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The IFOAM EU delegation meeting the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Cioloş, Mrs. Alina Ujupan, a member of his Cabinet and the Head of the Organic Farming Unit Mr. João Onofre. Representing IFOAM EU were President Christopher Stopes, Board Members Thomas Fertl, Dominique Marion, Marian Blom and Director Marco Schlüter.
Dear readers,

The process of reviewing the Organic Regulation launched by the European Commission is entering a critical stage. The European Commission will launch two separated documents next spring: a proposal for new European Organic Regulation to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers and a new European Organic Action plan. This was confirmed in a meeting IFOAM EU had with the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Cioloș.

The Commissioner also made it clear that the new Organic Regulation should be easier to understand, be more transparent, include fewer exceptions and explain the remaining ones to consumers better. Importantly, it should promote the growth of the organic sector through increased quality.

This demonstrates that the regulation review has developed its own dynamic. At the start of 2012 no major reform was foreseen, rather just control and import were to be improved. This has developed into a total reform with a completely new organic legislation, leading to the greatest opportunities but also the greatest risks.

IFOAM EU will be the first one to applaud if the Commission (COM) delivers a well drafted proposal. We clearly support a principle-driven development of the regulation. For us, this is a step-by-step development. A radical elimination of all exceptional rules – as considered in COM option 3 – would cause a collapse of the organic sector, taking into account that the Commission considers also some existing permanent rules to be exceptions. In other words, there are two possibilities:

• Perhaps the organic regulation will truly be improved and will have a much clearer structure, make fraud more difficult and strengthen consumer trust.
• But in the worst case, the new regulation proposal could abandon important elements of the current regulation and could be detrimental to the viability of the organic sector.

In the second case, the organic sector must mobilise to influence the co-decision process within the European Parliament and Council to ensure the regulation finally adopted reflects the practical reality and possibilities of operators. In any case it is clear that the Commission will be completely liable for their proposal and the total revision that did not emerge a call by the sector.

An organic action plan is meant to link organic developments with current policies, such as the CAP and the new EU framework for research and innovation. IFOAM EU pushes for an ambitious action plan, which strengthens the sector via such policies. Unfortunately, many decisions are currently being made about how these policies are being implemented and will be finalised before the Commission publishes a new organic action plan, such as the set up of national rural development plans and first calls for research proposals.

These developments make the 10-year presence of IFOAM EU in Brussels an important event. On 6-8 November, on behalf of IFOAM EU, I would like to invite you to celebrate together this anniversary. This will be an opportunity to work on the European organic movement’s vision for the future and to find out more about developments on the organic regulation review and CAP implementation. Save the date now and more details will follow soon.

Marco Schlüter
IFOAM EU Director
POLITICAL HOTSPOT

WELCOME, CROATIA!

The IFOAM EU Group wishes to welcome Croatia to the European Union! As from 1 July 2013, date of entry into force of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Croatia, the EU is now 28. Croatia is now a full member of the EU with all the accompanying political and regulatory implications, including the CAP and organic regulation.

Members of the Croatian organic sector are invited to become members of IFOAM EU to bring Croatian interests into the positions IFOAM EU presents to the European Institutions. For more information, please call +32 2 280 12 23 or send an email to info@ifoam-eu.org.

Within the EU legislation adaptation package, two regulations adapt the EU organic regulations to the new entrance. Reg. (EC) No 834/2007 and Regs. (EC) No 889/2008 and No 1235/2008 apply in the new Member State. Namely, the term “ekološki” to indicate and label organic products in Croatia was inserted in the Reg. (EC) No 834/2007. Croatia is no longer considered a Third Country and import rules do not apply to Croatian products. Furthermore seven control bodies have been recognised to carry out control and certification in the new Member State.

The two new regulations:  
Council regulation (EU) 517/2013  
Commission Regulation (EU) 519/2013

On 1 July 2013 Croatia joined the EU to become its 28th Member State © Ivan Marko Stazic
Making Europe More Organic
Celebrate 10 years of IFOAM EU in Brussels

6 November  Excursion: Organic Policy Making in Action*
7 November  Conference: European organic political and legal framework*
            Gala dinner: Celebrate 10 years of IFOAM EU in Brussels*
8 November  Organic 2030: Build the European organic future**

Look forward to seeing you there
The IFOAM EU team
1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 REGULATION

COM PLANS NEW REGULATION AND NEW ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

Commissioner Cioloş confirmed that the Commission will launch a proposal for new European Organic Regulation to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers and a new European Organic Action plan in spring 2014. An IFOAM EU delegation discussed the different possibilities the Commissioner on 17 September. Commissioner Cioloş emphasised the need for quality-driven growth of the organic sector, based on a clearer and more transparent regulation and that exemptions should be reduced and the necessity of the ones maintained must be better explained.

