

Dear members,

It is now, in the middle of July 2008, thirty months since the first draft for a new organic regulation was presented by the EU Commission. Also the implementing part of the text has just recently been voted on and accepted by the Standing Committee on Organic Farming in July.

And what is the result? What have we gained in this process which have engaged us all and consumed so much of the resources in the organic movement?

We have got a new regulation where the first and principle part has a clearer and more logical structure and an improved language – people outside the absolute “inner-circle” will find it easier to understand. The import part of the legislation is also innovative and changed for the better.

The organic legislation should be a tool for a good and credible development of the sector and the market. Will the new regulation become this tool, or is there instead a risk it will be one of the major obstacles for this development? Well, unfortunately we have to state that there is plenty still to do, many of the disadvantages in 2092/91 still remain, and new ones are adding up to the administrative burden....You would have expected a better result from a revision.

The IFOAM EU Group managed to concentrate major resources on the revision process and gave professional input over the last 2,5 years. Thus, we have achieved important changes in the final text for the sector, e.g. reduced the administrative burden in the area of labelling & certification and obtained more feasible derogations. On the other hand we failed to stop the mandatory use of the EU-logo and labelling of origin. This has been criticised by the unanimous sector through the whole process. Labelling is an issue of communication on a market – if a label adds value to a product it is used, if not it is just an additional cost that has to be paid for. In the end this extra costs will naturally make organic products less competitive.

Whilst we acknowledge that the Commission has been working to clearly improve their consultation procedures since last autumn, we have to point out that the “democratic deficit” is the biggest disappointment of the whole revision process. This was not appropriate for the 21st century - the analogue process in the USA (NOP) is a far better example of openness and transparency.

There is a big challenge to improve this for the future.

Marianne Schönning,
Vice President, IFOAM EU Group.



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1. Activities of the IFOAM EU Group

1.1 Implementing Rules to the new Organic Regulation

► SCOF approved the general Implementing Rules (NIROF)

The Standing Committee on Organic Farming (SCOF) approved at its 75th meeting on July 2 the text of the [Implementing Rules](#) (the so called NIROF) to the new [Organic Regulation 834/2007](#). With this the process of revision of the Organic Regulation comes to its final stages. The Rules will be adopted formally by the Commission later in July or September and published in the Official Journal most probably in early October, according to Commission information. The regulation – after long and sometimes heated negotiations – will come into force on 1st of January 2009.

Further Implementing Rules for imports, for aquaculture and for wine (not part of the general NIROF) will be proposed later by the Commission, as well as the necessary amendment of the technical annex XI of the NIROF for renewing the EU logo (the implementation of a new EU logo, mandatory for all packaged organic products, has been postponed and is expected to be agreed in 2009).

The adoption of NIROF is a key step towards the implementation of the new regulation which on its part is of direct importance to everyone in the sector. All current and future organic producers throughout the European Union will have to operate according to the new legislative provisions of the EU.

In a [press release](#) the IFOAM EU Group expressed its mixed feelings about the newly adopted general Implementing Rules. The Group welcomed the progress with the long awaited Implementing Rules, but reiterated its concerns about a number of problems. While it meets with approval the important definitions which are to provide legal certainty for the operation of organic farmers, processors and control bodies in Europe, it cannot at the same accept approvingly the pressure to complete the process within an unrealistic timescale and a number of inconsistencies and impractical requirements. (Please find the full text of the press release [here](#)).

The IFOAM EU Group is working on a *Regulation Dossier* to inform about the new regulation, about what it brings to the organic operators and what the stakeholders think of it. The Dossier will be presented at BioFach 2009. (If you are interested in the sponsorship/advertising opportunities connected with the Dossier, the work on which is currently in progress, please get in [contact](#) with us).

► Organic Aquaculture - Implementing Rules

The IFOAM EU Group participated actively at the 3rd expert meeting on organic aquaculture (28-29th May, 2008), organised by the Commission, DG MARE, to collect expertise on the implementing rules in this area. The IFOAM EU Group handed in a [position paper](#) which was perceived and discussed as a valuable common position of the European organic sector. Further, the IFOAM EU Group contributed with its [position paper on organic seaweed implementing rules](#) as a supplement to the above mentioned position.

The long expected [working document of the Commission](#), DG Mare, was finally communicated to the Members States at the SCOF meeting on June 30th, asking for comments until mid-August. The IFOAM EU Group is currently preparing comments to this document. DG Mare aims to finalise the document in autumn to come to a final decision on aquaculture implementing rules before the end of the year.

1.2 IFOAM EU presentation at Green week

IFOAM EU Group had yet again the opportunity to participate in the annual Green Week of the European Commission (June 3-6, 2008) at the Commission headquarters in Brussels, an event which was this year devoted to the "Sustainable Consumption and Production". The week-long expo of green organisations provided a good opportunity for exchanges of information among non-governmental organisations, businesses, various levels of government and the public. It was a chance for the IFOAM EU to inform and engage those less familiar with the sustainability aspects of organic farming.

The EU Commissioner for the environment Mr Stavros Dimas was one of the many personas from the EU political arena who took the occasion to visit the IFOAM EU stand and learn more about the organic movement.

