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## **EkoConnect Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe**

Dear readers,

We are happy being able to send you the September edition of our newsletter today. Of particular importance is currently the adoption of a new EU-Organic-Regulation, which concerns all European organic companies. The new regulations are not yet completed and they are not without controversy on the part of the organic farming associations. For this reason it is now very important that we all play a part in the process of developing implementation directives / regulations in Brussels.

The country report leads you to the south-eastern part of Europe: to Bulgaria that joined the EU only this year. Bulgaria disposes of a small but constantly increasing organic production which is gaining in importance, most notably in the range of vegetables, wine, herbs and honey.

Moreover we present you some exemplary initiatives from the Czech Republic, Russia and Germany, where universities, associations and companies campaign in totally different manners for organic agriculture.

We would like to invite all of you to transmit the infoletter to partners and friends. For those of you who did not receive the infoletter directly from us and would like to subscribe to it you are invited to write a short mail to [redaktion@ekoconnect.org](mailto:redaktion@ekoconnect.org).

The editorial team send its love from Dresden

Christian Pein & Hedwig Emmerig & Katrin Böttger

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## 1. +++ Organics are growth market in Bulgaria +++

Numerous articles and news items released during the last months confirm that organic farming and food in Bulgaria is increasingly gaining public attention in the country and abroad.

Organic agriculture was introduced to Bulgaria in 1990, when agricultural land was put into small plots and distributed among the population after the fall of the communism. The EU as well as the government of Bulgaria encourage the transition to organic farming and subsidise organic farmers and food producers. Precisely it is since 2006, when SAPARD (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development) got introduced in Bulgaria in preparation of accession of the country to the European Union, that farmers receive financial support during the three-year conversion period to organic farming.

Most organic farms in Bulgaria are very small and run less than one hectare. They often rely on investments from and supply contracts with foreign companies.

Currently, 90 per cent of all Bulgarian organic food is exported to wealthier EU member states. The country's crops include fruits (apples, peaches, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, plums, and grapes for wine-making), nuts (walnuts and almonds), herbs and spices (dill, peppermint, lavender and many others) as well as essential oils, tobacco, and vegetables. Cows, sheep and goats are kept for the production of milk, yoghurt and cheese. Lamb and calf meat is available as well as organic jam and honey. In addition, large areas of wild land have been certified as organic to collect wild fruits, herbs and mushrooms. It is assumed that currently about 60 % of raw materials come from wild collection.

Organic rose oil, tobacco, wine and fruit growing are assumed to be of the highest potential for the country. Organic aquaculture seems also promising due to favourable natural conditions.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, nine manufacturers are currently certified organic and provide dried and frozen herbs, spices, seeds, (wild) fruits, vegetables, honey and rose oil. Examples for processing companies which maintain an internet website are:

- IRA-EKO Ltd. (<http://www.ira-eko.com>), dried herbs, spices, seeds, and roots
- Biostart Ltd. (<http://biostart.cbivel.org/>) herbs, spices, fruits, vegetables
- Ecomaat Ltd. (<http://www.ecomaat.com/>), essential oil and cosmetics
- Cooperative Bio-Bulgaria (<http://www.biobulgaria.hit.bg/>), essential oils, herbs and fruits, dairy products, meat, and honey
- Balkan Bioherb (<http://www.euroherb.nl/uk/BULGARIA.asp>), herbs and spices – in cooperation with the Dutch company Euroherb

The ministry announced to support organic farming and food processing with around EUR 12.6 million in 2007 in order to boost the domestic market and gain market shares of the European market. Till 2013, 8 % of agricultural land in Bulgaria shall be farmed organically (in 2005, it were about 0.3 %) and 3 % of the food products sold there shall be organic according to the strategic goals of the National Plan. In addition, legislation, education and research, and certification in the field of organic farming shall be improved within the next years. The Bulgarian law on genetically modified organisms (GMO) is already highly restrictive which favours organic farming and prevents conflicts between organic and non-organic farmers. (he/yh)

(Sources: organic-market.info, ZMP, ITC, sofiaecho.com, eastbusiness.org, fruchtportal.de, bulgaria.de, cee-foodindustry.com and own research)

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## 2. +++ Moldavian Ministry of Agriculture sees bright future for organic farming +++

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry in the Republic of Moldova has published a report on the strategic development of agriculture in the years 2006-2015. Especially fruit growing is expected to be promising on the domestic market as well as in terms of export potential to Western Europe. The organic legislation is geared to the European Union organic regulation.

