

Compilation feedback first questionnaire

**Contributions in no kind of order**

Contribution from Tokannou René, REDAD (Network for Sustainable Agriculture Development), Bénin

1 – The first principle can be reformulated to become the main aim of the organic movements like this :

To provide people with sufficient quantities of high quality food, fiber and other products worldwide within a safe, secure and healthy producing and processing environment.

The principles behind these aims are :

Use the natural potentials to satisfy the human beings' needs

Take care to the scarce resources (lands, water, genetic resources, knowledge, etc...) for a sustainable use  
Maintain a safe, secure and healthy producing and processing environment by avoiding heavy use of external inputs.

Promote social justice through the production and trade chains.

Etc...

The most important purpose to have a set of principles is to make clear for everybody that you know well what you are doing and where you are going.

2 – Work of the principles in the organic movement

The principles are like driving forces for the organic movement.

Diversity in the movement is a question of level of progress towards the main aim of the organic movements as formulated : provide people with sufficient quantities of high quality food, fiber and other products world-wide within a safe, secure and healthy producing and processing environment.

Outside the organic movements, the principles would show the way of thinking and the driving lines of the organic actors.

Many principles can be cited as being rightfully principle of organic agriculture (please see the one up-cited as being behind the aims).

3 – At this moment it's clear that there is a need to reformulate the principles of organic agriculture in order to make them simple and more workable.

Many of the principles are relying on the same topics without being significantly different.

For the last question, I'm still trying the reformulation of the principles in order to diminish their number. I'll send them later during this week.

Thanks

Principles of Organic Agriculture  
Comments by Elizabeth Henderson  
April 2004

1. What is the most important purpose of having a set of Principles?

Writing a set of principles and then, from time to time reconsidering them, is an important process for our movement. This process gives us the opportunity to reflect upon, discuss, and test the validity of our most important values. I believe that these principles must inform the IFOAM standards for certification and accreditation.

2. What kind of work are the principles doing in the organic movement?

Principles serve as a touchstone for the organic movement, to guide our policies and actions, and our allocation of scarce resources of time, energy and money. The principles help shape the system of certification and accreditation. They also help shape our organizing for social change.

How can principles accommodate the diversity of the organic movement?

Because basic principles are abstracted from the concrete details of everyday realities, they can overarch a diversity of local interpretations. The most basic and underlying principle of organic agriculture is an attitude of respect for nature, for the natural order, systems and cycles, or, as some would say, the "ecological imperatives." People from very diverse cultures and with differing levels of formal education share this attitude. They may express it in very different terms, yet they have in common a sense of the interconnectedness of the living creatures of this planet, and respect for the living soil, for the microorganisms within and above the soil, for plants, for animals, and for other human beings. The sophisticated holistic science of modern organic agriculture has grown out of the holistic view of the universe of indigenous peoples around the globe. The roots of the founding thinkers of organic agriculture, Sir Albert Howard, Rudolf Steiner, and others, reach back into the peasant wisdom, accumulated over millennia, of Asia, Europe and Africa.

What would be the role of principles outside the organic movement?

For those outside the organic movement, our principles can serve as inspiration for change. Our principles also allow other people to recognize who we are and what we stand for.

What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as being distinct from principles for a better world)? Underlying all the principles of organic agriculture is a philosophy or set of spiritual values that honor nature. We do not imagine that human beings could dominate nature, since we are part of the interrelated and interdependent complexities of the natural system.

NOFA has been working on revisions to the IFOAM principles to use in our work. Here is our current draft:

To produce food, fiber and care for land with methods that are compatible with natural cycles and living systems of the soil, plants, and animals in the entire production system.

To maintain long term fertility and biological activity of soils using locally adapted cultural, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed to reliance on chemical inputs.

To promote the responsible use and conservation of water and all life therein.

4. To encourage agricultural diversity on actively managed land, and to maintain and encourage biodiversity and wildlife habitats in the surrounding ecosystem through the use of sustainable production methods.

To use, as far as possible, renewable resources in production and processing, avoiding pollution and excessive waste.

To create a harmonious balance between animal and crop production.

To provide humane living conditions that allow animals to express their basic innate behavior.

To foster local and regional production and distribution so that communities, regions and nations can achieve food security and food sovereignty.

To recognize the social impact of production practices and to honor those that are humane, economically just and environmentally sensitive.

To provide everyone, women and men, involved in the food production, processing, and distribution system the means for a basically safe, secure, and healthy working environment and satisfying quality of life. This requires prices for farm products that cover the cost of production; fair, negotiated, long-term contracts throughout the food supply chain; and dignified work with living wages for all food system workers.

To honor and protect indigenous knowledge.

What does this require with respect to the form and number of principles?

I do not think we can predetermine the number of principles. Our test should be for simplicity - the smallest number of principles that covers the major points without leaving any out or repeating.

As to process, I think the process proposed by the World Board makes sense: a small international group of IFOAM members, chosen because they have the respect of their peers, drafts a set of principles. Then a larger group reviews the draft and comments upon it. The original group revises their draft and provides explanations for their decisions. Then, that second draft circulates among all the members of IFOAM. Hopefully, member organizations will take this process seriously and sponsor discussions among as many individuals as possible and submit comments to the drafting committee. This group then does a third draft and presents it to the World Board for their consideration and discussion. The Board then submits comments to the drafting committee, which produces a fourth draft and presents that draft to the General Assembly in 2005 for discussion, amendment and final ratification.

4. Do you have any visualization/materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture?

Photo of two small girls who have been helping dig organic potatoes delightedly displaying their dirty hands. This image symbolizes for me our primary purpose for organic agriculture: to create healthy soil, healthy plants, healthy animals and people who eat those plants, a new generation of strong and happy people who will bring peace and abundance to our troubled world.

## Questionnaire for Consultative Group on rewriting the Principles of Organic Agriculture

Reaction ultimately April 20th

**From : Vic I. Tagupa (Sustainable Agriculture Center)**

*IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. Our goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture.*

Currently IFOAM has principal aims (see Annex). What do you see as the principles behind these aims? 1

*The principal aims can be collectively put into a Framework and Worldview of Organic Agriculture. As a framework it has to reflect a set of general principles and philosophy which is link to the principal aims as basis of operationalization and advancing the Organic Agriculture Movement. Essentially the principles and philosophy should not limit to the ecological, economic, socio-cultural, socio-political and technological dimensions. The inner ecology or well-being of the farmers and key players in OA should be taken into account as potential for the sustainability of the organic agriculture movement. What I mean to say that the development of human potentials is/can be the central core of Organic Agriculture Movement. This would mean then that Principled Organic Agriculture reflects the complexities of human and society and environmental interactions and as part of the universal law and processes that would ultimately results to A Better World for human security and sustainability, hence, improvement on the quality of life..*

What do you see as the most important purpose of having a set of Principles?

*With a framework, generally the complexities of Organic Agriculture is generally understood. With a framework and a set of principles and philosophy, IFOAM as a movement has its concrete basis of engaging potential development organizations and governments to enhance unity for believing the set principles/philosophy. It's very hard to engage on negotiations to influence others without such basis of negotiations in advancing OA especially we're now under the globalization regime. The opposition to GEO/GMO is a concrete manifestation that IFOAM responded to the reality that GEO/GMO is not acceptable to its principles of diversity, work compatibly with natural cycles, that the food system and its benefits is controlled by the few, that the seed is sacred (this can be regarded as concrete philosophy) and its against the law of nature, hence, opposes to the law of God (philosophy/spiritual), etc.*

*The set of OA principles reflect the worldview of agricultural development and provided individuals/citizens and/or organizations/ institutions all over the world to examine their own position in terms of compatibility to their own principles and conviction of agricultural development. It means to say that the principles function as the initial tool of internal processing of individuals/citizens/ organizations/ institutions to link their own understanding of OA whether to engage or not to engage with IFOAM and vice versa. To make it specific, the set of principles is the basis of unity and cooperation, directions,*

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1

Principle means a basic truth  
Principal means the same thing as "main."

