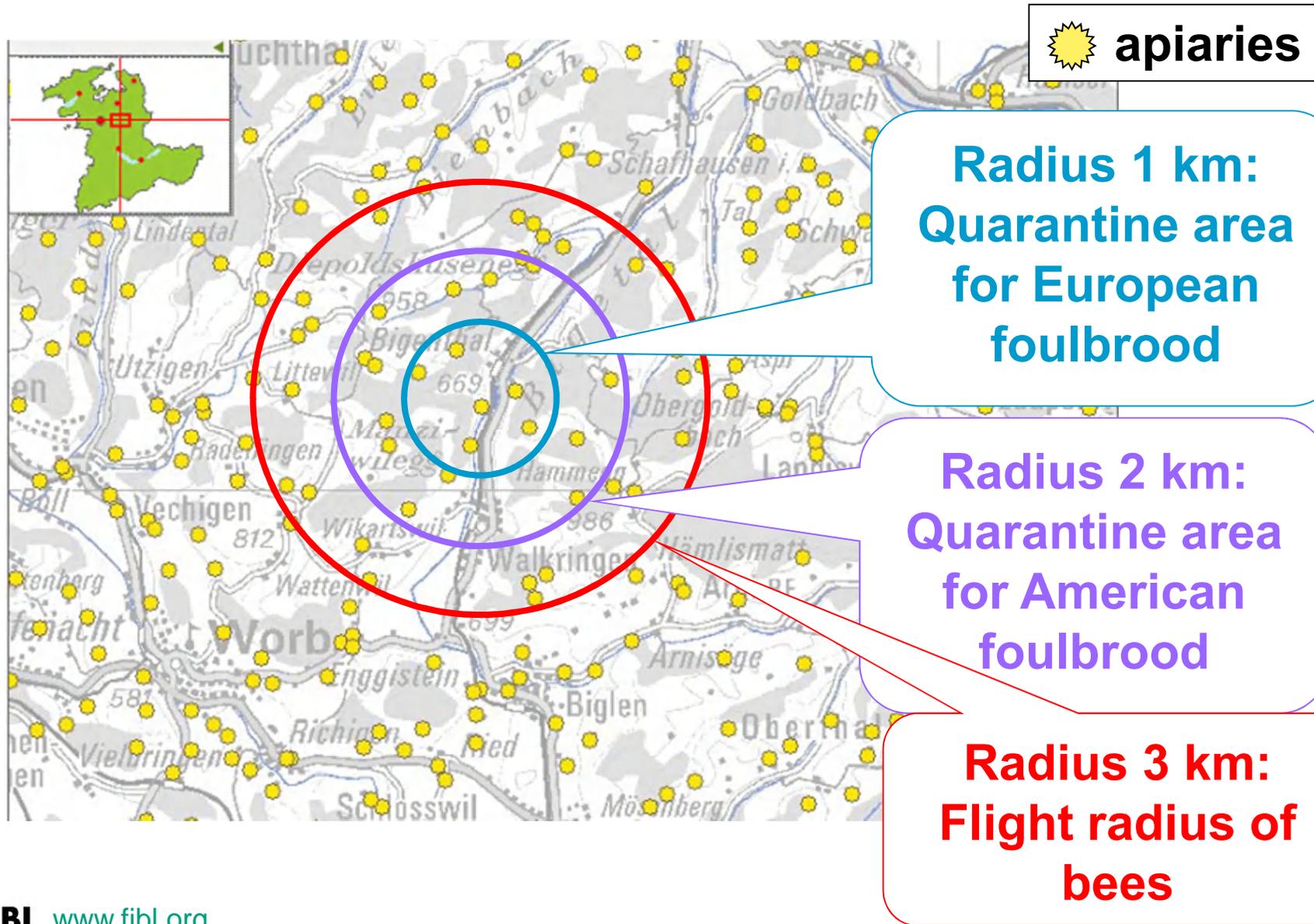
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Key data on conventional and organic beekeeping in Switzerland

