

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP | MILLENNIALS - WHAT MAKES THEM TICK?

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THE WEALTH TRANSFER WHO WILL HOLD THE POWER?

SEVENTH GENERATION CEO
JOHN REPLOGLE
ON THE COMPANY'S BOLD NEW PATH

EILEEN FISHER BUILDING A TIMELESS BRAND

TOP SUSTAINABLE
**CHEESE
PRODUCERS**

FOOD | ENERGY | FINANCE | INNOVATION & DESIGN | LEADERSHIP



A DEEPER DIVE INTO BIODYNAMIC CERTIFICATION

BIODYNAMIC CERTIFICATION IS OFTEN VIEWED AS THE PINNACLE OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR AGRICULTURE.

Certified Biodynamic® products not only have to meet all guidelines for organic certification, but biodynamic practitioners use a holistic approach, seeing their farm as an interconnected, diversified, and balanced living organism. Biodynamic certification, carried out by Demeter International and Demeter USA here in America, is widely popular in Europe and is beginning to gain traction in the US beyond the wine industry. We had the chance to speak with the Co-Director of Demeter USA, Elizabeth Candelario, regarding the growth of the certification in the States and the key drivers in the market that are scaling Biodynamic practices.

What insights do you have on the growth of Biodynamic certification over the past few years?

Elizabeth Candelario: I would say we're growing at about ten percent per year in terms of our membership. That growth has mostly been in the wine industry; the wine industry was definitely the early adopter here in the US. But in the last few years, especially with our new Whole Foods Market program, we're starting to see a lot of the very best organic food companies bringing Biodynamic products to market.

As you said, Biodynamic practices have traditionally been associated with wine. How has the certification begun to scale to other industries and where are you seeing the most traction?

EC: Biodynamic is a newer phenomenon here in the United States, but it's been practiced in Europe since the late 1920s. There are all types of products in the market in Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy. While here the Biodynamic movement in wine is leading to adoption in other types of consumer products, in Europe it was

more the other way around, where there was growth in other products first and then that inspired Biodynamic winemakers.

We're seeing a range of product types coming into the market: tea, rice, chocolate, juice, pastas, pasta sauces, olive oil, fruit spreads. What we're not seeing quite as much growth in is meat and dairy. That's probably because the standards, especially with the dairy industry in the US, are going to be very hard to meet.

Some of the biggest Biodynamic farms in the world are tea plantations in India that are thousands of acres in size. Here in the United States, our biggest Biodynamic farm is about 900 acres. That's Fred Kirschenmann's grain farm in North Dakota. Most of the Biodynamic farms here in the US are small or medium-sized family farms selling locally or regionally.

About ten years ago, Demeter had about fifty members. Again, the wine industry was really the early adopter, but after all of these wineries got certified (we have eighty now, which is third in the world after France and Italy), I had food writers call me and say, "Well, this is great but what products other than wine are there in the national marketplace?" And there really weren't any.

Demeter's mission is to enable people to farm successfully in accordance with Biodynamic principles and practices. We began to realize that one of the definitions of success is economic. You can't have a sustainable farm if the farm isn't sustaining the farmer. And we realized that it was really hard to create economic success in a marketplace that didn't even know what Biodynamic was. How do you educate consumers about the importance of



Biodynamic farms and products if you don't have a national marketplace of products? How do you begin to create the national marketplace if you don't have consumers clamoring for those products? Therein lies the Catch-22, and it's in that that we can look back over the organic food niche and say, "Gosh, it took us forty years to get to where we are right now." But I would say, at Demeter we're not nearly that patient, so we began to realize that in

order to create this marketplace, we needed to integrate the supply chain; we needed to get the retailer, the processed food company, and the farmer all working together with this vision of a dynamic Biodynamic marketplace well in advance of consumers knowing what it was.


So, we went to Whole Foods and Whole Foods said to us, "We not only think that Biodynamic is important, we want to be really proactive

in helping create this Biodynamic marketplace, and in order to do that, we're going to go to our very best organic food companies and ask them to consider bringing Biodynamic line extensions into the product market." If you shop at Whole Foods now, you can go and see that its top organic juice company, Lakewood Organic, now has Biodynamic juices. The Republic of Tea, a fantastic tea company, now has a whole line extension of Biodynamic teas. DeLallo Pasta, one of the top organic pasta companies in the country, now has Biodynamic pasta and olive oil. Amy's Kitchen has a Biodynamic frozen pasta bowl. Lundberg, one of the most venerable natural and organic rice brands in the country, now has a Biodynamic rice.

Once you get these processed food companies to commit, then all of a sudden you go back to the farmer and you can say, "Look, we now have retailers who are really promoting this. We have processed food companies that are looking all over the world for tomatoes and onions and green bell peppers and now might be the time, Mr. or Ms. Farmer, to consider transitioning your farm from organic to Biodynamic."

