

The integration of disabled people in agriculture as an opportunity for landscape development – case studies in Germany

The integration of handicapped people in agriculture is a combination of social work and farming which aims to make use of the multifunctional potential of agriculture demanded by society and politics. Both agriculture and social work can profit from cooperation. Can there be beneficial effects for landscape and wildlife too? The poster describes a study of the potential of three farms for the integration of physically and mentally disabled people with work on the landscapes. The main questions asked were: What has already been done? Which aims have been followed? What are the conditions restricting or supporting the implementation of landscape work?

Case One: Bingenheim



Community Bingenheim established 1950

- Sheltered Workshop for handicapped people (WfbM)
- 12 handicapped people in agriculture, more than 200 in the institution, ratio of supervision about 1:3
- Demeter certified
- 100 ha / 55 ha arable
- Cereals, forage crops, potatoes
- About 2 ha apple orchards
- 40 milking cows + offspring + fattening
- 5 sows + offspring + fattening



Landscape in Bingenheim

- Well structured diverse landscape in the transition zone between mountainside and valley with elements of both
- Average field size of 2 ha
- In the past strong awareness of landscape work especially regarding the concept of the farm as an „organism“ with planting of two kilometres of hedges and individual trees
- At present unclear development because of new generation of farmers

Case Two: Gut Sambach



Community Gut Sambach est. 1991

- Not a WfbM, independent integration
- 24 handicapped people in total
- Ratio of supervision 1:3 to 1:6
- Demeter certified
- 530 ha / 380 ha arable
- Cereals, forage crops, potatoes
- About 12 ha orchards
- 150 milking cows + offspring + fattening
- 200 fattening pigs + sows



Landscape in Sambach

- Arable Land with fields up to 30 ha
- Tree-lined ditches and rows of trees
- Very old coppiced willows as especially valuable habitats
- Ditches and orchards are grazed
- In the nineties many measures like tree planting financed by the city community
- At present bad state of maintenance and no concept of cultivation, sometimes unemployed people hired for cutting

Case Three: Hofgut Richerode



Church Institution Hephata Hessische Diakonie established 1915

- Sheltered workshop for handicapped people (WfbM)
- 20 handicapped people in agriculture
- More than 1000 in the institution
- Ratio of supervision 1:7
- Bioland certified
- About 90 ha / 50 ha arable
- Cereals, potatoes, forage crops
- 50 fattening bulls + 400 hens + 160 chicken (+150 ducks + 300 geese)
- Potato peeling equipment



Landscape in Richerode

- Lack of structure: no visible history
- Average field size of 7 ha
- Animals are kept inside, only some of the poultry is free-range
- Farm and landscape are divided and characterised by a stream and a main road
- Search for identity through landscape work as a task for the future

Conclusions: Opportunities for landscape work with disabled people

++ Advantages ++

- provides plenty of practical tasks
- landscape work carried out off-season, so combines well with agriculture
- by including disabled people, farms are less dependent on production
- work on the landscape promotes identification with the location

- - - Disadvantages - - -

- financial issues – you cannot sell landscape – a challenge for the future?
- competition for time, space, workers
- shortage of professional staff
- capabilities of disabled people

The investigation of these three cases shows that there is great potential for the inclusion of disabled people in landscape work on farms and that many things have already been achieved. This potential is limited in practice by multiple factors; most important are factors that also limit the sustainable farming concept such as a shortage of professional staff, time and money. The attitudes and esteem of farmers and staff are decisive for what happens in the landscape.

Contact:

Marie Kalisch, Dr. Thomas van Elsen, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL e.V.), Nordbahnhofstr. 1a, D-37213 Witzenhausen, Germany, Tel. +49 (0)5542-981655, E-mail: Marie.Kalisch@frib.org

