

Short Rotation Woody Crops (SRC) plantations for local supply chains and heat use

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2nd training for public land owners

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Abbreviations

ARL	Academy for Spatial Research and Planning - Leibniz Forum for Spatial Sciences
BAT	Biomass Trading Centre Achenal
CIPRA	Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes = International Commission for the Protection of the Alps
IGF	Institute of Interdisciplinary Mountain Research - Austrian Academy of Sciences
SRC	Short Rotation Coppice

1 Introduction

The aim of the second seminar for public land owner was to inform and educate public land owners / managers about the possibilities using public land for production of SRC focusing on different strategies for land-use planning. In contrary to the first training, the second one targeted not only the Achantal region but also the entire Alpine Region. Therefore, the general concept was adapted to overall conditions in the Alps and to local needs regarding SRC production, usage, legal aspects and capacities.

With the provided information, the knowledge basis shall rise and experience exchange should be enabled between the attending partners. Both should lead to increased capacity for the plantation, establishment and engagement into local supply chains or SRC in general. Knowledge was transferred to stakeholders at the regional and national level and therefore it is expected to create capacity for SRC in order to remove non-technical barriers related to SRC cultivation and production of woodchips.

Sustainable agricultural practices for wood chips production from SRC have been promoted in order to highlight environmental benefits of SRC, not only in the Achantal but also in the complete Alpine region, in which tourism (“green tourism”) plays a very dominant role. The seminar shall be a decisive step on the way of creating an energy-autonomous region until 2020, creating employment opportunities and decreasing a brain drain.

The described training event took place on the 14th October 2016 in Grassau (Achantal) as a “side-event” of the AlpWeek. This framework deliberately has been chosen for raising interest for SRC issues also by a broader audience. The training event was very successful as seen in the number of attendants: 23 public land owner / managers participated.

2 Involved stakeholders

The Biomass Trading Centre cooperates in several projects with the Ökomodell Achantal e. V., an association of Achantal communities (see www.oekomodell.de for more details) and which was the host of the AlpWeek 2016 (see <http://alpweek.org/2016/>). Therefore, a close connection of the BAT to the mayors in the Achantal and the Alpine region is given.

Regarding the preliminary program of the Alpweek, BAT contacted via the Ökomodell Achantal e. V. the AlpWeek-partner ARL (Academy for Spatial Research and Planning - Leibniz Forum for Spatial Sciences; <https://www.arl-net.de/content/english>) in order to gain ARL for a combined training event. According to successful negotiations, a joint agenda was elaborated (see Figure 1) and furthermore distributed via all channels and networks of all involved partners (BAT, Ökomodell and ARL).



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Einladung zum ARL-Workshop am Rande der Alpenwoche in Grassau (14.10.2016, 10-16 Uhr) zum Thema:

„Alpenweiter Freiraumschutz – ‚Unerschlossene alpine Zonen‘ (UAZ) und deren raumordnerische Sicherung“

Programm:

Hubert Job (ARL Hannover): Einleitung – UAZ: Definition und Mehrwert einer internationalen Betrachtung

Oliver Bender (IGF Innsbruck): Demographie und Großschutzgebiete in den Alpen

Marius Mayer (EMAU Greifswald): Neuigkeiten zum Thema Bayerns "Alpenplan"

Peter Hasslacher (CIPRA Österreich, Innsbruck): Neuigkeiten zum Thema Tiroler "Ruhegebiete"

Andreas Marlin & Stefan Obkircher (Landesplanung Vorarlberg Bregenz): Neuigkeiten zum Thema "Weißzonen"

Gero Nischik & Christoph Knauf (WSL Zürich-Birmensdorf): „Anlagenfreie Gebiete“ in der Schweiz

Kurt Kußtatscher (TRIFOLIUM Bozen): "Unerschlossene Gebiete" Südtirols/Italien

Claire Simon (CIPRA international Schaan): Fazit – Todos für intendierte Tagung und Projektstudie

Stefan Hinterreiter (BMA): SRCplus - Möglichkeit zur nachhaltigen Energieversorgung

Wofür steht dieser Workshop? Die alpine Raumordnung wird neuerdings immer häufiger konfrontiert mit Entwicklungen, die eine integrierte und zukunftsweisende Raumplanung im Dienst von Mensch und Natur konterkarieren. Aktuelle Beispiele finden sich genug. Explizit hinzuweisen ist auf den derzeitigen forcierten Ausbau von Skigebieten; ungeachtet der wirtschaftlich wenig rosigen Aussichten im Wintertourismus angesichts zunehmender Temperaturen. Bedroht sind vielfach bislang unerschlossene und geschützte Räume; so am Riedberger Horn im Oberallgäu,

wo der seit 44 Jahren bestens bewährte Bayerische Alpenplan zum ersten Mal geschwächt werden soll und damit ein Präzedenzfall geschaffen würde. Deshalb braucht es jetzt eine international abgestimmte Raumplanung, die den alpenweiten Freiraumschutz vorantreibt und damit die zu Grunde liegenden, vier Protokolle der Alpenkonvention neu mit Leben erfüllt. Denn der ganzheitliche Ansatz, den die Alpenkonvention verfolgt, scheidet bislang leider häufig an den sektoral sowie nach Partikularinteressen orientierten nationalen Politiken im Alpenraum.