On the picture: Lena Wietheger from the Brussels office of IFOAM EU Group discusses with Commissioner Dimas the principles of organic agriculture.



Thanks to the generous support of Den Diepen Boomgaard (a local organic farm) the stand of IFOAM EU displayed a variety of organic fruits and vegetables. The homemade 'Sustainability Quiz for Organic Food and Farming' was a good starting point to share information on organics in Europe as well as the current work of IFOAM EU. The participants were rewarded with a Bioshop voucher and organic juice from Pajottenlander, which sponsored our booth.

1.3 Upcoming IFOAM EU Group events - next seminars

After its Bulgarian seminar in the beginning of April, IFOAM EU Group is planning and preparing two other Commission funded seminars on organic farming: in Hungary in September this year (18-20/09/2008) and in Romania in April next year (23-25/04/2009). The first one will focus on the topic of "Sustainable agriculture in Europe - the role of organic food and farming and its political framework". The second seminar will look into: "Multifunctional agriculture in Europe - the role of organic food and farming and its political framework".

1.4 Research

► **ORGAP concluded with guidelines for successful organic action plans' development and evaluation.** Having started in 2005, the three year project was finalised at the end of this April and after its main outputs were published, the project and its results and publications were presented at the July meeting of SCOF.

The EU Commission-funded ORGAP project – "*European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming – Development of criteria and procedures for the evaluation of the EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture*", did major work on the methodology to evaluate the EU action plan in this area, but it also made an extensive research on the numerous organic action plans developed on national and regional levels in Europe. This background research, and the wealth of input from experts and stakeholders, was used for the development of a [practical manual](#) (IFOAM EU Group was one of the producers) and [evaluation toolbox](#) (ORGAPET) – two main project outputs designed to support the initiation, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of EU and national action plans for organic food and farming.

For further information: www.orgap.org

► **ORWINE: the second European Project Advisory Committee of the three year research project ORWINE** took place at the end of May in Venice. The IFOAM EU Group is one of the project partners. The goal of the meeting was to discuss the comments and opinions gathered from stakeholders and to produce recommendations for the EU Commission for setting up the Organic Wine Regulation before the end of 2008.

The about 30 participants from all over Europe appreciated the work done so far by the project consortium and encouraged the team to go for a clear distinction between conventional and organic wine. Especially in regards to the SO₂ content in organic wine: they requested a clearly lower admission level than in conventional wines. The last ORWINE project meeting is scheduled to be combined with the SCOF meeting and possibly with the EU Wine Commission in November 2008.

More on ORWINE: www.orwine.org

► **Organic Research Platform – stakeholder forum in Brussels:** ‘What research is really needed for organic food and farming?’ was the main issue of the 1st Stakeholder Forum of the Organic Research Platform held on June 10, 2008 in the office of the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) in Brussels.

The meeting, attended by some 20 stakeholder/civil society organisations and the Commission, aimed to involve EU organisations in the newly founded organic research platform, to explain its structure and provide yet another opportunity for comments on the last draft of the [Organic Research Vision 2025](#) for Organic Food and Farming. The Vision was a subject of consultation in April/May and was an initiative, as well as the platform itself, of the IFOAM EU Group and ISOFAR.



Marco Schlüter, director of the IFOAM EU Group, moderated the forum and gave an update on the state of the art of the Technology Research Platform and the research vision. The participating organisations asked the IFOAM EU Group to continue to be in charge of the platform secretariat. The participants then discussed in working groups on the different parts of the research vision:

- Organic agriculture as an ethical value system for research
- Organic agriculture and regional and global economies
- Organic agriculture and ecological intensification
- Organic food, healthy diets and human well-being

To read more about the Vision and to comment, please go to: <http://www.organic-research.org/index.html>

1.5 IFOAM EU Group/office in Brussels & internal structure

The Brussels office of IFOAM EU Group welcomed in the beginning of June Eduardo Cuoco (Italy) who took up the position of a Research Technology Platform Coordinator (for the Technology Platform please see above).



The office now works with 5 staff members, plus two trainees, after the leave of Monika Styczek, a 1-year EVS funded trainee. We would like to

thank Monika for her contributions in the organisation of events and other areas.

IFOAM EU Group is currently looking for an intern starting from September 2008. Interested candidates can receive the application form from Lena.Wietheger@ifoam-eu.org. The application deadline is July 28. Own funding for the internship period is a necessity. You can find more information on the internship at www.ifoam-eu.org.

2. Decisions/Reports concerning organic farming

► **Standing Committee on Organic Farming** - short reports of the meetings of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming:

- [75th meeting on 1-2/07/2008](#)
- [74th meeting on 26-27/05/2008](#)
- [73st meeting on 15-16/04/2008](#)

► **The First Specialised Organic Retail Report – Europe 2008** is now published by the Organic Retailers Association. Its 384 pages contain: general economic background and country information, underlying market shaping forces, market actors in the organic supply chains, consumption indicators and consumers, products, marketing and distribution trends, practical guidelines and addresses. For the price of € 350 you can order it at office@o-r-a.org or by fax: +43-1-9076313-20.

