

Abstract:

The German horticultural sector is faced to an increasing international competition. The realisation of the European Single Market and the enlargement of the European Union are putting high pressure on German horticultural farms. The lack of comprehensive studies about the competitiveness was the reason to initiate a research project directed to identify strength and weaknesses of the German horticulture sector. The examination should help to conclude reasonable measures to develop the sector and to abolish distortions in the market. Extensive empirical studies over a three years period enabled to get a comprehensive picture of the situation. A meta-analysis of relevant publications and detailed interviews with experts in the sector were the appropriate methods to get the required information. The comparison of the German business environment with that of eight other European countries was undertaken by use of a scoring-model. The choice of important competitiveness parameters guided the assessment-process. The results show clear competitive advantages as well as disadvantages of the German horticultural sector. The horticulture of all of the analysed countries has strengths as well as weaknesses compared to the German sector. Because it was not differentiated between horticultural branches it demands a cautiously handling of the results.