

Public relation work

Farm channel “My KuhTube”

Farm: **“Amos Venema farm”**
Location: **Jemgum (Ostfriesland),**
Germany



Photo: NDR

Background

Amos Venema’s farm is a dairy farm located in Ostfriesland in Northern Germany above 2 Meter sea level. It is a family-owned farm with 171 dairy cows located in a grassland region. About 56 ha of farm land is in a bird reserve and approx. 35 ha of grassland is in a water conservation reserve. The restrictions of the nature reserve challenge the grassland management due to a restricted grazing period, defined cutting dates and the presence of geese, who decline the grass yield of the first and second cut. After Amos came back from an Australia trip and he was passionate about to show his daily work to the public. At Australian farms it is common to have webcams inside the shed for animal control and to provide the opportunity of following the live broadcast from the shed to the public. Amos created different ideas how to connect town people with the daily farm life. One of his ideas was to generate a version of the international TV-show “Big Brother” on his farm. The contestants live on the farm and do the daily work. The contestants should experience the real farm life aside the idyllic farm expectations. However, there is no insurance that accepts no liability, so it was not feasible.

Due to communication barriers between the urban and rural population Amos and the region's dairy industry association (Landesvereinigung der Milchwirtschaft Niedersachsen e.V.) developed a video channel on YouTube. “My KuhTube” shows twice a week farm videos made by one of 18 dairy farmers, who are involved in the project. The videos are about their daily work and interesting

farming topics. The main aim of “My KuhTube” is to strengthen the relationship between farmers and consumers, to inform the consumers about modern dairy farming and to give them an authentic understanding of the daily work on farm and about the farmer.

Detailed description

Amos Venema started in 2013 with making videos about his work on the family farm for the YouTube channel “My KuhTube”. He is seen as a pioneer for agricultural public relation in Germany and embodies and represents the farmers. Besides the videos, he opens his farm gates for visitors and holds presentations on different events. Amos is passionate about informing people about his profession and his vision is to send positive and realistic messages to the public. In Amos point of view are daily positive messages from farmers more successful than an open-farm day once a year. The “My KuhTube” videos are uploaded twice a week and the consumer have the possibility to accompany the farmer’s everyday life. The farmer gets an identity and the distance between consumer and farmer can be overcome.

In the beginning of the project each farm, who is participating got a video equipment from the region's dairy industry association (Landesvereinigung der Milchwirtschaft Niedersachsen e.V.). A media law contract safeguards every farm, who is making videos for the channel. In addition, every “My KuhTube”- farm has participated at the milk award of the region's dairy industry association (Landesvereinigung der Milchwirtschaft Niedersachsen e.V.) and has been checked in advance.

The videos are uploaded on www.mykuhtube.de and a short portrait of each farmer is shown on the webpage to personalize with the farmer. The videos topics are chosen by the farmers themselves. Amos made videos about the cow release in spring, the milking machine, silage making, cows on grass or the milk market in general. To ensure medial security for the farmers every video raw material is professionally edited.

Results

The video channel “My KuhTube” exists since 2013 and more farmers has followed and make videos for the channel or have been motivated to agricultural PR work. The project “My KuhTube” was a door-opener for more PR projects. “Dialog Milch” and many TV and radio interviews followed due to a successful implementation and an increasing interest from the public. The “My KuhTube”-farmers are known in Germany and receive a lot of feedback. Besides the positive feedback they also get negative feedback. Their statements are spread quickly and the need to get used to stand in public. In general, acceptance of farmers in public has been improved and consumers and farmers engaged more often in dialogue. Consumers are interested in the daily work on a farm and online blogs have a great demand and positive feedback. Amos noticed that more trainee and students request for a farm internship on his farm, but there is still a long way to go to provide a realistic picture about modern farming.

Adoption criteria

To generate a similar concept of sharing agricultural knowledge to public it is important to understand that a PR project do not need to reach every person. It is already efficient to reach a few persons, who spread the word in their personal environment. Further, it is necessary to ensure security for the farmer’s videos (media law contract, professional filtering of the videos). It is easier to start a project together with an association, who manage and spread the videos. Every small and realistic agricultural PR is important for the profession.

Future prospects

In future the farmer would like to implement a permanent agricultural TV channel and hope that more farmers have the courage to invest time in PR work. Further, it is essential that the farmers keep up with the times and are open-minded for new communication ways with the consumer.