

Dear members,

The summer break has already become a nice memory and we all are working hard to complete what we want to achieve in 2008. The EU Brussels agenda offers a lot of opportunities to advocate for organic and there is no time to stand still. The implementing rules of the new organic regulation are now published in the official journal and the IFOAM EU Group started its assessment. Further, the rules for organic aquaculture and imports are not completed. In particular the area of aquaculture challenges the sector, as the European Commission wants to push through this process until the end of the year although its background work on it is far not developed or sufficient.

We made great progress in establishing the Research Platform "Organics" as we could commit 15 partner organisations to join and we finalised the Research Vision which will be officially launched this autumn. The discussion about the future CAP after 2013 has started and additionally the Commission plans to launch a consultation on quality schemes and production in mid-October.

Regarding quality, there are two other legal initiatives on the way. The first one is the Commission proposal on the general Ecolabeling which will also include food! The other issue is the nutrition labelling where the EU wants to agree to give additional information for the consumer. However, the currently so favoured traffic light labelling would not enlighten consumers, but give green light for example to "sugar free" products with artificial sweeteners, etc.

The IFOAM EU Group is working on all the above issues. On the other hand our work focus gradually turns to the preparation of our activities next year - the 4th IFOAM EU General Assembly, taking place at February 18, 2009, in Nuremberg, being one of them. However one main present priority is our recently started strategy process which will be completed by December this year and which will help us focus our work to your benefit and make the organisation fit for the challenges ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marco Schlüter".

Marco Schlüter
Director, IFOAM EU Group



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1. Activities of the IFOAM EU Group

1.1 Implementing Rules to the new Organic Regulation

▶ The Implementing Rules published in Official Journal

After the general Implementing Rules (NIROF) to the new [Organic Regulation 834/2007](#) have been approved in summer 2008, they are now published in the Official Journal of the EU in all languages.

You can find the final text here: [Implementing Rules to Council Regulation \(EC\) No 834/2007](#).

▶ Work on the Implementing Rules for Import still ongoing

Whilst the general Implementing Rules have been approved by the Standing Committee on Organic Farming (SCOF) on 2nd of July 2008, the Implementing Rules for Imports from non-EU countries are still under discussion between the European Commission and the member states.

This process, having started in the beginning of this year, seems to be now in its final stage; the Import Rules were in discussion at the SCOF meeting in the end of September and will probably be put to a final vote in late October. Between these two SCOF meetings, the text will also be presented to the Advisory Group on Organic Agriculture of the European Commission on 14th of October.

The IFOAM EU Group [commented on the draft](#) pointing to the unresolved problem with supervision of the certification bodies. According to the Group the draft import rules do not clearly guarantee that sufficient resources and capacities (within the EU) will be made available for this. Further to that, the lack of clear directions for assessment of equivalence and compliance was commented.

The work on the Implementing Rules for Wine Processing will be started in 2009.

For more detailed information:

- IFOAM EU Group's [Revision Info page](#).
- [Special edition revision newsletter](#)

▶ Implementing Rules – Organic Aquaculture

The Commission plans to finalise the implementing rules for the new area of organic aquaculture before end of this year. The second draft of the [working document on organic aquaculture and seaweed](#) was presented and discussed at the SCOF meeting on 16 and 17 of September. The IFOAM EU Group assessed this paper as still far from being a final version of future implementing rules. The IFOAM EU Group is currently working on a position

commenting the latest draft. The next SCOF meeting for aquaculture is scheduled for 7-8 of October.

► **The IFOAM EU Group is working on a Regulation Dossier to inform about the new Organic Regulation** and is planning to launch it during the next BioFach in February 2009. It will be published by then in at least three languages (English, German and French but possibly also Italian and other).

The Dossier, which will be distributed free of charge in all the different languages amongst the organic stakeholders in Europe, is sure to provoke substantial interest due to its valuable content detailing and explaining the new provisions for the organic sector. It is being financed through sponsorship and advertising. If you are interested in using up the last opportunities for sponsorship or advertising, please get in [contact](#) with us.

