

PRESS RELEASE

Council backs organic sector demands and Commission changes its approach to a new organic regulation

Brussels, 15 December 2014 – EU Agriculture Ministers have endorsed a non-binding report summarising the progress made under the strong leadership of the Italian Presidency on the Commission proposal for a new organic regulation. Nevertheless, a legally binding, partial general approach was rejected as concerns with the Commission’s flawed proposal were too great. Speaking at the meeting, Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan said that organic is a key sector in Europe for job creation, is growing 9% a year and this must be supported by regulation. He continued: “No one disputes the fact that the current proposal is unacceptable.”

“It is very positive that the Council and Commission acknowledge how problematic the Commission proposal would be to organic food and farming,” says IFOAM EU President Christopher Stopes. “Since the Commission launched the process, IFOAM EU has said that the most effective way to strengthen organic requirements, consumer confidence and market development is to enhance the existing regulation. We are very pleased that, in many respects, the Italian Presidency has brought the Commission proposal for the first 19 articles back into line with the current regulation.”

“Ten of the eleven guidelines proposed by the Presidency and noted by the Council match IFOAM EU demands for improvement. This success demonstrates the importance of the organic sector in Europe,” adds Director Marco Schlüter. “Ministers have acknowledged the complexity of the regulation and stated that nothing can be agreed until everything is agreed. The organic sector in Europe has demonstrated its strength, with national ministries evaluating the evidence and listening to the organic stakeholders in their countries.”

“The Italian Presidency has made some important progress, but there is still much to be done in order to turn this proposal into legislation that would support the development of organic in Europe,” continued IFOAM EU Vice President Sabine Eigenschink. “Some of the most difficult areas – controls, imports and thresholds – have not been dealt with yet. Furthermore, the Commission must ensure sufficient resources are devoted to resolving the long outstanding topics such as poultry and greenhouses.”

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IFOAM EU represents more than 160 member organizations in the EU-28, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organizations span the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies