**3.3.f – Exercise added values: case study “Hofgut Richerode”**

Task: What added values does the “Hofgut Richerode” generate and what added values could this farm generate? Collect added values from the farm description and the short video and underline relevant references to it in the text.

Aim/ objectives

The aim of this exercise is to filter out the added values for various stakeholders, groups and sectors that this farm generates from a complex description of Social Farming. In addition, a short film about the farm is available. This exercise builds on the existing knowledge of the two presentations from unit three. What has been learned so far can be applied and tested in this exercise.

Learning outcomes

After studying this resource, you will be able to:

* Explaining the possibilities to create added values for all actors involved on a Social Farm.
* Indicating added value of Social Farming for biodiversity and landscape development.
* Generating added values of Social Farming for the environment by using many “helping hands” for landscape development, active care and measures integrating farm elements which increase biodiversity.
* Applying the principles of Social Farming to certain cases and projects.
* Transfer of basic knowledge on concrete examples.
* Assessing structures on Social Farms.

Keywords

* Social institutions with Social Farming
* Workshops for people with disabilities
* Landscape management group

Description of the Social Farm “Hofgut Richerode”

1. Key points

Hofgut Richerode belongs to Hephata Hessian Reformatic church (Deaconry) and has a long history as farm for supplying the institutions with food. There are quite a lot of similar **institutions** in Germany where farming as work for people with disabilities had been traditional but was given up or reduced when food prices made self supply unprofitable in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the last decades some of those institutions have taken up farming again in the organic way. From 150 existing green sectors in WfbM (**Workshops for people with disabilities**) 60 percent work organic with certification (Hermanowski 1992). Some of them already run a **landscape management group** caring for municipal areas or carry out private instructions. A great potential could be to work with people with disabilities in designing landscapes and maintenance of landscape elements on those farms and institutions itself where requirements are obvious. Offering highly suited working places for people with disabilities is an interesting option, but the challenge is that WfbM are forced to work efficiently and have to earn profit to pay their employees with disabilities. A limiting factor is the financing of those landscape groups.

Since 1991 Hofgut Richerode works as a certified organic farm (Bioland) keeping bulls, pigs, poultry and producing crops on about 130 ha of land. There is also a garden where herbs are grown and a mixing and packaging unit for a regional organic tea brand. The main sector of the agricultural production is growing potatoes. There are own peeling, packaging and storing installations facilitating the marketing to wholesalers and creating lots of secure working places for the people with disabilities - 80.

1. Description and Background of Richerode Farm

First mentioned as settling in 1193 the “Rucherod“ or “Trugelnroder Gut“ had different owners and use until Hephata bought it in 1918 as a farm for self-supplying its institutions with food. A lot of construction and building went on such as electricity supply, water supply, houses, sheds and a federal highway. Cows, poultry and pigs were kept and on 93 hectares cereals, potatoes and vegetables were grown. In the beginning twelve and later up to fifty people with disabilities were helping and living on the farm, especially concerned with potato growing and animal keeping.

Because prices fell on the food market food supply from the own farm became unattractive for Hephata and was given up in 1968. The farmland was leased out and the farm buildings were still used for accommodating and workshops for the people with disabilities. In the new workshops the people were busy with packaging or assembly work, often manual work in pre-stage of the industry.

In 1990, when even industrial works were not economically attractive any more Hephata had to decide whether to keep and restore the location in Richerode or leave and sell it. On condition that the place was kept, farming should be revived. Since 1991 Hofgut Richerode is an organic working farm (Bioland certificated) again with bulls, pigs, poultry and crop production on about 130 ha of land. There is also a garden where herbs are grown and packed as “Mountain Herbs” herb tea brand. The main sector of the agricultural production is the potato. There are own peeling, packaging and storing installations facilitating the marketing to wholesalers and creating lots of secure working places for the people with need for support.

All-inclusive there are 80 people with different people with disabilities and different capability in Richerode, working in the sectors gardening and herb tea, potato processing, housekeeping and agriculture. Retired people with disabilities can stay and live on the farm. Young people with need for support are attending training on the job. In the agricultural sector there are four farmers guiding 20 male people with disabilities. 85 % of the Farm income is derived from money paid for the employment of the people. The work includes animal keeping and potato growing. The aim is to create working facilities that fit the integrated persons in a way they can do the job without help but own responsibility. Some co- workers are even capable of tractor driving. One is busy to transport the rubbish of the local cemetery to the compost place. In future a group of workers might be busy in landscape design and maintenance.