1.2 IFOAM EU involvement in recent organic events

► **IFOAM EU expert seminar called for organic farming to be the future model for European agriculture**

Experts called for using organic farming as a model for agriculture in Europe during the next in a row seminar organised by the IFOAM EU Group this time in Hungary. The seminar, which took place from September 18 to 21 in Hortobagy, focused on the sustainability aspects of organic farming and brought up strong arguments for its use as the overall model of agriculture in Europe. A parallel point of discussion was the changing policy framework of the European organic food and farming.



More than 30 participants from 20 EU and EFTA countries discussed on the new organic regulation and its implementing rules, the role of organic farming within the EU Common Agricultural Policy and the research needs and priorities of the organic sector. Ms Maria Fladl from the

Organic Unit of DG Agriculture of the European Commission updated the

participants about the EU Organic Action Plan, the new organic regulation, in particular regarding the implementation of the rural development measures. You can find out more about the conclusions of the seminar in the following [press release](#).

The seminar has been co-financed by the European Community, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development. The next such event of the IFOAM EU Group will take place in Romania in April 2009. For more information on that, you can contact the [IFOAM EU Group office](#).

► **IFOAM EU participation in Bioacademy'08:** the IFOAM EU Group was for the fourth time patron of the [Bioacademy](#) in Lednice, the Czech Republic, in the beginning of September.



Working moment of the Bioacademy. From left to right: Jiri Urban, Deputy Minister for Environment and Organic Agriculture in the Czech Republic, Marco Schlüter, Director of IFOAM EU Group, Francis Blake, President of the IFOAM EU Group and Dr. Urs Niggli, Director of FiBL Institute.

The event is one of the major come-togethers for the organic movement in East and Central Europe. For the first time two parallel conferences took place: scientific conference "New Findings in Science and Research – Innovation in Organic Farming" and conference for practitioners. One of the highlights was the closing panel with Percy Schmeiser as a guest speaker. [Percy Schmeiser](#), a farmer and seed developer from Canada, has become the worldwide symbol for the resistance to the brutal methods employed by the multinational seed producer Monsanto to bully and control farmers.

1.3 Policy

► **Soil Directive:** the European Commission launched in September 2006 a proposal for a Soil Directive to mitigate soil degradation and protect

soils, which was then blocked by a sufficient minority in the Council in the end of 2007. The current French Presidency put this topic back on the agenda, but environmental organisations fear that the proposal will be completely weakened down in the process of looking for an agreement.

The IFOAM EU Group director Marco Schlüter was invited to speak about the directive before the audience of a Brussels seminar, organised by [EEB](#) on July 4th. There he expressed the Group's support for the protection of soil, underlining the benefits of organic farming in this respect.

► **Nutrition (traffic light) labelling:** in order to fight obesity and other welfare diseases in the EU, the Commission has proposed to substitute the present voluntary criteria for [nutritional labelling](#) with a mandatory nutritional labelling scheme. It is currently being discussed at EP and Commission level how the nutrition labelling should be fixed by [a new EU regulation](#) on the provision of food information to consumers. The system most discussed is the so called 'traffic light system' which involves 'mandatory declaration' at the front of the product pack of the levels of energy, fat, saturates, sugar and salt expressed in a simple colour-coded way.

The IFOAM EU Group opposes the 'traffic light' system as based on 'old fashioned' nutritional principles and on very basic nutrition information. The system also gives preference for high technical industrial products over natural and processed foods. The Group currently works on a mini-dossier examining the proposed nutrition regulation.

► **The Commission's proposal for EU Ecolabel** is back to the discussion table after in end-July DG Environment sent to the European Parliament and the Council a [Proposal for a Regulation on a Community Ecolabel scheme \(COM \(2008\) 401/3\)](#). The Regulation is meant to apply to any goods or services which are supplied for distribution, consumption or use on the Community market, but concerning food products, it shall apply only to processed food and to the products of fishing and aquaculture. The IFOAM EU Group finds the Proposal highly problematic due to the risk of confusing consumers more than informing them. The Group is currently working on its Position on the Proposal. The Commission's stances on the Ecolabel can be found [here](#).

