

The Public Eye Positive Award 2007 for a groundbreaking business initiative goes to

Coop Switzerland

FACTSHEET , prepared by Coop

The Figures

- In 2006, Coop generated retail sales of CHF 14.7 bn. Compared with the previous year, this corresponds to an increase of CHF 0.7 bn or 4.6%.
- In 2006, sales of organic products at Coop were up by 2% again after stagnating in 2005.
- 50% of all organic products sold in Switzerland are sold over the counter of Coop.
- Under the Naturaplan label, Coop currently offers 1,800 products and generates CHF 1.06 bn in sales. Of these, the 1,400 organic products generate sales of CHF 603 m, while the 400 egg and meat products produced under humane animal husbandry conditions result in sales of CHF 459 m.
- Coop generates around 8% of its food turnover with organic products.
- In addition to these results for organic foods, Coop generates sales of CHF 46 million with organic fair-trade cotton textiles sold under the Naturaline label.

The Story

Coop recognized the potential of organic production early on. In addition to the vision, this called for professional, market-oriented implementation as well. The “organic” concept was never merely a marketing gambit or a programme aimed at protecting agriculture. At Coop, organic stands for sustainable handling of resources, environmental protection and animal welfare on the one hand, and high-quality products sold at competitive prices on the other. Coop launched Naturaplan in 1993, after several years of preparatory work. The range includes organic products plus eggs and meat produced under humane animal husbandry conditions. For Coop it was clear that credibility would play a key role in determining the range’s success. That is why Coop did not create its own organic label but systematically uses the “bud” label and relies on its partnership with Bio Suisse. Regardless of whether an organic carrot comes from Aargau or an organic orange from Sicily, both meet the stringent Bio Suisse guidelines.

However, for Coop it was not enough to build up its own organic range. At the political level too, Coop worked to bring about a decidedly ecological and market-oriented agricultural policy. The company was also involved in an ad campaign in 1995 to motivate farmers to switch to organic production. Because organic farming was very innovative from the outset, Coop financed a number of projects at the Research Institute for Organic Farming (FiBL) from 1987, six years before the first Naturaplan product was sold.

In 2003, to mark the tenth anniversary of Naturaplan, Coop established the Naturaplan Fund, which supports sustainable projects for 10 years to the tune of 10 million Swiss francs per year. Major projects supported so far include “planète bio suisse”, where school classes are able to experience organic farming first-hand, large-scale projects at the Research Institute for

Organic Agriculture (FiBL), the financing of training centres for Naturaline organic cotton growers in Maikaal (India) and Meatu (Tanzania), and a project in conjunction with the WWF to promote sustainably produced soya.

With organic production, Coop has shown that ecological commitment can be successfully combined with economic interests. It was important that the organic concept was not merely a peripheral phenomenon but is anchored firmly in the corporate strategy. Naturaplan is just one range that highlights the commitment to quality and sustainability. Others are Naturaline, Max Havelaar, Oecoplan and ProSpecieRara. To increase transparency, Coop will sell only organic products in its Naturaplan range as of this spring. Meat and eggs produced under humane animal husbandry conditions will be sold under the new Naturafarm label.

Coop is currently the biggest provider of organic products in Switzerland with a market share of 50%. It intends to expand this leadership in the future - the potential is already there. For the growing generation of people who practise "LOHAS" (Lifestyle Of Health And Sustainability), "green" production and careful interaction with nature and people are also important, in addition to culinary enjoyment and healthy nutrition. Coop will continue to promote regional production, for example with organic fruits and vegetables under the "Organic – fresh from the region" concept. At the international level too, Coop will continue to be active, for instance with Naturaline, where it plays a pioneering role in organic cotton and is now the biggest provider worldwide of textiles made from organically grown fair-trade cotton.