Are there any misconceptions about Biodynamic certification that you often come across that you wish that you could rectify? Is there something that you wish everybody knew about Biodynamic certification?

EC: I've been working with Biodynamic farms and products for about fifteen years and I've always been amazed at all of the almost sensationalist conversation out there in the marketplace. It's getting a lot better now so I hate to repeat it because I don't want to keep perpetuating it, but fundamentally, in terms of Demeter, the term "Biodynamic" is defined by the Demeter Farm and Processing Standards. Anybody can pick up that Farm Standard and read it and there's nothing in that Farm Standard that reasonable people aren't going to agree with, aside from, perhaps, misunderstandings around the role of the preparations (soil and compost additives created on the farm), which is an important thing that we have to keep focusing on and



"You can't have a sustainable farm if the farm isn't sustaining the farmer."



keep encouraging the science around.

Fundamentally, I would say that the relationship between the farmer and his or her farm is a very personal one, and some people who have been practicing Biodynamic farming for a long time might describe Biodynamic through their own personal relationship with the farm, which might be very hard for people who don't have that context to really understand. I always like to use the analogy of doing yoga. If I just met you and I thought you could really benefit from doing yoga, and I said, "Look, if you do yoga, you're going to have a spiri-

The biggest Achilles' heel is the tension between opportunity in the marketplace and the true fact of biological time. They don't align at all. Our member services coordinator spends half of her time cold-calling farmers saying, "Do you know about Biodynamic agriculture? Is it something you might be interested in considering?" Our biggest challenge is that our opportunity in the marketplace is so great right now, but it has yet to translate to lots more farms ready to create the raw materials necessary to bring these products to market.

where you don't use prohibited materials and you'll still get that organic certification. With Biodynamic, the entire farm has to be certified. There's no just dipping your toe in the water. Also, for example, with Biodynamic, ten percent of the total acreage of the farm needs to be set aside for biodiversity. Think about Napa, California, where every square inch has such a high value because of the value of those grapes. There isn't a lot of biodiversity built into those farms because the land is so valuable.

The other hurdle is the expertise. Demeter is still a small agricultural non-

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tual awakening and you're going to feel a connection to something that's larger than you," people might look at me like I'm crazy. But if I came to you and said, "Look, you should do yoga because it's really great exercise. It increases flexibility and gives you greater cardiovascular conditioning," six months from then, you might come back to me really excited and talk to me about how you're making a connection between your postures and your breathing in your yoga practice. When you work with Demeter, we're really in the business of saying this is "good exercise" for the farm and then the farmers come to understand what it means to them.

What is the most common challenge that you're facing in terms of actually getting people to take on the certification and how are you addressing it?

EC: When Amy's Kitchen came to us and said, "This is really great. We want to bring Biodynamic products to market. We need forty thousand pounds of Biodynamic tomatoes and we need twenty thousand pounds of Biodynamic onions," we said, "We don't have any." It's not like big Biodynamic farms exist and there's all this raw material sitting around.

For the farmers you are cold calling who have put up a bit of resistance to becoming certified, where do you think most of that resistance is coming from?

EC: Farms and farmers are unique - each one. So it's very hard to give a blanket answer to that question because our biggest success, whether it's a retailer or a processed food company or a farmer, is when we find those that are already values-aligned. That certainly has been the case for the processed food companies - the companies that are ecologically proactive, philanthropic, involved in their own communities, focused on product quality, have their own internal sustainability metrics - those companies are already values-aligned with what we're doing. Many companies are already there. Even if they don't know what Biodynamic is when we talk to them about it, they get it.

I would say the same is true for farmers. Biodynamic is a new old thing. It's really the way their great-grandparents farmed. If you go to a farmer who's really connected to his or her farm, this farm system can really resonate with them. But then there are the physical hurdles. With organic, you can have a 2,000 acre farm and just have ten acres

profit and we represent the whole United States. We need to continue to really educate people - not just farmers, but consultants and investors - so we have a long way to go with that as well. So there are a number of different hurdles, but none that are insurmountable.

In a perfect world, where do you see Demeter going in the future and what is giving you hope that you will achieve that goal?

EC: We're talking about that internally right now - what are our metrics of success? In Germany, ten percent of the organic farmland is Biodynamic. Demeter's vision is to heal the planet through agriculture, so if we're going to really impact climate change, agriculture is the number one way to do that. If you build really healthy farms, they're going to sequester carbon faster than taking every gas-guzzling car off the road. So I would say our number one metric is acreage, and I would like to say that if we follow the metrics, someday ten percent of the organic farmland in the US will become Biodynamic - that would be something that I would feel really good about. It's possible. It might take quite a while, but I think that's definitely possible. 🌱