1.4 Research

► Organic Research Vision and Technology Platform

The 'Vision for an Organic Food and Farming Research Agenda to 2025' was finalised in the end of July after an extensive stakeholder consultation, organised by IFOAM EU Group and the International Society of Organic Agriculture Research (ISO FAR). The Vision builds the basis for the development of a strategic organic research agenda with the intention to

influence the European research priorities. It formulates three main research priorities:

- Viable concepts for the empowerment of rural economies in a regional and global context
- Securing food by eco-functional intensification
- High quality foods – a basis for healthy diets and a key for improving the quality of life and health

The Vision document provides an outlook on future challenges in the areas of agriculture, environment and food production. It also sketches the potential that organic farming has to offer and the resulting research needs.

IFOAM EU Group has been putting more and more stress on the research needs of the organic sector. A Research Technology Platform "Organics" for organic food and farming has been set and develops since May 2007. Already 15 partner organisations from civil society and the economic sector have got involved in it; they also joined the initiators of the Platform in the development of the Research Vision 2025.

Both the Technology Platform and the Research Vision will be officially launched in November.

▶ **ORWINE project rounding off**

The Organic Wine research project ORWINE is in the process of rounding off: after nearly three years of European wide research for a legislative framework for wine from organic viticulture, the involved pilot farms are currently busy to apply this year's processing protocols. Shortly, a last stakeholder consultation round throughout Europe will call for the last inputs from the sector on the proposed wine rules and key questions.

Read more on www.orwine.org

▶ **The ORGAP project** concluded with the publication of a [practical manual](#) (IFOAM EU Group was one of the producers) and [evaluation toolbox](#) (ORGAPET) – two important sources in support of a better creation, implementation and evaluation of EU and national action plans for organic food and farming. Further information is available at www.orgap.org.

1.5 IFOAM EU Group/office in Brussels & internal structure

▶ **The next General Assembly of IFOAM EU Group** will take place on 18 February 2009 in Nuremberg – as an IFOAM EU member you are kindly asked to reserve this date in your calendar. By the end of October a webpage with updates and relevant documents will be set up and announced.

► **The Brussels office of the Group** had to take goodbye with Andrzej Szeremeta (an EVS-supported trainee) and Michaela Senek (Erasmus trainee) due to the end of their traineeship periods. The office wants to thank them for their devoted work in many areas but specifically in organic aquaculture (Andrzej) and fundraising (Michaela). Apart from the more fixed staff, the office now works with one new stagiaire: Angela Morell Perez from Spain (in the center of the picture) - an organic agriculture student from the University of Waheningen - and expects the arrival of two more trainees.



1.6 The Head Office of IFOAM International in Bonn announced the search for the best candidate to be the IFOAM Executive Director. A job description and call for applications have been posted [here](#). The director position is available due to the announced decision of the current executive of IFOAM, Ms Angela Caudle, to not return to IFOAM in the same capacity after her maternity leave. IFOAM expressed both gratitude and best wishes for the future role of Ms Caudle. For more please look on the [IFOAM webpage](#).

2. Decisions/Reports concerning organic farming

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

- [76th meeting on 24/7/2008](#)
- [75th meeting on 1-2/07/2008](#)
- [74th meeting on 26-27/05/2008](#)

► **The First Specialised Organic Retail Report – Europe 2008** have been published by the Organic Retailers Association. Its 384 pages contain wealth of information on organic marketing. It is available upon request from office@o-r-a.org or orderable by fax: +43-1-9076313-20.

