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Final Report

IAAS seminar 2016: An Agricultural Walk along the Rhine

30th of April 2016 – 7th of May 2016

“An Agricultural Walk along the Rhine” – this was to be the topic of this year’s seminar and it turned out to be even more. Supported by our great sponsors we left Stuttgart for a journey that would take us to three different countries, eight exciting companies, farms and research centers as well as diverse landscapes and cultures. We were joined by students from Germany, Ecuador, Austria, Slovenia, Serbia, Indonesia, Croatia and Norway, 28 in total, who made this a memorable week for IAAS Hohenheim.

Saturday April 30th “Welcome to Germany”

After a long journey we expected the participants to be tired but the excitement to meet new people and to start the seminar predominated. We prepared a little scavenger hunt on the campus area and also a little quiz about Germany. In the evening we took everyone to the “Stuttgarter Frühlingsfest” (spring festival), Europe’s biggest of its kind. We enjoyed some beer and had a little milking competition on robot cows, where the Slovenian girls showed what they’re made of.

Sunday May 1st “Hello Fornbach”

May 1st is an official holiday in Germany with the tradition to take a walk (younger people often add a handcart and some beer to make the hiking a bit easier). A tradition we also followed. On the way to our accommodation in Fornbach we stopped in Nagold, a city on the verge of the black forest. After a short city tour we started our walk upon the hill until we reached the ruins of the castle “Hohennagold”. From up there we enjoyed a great view over the city of Nagold and the valley.



Back in Nagold, we had a short lunch in the park, before we went on to visit orchards (apples, cherries, currant and plums) in the Rhine valley. The owner, Mr. Hönig, told us about the different varieties, growing methods and plant-health measures. We then visited a nearby strawberry farm, where we were given a brief overview about the problems the farms are facing today and in the near future (e.g. the minimum wage in Germany).

KWS-Day, Monday May 2nd “Nitrogen & Protein”



Early in the morning, we began our journey to Sinsheim, to visit the fertilizer spreader manufacturer Rauch. They hold a presentation about “Challenges of global agriculture” and gave us a quick overview about the Rauchs history: The family owned company Rauch farm machinery. After that we started the factory tour, to learn how they manufacture the machines and to see how everything works. It was really impressive to see how modern technology can support the agriculture. Back in the Rauch discussion forum they showed us a video, which explained exactly how the modern fertilizing technology works. Marketing Manager Jens Hille fortified the importance of precise metering and distribution of mineral fertilizers.

After Rauch had provided us with myriad of information and interesting insights Mr. Hille invited us to get active. We had the chance to ask questions and soon a discussion about the changing agriculture and its future began.

Then we went to Forchheim and had the opportunity to visit the agricultural technology center, where we met Dr. Joachim Raupp. He guided us through the center’s testing grounds where lectured about “providing protein plants” followed by a presentation about the protein strategy, a project of the state Baden-Württemberg to increase the cultivation of legumes and the protein yield.

After the presentation we returned to our accommodation in Fornbach and realized a workshop: “How to prepare chesses noodles”, which is typical Swabian plate. Everyone had the opportunity to learn how this delicious dish is made. After dinner we started with some of the presentations by the participants.



Rentenbank-Day, Tuesday May 3th “Special crop & agricultural policy”

On Tuesday we headed to Rastatt and visited an asparagus breeding operation. In the morning we had a speech on asparagus harvesting and modern breeding goals. We recognized that asparagus seemed to be relatively unknown to our participants and were taught that the love to asparagus seems to be a German phenomenon. After the speech we went on to learn more about the different classifications and processing methods and had an insight in the greenhouse, where the asparagus is bred. Afterwards we went to the asparagus field and many participants were encouraged to sting asparagus. At the end we had lunch with some delicious cakes and coffee.

From Rastatt we headed for Strasburg, to the EU- Parliament. We took a look at the installations and had a discussion with a parliamentarian on the Common Agricultural Policy. Agricultural and food policy has remained a central issue within the European Union.



When we finished the program in the EU Parliament we went to the city center, to have a sightseeing tour in Strasbourg. Of course we had to try “tarte flambée”, which is a famous dish in Alsace-Lorraine.

Syngenta-Day, Wednesday May 4th “Research & innovation in agriculture”

This day we got up very early to be on time at our next destination: Basel-Switzerland. There we were welcomed with a friendly snack and visited Urban Farmers (The first commercial aquaponics rooftop farm worldwide)

They held a presentation about the company and we talked about rooftop farming, leading on to more sizeable, and commercially viable business models as well as a tour of the facilities.

Then we headed to the Syngenta research centre, located in Stein. We were cordially received to have lunch. Once we finished lunch, we were introduced to the Syngenta Crop Protection, (Syngenta researchers work in a team-effect profiles for new pesticides and lead biological studies on technical support for market products. The agronomically important crops are the focus). After that we did a tour in “Insect Control” and “Disease Control”. The last tour was in the seed care institute.



After all we returned to our accommodation place, where we had the traditional “trade fair” (every participants provides typical dishes and drinks from their home countries in a cosy atmosphere).

Thursday May 5th “The day off”

After a long day in Switzerland and a long night of intercultural exchange during the trade fair we deserved a day off, yet it was full of program. While some stayed at our accommodation in Fornbach, exploring the surrounding black forest, most of us went to Baden-Baden where we had a city tour. Baden-Baden is considered as one of the most famous and most beautiful spa towns in Germany which we now can confirm. It is famous for its thermal baths, its festival theatres, its park areas and, according to Marlene Dietrich, the world’s most beautiful casino.

After our stay in Baden-Baden we spontaneously had the opportunity to visit a local dairy farm with transparent production. One of our participants, a former intern on that farm, gave us an insight into modern milk-production, including a milking robot, an in-house dairy and direct sales through a milk machine which offers visitors the opportunity to fill their bottles with fresh raw milk. An opportunity we didn’t want to miss – and we weren’t disappointed.

On our way back to the accommodation we made a short break at some waterfalls nearby in the black forest.

Back in Fornbach it seemed that we would spend the rest of the evening at our fireplace but we surprised our participants with a nightly march with torches to a nearby lake.



Friday 6th May “Good Bye Fornbach”

After we jointly cleaned our accommodation we left Fornbach with a heavy heart – our new destination: Hohenheim. We visited Hohenheims most modern greenhouse. There Dr. Helmut Dalitz demonstrated how different plants adapt to different environments.

After that the participants were given some spare time not knowing what they would face in the evening. A final surprise activity which took us to Böblingen, a town near Stuttgart.

In Böblingen we visited the brewing manufactory “Schönbuch”. We were given an insight into the whole brewing process, different types of beer and the history of Schönbuch. At the end of our guided tour we were invited to a beer tasting with beer freshly tapped from the storage tanks. We were allowed to take the “Schönbuch” glasses with us as a final gift.

After the guided tour we stayed at the brewing manufactory Schönbuch and went to the brewing house for dinner. Everybody could choose from various regional dishes and, of course, the Schönbuch beer range. It was a swell ending to our seminar.

However we had mixed feelings knowing that the seminar would be over soon.



Saturday, May 7th “Time to say goodbye”

On Saturday it was time to say good bye. Let’s hope that the proverb “You always meet twice in a lifetime” is true. We all came from different countries for an exciting seminar about agriculture and in the end left as friends, we will truly miss.

Acknowledgement

IAAS Germany would like to thank all participants for their great interest and motivation during the seminar.

Undoubtedly this seminar could not have been arranged without the help of our generous sponsors, whom we would hereby like to thank cordially.



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