

Dear members,

The year has started successfully with our 4th General Assembly one day before BioFach where the scene for the next three years has been set. The Programme of the IFOAM EU Group for the years to come is very ambitious - you can see that for yourself if you download it from our webpage.

The new Organic Regulation is in our focus and we want to strengthen capacities regarding our content and lobby work as well as our information work in this area. The newly published Regulation Dossier is one example. Our Revision info page will be transferred to a permanent Regulation info page. Further, the added value for members will be increased by providing information in our new intranet from this year.

Through successful fundraising we are able to establish this year the new position of a Policy Coordinator to support our activities towards the EU's Common Agriculture Policy and to work for strengthening organic production as a solution for major EU challenges.

Further, the IFOAM EU Group decided to work out a new action plan in order to define a consistent policy for organic food and farming and to be an active driver in organic-friendly policy. The new organic research platform, where the IFOAM EU group is founding member, was successfully launched and will now develop new research ideas and priorities.

Fundraising and financial issues will remain also in 2009 an important issue, but on a higher level, to secure the long term success of the organisation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Marco Schlüter', on a light-colored background.

Marco Schlüter,
Director



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1. Activities of the IFOAM EU Group

1.1 IFOAM EU at BioFach

During this year's BioFach (Nuremberg, 19-22 February 2009) IFOAM EU Group launched its [Dossier](#) on the new Organic Regulation, met with the EU Agricultural Commissioner Fischer Boel and the EU Presidency Czech Minister for Agriculture Petr Gandalovič and organised a number of events, presentations and workshops. Besides the internal meeting of the IFOAM EU Aquaculture Expert Group, public workshops and presentations on the new import regime in the EU, the new Organic Regulation, the policy work of the IFOAM EU Group, were organised and held. Representatives of the EU Commission took part in most of these events to inform the organic sector on the most important current regulatory developments.

In addition to many other big or small, scheduled or spontaneous meetings with members and partners, IFOAM EU Group also took an active part in the workshop of the [Technology Platform Organics](#) (IFOAM EU is one of its founding members).

Links:

- [IFOAM EU at BioFach 2009](#)

1.1.2 IFOAM EU launched a Dossier on the new Organic Regulation



The IFOAM EU Group has published and launched a Dossier on the new [Organic Regulation 834/2007](#) on February 19 during BioFach.

The Dossier, which gives first assessment and interpretation to the regulation, was presented at the booth of the Czech Agriculture Ministry by:

- Mariann Fischer Boel, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
- Mgr. Petr Gandalovič, Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic (currently holding the EU Presidency)
- Francis Blake, President of IFOAM EU Group

You can find out more about the event [here](#).

The Regulation Dossier, whose preparation took significant efforts over the last months, is now available for free download from the website of the IFOAM EU Group not only in [English](#) and [German](#), but also in [Czech](#) and [Greek](#) languages. Versions in French and Polish will be available soon.

In addition, English and German paper copies of the Dossier will be provided to you upon request for free (against paying postal expenses). If you wish to have a paper copy or copies (for distribution to members, clients and/or partner organisations), please contact Camilla Mikkelsen at ifoam-eu.org.



From left to right: Mgr. Petr Gandalovič, Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, Mariann Fischer Boel, EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Francis Blake, President of IFOAM EU Group, Jiri Urban, Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic.

*IFOAM EU Group would like to thank all private sponsors who have enabled the production of this Dossier. A special thanks goes to the two main sponsors **ARIZA** and **HiPP**. This publication has also received funding from the European Community, DG Environment.*

1.1.3 Forth General Assembly of the IFOAM EU Group

Forty eight participants representing sixty eight member organisations of IFOAM in Europe – members of IFOAM EU Group, took part in 4th General Assembly of the IFOAM EU Group which was held on 18th of February 2009 in Nuremberg.

The assembly, which takes place every three years according to the statutes of IFOAM EU, was chaired this year by Christopher Stopes from EcoS Consultancy (UK) and Katerina Nesrstova from Pro Bio (CZ).

Its main agenda points included reporting on the activities and the financial performance of IFOAM EU Group for the period 2006-2008, and presentation of work programme and budget for the next three years

(2009-2011). For detailed account of the assembly, please follow our [GA link](#). The Programme of IFOAM EU for the next three years can be found [here](#).