According to the German Foundation Ecology & Farming (SÖL) and the Moldavian ministry, the organically farmed area amounts currently to about 11.000 hectares. This area shall be nearly tripled

to 31.100 ha by 2015. Cereal crops, oil seeds, and fruits / vegetables shall be the main crops (see table). The production volume shall be increased to about 75.000 tons. (he)

<b>Prognosis - organically farmed area and production output in Moldova 2006-2015</b>		
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Organically farmed area in ha</b>	10.755	31.100
<i>Cereal crops</i>		5.000
<i>Oil seeds and legumes</i>	1.400	3.500
<i>Fruits and vegetables</i>	350	1.000
<i>Pastures and grassland</i>		5.000
<b>Production output in tons</b>	30.590	74.575
<i>Oil seeds and legumes</i>	2.890	6.150
<i>Fruits and vegetables</i>	200	750
<i>Mushrooms and fruits from wild collection</i>	1.500	7.450

(Source: ZMP ÖKOMARKT Forum, no. 20)

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### **3. +++ UA: Ukraine – future organic breadbasket? +++**

The largest organic farming areas in Eastern Europe are located in Ukraine with 242.034 hectares (2006). Currently there are 70 organic farms, most of which are concentrated in the South (Odessa and Kherson regions). By now, they occupy about 0.64 % of the total area of farmland. The main crops are grains (wheat, barley, corn, oats, millet), oilseed (sunflower, flax, rape seed), legumes (soybeans, chickpeas, peas), essential oils (lavender, rosemary, wormwood), apples, berries and mushrooms. However, according to Eugene Milanov from the Organic Federation of Ukraine production is still mainly limited to wheat for export.

Ukraine has enormous potential for large-scale organic farming. Large farms (ideal for growing quantities large enough for export), fertile soils and a long standing agricultural tradition all help to produce high quality crops.

Ukraine's strategic location between the EU and Russia also provides easy to access for Ukrainian goods to two large markets.

So what is preventing Ukraine from developing its organic agriculture sector?

One of the biggest problems is a lack of organization. Other reasons include incomplete land reforms and continued sharing of agricultural lands. Furthermore, national certification and control systems are insufficiently developed. It is precisely this lack of effective organization and national regulation that is preventing Ukraine from exporting to the EU. In accordance with EU regulations, Food must be of a certain quality and control systems must work properly, however experts are lacking as well as an understanding of existing requirements or even basic principles of organic agriculture. According to Milanov the organic sector is being held back by lack of legislation setting legal standards. However, in 2004 the government formed a working group to draft necessary regulations. The law is expected to come before Parliament later this year. Clearly some steps to develop Ukrainian organic farming have already been taken. One of the most active organisations in this field is the "Organic Federation of Ukraine", an NGO bringing together farmers, processors, traders, consumers, as well as schools and service providers specialized in organic farming. It provides information such as e-bulleting and books. According to Milanov "Ukraine is already developing into an organic agricultural country". Once again, it is returning to its historical role as the breadbasket of Europe, only this time, an organic one.

(Sources: *Deutsche Welle online, information material of the Organic Federation of Ukraine, M.Kapshtyk (Association of Farmers and Land Owners of Ukraine)*)

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### **4. +++ RUS: Project on organic animal husbandry and handicraft meat processing +++**

Not far from the district town of Suvorow (about 200 km south of Moskow in the region of Tula) a new project aimed at linking high-level organic farming with traditional food processing is underway. At the heart of the initiative will be pork and beef production as well as high-quality meat products made

possible by extensive free-range, natural feeding practices, species-appropriate slaughtering practices and gentle meat processing. An associated farming and vocational school will offer the apprenticeships and advanced specialist training. Shops in nearby cities will attract both customers who appreciate high-quality food for health reasons and those who want to encourage rural living in the region. According to the initiators Alexander and Roswitha Brodowski, production is scheduled to begin in 2008. They were inspired by the "Herrmannsdorfer Landwerkstätten" near Munich whose founder, Karl Ludwig Schweisfurth, serving as advisor for the project. Additionally, they are in need of an experienced free-range pig handler to work on-site. (he)

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### 5. +++ Czech Parents support organic food in school canteens +++

*Organic food in public schools*, a pilot project in the Czech Republic aims to provide opportunities for organic farmers to supply school canteens with their products.