► A new [regulation for implementing the provisions concerning certificate of inspection for imports](#) from third countries under Article 11 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 on organic production of agricultural products has been published by the Official journal of the Commission on June 20th.

3. Calendar of events/Other news

3.1 Calendar of events

Time (2008)	Event
September 3-5	Bioacademy 2008 – 8 th European Summer Academy on Organic Farming, Lednice/Czech Republic (1) http://www.pro-bio.cz/bioak/info.php?lan=eng <i>Under the patronage of the IFOAM EU Group.</i>
September 11-14	20th International exhibition of natural products - nutrition, health, environment, Bologna/Italy www.sana.it
September 16-20	VIII Scientific biannual Congress on Organic Farming and IV Ibero-American Agroecology Congress, Bullas/Spain Look for information on the SEAE website: www.agroecologia.net

September 25-27	BioCordoba 2008 – Cordoba, Spain http://english.biocordoba.com/
October 29-30	DG SANCO (European Commission) Conference "Delivering for Tomorrow's European Consumers, Brussels/Belgium http://www.sanco-tomorrow.eu
November 5-7	5th International Scientific Conference on Sustainable farming systems ECOMIT, Piešťany/Slovakia (2) http://www.ecomit.vurv.sk/about-the-meeting/intro/

Featured events

(1) The 8th European Summer Academy on Organic Farming – Bioacademy 2008 in Lednice na Morave will bring together around 200 participants like every year. The event is important and interesting occasion intended for everyone involved in organic farming and foodstuffs. This years' title is "New Findings in Science and Research – Innovation in Organic Farming".

The content is split into two parallel conferences: a **conference for practice** around the topic of "Quality assurance and market production" and a **scientific conference** entitled "Food, Ecology and Fairness: Trends in Research and a Vision for Organic Agriculture". Accompanying programme, e.g. the already traditional festive closing ceremony in the ancient Lednice chateau or organic wine and food tasting in cosy wine cellars, has also been prepared, as well as three excursions (Austria, Slovak Republic and Czech Republic). As it has been over the last years, IFOAM EU Group patrons the event. *All information including on-line registration is available at <http://www.pro-bio.cz/bioak>.*

(2) The 5th International Scientific Conference on Sustainable Farming Systems "ECOMIT" is still inviting registrations. The deadline for the submission of papers has been prolonged until 31 July, 2008. The Conference will provide a forum to discuss the latest knowledge, problems, and solutions in agricultural research with the emphasis on soil and climate change. [Key note speakers](#) from all over the world will present their vision and state of the art in the field of conservation agriculture, organic agriculture in relation to plants and soil, climate change, water efficiency and water management, mechanical soil management, soil health and soil biodiversity, energy production and energy use.

3.2 Other news

► **Organics met in Modena:** from 16 to 20 June 2008 more than 1700 experts, practitioners and producers from some 110 countries met in

Modena/Italy for the [16th IFOAM Organic World Congress](#) to discuss biodiversity, food safety, sowing, growing and harvesting techniques, market opportunities, verification methods, and technological innovations. The Congress has been organised by IFOAM International and the local organisers ModenaBio. The IFOAM General Assembly which followed the congress elected the [new World Board](#) of the organisation. The next congress and General Assembly will take place in South Korea in 2011.

► **Ahead of the European Council of 19-20 June, more than 35 civil society groups**, networks and social movements working for trade justice across Europe have sent a letter to their Trade and Agriculture Ministers. In the letter, the signatory organisations explain the reasons why the EU bears a major responsibility in the current global food crisis, and outline why the current European Commission proposals to deal with the crisis – especially further trade liberalisation and deregulation of agricultural markets – are inefficient, unfair and unsustainable. The signatories put forward a set of alternative policy proposals for EU trade, agriculture and energy policy-makers.

FR: http://www.s2bnetwork.org/download/letter_foodcrisis_trade_EU_190608_fr
EN: http://www.s2bnetwork.org/download/letter_foodcrisis_trade_EU_190608_en

► **New report of OECD and FAO points to the demand for biofuels and the drop in R&D as a reason for the food prices rise.** The report highlights for example that over half of the increase in world demand for grain & vegetable oil between 2005 & 2007 was due to biofuels. That already makes them a strong factor for the upward shift in commodity prices. The report also forecasts that market prices in the coming decade will be on average higher than over the last decade, although not as extreme as in the past 12 months.

For details: [OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook Report 2008-2017](#)

► **Study of IEEP reveals member state priorities in Rural Development spending.** The overall public spending on such schemes amounts to €144 billion from 2007-2013, according to this new comprehensive paper of the Institute for European Environmental Policy. Based on the 76 regional and national Rural Development schemes, the study shows that €67bn (or 46%) of this total is dedicated to Axis 2 (land management and the environment), €48bn (or 33%) to Axis 1 (improving competitiveness), 13% (€18.0bn) on Axis 3 (Diversification) and 6% (€8.6bn) to LEADER type programs. The report also finds distinctive patterns in the member states spending on rural development.

Full report: <http://www.ieep.eu/whatsnew/newsitem.php?item=171>



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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