The board of IFOAM EU Group – November 18, Nuremberg

1.2 The new Organic Regulation – logo competition pre-announced, aquaculture Implementing Rules close to vote

► **Logo:** The European Commission has published, although not yet launched, a [competition announce](#) inviting design proposals for the new EU organic logo. The competition itself will be opened as soon as all the language versions of the competition site can be made available (that is scheduled for mid-April). The previously proposed design for the introduced by the new regulation EU-wide organic logo could not be adopted due to its similarities with the logo of a well-known European retail chain. Because of this, the logo could not be launched as part of the [organic promotion campaign](#) and could not enter into force along with the [Organic Regulation](#) on January 1st this year.

► **Aquaculture:** the Implementing Rules for the area of organic aquaculture are being moved closer to the vote in the Standing Committee on Organic Farming (SCOF) despite the criticism by the IFOAM EU Group on the [last working document](#) of the European Commission. In brief, IFOAM EU Group's biggest concern, expressed in series of communications to the Commission, is that the present draft does not reflect sufficiently the organic principles as laid down in the Organic Regulation 834/2007. Issues like high stocking densities, allowed substances (for cleaning) as

formaldehyde and copper sulphate, make the aquaculture rules look too close to the conventional aquaculture practices, which cannot be found acceptable.

This criticism was supported by a majority during the last meeting of the EU Advisory Group on Organic Farming of DG Agriculture on March 17. However, the Commission closed the consultation period in the end of March and will seek a vote at the meeting of SCOF in May.

Links:

- IFOAM EU Group's [Revision Info page](#)
- IFOAM EU Group's latest [Comments on the Aquaculture Implementing Rules](#)

1.3 Policy**1.3.1 IFOAM EU actions against cultivation of GM varieties in Europe**

IFOAM EU Group joined in mid-March an [European cyber action](#) against cultivation of GM maize in Europe and called during the opening of BioFach in February for support from Germany for the right of maintaining national bans on GM maize.

The actions follow proposals of the European Commission to allow two new GM maize varieties (Bt11, produced by Syngenta, and 1507 by Pioneer) for cultivation in the EU and to remove the French, Greek and Hungarian national bans on Monsanto's MON810 maize.



February 19, Nuremberg Messe (BioFach). From left to right: Rudi Vierbauch, Chairman of Bio Austria, Thomas Dosch, President of Bioland and German board member of IFOAM EU Group, Ilse Aigner, Minister of Agriculture of Germany. Mr Dosch and Vierbauch spoke to the German minister in support of the action of the Austrian, French, Greek and Hungarian members of the IFOAM EU Group against the Commission's plan to remove their countries' national bans on cultivation of GM maize (MON810).



Members of IFOAM EU Group from Hungary, France, Greece and Austria (from left to right) protested during BioFach against the plans for lifting of the national bans on GMO cultivation.

Shortly afterwards, on March 2, the EU ministers rejected the Commission proposal to force Austria and Hungary to lift GMO bans and permit cultivation of Monsanto's MON810, the only GM crop allowed for cultivation in EU (currently being re-assessed on EU level). However the case still stands for France and Greece with further decisions to come, probably in April.

The EU ministers in charge of the GMO dossiers are also still to decide on the authorisation of Bt11 and 1507.

Please follow these links for more on the IFOAM EU stances on the recent attempts to allow GMO cultivation in the EU:

- [PR: IFOAM EU calls to the German Minister of Agriculture to oppose lifting of national GM bans](#)
- [Letter to the ministers on voting to the GM proposals of the Commission](#)

1.3.2 Ecolabelling



The IFOAM EU Group expressed utter disappointment at the first-reading plenary vote of the European Parliament on April 3 - concerning EU Ecolabelling, and called the EU institutions to "stop interfering in functioning markets through inconsistent labelling

attempts". With its vote the Parliament did not clearly exclude the labelling of food products from the scope of the Ecolabel. Thus, the first-reading adoption of the Ecolabelling proposal left room for a future decision establishing a system of awarding EU Ecolabels to non-organic foods. But in many countries 'eco' refers to organic and even this only is already a clear signal that an Ecolabelling scheme involving non-organic food products "will only serve to confuse the consumers". Read more on the [IFOAM EU position on Ecolabelling](#) here.

