

## CASE STUDY : Switzerland – *Notre Panier Bio* – Innovation and risk sharing between producers and customers

### General information

Name of the case: *Notre Panier Bio*

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Country / region: Switzerland, Freiburg Canton

Additional information (contact person or website): [www.notrepanierbio.ch](http://www.notrepanierbio.ch) (in French)  
[www.unserbiokorb.ch](http://www.unserbiokorb.ch) (in German)

The *Notre Panier Bio* organisation operates in the Freiburg Canton. With an area of 1,670.7 km<sup>2</sup> and 303,377 inhabitants, the Freiburg Canton has a density of 180 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in 2014. More than 59% of the territory is used for agriculture. There are about 3,000 farms, mainly producing milk. The farms are an average of 25.4 ha.<sup>12</sup>

There are about 160 families of organic farmers, so they account for 5% of the producers in the area.

*Notre Panier Bio* is a non-profit organisation funded in 2006 by both consumers and producers in the Freiburg Canton. It aims at developing and sustaining Community Supported Agriculture, through several means:

- Establishing direct links between producers and consumers
- Referring to and promoting food sovereignty
- Organising actions for the cultivation and distribution of organic products and processed produce that uses organic products
- Advocating in favour of local production
- Paying a price for the products that meets local fair trade requirements and that benefits both producers and consumers.

In January 2016, 540 consumer families and 22 producer families were members of this non-profit organisation. The 22 farmer families work with the organisation as well as allocating part of their production to this specific distribution method.

For **consumers**, being part of *Notre Panier Bio* involves signing a contract for a one year minimum period, agreeing to buy a monthly basket of products, and paying an annual allowance of 50 Sfr for the organisation. Consumers do not choose the contents of their basket but can decide on the size of the basket and are free to select from a range of possibilities as explained in the following table. There is also the possibility to buy an extra basket, four times a year, called “C’est la fête!” (*It is party time!*) with more “sophisticated” produce. The cost of this is 79 Sfr per basket.

	Panier Bio	Panier Bio Végétarien	Panier Bio du Jardin
Price small / big size	56 / 79 Sfr	56 / 79 Sfr	43 / 56 Sfr
<i>Translation</i>	<i>Organic Basket</i>	<i>Vegetarian Organic Basket</i>	<i>Organic Garden Basket</i>
Vegetables and fruits	X	X	X

Bread, flour, oil, pasta	X	X	
Dairy produce	X	X	
Dried meat and sausages	X		
Eggs	X	X	

Consumers can therefore choose the size of the basket and the distribution point they want to pick up the basket. The products in the basket are determined by the producers but consumers receive an e-mail with the contents of their basket one week before delivery takes place. There is no home delivery but there are about 30 pick-up points where consumers can collect their baskets. The contract runs for a year, and is renewed every six months, and can only be broken by a letter sent a month before the renewal date.

For **producers** being part of *Notre Panier Bio* implies being able to deliver the given number of organic products with the required quality for the baskets several times a year. A producers' meeting is held once a year to organise the distribution of the products. The producers inform the steering committee of any price change or any change in their production. Producers pay a 200 Sfr membership fee to the organisation, and make a 15% profit margin on their products.

### **What is the innovation?**

The producers and the consumers have direct contact as the Steering Committee is composed of are both producers and consumers; they also have the opportunity to meet during events (organic market, farm visits, General Assembly ...). Consumers can also make direct contact with producers, as all their contact details are listed on the organisation website.

The Steering Committee also facilitates the circulation of information about the needs and wants of consumers to the producers and the possibilities and constraints of producers. This falls into different categories

\* The absence of products or a range of products, for example berries

If the consumers complain they do not get enough of a given product, the Steering Committee share the information with the producers to ask them to adapt their production the following year, and if no one within the group of 22 producers is able to meet this need, then the Committee will look for an organic producer in the region who would be able to produce what has been requested, and ask them to and join the organisation.

\* A producer would like to introduce a new product, such as camelina oil<sup>1</sup>.

If a producer would like to start producing or introduce a new product to the range of products delivered in the baskets, they can provide a sample to the Steering Committee for trial tasting and discussion about the price, the quantity available ... If the producer would like to sell a specific product, with greater added value, it can be sold through the "C'est la fête!" basket. The organisation is therefore a kind of "protected market" for the producer.

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1 <http://oilhealthbenefits.com/camelina-oil/>

## **What are the implications in terms of risk sharing ?**

### 1. Risks for the consumer:

The consumer takes the risk of having products he/she does not like in the basket. He or she might not like it, but the quality and the mode of production are certified. The consumers agree to accepting a monthly basket; it does not cater for all their needs, but is a way of supporting Community Supported Agriculture.

They can change the type of basket and size by a simple phone call or an e-mail to the distribution centre.

### 1. Risks and solutions for producers:

#### a) Risk of crop failure:

The person in charge of the product distribution is also a vegetable grower, who has several means of distribution for his own vegetable and other products (market, direct sales, restaurants...). Solution: This gives him a margin to adapt the contents of the baskets. He also informs customers if the quality of the products has been adversely affected by the weather: for example, some apples had pockmarks from a hailstorm. This did not change their taste, only their appearance. These apples were therefore distributed in the baskets with a little note explaining the situation. Nobody complained. b)

#### b) Risk of over production or bad production timing

Solution: the person in charge can adapt the content of the baskets, he can adapt rapidly to a change in production or in the delivery month for any given product.

#### c) Risk of launching a new product

Solution: if a producer wants to try a new production, they have the possibility of informing consumers through the newsletter; they can also introduce the product during an event and also get feedback from other producers.

## **Conclusion:**

*Notre Panier Bio* offers a “secure market” to producers, with the strong consumer commitment. This commitment also involves direct contact and helps both consumers and producers become aware of the structural issues of the overall food system and how an agroecological food system could be implemented.