

Dear Members,

You receive the last IFOAM EU Group newsletter of the year 2007 before the Brussels office will leave for Christmas break.

It was again an exiting year for the IFOAM EU Group involved in the discussion about the implementing rules of the new organic regulation, the CAP Health check, the business and biodiversity and the drawing up of an organic research vision.

The last highlight of a long year was the European Organic Congress in Brussels on December 4-5 which the IFOAM EU Group organised to urge policy decision makers to practise a consistent policy in all major agri-policy fields. Together with about 300 participants we developed congress conclusions as a new political agenda for organic food and farming. These recommendations will be developed further in 2008 to give clear guidelines to policy on the levels of EU and the member states.

Next year as one priority the IFOAM EU Group will start a process to develop a vision and strategy to prepare the General Assembly in 2009. It will be crucial to continue to implement our financial concept to ensure appropriate finance from 2009 onwards.

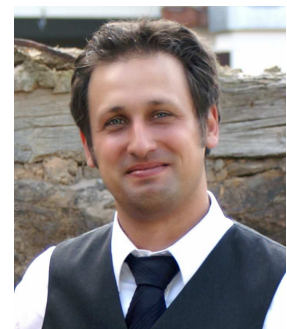
Further main organic challenges in Brussels will be:

- The implementing rules of the organic regulation
- The forthcoming discussion about the future of the CAP
- The official establishment of a research platform for organic food and farming to influence EU research funding
- The labelling thresholds for non-GM seeds

With these challenges ahead I wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy organic new year 2008!

A handwritten signature in dark ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and reads "Marco Schlüter".

Marco Schlüter
Director



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1. Activities of the IFOAM EU Group

1.1 The European Organic Congress demonstrated the vitality of the growing organic sector

More than 300 participants from more than 34 countries got together in Brussels on December 4 and 5 to discuss the future of the organic food and farming in Europe.

The congress was opened with a [speech](#) by the EU Agriculture Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel who noted, among other things, that organic production is steadily growing in most EU countries and there is now a keen awareness of its societal benefits.

The well-attended congress organised by the IFOAM EU Group - as key organic policy event in the EU in 2007, was for two days a meeting point for high level officials from the European Commission, European Parliament, OECD, representatives of different interest groups, environmental organisations and above all, and in large numbers, stakeholders from the organic sector from all over Europe.

The congress was intended to assess the current situation and political development after the European Commission launched its organic action plan in 2004. While being broadly representative for the current questions and debates related to organics, the European Organic Congress' particular focus was on the future policy to organic production – in this respect the congress' output was a set of recommendations for the improvement of the policy framework for the organic sector in Europe. In its closing communique the congress identified the following necessary steps in the following areas:

- **CAP Health Check** - to make organic farming a specific focus of the environmental measures to be developed as part of the EU's CAP Health Check;
- **Funding** - to ensure that some of the proposed increase in rural development funding is targeted at organic farming;
- **Research** - to support the development of a dedicated organic research vision and ideas forum;
- **Stakeholder involvement** - to improve the involvement of stakeholders in the process of reforming the EU regulation;
- **Ethics** – to maintain the integrity of organic food with reference to core values, to protect against devaluing the concept as the market expands;
- **GMO vs. Organic** – to continue campaigning for GMO policies that protect the GM free status of organic products and ensure that liability for contamination is consistent with the polluter pays principle.

(For full text of this and other congress communications, please go [here](#))

[More information:](#)

Most speeches and presentations were made available at the [congress website](#). The presentations will be made available as podcast in the new year.

To leave a comment, please go to:

http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/Congress_guestbook.aspx

To take part in the congress evaluation, please fill in and return the congress evaluation form:

http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/Congress_Material.aspx

For full account of the topics and the involved speakers, please see [Programme](#) and [Work Sessions](#) of the congress website.

1.2 The new Organic Regulation – Implementing Rules

The [Revision Info page](#) of the IFOAM EU Group contains the outputs of the latest work of the Group on the Implementing Rules which will be attached to the recently adopted [new organic regulation](#) (834/2007), which on its part will replace, as of January 2009, the Council Regulation 2092/91 (the current organic regulation).

