

**Nominated for the Public Eye Positive Award 2007  
by Bioterra, the Swiss Biological Organization for Gardens, Consumerism, and Agriculture**

## Coop

Headquarters:	Basel, Switzerland
Branch of trade:	Retail trade
Turnover / Profit:	CHF 14 billion / CHF 385 million (2005)
CEO:	Hansueli Loosli
Owned by:	Cooperative with 2.3 million member households
Employees:	45,000 (2005)

### Summary

*Coop has been nominated for its groundbreaking business initiative in favour of organic agriculture. Since 1993, the number of organic farms in Switzerland has grown from 1,000 to more than 6,000, which means that 11% of the nation's arable land is now worked on organically. The impulse came as a result of the ecological reforms of agricultural politics. But the number of organic farms would not have increased as dramatically if Coop would not have entered the arena with its uncompromising marketing of organic products. For a national chain retailer, such committed marketing of organic products was a worldwide pioneering endeavour. Thanks to the increase of organic farms - which do not depend on artificial fertilizer, synthetic herbicides, and pesticides - positive affects are now noticeable in the environment. There is less soil and water pollution which helps to sustain natural habitats and a biodiversity in Switzerland.*

### Responsible corporate behaviour

For organic products, Coop co-operated, from the very beginning, with Bio Suisse, the umbrella organization for Swiss organic farmers. Coop has bound itself to one of the world's strictest labels, the Knospe (bud). In order for products to bear the Knospe, they must be made in accordance with the unified regulations of Bio Suisse which not only monitor how a product is grown, but all the production steps taken afterward. Coop was the first major retailer in Switzerland to exclusively offer organic products marked with the Knospe. Imported foods are also subjected to the same regulations as those originating in Switzerland; their compliance to the Knospe's regulations is monitored by independent supervising firms.

The start-up period of Coop's Naturaplan brand launched in 1993 was met by a large consumer demand even though only a few products were available. Thus, Coop started a successful campaign in 1995 inspiring Swiss farmers to switch to organic agriculture. In doing so, Coop was able to build up a line of 1400 organic products.

## **Achievements**

By engaging the market for organic products, Coop succeeded in making Swiss agriculture more ecological. Around 11% of the arable land in Switzerland is now organically cultivated. With this percentage, Switzerland is second only to Austria in organic farming in Europe, where the average is 3.2%. Coop's thorough marketing strategies led all other major retailers in Switzerland to enter the organic business.

Organic agriculture is an important contribution to environmental protection. Scientific studies show that organic farms are inhabited by more birds, insects, and worms than traditional farms. The creation and sustaining of natural habitats is especially important for endangered species. On organic farms it is forbidden to use chemical or synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. This saves not only money and energy, but also reduces the pollution of the soil and surrounding waters. For example, it has been proven that in the vicinity of organic fields there is less nitrogen in the ground water, surrounding water bodies contain fewer pesticides, and the soil as well as leafy vegetables contain up to 40% less nitrate.

In addition, Coop markets old strains of vegetables and the meats of rare livestock breeds. They also offer an apple juice under the label "Hochstamm Suisse" (orchard-grown fruits). These measures further sustain the diversity and variety of cultivars.

## **Further improvement**

Coop Naturaplan comprises two product lines: one offering a large variety of foods produced organically, the other offering meats and eggs raised in animal friendly conditions. This created unnecessary confusion for consumers, although the two lines are packaged in two different colours. The demand for more transparency will be addressed by Coop in Spring 2007. Naturaplan will become a pure organic label certified by the Knospe; the planned Naturafarm label for meats and eggs will represent, as Coop describes it: "the best possible living conditions for an animal considering the large amounts of production."

For Bioterra it is clear: only Coop Naturaplan stands for organic and should be preferred to Naturafarm. Naturaplan should therefore be prominently displayed, in high amounts and in many varieties, on shelves in all Coop outlets. At the same time, the Naturafarm label should not become a competitor to genuine organic products, especially since the brand name can be easily confused with Naturaplan; they are similar on the outside but the contents are not the same.

Bioterra urges Coop to continue to fulfill its responsibility as a market leader in the organic business, to stand behind strict production standards from raw to final products, and to ensure price transparency. Organic products should have, even after production and transport, an added value for humans and the environment. The advancement of regional products and the fulfillment of the principle "no air transport" for organic products is essential to Bioterra in this context.

### **Further information:**

- [www.bioterra.ch](http://www.bioterra.ch)
- [www.biosuisse.ch](http://www.biosuisse.ch)
- [www.fibl.org](http://www.fibl.org)
- [www.coop.ch](http://www.coop.ch)