



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

IFOAM Head Office • Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5 • D - 53113 Bonn
4 December, 2006

Mr. Juha Korkeaoja
Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
President, European Agriculture Council

Ref: Proposal for Council Regulation amending Regulation EC No 2092/91, DS 825/1/06, prop, 2006 5101/06, 30 November, 2006

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements about the most recent proposal from the Finnish Presidency, dated 30 November, 2006 for the revision of EC No 2092/91. Our comments in this letter are focused on the import provisions in Article 11. When reacting on the abovementioned proposal, we as well aim to react on Proposal for Council Regulation amending Regulation EC No 2092/91, DS 841/06, prop, 2006 5101/06, 30 November, 2006, which contains, according to our understanding, the same content and is listed differently with different article numbers so as to correspond with the proposals for the total revision of the Regulation EC No 2092/91.

We note that the 30th November proposal appears to have addressed some of the points of the proposal made by the German and French Council members, and also a concern on the import requirements raised by a number of third country certification bodies and by IFOAM's EU Group on behalf of IFOAM.

We have noted, and we support the new clarification in Article 11.2 and Article 11.5, of the new proposal that the assessment, listing and oversight of certification bodies competent to certify organic products imported to the European Union applies equally to all control bodies, including those who are approved to certify within the European Union under the provisions of Article 9. We have also noted the addition of language stating that the regular review of the control bodies certifying imports will be based on risk assessment. While in principle we support a risk-based approach to review, the implementation thereof must not unduly discriminate against any particular group of control bodies, either indigenous control bodies in the third countries or EU-based bodies.

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The new proposal adds under article 11.3 a requirement that an original certificate must accompany all goods to the premises of the first consignee and thereafter be retained by the importer. We object to this provision, and particularly to the way in which it applies only to those products that are imported under “equivalent” guarantees. We see no logic for the case that a product produced under an “equivalent” guarantee needs this additional measure whereas a product imported under a “compliant” guarantee does not. Furthermore, IFOAM objects to the measure in any case. We believe that the burden it places on the organic system - to generate transaction certificates for every import shipment to the EU - is immense and it puts a great strain on control bodies and their producers - especially those with lower resources. On the other hand, we question whether this measure provides meaningful additional control. In summary, we believe that the cost of this requirement far outweighs the benefit in general, and we especially object to its application in the current proposal, which will discriminate against “equivalent” organic guarantees.

IFOAM appreciates the efforts of the Finnish Presidency to respond to the concerns of the organic sector, and we request that efforts be continued to produce a revised Council regulation governing imports that optimally supports the growth and integrity of organic agriculture and markets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerrmann'.

Gerald, A. Herrmann
President IFOAM

cc Mrs Mariann Fischer Boel, Commissioner for Agriculture
EU Member States permanent representation
European Parliament Agriculture and Environmental Committees
Standing Committee on Organic Farming