

Dear Members,

This is a challenging time for the organic farming movement in Europe, with the Council's December 19 "general approach" to a new organic regulation on the table. The Annexes, the technical parts, remain to be worked out.

There are many important issues on which the organic sector is opposed to the Council, eg. GMO, compulsory logo. One crucial and embarrassing insufficiency is the lack of transparency and of formal mechanisms for consulting the professional organic farming sector before decisions are taken that affect the development of the regulation. Organic production and the dynamic market of today are the result of the initiative and development from within the sector – for any legislation to be legitimate, it is crucial to consult those involved.

On the other hand, we obtained major improvements, compared to the Commission's original proposal of December 2005. The restrictions on private standards and trade marks were deleted and we also find improvements in other areas. But a better result would have been necessary to ensure a mature regulation as a tool for the future development of the sector. We regret that, just as the Council was starting to make substantial progress, this "general approach" was pushed through that might limit further progress.

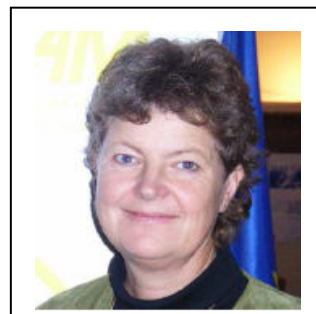
Now we have to ensure that changes will be made through the German presidency and the European Parliament report.

I am happy to forward our pre-Christmas newsletter to inform you of what IFOAM-EU has been doing. At the same time, I have to apologize for not sending you our general newsletter regularly this year. Our resources have primarily been devoted to working on the revision of the Organic regulation. As you may have seen, we published two extra editions on the Revision (see also point 1.1) as well as a web-page.

I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy and successful new year!

Yours sincerely

Marianne Schönning, Vice-President



Summary

1. Activities of the IFOAM EU Group

1.1. Revision of the Organic Regulation (2092/91)

- * Council decided on "general approach"
- * IFOAM EU Group revision newsletters

1.2. IFOAM EU Group office in Brussels & internal structure

- * Brussels office moved
- * New office staff
- * Specialist Group Organic Retailers
- * Annual report 2005

1.3. IFOAM EU Group in public

- * Organic Week in EU institutions
- * Green Week in Brussels

1.4. Policy

- * Seminar on Organic farming and Lisbon strategy

1.5. Research

- * Less EU research funding for Organic Farming?

2. Decisions/Reports concerning organic farming

3. Calendar /Links /Other news

3.1. Calendar

3.2. Links

3.3. Other news

1. Activities of the IFOAM EU Group

1.1 Revision of the Organic Regulation (2092/91)

Council decided on "general approach" – The Agricultural Council decided on December 19 on a "general approach". This is close to a final agreement, after which only small technical changes are possible during the following German Presidency (start 1. January). 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. Now, just as the Council is making strong headway, a quick decision was made before the end of the year.

The sector remains concerned, for example, about the lack of stakeholder involvement, GMO's, the mandatory use of the EU logo, the inadequately defined 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.

A big achievement for the organic sector has been that proposed restrictions on private trade marks and standards (Article 20 & 24) have been dropped, these private standards being essential to maintaining a dynamic and expanding organic food and farming sector.

The Council also adopted a Regulation introducing interim import rules, pending the entry into application of the new legislation on organic products, certain import provisions of the current legislation expiring on 31 December 2006.

*Download:

[Press release IFOAM EU Group - \(French\)](#)

[Press release Council](#)

IFOAM EU Group revision newsletters – The IFOAM EU Group published [two newsletters \(in various languages\)](#), in July and December, to inform about latest developments. The newsletters are available in several languages. For the same reason a [Revision Info page](#) was set up. On this web page you find the latest news of the revision.

1.2 IFOAM EU Group/office in Brussels & internal structure

Brussels office moved – The IFOAM EU Group Brussels office had to move this autumn to a new location. The new office is in the centre of the EU quarter and provides more space for the staff. The new address is:

IFOAM EU Group
Rue du Commerce 124
1000 Brussels
Tel.: + 32-2-280 12 23
Fax: +32-2-735 73 81

New office staff – The IFOAM EU Group office in Brussels expanded its team during autumn. In October, Sevelina Todorova (Bulgaria) joined the office team as administrator. Irina Maia (Portugal) arrived in

September for a one year traineeship and Damien Dessane from France started his half year internship in November.

