

PRESS RELEASE

Don't rush regulation

Brussels, Belgium, 13 March 2015 – The organic regulation proposal will be on the agenda of the next AGRIFISH Council meeting on Monday, with the intention of reaching agreement on a general approach in the May Council. The direction of the discussion on the new organic regulation has improved under the leadership of the Latvian Presidency. However, the Commission is now putting immense pressure on both the Council and European Parliament to come to agreement by the end of June, saying that otherwise it will withdraw the proposal. With the integrity of the EU standard and the livelihoods of thousands of organic producers at stake, IFOAM EU opposes this artificial deadline. As the organic regulation is highly complex and detailed, sufficient time must be spent to reach a text that both improves on the existing regulation and that can be applied practically.

“All EU institutions have indicated that they consider the initial proposal not to be appropriate. What was badly set up from the beginning cannot be repaired in a few months by setting a political deadline. Therefore, we call on the Council and European Parliament to continue their good work to achieve a regulation that ensures sustainable growth of organic production in Europe and to clearly refuse any attempts to limit the time needed for this process. The quality of the final proposal is of critical importance and this must not be compromised in the interests of speed,” says IFOAM EU President Christopher Stopes.

IFOAM EU Director Marco Schlüter continues: “We are optimistic about the direction the discussions are taking but in the end the regulation must be technically sound and simplify daily life for operators. At the moment, it seems that EU institutions underestimate the time needed to do so. Critical topics such as the import regime and decertification threshold are still open and the potential impact of the many technical details, including in the annexes, have not yet been properly analysed. IFOAM EU is continually offering its expertise to help get this right, but it is not possible to achieve a detailed opinion by May 2015.”

The IFOAM EU has proposals on the table, is eager to deliver concrete solutions and continue to work with the institutions on a practical way forward. Any acceptable regulation must be technically watertight as all organic operators across the EU and beyond will have to apply it for many years to come.

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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.