

FARMINFIN



Farming concepts and innovative
funding/financing

CASE STUDY

Anton Dapont



INTRO

Anton Dapont is a career changer in agriculture. He founded his farm in 2009 and focused on preserving the old and creating the new. He wants to break new ground in agriculture and bring organic farming back to the forefront. Behind this is a holistic concept of agriculture-nature-animal-human-culture, in which customers and partners are included. The farm succeeds in creating successful regional networks. In addition to the entrepreneurial approach and will of the farm manager, the cornerstone of the farm's success is its cooperative way of working. The Hausberghof is a 350-year-old, listed Rottal four-sided farm. The farmstead itself probably dates back to Roman times and was acquired by Anton Dapont in 2004. In the following years, he first renovated the residential house, then the storage rooms and the barn using old, natural building materials. Among other things, Mr Dapont now offers animal leasing to market his pigs, sheep, cattle and geese.

1. PERSONAL DATA OF THE FARMER



- **Name:** Anton Dapont.
- **Birth year:** 1960.
- **Gender:** Male.
- **Education:** Toolmaker, evening school for mechanical engineering, then technician and industrial foreman, then foreman and additional training in QM, later head of industrial division.
- **Occupation:** Full-time farmer.

2. FARM DATA

- **Farm location:** Hausberghof, Haag 10, 84385 Eggldham.
- **Farm Area in ha:** 20ha, of which 17.5 ha leased.
- **Farm description:** As a career changer in agriculture, the entrepreneur Anton Dapont took a new look at farming. He thought about how he could earn a living based on just a few hectares of land. He thought about contrasting the orientation towards "bigger and more" with an orientation towards direct market access and value creation. He aimed at high-quality niche production in order to keep most of the added value of his products within the company. Today he offers the following at the Hausberghof:

- Animal leasing (cattle, pigs, sheep, geese) including advice to customers from rearing to fattening and slaughter.
- The cooperation with the butcher goes as far as agreeing and selecting an individual cutting plan for the meat.
- Agricultural tourism with farm holidays.
- Bread station with own products such as pork as well as regional organic beer, organic wine.
- Sale of air-dried bacon.
- Cooperation with other organic farms in the region in an animal leasing network.

The individual parts of the operation work together to form a circular farming system.

Currently 20-25 cattle, 45 sheep, 34 pigs and 20 geese are kept. Together with the cooperating partner, approx. 80 pigs are kept within the framework of animal leasing. Art and culture are also an important and integral part of the farm, in addition to operational agriculture. The Slow Food movement as well as regional initiatives such as the Genusgemeinschaft Städter & Bauern are important background. Mr Dapont's wish with the Hausberghof is to preserve old cultural assets and at the same time create something new. He wants to maintain organic farming principles, permaculture, resistant animal breeds, be in harmony with nature, animals and humans, and also use and employ animal leasing for this purpose.

3. FINANCING AND ACCESS TO FUNDING

Due to existing reserves from his previous occupation, the farmer was able to build up and expand the farm part-time and step by step. He and his partner now live entirely on income from farming. To make this possible, he had to create a profitable farm from scratch. He restored the buildings, building on his existing reserves.

Nature, land and animals are at the centre of the farmer's interest. He is close to the Slow Food movement and offers high-quality opportunities to experience the joy of food. To this end, he pioneered an offer to consumers to get involved in production as early as possible: animal leasing. The term is now well established, even if it is somewhat misleading. Animal leasing is, in fact, contract fattening. The consumer buys a piglet, a sheep, a calf or a young goose, pays for the care of the animal which is in Mr Dapont's care from then on. Mr Dapont is very cautious about the further development of the business. He does not want to grow too fast or accelerate processes. Slow and organic growth suits him and his customers, and is also an important key for communication and success. People and potential customers are looking for such islands of retreat from the modern hectic world. Customers come close to agriculture on the farm through its products and processes and appreciate the products. The entrepreneur's work is highly valued and his customers are mostly long-term customers. This is the result of the high quality of the products and the relationship with the farmer, his work and his business. Within the animal leasing offer, the farmer wants to grow exclusively through quality and exclusivity (special breeds, special husbandry). This has achieved the following:

- Monthly stable and fixed income
- Customer loyalty
- Appreciation
- Supra-regional attention and imitators, which Mr Dapont explicitly and actively supports

The entrepreneur is very satisfied with what has been achieved.

“Think about independence from the market and trade, and whether you have possibilities in the network or in cooperation to decouple profitably from the world market and to find market accesses together that are lucrative!”

“Think about working with others before investing yourself without limits!”

“Work with society and its desires! Think about the Slow Food movement and the thoughts in it!”

“Think about the quality of your products! And what exactly you can do with this special breed and special product quality!”

4. TRAINING NEEDS AND CONCLUSION

■ **Training experiences and gaps:** As a career changer in agriculture, he was not “pre-programmed” with regard to setting up the farm. He was open about how to plan and what he could expect from his farm.

Through his former profession, he had very good knowledge and expertise in trade. He knew the right approaches. He knows that office work is an important part of running a successful agricultural business.

Anton Dapont is very well educated - off-farm. Besides that, his learning was based on learning by doing and above all on observing animals and nature on the farm.

The farmer is very strong in customer communication and he has a good relationship with the media. So it was easy for him to generate interest for his innovative ideas not only on a regional level. He offers openness and transparency in all his operational processes.

The farmer sees the following success factors for his concept:

- High standards and ambition
- Curiosity and creativity
- Patience and perseverance
- Target orientation
- Communication and transparency (between partners and towards customers)

In order to use an innovative means of financing, he advises other farmers to exchange ideas directly with existing farms or with proven and experienced experts.

It is fundamental for a successful farmer today to have very good knowledge and skills both agriculturally and commercially.

The closer the farmer is to the customer with their product or means of financing, the more important it is to maintain excellent relationships based on communication, openness and transparency.

► **Final considerations:** Anton Dapont had a clear picture of the great challenge of gradually building up a business in a niche market. Also of what it means to produce high quality, to communicate it and to involve customers as well as business partners. Today, the operation is also economically sustainable and possible in the long term.

The overall goal and success factor is to build trust with customers and bring them closer to organic farming. This can be achieved with an open culture and communication (analogue and digital). The entrepreneur wants to strengthen the understanding for humane animal husbandry and organic farming and its added value.

In marketing, it is important to be close to the customer and to incorporate the customer's wishes. This applies to the life of the leased animals as well as to slaughtering and butchering at the customer's request.

Cooperation with the butcher offers great added value here and is just as suitable for differentiation on the market as special breeds and special animal husbandry.

Within the framework of agritourism and on-farm gastronomy, organic farming can be experienced at first hand, or you can simply enjoy a holiday in the countryside.

Just as he does with his customers, Mr. Dapont maintains a very open approach and the greatest possible transparency in his cooperation with farmers, butchers and regional producers.

In addition to the already existing cooperations with other organic farms in the region for pig fattening, Mr. Dapont built up a larger network in the area of animal leasing.

He has a clear picture of the great challenge it is to build a business in a niche market. Also of what it means to produce high quality, to communicate it, and to involve customers as well as business partners.



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Social media

Facebook: [@farminfin](https://www.facebook.com/farminfin)
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Project webpage

www.farminfin.eu

PROJECT COORDINATOR



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