

Sustainable agriculture needs more than food labelling rules

Brussels, 28/05/2009 - The EU Commission presented today a Communication on Food Quality. For IFOAM EU Group (1) this is a good step towards more quality production and to a better choice for consumers, but the Group also has a number of reservations.

Above all, sustainable practices cannot be left to labelling schemes and distinguished products - the Commission should rather take its responsibility to create rules for a more sustainable agriculture system, which improve the standards for animal welfare, internalise environmental costs and contribute to tackle climate change.

"Organic is the most successful EU food quality scheme. Organic farming is not only a forerunner in delivering high quality food, but also fulfils highest standards in production and processing: best practices in animal welfare, conservation of biodiversity, responsible handling of natural resources and low impacts on the climate are since long characteristics of organic production", says Thomas Dosch, Vice-President of IFOAM EU.

According to Dosch "the clear message that an organic label puts across to consumers must not be jeopardised by a large variety of similar looking labels that are claiming just one single aspect of sustainability".

"The number of EU food labels must stay manageable and the differences between labelling schemes must be easy to grasp. Certain standards that would make food production more sustainable must become the rule rather than being the exception - organic farming is the proof that higher standards are practicable."

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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.