**Importance of nonprofit nutrition and food education for regional cooperatives**

January 2020

Why is this topic important?

In large parts of the population, the direct connection to agriculture and food crafts has been mostly lost in the last decades. However, for a few years now, there has been a growing desire to be more a part of it again (e.g.: rapidly growing Solidarity Agriculture). Regional value chain cooperatives are picking up on this desire, creating transparency and connection from city and village to organic farms and artisanal processing.

It is a logical next step to anchor the whole topic of nutrition and food education as an important task and central tool in regional cooperatives.

Cooperatives such as Landwege eG, Oikopolis and Odin report how centrally important this educational work was and is to their success. When, for example, many Lübeck schoolchildren are emotionally moved by a visit to the "Landwege Farm" and enthusiastically tell their parents about it, this has an immediate positive impact.

In addition to the reputation and public service, it also speaks to the credibility and the community service nature of a cooperative to engage in nutrition and foodal education. And, it is a unique selling point, because the topic is not addressed by many other groups and organizations.

**How have cooperatives taken up the issue?**

Most cooperatives have set up a closely interlocked dual structure consisting of a commercially active company and a non-profit organization under the same name.

In addition to Landwege eG, there is the nonprofit Landwege Verein, which operates the Landwege farm and successfully does educational work there.

(www.vereinlandwege.de)

VG Dresden works closely with the VG Verein, which organizes educational work and farm excursions to regional suppliers. Every member is automatically a member of the association and a fixed small part of the membership fee is forwarded to the association.

Similar, but without automatic membership, is Tagwerk eG, the Tagwerk association is active in educational work and publishes, for example, the Tagwerk newspaper.

(www.tagwerkcenter.net)

Odin enables beekeeping on participating farms through a non-profit structure by employing beekeepers, and organizes the breeding of new vegetable and grain varieties. Members can thus participate financially in meaningful projects.

(www.odin.nl)

And Oikopolis, through its financial participation in an organic farm, created the possibility of converting it into a school farm, thus creating a nutrition and foodal education project of great importance for Luxembourg.

(www.kass-haff.lu)