

AGRITOURISM ORGANIZATION IN SWITZERLAND?



A national agritourism organization is desperately needed in Switzerland as there is no official body that would set a plan in the marketing of agritourism.

The Organization of Swiss farmers (Schweizerische Bauernverband), SBV has recently tried to help the marketing with a national program. Unfortunately, the attempt was not a success. The whole project failed because agritourism companies were not able to cooperate. **The Agritourism Organization is a second attempt to unite farmers and smaller agritourism businesses.** The origins of the project are connected to the Federal Office for Agriculture. The College of Agriculture in Zollikoffen has become a neutral partner of the project and is responsible for its presentation, for which it is also being adequately financially supported. By the end of autumn the business plan and the head office should also be established.

The problem with funding the organization is still open to negotiation. "The business plan will show how much money we need" says Gustav Munz of BLW. **The main purpose of the project is the coordination in the marketing of agritourism offers.** Martin Nydegger from Switzerland Tourism claims that for such a fragmented marketing that we have nowadays it is not possible to plan a strategy. There are about 3,500 rural tourism providers in Switzerland. However, only 500 of them are currently part of any organizations: farm holidays (FEBA), Sleeping on straw or Tourisme rural.

Both Switzerland Tourism and SBV hope that with a strengthened rural tourism the image of Switzerland will improve. Nydegger says: "It is a showcase product for an authentic Switzerland." A product that tourists are interested in: FEBA counted 100,000 overnight stays in 2009 (2.2% rise). According to Rita Barth, the president of FEBA, a farming law would have to be put through so that there is a breakthrough in agritourism. The concept of agritourism has not been defined by a law yet that is why it is difficult for farmers to turn their farms into an agritourism venue. There are no set rules to go by.

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