

German biomaiz: Proposals for initiatives to change the negative role of conventional German biomaize on organic farming.

Presented by Per Kølster, chairman, Organic Denmark, during a visit at GrüneWoche, Berlin, to Bioland, president Jan Plagge, at a board meeting of BÖLV (umbrella organization of all organic associations in Germany), January 22, 2014.

Background

- German energy policy enhances cropping of maize for biogas production
- Due to the very favorable price, biomaize is winning in the competition for land
- This increases the pressure specifically on the organic dairy production and in general on farmers who want to produce food.
- This is a problem both in Germany and in the southern part of Denmark.
- The German government has decided to end this energy policy in 2030. In other ways this is far too late to change the situation

Proposals presented and discussed

- Danish Ministry of Food: Make a synthesis of the problems (structural, employment, economical, ecological) based on the German knowledge and seen in the Danish context
- Calculating and defining new organic conversion and area support payments that reflect higher land prices and lease prices, driven by maize for biogas production. There is an income loss for landowners, who chose not to grow maize, and compensation may require a doubling or tripling of organic conversion and area payments in the affected areas.
- Requirement of crop rotation, as a CAP greening requirement in Germany and Denmark (and what about other neighbor countries as Poland, Holland, Belgium, France etc.?).
- Requirement of larger diversity of inputs to biogas plants—a maximum maize input of 25%.
- Green fees on monocropping. Fee revenue is returned to farmers who use a crop rotation.
- Support for alternative crops, grown extensively by organic farmers. Clover (in mixtures) for example.
- Biomass fee structure to discourage monocultures and encourage use of non-food inputs to biogas plants.
- Restriction on maize (or use of pesticides) in all areas of importance for drinking water supplies or preservation of biodiversity.
- Possible EU case against biomaize.
- And of course, reopening the issue of price guarantees for biogas.

Actions

- Informing and encouraging ministers to talk and search for solutions
- Inquiry to the EU-Commission and the Parliament
- Challenging the energy sector to take responsibility for its role in agriculture
- Press arrangement for instance on the German/Danish border, contact with Bioland jan.plagge@bioland.de, and with their local chairman of Bioland, Jens Masslo, in Schleswig-Holstein jens.masslo@bioland.de

Information and contacts, Germany

- Contact in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture could be the Director-general for “Bio-based Economy, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry”, Clemens Neumann al5@bmel.bund.de
- The Thünen Institute of Farm Economics (federal) in Braunschweig has made a series of studies and reports about the consequences of the biogas maize. Contact Dir. u. Prof. Dr. Hiltrud Nieberg hiltrud.nieberg@ti.bund.de.
- “Organic farming and bioenergy production – conflicting goals and approaches to a solution”
 - <http://www.tab-beim-bundestag.de/de/pdf/publikationen/berichte/TAB-Arbeitsbericht-ab151.pdf>
 - <http://www.tab-beim-bundestag.de/en/publications/reports/ab151.html>
- Similarly, Bioland has comprehensive documentation about the maize problem, President Jan Plagge, Bioland, jan.plagge@bioland.de