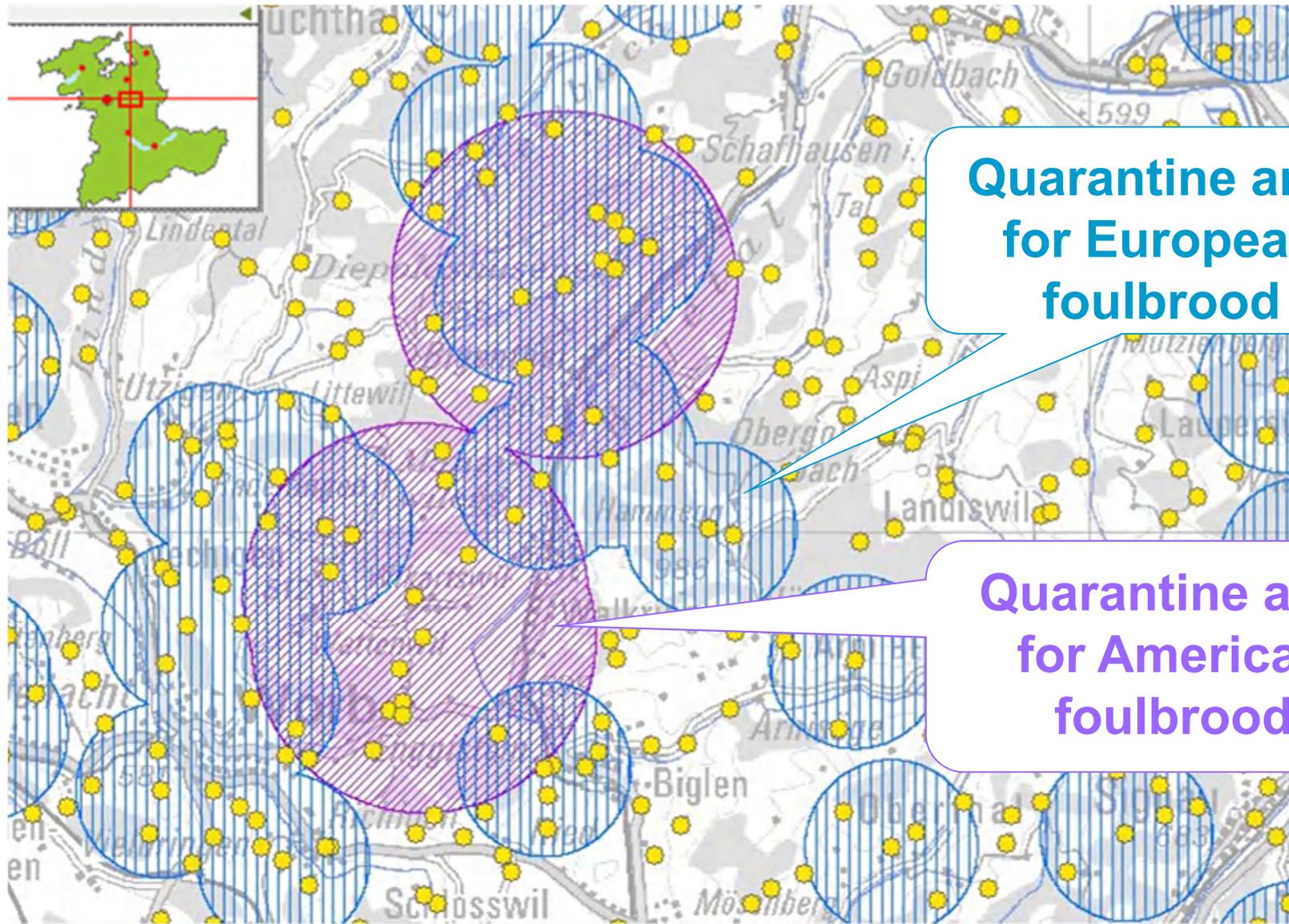
- › Average density: 4.5 beehives per km²
- › Density in lowland regions: ca 20 beehives per km²
- › Annual yield 10 kg per beehive

	Conventional	Organic
› Number of beekeepers	17'000	150 (=0.9 %)
› Number of beehives	170'000	6'000 (=3.5 %)
› beehives per beekeeper	10	40

