



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

Gerald A. Herrmann, President of IFOAM, patron of BIOFACH
Welcoming address BioFach 2006

A warm welcome to the BioFach, the world's leading fair for organic products, the world's biggest organic wine fair and the emerging, independent organic cosmetics fair. This list proves that we are in the heart of the market, here in Nuremberg. IFOAM is proud to be the patron of BioFach.

Organic markets are developing worldwide, and the outlook is positive; not only in the USA and the Europe. Growth rates are impressive and range in double figures. Markets are emerging in Brazil, China and India and in many other countries of the world. The market base is middle class, and its profile is not significantly different from that of mainstream markets. People's convictions and personal motives have the same underlying consciousness: food should be ethical, social, ecological and healthy. It should taste.

No form of agriculture matches our wishes and expectations as the organic one. No other form of agriculture matches all the New Years Eve addresses, appeals and future talk of politicians better than organic agriculture. No other form of agriculture holds the key to the solution in its hands to meet the demands of the Millennium Development Goals: to halve poverty and hunger in the world by 2015.

We are innovative and represent the future, the alternative - still - even if the word alternative is rarely used today. We stand for values and guarantee benefits to all layers of the society. The benefits are also for the ecology, climate, soil, water, biodiversity, as well as economy; by creating employment or reducing energy use. You must be wondering why I talk to you at length about all this when you already know all that. Let me give you an example: the discrimination of organic agriculture in relation to conventional agriculture is not yet at par as recently proven by scientists, even when the German Agricultural Minister Horst Seehofer remarked not very long ago that the preferential treatment of organic agriculture will now come to an end with his term - quite the opposite of what is fact.



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Another especially good example for this is the recent decision of the WTO to condemn the EU for not granting authorization of transgenic crops. Even if the process may be in line with the international practices and treaties, it does not address or solve the problems which come along with the technology, especially through contamination. Coexistence is not possible; nature does not let itself be confined by administrative concepts. This may not be the right place to debate the democratic legitimation of such decisions; but it needs to be mentioned that the majority of European and consumers elsewhere in the world are clearly rejecting genetic engineering. IFOAM and the organic sector are of the same opinion, and will continue its fight against genetic engineering in agriculture.

Last year, my predecessor, the former President of IFOAM, Gunnar Rundgren mentioned the positive steps the EU Commission had taken in its recently presented European action plan for organic agriculture. This action plan involved itself in constructive dialog with the stakeholders of organic agriculture, above all the strong involvement of the IFOAM EU-Group. Even if there was criticism, and not adequate financial resources were at hand, it is generally agreed that the strategy paper was a move in the right direction.

Today we realize that with the new Commission, our cooperation will have a new character. The revision of the EU Regulation on Organic Agriculture has been proposed in a hurry, even though there was no valid reason for such haste.

The commission is often scolded for being slow, but in the case of the revision of the Regulation on Organic agriculture it was surprisingly quick. Not only does the new regulation in essence have new goals, it has been rushed at such a tempo that did not allow members states and other stakeholders sufficient opportunities to take a position.

It is worrying that the cooperation between the organic sector and the Commission that was based on trust is now shaken, although both parties have made their individual contributions to the fact that we today in Europe have an organic sector which deserves trust of consumers. Without need, the proven cooperation is put under

question, and the involvement of the private economy is at stake in favor of EU sovereignty; although we can look back with content at the results of the last 15 years cooperation. BioFach shows that the organic sector could develop successfully within the existing framework.

It should however not be forgotten that the EU Regulation has significantly influenced emerging international markets. Many governments of the world oriented themselves on the EU Regulation when developing their own organic systems and regulations. We recognize the fact that the planned import regulation includes positive aspects; however we must give it sufficient thought regarding the implications of a hasty revision on aspects like harmonization of international regulations.

It is still not easy for business in the sector to trade across international borders. And this is not because of all the known mechanisms aiming at sealing off internal markets and other such barriers as applying for conventional markets. Problems are home-made. Laws and private standards distinguish from each other in details, and result in that they do not accept the products which have been certified by other systems than the own. IFOAM has with its Organic Guarantee System contributed to these differences. We however initiated a review of the Organic Guarantee System, which involved all stakeholders including lawmakers, and envision a system which is international, robust, but which is at the same time flexible. The EU Commission was and is, along with many other governments involved in this work. Regarding its international nature, the revision of the EU Regulation shows some welcomed improvements, but cement differences from other systems, which will at the cost of business in the organic sector hold product prices high. I appeal to you to use all your powers to influence the Commission to pull brakes on its undemocratic haste and to withdraw its proposal.

To conclude, let me bring one more thing to your notice. BioFach will support IFOAM as its patron in a campaign to win more members. BioFach and IFOAM both are working for the promotion of the international organic sector. This special relationship motivates BioFach to engage itself now even more. You as exhibitors and members of IFOAM will be happy to learn that you will in future years be able



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to avail of a rebate on the list price at BioFach. We will subsequently inform you in more detail after negotiations have been finalized.

Let us stay together, shape and represent the future. IFOAM invites you heartily to BioFach. I wish you all a successful BioFach 2006.