

Five Questions for Heinrich Bucher, Managing Director of Proviande

1. What are Proviande's main responsibilities and what advantages do they bring to the individual organisations operating along the value-adding chain of the Swiss meat industry?

As the sole platform for everyone involved in meat as a product in Switzerland, Proviande unites the producers, livestock dealers, retailers, importers, exporters and processors of meat animals, meat and by-products within one organisation.

Proviande's scope of responsibilities includes neutral quality classification of meat carcasses in slaughterhouses and of meat animals at the meat markets, the organisation and management of public meat animal markets, marketing communications for Swiss meat sales promotion at home and abroad, the compilation and publication of meat statistics and the provision of services to members of the industry.

Proviande offers the Swiss meat industry a neutral platform in which current problems can be discussed and consensus found based on the integration of all its members' requirements. Not only do industry members profit from our services (for instance, the promotion of quality assurance) but also the end consumers, who receive a high-quality end product. Moreover, Proviande is the central organisation and contact point for all issues and questions involving the Swiss meat animal and meat markets as well as meat as a foodstuff.

2. What goals has Proviande set for export marketing and what role does the possibility of a trade agreement between Switzerland and the European Union play in your planning?

Proviande has created a platform under the umbrella brand of "Swiss Meat" to support the export activities of the Swiss meat industry with a wide range of marketing and sales promotion measures. The positioning and marketing of the "Swiss Meat" brand is intended to continuously boost sales of Swiss meat specialities outside its home borders over the coming years.

In particular against the background of a possible free trade agreement with the EU in the agricultural and food industry sector, Proviande has been working actively since 2006 towards building up sales promotion measures for Swiss meat products at international level. The working group set up by Proviande expects that protective customs duties will have been radically reduced, or perhaps even abolished, by 2015. While Swiss meat products would then have additional sales markets abroad, less expensive import products would at the same time, however, also gradually become available on the Swiss market. Proviande is, therefore, not wasting any time in actively getting prepared for a possible opening of the borders.

3. How important is the German market and what expectations does the Swiss meat industry have of it?

Proviande's export marketing activities focus on the target countries of Germany, France, Italy and Austria. The industry has agreed that the main focus is to be placed on Germany. Germany is a very large market characterised by a highly developed sense of quality in our targeted customer segments, a significant interest in regional products, a high level of import willingness and a pronounced consciousness of foodstuff safety. The German consumers should be made aware of and appreciate Swiss meat as a high-quality product.

4. What exporting activities has Proviande initiated to promote market entry into Germany and what does it expect of Proviande's appearance at the ANUGA trade show?

Our joint delegation at ANUGA demonstrates the industry's heightened efforts in the area of export market entry. Proviande's appearance at the Anuga will be accompanied by industry-specific media and PR work in Germany and complemented by background information on Swiss meat and by its international homepage, www.swiss-meat.com.

ANUGA Meat is the leading international trade show of the meat and sausage industry and, consequently, is the ideal platform for building up contacts with the top national and international decision makers from the fields of commerce and catering. Proviande supports the Swiss meat industry in setting up contacts and, in making a joint appearance, heightens awareness of Swiss meat specialities. At the same time, Proviande is positioning itself and promoting awareness of the organisation among the international meat purchasers and trade journalists of Switzerland's neighbouring countries.

5. What are Switzerland's characteristic meat specialities and what is special about them?

In Switzerland, family-run farms operate in accordance with the Swiss "Proof of Ecological Performance" standard for environmentally friendly agricultural practices. The stringent Swiss animal protection code with its independent control instruments ensures that farm animals are fed correctly and kept in conditions appropriate to their species and wellbeing. Animal transport times are short as the slaughterhouses are distributed evenly throughout the major animal production areas. Only choice quality raw materials are used in the production of Swiss meat specialities. The origin of all meat used can be tracked back to the source farm thanks to a central animal transport database. The Swiss national food code (equivalent to EU food legislation) and independent control measures guarantee the safeness and high-quality standards of Swiss meat products.

The Swiss bestsellers include Bündnerfleisch and cured ham, not to mention the traditional veal-based St. Galler bratwurst and Cervelat:

- Bündnerfleisch is the most typical and popular of all Swiss meat specialties. Choice quality pieces of meat are dried in the pristine mountain air of Graubünden (or Grisons, as it is also known) and preserved by natural curing.
- Cured ham is not quite as strong in aroma as Bündnerfleisch and is finer in consistency. It is not smoked. From the selection of the correct ingredients to the ripening process that takes place over many months, skilled craftsmanship is the decisive factor for the flavour of the finished product.
- The St. Galler veal sausage was first mentioned in writing in 1438. Since then, the original recipe, based on veal, bacon, spices and fresh milk, has changed only minimally. In contrast to other bratwursts, the St. Galler is not served with mustard.
- Cervelat is the national sausage of Switzerland. Whether speared onto a self-carved skewer for roasting over a camp fire or sliced into slivers as the main ingredient of the Wurstsalat, a cold sausage salad unique to Switzerland, this boiled meat sausage will never be missing any Swiss fridge or rucksack.

A list of all Swiss meat specialities is available at www.swiss-meat.com.