

Final Draft on the Definition of Organic Agriculture

December 13th 2007

Background

After adoption of the Principles of Organic Agriculture, the General Assembly passed a motion to establish a succinct Definition of Organic Agriculture. This definition must explain what Organic Agriculture is, reflecting its true nature and the Principles in a concise way.

WB decided upon a ToR for the Task Force, recruited TF members from the TF on the Principles and identified following criteria for the definition:

- Short / concise
- Positive as opposed to normative (which is the form in which the principles are formulated)
- Positive as opposed to negative (what Organic Agriculture is NOT or does NOT use)
- Cover full diversity of Organic Agriculture in the world
- No specific reference to certification (in line with position on full diversity of Organic Agriculture)
- Based on and tested against POA

The Task Force began formulating a first draft based on a report that summarized and analyzed existing and submitted definitions. Based on the report, the Task Force had several conference calls and email discussions to formulate the first draft.

A call was then made to IFOAM's internal bodies to comment on the first draft. All responses were analyzed, considered and appreciated and a second draft was proposed.

The general public and IFOAM members were invited to comment on the second draft definition which was composed of four definitions and explanatory notes.

In its September 2007 meeting the World Board withdrew the requirement from the Terms of Reference that the Definition of Organic Agriculture should be positive as opposed to negative.

After two rounds of input and comments, the Task Force met in Bonn in December 2007 to come to a final draft proposal that was put into consideration to the Standards Committee and the Executive Board in January 2008.

Proposed definition

Organic agriculture is a food production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.