Examples of usage:  
Her textbook is called "The principles of physics,"

Her principal means of financial support for her university studies were from an inheritance from her grandmother. Page 4 of 31

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*applications in the farms and limitations and I believe that the set of principles are the also the basis of IFOAM's decision making process.*

What kind of work are the principles doing in the organic movement?

How can the principles accommodate the diversity of the organic movement?

What would be the role of the principles outside the organic movements?

What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as being distinct from principles for a better world)?

*OA as framework and with a set of principles and philosophy is dynamic in terms of approaches and applications relative to the realities in the communities/societies or farmers. Consequently, it's also very dynamic of responding to those realities, because it has to be location specific. The set of principles then would give ways for local innovations and concrete translation of OA and movement. Hence, the principles are the basis of working together in diverse climate, society/culture and faith.*

*The principles should not be confined to NGOs/church/POs. It has to proceed to pro-active engagement with governments/academes for integration and convergence of OA development program in governments and schools/universities structures and policies especially in the communities in order to provide equal chance of community people who don't belong to any organizations and be part of the development processes and its outcomes. These disorganized people especially farmers are dominant in the communities especially in the third world countries.*

*The set of general principles essentially govern IFOAM as a movement. It should not be fixed at the context of generalities but to be responsive in terms of localization. The general principles is the document that serves as a guide to the level of working together for Organic Standards and Certification, by defining its roles and functions of organizations/partners but the localization and decentralization process should be with the concern of organizations. It has to be respected (the organization) in order for organization to evolve/develop its own initiatives and independence in localizing the OA worldview.*

*In the context of sustainability, the principles are the basis of formulating the OA sustainability indicators at the global, regional, national and local levels. This process is a concrete translation of the principles into realities in a given situations. The indicators serve the living materials for movements in the monitoring and evaluation of OA development approaches, processes and practices*

What does this (your answers to the former questions) require with respect to the form and number of principles?

Do you have clear, specific and appropriate ideas for drafting the principles?

How can we best establish a set of principles of organic agriculture?

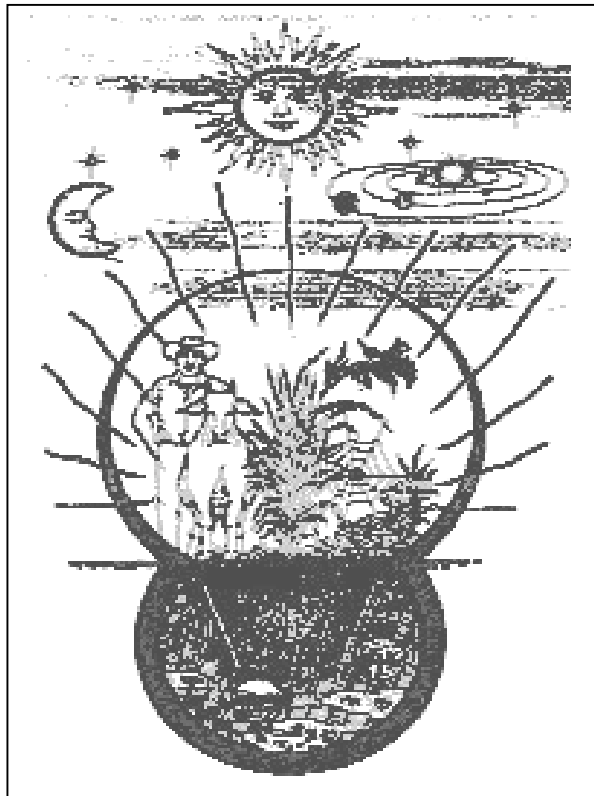
*I can start to look in the broad spectrum of OA as a framework with emphasis of SYMBIOTIC interdependence and interconnectedness or the sum of all parts and PEOPLE as the central of this framework as a way to achieve the medium and long term goals of OA and ultimately the very long term goal of BETTER WORLD (may be 50 or 100) as shown below.*

*The framework shows in the context of reality that people or farmers are living within the given ecology or environment, economy/business, norms in the society, culture and spiritual values, science and technologies, and governance/government. So the framework in general can be the basis of formulating general principles and philosophy of OA such as Ecological Soundness, Economic viability/soundness, Social equity/sensitivity in relation to government structures and policies, Cultural sensitivity and appropriateness, technical appropriateness and soundness and development of human potentials. Within each general principles are the principals aims such as ecological soundness (aims*

2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,12,14) , economically viable ( 8.) among others. The framework reflects the diverse situations, hence it suggests the diverse approaches and strategies at the global, regional, national and local levels. Concretely, the approaches/strategies in bringing the principles differ in at the context of globalization (IFOAM) , regionalization (IFOAM Asia, IFOAM Africa, etc.), nationalization and localization as explain earlier.

Do you have any visualization / materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture? You are invited to share them with the Task Force! Could you articulate in one sentence the relationship of this photo, painting etc. with the principles of organic agriculture? NB: please be aware that any materials sent to us will not be returned. They will be used by the Task Force and may be eventually displayed during the General Assembly 2005.

Below is the visualization I have so far. It shows to some extent the integrity of creation and at the minimum reflecting the principle of working compatively with natural cycles and living systems through the soil, plants and animals (including farmer) in the on farm production systems in a given location. Under the illustration is a product of my own reflection.



To think is power and to do is powerful since it generates changes in the society. In the society of soil animals (macro and micro animals), their dynamisms are link to the stewards of creation. Working 24 hours, soil animals are using their power for the betterment of the society of stewards. But are the stewards doing the same for their society???. Life is mysterious that the minute forms of creations (possibly without scientific intelligence) are doing their shares to hold on the **“Integrity of GOD’s Creation”** than the stewards of creation.

## Questionnaire for Consultative Group on rewriting the Principles of Organic Agriculture

Reaction ultimately April 20<sup>th</sup>

Maria Fernanda Fonseca – PESAGRO-RIO/Brazil

Unfortunately, these questions below were answered just by me. Forgive for my bad English. Is very difficult to express our feelings and thoughts in other language that is not your mother language.

*IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. Our goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture.*

Currently IFOAM has principal aims (see Annex). What do you see as the principles behind these aims? 2

I think that on the beginning of organic agriculture standards, we have principles, not principle aims. The principles behind these aims were established on the eighties. Of course as said Lawrence Woodward at BIOFACH2004, some are missing (nature conservation), like: (i) the transparency on the margins practiced along the productive chain (I prefer production, marketing and consumption network); (ii) the rights of working people in rural and urban areas that are linked in a way with the production and marketing food; (iii) activities related to processing systems; (iv) to stimulate the link between rural and urban areas and population; (v) activities related to wild harvesting and hunting with a sustainable managed. I don't think we have to mention the rights for indigenous people on a specific item because what we have are people living in rural or urban areas (***To make it possible for agricultural producers to earn a living through their work and develop their potentialities as human beings.***) We must include others than farmers, but we don't need to specify Negroes, whites, indigenous, family farmers, large entrepreneurs (big organic agribusiness firms just looking for money and marketing opportunity).

What do you see as the most important purpose of having a set of Principles?

I think the principles (*basic truth*) have the mission to guide the organic movement, and as so, are also part of the standards systems, the production systems, the marketing schemes, the commercial chains, the consumers options to choose for food, the politicians to support action plans.

I don't think the principles have to be out of the IFOAM BASIC Standards. The first task of the inspector should be to see if the unit are in accordance with the principles of organic agriculture. This (to follow the principles) is the inspectors principal aim, for instance.

They have to be part of all documents as the IFOAM mission is now on the IFOAM documents.

What kind of work are the principles doing in the organic movement?

I think they had done on the eighties and in the nineties. Now they had been forgotten, they are more just for inspectors to look once a year, if they are not able to see in the check list, to allow a unit to have the organic certification in case of doubts. Few people are really worried in following the principles. We need education, we need commitment, and that cost money, time. Today people look more for efficiency, competence.

