

Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau Institut de recherche de l'agriculture biologique Research Institute of Organic Agriculture Istituto di ricerche dell'agricoltura biologica Instituto de investigaciones para la agricultura orgánica

Media release

Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann and European ministers of agriculture visit the FiBL in Frick

How can agricultural soil be sustained and even improved? A tour through the department of soil sciences at the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL in Frick provided the ministers with good answers to this question. Prior to the tour, the ministers took part in a conference discussing the soil issue.

(Frick, 5.11.2015) It provides us with food, it cannot be reproduced and should not become an object of speculation – that is why agricultural soil must receive better protection. Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann (Switzerland), Christian Schmidt, Minister of Food and Agriculture (Germany), Fernand Etgen, Minister of Agriculture, Viticulture and Consumer Protection (Luxembourg) and Christa Bauer of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (Austria) agree on this point. On the occasion of the ministers' meeting at FiBL on 29 October, they further discussed the implementation of the goals mentioned in the 2014 communiqué (see link below).

Organic agriculture increases soil fertility

After the meeting of the ministers of agriculture, the delegations were shown several advantages of organic agriculture during the tour. Organic agriculture increases soil fertility, which has been proven in the long-term DOK trial performed by FiBL and Agroscope. A meta-analysis by FiBL came to the conclusion that organic soil contains more humus than conventional soil. An experiment conducted on the FiBL farm showed that, when organic farming is combined with reduced tillage, humus increased by 24% over the course of a decade compared to tilled earth. Apart from humus, there has been a 34% increase in microorganisms and a 67% increase of earthworms over the years in reduced tillage systems. Due to the build-up of humus, a more active soil life and an improved water regulation, there is a potential for more stable yields. At the same time, the soil is protected from water and wind erosion.

EXCELLENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Das FiBL hat Standorte in der Schweiz, Deutschland und Österreich FiBL offices located in Switzerland, Germany and Austria FiBL est basé en Suisse, Allemagne et Autriche FiBL Switzerland Ackerstrasse, CH-5070 Frick Tel. +41 (0)62 865 72 72 info.suisse@fibl.org, www.fibl.org



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Fernand Etgen, who is also President of the Council of Ministers for Agriculture of the European Union, concluded the tour through the institute with the following statement: "The research carried out at FiBL adheres to high scientific standards and at the same time never loses touch with the practical side. I have never seen anything like it."

Pictures and further information may be downloaded at the FiBL website

> <u>http://www.fibl.org/en/media.html</u>

Link to the 2014 communiqué of the Ministers of Agriculture (German language)

> http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/41408.pdf

Questions concerning the media conference of the ministers of agriculture

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