IFOAM EU outlined its support for the principle-driven development of organic farming, but underlined that this means step-by-step development reflecting the practical reality of operators and other sector stakeholders.

The revision is reaching its final stage as the Commission’s Impact Assessment outlining three options is scheduled to be approved and sent for internal approval around now. The Impact Assessment will be the basis for a further future regulation.

Further, IFOAM EU presented a proposal for the legislative direction and called for an ambitious organic action plan, including strong support for organic research and innovation under Horizon 2020. The first calls under Horizon 2020 will be launched soon, before a new action plan will be published. The ambitious plans of the Commission must be backed up by sufficient resources, in order to make needed innovation for the organic sector possible.

Q&A ON COMMISSION LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL ON OFFICIAL CONTROLS

On 6 May 2013 of the Commission published legislative proposal for a new regulation “on official controls and other activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant reproductive material, plant protection products.” The Commission has expressed the aim as harmonisation and simplification. This new proposal affects Reg. (EC) No 834/2007, and specifically art. 27 on the control system for organic farming and production.

Several stakeholders submitted questions to the Commission’s Organic Unit, which decided to publicly answer to the stakeholders’ questions, doubts and concerns.

EGTOP: NEW DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

Following the June plenary meeting of the Expert Group on Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP), new documents were published on the its webpage. In particular, the final report on organic greenhouse production and three new mandates, two for organic food and one for organic aquaculture are now publicly available.

In the food mandates, the Commission asks the Expert Group to provide technical advice on flavours and their use in organic production (Food Mandate II) and to evaluate whether the use of certain substances and techniques are in line with the objectives, criteria and principles of the organic regulations (Food Mandate III). The report of the first Food Mandate was published in 2012.

In the Part A of the organic aquaculture mandate, the Commission asks the Group to provide technical advice on the use of non-organic juveniles in the light of the sequential phasing out of their use and to evaluate the permitted feed sources and additives. This mandate could be the starting point for a revision of Reg. (EC) No 710/2009. In fact, this regulation provides for a revision of the organic aquaculture rules starting as of 1 July 2013.
EU Leaders are set to discuss outstanding issues on CAP financial elements in September following the deal reached by European Parliament, Council and Commission negotiators on 26 June. The first round of these negotiations took place on 17 September with negotiators stressing the need for talks to be concluded by the end of September. However leaders from the Parliament and Council disagree on whether further changes on several points can be made. CAP financial elements are linked to the negotiations on the EU budget 2014-2020 and include the capping of direct payments, the transfer of funds between Pillar 1 and Pillar 2, and Pillar 2 co-financing rates.

Small compromise proposal agreed by Farm Ministers to reduce large direct payments for beneficiaries

At the AGRI Council on 25 June Farm Ministers agreed to a proposal to reduce direct payments above 150,000 euro for farms by 5%. Member states would still be able to opt out of this requirement if they used 5% of their Pillar 1 funding to begin to redistribute direct payments more fairly among farmers. The proposal was put forward as a final compromise by Farm Ministers on the basis that all other CAP financial elements – agreed by European Heads of State and Government on 8 February 2013 – would not be up for negotiation. However this proposal was not discussed in the final trilogue talks on 26 June and is therefore not yet part of the final deal.

**Parliament to present compromise proposals on financial elements, Council opposed**

Before the summer Parliament negotiators outlined that as financial elements were not part of the deal they would present compromise proposals to the Lithuanian EU Presidency and the Commission in September. A significant majority of Agriculture Ministers highlighted their opposition to discussing these elements further at the July AGRI Council Meeting in Brussels. This opposition was reiterated by Ministers on the fringes of the Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers in Vilnius 8–10 September.

On 2 September IFOAM EU in partnership with other civil society organisations sent an open letter to Parliament CAP negotiators and other key MEPs calling for them to address the significant gap in rural development expenditure by rejecting further cuts to Pillar 2 and boosting sustainable investments in rural areas and green job creation.

