

♦ Rural Europe – Modern Farming on Traditional Ground ♦

South Tyrol
South Sweden

Press Kit



Two-part documentary series about rural Europe
by Susann Reichenbach and Anne Mesecke

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Agriculture and Rural Development



Hoferichter & Jacobs
Film- und Fernsehproduktionsgesellschaft mbH

10119 Berlin, Liniestr. 44 □ 04277 Leipzig, Scheffelstr. 31a □ 17489 Greifswald, Goethestr. 2
Tel./ Fax: 030 - 3087 4560 / -66 □ info@hoferichterjacobs.de □ www.hoferichterjacobs.de

♦ About the Films

„Rural Europe – Modern Farming on Traditional Ground“ is a journey of discovery, following the traces of European agriculture as we know it today. The series comes to know the people and regions that have been shaped by agriculture for centuries – and in which agriculture still determines a yet modern life. In the course of this filmic journey, the two documentaries first and foremost raise one question: In the 21st century, what is the future of agriculture.

Alp meadows in blossom, endless orchards, romantic villages – this is what tourists know and love about South Tyrol. But this agricultural dream is the product of hard work. Farming here is a constant practical test: the main part of this region consists of high and rocky mountains. But the farmers have found their niches and managed to



turn this once poor district into one of the richest parts of Europe. Everyone with their own methods: the mountain farmer family in the National Park Stilfser Joch, the mountaineer Reinhold Messner on his self-sufficient farm, the strawberry farmers on the Martell Valley, the winegrowers on the Kalterer Lake and many others. With spectacular pictures the film shows their stories – without which South Tyrol would not be what it is today.

The garden of Sweden is located in the southernmost part of the country: Scania. Seen from the air, pasture areas, fruit plantations and forests stretch over the whole land like a patchwork rug – a land which already Swedish fiction figure Nils Holgersson crossed on the backs of wild geese. The fertile land in the south, proverbially the “anteroom of sweet life”, is at the same time one of the most diverse landscapes in Sweden. Author Anne Mesecke goes on a journey of discovery through a cultural landscape which has been shaped by human beings for more than 7,000 years.

South Tyrol

Alp meadows in blossom, endless orchards, romantic villages – this is what tourists know and love about South Tyrol. But this agricultural dream is the product of hard work. Farming here is a constant practical test: the main part of this region consists of high and rocky mountains. But the farmers have found their niches and managed to turn this once poor district into one of the richest parts of Europe.



Mountain farmers have been settling on the hillsides of the Alps since the Middle Ages. Just like the ancestors of Edi Stricker. At 1,950 metres height in the national park Stilfser Joch below the highest mountain of South Tyrol, his farmyard “Stallwieshof” is one of Europe’s highest corn yards. The 73-year-old mountain farmer works the yard with his wife and sons.

Even in the Middle Ages. The first farmers settled up here. They fled feudal landowners and frequent floods during spring time down in the valley. In the heights of the mountains, they were completely on their own with nobody to help which is why mountain farmyards had been existing in entire seclusion and isolation disconnected from the developments in the valley for centuries. This fact only changed in the last decades when the government realised their importance for landscaping and, as a result, decided to provide financial assistance to prevent the farmers from migrating. Ever since Edi and his farmyard “Stallwieshof” were connected to the valley by constructing a street, life up here has picked up speed. Tourism has turned out to be an important mainstay for the Strickers because they are able to keep financing their “Stallwieshof” this way. Mountaineer and alpinist Reinhold Messner is convinced that the beauty of South Tyrol is due to the hard work of the mountain farmers. As a retirement plan and for landscape preservation, Messner bought and refurbished a left self-catering yard below his Castle Juval.



Only 6% of South Tyrol’s area are located in fertile river valleys. The most famous valley is Etschtal, marshy and, therefore, hardly suitable for agriculture in the past. Since the 19th century, the river Etsch has been gradually straightened. Drains and dikes are now running through the valley. The valley has developed into one of Europe’s most important fruit-producing areas. Every tenth apple we eat comes from here. But the success comes with a price: monoculture. Most farmers produce the modest Golden Delicious. Apple farmer Karl Luggin adds red colour to the yellow game. He was courageous enough to

plant an apple which seemed to contradict all rules of the market: red and so sour that you can hardly eat it. But Luggin manufactured the apples in a new way – as a result, he has more customers than he can handle.



The love for their homeland and their will to try out new ways has always driven the farmers of South Tyrol: not only the farmers in the mountain villages and the apple farmers but also the strawberry farmers in the valley Martelltal and the vintagers at Kallterer See (Lake Caldaro). Each of them in their own way. The film tells their stories – and South Tyrol would not be the same without them today.



