

Agriculture

“We want to fulfil our bridge-building function”

Around 1400 young people got a taste of farming last year

by Jonas Ingold



Managing Director Ueli Bracher hopes for a consolidation in the number of young people taking part. (pma/Agriviva)

LID. In this interview Agriviva's managing director Ueli Bracher sums up the year and discusses the challenges of the future.

Ueli Bracher, Agriviva celebrated its 75th anniversary last year. How would you sum up the anniversary year?

Ueli Bracher: Positive. On the one hand, we were able to increase the number of participants in the

anniversary year – we were very pleased about that. We were also pleased with the numerous congratulatory video messages we received from well-known personalities – first and foremost from the President of the Swiss Confederation, *Guy Parmelin*.

The lively anniversary general assembly with the appreciative remarks by the president and the managing director of the farmers' association of the host canton of Bern as well as the anecdotes of former association presidents will remain in fond memory. And with the song “Allez! Viens dans les champs” (Let's go to the fields) by the Biel rock band QL, composed especially for *Agriviva*, we were able to add another splash of colour that will shine beyond the anniversary year.

The number of young people participating in the voluntary farm work has increased, despite the pandemic. How do you explain that?

We see several factors: a general increase in interest in “green” topics such as nature, agriculture, food production and sustainability; on the other hand, more schools participated than in the previous year. It was important that the farm work assignments could be carried out regularly despite Corona; this was and is possible be-

Agriviva: Landdienst, voluntary farm work for young people

In 2021, almost 1400 young people took part in Agriviva. This is more than in 2020. In total, the young people performed 21,000 days of voluntary farm work last year. Since 1946, more than a thousand young people have helped out on farms every year – whether in the house, garden, stable or in the fields.

Landdienst has a long tradition in Switzerland: it began in 1946 when the “voluntary landdienst” was founded in Bern shortly after the Second World War. The traditional landdienst was renamed Agriviva about ten years ago – but the non-profit organisation's mission has remained unchanged: to create experiences and encounters for life on farms.

In the past 75 years, more than 340,000 young people have benefited from the organisation offering placements and thus got to know a new world. The landdienst farm work assignments take place throughout the year and last from one to a maximum of eight weeks. Every fifth participant also takes advantage of the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge of another national language with Agriviva.

cause only one young person stays with the host family at a time.

Social media is a daily companion for the young people. Do you see this as competition to the work in the Landdienst, the voluntary farm work, or can Agriviva even draw opportunities from the use of Instagram and Co.?

Social media offer great opportunities for us to make our services known to the target group of young people in a cost-effective way. Last year, for example, we successfully took our first steps on *Snapchat*, a platform that is booming among young people. Or the young people send us photos from their volunteering via Instagram.

On the one hand, this creates positive points of contact with the young people and on the other hand, we receive authentic content for our account. If you look at the pictures under *#Agriviva-*

foto2021, you will find shots of sometimes considerable quality. And they show, based on the motifs and subjects, what essentially impresses the young people: Nature, people and animals. Mobile phone consumption can have a negative effect, especially during farm work, when it reduces the young people's attention during working hours.

In one sentence: Why should every young person have participated in Agriviva once in their life?

Because this offers the chance and opportunity to gain valuable experience around nature, people and animals, which leads to a better relation to the demanding and elaborate production of food and to a more differentiated picture of the versatile and important work of farmers.

After the anniversary is before the anniversary. What developments do you expect in the coming years and what do you hope for?

We expect a continued high level of interest in ecological issues and topics such as sustainability, careful management of resources, quality standards, etc. – this could have a positive effect on the demand among young people for a farm work assignment. On the other hand, the number of farms is steadily decreasing – and thus also the offer of such placements.

A high degree of mechanisation and the fact that on many farms at least one person has an outside job, leaving less time for looking after young people, also have a dampening effect on



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the availability of places. In addition, the number of parents who have experienced farm volunteering themselves and recommend that their offspring also do so is declining.

Reasons for this are the discontinuation of compulsory landdienst for schools or the higher proportion of young people with a migration background. Under these conditions, we hope for a consolidation or slight increase in the number of participants – and that we can continue to fulfil our bridge-building function between town and country with the necessary support of the partners involved and then celebrate it in a fitting manner as part of the 100-year anniversary!

Source: <https://www.lid.ch/medien/mediendienst/detail/artikel/wir-wollen-unsere-brueckenbauer-funktion-wahrnehmen/>, 14 January 2022

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