Formal agreement by the Parliament and the AGRI Council on the final CAP deal and EU budget agreement will take place in between September and November. Ratification of the final legal texts can only occur after the legislation has been legally verified and translated into the 24 official languages.

**EU leaders to negotiate CAP transition rules for 2014**

Elsewhere EU Institution negotiators are expected to enter into negotiations regarding the Commission proposals on CAP transition rules for 2014 in Autumn/Winter 2013 with an agreement finalised by the end
of 2013. The lead rapporteur for the European Parliament, German Christian Democrat MEP Albert Dess, presented a draft report to COMAGRI members in July. The draft report calls for unused direct payments funds to be transferred to rural development programmes, but specifies that Pillar 1 greening rules should be delayed until 2016. In COMAGRI, proposals to delay implementation further have been strongly rejected by representatives from other political groups. The draft report and amendments will be voted on in COMAGRI on 30 September.

AGRICULTURE MINISTERS DISCUSS SOLUTIONS FOR FUTURE OF FAMILY FARMING

Agriculture Ministers discussed the future of family farming in Europe, highlighting topics including increased competitiveness, research and innovation, promotion of new entrants, increased coupled support and access to credit during their Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers in Vilnius from 8-10 September. Discussions centred on Family Farming Prospects in the Context of Globalization in context of 2014 being designated ‘International Year of Family Farming’ by the United Nations. A number of events will take place over the coming months on this issue including the European Commission’s conference on family farming to take place on 29 November 2013. The outcomes of these events will feed into the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) upcoming European Regional Conference in Bucharest in April 2014.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY: SUSTAINABLE BIOGAS ON ORGANIC FARMS

Biogas production can provide income opportunities for organic farms and contribute to overall farm sustainability. We invite all organic farmers and their representatives, biogas consultants and associations, green energy companies and interested consumers to the free training sessions on organic biogas.

To reach and inform a diversified and broad target group on the topic of organic biogas, SUSTAININGAS conducts training events in several EU countries and languages. The first opportunity to get insight into the SUSTAININGAS project and to learn more about organic biogas will be through a live webinar. Register for access to the one-hour online Live-Webinar with a concluding discussion. Subsequent to the Webinars, there will be workshops held in each SUSTAININGAS partner country, mainly designed as a two day event (one day participation is possible). The regional workshops will deliver further information on organic biogas, current trends and developments, sustainability criteria, technical and economic requirements and present best practice examples.

Webinars and workshops will take place in all six project countries in the national language between October 2013 and March 2014.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Live Webinars</th>
<th>Workshops</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>30 Oct 2013</td>
<td>17 Feb 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>29 Jan 2014</td>
<td>13–14 Mar 2014</td>
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<td>English</td>
<td>8 Oct 2013 &amp; 21 Jan 2014</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>8 Oct 2013 &amp; 7 Nov 2013</td>
<td>30 Jan 2014 (Schloss Puchberg, Wels, Austria) 6–7 Nov 2013 (Würzburg, Germany)</td>
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<td>Polish</td>
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<td>Spanish</td>
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Please find more information and register here!
While the analysis of sustainability performance of biogas plants has been updated, test phases are running for a pre-version of a best practice handbook for sustainable biogas and for recommendations for stakeholders. We are moreover looking for best practice examples of sustainable biogas production on organic farms throughout Europe. If you are interested in sharing your experience or learning more about the project, please contact laura.maeso(at)ifoam-eu.org.

The European Parliament has launched a schedule for its work on the Commission proposals on seed, plant health, animal health and controls. The first discussions in the agriculture committee took place on 16 and 30 September. The draftsmen and draftswomen will have to submit their draft reports by the end of October for translation. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will have the possibility to assess different perspectives in a hearing of experts on 25 and 26 November. MEPs can hand in amendments to the draft reports until 11 November for controls and 4 December for seed. To follow are the votes in the Committees (January/February) and in the plenary (indicative date: 15 April). While the delegates of the Member States discuss changes to the Commission text article by article in the Council working group.

