

Getting a Feel for It Tacit Knowledge of Austrian Newcomers to Farming An Exploratory Study

Nina Kovacs

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Newcomers to Farming are people who start farming without having an agricultural family background. Tacit Knowledge is acquired through socialization. Newcomers, who are not socialized by their families, are supposed to lack Tacit farming-related Knowledge.

The overall aim of this study was to explore Newcomers' Tacit farming-related Knowledge, by fulfilling the following objectives: First, identifying areas where Newcomers do or did lack Tacit farming-related Knowledge; second, identifying and describing strategies. Newcomers use to overcome a lack of Tacit farming-related Knowledge; and third, exploring how non-farm work experience can be applied in Newcomers' new occupation as farmers. Qualitative Interviews with standardized open-ended questions were conducted with 19 Austrian Newcomers to Farming who were chosen using maximum variation sampling. Results showed that Newcomers mostly lacked Tacit Knowledge in the production of goods, and that lacks were mostly due to insufficient practical skills and experience. Moreover, ten major strategies Newcomers used to overcome lacks of Tacit farming-related Knowledge were identified (strategies revolving around other people; strategies based on information and Explicit Knowledge; and strategies that can be performed by Newcomers independently, without outside help). Also, Newcomers were able to apply a wide variety of skills (mainly soft skills), mainly in the delivery of goods to end-customers. It can be concluded that socialization does indeed play an important role in the acquisition of Tacit farming-related Knowledge and that longer involvement in farming activities leads to fewer lacks of Tacit farming-related Knowledge. Also, farms started by more than one Newcomer can have advantages compared to single-operator ones, because more previously acquired work experience can be applied.

Betreut von Dr. Maria Gerster-Bentaya

Geprüft durch Prof. Dr. Andrea Knierim