

Request for input on the review of the Principles of Organic Agriculture

Questionnaire to the second draft 0501

To:

Consultative Group on the review of Principles of Organic Agriculture
IFOAM structures
All IFOAM members

From:

Task Force on the review of Principles of Organic Agriculture

You are invited to participate in the fourth consultation round on the review of Principles of Organic Agriculture.

Brief Background:

At the General Assembly 2002 in Victoria, Canada IFOAM's membership adopted an amendment to the motion on Basic Standards revision procedure stating:

'Any change in the basic principles (section B.1) would have to be approved by the GA'.

In March 2003 the World Board formulated IFOAM's mission that is referring to the Principles of Organic Agriculture:

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.

The World Board plans to come up with a motion for the coming General Assembly in Adelaide, Australia, September 2005 on the Principles of Organic Agriculture.

Therefore a Task Force and a Consultative Group have been installed.

The review process on the Principles of Organic Agriculture started at the occasion of Biofach 2004.

A first questionnaire has been sent out to the Consultative Group concerning purpose, function and form of the Principles of Organic Agriculture: They are to be the foundation and framework of Organic Agriculture; They will lead and unite the organic movement, give guidance (in standards, policies, in general) and inspiration (internally for the movement, externally for change), they should be universal principles that are regional applicable and provide identity; They should be simple and normative ('ethical')

A second questionnaire asked the members of the Consultative Group for input on 'thematic areas' on which principles need to be developed. The thematic areas identified were: 'Holistic health', 'Livelihood – equity', 'Biodiversity', 'Soil', 'Cyclical systems', 'Animals', 'Local markets / accessibility' and 'Precautionary principle'.

The third round for consultation elaborated further on this and tested a first rough draft and asked questions whether the values of organic agriculture are properly reflected, if a hierarchy is needed, if the proposed principles could be merged and if they should have names. From the 8 thematic areas 'local markets / accessibility' and 'biodiversity' were not given a separate principle, but were considered to be a subset of other principles.

The first rough draft has been presented for input at several occasions like the IFOAM EU group meeting, the IFOAM Asia conference and the IFOAM Summit.

The questionnaires and the inputs can be found on the web: [OA principles review documents](#)

The Task Force on the review of Principles of Organic Agriculture has processed the input into a second draft. This draft reduced the number of principles to four. The narrative under each of the principles explains how the principles on soil and on animals are addressed as part of the other principles.

On the current draft your feedback is kindly requested.

As for a proper understanding and as comparison with other feedback, we'd like to ask you to answer the questions as posed. The Task Force specifically requests your opinion on these topics.

There is space however to include any other comments, if you like.

Questions:

1. Do the proposed principles presented reflect the values of organic agriculture? If not, are there values or principles that are missing or some that could be removed?
2. Do you think that the proposed principles are universally applicable and take into account regional variation?
3. The feedback on the first questionnaire suggested that principles should be formulated in a normative way¹. However some members of the consultative group questioned the use of the word 'should'. The Task Force solicits for ideas on a different kind of wording that is as strongly normative as 'should', but otherwise formulated.
4. Do you have any suggestions on the wording of the preamble?
5. Do you have any suggestions on wording and language? Are the principles and the explanations that belong to them easily to be translated in your language?
6. Do the proposed principles and explanations address 'soil,' 'animal welfare' and 'biodiversity' in a satisfying way? Do 'soil' and / or 'animal welfare' deserve a separate principle? If you think so, please suggest some motivation, formulation and explanation of the new principle.
7. Do you think that the principle of fairness rightly addresses the responsibility of Organic Agriculture's in the world? Does the proposed statement make claims and imply obligations that are beyond the control of the Organic Agriculture Movements?
8. *Repeated request from the first questionnaire:* Do you have any visualization / materialization (e.g. a photo, art, a poem, a music composition) 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? At the coming General Assembly space will be provided to exhibit all these visualizations.
9. Any other comments.

¹ A positive statement like 'Organic Agriculture is' is simply untrue in this world.

From the IFOAM website (see link above) you can download PowerPoint presentations with the text of current draft and with explanatory background. Translations in Spanish and French will follow as soon as possible. You might like to use these presentations when discussing the principles in your own organic circles. The Task Force on the review of the Principles of Organic Agriculture encourages you to do so!

All consultation feedback is due by no later than March 25th. Please email your responses to l.luttikholt@ifoam.org

Next steps:

The Task Force on the review of the Principles of Organic Agriculture will study the comments and take due consideration of the suggestions. All comments will be made public as well as the considerations and argumentation of the Task Force. The final recommendation for the review of the Principles of Organic Agriculture will be submitted to the IFOAM World Board, with a summary of the most critical issues and the rationale of the Task Force for its proposal. The World Board shall decide in its June 2005 meeting on the motion on the Principles of Organic Agriculture to be put forward to the IFOAM General Assembly 2005 at Adelaide, Australia.