

Chapter 1 “Sustainable Weeks” in Austria

Raising awareness through sustainable products

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1 Introduction

The change of the consumer buying habit in the industrial countries is one of the fundamental conditions for accomplishing a sustainable development. Because of an absence of alternatives as well as individual barriers in the perception and realizing available options, the scope for sustainable consumer behaviour is limited. The potential in changing lies in raising efficiency in the use of resources especially in the change of value systems and life styles as well as in the broad attendance of the population. Sustainable consumption won't be enabled till an appropriate offer in the market exists and therefore the basic requirement is a changed way of production in the economy.

2 Conception and Target

2.1 The basic idea

With the resolution the “Austrian strategy for sustainable development“ in 2002, the Austrian Government has made a decision for the path of sustainable development.

Political conditions also the way of doing business and living in the country should be directed to the principals of sustainable development. In consequence of the phase of implementation of the Austrian strategy for sustainability the topic “Sustainable Consumption“ has gained in importance. Sustainable development can take shape especially in this topic and therefore become even more assailable and directly perceptible for each and everyone. Awareness building initiatives, which show appropriate courses of action, should take centre stage during the implementation. Because: In front of the display shelves the consumers have the opportunity to decide.

The best way to advance sustainable behaviour are concrete behavioural offers , which are as possible as closely orientated to the needs of the users.

By the development of a PR-concept “Sustainable Austria” (Initiator: Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment, and Water Management, which also coordinates the implementation of the Austrian strategy of Sustainability) the topic “sustainable consumption“ should be forced in the publicity. Sustainable products, which bring out a significant improvement to the status quo in an ecological and socio-cultural way, have left the stage of being a niche product in the last years. Products of organic farming and regional production and commercialisation, products of fair trade, environmentally compatible production or products, which are especially energy saving, are already in shelves of many significant trade chains. By an arranged and media-effective campaign with trading partners, these products should be consciously placed in the delivery device and advertised as “sustainable“ products. The topic sustainability, which is often hard to convey, will be more assailable for the population.

2.2 Target of the campaign

The initiative “Sustainable Weeks” should show how the main idea “Sustainable Austria“ is able to realize in everyday life. Through this project the possibility to orientate their personally consumer behaviour by sustainable and ethic-ecological aspects, is provided for the consumers. Existing certification marks and labels are decision support – an additional brand mark is used as an eye-catcher. The matters of sustainability are furthermore shown in information folders.

Target is to raise the Austrian consumer’s awareness for “sustainable consumption“ and thus to enhance the sale of products, which are on a way to sustainable development. In doing so the attention should be directed to the increasingly strongly diversified range of products. Interested consumers should be invited to buying “sustainable products” by concentrated information, advertising and accessory public relations.

3 Definition “sustainable“ products – the label-program

Sustainable products, with more dimensions of sustainability, such as organic produced products from regional materials and environmentally compatible packed, are still barely available. However there is a multiplicity of products in trade, which show significant advance in specific criteria compared to conventional products.

In the organic sector more than 60 eco-certifications (Öko-Zeichen) indicate a sustainable product.

Products, which are on the way to sustainability, are from fair trade, organic farming, regional production and commercialisation, environmentally compatible production or especially energy saving. On this basis guidelines for “sustainable products“ have been developed for the implementation of this project and to label-programs abstracted and made available for trade chains.

Sustainable products are orientated by the requirement to the following five guidelines:

1. Organic production and treatment
2. Fair trade (“global responsibility”)

3. Energy efficiency/ preservation of resources
4. Environmentally compatible treatment (e.g. reusable bottles)
5. Regional production and treatment (“regional quality”)

Each guideline is based on already available certification mark. For the guideline “regionality”, criteria for the different types of products are defined, by workshops and interviews with experts. Each label-program is available for possible additions or new labels.

In 2004 the first label-programs were established. In the last 4 years they have been consistently updated in content. Furthermore new label-programs were established for new branches in this campaign. In the meantime there are label-programs for:

1. hardware stores
2. health and beauty retailers/ chemist’s shops, health food shops
3. electric shops
4. food trade, bakeries, butcher’s shops and
5. furniture stores

The following table shows the branches with the types of products assigned to their specific guidelines, which were discussed during the Sustainable Weeks in 2004.