The European Commission is hoping to present the Commission proposal for the implementing rules to the Standing Committee on Organic Farming in January, with the aim of getting them approved by the summer of 2008. The new areas will not be included. The exception is aquaculture, on which DG Fish has already started work, having held one meeting of an expert group.

The Commission launched to member states and to the Advisory Group on Organic Farming a non-paper [on imports](#) for a "Regulation laying down detailed rules for implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 as regards the arrangements for imports of organic products from third countries".

Further documents

- IFOAM EU Group [letter](#) to the Head of Unit Organic Farming of the European Commission on acids for salt bath treatment in cheese production.
- IFOAM EU Group [Letter](#) to the Head of Unit Organic Farming of the European Commission on the new implementing rules of organic production.

*** IFOAM EU Organic Aquaculture Group** – The IFOAM EU Group established an organic aquaculture working group to develop common position for setting up the implementing rules. The responsible DG Fish of the Commission plans to invite experts in January and March where the IFOAM EU Group will also participate. DG Fish hopes to forward a legal proposal to the Standing Committee on Organic Farming in autumn.

1.3 IFOAM EU Group/office in Brussels & internal structure

New position - the IFOAM EU Group has extended until January 27, 2008, the application deadline for the position of a **Technology Platform Coordinator**. The Coordinator is to ensure the proper implementation of a new project – Research Technology Platform on organic food and farming. Job description and details can be found on the [webpage of IFOAM EU](#).

1.4 Policy

* **CAP Health Check – the future of the EU Common Agriculture Policy:** The IFOAM EU Group has launched a position paper on the so called CAP Health Check 2007/2008 (policy review of the EU's Common Agriculture Policy). The paper points to the CAP Health Check as an unique opportunity to improve the CAP (and organic policy within CAP), and provides reform proposals. It can be downloaded [here](#).

* **IFOAM EU Group signs a letter to the Commission against approval of GM maize varieties:** in end-November the Group joined Greenpeace European Unit and other organisations - environmental NGOs, farmer organizations and consumer co-operatives, in signing a letter to all the 27 European Commissioners concerning the commercial cultivation of two new GM maize varieties (Bt11 and 1507) in the EU.

* **The role of business in biodiversity conservation** was explored during the two-day conference of the EU Portuguese Presidency which took place on November 12-13 in Lisbon. The conference was the meeting point for more than 400 leaders from business, governments, the European Union and non-governmental organisations, who discussed on the convergence between public and private sectors and other strategies to stem a steadily worsening global biodiversity crisis.

The IFOAM EU Group director Marco Schlüter participated in this conference to communicate how well organic food and farming already practices business and protection of biodiversity. It is now important that the conference in Lisbon will be followed up by a real major shift in thinking on the role of business in halting the loss of biodiversity instead of using it for 'green washing' of companies' images.

Conference reports and presentations as well as '[Message from Lisbon](#)', calling for continued engagement of business in biodiversity conservation, are available at www.countdown2010.net/business.

* **Council postpone decision on Soil Directive:** Following vote in the Environment Council on December 20, where a blocking minority of five ministers from Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK stopped a compromise proposal for a Soil Framework Directive, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the IFOAM EU Group and BirdLife expressed their utter dismay at the unwillingness of a select group of Environment Ministers to face a very real problem in the EU: the [continuing degradation of our soils](#).

1.5 Research

* **Research Technology Platform – consultation on Vision Paper for Organic Research 2025.** The IFOAM EU Group and ISOFAR launched in November a consultation round on the 4th draft of the Organic Research Vision Paper, which is to serve as a guiding document for organic research in Europe. The 'Vision' is the first step of establishing a Research Technology Platform on organic food and farming. You can find more information on the [IFOAM EU Group webpage](#). In January there will be a new version of the research vision available.

2. Decisions/reports concerning organic farming

No new legislative decisions have been taken since the issuance of the IFOAM EU Newsletter No 18 in November. Below you can find links to the decisions in amendment of the organic regulation, which were taken earlier this year.

