

PRESS RELEASE

Organic regulation proposal: No agreement without the organic sector

Brussels, 11 May 2015 – The intense discussions among national Ministers at today’s AGRIFISH Council meeting clearly demonstrated how difficult it is to reach agreement on an initial problematic proposal if the sector’s opinion is not appropriately taken into account. Although there was talk of a possible vote on the Council position at this month’s meeting, voting has been postponed to June. The diversity of opinions among Member States on many key topics remained – including on thresholds, import and controls – as witnessed by an IFOAM EU delegation at the Council today.

“The discussion today has shown that there will be only an agreement with the backing of the sector. The European organic sector has made it clear that it will not accept a regulation that includes a decertification threshold, in which the specific control requirements for organic are not included and that would require full compliance for imports”, says IFOAM EU Board Member Jan Plagge. “We call on the Commission to finally fulfil their promise of a ‘fresh look’ and support today’s Member State majority to go for solution without decertification thresholds”

"IFOAM EU welcomes the decision by Member States to postpone voting to June, an acknowledgement that there is too much to be done to come to agreement now. The Council and Latvian Presidency have invested much effort, and did a good job in limiting the negative impacts of the Commission proposal. However, the current compromise text doesn't create a real added value with respect to the current regulation. This shows how flawed the initial proposal was and the Council has wisely chosen to take more time in order to obtain better legislation", adds Marco Schlüter, IFOAM EU Director.

“Organic farmers must be rewarded for their services to society and the environment, not punished for pesticides they have not introduced into the system. The decertification proposal is not only wrong-headed it could also jeopardise organic farmers who could not bear the financial risk entailed and would threaten the peaceful co-existence of organic and conventional farmers in rural areas”, highlights Albena Simeonova, IFOAM EU Board Member. “As long as there are no harmonised rules at European level on the facilities, methods and investigative parameters used by European laboratories the implementation of such decertification thresholds would in practice not even be feasible.”

“All institutions argue about strengthening consumer trust. Therefore we call on the Member States and Commission to be consistent, when it comes to the question of controls. Annual inspections are important for securing trust in the soundness of organic certification and for helping organic operators avoid misinterpreting fast-changing regulation”, explains IFOAM EU Vice President Thomas Fertl. “Finally, it is now up to Member States to recognise the role of the sector to improve organic production in Europe. IFOAM EU, together with COPA-COGECA and EFFAT, have provided Member States with clear recommendations on how to handle the issue of thresholds for non-authorized substances and annual inspection.

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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.



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