



PRESS RELEASE

Organic regulation negotiations, time for a change

Brussels, 8 June 2017 – Ahead of the upcoming orientation debate at the Council of Agriculture Ministers of 12 June, the Organic and Fair Trade movements and Organic Certifiers reiterate the importance of evaluating whether the text currently on the negotiation table provides real added value to the existing legal framework, or whether alternative approaches need to be envisaged.

According to IFOAM EU, EOCC and FTAO, the current approach to the negotiations is bringing a lose-lose situation for institutions, organic operators and consumers. It will not lead to the overall development of the organic legislative framework and does not meet the initial objectives of the revision process. These included removing obstacles to the development of organic production in the EU, guaranteeing fair competition, maintaining consumer confidence and simplifying the legislation and associated bureaucracy.

Since the 1960s European organic farmers developed strict rules themselves in order to deliver high quality food production according to the principles of fairness, ecology, health and care. The same farmers called for a strong EU organic regulation to harmonise and improve the standards and increase consumer trust, which resulted in the first EU Organic Regulation in 1991. Organic is one of the few sectors ever that wanted to be regulated and certified with clear and transparent rules.

"The future regulation must be technically sound and provide significant added value compared to the current legislation. A win-win situation is still possible by integrating in the current Organic Regulation those aspects discussed during the negotiations that would be expected to lead to a positive development of the organic sector" said IFOAM EU President, **Christopher Stopes** "Continuing with 'negotiation-as-usual' will not meet the real needs of organic producers and European citizens."

He added "As for the most discussed item so far, the presence of residues in organic products, it is important to start the debate from a clear and objective fact: today organic products are often residue-free and rarely contain some residues due to the fact that 95% of EU agriculture relies on the use of chemical pesticides¹. Organic farmers should not be considered responsible when organic products are contaminated by the chemicals used by their neighbours: the polluter-pays principle must not be turned upside-down."

"It is crucial that the final text is readable, consistent and easy to implement" added EOCC Board member **Michel Reynaud** "This is not the case at the moment: the text is not technically consistent and clear at this stage. This will cause many problems in implementing it in the future both for the Member States and the certifiers. Particular attention needs to be paid to the control system and the import regime, these are key to maintaining consumer confidence." He added "It should be clear that organic is based on a process approach and it cannot be delegated to a simple tool – the laboratory test – whether a product is organic or not."

"Although Western Europe and North America represent 90% of the global organic market, when it comes to the consumption of certified organic products, Africa, Asia and Latin America are home to 82% of the certified organic farmers. These producers are mostly smallholders exporting to developed markets" said FTAO Executive Director, **Sergi Corbalán**. "The current proposal sets a double-standard for different countries: the EU

¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/fr/efsajournal/pub/4791>

will accept differences in rules from the US, Canada or Japan whilst it will be very strict with countries in the global South even if their organic standards are often equivalent to the EU ones. Therefore, for a US organic farmer it would be very easy to export to the EU, whereas a farmer from Uganda would have many more costs and a heavy administrative burden to bear. A new and fairer solution needs to be found urgently to address this double-standard. The European Union must stand to its commitments that its trade and agriculture policies will contribute, rather than hinder the global partnership to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030."

IFAM EU, EOCC and FTAO recognise the huge efforts and work made by the EU Institutions involved in the past months and will continue to contribute constructively to the development of the legislative framework.

During the meeting of the Special Committee on Agriculture of 29th May, 17 Member States opposed the Maltese Presidency request for a new mandate to further negotiate the organic dossier.

There is an increasing dissatisfaction among the Council and the Parliament. The Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development Paolo De Castro clearly stated that the proposed text - as it is now - would water down the organic regulation. According to him, the current negotiation process should get to an end and the good discussions taken in the last months should be integrated into the current 'lisbonised' organic regulation as delegated acts.

Ends.

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Notes for editors:

- The [IFOAM EU](#) (the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU Group) represents actors of all the organic value chain, from the farm to the fork. All the major EU organic farmers' associations as well as processors and certifiers and – through our members – thousands of consumers and citizens are part of IFOAM EU. With its wealth of hands-on field experience and technical knowledge, has always provided valuable input to national and EU institutions on the organic legislation and development policies, and since 1972 the – continuously updated – IFOAM technical standards have been the reference for policymakers all over the world, including for the EU regulations published from 1991 onward.
- The [EOCC](#) (European Organic Certifiers Council) is the voice of about 50 control bodies and authorities in Europe and beyond. EOCC has brought constructive proposals throughout the revision process of the EU organic regulation and made numerous improvement suggestions, as EOCC hoped that a “better regulation” could be achieved, serving to protect consumers, supporting fair competition on the organic marketplace and supporting further growth of the organic sector.
- The [FTAQ](#) (Fair Trade Advocacy Office) speaks out on behalf of the fair-trade movement for fair trade and trade justice with the aim to improve the livelihoods of marginalised producers and workers in the South. The FTAQ is a joint initiative of Fairtrade International and the World Fair Trade Organisation (respectively with a European and global scope). Through these three networks the FTAQ represents an estimate of 2.5 million Fair Trade producers and workers from 70 countries, 24 labelling initiatives, over 500 specialised fair-trade importers, 4,000 World Shops and more than 100,000 volunteers.