

Organic Beekeeping in Germany – Standards and Inspection System of Bioland



Picture by Kerstin Walther-Hellwig

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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



Picture by Jan-Dirk Bunsen



Picture by Bioland e.V.



Picture by Bioland e.V.

with personality & profile



and regional production.

Shaping Organic Farming



Effective Promotion

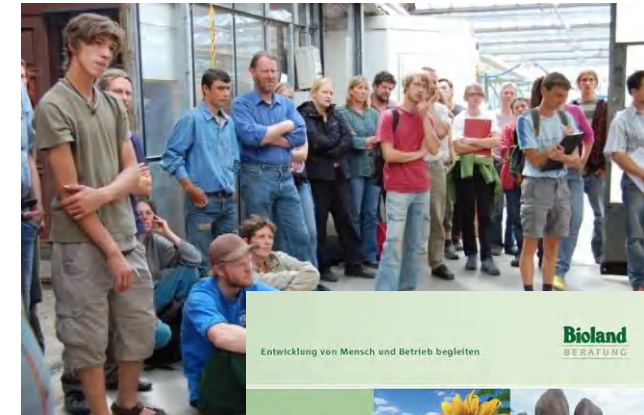
- 200 Regional groups
- Region - Berlin- Brüssel

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

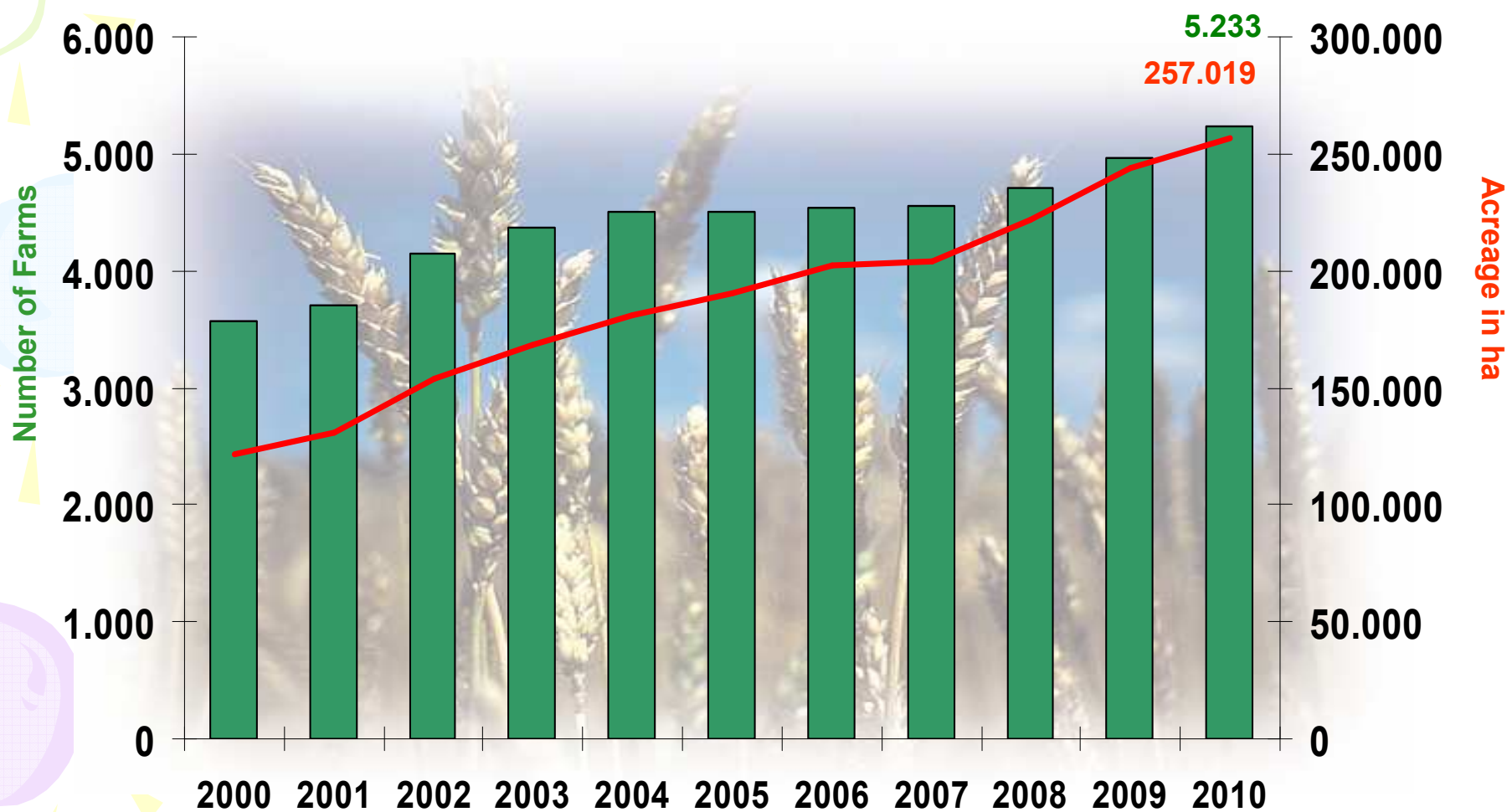


All above pictures by Bioland e.V.

