

The Future of Organic Food Processing: Sustainability - Quality - Integrity

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2nd IFOAM EU Group Conference
on organic food processing and environmental performance
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Frankfurt, 27/11/2012 – Experts from the organic food processing and trade industry – processors, traders, researchers and trade associations – gathered to discuss the way forward at the 2nd IFOAM EU Group conference on organic food processing and environmental performance, co-organised by AÖL and FiBL. The conference participants, more than 80 people from about 15 countries, emphasised the need for organic operators to take full responsibility for sustainability, integrity and quality. Nevertheless there is a need for the further development of organic processing rules.

"The organic processing rules in the EU Organic Regulation need to be adapted to the needs of a fast-growing and changing market. The relevant rules in Organic Regulation (EC) no 834/2007 should be adjusted to match the reality of the EU organic market", says Alexander Beck, Chief Executive Director of Aeel. "For example, the rules for the use of origin labelling and the 'EU/non-EU Agriculture' wording on organic products should be improved and harmonised within the different overlaying EU regulations. Now it is good time to take the next step and to introduce and reinforce environmental performance of organic processors and trade operators in the EU legislative framework."

"On the other hand, a lot can be already done by updating the annexes of the current legislation" points out Marco Schlüter, IFOAM EU Group Director, referring to the Report on food by the Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP) (3). We appreciate the report is a first step of the review of annexes of Organic Regulation (EC) No 889/2008. However there is a need for greater production of organic additives, flavourings, microorganism preparation and techniques to help the sector develop in line with the approach of careful processing in organic production. EGTOP should provide technical advice regularly, every year or two, on the additives and processing techniques allowed in organic food production."

"Equivalency standards signed this year between the EU and US are an example of how legislation can provide great opportunity for improving international trade and the free movement of organic food worldwide, but further clarification is needed to make it operational and avoid unfair competition. The organic sector is expecting stable growth of the organic market and is constantly working to enforce its integrity and sustainability, secure credibility and quality of organic food and maintain consumer trust. Legislation should facilitate this process and not hamper further development," adds Bavo van den Idsert, IFOAM EU Group Vice President.

Participants also discussed the issue of integrity: "There is a need to increase quality and harmonization of control on both EU and imported products and operators in third countries. But improvements in control system have to be done carefully without posing unnecessary burden for organic producers," says Andrzej Szeremeta, food legislation coordinator.

During the conference examples of major organic successes helped set the stage for discussion, namely Abafoods' quality initiatives from farming to technology; Rapunzel's measures to maintain integrity throughout the value chain; and Duchy Originals' sustainability approach: going full circle from and back to small farmers. Participants then exchanged ideas in workshops on the three key topics of sustainability, quality and integrity. The success of the conference lies in the exchange of knowledge and the valuable, practical input provided by the participants, which will be taken up in IFOAM EU's positions and recommendations to the EU institutions. Head of the Organic Farming Unit at DG Agriculture, Mr. João Onofre, was present to describe the European Commission's approach and discuss the practical implications of regulation on organic processing and trade with participants.

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Notes:

(1) The IFOAM EU Group represents more than 300 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU-27, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organisations include consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies - www.ifoam-eu.org

(2) 2nd IFOAM EU Group Conference on organic food processing and environmental performance: "The Future of Organic Food Processing: Sustainability - Quality - Integrity" in Frankfurt in Germany is organised by the IFOAM EU Group, Aoel and FiBL Germany - www.organicfoodprocessing.eu

(3) [Report on Organic Food 20-21 June 2012](#)