Representatives from seven pilot schools in the southeastern part of the Czech Republic were interviewed to determine the attitudes of parents, teachers and cooks regarding organic food. The results were surprisingly positive: 85 percent of the 280 parents surveyed would prefer their children to have a lunch prepared from organically grown products and 60 percent are willing to pay 10 percent or more for it. 80 percent of the parents interviewed also support the idea of school trips to organic farms. Responses from teachers were even more positive.

The project encompasses a complex approach to organic food and organic farming. Education of pupils, parents and cooks therefore plays an important role in the project, which is part of an Agro-Environmental-Information project (Network of information centers) co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Czech Republic.

Plans for student field trips to organic farms and farmers being invited to speak in schools are set for the next few months to increase public exposure to the farming experience. In September, all pilot schools are organizing Organic Food Days during which all lunches will be prepared with completely organic products. There will also be a number of games to help increase student interest in this topic. (cp)

(Source: Tomáš Václavík, Green marketing)

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### 6. +++ EU: New EU Organic Regulation Adopted +++

The European Union's Agriculture Council adopted a revised regulation on organic foods and farming. The new regulation will come into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. That will be the first step in the process of replacing Council Regulation 2092/91. This process started 18 months ago with the publication of the Commission's draft proposal. What is new in the revised regulation?

First of all there are more precise regulations regarding the prohibition of GMO. The second most important change concerns the labelling of all pre-packaged organic food produced in the EU with the EU-logo. According to the new regulation at least 95 percent of the ingredients (in terms of weight) must be organic. Before, it had to be 70 percent. Otherwise the EU-logo cannot be used. (bj)

For further information concerning the new "EU Organic Regulation" please have a look at the following website: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/qual/organic/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/qual/organic/index_en.htm)

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### 7. +++ European Organic Congress to look into the future of CAP +++

Future EU policies on organic food and farming within the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) is the focus of the upcoming European Organic Congress to be held in Brussels December 4<sup>th</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The forum, which is organised by IFOAM EU Group, is expected to bring together at least 200 participants representing: the European Commission, authorities and organisations from the EU Member States, members of Parliament and a broad range of stakeholders from all over Europe. The European Organic Congress will evaluate the implementation of the European Action Plan on Organic

Food and Farming. In a second step, the participants will discuss and develop a political agenda within the CAP of the EU–27 to enhance the further development of organic foods and farming. The IFOAM EU Group invites all interested stakeholders to the Congress and is seeking cooperation with farmers, all organic operators, the food sector as well as environmental organisations, trade unions and consumer organisations. (yh)

For further information please check the website of the IFOAM EU Group:

<http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/>

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### **8. +++ Proceedings of the 3rd International Congress of the European Integrated Project “Quality Low Input Food” (QLIF) +++**

The proceedings document the results of the congress, held March 20–23, 2007, in cooperation with the University of Hohenheim, Germany. It was convened in parallel with the 9<sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference on Organic Agriculture in German-speaking countries, entitled “Between tradition and globalization”.

The QLIF project aims at improving quality, ensuring safety and reducing costs along the organic and low input food supply chains through research, dissemination and training activities. The proceedings include all the presentations on the topics listed above. (yh)

Niggli, U., Leifert, C., Alföldi, T., Lück, L., Willer, H. (Hrsg.) (2007): Improving sustainability in organic and low input food production systems. FiBL, Frick, 462 S., ISBN 13:978-3-03736-003-3, Euro 15,-

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### **9. +++ ORGANICagriculTOUR – Students on promotion tour in Hungary and Romania +++**

