Cow release events – a way of communicating positive values

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Three years ago, Grünlandzentrum Niedersachsen/Bremen initiated the event "cow release" in the region. A festive event that brings the consumers closer to the farmer and enlightens consumers on how grasslands and ruminants contribute to sustainable food production and an increased biodiversity. The events have become a success!

Background

In recent years, scandals, especially in the pig and poultry industries, have contributed to the fact that this form of agriculture cannot be reconciled with the demands and expectations of society. Today, the relationship between agriculture and society is in a state of imbalance, which makes a proactive approach to agricultural topics more important than ever. Otherwise this development will result in an ongoing closure of farms. In this case, not only short food supply chains (SSCs) are an approach for regional value chains. The added value of sustainable and thus regional agriculture can be also supported by renewing the connection between agriculture, its products and consumers – resulting in an increasing willingness to pay an additional charge for locally produced food.

Cow release events a platform for dialoque

Events on farms are a suitable platform for dialogues. Especially public events such as the cow release are promising methods for maintaining and promoting the good image of the dairy industry and dairy products. Following an already working, successful best practise from Sweden called the "Kosläpp" the Grünlandzentrum Niedersachsen/Bremen initiated a festive

cow release ("Weideaustrieb") for the first time three years ago. The aim was to give more space to pasture grazing in public and to enlighten consumers on how grass and ruminant contribute to sustainable food production in a circular bioeconomy and to explain how cattle husbandry, biodiversity and sustainability are naturally connected "from grass to glass". A small team of the Grünlandzentrum planned the event day, sent out invitations and

promoted the event at regional level. Politicians and actors involved in the milk value chain were also invited to highlight the importance of the event for society. Media and press reported on the programme and informed about the venue. Thus, both publicity but also the relevance of the event could be increased.

A popular event that builds trust

Since the first cow release in northern Germany has been organised, more and more farms have been offering cow releases as a public event, attracting many visitors every spring. By experiencing the unique image of jumping cows on the first day of the grazing season, the connection between consumer and producer was strengthened. This becomes evident in the growing scope of the cow release event since 1500 visitors celebrated the opening of the grazing season in 2019 on a farm in Wesermarsch region. On 13th April, the stable doors of Holthusen farm opened for 200 dairy cows, jumping to the pasture in front of a broad audience.

The overall benefit of the cow release results not only in growing demands for regional products, but also a strengthened integrity and growing interest through the transparency of the farms. In the future Grünlandzentrum Niedersachsen/Bremen e.V will strive to raise the awareness of the event and encourage farms to contribute with their own cow release. In addition, the "Weideaustrieb" can be used to offer even more regional products and to inform about their production. The event offers a good platform for regional producers to network and further develop short food supply chains.

Do you want to know more?

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