



### In this Issue:

- New Board Member
- ORA at BioFach 2006
- ORA seeks network-partners

### News inside ORA

ORA is pleased to announce an expansion of its Board: **Dr. Toralf Richter**, researcher and expert on organic food marketing, was elected as second Vice-president to the ORA Board in November 2005.

Toralf works as a consultant in the specialized organic retailer sector at **BIO PLUS AG** in Switzerland (<http://www.biopartner.ch>). Before Toralf was employed at the Research Institute for Organic Farming (FiBL) in Switzerland for seven years. He got experience there in the organic market related consumer and market research and participated in several European research projects (OMIaRD, EISfOM, QLIF). Apart from the scientific profile Toralf published books on market research results and marketing guidelines for organic producer initiatives (<https://www.fibl.org/english/shop/>) which are helpful tools for the development of the organic markets in many countries.



### ORA at BioFach 2006

#### ORA VISION CAMP

Organic Retailers Association invited leading experts & stakeholders from different countries to a Vision Camp in order to exchange opinions and thoughts on ORA's future direction and to discuss steps of cooperation among stakeholders.

Here are the results and suggestions of more than two hours of fruitful discussion on what should the role of ORA be.

#### ORA should:

- play a uniting role on behalf of independent organic food retailers (in the EU)
- be a political representative of organic retailers (on the EU level)
- define and help to implement common ethical values and standards for organic retailers
- transfer information among stakeholders
- build up a network of national ORA partner organizations
- create an efficient expert network to support the development of the organic-shop-sector, exchange of experience, consultancy pool
- help in networking between processing and trade
- create opportunities and initiatives for vocational training
- organize annual ORA meetings at BioFach - information platform for challenges and problems in the retailer sector, workshop with impulse contribution and moderated discussion rounds



As a result of the Vision Camp, the ORA members re-formulated its basic aims and strategies as follows:

## What is ORA?

ORA is the umbrella association of organic retailers worldwide. The definition of organic retailers comprises those retailers which sell 100% organic food and non-food items in their shops and markets or aim for 100% in their development. ORA also is the Internal Body of IFOAM for Organic Retailer Issues.

### Facts:

- founded in 2004
- Headquarter in Vienna/Austria
- Member Countries (2005): Austria, Belgium, Czech Rep., Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia
- Board Members: Ralph Liebing (Austria): Executive Director, Tom Vaclavik (Czech Republic): President, Ferenc Fruehwald (Hungary): Vice President, Toralf Richter (Germany): Vice President



### ORA Mission:

1. To support the Organic Retailers Sector worldwide in order to provide consumers with high quality organic products through highly qualified and committed organic retailers.
2. To encourage the development of Independent Organic Retailing Sectors as to create professional marketing channels for medium & small scale organic farmers & processors for their national and regional products.

### The Goals of ORA:

1. To encourage the development and professionalism\* of OR as an important sales-channel for organic products (\*e.g. basic business skills such as Qualification-Standards)
2. To support emerging organic market's development through establishing OR-structures.
3. To develop a code of practice: to gradually development a system of Organic Retailers Standards concerning qualification, assortment, service, preparation, handling, storage, documentation, labelling, advice and social issues.
4. To collect and represent the interest of national retailer sectors on international level.

### Strategies:

- Ad 1: Know-how-transfer, raise awareness amongst stakeholders & policy-makers, Consulting, Lobbying, Excursions, collection market-data, PR, best-practice-examples
- Ad 2: ORA-Consultancy-Network, collect project-possibilities (-international, EU), Know-how-Transfer, tools- & strategies for National-Organic-Action-Plans
- Ad 3: Collect national or regional best-practice-examples on every issue and form minimum-Standards; encouragement to implement standards
- Ad 4: Creation of an International network amongst OR, representing different national views and needs, creating common needs, engagement in and of IFOAM

### Priorities on ORA activities :

- Creating a communication platform to spread best-practice-examples worldwide
- Networking with national stakeholders and organizations which are involved in the organic retailer sector.
- Developing of market-development tools
- Set-up on Counseling Network
- Offer of Counseling Network (e.g.) IFOAM; IFOAM-projects; FAO; co-genial NGOs; projects in South/Eastern Hemisphere
- Search for appropriate International & National Projects & Research Studies
- Design & Management of International & National Projects & Research Studies
- 2006: Search for employment of 1 part-time-person for HQ in Vienna
- Fundraising



## "Small but smart"

This seminar was very well attended by an audience of about 60 and all 3 speakers presented their success stories in an individual and captivating style.