How can the principles accommodate the diversity of the organic movement?

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2

Principle means a basic truth

Principal means the same thing as "main."

Examples of usage:

Her textbook is called "The principles of physics,"

Her principal means of financial support for her university studies were from an inheritance from her grandmother. Page 7 of 31

### **UNITING THE ORGANIC WORLD**

They have to be more general than specific and have to be build asking for contributions around the world, not a lot from the “North” (High Income Countries) and less from the “South” (Low Income Countries).

What would be the role of the principles outside the organic movements?

I think that, when we think in a better world it does not depends if we believe in the principles of organic agriculture, socialism, etc. The role would be participating in the construction of another world, with peace, place for everybody with health and well living.

What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as being distinct from principles for a better world)?

Of course as we speaking of organic agriculture, some principles are very focusing on rural aspects. But, the principles we live for, are the principles for a better world.

What does this (your answers to the former questions) require with respect to the form and number of principles?

The form of the principles, I think, have to try not to put just one point of view, have to be more general than specific, establish that those principles are the agreement, the compliance that people and organizations have in all tasks they say they are doing “organic agriculture”. They have to have the opportunity to be changed as have consensus on that.

Do you have clear, specific and appropriate ideas for drafting the principles?

How can we best establish a set of principles of organic agriculture?

To continue the work done by Lawrence Woodward comparing the evolution of the principles of organic agriculture in principle aims of organic agriculture. The task force with the help of the consultative group will produce a document on that to be send to a broad organic network.

Leave more time for people from task force and consultative group on discussing Principles of organic agriculture to spread the “questionnaires”. It takes time but is more faithful, more acceptable, more followed after, when negotiations, conventions, agreements are build together with a representative sample of all the agents involved with production, marketing and consumption of organic food.

To identify key persons, organizations and networks (preferential) that works with the organic agriculture principles (not just the organic certified world) around the world; Use the internet for opinions on papers produced by the consultative group and task force (involve first the organic movement but after uses the ISEAL ALLIANCE to do the same “homework”) on a wide base of consulting locally, regionally. After that, compiles the suggestions and produces another document.

Now we go to local, regional and international seminars, workshops, where people are going to discuss the document prepared with the suggestions of everybody summarized. The controversial have to be highlighted because they have to be discussed again and try to achieve a consensus.

After we achieve the results, each one that take part of that “solution”, “agreement”, commitment, we have to have the mission to diffuse for our local talkers, listeners.

Do you have any visualization / materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture? You are invited to share them with the Task Force! Could you articulate in one sentence the relationship of this photo, painting etc. with the principles of organic agriculture?

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Sorry, that I will have to translate and look on my “dead” (alive in memories but not printed!) files.

Nest time perhaps.

Dear members of the Consultative Group on Principles in Organic Agriculture,

I beg your pardon if I do not follow the given questions, but I feel I have to sort myself in this question on a blank sheet first. I will try to give some thoughts in the short time I have tonight before I will be leaving for a ten day journey to Sicily to the Cooperative Salamita tomorrow morning.

Lawrence gave an impressive overview of the development of the principles the last three decades on the BioFach. In some way they became more clear, and at the same time more abstract, although they grew in number. I understand this development as a trial to find expressions which leave less questions open on the meanings of the paragraphs. But sometimes if you say just things which seem to cause no failure it does not become more clear. Anyhow, instead of declining through all areas belonging to OA (plants, animals, even trade) it might be fruitful to search for the real (I mean one layer behind the areas) “principles” which are a guidance to OA.

I will name one example from the past:

Have we been – *although* we had the principles as we had them - conscious enough on techniques like hybrid seeds (as they appear now as somehow the pioneer-techniques for genetic engineering)? In other words: Have our principles made us aware enough to such developments, or did they let us look too much in the wrong directions (sorry for this “english”)?

In the present:

Are we not nowadays unsure whether it is to close nutrient *and* energy cycles as much as possible? - or the other way round: close the cycles (just) as much as needed for a more or less sustainable agriculture?  
As much variety as possible, or as much variety as necessary? Etc.?

Or let us take it sharper: Do we use our principles to widen them – and to what extent? Does that not weaken the organic movement more as it gives strength to it?

Do we realise that most probably we will face the discussion on genetic engineering in the organic movement when the first potato species with resistance on phytophthora infestans will appear? Will we “fit” the principles for these discussions without making pro forma decisions in advance?

I think the principles should be “basically” in the best sense, might be “basically<sup>+</sup>”, but somehow true. Not (so) idealistic where everybody smells, that the reality is (too) different; where there is no denial on, which are not disputable:

no excessive pollution of water and air

Is it to foster (all) self-healing processes?

Is it (for example in animal care) natural solutions first, artificial, but naturally sound solutions (like homeopathic medicine) next? And, before severe suffering arises, (even) specific conventional measures are appropriate?

Denial of techniques which – on the long run – hurt or even dismiss participatory approaches of the stakeholders (like genetic engineering as it appears nowadays)

A solid humaneness, as well to animals or Creature as such

basics in fair trade (no severe exploitation)

etc.

But what is about the (other) ideals we have and of which some of them were woven in more or less in



the principles so far? Might be that they are to be put in a model (Leitbild), but it might even be that they are out of there character just individual.

So far for today from my side.

Best regards and wishes to everybody

Nikolai

*[Willie Lockeretz's responses in italics.]*

Currently IFOAM has principal aims (see Annex). What do you see as the principles behind these aims?  
What do you see as the most important purpose of having a set of Principles?

To provide a consistent basis for deciding whether, and if so how, to revise organic standards, such as whether to permit a new technique or material.

What kind of work are the principles doing in the organic movement?  
How can the principles accommodate the diversity of the organic movement?

Although organic systems vary from place to place, the principles should be universal, and therefore should be as general as necessary to accommodate every reasonable embodiment of the concept "organic".

What would be the role of the principles outside the organic movements?

To provide a universally accepted but brief answer to "outsiders" who ask: "What is organic agriculture all about?"

What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as being distinct from principles for a better world)?

This is a tough but important question. I think the criterion should be that any additional principle must reflect some historical continuity with the concept of "organic" as the term has been used over the past several decades. That is, it can be an expansion, extension, or modification of organic ideas, but shouldn't be a completely new concept that has no connection with what has gone before. Also, the principles should describe organic agriculture as the term is currently used by those who are involved with the concept and therefore have the right to define what it is. The principles should not be a "wish list" of what someone wants organic to mean. Such ideas instead should be put out separately, such as in a discussion paper entitled "A Vision for the Future of Organic Agriculture," for example.

What does this (your answers to the former questions) require with respect to the form and number of principles?

There shouldn't be too many of them, but each one should be important and universal (both universally accepted and universally required of any system that calls itself "organic").

Do you have clear, specific and appropriate ideas for drafting the principles?  
How can we best establish a set of principles of organic agriculture?

By assembling a representative cross-section of knowledgeable people (as you have already done), and taking existing and previous versions of the IFOAM principles as the starting point, but modifying them only to the extent that there is a clear need to do so.

Do you have any visualization / materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture? You are invited to share them with the Task Force! Could you articulate in one sentence the relationship of this photo, painting etc. with the principles of organic agriculture?

I am delighted to attach the eloquent poem "This Compost", written by the American poet Walt Whitman.

By the end of the poem, its connection with the principles of organic agriculture will be so clear that I hardly have to explain it!

*This Compost*  
Walt Whitman, 1870

1. Something startles me where I thought I was safest,  
I withdraw from the still woods I loved,  
I will not go now on the pastures to walk,  
I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover the sea,  
I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to renew me.

O how can it be that the ground itself does not sicken?  
How can you be alive you growths of spring?  
How can you furnish health you blood of herbs, roses, orchards, grain?  
Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses within you?  
Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour dead?