Largest Organic Farming Association in Germany



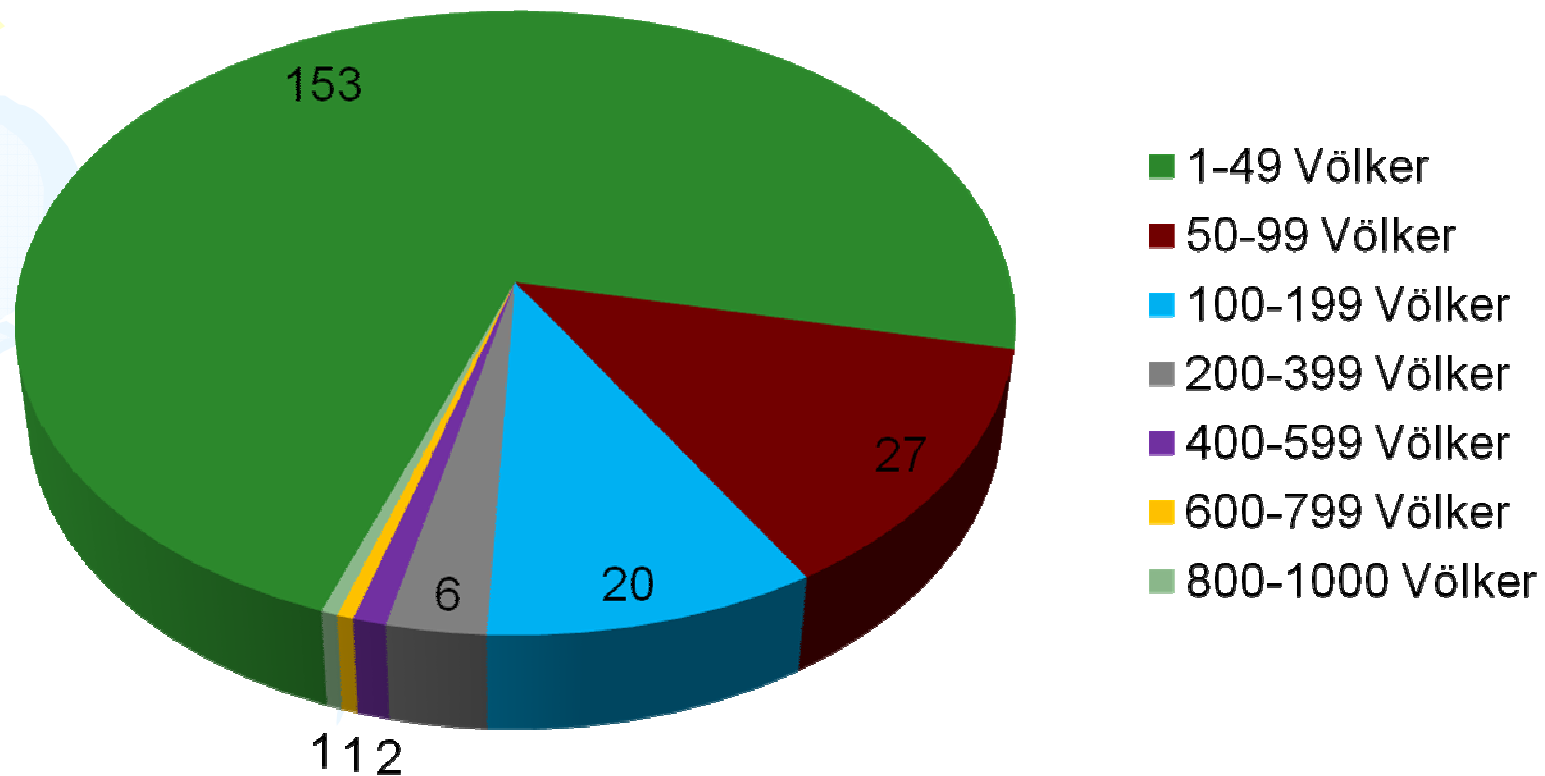
Bioland in Numbers: Farms and Acreage



210 Bioland-Beekeepers (2009)



Imkerei-Größen



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 committees 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:

