



# ALOIS LAGEDER

## BIODYNAMICS IN THE VINEYARDS OF ALOIS LAGEDER

*Biodynamics (from the Greek βίος and δῖνamikòs) is an organic farming method that is based on the principles of Anthroposophy. It understands the vineyard, the grapes, the soil, the natural setting, and all the organisms that live within it to function as a highly complex ecosystem, and as interdependent component parts of the universe as a whole. A vintner working in harmony with the forces, rhythms and cycles of nature improves the health of the soil, increases the vitality of the grapevines, and thus, as well, the quality of the grapes he harvests. His goal in using this agricultural method is to bring his grapevines into the greatest possible harmony with the specific conditions offered by the vineyard, thereby producing authentic wines that give outmost expression to their particular origin and unique terroir. Indeed experience has shown that the wines produced from biodynamically cultivated grapes are particularly well-balanced and harmonious, with increased levels of complexity, expressivity and individual character.*

Holistic thinking and sustainability are the guidelines for all the activities of the Alois Lageder winery, in the cellars as well as in the vineyards, and the use of environmentally protective methods in every aspect of viticulture and wine production dates back for more than two decades. Even in this earlier phase, our vineyards were always cared for in natural ways according to the principles and methods of sustainable agriculture, in which pest control and the prevention of diseases is first of all based on natural remedies. At Alois Lageder we first used organic and biodynamic farming methods in the early 1990s.

The success of these experiences encouraged us to convert all of the winery's estate vineyards to biodynamic viticulture, in three steps, between 2004 and 2006. In practical terms, this amounted to complete and consequent renunciation of chemically synthesized fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides, in addition to the rejection of all artificial fertilisers, even in cases of emergency. To our great satisfaction, this conversion took place without major problems or losses, as after years of sustainable cultivation, the grapevines and the soil were well prepared for this next step. With the 2007 harvest biodynamically grown grapes from 22 hectares were produced according to certified Demeter standards. All of the Alois Lageder's estate vineyards, some 63 hectares, will qualify for Demeter approval in 2009.

We have also initiated to a pilot project for the various other growers that supply the winery with grapes: a center for guidance and the teaching of biodynamic viticulture.

In the next few months, Alois Lageder will release the winery's first two wines — a red and a white Estate Cuvée — with Demeter certification. They bear the seal 'βδ', for the Greek βίος and δῖνamikòs, and are made respectively from the winery's best red and white grapes and from its own biodynamically cultivated vineyards.

Other in-process projects include the certification of other wines of the Alois Lageder production, in the product-groups of the Estate Wines and the Single Vineyard Selections (Löwengang, Römigberg, Coreth, Benefizium Porer, Lindenburg, Am Sand).

Demeter certification has existed since 1928 and is awarded, by the independent Demeter organisation, to biodynamic products. Demeter certification is achieved through the strict observance and thorough testing of rigorous agricultural guidelines.



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## BIODYNAMICS

Biodynamics is a holistic system of sustainable, organic agriculture with the goal of producing better tasting foods that offer a level of quality, wholesomeness and nourishment unachievable by conventional production methods. This goal is pursued primarily by improving the fertility and health of the soil on which crops grow. Strengthened by such practices, the vines are able to protect themselves from illnesses and parasites and to yield high-quality grapes.

There are two different methods of procedure in ecological or organic farming of vineyards: biological-organic viticulture and biological-dynamic viticulture, also known as Biodynamics (from the Greek βίος for life and δῆναμικὸς for motion). Biodynamic agriculture is based on the principles of Anthroposophy, as researched and formulated by the Austrian philosopher-scientist Rudolf Steiner. In 1924 in the lectures and essays that appeared in his volume on *'The Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture'* Steiner presented his concepts of agriculture close to nature and with an inter-relationship between nature and the cosmos.

Just as in biological-organic farming, Biodynamics first demands complete rejection of artificial fertilisers and synthetic means of parasite and disease control. But biodynamic agriculture also goes much further, and its premises and implications are much more rigorous: Biodynamics looks at the growth and development of plants holistically, just as it does with human beings and animals. Everything — including agricultural practices — is a part of a living organism and subject to nature's forces and processes, both earthly and cosmic. A farm run on biodynamic principles is a unique, living individuality and a self-sustaining ecological system. Species-appropriate animal husbandry, which plays a key role in caring for the soil and assuring the health of vegetation, as well as the health and well-being of all who live and work on the farm are paramount. In summary biodynamic farming also demands a mode of sustainable management, in tune with ecological and socio-economic principles.

The Alois Lageder Winery is a member of the Alto Adige chapter of the *'Biodynamic Agricultural Association'*, which brings together enterprises in the fields of farming, animal husbandry, viticulture and fruit orchards. The members of the group are in constant and energetic contact with one another, and are engaged in common projects and undertakings in the service of a shared goal. The group hopes to continue to grow and aims to form a solid and permanent ecologic unit in the Southern Tyrol region.

