



Danube Soya for the Promotion  
of European Soya Production

## **Danube Soya East-West protein forum continues to blaze the trail for a European protein strategy.**

Press release

**Around 400 participants from 60 countries are meeting at the conference "GMO-free Europe Future Opportunities and Challenges" in Berlin. In this framework the Danube Soya East-West Protein Forum took place, in order to promote the creation of a European and GM-free protein strategy through specific cooperation of East and West. This time Germany is the main topic: with its demand of 5.9 million tonnes of soya per year, Germany is the largest soya consumer in Europe.**

**Soya production in Europe is increasing: in 2015 2.8 million tonnes of soya beans are already being produced in the Danube region (including Ukraine and France 7.7 million tonnes). Ukraine will produce around 4.7 million tonnes, which is 60% of the European soya production. For Germany European soya can therefore be a real alternative to soya from overseas. The Danube Soya programme certifies European soya with the core criteria "regional", "GM-free" and "sustainable".**

### **Danube Soya Association, Berlin, 7 and 8 May 2015**

In the framework of the conference "GM-free Europe", Danube Soya is already staging its third conference. This year the focus is on the organisation of protein partnerships between Germany and the countries of the Danube region, in which the soya bean is increasingly being cultivated. Currently, Germany imports over a tonne of GM-free soya beans and soya bean meal, mainly from overseas. Danube Soya can be a sustainable alternative to this.

In the five keynote speeches, the availability and political framework conditions of soya bean cultivation in Europe will be described.



## Great potential from the Danube region

"Already over 3 million hectares of soya are being cultivated in the Danube region (incl. Ukraine) – that is already the equivalent of over 7.7 million tonnes. In ten years, Europe could easily more than double this amount. Together with other European sources of protein, the reduced consumption of animal protein and increased imports of certified soya such as ProTerra, Europe could succeed in switching to a sustainable protein supply by 2015", according to Matthias Krön, CEO of the Danube Soya Association founded in 2012.

In 2015, soya bean cultivation rose, compared to 2014, by 180,000 hectares (including Ukraine – by 540,000 hectares), this growth alone could cover the Austrian demand of around 600,000 tonnes. While in 2012 3.9 million tonnes were produced in the Danube region and Ukraine as well as France, in 2015 this number will rise to 7.7 million tonnes, if projections are accurate. This rise will continue as long as the continuing demand from processors and food retailers does not drop off. The Association has great hopes of the northern Danube region: in mid-April Danube Soya kicked off their efforts in Poland and Ukraine. "Since the end of 2014 we have been working together with the Association, in order to establish Ukraine as an important and perhaps shortly the largest supplier for Danube Soya. 1.8 million hectares of soya bean cultivation in Ukraine in 2014 is more than in the whole remaining Danube region – and our potential is by far not exhausted. 3 to 4 million hectares are a realistic projection of the next few years", says Inna Meteleva of the Svarog West Group.

But other countries in the Danube regions have developed to become significant soya bean cultivation countries as well. The main reasons for this are the political framework conditions in the EU countries. Donal Murphy Bokern, member of the European Innovation Partnership, the protein plants focus group of the EU Commission, reports, "with the new Common Agricultural Policy, many member states will have opportunities to promote soya bean cultivation. Amongst others, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary and Romania decided on joint premiums of 200 – 400 euros per hectare. The approval of soya for allowance in the ecological priority areas and the obligation to rotate crops will motivate farmers to plant soya beans." Initial results are evident in 2015 particularly in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, but also in the non-EU country of Serbia – together they will cultivate 120,000 hectares of soya in 2015 alone.

The 7.7 million tonnes of soya from Europe that have already been produced become even more important in relation to demand if demand falls further – a trend that has



already been apparent in the past few years. Changes in consumer habits and the increased use of other sources of protein could reduce the soya demand by 2025 from currently approx. 32 to 27 million tonnes – then Europe could soon succeed in providing for itself sustainably. “10 million tonnes of soya could be certified by ProTerra from Brazil and also from India in the coming years. Together with the 7.7 million tonnes of soya from Europe, we could already cover over 50% of the demand in Europe”, as Jochen Koester, member of the board at ProTerra, optimistically expects.

### **Germany’s change over**

Giorgio Dalla Bona, Cereal Docks Italy and Rudolf Bühler of the Agricultural Producer Association Schwäbisch Hall are reporting existing trade links between European producers and consumers. „For our pigs, we already use only European soya in the trough. Our trade links to Serbian farmers is important and right. Together with the intensification of European cultivation and the increased demand for sustainable sources, we can make a contribution to a GM-free Europe,” says Rudolf Bühler.

Giorgio Dalla Bona is also reporting increasingly positive experiences with Danube Soya: “Italian, therefore European soya, is already being used in Germany. Through Danube Soya, the demand is rising. In Italy we have optimum conditions for growing soya. We must use these conditions and in this way we can make an important contribution to Europe’s protein supply. The essential success factor for the further increase in production is the continued and patient demand from the industrial sector”, as Giorgio Dalla Bona demands.