Lowland: High density of bee colonies, 20/km²



Quarantine situation 2010 in a typical lowland



**Quarantine area
for European
foulbrood**

**Quarantine area
for American
foulbrood**

Bee regions and major honey plants



Lowland regions

- › Fruit trees
- › Dandelion
- › Canola
- › Forest trees



Alpine regions

- › Alpine rose
- › Blueberries
- › Erica (*Calluna vulgaris*)

Professional status of Swiss beekeepers



- › **85 % Amateurs (with traditional, stationary beehouses)**
- › **14 % Semi-professional beekeepers (with mobile beehives)**
- › **1 % Professional beekeepers (with mobile beehives)**

Regulation of organic beekeeping in Switzerland



Swiss organic farming ordinance

(equivalent to EU legislation)

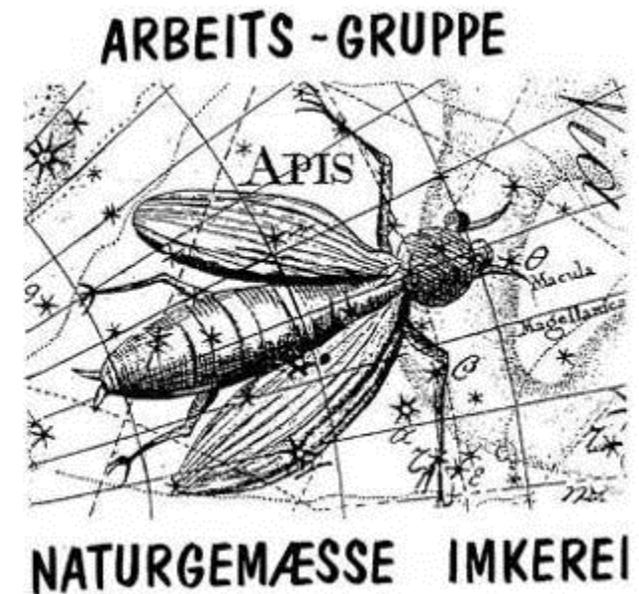
Private organic standards

Legal requirements (organic)

Legal requirements (general)

AGNI „Arbeitsgruppe naturgemässe Imkerei“

- › First organic beekeeping association in Switzerland
- › Functions as umbrella organization of all Swiss organic beekeepers
- › Private association



Quality of Swiss bee products

- › **Swiss conventional and organic honey is hardly contaminated, because**
 - **95 % of all farms practise IPM**
 - **The Swiss industry has high technical standards to avoid pollution**
 - >> organic beekeeping is possible in all areas of Switzerland**

- › **The goal of Swiss beekeeping has always been high quality honey. These efforts were supported by residue analyses carried out by the Swiss bee research centre ‚Liebefeld‘ (Stefan Bogdanov). These investigations have opened the door for organic beekeeping in Switzerland.**

- › **The main difference between conventional and organic honey is the sustainability of production.**

Honey marketing

- › Demand for honey greatly exceeds inland production
 - > Import (organic and conventional honey)
- › Direct marketing vs. trade



Seit 1972. Die Biomarke der Schweiz. **biofarm**

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Schweizer Berghonig Region Furka

Ein Genusszerlebnis

Wärzig, aromatischer Geruch, cremige, weiche Konsistenz mit einem feurig-säuerlichem Geschmack. Der Geschmack der Blüten ist ein anderer Feingeschmack und weicht Körper und Geschmack. Dieses tragen zu einem würdigen Teil für die Erhaltung natürlicher Flora bei.

Art. Nummer	Gewicht	Einheit	Detailpreis	pro
32922	140 g	Karton	CHF 7.80	Glas

Zurück zu Übersicht | Zurück zu Dornerhörnli & Co.