Where have you disposed of their carcasses?  
Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations?  
Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?  
I do not see any of it upon you today, or perhaps I am deceiv'd.  
I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my spade through the sod and turn it up underneath,  
I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

2. Behold this compost! behold it well!  
Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person -- yet behold!  
The grass of spring covers the prairies,  
The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,  
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,  
The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,  
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of its graves,  
The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,  
The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-birds sit on their nests,  
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,  
The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the cow, the colt from the mare,  
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark green leaves,  
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilacs bloom in the dooryards,  
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those strata of sour dead.

What chemistry!  
That the winds are really not infectious,  
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea which is so amorous after me,  
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with its tongues,  
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have deposited themselves in it,  
That all is clean forever and forever,  
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,  
That blackberries are so flavorful and juicy,  
That the fruits of the apple-orchard and the orange-orchard, that melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will



none of them poison me,  
That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any disease,  
Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what was once a catching disease.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,  
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,  
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions of diseases' corpses,  
It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,  
It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops,  
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last.

## IFOAM Questionnaire

Henk Verhoog (Louis Bolk Institute, NL)

### Principles behind the aims

The principles can be grouped together under four headings (basic principles?): regionality, sustainability, social integrity and ecological integrity (see elaboration under 3: Form and number of principles)

The most important purpose of having principles is that they can serve as a kind of general guide for the whole organic movement, without becoming too specific and detailed. They should be at the background of the formulation of any legal binding rules. Legal rules tend to become more and more detailed and they are universally binding, thereby decreasing the freedom of the farmers and other stake holders (the space in which farmers, etc, can come to their own decisions). The legal rules should be minimal rules and should be binding for the whole movement. But there should be enough room for regional and individual differences. The more the basic principles get internalized, the more freedom can be allowed for finding solutions which are in accordance with the principles, but which may differ regionally. This internalization can only be reached by means of argumentation: someone who wants to diverge from the rules should have good reasons for doing so and there must be a kind of binding procedure within the organic movement, explaining what kind of step must be taken to reach local and international consensus as to the 'goodness' of the reasons given.

NB: these remarks are based on the belief that it is good and desirable to have as much freedom as possible within the organic movement (and in general) for individual decision making, as long as this is done on the basis of an awareness of the whole context (ecologically, socially) and a willingness to act responsibly. Individual responsibility always implies the duty to respond to questions about one's actions.

### Kind of work the principles are doing

I am not quite sure whether what I have described under 1 is the way the principles are at present working within the movement. I described what I think the function of (basic) principles should be inside the organic movement. Outside the movement the principles should be recognizable as being specific enough to distinguish organic agriculture from conventional agriculture. It is very important that the specificity is well argued for (not creating a strawman of the 'enemy').

It is always difficult to decide what principles are 'rightfully' principles of organic agriculture, especially if one wants to formulate principles which are specific (exclusive) for organic agriculture. Sustainability for instance is a principle which is also used in conventional agriculture nowadays. Thereby it is no longer exclusive for the organic movement. In my opinion it is the combination of principles which is important, and above all the view of man's relation to nature and natural entities which is believed to be ethically desirable within the organic movement. This is at present very much lacking in the formulation of the basic principles. Making this view explicit would immediately show the difference between organic sustainability and conventional sustainability (more about this in 3.)

### Form and number of the principles

It would be good to reduce the number of principles and/or to order them under a few basic principles. Especially to the outside world this would be useful.

I think all principle aims mentioned can be put under 4 basic principles:

Regionality: 5, 6, 9, 15.

Sustainability: 4, 7, 8, 10, 12

Social integrity: 3, 13, 14

Biological integrity ('naturalness'): 2, 11

Aim 1 is not specific for organic agriculture and seems to me self-evident.

These basic principles (aims) could also be called values: that which is valued within the organic

movement. Important is how each of these basic aims is specified, is given a meaning and why.

Regionality (mentioned in 9). In the organic worldview immediate perception and experience of nature is an important value, both for the farmer and for the consumer. The farmer should 'know' the consumers, and the consumer should 'know' the producer and how the products are produced. This is best realized in regional production and consumption. For consumers the products should preferably be as 'natural' as possible: few steps between production and consumption, no artificial or synthetic additives, etc. Respect for indigenous knowledge is also part of this (15). This could be generalized to respect for experiential knowledge of the farmer, and such knowledge is always based on a specific situation (regio, climate, soil, breeder's eye, etc.). Maintenance of diversity (5,6) has to do with regional adaptations of plants and animals, instead of the world wide races of conventional farming. There is a close connection between conventional experimental science (aiming at explanation by universal laws) and the global competitive economy.

Sustainability (explicitly mentioned under 5). This is a popular principle evoked by many groups of people. It should be made clear that in organic agriculture this principle refers to the whole production chain, as is made clear under aims 4, 7, 8 and 12. This is so because man is seen as a part of nature in organic agriculture. What we do to nature has an impact on ourselves. What we consume can not be consumed by others. A sustainable agriculture should give enough food for human beings (aim 1), should not pollute the environment, etc.

A harmonious balance between crop production and animal husbandry (aim 10) can be seen in various ways, as an element of sustainability (not too many animals if this means the use of inputs from third world countries for instance), or as an element of biological (ecological) integrity. One could subsume social and ecological integrity under sustainability (people, planet, profit), but in my opinion it is better to take social and ecological integrity apart. In reality the four basic principles should support each other.

Social integrity. The word 'integrity' always refers to wholeness, a harmonious balance between the parts, interconnectedness, interdependence. Community supported farming is an excellent example of social integrity in agriculture. The first condition is that the social (and ecological) impact of the production system must be recognized and understood (aim 3). A whole chain which is socially (and ecologically) responsible (aim 14, and 13) is the expression of social integrity.

Biological integrity. Here the word integrity refers to nature and natural entities. One can speak about the integrity of a landscape (including man as part of nature), of the agroecosystem, of plants and animals. One of the arguments against genetic modification is that it violates the integrity of plants and animals. The concept of integrity has proved to be a useful concept with respect to the evaluation of all kinds of techniques used in agriculture.

Why should we respect the integrity of nature (natural entities)? The reason is that nature is not only valued as a material instrument to fulfill human goals. It also has an intrinsic value (inherent worth, Würde der Kreatur). Man is part of nature and other natural entities are seen as partners, to cooperate with. With 'naturalness' in organic agriculture we do not mean a reference to pristine nature (untouched by man), but a form of agriculture which respects the relative independence of nature. That is why we use natural substances instead of synthetic ones, why we stimulate self-regulation in nature or make use of natural cycles (aim 2), why we create conditions in which animals can express their 'natural' behaviour (here meaning species-specific or innate behaviour: aim 11). There is a wisdom in nature from which farmers can learn. That is also the reason why holistic (phenomenological and other) methods are sometimes used to complement the reductionistic experimental methods in natural science. They are not invasive and are better suited to the study of living nature.

Conclusion: as outlined, I think the best way to establish a set of basic principles is to relate them to the



(ethical) view of the relation between man and nature underlying organic agriculture. In learning from and working together with nature, we should take into account the specificity (the characteristic 'nature') of a landscape, an (agro)ecosystem, a crop, an animal species, and human beings we cooperate with. Human Economy should be the social equivalent of nature's economy. All the elements of the system have a relative autonomy and vulnerability, but ultimately all depend on each other (interdependency).

Visualization...  
No inspiration at the moment

## Questionnaire for Consultative Group on rewriting the Principles of Organic Agriculture

Reaction ultimately April 20th

Rod May

*IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity.*

*Our goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture.*

Hello all. I have had the chance to see several other comments, and submit a few more just before the deadline!!

Currently IFOAM has principal aims (see Annex). What do you see as the principles behind these aims? 3  
What do you see as the most important purpose of having a set of Principles?