Table 1: Branches and types of products of the Sustainable Weeks since 2004

Branch	Guidelines with types of products	Sustainable Weeks since 2004
DIY stores, Hardware stores	<p>Guideline ENVIRONMENTALLY COMPATIBLE TREATMENT: building materials; bottom covering; isolation; colour, varnish and glaze; garden; derived timber products, wooden furniture and other wooden products; returnable products; water and energy saving sanitary equipment; solar panel; combustibles of biomass</p> <p>Guideline ENERGY EFFICIENCY: energy saving lamp</p> <p>Guideline FAIR TRADE: e.g. football, wickerwork, carpets</p>	2004; 2005: energy saving lamp
Drugstores, health and beauty retailers/chemist’s shops, health food shops	<p>Guideline ORGANIC PRODUCTION AND TREATMENT: organic food</p> <p>Guideline FAIR TRADE (“global responsibility”): fair traded food</p> <p>Guideline ENVIRONMENTALLY COMPATIBLE TREATMENT/ returnable, e.g. reusable bottles: multi purpose cleaner and cleaning supplies for sanitary facilities; sanitary paper; detergent; dishwashing detergent; soap, shampoo and conditioner;</p>	2004: food as well as sanitary products etc.; 2007: natural cosmetics

Branch	Guidelines with types of products	Sustainable Weeks since 2004
Electrical retailers	natural cosmetics products Guideline ENERGY EFFICIENCY or PRESERVATION OF RESOURCES: brown goods (DVD Player, DVD Recorder; TV), grey goods (printer, monitors; oven), energy saving lamp, white goods (freezer, chest freezer, refrigerator; dishwasher; washing machine)	2005: white goods, energy saving lamp; 2006: brown and grey goods
Food trade, bakeries, butcher's shops	Guideline ORGANIC PRODUCTION AND TREATMENT: organic food Guideline FAIR TRADE ("global responsibility"): fair traded food Guideline ENVIRONMENTALLY COMPATIBLE TREATMENT: (e.g. sanitary products) or returnable, e.g. reusable bottles: multi purpose cleaner and cleaning supplies for sanitary facilities; sanitary paper; detergent; dishwashing detergent; sea fish Guideline REGIONALITY („regional quality“): regional produced food	2004: food trade; 2006: bakeries; 2007: butcher's shops
Furniture stores	Guideline ENVIRONMENTALLY COMPATIBLE TREATMENT: bottom covering; wooden and derived timber products, wooden furniture; mattresses; upholstered furniture; paperhanging; wall paint; other products (e.g. office chairs and swivel chairs) Guideline ENERGY EFFICIENCY or PRESERVATION OF RESOURCES: Household appliance (oven; freezer, chest freezer, refrigerator; dishwasher; washing machine), energy saving lamp Guideline FAIR TRADE: e.g. wickerwork, carpets	2007

4 The implementation of the campaign

4.1 The brand mark “Das bringt's. Nachhaltig.“ (“Getting there the sustainable way”)

To advise the consumers to the diversified choice in Austrians trade chains, the brand mark “Das bringt's Nachhaltig“ (“Getting there the

sustainable way”) (Figure 1) was developed together with involved trade chains. This is not to understand as a certification mark, but as an instrument of advertising for a better overview of products as an optical exclamation mark for a product with ecological and social value. This brand mark only advises to products, which have labels, brands or certification marks from the developed label-programs or comply with their criteria.

Determining for the development of the brand mark was:

1. The trade chains are able to change the colouring of this brand mark to assure the integration in to their own CD. Shape and typography have to remain.
2. Sub logos are established in order to differentiate within the topic. These are placed right next to the particular product and therefore explicit differentiate between “organic“ and “fair trade“ for example.
3. The brand mark is never shown alone and is always to combine with slogans, an accompanying text, and the homepage of the campaign or the sub logos. (see example in Figure 2)



Figure 1: Brand Mark “Getting there the sustainable way” for promotion of products



Figure 2: Examples for Sub logos (“action symbols“): Echt Bio, Gut zur Umwelt, Energie Sparen (“real organic”, “good for the environment”, “saving energy”)

4.2 Product-Check-Service

For the trade chains a product-check-service was established and offered to the involved trade chains. The check-up of the products according to the defined criteria of the label-programs should assure that the products chosen by the trade chains are capable for the sustainable weeks.

4.3 Advertising material

The campaign of the sustainable weeks is supported by the following advertising material.

4.3.1 *Folder and dispenser*

Folders for the participating trade chains are produced – food trade, bakeries, butcher's shops, health and beauty retailers, electric stores and building & living.

The folder is additional information for the consumers, to demonstrate very effectively and strikingly, what kind of product's advantage is regarded as "sustainable" in the target sectors. They function as a mass-market medium for the sustainable weeks.

