

## VOLUNTEERING

Corporate social responsibility is a key priority at VALUEworks. Both as a firm, and as individual employees, we lend support to several charitable initiatives. In 2009, VALUEwork's employees experienced firsthand the difficulties (and rewards!) of life as an organic farmer. As many surveys have documented, manual labour for farms is difficult to source, very expensive and yet imperative to success. Bearing this in mind, we embraced the opportunity to extend our charitable work into the farming sector.

In August 2009, we spent two days in Steg, in the Zürcher Oberland, performing a variety of labour intensive farming tasks. Our involvement in Steg was hugely successful – both from the perspective of the farm and from that of VALUEworks' employees. In fact, it was so successful that we decided to continue our farm volunteering in 2010, returning to the Jacober family in the Zürcher Oberland.



A report by Janet Palmiero and Danja Lande

The Jacobers, a large family with nine children, run a certified organic farm in Steg. Both friendly and dynamic, they manage a successful enterprise and offer warm hearted hospitality to all who visit! The Steg farm is located on difficult, run down land and the Jacobers have worked hard to renovate and make the farm productive. Traditionally, their key product has been berries but more recently, the Jacobers are attempting to diversify into dairy.

This diversification into dairy offered VALUEworks' employees a pleasant surprise when we all arrived at the farm. Early that morning a beautiful and valuable Jersey calf was born. We were given the honour of naming it and after much deliberation we went for an Italian slant. It was a wonderful start to the morning witnessing „Luca“ drinking his first milk out of a PET bottle and undoubtedly worth braving the cold, wet weather for!



After marvelling at nature's awesome power and fortified by hot coffee and fresh „Zopf“ we got down to the day's business.

Initially, we were split into two groups. The task of the first group was to begin to prepare a vineyard for the harsh winter. The Jacobers hope to produce grape juice, firstly for their own consumption but with the view to commercial production. Some of the grape vines are young, having been planted in 2009 on a very steep

slope some distance from the farm house. The vines are extremely delicate and to give them maximum chance of growth, it is necessary to attach the tendrils to supporting wires so that they do not snap under the weight of snow. Each small branch must therefore be wound around a support and then fastened with a cable binding.

We set to work in the rather inclement weather. As we worked in the wet, cold conditions, we gained a new appreciation of the



difficulty of outdoor manual tasks in Swiss winter weather. While attaching computer cabling with cable bindings is comfortable in a warm office, the similar task of attaching recalcitrant vine tendrils onto supporting wires balancing on a steep slope in a chilly wind with water dripping down your neck is a different proposition altogether!



Some years ago plans were laid for a small kiwi plantation on a slope in the same area as the vineyard. A spring is located further up this hill and our task last year was to dig an irrigation trench running from the spring to a reservoir at the bottom of the hill. Last year this task took 10 of us a day and a half to finish and the successful completion thereof

was viewed by all with great satisfaction (albeit through a haze of hand blisters and muscle ache).

Unfortunately, this year's job for the second group did not result in a similar level of satisfaction. We discovered that – despite proper planning permission having been granted for the kiwi plantation – its location caused concern for local hunters, who felt that the fences interfered with the free movement of wildlife in the area. Due to these concerns Beat has had to relocate the entire plantation and hopes to replant on another smaller piece of land closer to the farm house. One



advantage of this though is that the land can once more be used for grazing which will benefit the dairy production.

The task of dismantling the irrigation system fell to the second group of volunteers. This required teams of two working on each irrigation line.



Ralph, Horse whisperer.

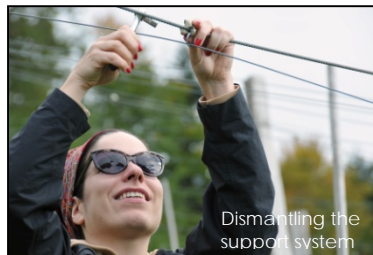
One volunteer removed the down irrigation pipes from the overhead feeder pipe. The other unclipped the bindings which were attaching the feeder pipe to the wire supports. Both these tasks required a certain amount of force and rapid reaction time to avoid the stale water from the overhead feeder pipe raining down on us. As

always team work expedited the process and by lunchtime we had removed all the down pipes and dismantled the overhead feeder pipes.

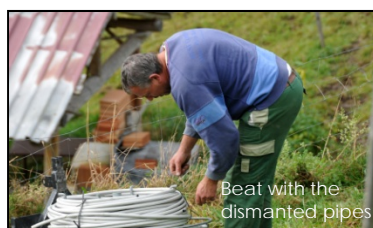
Lunch was, as always with this generous family, a fantastic meal. All the unaccustomed physical labour had given rise to very hearty appetites and the "Spätzli-Gratin" and steaks disappeared rapidly. By the end of the meal everybody was strengthened and dry enough for the second part of the day!

This time all of us went back to the plantation and finished dismantling the support system for the kiwis. All screws had to be unwound and removed.

Ralph, Andreas and Heiko went ahead and loosened them and the rest of us followed unwinding and taking all the screws and nuts off. At the same time Beat rolled up the water pipe, which we had released in the morning.

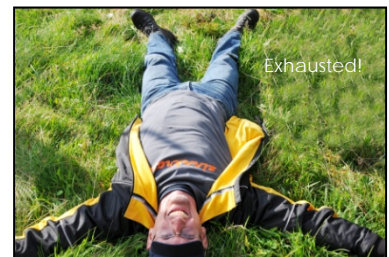


Dismantling the support system



Beat with the dismantled pipes

In the early evening, after finishing our task, we went back to the farmer's house, where we were served with beer.



Exhausted!

Most of us bought some fresh farmer's cheese and eggs before making our way to the same restaurant at which we had dined the previous year. The whole team enjoyed a delicious meal at the Bleiche Beiz and another successful volunteering day came to an end.



Fresh cheese, butter and eggs to take home!