Specialist Group Organic Retailers – The IFOAM EU Group established together with the Organic Retailer Association an IFOAM EU “Organic retailer” specialist group. This new cooperation will ensure that the specific concerns of the rapidly growing organic retailer sector are given due attention. It will also strengthen the representation of the whole organic sector in Brussels by speaking with “one organic voice” under the flag of the IFOAM EU Group.

Further information:

Ralf Liebing (liebing@vnoe.at)

Annual report 2005 – You can now download the annual report of the IFOAM EU Group for 2005.

* [Download](#)

1.3 IFOAM EU Group in public

Organic Week in EU institutions - The IFOAM EU Group organised together with the Austrian EU Presidency (01.01 to 30.06.2006) an ORGANIC WEEK in the canteens of the European Commission and the European Council in Brussels. The event took place from May 17 to 24. During this period, EU officials and their guests had the possibility to enjoy a range of organic meals. This public-private initiative aimed to

support the use of organic food in public canteens and underlines the role of catering for a dynamic development of the organic sector.



From the left: Mr Onderet, chef de cuisine, Agriculture Commissioner Fischer Boel, Austrian Minister Pröll and Marco Schlüter (IFOAM EU Group) at the Organic Week

* [More information](#)

* [Press release Organic week](#)

Green Week in Brussels - This year the IFOAM EU Group participated at the Commission's annual Green Week in Brussels from May 30 to June 2 2006. This year's theme was “Biodiversity”. The IFOAM EU Group presented its perspective on biodiversity and organic farming with its own stand. Visitors to the stand found various information on the

potential of organic farming for preserving biodiversity, participated in a vegetable seeds quiz, tasted organic wine and talked with the staff of the IFOAM EU Group.



Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas visiting the IFOAM EU Group booth during Green Week.

Among the most famous visitors to the IFOAM EU Group stand were the Commissioner for Environment, Stavros Dimas, and Vandana Shiva, environmental activist (former IFOAM world board member) and winner of the alternative Nobel.peace price (Right Livelihood Award).

* [More](#)

1.4 Policy

Seminar on Organic farming and the Lisbon strategy - The IFOAM EU Group organised a seminar "Organic Farming and Rural Development in the Context of the Lisbon Strategy" in October in Brussels. The main outcome of this meeting of European experts at the was recognition of the role of organic agriculture in contributing to the targets of the Lisbon Strategy! 'Organic farming delivers the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy', said Francis Blake, president of the IFOAM EU Group. 'We call on the Commission to use Organic farming to its maximum advantage.'

* [Press release 23/10/2006](#)

* [Download seminar documents](#)

1.5 Research

Less EU Research funding for Organic Farming? - The IFOAM EU Group on October 11, 2006, sent a [letter](#) to EU Research Commissioner Potocnik to express its serious disquiet at there being less funding for organic food and farming research in the new 7th Framework Research Programme than under the current one. This letter was supported by other European umbrella organisations. Furthermore, the Group met various EU officials and the Commissioner's cabinet.

Reducing research money for organic farming in the 7th Framework Programme would not only contradict the various EU policy strategies relating to organic farming, e.g. the European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming. It would also hamper the further development of a dynamic organic food and farming sector and market. The new Programme will start on 1.1.2007.