The principles should provide the conceptual framework for development of policy and standards. Some of them may be directly linked to a standard, some to recommendations within the standards and some as the basis for research and development and IFOAM general policy and the conduct of industry organizations and bodies.. If they remain within the domain of standards and are reflected by an operational requirement, they will be different from a more overarching context for the conduct of IFOAM and the industry as a whole.

It may therefore be argued that their importance is relevant to the conduct of the practices and to the conduct of the players.

What kind of work are the principles doing in the organic movement?

They currently attempt to reflect the thinking of the majority of the movement and provide a measure of common belief within the practicing operators. They appear to be referred to frequently as guideposts for those early in the development of their industry or sector. It is questionable that they provide significant guidance for the commercial and scientific world. It is also questionable that they are more than academic value for a growing section of the industry and probably remain of philosophical interest rather than for guidelines holistic enterprise and business development in organic products

How can the principles accommodate the diversity of the organic movement?

Probably not too difficult if they remain sufficiently universal

What would be the role of the principles outside the organic movements?

They would have different roles depending on their construction. If they are focused on organic production and processing principles they will carry a history and an identity for the movement. This may find itself being overtaken by other innovative sectors or simply begin to state obvious truths as we see a general awareness of the importance of the principles permeate certain societies.

What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as being distinct from principles for a better world)?

This may be a false dichotomy and attempts to tease out the different relevance of principles for us and the world may not be fruitful.

The principles as they stand cover many aspects of organic conduct but could be augmented with some more articulate references to the whole chain of production, including the conduct of the movement

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3

Principle means a basic truth

Principal means the same thing as "main."

Examples of usage:

Her textbook is called "The principles of physics,"

Her principal means of financial support for her university studies were from an inheritance from her grandmotherPage 17 of 31

### **UNITING THE ORGANIC WORLD**

itself. This could include reference to representation, regulation, business ethics, and matters relating to the “political” conduct of the movement.

What does this (your answers to the former questions) require with respect to the form and number of principles?

They could be grouped as an earlier commentator has suggested. They need to at least as numerous as present probably

Do you have clear, specific and appropriate ideas for drafting the principles?

No. Most of them are less than specific.

How can we best establish a set of principles of organic agriculture?

This process is a good start. I suggest we decide how much we want them to do first. I tend to favour a broader perspective than at present.

Do you have any visualization / materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture? You are invited to share them with the Task Force! Could you articulate in one sentence the relationship of this photo, painting etc. with the principles of organic agriculture?

Yes, this tree is actually 3 different trees, a eucalypt, a tagasaste and a chestnut. They are all from different places and have grown together to create an orderly pattern and seem to co-exist and express a common form. Im not absolutely sure of the significance of this but I thought it was pretty neat!!



NB: please be aware that any materials sent to us will not be returned. They will be used by the Task Force and may be eventually displayed during the General Assembly 2005.

## Questionnaire for Consultative Group on rewriting the Principles of Organic Agriculture

Replies by Anton Pinschof, (FRABBretagne) April 20<sup>th</sup> 2004.

*Apologies for length, but be thankful there are no footnotes yet.*

*Health warning: The author has felt obliged to include reflections on policy that spill over the edges of our practical terms of reference and might inspire terror or curiosity or both. Further consideration may therefore be needed under other agendas.*

*IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. Our goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture.*

1. Currently IFOAM has principal aims (see Annex). What do you see as the **principles behind these aims**? This page of "aims" has, like the rest of Basic Standards, evolved from the **need to codify** the common ambitions of the various movements towards probiotic or biological agriculture (in reaction against anti-biotic or bio-antagonistic agro-industry). In the French version these "principal Aims" are "Aspirations principales". The unspoken principle behind these aims is that of **Right Livelihood** to which we aspire in this fragile Biosphere, ignoring the fact that it is probably too late to reverse the mainstream trend and that, even if the trend were reversed, this might not slow down climate change nor its differential effects.

What do you see as the most important **purpose** of having a set of Principles? Those principles presently heading each chapter of the Basic Standards are the slightly more practical elaborations of the above mentioned "Aims", formulated as the ideal situation informing both Recommendations and Standards in each chapter. Even if these preliminary "Aims" are renamed "Principles", little will have changed. They still will serve **to inform the practical elaboration of organic food & farming standards** by legislators and standard-setters, **including collectively certified peasants groups**. In the case of IFOAM-accredited certifiers, they assume practical importance as factors for obligatory consideration. In any case, if the principal Aims are to be reconsidered, consolidated and embodied as underlying Guiding Principles, they will be the summary of IFOAM's Bible. Which is a paradox because we are trying to codify life in our book, our source material being life itself and no book.

2. What kind of **work** are the principles doing in the organic movement?

These written principles are trying to codify what we understand of unfathomable living realities, indeed these written principles are usurping the place that life itself should alone occupy. They are trying to sum up our agricultural perception of the Biosphere, the science of Biology and the LIFE sciences in general as applied to food & farming. The nascent twentieth century science of Biology (as opposed to nineteenth century Chemistry) was presupposed as the guidebook to Best Farming Practice, so IFOAM's various predecessors thought. Indeed, many of the pioneers referred to Laws of Nature, though mercifully none have been found inscribed in stone. **Living nature is our only book** and the forest our only temple. The arguments for pious respect of existing natural systems (Naturfrommigkeit), and for recognition of the **natural limits to growth** (of power), are essentially theological in that living systems are spontaneous, unwritten & mysterious and so we invented God to take care of the unseen aspects. We now again have to recognise limits to human arrogance and try modestly to fit in with the natural environment as we find it. This time round some of us do it voluntarily, without orders from God, though we see Mother Nature being vengeful enough and soon enough. These principles serve the movement as its ultimate expression of the **precautionary principle in relation to Mother Nature**. We shall not struggle to dominate nor to escape but, as Hilaire Belloc put it, *always keep a-hold of Nurse for fear of finding something worse*.

How can the principles accommodate the **diversity** of the organic movement? Luckily, no Book ever written in any one language could pretend completely to accommodate the diversity of Life on this planet,

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### UNITING THE ORGANIC WORLD

even with a chapter in each surviving language. These principles in English can however more or less encompass the various aspects, if edited delicately. People can hardly ever comprehend all of reality and tend to take refuge in some **partial description** that fits their circumstances. We have officially called this world an environment (Umwelt, out there) and again forgotten to be part of it. The English language, so universally used and misused, perchance became so widespread as common language of only merchants. Most people and especially peasants rightly prefer their own dialects that bespeak their cultural roots and the peculiar conditions of their places. These Principles can be the shorthand version of a new consensus (about the right way to live) that will serve till another committee has a go at it.

What would be the role of the "**Principles**" **outside** the organic movements?

In the relations of the Federation with other NGOs and with competent authorities, the Principles serve as **reference point** in negotiations. The ultimate significance of the IFOAM Basic Standards as a whole, far beyond their function for accredited certifiers, is in their belonging entirely to the movement. No outside power can tell IFOAM what to think. These texts are sovereign territory. They are indeed often referred to first by others, as ultimate authority in any doubtful matter, because they know them to be endorsed by the whole diverse movement. And the radical **moral authenticity** of these principles is for many public authorities a welcome support in situations where the public interest and supposedly democratic institutions are practically under the dominion of enormous and irresponsible private powers with purely financial interests. IFOAM & its Principles can occupy a moral position in agriculture & food policy that is like the moral authority of the Vatican in past times, except that it has real roots on this planet.

What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as distinct from **principles for a better world**)?

All of them, but not exclusively so and anyway we belong to this world.

