

***Organic sector on new regulation:
Strong concerns about GMOs, EU logo and lack of stakeholder involvement
But glad Council could be convinced to allow private standards***

Brussels, 20/12/2006 – The Agricultural Council yesterday agreed on the outlines of the new organic regulation (1). The IFOAM EU Group regrets that the Council did not take those extra steps needed to achieve a mature regulation. “The latest text has clearly progressed since the original proposal”, said Francis Blake, president of the IFOAM EU Group. “Now, just as the Council is making strong headway, a quick decision was made before the end of the year. This appears to be at the expense of an optimal solution.”

The IFOAM EU Group is pleased that a number of its concerns were taken on board by the Finnish Presidency with support of the Commission. A big step forward is that proposed restrictions on private logos and standards were dropped, as they are essential to maintaining a dynamic and expanding organic food and farming sector (2). On the whole, the group welcomes the move to a clearer structure and greater readability.

Nonetheless, a number of issues still do not reflect the opinion of the whole European organic sector. In particular, Commissioner Fischer Boel’s promise to ensure better stakeholder involvement should be formally reflected in the procedures. The sector remains concerned about GMO’s, the mandatory use of the EU logo, the inadequate link to the food and feed control regulation (882/2004) and the exclusion of catering and non-food products from the scope of the regulation (3).

“We urge the coming German Presidency and European Parliament to resolve the outstanding issues and to ensure that this new ‘organic’ regulation will provide the right framework for a dynamic, innovative and expanding organic sector”, commented Sabine Eigenschink, regulation chair of the IFOAM EU Group.

Ends (1,696 Characters)

Contacts: Sevelina Todorova, + 32-2-280 12 23

Notes.

(1) At the Council of ministers meeting yesterday the agriculture ministers agreed on a “general approach” under the Finnish Presidency. This is close to a final agreement, after which only small technical changes are possible during the following German Presidency. The proposed regulation would come into force on 1st January 2009.

(2) Article 20 and 24 of the Commission proposal from December 21, 2005 are now deleted. They would have led to more bureaucracy and would have restricted the private sectors ownership of their own standards and use of their own logos.

(3) See IFOAM EU Group revision info page:

http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group/web_Revision/Revision_info_page.html