* [More](#)


2. Decisions/Reports concerning organic farming Amending Regulation 2091/92

In the official journal you will find all decisions, reports and new laws. The electronic form of the official journal can be found under:


<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOIndex.do?ihmlang=en>

Below are listed the amendments to Council Regulation 2091/92 in 2006:

24 May 2006 –

[Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 780/2006 of 24 May 2006 \(amending Annex VI from 01 December 2007\)](#) 

5 May, 2006

[Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 699/2006 of 5 May 2006 \(amending Annex I - poultry housing\)](#) 

Overview of all amendments to Council Regulation 2092/91

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic/standards/amendments.htm>

3. Calendar/Links /Other news

3.1 Calendar

April 19-20, 2007 - 3rd Conference on "GMO Free Regions, Biodiversity and Rural Development" will take place in Brussels

24 April 2007, "2nd International Symposium on Organic Viticulture- Regulations for Organic Enology", organized by the German Organic Winegrowers Association (ECOVIN) and the German Winegrowers Association (DWV) will take place during the "Intervitis Interfructa" on April 24th, 2007 in Stuttgart, Germany.

For more info:

<http://www.isofar.org/events/events-2007.html>

<http://www.messe-stuttgart.de/intervitis//2007/english/index.htm>

3.2 Links:

Standing committee on Organic Farming- Short report of the meetings of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming held in 2006.

11 January: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/minco/regco/agbio/63.pdf>

23 March: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/minco/regco/agbio/64.pdf>

6-7 June: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/minco/regco/agbio/65.pdf>

21-22 September: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/minco/regco/agbio/66.pdf>

Biotech Mailout of "Friends of the Earth Europe" can be accessed at:
http://www.foeurope.org/GMOs/publications/Biotech_December06.pdf

Organic Research update - You can find an interesting link to organic research matters, updated twice a week, covering all aspects of organic production, research, policy as well as people and events.

<http://www.organic-research.com/news/database/guestnews.asp>

Follow up Odense – All documents about the Joint Organic Congress in Odense, Denmark, in May 2006 can be downloaded now:

www.organic-congress.org.

Council on the Future of European Agriculture – Finnish preparatory document for Council meeting of September 26 to discuss the European model of Agriculture.

http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/other_documents/vko30/en_GB/1153824999785

3.3 Other news

Birdlife Report criticises Rural Development programmes in new Member States – Birdlife International published a report on the effectiveness of agri-environment schemes in 10 new Member States. Many of the draft Rural Development programmes submitted to the Commission by the 10 new Member States would fail to deliver a sustainable farming sector in those countries, particularly with regard to the conservation of farmland birds & their habitats.

* [Download](#)

Soil Strategy published – The Thematic Strategy on Soil Protection was adopted by the European Commission on 22 September, 2006. The proposal was transmitted to the Council, the European Parliament and other EU institutions to follow the legislative process.

The strategy is accompanied by a Framework Directive and outlines a number of policy initiatives. The aim of the strategy is to protect Europe's soil against erosion, organic matter decline, salinisation, compaction, landslides, sealing and contamination. Areas at risk of soil degradation will have to be identified by Member States. Further national plans to rehabilitate them will have to be established.

* [More](#)

EU Labelling paper - The Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection (DG Sanco) is currently considering a number of labelling issues. In order to provide a more coherent basis for the proposals needed, the Directorate-General launched a dialogue with key stakeholders in its established consultative fora in order to redefine the foundations of its approach. See below the background paper being used to frame these discussions. It was sent to Member States and was discussed during meetings of various working groups.

* [Background paper DG Sanco](#)

* [Result internet consultation DG Sanco](#)

EEA report – The European Environment Agency (EEA) published a report entitled "Integration of the environment into the EU agricultural policy" that seeks to reflect on progress, achievements and obstacles to the integration of environmental concerns into the EU agricultural policy, according to indicators developed within the context of the IRENA operation.

* [Download](#)

Thematic strategy on pesticides published - DG Environment on 12th July 2006 published its thematic strategy on pesticides: "A Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides" (sic).

* [More](#)

Pesticide residue report for 2004 - The European Commission published its 2004 report on pesticide residue levels in plant products in Europe. It says that around five percent of fresh fruit & vegetables and cereals contained pesticide residues above the maximum permitted levels in 2004, down from 5.5% in 2003.

[*Download](#)

Animal health strategy – A report was drawn up by the Food Chain Evaluation Consortium (FCEC) under the direction of a DG SANCO steering committee. It should facilitate the decision on the EU's animal health policy and strategy.

[*More](#)

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.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group/eu_group.html

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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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