The real question should be about the blinkers we wear. What are **the missing principles** about **externalised costs**? Financial costs, for example, can and usually do totally dominate farm planning and distort farm economics. If we ignore them, they go on hindering best practice and urbanising society, but if our principles address the debt problem, the B52s will be put on red alert and we shall be told we have no business making the world better. Yet private mega-business has no Godgiven right to exploit the world. It was precisely because they saw the world being worsened that pioneer organic farmers made the effort to improve their method and make it pay. A **better world** would of course mean sacrosanct topsoil & biodiversity, redistributed land, freedom from usury and forced trade, access to really free local markets. All of these are vital to farmers and are in the public interest. The organic movement's **defining moment** of rupture, its refusal of synthetic chemicals, was itself an action for a better world for all citizens. Best farming practice can no more be distinct from the making of a better world than can humanity be distinct from this almost uninhabitable rock hurtling through space. Just because over-civilised language distinguishes, analyses & classifies known aspects of life with magic labels does not mean terrestrial life is not a whole, misunderstood but coherent phenomenon. We have no principle about music, but if it were suggested that, for lack of a written principle, music must be dissociated from organic farming & food processing, there are millions who would laugh and make up satirical songs about that.

I do apologise for this digression. If I am ranting & raving, it is because there are huge organisations of peasants in Africa & South America (& probably Asia) to whom IFOAM is an irrelevant pompous joke.

It has not actually been suggested yet but, there might still be some people with the (sectarian) feeling that we should exclude any principle that was suspected of only bettering the (uncertified) world. Yet IFOAM has never been only about triumphantly promoting its own cause and its own niche market. It also addresses things political, non-agronomical or non-organic when it must. The WTO and Kommissar Fischler say GM is a purely commercial phenomenon, so IFOAM rightly said no, this is a gigantic

political, scientific & commercial fraud. As a movement of citizens we have to address **matters of public interest**, if from our own professional point of view. When a farmer is forced by debt-usury to abandon best practice or leave the land, it is assumed this is purely a private commercial matter between him and his God-bank and for several generations farmers have been vanishing like flies in September (in the north already, though in the south the timing is different, both for flies & peasants). We have done nothing for them directly, though we do propose a better method for those who have not yet vanished. Perhaps one day IFOAM will (with allies) take chemical companies to court for poisoning the world. After all, we can bear witness to the fact that nobody needs them and show they are scientific and commercial confidence tricksters as well as poisoners.

And does anybody really think the pioneers & organisers of biological farming (& the founders of IFOAM) had no thought for **non-agronomic aspects**? I can think of one dynamic prophet who had plenty to say about money that his bourgeois disciples and promoters rapidly forgot. And some of his best friends were revolutionaries who were put up against walls and shot. I can think of another very Catholic pioneer who was elected a fascist member of parliament and presumably did not dissociate his farming ideas from his political ones. These two luminaries started two movements (hating each other faithfully) that between them can account for a significant proportion of today's organic farmers. And after all, today's successful modernised organic farmers have survived precisely because they embraced the fact that **moneymaking** rather than living has become the principal motor and purpose of all farming. Otherwise they would be out of business. But has IFOAM even a tiny principle or recommendation hidden away somewhere that says anything about **limiting debt in the interests of best practice**? And has anybody noticed that growth-finance & terrestrial economics are really two quite distinct and different animals? When shall we see public finance for a study that demonstrates this and demystifies pseudo-economics?

There is nothing in the organic method that can dissociate itself from efforts towards **bettering the world**, because everything, including the land, is getting so much worse so rapidly that survival for the majority is improbable anyway. It is axiomatic for agronomists that best practice can only hope to slow down soil erosion, even while we are busy building up the soil. We need organic farming simply to **save the world from getting even worse**. And practically the worst thing about civilisation has always been its nasty habit of enslaving peasants from the safety of some fortified place (like the **Bank**). So why not plan a new IBS chapter on the principles and practice of issuing & circulating biodegradable, interest-free local money, as an input with potential for transforming a local economy. The circulation of money is as vital a prerequisite for a viable human economy as is the circulation of water.

Once the sectarian blinkers are off, this question goes a long way. This **destructive civilization** has been pestering the world since centralising urbanisation got the upper hand over the biodiversity of nature & culture. Humans have always found it difficult to control the alienated behaviour of the various power systems that have ravaged the Earth. And now, apparently for the first time, a protection gang has finally escaped all human control and subjected almost a hundred percent of "the economy" to its predatory, parasitical and ultimately suicidal liberties. It recognises no **limits to (its) growth**.

The peasants & the dispossessed have always known about **externalised costs**. They heard the hooves of their cavalry, saw their sails and their parachutes. And yet some still felt they had a future as **an integral part of this world** and refused the addictive short cuts imposed by (for example) explosives factories in search of a new trick (after World War One = fertilizers, after World War Two = pesticides), and if these peasants got together with scientists, technicians, publishers, administrators, artisans, traders & citizens to organise supplies of healthy food from healthy methods, then at least IFOAM owes it to them to recognise the volatile context within which all this huge potential has been fermenting. IFOAM is part of this perilous world and the IFOAM **principles & policies can recognise and address the whole context**.

There seem to be 3 ways.

**Either [I]** we take on this history from the point where it touched us, convert to some ready-made organic system & market, put on blinkers and get on with it, which involves struggling with many **symptoms** of things we did not cause (society emigrating, markets disorganised by price wars, usury, over-specialisation, famine, pestilence, injustice, pollution, bureaucracy & corruption). This struggle can be summed up as the **reformist** way, trying to reorganise the remnants of society whilst ignoring the factors that are every day busily destroying it. Some call this positive thinking. I call it optimistic blindness.

**Or [II]** we look about for the **root causes** of the immense power that is destroying our world. The **destructive forces** are so powerful that we cannot comprehend them. We meet at sparkling congresses and congratulate ourselves about statistical growth of "the sector" while humanity teeters delicately on the brink of planned obsolescence. An invisible hand pushes poisons and bullshits the masses and bulldozes the orchards. The dogs in the street can see the cause of this abuse of power: it is quite simply that power accumulates in a few hands. Did we vote for that? Yes & no, but that's another debate, and Europe at least could now show an example and voluntarily stop its pillage & use of petroleum. Europe will wait till its too late. Yet the prohibiting of toxic industries & unfair trade and the general acceptance of the biological-organic method would be merely the **natural side effects** of such new public policy. We would no longer need to certify everything that moves.

But **sustainable stupidity** being part of human nature and angels being very discrete, we can meanwhile only codify best practice and certify the products that are exported wholesale. But our principles have to recognize the existence of some rather awkward **non-agronomical problems** that affect farming systemically, such as the extraneous power of extracted finance. Unlike the water & lifeblood & language of the earth that naturally circulate, surplus financial capital tends not to circulate freely but to accumulate in high places or dark places, where it does no good to man or beast. The racketeers who fight over the ownership of capital never think to consult the penniless about how to recirculate it, but do sell it back to governments and ambitious citizens, for more than its face value. So all borrowers must become exploitative so as to pay the interest for every day that passes. Time has been turned into money by some very clever alchemists. Farming and society have been completely deformed by this perversion, but those who struggle with the consequences still think God made time into money. This is part of the sleepwalking that objectively supports Growth (of monopoly money) and the resulting uncontrollable accumulation of power in the hands of some ignorant fat cats who think they must manage the world.

None of this need offend food distributors, who are well placed to know just how expensive the money is that they must often borrow and which forces them to push for the highest profit margins they can get, just to survive. It pushes them into importing much larger volumes (at rock bottom prices) than are strictly needed.

This second, **radical** approach, that would refuse blinkered solutions to so-called economic problems, would require open debate within IFOAM and would in fact avoid conflict and the splitting off from the movement of huge numbers of peasants. Such a debate would surprise both those who see this movement as a weird sect, out of touch with reality, and those who see it as corrupted by multinational companies. Both can be proved wrong. In any case, mega-businessmen & bankers are themselves a weird sect, out of touch with reality.

The **third way [III]** is a subtle combination of the previous two (both reformist and radical). It accepts the furry edges of things and goes for strategic thinking in negotiation with both natural and unexpected allies at different levels, from the local front to the international front. This approach needs no expression as written principle but can be pursued by the Federation in its **policy for a better world**.