The Ecolabel is used as a sign for 'environmental quality' of goods and services on the European market. There are so far some 3000 products which have been awarded the label. The plans to expand its application date from July last year when the European Commission launched a [proposal for a revised Ecolabelling regulation](#). It proposed opening up the scope of the label among other changes to the existing rules.

The position of IFOAM EU Group on the Ecolabelling proposals was clearly expressed soon after their announcement in a [letter to DG Environment](#).

Links:

- [Commission's page on the Eco-label](#) and
- [Proposal for revision of the Eco-labelling scheme](#)

1.3.3 Nutrition labelling

At their meeting on 16th of March, the MEPs from the Parliament's Environment Committee decided to postpone the vote on the highly controversial report on the Commission's [Proposal for a Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers](#) (nutrition labelling). The report which currently has some 1000 amendments will have to be rewritten and examined by the committee anew. The Commission's proposal for an 'update, simplification and harmonisation of rules on food labelling in Europe' has faced heated discussions in Parliament and in some member states.

The IFOAM EU Group's argument against the nutrition labelling proposals concern especially the so called 'traffic light system' (mandatory declaration at the front of the product pack of the levels of energy, fat, saturates, sugar and salt, expressed as colour-codes) as simplistic and in practice misleading. The Groups have expressed its position in a [letter to DG SANCO](#) of the European Commission.

Links:

Commission's pages on nutrition labelling:

- [Summary of legislation](#)
- [DG SANCO page on nutrition labelling](#)

1.3.4 Agricultural Product Quality Policy

The President Francis Blake participated with an IFOAM EU Group delegation in the high-level [conference on EU agricultural product quality policy](#), organised by the current Czech EU Presidency on March 12-13 in Prague. The conference followed the European Commission's [Green Paper on Agricultural Product Quality](#) as a further step in a consultation process that may lead to new EU legislation in the area (read on the IFOAM EU position on the quality policy [here](#)). The President of IFOAM EU spoke at the conference within a panel, devoted to organic farming and focused on one of the questions raised by the Green Paper: "How to develop a single EU market for organic products?"

Mr Blake brought the organic viewpoint to the issue. In his [speech](#) he highlighted that the real question is how "to get more organic farming produce more organic food and ensure more organic consumption" so as to maximise the outstanding benefits that organic farming can bring – including for agricultural product quality. The question is not the single market, said Mr Blake. The descriptions of organic farming are: diverse, locally adapted, minimal external inputs, bringing producers and consumers together. This is not a way to qualify the 'one size fits all' single market approach (see for the presentation of Mr Blake [here](#)).



Organic farming offers superior quality.

The 400 delegates to the conference also discussed the concept of an EU quality logo, the proposed TSG scheme (Traditional Speciality Quaranteed) and the currently in discussion ideas of an Ecolabel, Animal Welfare label, a "EU/non-EU label" as well as a "place of farming label"...A comment on the part of one of the speakers to the conference was that with regards to the labels the EU is potentially walking into a chaos. The Commission is expected to come up with formal Communication on May 27 that will be discussed under the Czech and Swedish Presidencies in 2009. A legal proposal might follow next year.

While in Prague, the Director of IFOAM EU Marco Schlüter went to visit one of the Czech members of the Group - Pro Bio Liga, and met with the EU Agriculture Commissioner Fischer Boel and the Czech Minister of Agriculture Petr Gandalovič at the Eco Centre of Prague.

Links:

- [IFOAM EU Group's page on the Quality Conference](#)
- [European Commission's page on quality policy](#)

1.4 Research

1.4.1 TP Organics - towards a Strategic Research Agenda for organic food and farming

The team of Technology Farming 'Organics' is now further developing a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) for organic food and farming – a process to identify and formulate research priorities in the area of organic food and farming and direct research funding to more organic relevant research.