The first speaker, **Mr. Esche Schoerghofer**, who runs a small, highly specialized bio-shop called "*aus gutem grund*" ("*for a good reason*") on the south-western outskirts of the 2-million-City of Vienna/Austria approached the theme from a very philosophical viewpoint. He questioned the ongoing publicity of never-ending growth in the fields of the organic-movement: the where-to's, the what-for's, at what price & under which parameters of success. He set it in the context of his personal living-quality as a bio-supermarkets competitor - never willing to change positions: and his conclusion was that he would rather have less income and still retain the ability to make his own personal decisions than be controlled by "the market". And he indeed has been successful with a yearly turn-over of approx. 500.000 Euro on 45m<sup>2</sup>! His secret: he runs the only qualified Demeter-shop in the whole of Vienna with the largest Demeter-assortment, and he has a wide experience and knowledge base related to these products. Additionally, (and as important) he knows most of his customers & all of his farmers personally.



The 2nd speaker, **Mrs. Irmgard Voegtler-Laub** from Aulendorf in Southern Germany, runs a bio-shop called **Greens** ([www.naturladen-aulendorf.de](http://www.naturladen-aulendorf.de)). She spoke in detail about how she decided to look for new premises instead of remaining in her tiny shop. She elaborated on how she had made Greens a local success, showing us pictures of her very modern & aesthetic shop. Everything about her was impressive underlining once again the story of how an idea and the right commitment can become the driving force behind a successful project- even with competition present.



We flew speaker No. 3 in from Britain: **Mr. Mark Holme** of Chester with his success story called **organicfair** ([www.organicfair.co.uk](http://www.organicfair.co.uk)). Knowing how difficult independent organic-retailing is in the UK in comparison to "the Continent" it was wonderful to hear how over the years Mark's organicfair became the most successful privately owned organic food shop in the UK. He has managed to offer over 1.500 organic products - mainly regional/national and hardly no imports - which is splendid and demonstrates his hard work and genius. Although organic products in the UK still have the image of being too expensive and scarce, he managed - e.g. by developing a special box-scheme-service - to raise awareness and business. He also emphasised a very personal approach towards the majority of his customers. Now he is thinking of opening another shop which, we are sure, will become another success.

### **Conclusion:**

The conclusion therefore of "small but smart" is that with an atmosphere of creativity, success & hope many in the audience (who were shop-keepers of a similar kind) - felt re-affirmed in their approach and could see that commitment still leads to success. The more personal the relationships that can be created with customers, the better the chances are of competing with "the big ones" of the sector and the "new-ones" from the conventional retail sector who are now starting to sell organic all over.



## ORA Network - ORA SPINS NET AND LOOKS FOR NETWORK-PARTNERS

The **ORA Concept** is to support independent organic retailers as a unique and important marketing and information/knowledge channel for organic products and food. Organic retailers constitute a significant bridge between small and medium size organic farmers and processors as well as consumers, mainly in urban areas.

### **ORA activities**

ORA is currently developing the **Knowledge and Advice Resource Pool**, that will be offering educational programs on the subject of marketing, sales and customer relationship skills, financing, assortment development and other topics for the organic retail trade.

ORA furthermore intends to create a set of Quality Standards and Programs of Improvement both in the shop assortment and in the staff qualifications.

### **We seek like-minded partners**

ORA's intention is to establish national contact persons which are/will become closely involved in the national organic retailer sector and therefore could be considered as opinion and knowledge leaders for this sector in their countries. We intend to set up the **ORA Network**, a web of interested bodies and individuals from the consulting, research and trading fields, who are - in cooperation with us - willing to:

- develop national networks to support organic retailers
- serve as the national or regional ORA Network contact
- collect information on the state and needs of the organic retail branch and its stakeholders in their country
- implement ORA Concepts in their country
- drive fundraising on their national levels
- investigate upon national projects or funding for the sector

### **To Do's:**

1. Please, consider if you or your organisation are interested to be part of the **ORA Network**. Participation would not mean any formal obligations for you - besides the input of your know-how.
2. In case you do not see a personal role in the ORA Network it would be very beneficial to us if you could suggest institutions or persons in your country with a close involvement on the organic retailer sector or interest in our alignment.

## **Our Daily Bread**

### **New film by Nikolaus Geyrhalter**

Welcome to the world of industrial food production and high-tech farming! To the rhythm of conveyor belts and immense machines, the film looks without commenting into the places where food is produced in Europe: monumental spaces, surreal landscapes and bizarre sounds - a cool, industrial environment which leaves little space for individualism. People, animals, crops and machines play a supporting role in the logistics of this system which provides our society's standard of living.



OUR DAILY BREAD is a wide-screen tableau of a feast which isn't always easy to digest - and in which we all take part. A pure, meticulous and high-end film experience that enables the audience to form their own ideas.

[www.unsertaeglichbrot.at/](http://www.unsertaeglichbrot.at/)

ORA welcomes your questions. Send them to [info@o-r-a.org](mailto:info@o-r-a.org).  
Please forward ORA News to a friend or colleague, thank you.

### **Contact:**

ORA-Organic Retailers Association  
A-1040 Vienna, Theresianumgasse 11.1.1  
Tel. +43-1-403 70 50 - 235, Fax: Ext. 190  
[info@o-r-a.org](mailto:info@o-r-a.org)  
[www.o-r-a.org](http://www.o-r-a.org)