

LEVANDULOVÝ STATEK BEZDĚKOV

Good Practice Collection



Introduction

Levandulový statek Bezděkov is a family-run lavender farm and agritourism business in the village of Bezděkov u Úsova in northern Moravia. It is located in the picturesque landscape of the hills Zábřežská vrchovina, attracting many tourists but also providing ideal conditions for agriculture, which is reflected in the rich agricultural history and traditions in the region. While the farm's specialty is lavender, as its name suggests, you may also find a wide range of cultivated fruits, vegetables, various herbs and also many animals.

The Farm

The farm has undergone a major transformation in 2014, when the first lavender plants were planted. Since then, the whole farm has been converted into a combination of an agricultural enterprise and tourism business. The farm is owned and led by the Drlík family – Lukáš and Veronika Drlík. The core of their concept is to cultivate their own crops and fruits organically, processing the products directly at the farm and selling them at the farm shop to tourists who come to the farm either to enjoy a visit at the farm itself, or use its accommodation offerings as a base to go on trips in the surrounding region. During peak seasons in June and July the farm accommodation is fully booked, while during the quieter times the farm will see an average of four guests per day.

The Location

Levandulová farma Bezděkov is located in Bezděkov u Úsova, a small village in the Olomouc region in northern Moravia. The surrounding landscape is defined by the hills Zábřežská vrchovina. The nearest larger city is Brno, to the south – approximately 120 kilometers, while Ostrava lies 140 kilometers to the east. Olomouc, the seat of the region, is the closest of these three – situated 45 kilometers south-east.

The region sees a high number of visitors, looking not only for the beauty of the surrounding natural landscape, but also many historical sights, such as the historical center of the city of Olomouc or the medieval castle Bouzov.



Agricultural regeneration objectives

The farm itself spans 17 hectares. It employs two permanent employees, however up to twenty temporary workers may lend a hand during increasing seasonal workloads. That is not including the eight members of the family, who are devoted to keep the farm thriving year-long.

The farm's main product, lavender, is grown on a large scale. It is grown organically, the cultivation includes a lot of crop diversification, supplemented by a variety of other medicinal plants and herbs. The first lavender seeds were planted in 2014 – 500 small plants in the first lavender field. The following year the lavender was replanted, creating the first whole field. In the following years, many more fields were planted, creating a true lavender kingdom.

The Drlik family strongly believes in the principles of organic farming and sustainable agriculture. All of their crops are grown organically. This means they don't rely on herbicides and pesticides. This has presented many issues in the past, specifically a difficult to control growth of weeds in the fields. Several workers had to be employed just to eliminate and control the weeds. Another problem was extensive soil erosion, contributed to by higher precipitation typical for the area. And, on top of that, as the farmland is located on a slope, there always was considerable washing on the field.



Best Practice Focus

To reduce the erosion of the soil, the farm has implemented a higher crop diversity, aiding the soil with the growth of various different plants, increasing the amount of nutrients. These include a wide mix of medicinal plants, herbs, various kinds of fruits and vegetables and trees. The produce from these other plants is processed into local products and sold at the farm, just like the lavender. The difficult to control weeds have also been successfully repelled – the family has acquired a flock of thirty sheep, who graze the fields, eating the weeds. This solution eliminates any needs for different kinds of weed control, such as mechanization or chemical sprays. The sheep contribute to the improvement of soil properties not only through weed elimination, but their grazing also helps to loosen the soil. To prevent future washing of the fields, the slope was strengthened by planting grass in the intermediate rows on the field.

Financial aspects of regenerative measure implementati-on

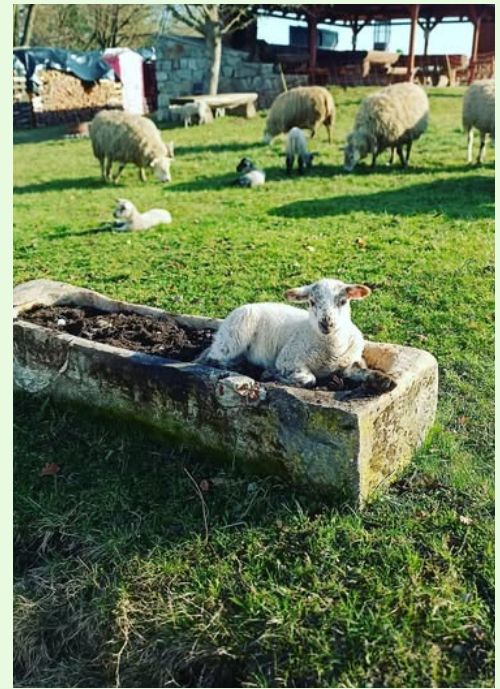
According to Mr. Drlík, the farm has faced challenges with extensive bureaucracy during its development. He decided to delve into the agrotourism business without any previous experience, and also without any external help – contributions, funding, donations or subsidies. As one of the current challenges he mentions strained relations with the neighboring farms, as they are not happy with the amount of traffic the tourism brings, specifically the high number of cars in the area. As far as challenges related to agriculture go, he mentions the complexity of the cultivation process when growing crops organically, however with time, the processes become more streamlined.



Categorisation, keywords

This case study presents an example of organic growing and pasture management through grazing, specifically by sheep.

Pasture management, grass grazing, sheep grazing, crop cultivation, crop diversity, soil health, soil erosion, soil nutrients



Advantages and disadvantages of organic growing and animal grass grazing

Advantages	Less land pollution through eliminating the use of chemicals.
	Organically grown products are commonly healthier and more valuable than those conventionally grown.
	Animal grazing is healthier for the soil and more cost effective than manual labor.
Disadvantages	More expensive and time-consuming cultivation process when herbicides and pesticides are not used.
	Higher learning curve when growing crops organically.
	Higher operation costs when growing crops organically.

Learning points

Knowledge	Requires knowledge how to grow organically.
	How to maintain a mostly monoculture plant and which crops can be used to diversify the field for increased soil health and nutrients.
	Precise knowledge of the soil profile and levels of precipitation.
Skills	To manage farm animals.
	To be able to process all the crops for the farm to be effective.
	To plan strategically and far ahead – organic growing may be more volatile and less profitable at the beginning compared to conventional growing.

References/Bibliography

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