

# From niche to volume with integrity and trust

## CASE STUDY FACT SHEET

# Ekolådan – Sweden

R. Milestad & J. von Oelreich  
KTH Royal Institute of Technology (Stockholm)  
April 2015



## Historical development

Ekolådan (EL) is an organic vegetable- and fruit-box scheme, run as a division within the non-profit foundation Stiftelsen Biodynamiska Produkter (SBP), at Järna, 40 kilometres southwest of Stockholm. EL was launched as a project in 2002, and the first boxes were delivered in autumn 2003. EL boxes contain only organic or biodynamic produce, and SBP is a fully certified organic business that also deals with wholesale and trading in organics.



One of Ekolådan's fruit and vegetable boxes (the 'Small Vegetable Box'). Photo from Ekolådan's web page, reproduced with permission from Ekolådan.

EL is an interesting case within the HealthyGrowth project for several reasons. First, box-schemes are a relatively new phenomenon in Sweden. Second, over the past decade, EL has undergone a process of growth, decline, and stabilisation. It expanded from zero to 4,500 boxes per week between 2003 and 2009 before rapidly declining to half that level owing to the convergence of three phenomena: in connection with the 2008/2009 economic crisis, some

customers could not afford to continue their subscriptions; the selection of organic produce in mainstream supermarkets improved; and competition from other home-delivery initiatives increased. After this triple crisis, the number of boxes stabilised before gradually increasing again to around 2,600 boxes per week (January 2015). This provides a good case of growth, rapid decline, stabilisation, and rebound. Third, EL is run by a non-profit foundation with the dual objective of providing organic/biodynamic fruit and vegetables to consumers and guaranteeing favourable long-term conditions for organic/biodynamic farmers. Finally, the EL box scheme is interesting because it delivers produce from several of Sweden's very few biodynamic farmers to consumers.

\*\*\*

*"4,000 boxes per week was quite a reasonable number. It's approximately where we were in 2009. Those volumes made it possible to work well, and to earn a little so we could reinvest and develop ... I think it would be nice if we could reach that far [again]..."*

(Ekolådan project developer)

\*\*\*

The authors acknowledge the financial support for this project provided by transnational funding bodies, being partners of the FP7 ERA-net project, CORE Organic II.



**Legal form:**

Ekolådan is a division within the foundation Stiftelsen Biodynamiska Produkter (SBP)

**Year of foundation:**

2002

**Homepage:**

[www.ekoladan.se](http://www.ekoladan.se)

**Logo:**



**Turnover:**

The turnover grew from 7.4 million SEK (2005) to 25.5 million SEK (2014)

**Product range:**

Home-delivered vegetable and fruit boxes (and a range of additional products that can be ordered with the boxes)

**Number of Employees:**

19 (2014)

**Distribution channels:**

Ekolådan's vans deliver fruit and vegetable boxes directly to the doors of consumers

**Facebook likes:**

1,245 (10 March 2015)

**Google hits:**

21,300 (10 March 2015)

## Supply-chain organisation

The overall value chain involves the organic/biodynamic farmers delivering fruit and vegetables to EL, EL/SBP (organisationally, SBP buys all the produce for EL as well), and consumers. After buying fruit and vegetables from farmers (in Sweden and abroad), EL alone controls the rest of the value chain until the boxes are delivered to the doors of consumers. EL/SBP strives for long-term partnerships with farmers, and many farmers who deliver fruit and vegetables to EL delivered to SBP long before the start of EL, some for 25 years. For the most part, the farmers supplying products to EL have remained the same since EL began. New suppliers have been added, but EL rarely ends a relationship with a supplier. In Sweden and in some cases abroad, EL/SBP has direct relations with the growers. In other cases abroad, SBP reaches agreements with other small- and mid-scale wholesalers. The quality of the products and reliability are valued by EL.

Current challenges for EL include the lack of organic farmers in Sweden and difficulty finding enough farmers who dare transition to organic farming in terms of farm succession. Other challenges involve competition from (non-organic) home-delivery services as well as competition from mainstream retailers, who steadily increase their organic range. Internal EL challenges include adapting to consumers' changing wishes and becoming up-to-date technically in terms of its website.

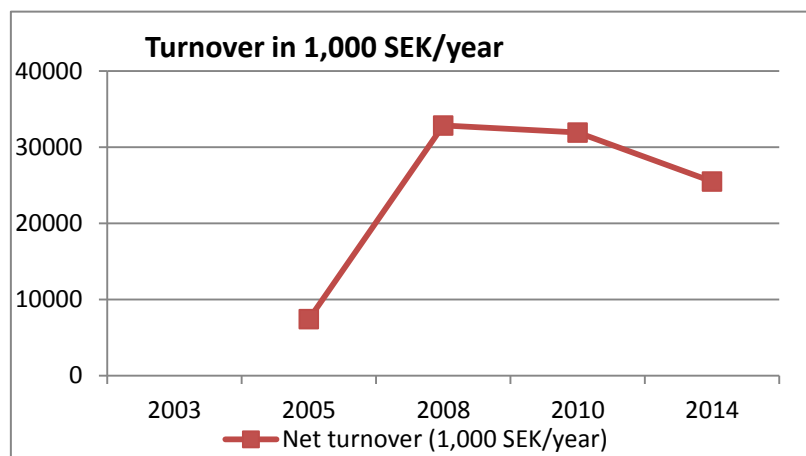


Figure 1: Turnover (2005–2014)

For further information, contact Dr. Rebecka Milestad ([rebecka.milestad@abe.kth.se](mailto:rebecka.milestad@abe.kth.se))

KTH Royal Institute of Technology/Division of Environmental Strategies Research (T: +46 8 7908825)

For full reports, visit the HealthyGrowth [2013–2016] project website [www.healthygrowth.eu](http://www.healthygrowth.eu)