

Towards better animal welfare in EU farming

IFOAM EU Group welcomes efforts to improve animal welfare standards in the EU food production chain and calls for a holistic approach

Brussels, 8/10/2009 – Swedish Agriculture Ministers Mr Eskil Erlandsson opens today the Final Stakeholder Conference of the EU research project “Welfare Quality”(1). On this occasion, **Christopher Stopes**, President of the IFOAM EU Group (2), welcomes the fact that the Swedish Presidency aims to improve animal welfare standards in EU food production but calls for a cautious approach towards upcoming EU Animal Welfare Labeling schemes in order to avoid consumer confusion:

“The IFOAM EU Group sees the improvement of animal welfare as an essential priority in view of the poor conditions for many farm animals in the EU. Organic stakeholders ask for more effort to be focused on improving legally binding minimum welfare standards in production, transport and slaughter of animals in the EU.”

“Organic farming is the only European wide sector where high standards and effective certification systems ensure better animal welfare. Since 1999, those standards are regulated at the European level. Consumers trust the organic label to deliver a high standard of animal welfare. Any confusion of consumers by unclear labeling must be avoided. Therefore, we can only support labeling of animal welfare standards that clearly go beyond the legally binding minimum requirements; that are based on scientific findings; on transparency and a strict system of inspection and certification.”

Otto Schmid, Vice President for research of the IFOAM EU Group, adds: “The development of animal welfare indicators is appreciated by many stakeholders as well as organic farmers. However, more research is needed, covering all farmed animal species and following a more holistic approach towards the definition of animal welfare. The overall management of livestock systems, as well as the adaptation of breeds to the environment must be better considered in further development of animal welfare standards. Furthermore, other instruments besides the standards will play an important role in the future to promote good animal welfare (e.g. financial incentives, code of practices, better information and education, etc.). The Technology Platform ‘Organics’ has identified further research needs for appropriate and robust organic livestock production.(3)”

End (characters 2412)

More information:

IFOAM EU Group, Phone + 32-2-2801223, Fax: +32-2-735 73 81,
info@ifoam-eu.org, www.ifoam-eu.org

NOTES:

(1) Welfare Quality is a European research project focusing on the integration of animal welfare in the food quality chain. The project aims to accommodate societal concerns and market demands, to develop reliable on-farm monitoring systems, product information systems, and practical species-specific strategies to improve farm animal welfare. Forty-four institutes and universities, representing thirteen European countries and four Latin American countries, participate in this integrated research project. The final Stakeholder Conference is being held on 8 and 9 October 2009 in Uppsala, Sweden. This conference is organised in close collaboration with the Swedish Government. More info at <http://www.welfarequality.net/> and http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings_news/2009/10/5/the_animal_welfare_conference_br_a_step_towards_higher_standards

(2) 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.

(3) TP 'Organics' is a platform for organic food and farming research which joins the efforts of industry and civil society in defining organic research priorities and defending them vis-à-vis the policy-makers. More at : www.tporganics.eu