

PRESS RELEASE

Agri Council on organic: Reasonable compromise took up many sector demands

Luxembourg, 16 June 2015 – Ministers agreed today at the AGRIFISH Council on a general approach on the Commission proposal for a new organic regulation. An IFOAM EU delegation in Luxembourg witnessed a last minute amendment to ensure that organic farmers won't be punished by EU legislation in future for contamination resulting from their conventional neighbours or the environment.

"Today's decision was an important step for organic farmers and consumers, as it strengthened the process based approach to organic farming. Ministers decided not to mislead consumers with false promises by making organic producers only accountable for what is under their direct control", said Jan Plagge, IFOAM EU board member. "It also leaves sufficient time for countries who already have decertification thresholds in place to phase them out by 2020."

"The general approach adopted underlines the importance of the EU institutions working with the organic sector, not against it. The Council compromise text provides important improvements on the initial proposal in almost all critical areas and has neutralised many of the dangerous elements. Specific control requirements remain under the organic regulation, regional standards have to be considered in trade with third countries, the number of delegated acts have been reduced, the scope of the regulation has been clarified and extended, EU wide bureaucratic rules for retailers have been avoided and member states maintain a limited flexibility on production rules", highlights Marco Schlüter, Director of IFOAM EU.

"However, it must be emphasised that the job is far from completed. The political negotiations did not put sufficient emphasis on ensuring the technical soundness of the final text. This must be dealt with as the practicability of the regulation has a profound impact on the viability of organic operators. Therefore we are looking forward to cooperating with the Luxemburg Presidency in its leading role in the Trialogue to get this right. We rely now on the European Parliament to bring in substantial improvements to the Trialogue which we can support so as to make good the deficiencies in the text adopted by the Council today. In particular, risk based control needs to be combined with annual control, and real equivalency in trade with third countries has to be developed. IFOAM EU has always emphasised that we need to develop organic production based on the current regulation" added Thomas Fertl, vice president of IFOAM EU.

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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.