Six students and one assistant in the Faculty of Organic Farming in Witzenhausen, near Kassel, set out on April 1<sup>st</sup> for the first ever three-week ORGANICagriculTOUR. It will take place twice a year, always at the end of the semester. The route included agricultural faculties in Budapest, Gödöllő and Debrecen in Hungary as well as Iasi and Cluj Napoca in Romania. Together with students at each location they organised project days focused on organic farming. Not only did they promote awareness of sustainable agriculture but they also discussed the situation and the on-site development potential for organic farming with participants. Prof Dr. Munteanu of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics in Iasi was impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the young team. At the same time, interested individuals received information about the range of educational opportunities available in the Faculty of Organic Farming at the University of Kassel. A secondary purpose of the tour was to recruit students from foreign countries for the University’s master’s program. With its focus on organic farming this master is unique in Europe. What makes it unique is the variety of teaching methods used, intense practical experiences and a high level of participation open to the students. In fact, the current master’s program, including its structure and content was mainly proposed and developed by students.

Both the new bachelor and master’s programs in “organic farming” (both introduced in 2005) and the ORGANICagriculTOUR have, in their first year, already been named [UN decade Education for Sustainable Development](#). The next tour in September will take students to Poland and the Baltic States. (kb)

For further information please see the following website: [www.organic-agricultour.de](http://www.organic-agricultour.de)

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### **10. +++ Trainee program V - for young organic farming professionals +++**

Starting November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, the fifth group of organic farming trainees will begin their studies. Trainees take part in an intensive 12-month practical training program in organisations and companies focusing on consulting, control and certification, processing or marketing organic food. During this time trainees are brought together for four one-week seminars, to be conducted in German. In the future, companies from Central and Eastern Europe will also be able to apply to participate. (kb)

For more detailed information please visit [www.soel.de/projekte/trainees.html](http://www.soel.de/projekte/trainees.html)

### 11. +++ Proper storage and ventilation of grain +++

Appropriate storage techniques can prevent losses caused by pests and fungi infestation. In order to prevent the appearance and further multiplication of storage pests, granaries should be emptied at the latest in spring and be thoroughly cleaned immediately afterwards. In this case it is not sufficient just to clean the grain store with a broom. Industrial vacuum cleaners can remove old grain even from poorly accessible corners. In case of pest infestation beneficial organisms or biological control agents can support pest control.

Very often, last year's grain contaminate the new harvest. Therefore it is best to remove all cereals early enough before the time of the new harvest and thus starve out present pests. If this is impossible, store old and new harvest separately or crush old grain for your livestock.

Most pests stop their biologic activity at temperatures below 10°C. This is the reason why stored grain should not exceed 14 % moisture level and a temperature of 10°C. Otherwise there is an increased risk of moulds and other pests. In addition, the grains loose too much matter due to respiration.

Sufficient aeration and deaeration possibilities are essential for granaries. Aeration serves also for secondary drying and improves storability of cereals. Existing grain stores and silos can be refitted without high construction expenses - for example with perforated ventilation ducts or drainage hoses which can be installed as a building-block system. For larger shallow stores telescope duct elements are offered which can be pulled out conveniently with the tractor before cleaning. The diameter of the ventilation ducts should be appropriate for a maximal flow speed of 10 m/s. Otherwise the counter pressure of the ducts gets too high. Channel distances and fan capacity depend on the purpose of aeration.

For cooling dry grain, relatively small fans are sufficient. Just off the combine, grains often reach a temperature of more than 30°C and will loose moisture for quite a while. As a consequence, silos have to be ventilated already during the first two days after filling. In summer, the late evening hours are best (after 9 p.m.). The outside air is then cooler but still dry. The air warms up on the grain and thus somewhat dries it at the same time. However, be careful in spring, when the warm outer air cools down on the stored grain that is still cold from wintertime. This can cause the humidity in the air to condensate on the grain – an unwanted effect.

Aeration as a method to dry moist grain is only appropriate up 19% moisture content. Moister grain can be dried more effectively by means of a traditional warm-air dryer. For this purpose, the grain should be evenly and shallowly spread out. For secondary drying, the drying air should be no warmer than 5 – 8 °C above grain temperature. Otherwise the warm air absorbs too much water at the bottom - which will condense again when the air cools down in the upper parts of the granary.