It is high time for the groups in the Member States to position themselves and to tell policy makers that we need seed legislation that opens up space for open pollinated varieties and populations as well as participatory conservation and breeding work. For more information contact: antje.koelling(at)ifoam-eu.org.
NEW ORGANIC ACTION PLANS IN FRANCE, IRELAND AND WALLONIA

New national & regional organic action plans have been launched in the last months. One example is the organic action plan launched in May by Minister Stéphane Le Foll in France. Entitled, “Ambition bio 2017,” it provides for action along six strategic axes: agro-environmental policies within the CAP to remunerate the environmental services provided by organic farms, water protection, public canteens, research, education and training. French IFOAM EU member Federation Nationale d’Agriculture Biologique (FNAB) welcomed the action plan, but called for more consistency in the overall agricultural policies in order to double the area under organic management in France in the next years. Minister Antonio Di Carlo launched a strategic plan for the development of organic farming and consumption for the Walloon region in Belgium in June. The plan focuses on research, training and promotion, with a dedicated budget of two million euro. The objectives are to increase the number of organic farms from 1,100 to 1,750 and agricultural land under organic management from 7.5% of to 15% by 2020.

In August the Irish government launched the Irish Organic Farming Action Plan 2013-2015 with the following four main objectives:

1. Increase the production base in Ireland, with a view to replacing imports with Irish organic produce where possible
2. Promote awareness of the potential export market
3. Develop sustainable export markets for Irish organic produce as supplies become available
4. Identify issues which are impeding the growth of the Organic Sector with an emphasis on developing solutions.

WORK ON INDICATION FOR LOCAL FOOD GOES ON

The EU Commission continues to work on labelling rules for the sales of food products directly from farms. Most likely a voluntary indication will be introduced via a delegated act under article 29 in the regulation on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs early next year. The rules will most likely limit the use of the indication to micro-enterprises (maximum annual turnover under two million euro) and refer to a minimum percentage of raw materials are coming from the farm itself, to the place of processing and to direct sales. The initiative goes back to a European Parliament report on promotional measures.
Parliament vote on biofuels

The European Parliament adopted its position on the Commission proposal on biofuels on 11 September. The Parliament voted in favour of accounting for greenhouse gas emissions from biofuel production, including indirect land use change; moreover MEPs call for a cap in first generation biofuels. According to current legislation, Member States must ensure that renewable energy accounts for at least 10% of energy consumption in transport by 2020. In the adopted text, MEPs say first-generation biofuels (from traditional sources) should not exceed 6% of final energy consumption in transport by 2020, as opposed to the current 10% target in existing legislation. Member States will now seek a common position of their own. If it is different from Parliament’s first reading text, a second reading will be required.

EU-US trade negotiations: second round in October

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations between the EU and the US will continue in October in Brussels. The first round took place in Washington from 8-12 July 2013. More than twenty negotiating groups associated the various areas that TTIP covers are involved in the process. While the TTIP is promoted as an opportunity to enhance trade for goods and services worth two billion euro, by lowering bureaucratic burden and trade obstacles, many NGOs (Greenpeace and Friends of Earth, among others) are concerned that an agreement might hamper standards such as those concerning genetically modified crops, hormone meat and chlorinated chicken.

Syngenta launches lawsuit against neonicotinoids ban

Syngenta has launched a legal challenge in the European Court of Justice against the decision of the European Commission to ban neonicotinoids, as the pesticide Thiamethoxam, which is produced by Syngenta, is concerned by this ban. The Commission, following the advice of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), banned these types of pesticides because of the high acute risks of damage to the nervous systems of honeybees and other pollinators, as demonstrated in scientific journals.
1.3 EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION POLICY/TP ORGANICS

ORGANIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PLATFORM, TP ORGANICS, OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED BY EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European organic sector receives recognition as an important player in the development of the European economy and driver of innovation. The granting of official “technology platform” status by the European Commission is reserved for outstanding European innovation platforms. “This is a great moment for organic in Europe,” said Marco Schlüter, Head of the TP Organics secretariat and IFOAM EU Director. “The Commission’s recognition of TP Organics is a clear sign the organic sector has taken its rightful place in the discussions among ETPs defining European research priorities as well as shaping the European research and innovation landscape. It also acknowledges TP Organics unique involvement of civil society organizations alongside a strong organic business and academic community, paving the way to further involve citizens in the business decisions that ultimately concern them.”

According to the Commission’s new staff working document defining the strategy for European Technology Platforms, the ETP “must represent a sizeable proportion of a current or potential future market and be seen to contribute to the global value chain benefitting Europe.” As well, ETPs are explicitly mentioned as stakeholders to be consulted on EU research priorities in the context of the European Innovation Partnerships and play a considerable role in setting priorities for Horizon 2020.