The folders are primarily disposed in the subsidiaries of the trade chains and in the stores of the independent merchants, but they are also distributed at regional activities. The key contents of the sustainability are presented for concrete life situations in each topic (organic, regional, fair, environmentally compatible, energy saving, returnable, building, living, etc.). The partners of the project and trading partners are also presented as logo, pictures and statements. Also dispensers for the area in the cash point and for the shelves are used.

A raffle on the backside of each folder creates an additional stimulation to read through the information, because the answers to the competition question are to extract from the text in the folder.

4.3.2 *Poster*

There are different types of posters as well as the folders. The posters should remind the interested consumer of the idea and the concern of the sustainable weeks and their products every year. Therefore they locally support the actual buying decision. Posters are used for declaration of special areas, for the entrance area of shops, in communities and at regional activities. On demand several trade chains get posters with a mutation of the logo.

4.3.3 *Shelf stopper, ceiling dangler and sticker*

Standardised produced shelf stopper are also used (true organic, regional quality, fair trade and energy saving). A plug-in tongue provides to place the stoppers in any shelf.

Ceiling dangles are branded with the respective logo of the trade chains and are available for them.

Stickers are made for affixing on households devices for electric stores as well as labelling and packing of regional and organic food for several trade chains.

4.3.4 *Merchandising products*

At regional activities merchandising products such as shopping trolleys coins, cotton shopping-bags and t-shirts will be passed out.

4.4 **Internet**

The website www.nachhaltigewochen.at is an appropriate tool to present the project, its targets, activities and players in detail.

Besides the user friendly design, an online-quiz with questions about “sustainable topics” as well as specific slideshows about model products have been arranged.

4.5 Accompanying PR campaign

4.5.1 *Kick off – press conference*

At a kick off – press conference of the sustainable weeks, where the initiator (Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment, and Water Management) as well as the co-operation partners and commercial representatives participate, topics of the campaign – like organic products, regional commercialisation, fair trade, ecological building and living and energy saving, will be discussed in their different facets of sustainable development.

4.5.2 *Media work*

Subsequent to the press conference, targets and matters of the campaign will be sent out as kick off press releases to technical periodical. A press release with pictures of the conference, a press kit and detailed information of the participating trade chains will be sent out additionally after the kick off – press conference. Furthermore media work will be afforded in the provinces. Editorial cooperations (no paid activation) with several printed medias, medias in provinces and the Austrian broadcast (especially television) have been decided.

4.5.3 *Activities in the provinces*

The sustainable weeks include besides co operations with trade, tours through provinces, where the Austrian minister of environment visits each province, whose provincial governments participate the sustainable weeks as project partners.

Target of these tours is to advert to the production and marketing of sustainable products or to products on a sustainable way, in and beyond the participation trade chains and the corresponding subsidiaries.

Therefore different regional initiatives and model products from the sustainable topic are chosen and presented in public campaigns or media meetings.

Examples for activities in this vein:

1. Visitation of a traditional regional cheese manufacture with tastings – creating a kind of market place situation – with the possibility to visit specific stations and tasting.
2. “G’scheit Frühstück” (“sustainable breakfast”) with sustainable products in a plant, which build low-energy finished part houses.
3. Lunch at a school, which is regarded as a role model project for canteen kitchen. They were highly anxious about applying a completely assortment of organic products with adequate quality.
4. Sustainable movie weeks with premieres and following discussion.

5. A series of technical discussions “Sustainable Talks“ with main focus like “healthy living”, “regional food”, “natural cosmetic”. Representatives of trade, production, management and NGOs face up to these topics and the professional public as well as the media.

Chosen provincial and local media are invited to several meetings.

5 Results and evaluation

This campaign is evaluated from the beginning of every year on the basis of following criteria:

5.1 Marketing attendance

In initiative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment, and Water Management three ministries (ministry of health, ministry of economics and the Austrian development cooperation of the ministry of foreign affairs), as well as the Chamber of Commerce of Austria and four provinces (Styria, Upper Austria, Lower Austria) have supported the project in 2007.

In 2007 altogether 28 of Austrian trade chains (in 2006 were 22 trade chains) from industries like food trade, bakeries, health and beauty retailers, hardware stores, electric store and for the first time butcher’s shops and furniture stores agreed to put specific “sustainable“ products in their window display.

Also 2,700 independent merchants supported the sustainable weeks 2007 with information, advertising and counselling in their stores.

5.2 Commerce advertising

In approximately 8.000 subsidiaries of the participating trade chains were over 1 million folders (total circulation was 1,053,400) about the sustainable weeks. The return of the quiz cards was about 14,141, which are 1.5%.