## BIODYNAMICS IN THE ALOIS LAGEDER VINEYARDS - Goals and Motivations

The Alois Lageder Winery stands for the highest quality and a sustainable, holistic approach to viticulture and winemaking - terms we understand as interdependent. Biodynamics plays a central role in a sustainably managed winery. It represents the most rigorous and self-monitoring way of respectfully working in the vineyards, and taking into account, the essence, forces and rhythms of nature, in order to bring the grapevines into harmony with both the earth and the cosmos.

As early as the beginning of the 1990s, this notion of holistic entrepreneurship also included the planning and construction of a new winemaking facility, cellars and administrative building based on principles of sustainable architecture and energy efficiency, and featuring the most extensive possible use of natural construction materials. All available means for energy conservation were employed, and the building has always made use of alternative, locally available energy sources.



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## BIODYNAMICS IN THE ALOIS LAGEDER VINEYARDS - Goals and Motivations (continued)

Alois Lageder sees sustainable agriculture and commerce as an expression of respect for nature, appreciation of the environment, and responsibility toward fellow citizens and future generations. Biodynamics is integral to the company's overall corporate culture and identity. But it is also seen as a great leap forward.

- **Protection of the Environment: dealing with nature respectfully**
  - o Soil: increased fertility and vitality through the stimulation of humus formation.
  - o Water: improvement of water storage capacity of the vineyard soils.
  - o Maintenance and promotion of biodiversity in the vineyards.
  
- **Wine Quality**
  - o Style: expressing *terroir*, authenticity and a sense of the place.
  - o Taste: harmony, balance, elegance.
  - o Integrity, pleasurability, tolerability, wholesomeness.
  - o More balanced growth of the vines and ripening of the grapes, with lower levels of sugar concentration at their full physiological maturity.
  
- **Economic Sustainability**
  - o Sustainable production as a factor of development, and respect for the quality of the future.
  
- **Climate Protection**
  - o The grapevines react far better to the "climate chaos" of constantly changing and extreme conditions resulting from global warming.
  - o Biodynamic farming has positive effects on both the micro- and meso-climate.
  
- **Social Responsibility**
  - o Greater opportunity in society at large, as well as within the company; motivated collaborators; fairer and more respectful treatment in every field of activity.



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## BIODYNAMICS IN THE ALOIS LAGEDER VINEYARDS - Fundamentals

- All of the Alois Lageder estate vineyards (some 63 hectares) have been fully converted, since 2004, to biodynamic agriculture, as have the wineries fruit orchards (3 hectares).
- Biodynamics is the Alois Lageder winery's alternative and *raison d'être* with respect to conventional agriculture, and a testament to a decade-long proven mode of agriculture.
- The world-wide organised Demeter association controls the observance of biodynamic guidelines for agricultural and production methods and certifies the sustainability of all their various phases.
- In 2009, Alois Lageder releases the first two wines produced from biodynamically certified grapes.
- Biodynamics is an integral part of the management structure of the Alois Lageder winery. Ecologically sustainable agriculture is seen as the only natural choice for a producer of quality wines.
- Alois Lageder views the successful conversion of the winery to biodynamic principles as a milestone of creative thinking. As compared to conventional viticulture, Biodynamics is understood to offer greater long-term success and higher quality levels.



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## ON THE LABELS FOR THE 'βδ' WINES

Developing a new label for the 'βδ' wines began with a review of the basic principles of Biodynamics, as formulated by the Austrian thinker and philosopher Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, his holistic vision of the human being and the earth on which we live led to profound and fertile discoveries in the fields of medicine, teaching, art and scientific endeavor in general. Agriculture was the last field to which Steiner turned his interest, shortly before his death. He did so at the behest of a growing group of farmers who looked with great concern at the first signs of weakness and degeneration accompanying the introduction of modern agricultural methods and, especially, the ever more abundant use of chemical fertilizers. Biodynamics is based on a global knowledge of the planet and its relationship with the cosmos, and it views the grape and the vines on which it grows as an integral part of the universe.

Each of the parts of a plant corresponds to one of the elements: roots - earth, leaves - water, flower - air and fruit - fire.

From time immemorial, the signs of the zodiac have been divided into four groups of three, each of which corresponds to one of the classical elements: fire (Aries – Leo – Sagittarius), earth (Taurus – Virgo – Capricorn), air (Gemini – Libra – Aquarius) and water (Cancer – Scorpio - Pisces).

The studies of Maria Thun have shown that the greater or lesser vigor with which each of the parts of the plant develops — roots, leaves, flower, fruit — relates to the position of the moon and its progress through the zodiac at the crucial moments of its life cycle.

The parts and life of the vine within this fourfold system is summarized by four symbols, arranged on a vertical axis. Each of these symbols stems, in turn, from a common matrix that refers to the cosmic law governing the whole of the natural world in all its various manifestations. The scheme on which these symbols are built makes use exclusively of the geometric form of the circle, thus referring to a vision of matter and the cosmos as an equilibrium among elements in a state of constant rotation, which also refers to a natural dynamism and expression of a core essence that evolves with time.

The attitude guiding this project has also led to a number of technical decisions. The environment always comes first and foremost. The paper used for the label is certified as ecologically produced; printing makes use of a single ink color; front and back labels have been reduced to a single sheet of paper; the foil that seals the bottle is likewise printed in a single color and results from a process that forgoes uses heated molds or heated ink relief.