What does this (your answers to the **previous** questions) require with respect to the form and number of principles?

One new Principle should acknowledge by some symbolic message the biggest non-agronomical & non-natural problem (power-finance) that seriously affects the land, farmers, food industries, public health & social justice. I'd also suggest trying to boil the whole lot down to rather fewer main principles, each one leading to three or more further sub-principles. We might still end up with 3 times 6, but I hope for less.

Do you have clear, specific and appropriate ideas for drafting the principles?

Yes, I have a few in the pipeline, coming soon:

- a) Some overlap (2=4; 5=6; 3=8=13=14).
- b) Only half accepted human responsibility for lives & deaths of domesticated animals.
- c) Some inadequate aspects (inputs).
- d) Some almost meaningless abstractions (harmonious balance).
- e) As you will have gathered, I also think I have spotted a need to include a Principle of natural economic order (as distinct from the chaos economy as we know it) with a further consequent recognition of the role & value of farmers in society, if only to help farmers feel less inadequate about the terrible financial pressures piling up on them for no good reason. Something symbolic about time & money might be good.
- f) As discussed previously, some need for a cross-referencing exercise, after which each of the principles in the chapters might carry a reference to one or more of the Guiding Principles.

My textual proposals are still in the pipeline, having been overtaken by the above brainstorm.

How can we best establish a set of principles of organic agriculture? This revision task force & consultative group now in session, in preparation for the 2005 Assembly, will find a *modus operandi*. If another round is needed for 2008, then so be it. It may be that "Aims" were the same as Principles, but since there are also Principles in each chapter, perhaps this document should be called Guiding Principles. The syntax of the verbs needs reconsideration. *Producing, working, recognising etc* is better than TO produce, TO work etc.

Do you have any visualization / materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture? You are invited to share them with the Task Force! Could you articulate in one sentence the relationship of this photo, painting etc. with the principles of organic agriculture?

Today's Venus & New Moon. Take a look and remember them. The only significance is that they are minding their own business and we are minding ours. We belong to this planet, this is our destiny. The Breton word for destiny is *planedenn*.

Further to my comments sent Thursday last, here is a suggestion for a threefold structure of the document. My understanding of the paper by Alroe & Kristensen and the comments from Verhoog suggests trying to bunch everything under three main **Ethical Principles of the Organic Method of Agriculture & Food Production**, each with sub-principles. Today it looks like this:

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#### § The Principle of Cyclical Ecology,

[Systems, Sustainability, Agronomy, Fuchs' Nutrient & Energy cycles and Self-Healing processes, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, The Good Shepherd principle of animal husbandry],

§ The Precautionary principle, [15, No manipulation of the Genetic code],

#### § The Economy of Human Dimension,

[The Locality principle (also known as the Nearness principle), Verhoog's Regionality & Social Integrity,

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### UNITING THE ORGANIC WORLD

1, 3, 9, 13, 14, Recognising the vital & vulnerable role of farmers in society, Recognising a Natural Economic Order, wherein time is time, money is money, and never the twain shall be confused)].

---

This last, economic, principle is based on the feeling we have to see food & farming as part of nature, not part of something so clearly destructive as today's Chaos Economy. We already have started with policies on Social Justice as well as originally rejecting all toxic chemicals. Now it is time to see what else systemically harms farming and the food economy. There are well established theories of non-monopoly Economy & Finance, recently echoed by critics of the "Autistic Economy" and concerted efforts to withdraw agriculture from the WTO altogether. Already over two centuries ago, the contemporary opponents of Adam Smith were clamouring for "free" trade to be limited to manufactured goods, but they lost the argument. The "Free Economy" theorists of the 20th century essentially follow neither Marxist nor Keynesian dogma. They seek economies of the small scale, proposes a monetary system subject to the laws of Entropy and of Society, which at present it totally escapes. In its application to food & farming, this implies according high value to human work and natural resources, and not letting time-is-money monopoly finance dictate everything. The Chaos economy is what we all see today as the totalitarian military-industrial order busily destroying agriculture & habitat. The organic farming movement cannot legislate, but it can better run its own affairs if free of the illusion that obsessive Growth of economies of (the large) scale are the only option, and it can help to establish healthier principles & models rooted in its own broad & deep economic base that is biological agriculture & its distribution systems.

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Herewith also a suggestion (for the first cluster above) from one of "our" scientists at INRA, whose name for the present I cannot divulge:

*"All methods of seed production, fertilisation, maintenance of the biological equilibrium in plant and animal production, preparation of food & feed, fibres etc., shall use only organic inputs that are also in accordance with all the other criteria (principles)".*

I have translated "de nature biologique" as "organic" although she may be saying something slightly broader than our special term "organic", but including that. Here is the original: *"Toutes méthodes de production de semences, de fertilisation, de maintien des équilibres biologiques au sein des cultures et des élevages, de préparation des aliments, des fibres et autres, ne font appel qu'à des intrants de nature biologique, répondant à tous les autres critères."*

All for now, Anton Pinschhof, (FRABBretagne)

Feedback K. Vijayalakshmi (member Task Force)

**Currently IFOAM has principal aims (see Annex). What do you see as the principles behind these aims? What do you see as the most important purpose of having a set of Principles?**

Organic agriculture addresses issues of food and non-food crops. There may be a need possibly to prioritise one over the other. In either case soil health and fertility are required for a good harvest.

The emphasis on improving and maintaining soil fertility has been dwindling for various reasons. There needs to be a re-emphasis on this basic principle. The principles should reflect a holistic approach to the maintenance of high soil fertility.

There are many emerging food technologies that do not depend on soil but are water based. For instance algae as a food for human consumption requires an aqueous medium. Just as curds or yoghurt need milk as a base medium. Algae or bacteria that are meant for human consumption may require to be grown in highly sterile environments to prevent contamination by other harmful species. The principles of organic agriculture will be required to have new notions of what constitutes organic farming, for these new and emerging foods.

**What kind of work are the principles doing in the organic movement? How can the principles accommodate the diversity of the organic movement? What would be the role of the principles outside the organic movements? What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as being distinct from principles for a better world)?**

In India for small farmers the constraints in following the organic farming principles and regulations are most difficult. Given the small sizes of holdings farmers are in need of their crop to survive. They may resort to all types of measures to save their crop, as it may be their only means of livelihood.

As yet there are no totally reliable ways of preventing drift of residues or entry of fertilisers through run off. The only totally permanent solution would be if entire geographical areas such as a watershed could be converted to organic practice. In this way the required isolation could possibly be achieved.

Water resources of farmers are usually through deep borwells, surface water storage bodies and rainfall. All of these sources have the possibility of contamination. How do the principles deal with such a situation in a practical way?

The organic principles need to consider both soil fertility and the human condition of the farmer who is working the soil. Blind application of principles and rules will neither help the soil or the farmer.

**What does this (your answers to the former questions) require with respect to the form and number of principles? Do you have clear, specific and appropriate ideas for drafting the principles? How can we best establish a set of principles of organic agriculture?**

Where small farmers in India are considered there has to be two requirements that the principles work to achieve.

**First :** Geographical boundaries must be identified that ensure prevention of drift of pesticides and fertiliser run off into fields.

**Second :** The farmers in that region need to be formed into a group such that the entire group is insured against crop failure. This would be the only means by which a small farmer could be dissuaded from using banned substances to save his crop.

Unless both these criteria are met, it will be almost impossible to be completely sure that the produce

of the group will be fully organic.

The organic movement must make use of the internet in a more effective way. It should create maps of all countries showing areas under conventional, organic, biodynamic practice. These maps must be regularly updated. The public at large would then have an idea of how the movement is spreading.

Public should also be able to get directly in touch with producers.

A database with a web-based front end could be used to keep track of what is the current status of a farmer's land and could also include the past history of the land. Real time data can be entered by the farmers themselves and this could also help in reducing overall cost of inspection and certification.