Approximately 400,000 shelf stopper, posters (>10,000) or stickers adverted to the campaign.

5.3 Business effects

The trade chains and the initiators of the project need to keep the respective sales figures in confidence for competitive reasons.

However most of the trade chains merchandised chosen sustainable products with low prices during the promotion period. Therefore basically an increase in sales can be assumed, especially in the sectors of organic food, reusable bottles and fair trade products.

Within the sustainable weeks numerous products were registered for the first time. In the last 4 years following sectors were in particular affected:

1. Food trade and hard ware store registered several fair trade products for the first time.
2. Food trade registered several organic products for the first time or clearly expand their assortment of organic products.
3. Food trade registered regional products for the first time.

4. Food trade clearly expand their assortment of organic and fair trade products.
5. Bakeries completely change their choice of coffee to fair traded coffee beans.

5.4 Awareness raising

During the years 2004-2006 a polling firm accomplished a survey by telephone (with 500 Austrians from the age of 15 years and up) before and after the campaign of the sustainable weeks.

In September 2005 only 15% of Austrians did already heard about the initiative the sustainable weeks. In September 2006 already the value raised to 22% and in October 26%.

After all every third women (30%) indicates to know the sustainable weeks.

Rising values in matters of commitment in Sustainability show accomplished surveys from the initiator of the project (BMLFUW), and several partners like the ministry of economics and the ministry of foreign affairs.

5.5 Media feedback

More than 150 media reports were achieved in 2007. This equals to an increase of approximately 50% compared to the previous year.

Thereof the biggest part was released as electronic media (28%) and in the internet (25%), as professional media (15%) and local media (11%). The presence in daily newspapers was about 7%. Giving a broad audience beyond the circles of experts an understanding of the topic sustainability was achieved by the media work.

The media's attitude towards the sustainable weeks was very positive. Every participant and partner was clearly present in the media and the press coverage was established.

5.6 Participation of provinces and initiatives

From the beginning 3-4 provinces participated in the campaign of the sustainable weeks. Besides the provincial governments and provincial agencies further independent regional initiatives or companies got involved at regional activities.

Many regional activities in the participating provinces provided the possibility to personally appeal to the population in to introduce the campaign.

5.7 Participation of NPOs and NGOs

Many leading NPOs and NGOs were engaged in the project or appeared as multipliers and/or took a stand with critical and constructive suggestions. The project is taking seriously from the NPO and NGO scene and particularly released in their own media.

5.8 Further effects

5.8.1 *Offering Product-Check-Service*

The arranged product-check-service was offered to every participating partners in 2007. It was well adopted from trade chains, bakeries, butcher's shops and health food stores.

Furthermore an assortment check was accomplished for a trade chain, which supported a labelling of proper products on the sustainable way.

Check-service was an important tool for a successful accomplishment of the sustainable weeks and supported the trade chains for a general offer of products.

5.8.2 *Visits on the homepage*

The website www.nachhaltigewochen.at underwent a relaunch in 2007 and was available for consumers and journalists as information and service platforms. In 2007 approximately 47,000 page impressions (compared to 2006: 37,000 PI) documented.

5.8.3 *Informative meeting Sustainable Talk*

The Sustainable Talk is a proper way of event to get information to the professional public during the sustainable weeks. In 2007 series of conferences which were initiated in the previous year was continued. Sustainable Weeks 2007 included a technical discussion about natural cosmetics, which were considered as a new part in the label-program. Representatives of trade, production, management and NGOs faced up to the professional public and the media about this topic. Because of this event a development within the topic in the "Austrian food codex" (Österreichischer Lebensmittelcodex) (term of natural cosmetics is defined) could achieved.

5.8.4 *Contests in schools*

Since 2006 schools are more and more involved within the sustainable weeks. In fall 2007 a contest in school started. Adolescents can bring in a contribution in the categories video, radio and multimedia in either one of these subject areas, sustainability, sustainable way of life, sustainable consumption.

The contributions should be innovative, inspiring or pragmatic. Adolescents should be motivated to reconsider their attitude. They also should get practical advices and applications to change something. The best contributions will be presented to the public during the sustainable weeks 2008.

6 Outlook

The project sustainable weeks shows how the idea of a "sustainable Austria" already starts to gain ground in everyday life. Because of the multiplexed appearance of trade and other involved parties of the sustainability throughout the country the public's attention is attracted.

A continuation and emphasis of the campaign is planned for the next year. The appearance in advertising and in subsidiaries will be continually improved and new sectors will be invited to participate. In 2008 textiles will be included.

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