

From Conventional to Organic: A Farmer's Journey Toward Sustainability

As part of the ***mEATquality project***, we are working to help farmers improve the quality of pork and broiler meat by applying **extensive husbandry practices** that respect animal welfare, environmental concerns, and farm economics. Our mission also includes informing consumers about production methods, supporting traceability to combat food fraud, and developing tools to assess sustainability.

To understand what drives farmers to make this transition, we spoke to several farmers. These conversations reveal the motivations, challenges, and hopes behind moving toward **more sustainable, animal-friendly farming systems**.

Our first story takes us to Baden-Württemberg, Germany, where Jürgen and Lukas Eiberger run **Biohof Eiberger GbR**, a Naturland-certified farm.



Biohof Eiberger GbR. Jürgen, Elvira and Lukas Eiberger (photos provided by Eiberger).

A Farm with a Vision

Imagine 240 hectares of land in the rolling countryside of Baden-Württemberg -fields of wheat, lupins, and clover grass, alongside barns housing over 1,000 pigs and a small herd of Angus cattle. This is Biohof Eiberger. But just a few years ago, things looked very different.

“We simply wanted to do something good for our soil and animals,” says Jürgen. That simple wish sparked a major transformation.

The Turning Point

The Eibergers converted their fields to organic on July 1, 2022, and by January 1, 2024, their fattening facilities followed. Why?

“The constant pressure regarding animal welfare, planning uncertainties, restructuring of conventional livestock farming, resistance issues in crop protection, and the volatility of the free market led us - after much consideration -to make the switch.”

Hopes for the Future

For Jürgen and Lukas, the goals are clear:

- Sustainable soil management and biodiversity
- Better quality of life for people and animals
- Stable prices

Challenges Along the Way

Transitioning wasn’t easy. “Crop production was challenging because our soils vary greatly and are not all ideally suited for organic farming. The ridge system helped us move forward.”

In the barns, creativity was key. “We focused on practical, cost-effective solutions. All facilities were rebuilt and reused. The entire conversion was carried out by ourselves and continuously improved with new ideas.”

The secret? “Be open to change. Family support, farm atmosphere, and location all have to fit.”



Lessons Learned

- What helped most? **“Good advice and visiting many farms** - this is where ideas come from.”
- Three words that describe their journey? **“Sustainable, professional, determined.”**
- Would they recommend organic practices? **“Absolutely** - you just have to want it.”

This story is a powerful reminder that sustainability starts with commitment and creativity. Stay tuned for more farmer insights as we explore how extensive husbandry practices can improve animal welfare, meat quality, and consumer trust across Europe.

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The *mEATquality* project aims to provide consumers with better-quality pork and broiler meat and animals with a high level of welfare by developing scientific knowledge and practical solutions together with farmers and chain partners. The project is coordinated by Wageningen Research (The Netherlands) and is a multidisciplinary team of 17 partners organisations representing 7 EU countries. The project is running from October 2021 to March 2026



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