Full TP Organics press release

UPDATE ON EIP FOR AGRICULTURE

Strategic Implementation Plan adopted

On 11 July, the High-Level Steering Board adopted the Strategic Implementation Plan of the EIP for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability. With this document, the High-Level Steering Board provided orientation to the implementation of the EIP. In the presence of Commissioners Dacian Cioloș (Agriculture) and Máire Geoghegan-Quinn (Research), the meeting brought together a wide range of interested parties, from governments to academics, from environmental NGOs to organisations representing all actors in the food production chain. IFOAM EU was represented by its president, Christopher Stopes. The Strategic Implementation Plan highlights the central role that innovation plays, and the importance of bringing together actors from across the whole supply chain and the scientific community to co-create knowledge and solutions. The conclusions of the implementation plan explicitly mention that improvements in productivity must go hand in hand with sustainable consumption. They also call for innovative solutions for the delivery of public goods, the sustainable use of genetic resources and improvement of soil fertility.
First Focus Groups started

At the beginning of July the Commission published the composition of the first three focus groups. The themes of the focus groups are:

- Optimizing arable yields in organic farming
- Increasing competitiveness of protein production in Europe
- Reduction of antibiotic use in the pig sector

These focus groups will assess the state of practice and research of each respective theme, identify further research & innovation needs, and suggest projects to test practical solutions.

Cristina Micheloni, core team member of TP Organics, has been appointed as a key expert of the focus group on organic farming. This focus group met for the first time on 23–24 September at the Organic Research Centre in the UK. The members discussed how to reduce the yield gap between organic and conventional farming and how to increase the performance of less productive organic farms to the level of best practice organic farms. IFOAM EU’s director, Marco Schlüter, was invited to give a keynote lecture. He said the organic sector should not be afraid to combine the usual approach of using natural processes with new technologies. However, the use of these technologies should be safe, transparent and appropriate.

New call for focus groups launched

On 17 September, a call for experts for the following focus groups was launched:

- Genetic resources: co-operation models
- Soil organic matter content in the Mediterranean region
- Integrated Pest Management in Brassica spp.

Deadline to apply is 6 October.

ORGANICDATANETWORK

The OrganicDataNetwork project members will meet on 3–4 October in Montpellier, France to continue advancing on the collection, handling and publication of organic market data. Better availability of market intelligence will enable policy makers and organic stakeholders to make better decisions and may encourage market entry and make the market more competitive and more efficient.
GIVE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO EXPO 2015 – FEEDING KNOWLEDGE

Feeding Knowledge (FK) is an international cooperative program aimed at networking scientists, researchers and technicians in the food security field. It is developed by CIHEAM-MAIB and Politecnico di Milano, in the context of Expo Milano 2015, whose theme is: Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life. The program will be part of the intangible legacy of Expo Milan 2015.

FK is built on the idea that knowledge development and sharing are the main tools to identify concrete solutions for food security which really meet the needs of developing countries. The program is thus based on the idea that to achieve sustainable development, everyone on the planet should have access to healthy, safe and sufficient food.

TP Organics has recently been approached in order to contribute to this process. We would like to invite you to join the network of researchers/experts who are interacting on the international platform www.feedingknowledge.net. One of the main aims of the network to draft “white papers” on different thematic priorities of food security, which give recommendations to address the main needs of the Euro-Mediterranean region with the involvement of the Extension Services. The outcomes of the “white papers” will be presented to the international community and policy makers at Expo 2015.

Membership is free and all members can add their valuable contribution and researches. FK network experts collaborate with thousands researchers and their ideas will inspire policies that meet the needs of countries and will have all the opportunities of visibility provided by Expo Milano 2015 where millions of people are expected.

All FK activities are developed through five research and innovation priorities for food security:
1. Sustainable natural resource management
2. Quantitative & qualitative enhancement of crop products
3. Socio-economic dynamics and global markets
4. Sustainable development of small rural communities in marginal areas
5. Food consumption patterns: diet, environment, society, economy and health

All these topics are strongly related to TP Organics core activities and mission.