1. **External environment**

Richerode Farm is not a single farm in the countryside but belongs to the big institution Hephata that owns a lot of different and similar institutions in the region. With about 1400 employees, it is one of the biggest employers in the area. This means not only the support of a big community but also a strong hierarchy, long tracks for new ideas to get developed. The farm manager is not the only one to make decisions. There is also the manager of apprenticeship, of housing, of gastronomy, the staff manager and many other responsible persons and boards. Since the re-establishment of the farm in the 1990s the goal of the farm is to work efficiently, to balance input and output. The specialisation on the crop potato with 10 ha growing area, peeling and packaging facility is not only economically efficient. It offers a working place for about 10 people whose disabilities admit no physically stressful occupation. The processing also opens up a market: the gastronomy of hospitals, in homes for elderly and school canteens showed interest in organic potatoes. The farm buys potatoes of organic farms in the region, thus strengthens organic farming in the region and established itself as a reliable trade and advice partner, a competence centre on potatoes. Not only different varieties are grown but also at different times planted and harvested. Professional storing was needed. With the help of the institution a sufficient and modern store was built.

It is not only in the field of potato that Richerode Farm has developed high quality standards. In 2008 a new pig shed was completed in cooperation with animal welfare professionals and the farm was rewarded at an agricultural fair in Berlin with the Pro Animal-Award for species- appropriate animal husbandry.

These examples show the great impact of the farm and its networks on regional and national level. Also, in the considerations about landscape in Richerode these networks play an important role. Not only the actors already active in the landscape such as hunters, rangers, fishers, nature conservationists, tourists and the workers and people with disabilities on the farm are integrated in the dialogue about what should be going on in Richerode – also the major, schoolteachers, journalists, the priest and senior citizens were invited to discuss landscape activities during a seminar.

1. **Challenges and actions required - Landscape in Richerode**

The landscape in Richerode is quite diverse. Through the narrow valley flows a brook, the yard lies surrounded by its meadows, fields and wood. There are damp and dry meadows, ditches and an orchard around the yard.

The residence area is tidy, clean and very clear: meadows and hedges are trimmed neatly; flowers are planted in pots- you wonder whether you are in an urban front garden or on a running farm. There is no smelling manure, no rubbish and no old machines. The rubbish bins can be opened only with keys to protect people with disabilities from a not wanted hobby.

Walking about in the landscape of Richerode nevertheless empties the mind and seems boring: there is no structure charming the eyes, no big tree that tells his long history, everything looks new, plane and unattractive. Through the valley runs a power cable and a federal highway splitting the farmyard in two parts. The noise of this street is the sound of this landscape, the rubbish thrown out of the car windows gets blown on the fields. There are only few trees or hedges “protecting” the landscape or fencing the road in. There is no harmony; everything seems to rush through that valley.

Since Richerode Farm took up organic farming in 1991 the farmer searches for possibilities to make this place a nice place to live and work. He is under pressure to manage and secure farm income and create convenient working places for his employees with disabilities. Because some people with need for support drive tractors and help cultivating the land it seems necessary to support their independence through easy structures. The farmer has the idea to redesign fields with unsuitable geometric forms into easily handled shapes. In this process some pieces, mostly triangles, will be set aside. These pieces get planted with trees for herb tea or fruit production or even firewood. Another example is the planting of shrubs around the power poles where one person always fears to drive the tractor against. The aim to make work easier for people with disabilities can this way be synergetic with business management and nature conservation.

A lot of other activities might be possible in Richerode in future. It might be necessary to make a plan not only considering single measures but a whole concept for managing the landscape. It should be possible to create a landscape working group of people with disabilities. Because the workshops for people with disabilities in Germany have to earn money to pay the people with need for support the funding could be limiting factor of the landscape management group. Intelligent connections between landscape design and cultural offers for tourists such as a cafe or an art gallery could be possibilities to get money from this non funded sector.

To get a little visual insight into the animal husbandry at Hofgut Richerode, you can watch the short video "Hephata-Hofgut Richerode not only gives work, but meaning".

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| 1. Which added values does the “Hofgut Richerode” generate? |
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| 1. Which added values could the “Hofgut Richerode” generate? Find suggestions in the text and come up with your own ideas. |
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