Overview of all amendments to Council Regulation 2092/91

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

Amendments to 2092/91:

[\(Official Journal L 098 , 13/04/2007 P. 0003 – 0004\)](#)

Commission Regulation (EC) No 394/2007 of 12 April 2007 amending Annex I to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto in agricultural products and foodstuffs. This amendment increased the allowance for 2nd year in-conversion feed to 50% for brought-in rations and to 80% for own-farm rations, until the end of 2008.

[\(Official Journal L 181 , 11/07/2007 P. 0010 - 0011 \)](#)

Commission Regulation (EC) No 807/2007 of 10 July 2007 amending Annex II to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs. In Table III (Substances to be used in traps and/or dispensers) in point 1 of Part B (Products for plant protection) of Annex II to Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, for the entry 'Metaldehyde', the date '31 March 2006' is replaced by '31 March 2008'.

For further information on EU decisions, reports and new laws you can always refer to the Official Journal of the European Union:

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

3. Calendar/Links /Other news

3.1 Calendar

January 17 - 20, 2008: ECOLOGY – ISTANBUL 2008, 7th Trade Fair for Organic Products and Environment, Istanbul/Turkey

<http://www.asdf.com.tr/english.asp>

February 21 - 24, 2008: BioFach, Nuremberg/Germany

<http://www.biofach.de/de>

February, 18-20, 2008: 13th International Conference on Cultivation Technique and Phytopathological Problems in Organic Fruit-Growing, Weinsberg/Germany

<http://www.ecofruit.net>

April 17-18, 2008: Colloque international, « Agriculture Biologique & Changement Climatique », Lempdes/France, www.abiodoc.com

May 12-16, 2008: GMO-Free Global Summit on Diversity during the Biosafety Protocol Meeting of Parties and the Convention on Biological Diversity, Bonn/Germany.

<http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/planetdiversity.html>

June 16-20, 2008: The 16th IFOAM Organic World Congress, Modena/Italy

http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/owc/Organic_World_Congress.html

3.2 Links:

Standing committee on Organic Farming- Short report of the meetings of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming:

- 70th meeting on [27/11/2007](http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/owc/Organic_World_Congress.html)
- 69th meeting on [16/10/2007](http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/owc/Organic_World_Congress.html)
- 68th Meeting on [13/06/2007](http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/owc/Organic_World_Congress.html)

3.3 Other news

* **The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) marked a five year anniversary** through series of events in end-November and throughout 2007. On November 22 a European Food Safety Summit, jointly organised by EFSA and the Portuguese Presidency, considered the future of food and feed risk

assessment in Europe. On November 20-21 the agency offered a Scientific Forum 'From Safe Food to Healthy Diets' which focused on the most important current challenges in food safety and various related issues. The events also highlighted EFSA's ambitions for the future - including its intention to support the European Commission in the field of nutrition, and moves to sign cooperation agreements with Japan, Australia and New Zealand (after having signed such with the USA's FDA) in attempt to expand its outreach and achieve global recognition.

For more information, see <http://www.efsa.europa.eu> - "Five Year Anniversary"

*** Start of EU project on training-certification for the organic retailing business.** The Cologne-based Institute *Equalita* continues its activities for quality assurance in organic food retailing with the project "**ECO-QUALIFY II**". The initial project meeting took place in Vienna on Dec 10-11. The objective of this Innovation-Transfer-Project is to expand the qualification standards for organic retailers, developed in the initial project "ECO-QUALIFY I", into a comprehensive European quality assurance system for the further education in organic foods trade. The system is to be transferred then to the participating project partner countries: Austria, Italy, Netherlands, Czech Republic and Germany.

The project will be carried out in the framework of the program "Lifelong Learning - Leonardo da Vinci" of the European Union. It is one of the 30 approved projects out of 86 proposals.

More information: www.equalita.de

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.

Editor IFOAM EU Group Newsletter:
Sevelina Todorova/Marco Schlüter
Rue du Commerce 124, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Phone: + 32-2-280 12 23
Fax: +32-2-735 73 81