

PRESS RELEASE

## Moving in the right direction with Parliament vote on organic, but obstacles still remain

Brussels, 13 October 2015 – Today's vote in the European Parliament's Committee of Agriculture (AGRI) significantly amends the Commission's proposal for a new organic legislation. This follows the sector's concern in many areas and is further recognition that the original proposal would hinder sustainable growth of organic production in Europe. Although the AGRI vote delivers a solid basis in many areas for further negotiations, some obstacles still remain.

"IFOAM EU supports the Committee's rejection of the Commission proposal to introduce a decertification threshold for non-authorised substances and its suggestion to better harmonise investigation procedures in cases of contamination. This will strengthen process-based inspections and follows what IFOAM EU has been requesting since the beginning", highlights Christopher Stopes, President of IFOAM EU.

"However, the clause to review the issue again in 2020 threatens the potential for success. A new 5-year period of legal uncertainty is completely unacceptable for the organic sector and must be excluded from a new regulation", adds Marco Schlüter, Director of IFOAM EU. Furthermore, the polluter pays principle cannot be turned upside down: organic farmers must not be made responsible for contamination resulting from conventional agriculture. This principle is valid today and also in 2020".

"In the area of organic control the Parliament sent a very clear signal about its value in the supply chain and the role of annual inspections in maintaining consumer confidence in organic", says Vice-President Sabine Eigenschink. "Maintaining the obligatory annual control, keeping the specific control requirements in the organic regulation and rejecting the excess of administrative burden for shops selling pre-packed organic food were core issues for the organic movement".

"We welcome that that the Agriculture Committee calls for an improved administrative structure and better supervision of implementation of the regulation", remarks IFOAM EU Vice President Thomas Fertl. "IFOAM EU has always stressed that the key to developing organic in Europe is to strengthen the implementation of the current standards, not necessarily to completely replace it".

"It is good that the committee recognised the reality of organic actors and ensures a certain flexibility in implementation in Europe. This especially important for countries where organic is less developed, especially in new Member States", mentions Albena Simeonova, IFOAM EU Board Member from Bulgaria. "In the same line, we welcome the suggestions for improving the status quo. For example, having a step-by-step approach towards 100% organic seed is very constructive".

"Unfortunately, on import the EU Parliament fell into the trap of trying to enforce EU standards throughout the world, instead of recognising that regional standards can deliver added value to European citizens. European consumers, organic processors, as well as developing countries will all lose out because of this decision. In particular, small-scale farmers in developing countries will have to work according to EU standards not suited to their situation. On the other hand, recognising regional standards as equivalent would have provided the opportunity to address issues that are ignored by the EU regulation such as child labour, animal welfare and deforestation", points out Bavo van den Idsert, IFOAM EU Board Member. "We call for a practical solution to provide a certain flexibility under the compliance regime".

"All the ingredients for the trialogue are now there. However, a lot of obstacles must still be overcome if a consistent organic regulation that supports the further growth of organic in Europe is to be reached. One thing is clear: European citizens want more organic not less", outlines Board Member Jan Plagge. The EU institutions therefore have a huge responsibility. IFOAM EU calls now on all EU institutions to constructively work together within the trialogue and offers its support to all EU institutions to achieve this goal".

Useful links:

IFOAM EU Position paper on the proposed organic regulation: [http://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/ifoameu\\_regulation\\_position\\_paper\\_roadmap\\_growth\\_organic\\_sector\\_20141110\\_0.pdf](http://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/ifoameu_regulation_position_paper_roadmap_growth_organic_sector_20141110_0.pdf)

For more information please contact:

Laura Ullmann, Communications Manager

+32 (0)2 808 7991 / +32 (0) 486 88 52 12, [laura.ullmann@ifoam-eu.org](mailto:laura.ullmann@ifoam-eu.org)

Or visit [www.ifoam-eu.org](http://www.ifoam-eu.org)

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