**Do you have any visualization / materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture? You are invited to share them with the Task Force! Could you articulate in one sentence the relationship of this photo, painting etc. with the principles of organic agriculture?**

**NB: please be aware that any materials sent to us will not be returned. They will be used by the Task Force and may be eventually displayed during the General Assembly 2005.**

I shall try to bring something.

These are some initial thoughts and I look forward to having a fruitful interaction with all of you.

With warm regards,

Viji

## Contribution Bo van Elzakker to discussion on Principles of Organic Agriculture

1.

The Principle on top of the Principle Aims is that a sound agriculture is the basis for a healthy society.

The second last Principle Aim comes pretty close.

The principle Aims try to explain a little where that form of agriculture is about.

The most important purpose of the principles is to translate, specify, back up the goal or general objective of the organic agriculture movement.

The general objective of the organic agriculture movement is creating/supporting healthy societies.

2.

It is where the organic movement stands for, IFOAM and its member organizations. It is what we have in common. It thus provides cohesion in a very diverse group. They provide motivation for those working in organic agriculture. Towards the consumers they give image, an otherwise invisible content of organic products.

If we restrict ourselves to the one principle, as above, it could accommodate the diversity in the movement. The challenge is that should agree that we are not working primarily on a type of agriculture but on a better society.

What organic agriculture is, is then a lower level that can be filled is locally.

Also outside the organic movement it would make it clear where it stands for. Given that it has a 'change the world' aspect, it could possibly result in a slightly more hand-of attitude from authorities regarding the definition of organic agriculture. Organic agriculture would become slightly more a social, political movement.

For me, organic agriculture is the principle for a better world. This is perhaps a very classical understanding, that agriculture is the basis of society, so organic agriculture is the basis for a better society. You could broaden it up and say that the countryside, the forests, the lakes, the land we live in, in fact nature is the basis of human societies.

3.

Simplicity is golden. Therefore ideally one principle. It can be broken down/ specified in various sub-principles of perhaps these principle aims but the less the better. It is no good to have 17 principles or principle aims.

Would rather have 1/3 page of text explaining what organic agriculture is about than a list of aims or principle aims or whatever you call them.

Most of the principle aims are (too much) the definition of what organic agriculture is. They are written more as objectives, what OA wants/should achieve. Most are farm system oriented, some relate to a wider area, they are not sufficiently focused on what the intent is of organic agriculture.

Important: we can only claim to work on a better world when we have somewhat better secured that social, cultural aspects are taken care of during the production and its processing itself. Paying attention may already be enough, we do not have to guarantee say a higher wage, although the law should be a minimum.

If you have principles for organic agriculture these have to be addressed in the standards. You cannot go on about providing living conditions for animals and not come back to it in the standards. That is valid as well for the principles/objectives relating to the wider farm area, and the societal impact. Although I agree

that the standards are formulated in chapters on crop production, animal husbandry, etc. the principles have to resound through the standards.

The other way round, if you follow the standard, you are an organic farmer or processor and you contribute to the goal of the organic movement.

The standards are basically a definition of what organic agriculture is. It is a bit overdone to explain that as well in the something like principle aims.

4.

Have no visualization but keep on thinking of Thomas Moore and Utopia.

Karl North, reaction on message from Anton Pinschoff

Interesting stuff. For years I have been asking myself how we should write principles that recognize and defend against the incessant moral corruption of the capitalist food economy and its related institutions in the knowledge business. Also how to incorporate values and yet be true to a scientific touchstone as well. Because I think so far we have settled for a mushy middleground that is too easy to corrupt and too hard to defend.

If we can settle on a single values-based principle whose central concept is amenable to rigorous scientific definition, that might bring clarity and most easily attract support as well. The one I have been pondering for a while is *sustainable carrying capacity*, which has a strong record in ecological science as a concept with explanatory power. A values-based statement using that concept might call for practices that maximize sustainable carrying capacity, not only of the human species, but of all those species (many not yet known) that appear to be necessary to sustain the human species at an acceptable quality of life indefinitely. I think such a statement could cover a huge amount of ground if it were informed of a deep enough understanding of the ecological concept it relies on.

Many shy away from 'carrying capacity', finding it hard to define. I think that is mainly because:

- 1) they expect it to be fixed, when in reality it is a variable. But I think ecologists have a good working understanding of that variability and its causes.
- 2) they fail to realize that it comprises two variables, in an inverse relationship: population density and quality of life of the species in question. At a given carrying capacity you can carry more people, goats, duckweed, etc. if you compromise living standard, or fewer at a higher standard. (This aspect of carrying capacity calls for serious moral choices, but perhaps not ones that the sustainable food system movement needs to address in its principles, as they only indirectly relate to production and distribution of food. If the movement could succeed in protecting and enhancing sustainable carrying capacity, that would already be a singular accomplishment.)
- 3) it requires an (eco) systems-over-time (that is, historical and holistic) approach to reality that is new to many people.

What I like about this approach is that one can then elaborate on the implications of such a central statement with sub-principles that all hang on a science-based concept. For example, one could do away with all the simplistic rules that weaken present organic philosophy (sic), like biological=good, chemical=bad, and instead rely on agroecological science to evaluate (as best it can) the impact of any practice on sustainable carrying capacity. And of course all socio-economic behavior would fall under the same evaluation axe.

Do you think it is possible for such an approach to bring more coherence to the wide-ranging (holistic) and legitimate concerns of a Pinchoff, or of you and I?

Karl North (via Elizabeth Henderson)

Dear Louise,

Greetings from India

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to share with you some ideas concerning the principles of organic agriculture as per your questionnaire. I am sorry for the delay in responding to your communication as I was constantly on travel for the past few weeks.

1. Currently IFOAM has principal aims (see Annex).

What do you see as the principles behind these aims?

What do you see as the most important purpose of having a set of principles?

The principal aims of organic production and processing as currently enshrined in the IFOAM documents are a mix of principles and ideas. If we strictly classify them in the same manner as scientific principles (as per definition), it would not give a full view of what we mean by organic agriculture. We have to realize that organic agriculture is a dynamic system which requires to be tuned to the past stock of knowledge and future possibilities of scientific understanding – technology and knowledge in the sphere. Therefore the mix of certain principles and ideas as provided in IFOAM documentation is very meaningful. However, the priorities in which these principles and ideas are organized as well as addition of new ideas/principles require to be explored.

2. What kind of work are the principles doing in the organic movement? How can the principles accommodate the diversity of the organic movement? What would be the role of the principles outside the organic movements? What principles are rightfully principles of Organic Agriculture (as being distinct from principles for a better world)?

One could broadly enlist the significance of the principles in the organic movement Ø They provide clarity for the concept of organic agriculture

Ø They are helpful in facilitating solidarity between different streams of ecological agriculture and people from different cultures who are practicing organic agriculture

Ø They provide key tenets for sustainable livelihoods and guide broader policies for sustainable development

Ø They indicate future areas of action and research for promoting organic agriculture As regards drawing distinction between principles and ideas, I have already commented in my answer to the first question. However, as an operational strategy to improve the present statement of principles in the IFOAM document, I would strongly urge to go forward to analyse the principles and the whole set of IFOAM norms on the basis of WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH. This is a new way of thinking for integrating various components of a philosophy at the operational level. Experts in this field are few but we can still try.

3. What does this (your answers to the former questions) require with respect to the form and number of principles? Do you have clear, specific and appropriate ideas for drafting the principles? How can we best establish a set of principles of organic agriculture?

THIS is long term work. Requires involvement of organic farmers from different regions and different players of the movement. Besides require to be ratified by the General Body of IFOAM

4. Do you have any visualization/materialization (eg.Photo, art, a poem) that expresses for you the principles of organic agriculture? You are invited to share them with the Task Force! Could you articulate in one sentence the relationship of the photo, painting etc. with the principles of organic agriculture?

I will do this later



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with kindest regards  
Alexander Daniel