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Title

Vineyards as source for cultural ecosystem services and enhanced sustainability: a survey from the Austrian Wine regions Wagram

I want to submit an abstract for:

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Keywords

Socio-cultural Ecosystem Services, Viticulture, Tourism, sustainability, "Nachhaltig Austria"

Research Question

Analyzing the opinion of wine growers on the effect of vineyards/wine landscape resulting in socio-cultural ecosystem services. Focusing the the topic "sustainability and certification" and "tourism and landscaping".

Methods

Empirical study employing interviews and questionnaire to analyze (quantitative and qualitative) within a group of 18 wine growers in the region (organic and conventional).

Results

Wine growers are aware of there role preserving the vineyards landscape but target wine production as primary income and goal . Sustainability certification is recognized within the community.

Abstract

Benefits that humans freely gain from natural environment and ecosystems are called ecosystem services. The ecosystem services are grouped into four categories: provisioning (production of food and water), regulating (control of climate and disease), supporting (nutrient cycles, oxygen) and cultural (spiritual and recreational benefits). The study presented is part of a project PROMESSING (promoting ecosystem services in grapes) that was conducted to unravel biodiversity process associated with main ESS in viticultural system taking different management system into account (www.promessing.eu).

Cultural ecosystem services are hard to measure and include aspects of landscape aesthetics, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation and spiritual considerations. Viticulture is an agro-ecosystem with a long lasting tradition and has shaped landscapes of wine growing regions worldwide substantially. Additionally the product itself "wine" has high economic importance and provides also some cultural values. This is also an aspect of increased tourism into wine growing regions, to combine the pleasure of the specific landscape with the consumption of food and wine. Recently consumer demand increased sustainability in production systems of agro-ecosystems with less input of unrenovable resources and the conservation or even the increase of biodiversity in agricultural environments. In Austria the number of organic farming wine growers increased substantially the last decade and the Austrian wine growing organization is providing a tool "Nachhaltig Austria" to promote and motivate wine growers to move towards a sustainable production and invest in new and more environmental techniques. The tool is focusing on all aspects of the production system and bases on the pillars ecology, economy and social aspect.

The main objectives of our study was to analyze the opinion of wine growers on the effect of vineyards/wine landscape resulting in socio-cultural ecosystem services. Thereby we focused on the topics "sustainability and certification" and "tourism and landscape". An empirical study employing interviews and questionnaire to analyze (quantitative and qualitative) within a group of 18 wine growers (organic and conventional) in the region Wagram was conducted. The interview took place within three months (11/2016-2/2017) and lasted between 42 to 85 minutes. The transcription was done manually and computed with MAXQDA software. The interview partners (wine growers) differentiated as follows: operations ranging from six - fifty ha, employees ranging from one - ten, all growers had a Viticulture & Enology training (from 3-5 years). The wineries differed in production: integrated (seven), organic (seven), bio-dynamic (3), sustainable Austria (1).

The main results showed that:

- (1) Wine growers are aware of their key role in preserving the vineyards landscape but target wine production as primary income and goal. They see the preservation of the landscape and of the ecosystem as a social responsibility influenced by consumers and their buying behavior.
- (2) Their effort should be recognized and respected but they don't expect financial remuneration for this service but higher sustainable standards should be recognized by consumers and valued by their decisions to buy for eco-friendly produced products.
- (3) Tourism is recognized as an economically important factor for the winery's business. Fifteen out of the eighteen winery owners are involved in events e.g. vineyard tours, wine tastings, wine sales. However only half of the wineries plan to expand their offers for tourists. Ideas that are being incorporated range from presentation and combination regional food and art up to events in cooperation with schools to attract young tourists.
- (4) Sustainability certification is highly recognized within the community of growers interviewed. Many of the growers observe confusion in consumers since there are too many "certificates" on the market. The request of the growers (transporting the perspective of consumers) is:
 - a. Consistent and explicit messages should be transported by certificates.
 - b. No redundancies should be tolerated among certificates
 - c. Strict control systems should be applied for the certificates.

Nevertheless the strongly support the effort to increase sustainable production systems and want to invest in new techniques.

Altogether growers support their efforts summarized as ecosystem services. Ecosystem services regarding the ecology of the vineyards and landscape are clearly prioritized in the grower's opinion, since they are essential to sustain the wine production as well as the economic growth of the operation. Cultural ecosystem services are being recognized rather to attract consumers (for the business) than to provide socio - cultural services for the society. Furthermore the "Nachhaltigkeit-Austria" certificate seems to be a first step in changing the mind-set of growers towards pro active engagement into cultural ecosystem services. Further research is needed to evaluate the the potential of such change in both growers and consumers. This work would be important for the constant evolution

of regulations of sustainability certificates.

In conclusion, regional viticulture provides a solid basis to support ecosystem services in the vineyard itself by e.g. protecting the soil, increase the biodiversity and reduce pesticide use. Furthermore vineyards (sites, terroirs) and viticultural landscapes (regions) have a high value for tourism and thus providing cultural ecosystem services. Further research should be done to work on strategies to increase awareness within the groups of growers.

Privacy

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