The kick off meeting of this process was held at this year's BioFach. In order to ensure a transparent process and broader expert participation, TP Organics – a platform of enterprises and civil society organisations, will continue with a series of workshops, which will take place within the following events:

- April 24, IFOAM EU Seminar – Bucharest (Romania)
- May 21, Nord Organic Conference – Gothenburg (Sweden)
- May 25, Organic Market Forum – Warsaw (Poland)

The key research areas that have so far been identified for the future work of the Platform are:

- Empowerment of rural areas
- Eco-functional intensification and
- Food for health and well-being



The TP Organics workshop during BioFach - February 21, Nuremberg Messe. This expert workshop collected ideas from SMEs to integrate them into the Strategic Research Agenda.

Links:

- [TP Organics website](#)



1.4.2 ORWINE presents the results of its 3-year research work in Brussels



The ORWINE project, which comes to an end after three years of joint efforts to develop recommendations for a legislative framework for wine from organic viticulture, announced its main findings during a public presentation on April 2 in Brussels.

Under the chairmanship of Jean-Francois Hulot, Head of the Organic Farming Unit of DG AGRI, an overall presentation of the project, was delivered by Cristina Micheloni from AIAB, the administrative coordinator of the ORWINE project.

The public presentation also included exposes on main aspects tackled by the project:

- analysis of existing EU regulations and private standards;
- what do consumers and traders ask for;
- what do producers want and are ready to do;
- wine-making techniques to reduce SO₂ and other additives;
- can Sulfit-limitating processes be successfully implemented in commercial wineries;
- a code of good practices as a guidance tool for wine-makers.

The project outcomes will be available from the [ORWINE website](#) soon.

2. Decisions/Reports concerning organic farming

2.1 Standing Committee on Organic Farming - short reports from the meetings of SCOF:

- [82nd meeting on 4-5/03/2009](#)
- [81st meeting on 28-29/01/2009](#)
- [80th meeting on 9-10/12/2008](#)

3. Calendar of events, conference reports & other news

3.1 Calendar of events

Time (2009)	Event
April 27-28	European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding - meeting on "Strategies for a future without cell fusion techniques in varieties applied in Organic Farming", Paris/France www.eco-pb.org
April 28-29	ITAB conference on "Plant breeding techniques, evaluation for Organic Agriculture and prospect", Paris/France www.itab.asso.fr
May 18-20	Nordic Organic Conference, Göteborg/Sweden http://nordicorganic.org/
May 22-24	BIOSTYL – Fair of healthy nutrition and healthy lifestyle, Prague/The Czech Republic http://www.biostyl.cz/main.php?pageid=3114
May 25-26	4 th Organic Marketing Forum (1), Warsaw/Poland http://www.organic-marketing-forum.org <i>(IFOAM EU Group is patron of this event)</i>
May 26-28	Conference "Sustainable Development: a challenge for European research", Brussels/Belgium http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/conference/2009/index_en.cfm?pg=exhibition
June 3-5	Co-Extra international conference: GM and non-GM supply chains – their co-existence and traceability, Paris/France http://www.coextra.eu/conference
June 6-14	Semaine Bio – more than 100 activities in Brussels and Belgium http://www.semainebio.be
June 24-26	Bioacademy 2009, Lednice/Czech Republic http://bio.bespin.cz/:en:start <i>(IFOAM EU Group is patron of the event)</i>
July 25 – August 31	SIDA International Training Program: Organic Agriculture Development, Sweden (part II to follow in Thailand 2010) http://www.grolink.se/Projects/OAD/OAD-Training.htm
August 25-28	1st International IFOAM Conference on Animal and Plant Breeding, Santa Fe, New Mexico/USA http://www.ifoam.org/breeding-diversity-conference.html
September 16-19	XV SEAE Technical Conference on Organic Production in the Mediterranean Basin, Mallorca/Spain Programme and registration form
November 10-12	GMCC-09: 4 th International Conference on Coexistence between Genetically Modified (GM) and non-GM based Agricultural Supply Chains, Melbourne/Australia http://www.gmcc-09.com/

(1) The Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw

Registration for the Organic Marketing Forum 2009 will be open until 15th of April. The forum invites all interested in organic marketing and especially those interested in the transfer of knowledge, new business contacts and business development between East and West of Europe. Organised by [EkoConnect](#), it takes place now for the 4th time in Warsaw under the patronage of the IFOAM EU Group and the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The organisers have now announced the opening of the already traditional 'Best of Organic' contest. Each exhibitor can [register](#) one of its products for the contest and may obtain the Best of Organic award, if it earns the recognition of the jury (formed by all participants of the meeting). The deadline for product registration is April 30.