This challenge is what a highly qualified roundtable will be discussing: Rainer Dullweber, Best3, Dr. Birgit Wilhelm, WWF Germany, Gerhard Aigner, Geflügehof Aigner KG, Dr. Ludger Breloh, REWE Group, Alexander Hissting, of the German Verband Lebensmittel ohne Gentechnik (VLOG e.V.) and Casper von der Crone of KAT discuss the changeover, the entry of Germany as well as the European protein supply.



5.9 million tonnes of soya beans are required in Germany. The neighbouring countries along the Danube produce more soya, but the increase in processing, optimised logistical operations, pricing models and the consistent availability of all qualities required is still a challenge. Already a majority of chickens in Germany are fed free of GM – additional programmes are being demanded by consumers.

“80 % of all German consumers refuse genetically modified products. Businesses must react,” emphasises Alexander Hissting. Particularly the promotion of regional agriculture and the reduction of non-sustainable soya imports is important to the environmental organisation WWF, “we cannot “outsource” our responsibility for our unique resources, such as soil, water and biodiversity. If we import soya, we must ensure that cultivation also takes into account ecological and social criteria, and that further huge areas of savannah and rainforest are not turned into soya monocultures,” says Birgit Wilhelm, keynote speaker on resource protection and agriculture of WWF Deutschland.

REWE already reacted a year ago and published a guideline for sustainable soya used as fodder. This is certainly welcomed by the WWF, however a quicker implementation is being demanded. With the “GM-free” seal of the VLOG and the ARGE label in Austria, REWE is already offering consumers guidance during their food shopping.

### **Extensive conference programme results in the agreement of a European protein supply**

Nine companies were exhibiting in the framework of the conference. New contacts and projects could be established. A total of 44 speakers presented their contributions in four simultaneous workshops. In the Danube Soya workshop, above all the available amounts in the Danube Region and potential trade routes are demonstrated, the subsequent workshop with the Bavarian Regional Council for Agriculture invites experts to discuss the challenges of sustainable supply chains in relation to domestic and GM-free soya.



In the context of the practical seminar "GM-free and sustainable soya feed in Germany: dual compound feed plants in practice", entrepreneurs explain the possibilities of compound processing and thereby make it easier for large companies to take the first steps in GM. During the workshop "Sustainable protein – soya as a foodstuff", the significance of soya as a foodstuff and thereby as a contribution to a European protein supply becomes clear. Danube Soya also invited participants to the by now traditional researcher's workshop in the sector of seed research.

"During our conference we saw once again that a fundamental consensus exists to set up a common European protein strategy in the medium term. Our task remains the certification of primary processors, agricultural collectors, compound feed plants and producers. But of course the most important part are relationships with farmers", emphasises Krön.

Training courses, information events and field days transmit knowledge about the certification of Danube Soya but also particularly about soya cultivation in general. The Best Practice manual, published last year, was translated into five languages and describes the best agricultural practice for effective and sustainable soya cultivation. Another project which exists since November 2014, is highly significant for the development of the Danube Soya project. The international working group under the management of the Federal Environment Agency harmonises GM-free standards for the whole Danube Soya region. "The Federal Environment Agency has for years been committed to uniform regulation of the production, labelling and control of GM-free products, in order to create greater transparency for consumers and industry. The Danube Soya project means that we are creating a technically sound foundation for such regulations and making an important contribution to its success", explains Helmut Gaugitsch, GMO expert in the Federal Environment Agency.



Danube Soya is thus able to connect the agriculture of the Danube region domestically and internationally and the incipient domestic European soya trade provides new opportunities to farmers. The processing of soya beans occurs primarily within the region – this is not the case for wheat, which is exported unprocessed. “There is great growth of potential yield in agriculture along the Danube and the use of as yet unexploited agricultural fallow areas and both more wheat and more soya can be produced. At the same time, an increasing number of branded programmes and individual retailers in Germany, Switzerland and Austria are committed to sustainable and regional soya feeding”, explains Krön.

The project is thus able to access multi-faceted potential even apart from the opportunities for increased European involvement in protein supply: It represents regional support of the Danube region through investment in the cultivation of quality soya and also for the expansion of the Danube as a supply artery for Europe. The expansion of infrastructure and processing capacity required for the supply chain offers the region an interesting economic outlook.

### **About Danube Soya:**

Danube Soya is a non-profit, independent organization and represents Europe’s most significant initiative in the agricultural sector. Danube Soya links civil society, politics and important businesses from all sections of the value added chain, ranging from GMO-free seed production to food of animal and vegetable origin. Danube Soya stands for GMO-free, origin-controlled quality soya from the Danube Region and incorporates about 175 members from all over Europe. The Danube Soya Association has made it’s objective to improve the conditions for successful European protein cultivation and to minimize soya imports. The Danube Soya headquarters are located in Vienna; regional offices are currently set up in Novi Sad, Serbia and in Bucharest, Romania. Representatives are in Switzerland and Italy.

Further information on Danube Soya can be found on [www.donausoja.org](http://www.donausoja.org).

#### Requests:

Danube Soya Association  
Mag. Ursula Bittner, MBA, Manager  
<mailto:bittner@donausoja.org>  
Tel: + 43 1 512 17 44 11  
Mobile: +43 664 960 64 29