Among its activities FK has created a Euro-Mediterranean network of researchers who are interacting on the international platform www.feedingknowledge.net. One of the main aims of the network to draft “white papers” on different thematic priorities of food security, which give recommendations to address the main needs of the Euro-Mediterranean region with...
Maya Hernando Calvo
In the end of July, Maya left the position of project coordinator at the IFOAM EU office. For two and a half years she was in charge of writing and coordinating projects and had numerous successful results in obtaining funding for projects both from the European Commission and from private foundations. Maya decided to return to her home country, Spain, where she would like to apply everything she has learnt at IFOAM EU to contribute to the development of the Spanish organic sector. We will miss Maya in the project unit in the IFOAM EU office, and we thank her for this dedication. We hope to see her in the organic sector in Spain soon, once again together with IFOAM EU!

Silvia Schiavon
With a great and successful organisation of the 7th European Organic Congress, Silvia concluded her time at IFOAM EU as a research and office assistant. Since December 2011, she has been able to combine her work at the research, events and office activities very well. Her dedication, patience and hard work will be remembered as a significant contribution to the success of IFOAM EU group during the past two years. We hope that everything she has learnt will be useful to her and that she will remain close to the organic sector and to IFOAM EU.

1.4 IFOAM EU COLLEAGUES

SAYING GOODBYE TO OLD COLLEAGUES
This year we are celebrating 10 years of IFOAM EU’s presence in Brussels with major achievements for organic food and farming in Europe. IFOAM EU’s lobbying work improves and sustains the framework organic stakeholders need to operate successfully in Europe.

The political and legal framework for organic farming in the EU is set by the European Institutions, and the unifying power of IFOAM EU gives the European organic movement the possibility of bringing its needs to the political decision makers and enables the movement to achieve so much.

Help to make organic’s impact in Europe stronger – donate today

Everyone who donates this year will have their (organisation) name and amount published. Top donors first!

Contact us:
laura.ullmann [at] ifoam-eu.org
Tel: +32 2 808 79 91
The South of Spain is unique for the diversity of its landscapes and its environmental value. There are regions in which up to 20% of the area is dedicated to natural parks, protected areas and nature reserves. In these regions, organic agriculture is the most appropriate agricultural model. In fact it is the Spanish zone with the most agricultural area cultivated organically: 1,082,814 hectares, which accounts for over 67% of national organic cultivation. The environment, including soil properties and climate, provide good conditions for growing high quality crops and developing environmental and social values.

The arrival of autumn brings a change in landscape and agricultural season in these lands.

**Extensive livestock**

Nothing more stimulating to the view than the autumn colors! In the meadows, the colors start changing in the field after the first rains. Extensive livestock graze in the fields among the natural oak and cork vegetation. Livestock is not just a source of income, they are also one of the most efficient systems for fire prevention. The quality of the beef and pork from these animals is recognized internationally, and more and more restaurants are including these products in their menus as a symbol of quality and to differentiate themselves.

**Olives for oil and for eating**

These two top elements of Mediterranean cuisine start their harvest during the autumn season.

The diverse varieties are all adapted to their local conditions. This is an illustration of the historic tradition of cultivating this crop, which can be traced to the time of the Phoenicians throughout the south of Spain.

The social importance of this crop is based on the need for human labour and the cultural wealth due to the large role the cultivation of olives for oil and for eating has played in these areas. Tradition and modernity: more and more mills are incorporating organic innovations in their production processes. Sustainable olive oil production systems consume as much energy as they produce, and the by-products of the olives are recycled and/or reused. This reality, in part, has prompted ECOvalia to develop standards set defining the environmental and social requirements for recognition and distinction of organic farmers who have advanced beyond the provisions of European regulations.

The process of cultivating olives for consumption is completely different from olives for oil: from the harvest of the fruit, to storage and processing. In this case, all steps must avoid damaging the skin and to ensure adequate product quality for consumers. The diversity of ways to prepare table olives is as vast as the number of places where they are grown. Furthermore, in almost every area there is a “local touch” in the process matching the unique culinary traditions of the area.

**Fruit and subtropical fruit**

When autumn begins, oranges, mangoes, custard apples and other fruits and subtropical fruit start to become ready for harvest. Those who are unaware of the special soil and climate conditions in the provinces of Malaga and Granada may be surprised by the ability to grow subtropical fruit in Spain. The producers’ know-how guarantee harvests with great organoleptic qualities, and the proximity to target markets ensures high quality in retail outlets.

