



Peanuts from Switzerland



Tipp von Esther Kern



In the past, children in Switzerland looked forward to getting peanuts from St. Nikolaus on 6 December. These nuts were considered a rare treat since they didn't grow in Switzerland and so had to travel a long way to get here. But that's all about to change.

In 2020, vegetable farmer Stefan Brunner from Spins in the Canton of Bern sowed peanuts for the first time, as an experiment. He came up with the idea after talking to a student who is looking at plants that could potentially be grown in Switzerland in the future, especially as the temperatures are generally rising. The organic farmer currently has five varieties growing in his testing area. "Next year we'll plant the two varieties that do best in a larger growing area," says the vegetable innovator.

Like peas, peanuts belong to the family of legumes, the similarity of the names being a strong indication of the botanical link. The wonderful thing about legumes is that their roots produce nitrogen, so essentially they fertilize the soil naturally, making them very attractive in organic agriculture. They were originally grown primarily in the tropics and sub-tropics, but now that it's warmer in Switzerland and there are varieties more suited to cooler climates, large-scale farming is definitely an option here.



It's not yet clear whether or not these peanuts from Bern's lakes area will be a success. "The cold spell in the autumn came at rather an inopportune time for us," says Stefan Brunner, who now wants to discover which varieties and cultivation methods work best. One thing that is certain, though, is that top chefs and amateur cooks alike can't wait to try out these peanuts from right on their doorsteps and to add an exotic touch to their traditional dishes, both before and after St. Nikolaus comes to visit.