Wir würden uns sehr freuen, Sie in Grassau begrüßen zu dürfen, und verbleiben mit besten Grüßen

Andreas Klee

Figure 1: Invitation and agenda of the second training for public land owners

3 Training event and results

The training was implemented as a “side event” of the AlpWeek at the premises of the Biomass Trading Centre Achenal in Grassau. Wolfgang Wimmer, the manager of the Biomass Trading Centre Achenal started with a short introduction including a warm welcome to all the attending participants.

As first lecturer Hubert Job (ARL; also chair holder/professor at the Institute of Geography and Regional Research at the University of Würzburg) gave also a warm welcome to the attendants and he wished to thank Wolfgang Wimmer and Dr. Stefan Hinterreiter for (co-)organising and hosting the event. Accordingly, Hubert Job introduced the ARL focussing on the aim of the event: provide information, rise knowledge and increase experience exchange between the attending partners in order to raise capacity in line of plantation establishment, engagement into local supply chains or SRC in general.

Oliver Bender (Institute of Interdisciplinary Mountain Research - Austrian Academy of Sciences; abbrev. “IGF Innsbruck”) followed Hubert Job. Bender is an expert for cultural landscape and regional development, agricultural geography, urban and landscape planning, geoinformatics and regional geography (southern and eastern Germany, the Alps, Italy). In his speech, he focussed on the demographic change in the Alpine region and how SRC plantations can save / create jobs and reduce a possible “brain drain” / rural exodus. Furthermore, he pointed out positive effects, which SRCs can provide in major protected areas.

After the short coffee break, Marius Mayer from the Institute for Geography and Geology at the Ernst Moritz Arndt University of Greifswald spoke about news referring to the “Alpenplan” of Bavaria. In this plan, SRCs can play an important role in terms of long-term, reliable and climate-neutral energy supply. Moreover, SRC can serve as an attractive method in terms of nutrient reduction and improving (ground-) water quality.

Peter Haßlacher (Head of CIPRA Austria) explained interesting issues about the topic “Tyrolian chill-out zones”. Within these areas, which are “cultivated” in an ecological way, the act of relaxing shall be the most focussed item for visitors. However, he also pointed out, that within these areas SRCs can be established as well and that new SRC plantations can for example break up the landscape or – if harvested in several stages – can create new landscapes. Summed up, SRCs in relax-zones can improve the recovery factor for the people and – furthermore – can contribute to the mitigation of climate change.

Subsequent to lunch, Andreas Marlin and Stefan Obkircher (federal state planning of Vorarlberg and Bregenz) introduced the topic of “white zones” to the participants and the possible link to/with SRCs. Beginning in 2012, they started to record the initial, near-natural and poorly developed alpine landscape zone in order to save/protect them as so called “Weißzonen”. In the long-term, the status of these areas shall remain almost unchanged. Only a smooth implementation of other uses could be implemented, like an ecological establishment of SRCs (no ploughing, no herbicides, no narrow planting distances and a “wide” planting pattern.

In Switzerland (like Gero Nischik and Christoph Knauf from the WSL reported) the alpine region has to face the challenge of being a natural and cultural heritage – which is worth of protection – and/or being a habitat, which shall support tourism, energy production and other economic developments. In this conflict, SRCs can combine several aspects (like energy production, economic development and nature conservation); therefore, an ecological implementation can occur. However, mainly in the lower regions of Switzerland, because of unfavorable growing conditions in the mountain areas. The same development could also be seen in South Tyrol, which was the main message of Kurt Kußtatscher from TRIFOLIUM Bolzano (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Impression of the training for public land owners in Grassau

According to another short coffee break, Claire Simon (CIPRA) summed up the already stated results, that in the alpine region, where the available land is quite limited and therefore a high competitive pressure on these areas exist, SRCs can act as a multifunctional connection between protecting the landscape and contributing to the rural development with a sustainable, ecological energy supply.

Dr. Stefan Hinterreiter (BAT) presented an example for a multifunctional connection at the end of the training event. He explained the suitable SRC species for the Achenal region as well as these for the alpine region focusing on the respective soil type and soil quality. Furthermore, Dr. Hinterreiter presented several ways of establishing new SRC plantations, each depending on the size, shape and soil condition of the respective plot. Moreover, he informed about the SRCs in the Achenal region, which are serving “multi-purposes”, particularly producing a local, renewable energy source and fixing/reducing nutrients. At the end of this presentation, Dr. Stefan Hinterreiter explained possible ways of harvesting SRC plantation focusing on the harvest at Übersee in January 2016.

Finally, Hubert Job (ARL) and Wolfgang Wimmer (BAT) thanked all participants for attending the training event. Moreover, Wolfgang Wimmer invited the attendants to visit the SRC at Übersee.

The second training event for public land owners was very successful. Several experts and public land owners – spread all over the alpine region – participated and shared a lot of information and practical knowledge. The event gained particularly in interest and value through the fact that stakeholders from other Alpine Regions joined. Moreover, participants joined with a clear focus on sustainable development strategies for Alpine Regions. This slightly different angle have forced SRC experts to clearly identify the positive development effects of short rotation crops to an overall strategy of green tourism and energy autonomy. It was expressed by several sides at the end of the event that “SRC” has been able to present its value in this respect persuasively.