

PRESS RELEASE

IFOAM EU at informal Council: We need an organic growth agenda for Europe

Riga, 2 June 2015 – At today's informal AGRIFISH Council meeting in Riga ministers discussed how to support further development of organic food and farming in Europe. One focus was to come closer to a deal for a Council opinion on the organic regulation proposal at the upcoming Council meeting on June 16. IFOAM EU president Christopher Stopes, who participated together with IFOAM EU director Marco Schlüter, was invited to contribute to the debate.

"It is an encouraging sign that the Latvian Presidency dedicated an informal Council meeting to discuss supporting further development of organic in Europe. With the current regulation proposal on the table and the implementation of the new CAP there is an opportunity to set up a framework that would make this possible", said Christopher Stopes. "What we need is a clever policy mix and better targeted support for organics throughout member states in the EU. For example, by supporting organic farmers for their refusal to use pesticides and not punishing them for contamination with traces of products permitted in the other 95% of agricultural production".

"We congratulate the Council on the improvements made so far in key areas of the COM proposal for a new regulation. However, some crucial issues are still to be solved such as thresholds, imports and controls. Nevertheless, the reform process has not made much progress over the current regulation: the initial Commission proposal was unacceptable, while the Council has made progress it hasn't had the time to improve much on what we already have", highlighted Stopes.

"The trickiest point for the organic sector remains the issue of setting specific pesticide decertification thresholds that makes organic farmers accountable for pesticides used in conventional farming. The European organic sector will not accept a regulation that includes a decertification threshold", continued President Christopher Stopes. "Further, the Council position on imports – focusing on full compliance – would be detrimental to developing countries and would affect the availability of products for EU processors and consumers. Mandatory annual controls must be maintained and embedded in a risk based approach to ensure consumer confidence on the organic system. And very importantly, we urge the Council to ensure the technical soundness of its text – due to the focus on political hotspots soundness is still lacking in some parts – as it will have a profound impact on the ability of national authorities, certifiers and organic operators to correctly apply it".

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

Or visit 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.