Extensive livestock, olive oil and olives for consumption, and subtropical fruit, vegetables, almonds and grapes, all are activated with the fresh autumn air, and the efforts to professionalize the organic sector become visible, giving result in terms of quality, environmental care and social responsibility.
Ecovalia has been active since 1991. Could you explain its activities and describe the changes at the organisation since then?

In 1991, Ecovalia was born as an organization of organic producers and processors with activities closely linked to advancement of the professional field of organic production. Since then, it has become increasingly open to the general public, with the additional aim of raising awareness about organic food among consumers, businesses, restaurants, civil society organisations, and others. In addition to promoting organic products, we also promote healthy eating and social responsibility. All these actions increase awareness of the value of organic production system and products in fighting many of the problems currently affecting citizens, such as climate change, health, economy, territory and social values.

The original name was CAAE and to match the developments of the organisation earlier this year we changed our name to Ecovalia.

Mr. García Melgarejo, what were your motives to become the head of Ecovalia?

My family comes from the agricultural sector, my grandparents were farmers. My professional experience began in the field of business management, especially in food companies. At the same time, I knew men and women from the countryside who were making great efforts that were unfortunately ignored by society. Organic production allowed me to combine these interests: healthy food production and the generation of greater income for people in rural areas. I am so convinced of this, that soon also I myself will become another organic producer.

From my position at Ecovalia, I can help the society in which I live recognize that food and farmers are essential for maintaining the balance of the world in which we live.

The year of Ecovalia establishment is also the year of European Union’s first Organic Regulation. How do you see the changes that in organic food and farming since then, from both legislative and practical aspects?

The organic sector has been growing and developing, and although the European regulation has developed as well, it is not enough compared to the sector. The current legislation leads to some obstacles that limit the ability of organic producers to deal with the challenges facing the agri-food sector. With this in mind, criteria such as energy efficiency and social welfare are not addressed in the current organic standards. The organic consumer is becoming stricter and expects to the sector to further integrate these principles into their operating practices including points of production, processing and marketing. Ecovalia is promoting these additional criteria for producers and companies to advance more on these requirements.

What are Ecovalia’s short-term goals and how is the organisation’s long-term strategy shaped?

At Ecovalia, we are convinced that organic production is the perfect tool to address the major challenges of sustainability, food security and rural development. Our initiatives and projects aim to raise visibility in society of the work, effort and results achieved by organic producers and organic farms, especially the people growing the crops as they are the women and men who make it all possible.

We also try to promote changes in the agricultural sector: we help producers develop a more commercial spirit and become closer to consumers; facilitate direct sales, participate in supply chains and alternative distribution channels, especially ones involving few intermediaries. This helps producers receive more for their products. It is also very important to our organization that organic food is accessible to all people, especially the youngest, ensuring a healthier future.
Can you give your opinion on the current state and future perspective of organic food and farming in Spain?

If we had asked the pioneers of organic farming for their vision of the future in the early 90s, probably almost no one would have imagined that this sector would achieve all it has. Though to us it may now seem insignificant, for them getting where we are now would have seemed impossible.

To be an organic farmer, you have to be optimistic. It is very difficult to guess what will happen in the future, for example by 2020, but copying Martin Luther King in his famous speech for social rights in Washington:

I have a dream that all the different governments at European, national, regional and local level, will recognize the critical role that organic production plays in facing the challenges of sustainability, food security and rural development.

I have a dream that the profitability of production and organic activities will have increased significantly, with the resulting added value for producers and companies.

I have a dream that the Spanish market for certified organic products, food and other products or services, will increase and become more dynamic. And they will have developed diversified distribution systems through specialized, local, short supply chains; large scale distribution; as well as HORECA (HOtel, REstaurants and CAtering) especially in school canteens and hospitals.

We must recognize that the organic sector has advanced much further than could have been hoped for when it started. But as 20 years ago organic operators could not imagine what the future would, it is very possible that we too are not aware of the potential our business holds for the next decades.
3 EVENTS

3.1 PREVIEW OF EVENTS

9–10 OCTOBER: SOIL ASSOCIATION’S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Soil Association 2013 Conference is focused on cutting edge solutions and approaches to the environmental and public health challenges of our day. Bringing together high profile speakers and practical people from a range of backgrounds the conference will share and inspire best practice, raise new questions and champion ways to feed this generation and the next healthily and humanely. The conference is a great opportunity to meet, network and share new ways of thinking with hundreds of other likeminded people. It will be held on 9–10 October 2013 at Central Hall, Westminster, London.