In general the farmer should take care to check the temperature regularly after filling with the help of probes. Warming will indicate that the grain has been put into store too moist or that storage pests have settled in. (kb)

#### Important data on cooling and drying of stored grain

	cooling	drying
Distance of ducts	2 - 3 m	1 m
Necessary air flow	20 – 30 m <sup>3</sup> /h per m <sup>3</sup> storage space	at least 70 m <sup>3</sup> /h per m <sup>3</sup> storage space
Max. bulk height	up to 10 m	4 m
Temperature of in-blew air	at least 5°C lower than temperature of grain	5 to maximal 8°C higher than temperature of grain

(Source: „bioland“, no. 07/2007)

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## 12. +++ Termine +++

- “Developing Organic Trade” - Conference, September 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Imperial College London, UK ([www.developingorganictrade.org](http://www.developingorganictrade.org))
- 21<sup>st</sup> IGN-Tagung “Animal suffering and welfare”, September 20<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup> 2007, Gießen, DE ([http://www.uni-giessen.de/vet-tierschutz/IGN/1\\_Anuendungung.pdf](http://www.uni-giessen.de/vet-tierschutz/IGN/1_Anuendungung.pdf))
- Anuga Organic – new Organic Fare, October 13<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> 2007, Köln, DE ([www.anuga.com](http://www.anuga.com))
- Bionord, October 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, Hamburg, DE (<http://www.bionord.de>)
- World Nutrition Day 2007 – main topic: „The right of food“, October 16<sup>th</sup> 2007
- Natural Ingredients 2007, October 30<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, London, UK ([www.fi-events.com](http://www.fi-events.com))
- EUCARPIA Symposium on organic plant breeding, November 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> 2007, Wageningen, NL (<http://www.eucarpia.org/>)
- ECOFESTIVAL 2007: The 10th Organic Products & Services Exhibition, November 8<sup>th</sup>– 11<sup>th</sup> 2007, Exhibition Center Helexpo Palace in Athens, GR ([www.ecofestival.gr/](http://www.ecofestival.gr/))
- Agritechnica 2007, November 13<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> 2007, Hannover, DE ([www.agritechnica.com](http://www.agritechnica.com))
- "Food in Future Climate - Conference on Organic Food Systems" - conference on climate change and organic agriculture, November 19<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup>, Norrköping, SE (<http://www.cul.slu.se/english/conference/index.html>)
- European Organic Congress to look into the future of CAP, December 4<sup>th</sup>– 5<sup>th</sup> 2007, Brussels, BE (<http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/>)
- BioFach 2008, February 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> 2008, Nürnberg, DE ([www.biofach.com](http://www.biofach.com))
- Salima – International Food Fairs, March 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, Brno, CZ ([www.bvv.cz/salima](http://www.bvv.cz/salima))
- Biol 2008 - International Organic Olive Oil Awards, April 30<sup>th</sup> - May 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, Bari, IT ([www.premiobiol.it/](http://www.premiobiol.it/))
- World Summit on GMO-Free Diversity – May 2008, Bonn, DE ([http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/fileadmin/files/gmo-free-regions/Call\\_for\\_Bonn\\_2008\\_e\\_d\\_f.pdf](http://www.gmo-free-regions.org/fileadmin/files/gmo-free-regions/Call_for_Bonn_2008_e_d_f.pdf))
- 3rd Organic Marketing Forum – International meeting for the processing and the marketing of organic food, 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, Warsaw, PL ([www.ekoconnect.org](http://www.ekoconnect.org))
- 22<sup>nd</sup> European Grassland Association Meeting – “Biodiversity and fodder – future challenges for grassland management“, June 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> 2008, Uppsala, SE (<http://www-conference.slu.se/eqf2008/>)
- 16<sup>th</sup> IFOAM Organic World Congress – Cultivate the Future, June 15<sup>th</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup> 2008, Modena, IT ([http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam\\_conferences/owc/Organic\\_World\\_Congress.html](http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/owc/Organic_World_Congress.html))
- 4<sup>th</sup> QLIF-Congress, June 18<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> 2008, Modena, IT (<http://www qlif.org/Library/letter/july07.html>)

