

Involvement of the Food industry in Food study programmes at BOKU

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Food Science and Technology education involving the Food Industry is following a bi-directional concept. On the one hand, the integration of industry representatives into food science and technology lecture of bachelor and master programs is seen as an essential part. It is the aim, expose students to the challenges that post-graduates are facing when entering their professional life but also to bring the industry in early contact to the food science and technology professionals of tomorrow.

In Bachelor and Master programmes especially optional technical subjects like cereal technology, sugar technology, brewery technology, wine production, fruit and vegetable processing, packaging technology, technology of chocolate and confectionary and automatic identification technology but also subjects like toxicology, food law and economics are lectured by experienced senior experts from the industry. They are fully responsible for design, conduction and assessment. Another option which is frequently used is to invite experts from the industry to give a lecture on a special topic within a course, e.g. a 1.5h lecture on crisis management or continual improvement within the course quality management to let the students know what is really done in the industry, what are the challenges and outcomes.

On the other hand, the educational commitment of BOKU also includes the conduction of training courses for food science and technology professionals that are already in their job within the food industry. Such qualification seminars are organized as education programs consisting of up to ten full day sessions spread over the period of 6 months taking place at the university facilities and being executed by university staff. The course program is aligned with the industry delegates beforehand and is meant to refresh the basic knowledge in the food science and technology area as well as to provide information on recent developments in the area. It is the aim to create an environment where the professionals, that are usually busy with fulfilling their daily tasks, get the necessary impulses in order to trigger innovation in their business. Each daily program consists of a seminar like lecture providing the platform for knowledge transfer and discussion as well as a hands-on practical part in the lab and pilot plant where participants get an insight into new technologies and methods.

The main objective of this program is to facilitate small and medium size enterprises the access to new technologies and innovative concepts and to create long term relationships between industry and university with benefits for both sides. Funding for such programs can be obtained by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency. These qualification seminars are a first step within the established program on developing research and innovation competences for small and medium size enterprises. Subsequent activities include the establishment of qualification networks which are medium-term collaborations between academia and industry aiming at competence development beyond pure research projects.

Experiences and learnings from the organizers as well as feedback of the participants resulting from the two concepts described above will be shared and discussed during this presentation.