

Ecolabeling for food products – added value for European consumers?

Brussels, 03/04/2009 - The IFOAM EU Group (1) express huge disappointment that the today's vote of the European Parliament (2) on the compromise text on the Ecolabel doesn't clearly exclude the labelling of food products from its scope. The IFOAM EU Group urges the EU institutions to stop interfering in functioning markets through inconsistent labelling attempts.

"The EU high level conference on agricultural product quality in Praha, March 12-13, following on from the Green paper (3) clearly warned the EU not to go "walking into chaos"', said Francis Blake, President of the Group. "But the current intention to include food in the scope in the new Ecolabel regulation will do precisely that and will only serve to confuse consumers."

"It is clear that an Ecolabel for food products can only be used for organic products as the term 'eco' is reserved by EU regulation 834/2007 only for organic foods", added Marco Schlüter, Director of the Group. "Organic food production is significantly better for the environment than conventional and there are already well established organic logos which consumers recognise and trust (and a new EU mandatory organic logo coming in July 2010). To add another logo, even with the best of intentions, is at best unnecessary and at worst detrimental."

"However, the IFOAM EU Group remains open to discuss the possibility of including additional environmental parameters, e.g. for organic processing, in the current organic legislation 834/2007", continued Francis Blake. "We support and understand the usefulness of an Ecolabel to encourage higher environmental performance for certain products. But this is precisely what organic farming and food processing has been doing for 85 years. Rather than trying to 'reinvent the wheel', it is far better to invest in the existing wheel of organic farming and help to further develop that."

The IFOAM EU Group offers its broad expertise to the EU Commission to assist in that process.

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NOTES:

(1) The IFOAM EU Group represents the 330 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU, EFTA and the EU candidate countries. Member organisations include: consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies.

(2) Before developing criteria for food and feed products, as defined in Regulation (EC) 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety, the Commission shall undertake a study, by 31 December 2011 at the latest, exploring the feasibility of establishing reliable criteria covering environmental performance during the whole life cycle of such products, including the products of fishing and aquaculture. The study should pay particular attention to the impact of any Ecolabel criteria on food and feed products, as well as unprocessed agricultural products that lie within the scope of Regulation EC No 834/2007. The study should consider the option that only those products certified organic would be eligible for receiving the Ecolabel award, to avoid confusion for consumers.

(3) The Czech Presidency high-level [Conference on the Future of the EU Quality Policy of Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs](#) took place in Prague, March 12-13, under the auspices of Petr Gandalovič, the Minister of Agriculture, and Mariann Fischer Boel, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. The conference followed the [Green Paper on Agricultural Product Quality Policy](#) issued earlier in the year. The Commission is expected to come up with formal Communication in May which will be discussed under the Czech and Swedish Presidencies in 2009. A legal proposal will follow at the earliest next year.