



Theme of the year 2021/22

The quality of biodynamic products and what it means for the earth and for human beings

The aim of this new theme of the year is to explore the quality of biodynamic products in depth. Biodynamic agriculture enjoys great popularity all over the world. The area farmed biodynamically is constantly expanding, specialised enterprises are converting to biodynamics and biodynamic products are in demand on the market. Besides quantity, the quality of a product is always important: after all, food should taste good and do us good.

Quality: complex and dynamic

A variety of influences contribute over time to the development of quality.

In arable agriculture, for example, where the farmer tends the growth and ripening of the crops between earth and cosmos year after year, quality arises from a seed that develops under unique growing conditions and human care and produces ripe fruits. Quality is produced by the way in which the living organism develops. The human being, their relationship to the product and to their surroundings as well as their intention all play a decisive role in the development of quality.

The meaning and evaluation of quality change depending on the context in which they are viewed. This is easy to experience when you break fresh bread and the warm moist scent of the baked grain rises into your nose. For a brief moment all the senses are involved and we are immediately curious about how it will taste. This explosion of the senses is not merely an experience but also the final quality check before eating the bread. If you wanted to use up old bread and feed it to an animal, for instance, you would proceed very differently.

You will receive a different definition of quality, depending who you ask and in what context. What to one person tastes good, does them good or is good, is subject to numerous factors such as type of diet, world view, profession and environmental awareness. The question of what quality is, how we perceive, experience and improve it, is complex and dynamic.

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of biodynamic agriculture, gives an important stimulus to study quality in greater depth and to develop biodynamic quality.

A holistic quality for human beings

At the end of the fourth lecture in the Agriculture Course, Rudolf Steiner expressed his views on the characteristics of high-quality food as follows:

"The important thing is, when these products get to man, that they should be beneficial for his life. You may cultivate some fruit ... [that looks really attractive], and yet, when it comes to man it may only fill his stomach without organically furthering his inner life."

Steiner's concept of food goes beyond material and sense-perceptible properties, such as taste and smell. He expands the concept to the transformation and development of the food in the body. His description can serve as a vision for the quality of biodynamic products. If we want to achieve this, it is important to explore what "organically furthers the inner life" and what this means in real terms for production, processing, trade and consumption. The Agriculture Course and the many developments and initiatives that are based on or connected to it provide a valuable source for this research.

Over the next year the topic "The quality of biodynamic products and what it means for the earth and for human beings" will be explored by the Section for Agriculture and the Circle of Representatives and forms the theme of the Agricultural Conference, the international event organised by the biodynamic movement from 2 to 5 February 2022. We cordially invite you to explore this topic.

At the conference we will read and work with the Michael Letter "At the Dawn of the Michael Age". (Steiner, R. (1998): Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts)

The topics below are intended as suggestions for working on the varied aspects alone or in working groups, meetings, conferences, etc.:

- The meaning of the development process of an agricultural product from nature, the processing and the consumption for the quality of a food.
- The influence of the farm's geographical, social and economic situation on product quality, as every farm is individual and has its own manure, animal stock and customer base.
- The attitude and devotion of the human being to the product and the production process and in addition to such aspects as the cultural landscape, work situation on the farm and way of treating the animals.
- Effects of biodynamic measures (preparations) on quality and methods that are suitable for perceiving and analysing this.
- Risks and potentials of mechanisation in relation to production, processing and preparation.
- Influence of the division of labour and of craftsmanship.
- The role of eating habits for consumption, quality and production.
- The range of options and methods for perceiving and experiencing quality.
- How can we develop a culture of sensory experience so that everyone can appreciate the special quality for themselves?
- The importance of nutrition for the human being, the earth and the cosmos.

The exploration of this topic all over the world will culminate in the next Agricultural Conference from 2-5 February 2022.

Suggested reading:

- Andersen, J.-O. (2019): Vitality, from soil to stomach, Books on demand
- Berardi, G. (2020): Foodwise. A Whole Systems Guide to Sustainable and Delicious Food Choices
- Essink, P., Doesburg, P. (2020): Barstensvol leven, een pleidooi voor vitale voeding, Christofoor, 2nd edition
- Peschke, J. (2021): Vom Acker auf den Teller. Was Lebensmittel wirklich gesund macht, AT Verlag
- Steiner, R. (2004): Agriculture Course: The Birth of the Biodynamic Method, Lectures 4 and 8, as well as lecture from 20.06.1924.

Further information at <https://www.agriculture-conference.org/2022>