

Abstract

The focus of this diploma thesis is organic farming. Its goal is to evaluate the positives and the negatives of organic farming from the sustainable development point of view. Sustainable development is usually divided into three pillars – environmental, economic and social. However, this thesis uses the division into four pillars of sustainability, in which the social pillar is divided into socio-political and human pillar, which is more fitting in this case. This division allows a more detailed evaluation of organic farming. The thesis also deals with the question of sustainability of the researched farm in the future.

The method chosen for the thesis is a case study, thanks to which a specific case was researched and answers for the stated questions could be found. Rainton farm in the South of Scotland serves as the case for the practical part of the thesis. Since the early 1990s Rainton has been in the process of conversion from the conventional to the organic way of farming. The business has been diversified and therefore the research could be focused also on the development of the visitor centre, ice-cream or cheese making.

Thanks to the data from interviews, participant observation and other documents, a complex picture of the organic farm was created. The research has shown that the conversion is a very demanding process, whose results show only after some time. From the environmental point of view, the positive changes in the ecosystems on the farm land and the farm's closest surroundings can be clearly seen. The socio-political layer of organic farming shows that societal decisions and the mood in society strongly influence farmers and businesses both positively and negatively. It has been observed that the conversion is the most demanding from the human and economic point of view, since it creates a major and long-standing strain both financially and personally.

The results of the research cannot be generalised on all organic farming businesses, yet they can be used as an example and inspiration for similarly focused farmers, who are planning a conversion from conventional to organic farming methods.

Key words

organic farming, agriculture in transition, sustainable development, pillars of sustainability