More details and registration here.

11–13 OCTOBER: NATURA FOOD

The 6th edition of the Natura Food – International Fair of Organic and Regional Food – the eco-friendly and low processed food exhibition in Poland and Central Europe will take place on 11–13 October, together with the 2nd edition of the beECO – Ecological Lifestyle Fair.

The significance of Natura Food 2013 is emphasized by the patronage of the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Union of the Voivodeships of the Republic of Poland, the Marshal of the Lodz Region, and the Mayor of the City of Lodz. The IFOAM EU Group is an official fair partner. Conference sessions will be organised at Natura Food by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and IFOAM EU.

The Natura Food and beECO fairs are a chance for business people and producers of organic, traditional and low processed food to meet consumers, and present an ideal opportunity to learn more about the most recent trends on the Polish eco-food market.

20–22 OCTOBER: NATEXPO 2013

Natexpo a major natural event in France and Europe for professionals in the organic, health food and ecological sector. It will be held on from Sunday 20 to Tuesday 22 October in the new High Environmental Quality Hall 7 of the Paris-Nord Villepinte exhibition centre.

Natexpo presents wide range of new products and is the only professional French fair dedicated to organic and health food. More than 500 exhibitors are expected, spread over the fair’s 4 areas, standing for the sector’s diversity:

• Organic & Tasty: organic food and wine
• Natural Beauty: cosmetics and hygiene
• Daily Ecology: environmental-friendly products, textile
• Health & Fitness: health food, dietary supplement

Request your free pass here.
4th International Conference on Organic Agriculture Sciences

9-13th October 2013 in Hungary

9th October: Organic Policy Summit in the Parliament building in Budapest
10-13th October: Scientific Conference in Eger

http://icoas2013.org/

The theme for ICOAS 2013 is Targeting Global Sustainability – Food Security, Biodiversity and Climate Change

Registration for the conference and Calls for symposia and papers are now open.
3.2 IFOAM EU AT NATIONAL EVENTS

SANA

TP Organics was present at SANA, an Italian exhibition for organic food and farming, which took place in Bologna from 7-10 September. During the four days TP Organics, represented by Marco Schlüter and Eduardo Cuoco, met the most important market player of the Italian sector in order to involve them in the revision process of the TP Organics Strategic Research Agenda.

TP Organics was also invited to participate in a seminar entitled “The future of Italian and EU Organic Farming: which opportunities for a greater Integration of Policies?” organized by the Italian National Institute for Agriculture Economy (INEA). During the seminar, experts from various EU countries discussed on how CAP, EU Regulation and the Research and Innovation policies can contribute jointly to give new impetus to the sector and what the role of research in Italy could be. TP Organics contributed with a presentation called “Research and Innovation in the Framework of European Policies for Organic Farming”.

It was also an occasion for IFOAM EU to meet its Italian member and to contribute to the discussion about “Revision of the Organic Regulation” and “Sustainability in Organic Farming” by the participation of Marco Schlüter at two major events organized during the exhibition.

Furthermore, IFOAM EU organized and held several meeting with members and potential members in order to increase Italian contribution to Brussels activities.

Last but not least, together with ICEA IFOAM EU launched the Italian version of its newest dossier: EU Rules for organic wine production: Background, Evaluation and Further Sector Development. The publication, co-financed by the European Commission – Directorate General Agriculture and Rural Development, received great interest from the Italian sector, especially certification bodies and those providing extensions services.
3.3 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

9–10 October  Soil Association’s Annual Conference
London, United Kingdom

9–13 October  4th International Conference on Organic Agriculture Sciences (ICOAS)
Budapest, Hungary

11–13 October  Natura Food Fair
Lodz, Poland

20–22 October  Natexpo 2013
Paris, France

6–8 November  Making Europe More Organic
IFOAM EU 10 year anniversary celebration
Brussels, Belgium

13 November  First European Rural Parliament
Brussels, Belgium

This newsletter exists to inform IFOAM EU members about the work of the IFOAM EU Group and its liaison and coordination office in Brussels. The IFOAM EU Group is the European Regional Group of the worldwide umbrella organisation IFOAM and is responsible for all matters related to organic farming with a Europe-wide scope.

Information IFOAM EU Group: http://www.ifoam-eu.org

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Organic street self-service shop in Pasman, Croatia © Emanuele Busacca