About 450 participants from 30 countries are expected to take part in this year's Organic Marketing Forum. For updated programme, registration form and further information, please visit the website www.organic-marketing-forum.org

3.2 Conference and other reports

▶ EFSA conclusions from safety review of existing active substances used in pesticides: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/ScientificPanels/PRAPER/efsa_locale-1178620753812_Conclusions494.htm

▶ New UNEP report on environmental food crisis: http://www.unep.org/publications/search/pub_details_s.asp?ID=4019

▶ Review of existing information on the inter-relations between soil and climate change: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/publications_en.htm

▶ Progress Report on the Healthy Democracy process (accessible on the DG SANCO website - the Stakeholder Dialogue Group web page - under "Meetings & work programme > 5 February 2009): http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/sdg/workprogramme_en.htm

3.3 Other news

▶ **European Commission to issue White Paper on adapting to climate change in April:** The future common Agriculture Policy should discourage unsustainable practices such as growing water intensive crops in water scarce regions, while Rural Development Programmes for 2007-2013 should encourage additional funding for climate change adaptation, reads

the draft of a Commission White Paper entitled "Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action". Due to be published in parallel with the DG AGRI working document "Adapting to Climate Change: the Challenge for European Agriculture & Rural Areas", the draft tries to set out a framework to reduce the EU's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

▶ **GM rape seed T45 was approved for import and processing for food & feed use (but not for cultivation) by the EU Commission in March.** It is developed by *Bayer CropScience* and used primarily in biofuel production. The authorization is valid for a 10-year period.

See http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biotechnology/index_en.htm for the Commission's positions and legislation on GMOs.

▶ **The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has launched a call for data on animal cloning:** the call follows a request from the EU Commission for further scientific advice. The new data is to feed into the current policy discussions on the implications of animal cloning on food safety, animal health and welfare, and the environment. EFSA's advice is then to be delivered by June.

See <http://www.efsa.europa.eu> - Public Consultations & Call for Contributions.

▶ **Czech EU Presidency still hoping to reach agreement on the Soil Directive:** Recent Council working group discussions over the Soil Directive have shown that there is still a blocking minority against agreement on the proposed directive, but the Czech Presidency remains decisive to press for political agreement at the June Environment Council. Opposition comes from Denmark, UK, Austria, Netherlands, France and Poland on issues related to contaminated site management, the costs of the implementation measures and the principle of 'subsidiarity' to govern EU soil policy. The Presidency is expected to call further working groups to try to work out a compromise.

▶ **Industry releases inflated figures for GM crops in Europe and the world,** reads new report by Friends of the Earth International. The industry-sponsored International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) has launched its annual report on genetically modified crops around the world. The report aims to show GM crops in a positive light through inflated and massaged figures, counter-argues Friends of the Earth in its own report "[Who benefits from GM crops? – feeding the biotech giants, not the world's poor](#)" (executive summary). The report compiles facts that are in clear conflict with the ISAAA's statements.

Find the full Friends of the Earth document here:

http://www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/Who_Benefits/full_report_2009.pdf

▶ **The Commission has launched a public consultation on climate change** to gather contributions from the relevant stakeholders to plug into its 5th National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Submissions from all developed



countries are due to be delivered to the UNFCCC secretariat by Jan 1, 2010, with the EU-27 expected to submit their individual national communications. The Commission consultation will run for 6 weeks. See <http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice>

This newsletter exists to inform IFOAM members about the work of the IFOAM EU Group and its liaison and coordination office in Brussels. The IFOAM EU Group is the European Regional Group of the worldwide umbrella organisation IFOAM and is responsible for all matters related to organic farming with a Europe-wide scope. Information IFOAM EU Group: <http://www.ifoam-eu.org>

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Please send any comments on the newsletter to info@ifoam-eu.org. For further information contact your national board member or the office in Brussels.

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