The beeswax situation in Switzerland

- **Newcomers in organic beekeeping must use uncontaminated wax**
- **Uncontaminated wax from Switzerland is rare, because**
 - **Low honey production = low wax production**
 - **In case of foulbrood: combs must be destroyed and the wax is lost**
- **Wax from European countries often contains thymol. This is neither accepted by Bio Suisse nor by Demeter**
- **Uncontaminated wax is available from Africa**

Control of the Varroa mite *Varroa destructor*



Control of the Varroa mite

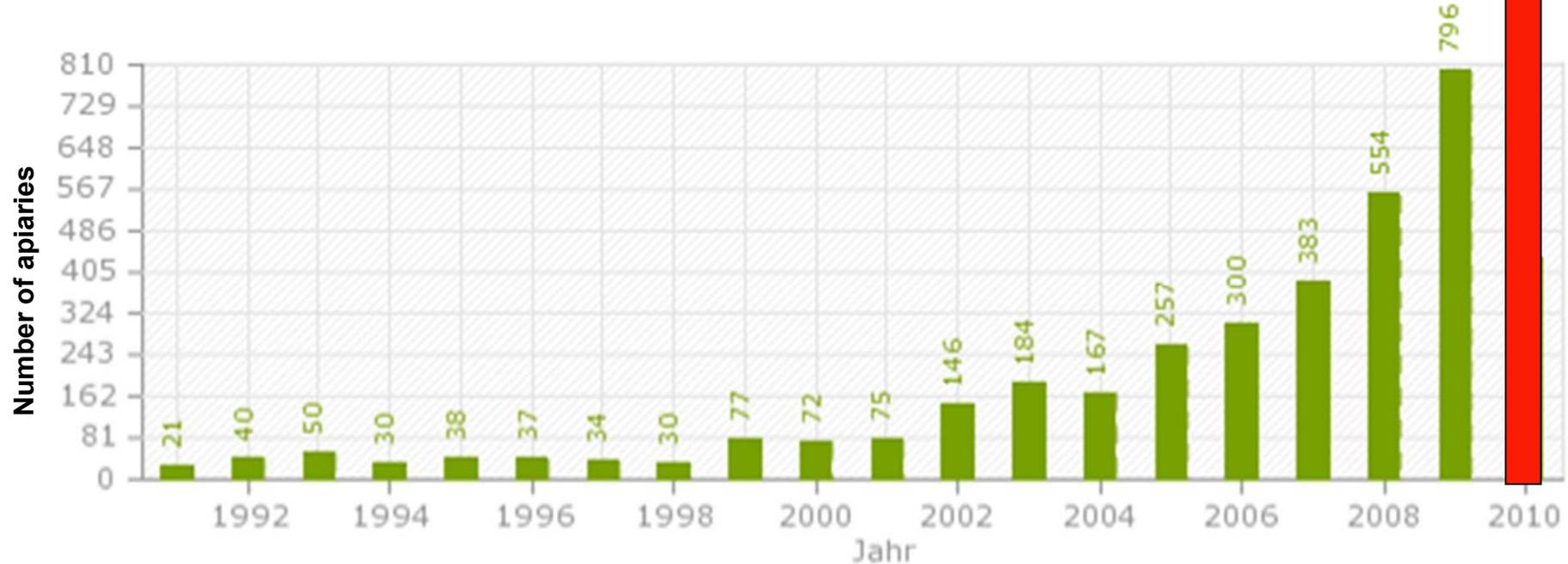
- **Effective control of the Varroa mite is a key factor for success in apiculture!**
- **High bee density in Switzerland aggravate the problem.**
- **The Swiss bee research center ,Liebefeld‘ has developed alternative Varroa control strategies for Swiss conditions, based on**
 - **formic acid**
 - **oxalic acid**
- **Not all beekeepers implement these strategies correctly, because of lacking knowledge.**
- **Outlook: I am currently testing the system of queen cageing combined with oxalic acid treatment.**

European foulbrood *Mellissococcus plutonius*



European foulbrood in Switzerland

expected for 2010: >1000



- Currently min. 6 % of beekeepers are affected
- Canton Bern, 2010: 65 % of apiaries in quarantine areas

Swiss organic beekeeping: an overview

Strengths

- › Good quality / purity of honey
- › High demand on the market

Weaknesses

- › Low yields of honey
- › High bee density / severe diseases

Thank you for your attention!