3. Calendar of events/Other news

3.1 Calendar of events

| Time (2008/2009) | Event |
|-------------------|---|
| Oct 27-28 | "Summit on the gene" - meeting in Paris to defend the farmers' right to use and reproduce their seeds. For information you can contact FNAB |
| October 16-17 | International Summit "Genes are not for Sale: Call for 10 years Moratorium on GMOs", Krakow/Poland (during EUROBIOTECH 2008) http://icppc.pl/gmo/internationalsummit.pdf |
| October 7-9 | Second International Non-GM Soy Summit, Brussels www.nongmosoysummit.com/register |
| October 28 | Symposium: "Addressing the climate challenge - what can agriculture do? Ideas from Europe and beyond", Brussels http://www.climatechangeintelligence.org/piccmat |
| October 29-30 | DG SANCO (European Commission) Conference "Delivering for Tomorrow's European Consumers, Brussels http://www.sanco-tomorrow.eu |
| November 5-7 | 5th International Scientific Conference on Sustainable farming systems ECOMIT, Piešťany/Slovakia http://www.ecomit.vurv.sk/about-the-meeting/intro/ |
| November 11 | A Global Contract Based on Climate Justice – The Need for a New Approach Concerning International Relations, European Parliament, Brussels http://www.global-contract.eu/ |
| November 12 | Tackling Poverty Through Fair Trade – A Consumer Cooperative Choice, European Parliament, Brussels http://www.eurocoop.coop/events/en/default.asp |
| November 14 | What role for pesticides in Sustainable Agriculture?, European Voice conference, Brussels http://www.europeanvoice.com/Article/61772.aspx |
| November 26-29 | SoilACE 2008 - II Conference on Soil & Compost Eco-biology, Puerto de la Cruz - Island of Tenerife/Spain www.soilACE.com |
| March 25-27, 2009 | EcoProcura 2009 (Climate Neutral through Procurement), Reykjavik/Iceland, http://www.iclei-europe.org/index.php?id=6337 |

3.2 Other news

► **The European Parliament voted against cloning of animals for food purposes.** On September 3 the Parliament called on the Commission to submit proposals prohibiting the use of cloned animals in food products following the publication of a cautious report by the EU's food safety authority on the issue.

While EFSA had found that "food safety concerns are considered unlikely," it warned that the lack of available data on the subject meant the risk had not been sufficiently taken into account. The EFSA report also highlighted the "significant animal health and welfare issues" faced by cloned animals compared to the conventionally ones.

The Resolution of the Parliament which followed the EFSA report highlighted the risk that whole herds could be decimated by disease and point to an [EU Directive on the protection of farm animals](#), which bans any natural or artificial breeding procedures likely to cause suffering or injury.

Currently no products derived from cloned animals are sold in Europe or the rest of the world, but experts believe that such products could reach the market by 2010, notably in the United States, where the Food and Drug Administration [concluded](#) in January that meat and milk from clones of cattle, pigs and goats and their offspring "are as safe to eat as food from conventionally bred animals".

► **New pesticide MRL database launched:** With the entry into force from Sept 1 of new EU rules on harmonised Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for pesticides, the European Commission has launched a database which allows producers, consumers and traders to find the appropriate pesticide MRL, applicable to each agricultural product.

See: http://ec.europa.eu/sanco_pesticides/public/index.cfm

In the meantime green groups, among which Greenpeace and the Austrian Global 2000, protested against the new pesticides residue levels, claiming that at least 700 of the set limits are too high - notably for apples, pears, grapes, tomatoes and peppers. The new regulation already faces a legal challenge in the Court of First Instance from the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) & the Dutch organisation Natuur en Milieu, who claim that the new MRLs will see an increase in the legal limits for many foods, which contradicts the EU commitment to set the lowest possible MRL. Industry officials respond by underlining that all MRLs have been backed by the European Food Safety Authority. See also:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/protection/pesticides/index_en.htm

► **Internet consultation on post-2012 climate change agreement:** The Commission has launched an internet consultation entitled "towards a comprehensive & ambitious post-2012 climate change agreement" in order to shape the EU's position in the UN Climate Change talks in Poznań in December & the Copenhagen Conference taking place at the end of 2009. Go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/template_climatepost2012.pdf

The EC recently closed a **consultation on biomass sustainability criteria**, which aim was to collect stakeholders input in the development of sustainability criteria for biomass for energy purposes. For follow-up and results:

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/consultation/uses_biomass_en.htm

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