



Working for organic farming in Europe

International Federation of
Organic Agriculture Movements –
EU Regional Group

President: Christopher Stopes

Director: Marco Schlüter

European Office

Rue du Commerce 124
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Phone: +32-2-280 1223

Fax: +32-2-735 7381

Email: info@ifoam-eu.org

Mr. Andrea Gavinelli
Head of Unit, Animal Welfare
BE- 1049
Brussels

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Dear Andrea,

Animal welfare labeling

Registered in Sweden, Uppsala
under organisation number
817606-9436

Thank you for our very helpful meeting on 23rd September 2009 with Jostein Dragset, it was a pleasure to meet you both. We look forward to meeting with you again on 15th October. I would like to outline some key issues of interest and concern to the IFOAM EU Group.

The IFOAM EU Group sees the improvement of animal welfare as an essential priority in view of the poor conditions many farm animals in the EU are raised in. More effort must be focused on improving minimum welfare standards in production, transport and slaughter of animals in the EU.

Organic farming systems meet clear animal production standards that deliver better animal welfare than non-organic. Furthermore, it is the only Europe-wide livestock production sector where high organic standards and better animal welfare outcomes are backed by European regulation, with effective inspection and certification systems in place to provide the assurance that consumers reasonably demand from the organic label. This view is supported by the outcome of the recently completed report to the EU Commission: *Feasibility study on animal welfare labelling and establishing a Community Reference Centre for Animal Protection and Welfare*¹.

It is also important to note that the linkages between animal welfare and other issues; including climate change, food sovereignty and food security; are becoming widely recognised. Thus animal welfare is not only important in its own right, but also because it is part of a solution to other global challenges. The recent report from the FAO² has usefully highlighted this link. It is clear that organic livestock production systems can deliver these other benefits within a well regulated and market oriented organic supply chain.

In view of the fact that consumers justifiably trust the organic label to deliver a high standard of animal welfare, we are concerned that any confusion of consumers by unclear labelling must be avoided. Therefore, we were encouraged to hear that you agree with us that quality labels should only be used where animal welfare standards clearly go beyond the legally binding minimum requirements, based on scientific findings and with a transparent, legally enforceable system of inspection and certification.

¹ Feasibility study on animal welfare labelling and establishing a Community Reference Centre for Animal Protection and Welfare. Part 1: Animal Welfare Labelling. Framework Contract for reevaluation and evaluation related services - Lot 3: Food Chain (awarded through tender No 2004/S 243-208899)

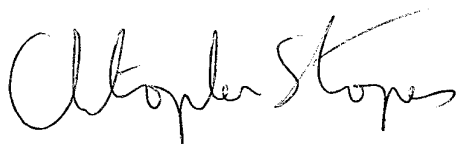
² *Capacity building to implement good animal welfare practices*. Report of FAO Expert Meeting, Rome, 30 Sept to 3 Oct 2009, FAO

Animal welfare outcome indicators are essential to any further development of labelling schemes. Ongoing research (including projects funded by the EU) is widely appreciated. However, more research is needed to include all farmed animal species and to develop a more holistic approach towards the definition of animal welfare indicators. The overall management of livestock systems, as well as the adaptation of breeds to the environment must be further considered in defining animal welfare standards. An initiative of the IFOAM EU Group - *Technology Platform Organics*³ - has identified research needs for appropriate and robust organic livestock production.

I would like to highlight five key priorities that we urge you actively to consider:

1. Disseminate the relevance of organic farming as a viable and market oriented approach to achieve improvements in animal welfare. As outlined above, organic farming has acknowledged higher animal welfare and has been regulated since 1999 at a European level.
2. Ensure that the links between higher animal welfare and wider global challenges of climate change, food sovereignty and security are well recognised and that organic food and farming systems represent best practice in this regard.
3. Significantly improve 'baseline' legally binding animal welfare standards for production, transport and slaughter of animals in the EU, based on scientific findings. This should not be specifically labelled with regard to any animal welfare attribute, since we believe this would mislead consumers who expect justifiable added value to lie behind a quality label.
4. Legally binding minimum criteria must be established for private quality labelling regimes. These must be backed up by scientific evidence that the production system can be defined and welfare outcomes demonstrated, and include inspection and certification requirements in line with EN45011 etc.
5. More research, covering all farmed animals' species and following a more holistic approach towards animal welfare indicators, is urgently needed to define better animal welfare standards in husbandry. The evaluation of inputs, management and the animal's environment should be included in assessments of the production system and animal welfare indicators.

We look forward to meeting with you on Thursday, with very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Christopher Stopes'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher Stopes
President

CC: DG Agri, Organic Farming Unit

³ Technology Platform Organics – see www.tporganics.eu