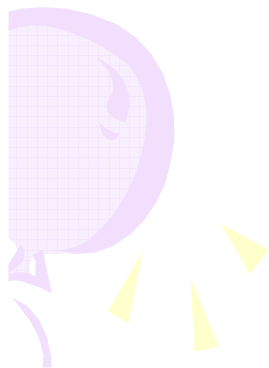
- Guarantee, that all products are always free of pollutants.
- It is rather concerned to ensure that the methods used are not harmful to the environment and minimal pollution from the environment occurs in the products



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 practises, 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



Picture by Albrecht Pausch

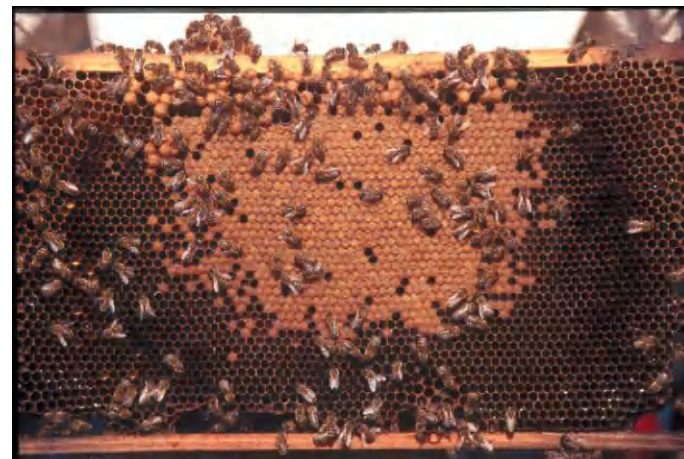
Aiming at surplus of natural non-contaminated wax

- 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

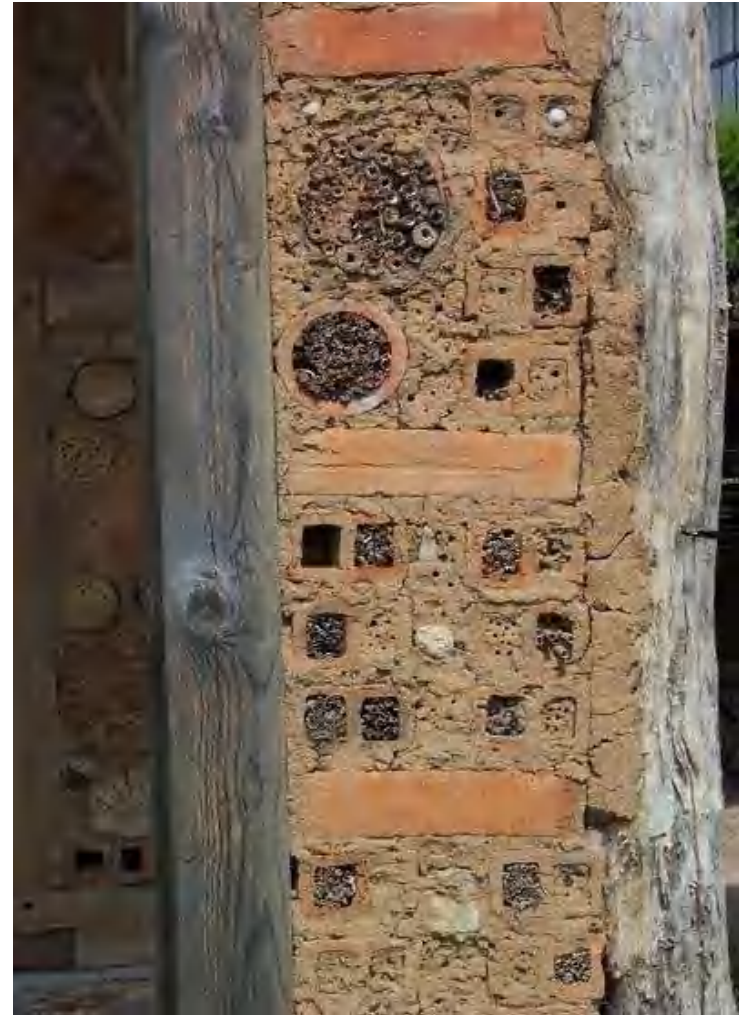
- Focus on wax as „the bee colonies memory“ obviously a good indicator for checking compliance with standards
- The excellent quality & reputation of Bioland Beekeeping & products – also a result of relatively high analytical efforts
- Increasing the % of spot checks, and incl. migratory sites proofed 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