South Sweden

The garden of Sweden is located in the southernmost part of the country: Scania. Seen from the air, pasture areas, fruit plantations and forests stretch over the whole land like a patchwork rug – a land which already Swedish fiction figure Nils Holgersson crossed on the backs of wild geese. Scandinavia's oldest settlement zone had been a continuous apple of discord between Sweden and Denmark in the Middle Ages, for fertile farm land is rare in the north which mainly consists of forested gneiss and granite ridges. The fertile land in the south, proverbially the "anteroom of sweet life", is at the same time one of the most diverse landscapes in Sweden. Here, fertile loess soils of the southeast are brought into contact with gneiss soils of the Fennoscandian Shield, the rocky forerunners of the Scandinavian woods. Between these two extremes, steppe and heathland run like a sandy division line from the east to the south coast. Nowhere does diversity show itself as clearly as in the east of Scania, the area of Österlen.



In the poorest parts of Österlen, the steppe-like pasture areas, young farmer's son Henric Åkesson starts a peculiar project at the end of the 19th century. In the brushwood of the hillsides of Stenshuvud, a distinctive mountain ridge at the Baltic Sea coast, he discovers wild apple trees – crooked, small, the apples inedible. How is it that apples, the fruits of the rich at that time, grow on pasture soils which are usually used for animals? What Åkesson does not know: the apple trees can use layers rich of chalk and minerals, located at a lower level. Furthermore, the maritime climate prolongs the vegetation period which is much longer here than in the rest of Sweden. Stubbornly, Åkesson begins to live his dream of an apple empire in the north along the coastline, fundamentally changing the landscape. Today, about 90% of all Swedish apples grow on the soils of Österlen but due to the liberalisation of the European agricultural market, the northern apple empire must compete with fruits from sun-kissed Southern Europe.



The film explores a cultural landscape which has been shaped by human beings for more than 7,000 years. It traces Henric Åkesson and the first apple farmers at Stenshuvud. But Sweden is much more than just apple farming today. The film accompanies farmers who try out new ways for a transition to a sustainable agriculture in one of Europe's most traditional agricultural areas. New agriculture – is it in the hands of the apple growers or in the modernisation and enlargement of old plantations? Do we find it at Bollerup, a long-standing agricultural school which has been educating young farmers for the past 100 years? Or are unconventional visions the key, like those of a young farmer family breeding old Swedish domestic animals and distributing the meat to gourmet restaurants in Malmö and Stockholm?



◆ Crew

Crew of „South Tyrol“

Script & Director	Susann Reichenbach
Director of Photography	Andreas Stahl
Sound	Thomas Funk
Video Editing	Dirk Seliger
Assistance Video Editing	Daniel Mischke, Christoph Sturm, Holger Tauer
Research	Hannah Roof, Eva Siebenhühner, Theresa Lorenz

Crew of „South Sweden“

Script & Director	Anne Mesecke
Director of Photography	Guido Kilbert
Sound	Thomas Weber, Kristof Kannegießer
Video Editing	Thomas Chapman
Assistance Video Editing	Christoph Sturm, Clemens Barth, Stefan Buschner, Daniel Mischke
Research	Theresa Lorenz, Peter Effenberg, Birgit Rasch, Michaela Kebschull

Crew of the Series:

Music	Moritz Denis, Eike Hosenfeld, Tim Stanzel
Narrator	Torsten Michaelis
Sound Mixer	Konterfei GmbH
Project Management	Karin Leske
Line Producer	Niki Kraus, Anne Stephan
Production Management	Marco Voss
Producer	Olaf Jacobs

◆ Produktion Data

Title	Rural Europe – Modern Farming on Traditional Ground 1. South Tyrol 2. South Sweden
Shooting Locations	South Tyrol: Berghof Stallwies at Stilfser Joch, Laas im oberen Etschtal, Martelltal, Schloss Juval im Schnalstal, Barbian, Eppan an der Weinstraße, Kaserill-Alm bei Villnöß, Hafling South Sweden: Haväng, Bollerup/Scania, Rörum, Juleboda, Stenshuvud Nationalpark, Österlen
Shooting Period	2012
Format	HD Cam
Length	2 * 52 Min.
Language Options	English, German

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◆ Contact



Hoferichter & Jacobs
Film- und Fernsehproduktionsgesellschaft mbH

Berlin – Leipzig - Greifswald

Producer: Olaf Jacobs
e-mail: info@hoferichterjacobs.de
Tel.: +49 (0)30 / 3087 4560

Press/Marketing: Ringo Rösener
e-mail: r.roesener@hoferichterjacobs.de
Tel.: +49 (0)341 / 2413 850

10119 Berlin, Germany – Linienstr. 44
Tel.: +49 (0)30 / 308 745 60
Fax: +49 (0)30 / 308 745 66

04277 Leipzig, Germany – Scheffelstr. 31a
Tel.: +49 (0)341 / 2413 850
Fax: +49 (0)341 / 2413 851

17489 Greifswald, Germany – Goethestr. 2
Tel.: +49 (0)3834 / 775 228
Fax: +49 (0)3834 / 775 229

www.natur-doku.de
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