



EkoConnect - International Centre for Organic
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EkoConnect Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

Dear Readers,

At the beginning of April an international group of experts met in Bulgaria to discuss the future of organic food and organic farming. The meeting was organised by IFOAM and Agrolink in consideration of the new European Regulation on Organic Farming, which is soon coming into force and of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Health Check.

With regard to the new European Regulation on Organic Farming ((EC) No 834/2007) the participants of the seminar discussed the proposed new mandatory EU 'bio' logo. By now, the European Commission has just withdrawn the new logo which was approved in principle in January 2008 due to similarities with the existing trademark of the German discounter ALDI. As a result, the Commission will ask the Council to postpone its mandatory introduction until 1 January 2010 to give time for a new logo to be commissioned. Francis Blake, president of the IFOAM EU Group expressed his concern: "This is going to cause serious problems. It is really not possible to postpone only this part of the new regulation – other parts have implications for labelling which means that many products will have to change their labels twice. This is absolutely not acceptable for the market." Francis Blake votes for the abandonment of a mandatory 'bio' logo.

If you have to know what the new (EC) No 834/2007 is about or if you deal with food and keep wondering whether you have to cope with this European Regulation or not, we can recommend you the "Juridical and agricultural comments on the (EC) No 834/2007". The book was written by Hanspeter Schmidt and Manon Haccius in February and is published in German. For you, we have already had a first look into it (see second article).

Another speciality of this edition is that we leave Europe for a short trip and visit to Azerbaijan. The author of the country portrait, Professor Babayev, works at the faculty of soil science and organic farming at the Azerbaijan Agricultural Academy. For many years, he has been engaged in the organic farming movement in his country. Although a market for organic food is still rather underdeveloped, Babayev sees a growing potential especially for small family farms with small capital stock.

And at this occasion, we want to invite you warmly once again to the 3rd Organic Marketing Forum which will take place on May 26 and 27, 2008 in Warsaw!

You will find all further information and registration forms on www.organic-marketing-forum.org. For direct information in Polish, German and English you may also contact Agnieszka Bolek from the organisation team at EkoConnect: agnieszka.bolek@ekoconnect.org; Phone +49 (0) 351-456 80 39.

As usual we welcome any comments and information about organic farming that you can send us by email to redaktion@ekoconnect.org

We hope you enjoy reading this issue. With best regards from Dresden,

Anja Nowack & Stefan Simon & Bernhard Jansen

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1. +++ AZ: Organic agriculture in Azerbaijan: an overview of the organic agriculture movement, current market characteristics and future challenges +++

Since 1960, the intensification of agriculture in Azerbaijan has led to environmental problems such as degradation of soils, water pollution and reduction of biodiversity. This severe situation boosted the scientific research on quality and condition of soil and other natural resources of the country. The results of research led to the first wave of expansion of a “green movement” by the end of the 1980s. Afterwards, economic difficulties that arose by the dissolution of the Soviet economy and problems ensuing from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict transferred the importance of the organic agriculture movement to second tier.

The key moment of revival of the green movement came with the agrarian reform which was started at the end of 1995. The amount of reallocated land for families ranges usually from 1.5 to 2ha. The biggest problems farmers have to cope with are lack of capital, high energy costs and limited possibility to access foreign markets. Problems concerning agricultural production directly include poor material base, lack of overview of varieties and bad conditions of seed funds, failure of irrigation system and poor organization of advisory-information systems for farmers.

In these conditions, the only alternative for farmers was to return to old methods and traditional land use. They also could not afford chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Therefore, all these obstacles enhanced the expansion of the organic agriculture in Azerbaijan. The carrier of organic agriculture ideas and movement in Azerbaijan was Ganja Agribusiness Association (GABA), founded in 1998. This association had to face the obstacle of overcoming and eliminating the developed “soviet” stereotyped way of thinking about management. Many trainings, seminars, conferences, etc. were organized throughout the last ten years by GABA and a network of international organizations such as Fund Eurasia, Fund Avalon, CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center), Elkana, etc. Beside these trainings GABA offered a new field of studies in 2007 – “Management of Organic Agriculture” to the first group of 16 students.

Today there are 332 organic farms, including 11 farm associations. The only national certification body “AZEKOSERT” has not yet passed the procedure of international accreditation, and thus is a limiting factor for export. At present, organic products are exported mainly to CIS countries (Commonwealth of Independent States).

Most of the organically managed land is used for pasture and haymaking (10,744 ha), wild collection and cultivation of herbs (8,200 ha), perennials (705 ha), vegetables (8,206 ha) and cereals (200 ha). The total number of certified organic land is amounted to 20,105 ha (2006), which makes an average of about 60 ha per farm.

In Azerbaijan, there are three large companies processing agricultural products according to organic standards. Reyhan Ltd. in the Gakh district deals with wild-growing fruits such as dog rose, hawthorn or sea-buckthorn. RDR Co. in Ganja produces mainly juices and compotes of pomegrate, quince, raspberry and blackberry. Suleyman Agricultural Co-op which is located in the Shamkir district makes juices, sauces, pickles and jams from bitter oranges. Besides, there is a number of organic farms processing organic products such as dried fruits (plum, apricot, cornel, persimmon), jams, pickles, juices and compotes.

Research shows that production of organic farms in comparison with conventional farms is more profitable, and this parameter is growing from year to year. The reason is an increase in demand for organic products among the consumers and expansion of the organic market. In the local markets, organic products can be found only in one organic market and in two organic sections of supermarkets. Organic products are ordered by several individual clients such as foreign embassies, oil companies, large hotels and restaurants.

The research carried out during the last two years shows that the interest of the consumers in organic products has greatly increased. At present, more than 5% of the population is a potential consumer of organic products (according to GABA, marketing research in 2007).

One of the major difficulties in the nearest future is the establishment of a legislative, which would be harmonized with international system of inspection and certification, foundation of local consulting services with the purpose of development of organic farming. The main obstacle for the development of organic agriculture and the potential of the organic food market is the mentality of different strata of the society in the relation to organic agriculture and its real advantages. It can be overcome by strengthening educational work among the population, in particular in rural areas and by creating regional demonstration organic farms.

Author: Amin Babayev, Professor of the faculty of soil sciences and organic agriculture at the Azerbaijan Agricultural Academy. For further questions please contact A.Babayev@gaba.az

Proofreading: Irmina Pelc

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2. +++ Review: Juridical and agricultural comments on the (EC) No 834/2007 +++

On 1 January 2009 the new European Regulation on Organic Farming (EC) No. 834/2007 will come into force and replace the present Regulation (ECC) No. 2092/91. To this new Regulation a legal commentary has been written by the lawyer Hanspeter Schmidt and Dr. Manon Haccius. In February the commentary was edited by hpslex publishing, Freiburg, Germany.

First of all, the juridical and agricultural commentary gives a brief summary of the essential improvements in the new Regulation. The authors show basic critical points and explain the logic of the wording of the law. Then, every article and paragraph is copied and commented in detail with regard to the consequences for the user.

The book may be used as a manual, therefore it is not necessary to read it from the first to the last page. Nevertheless, it is essential to read some passages accurately which is in every case useful for the over-all understanding. Those readers who are interested in the challenge to create the new Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 may read especially the commentary of the 40 reasons why a complete revision of the (EEC) No. 2092/91 has become necessary. The pages from 23 to 97 give also some information about European conflicts of interests, their reasons and about divergent policies.

The commentary offers to the layman the unusual possibility to learn several reasons for many paragraphs, missing explanations or even mistakes in the wording of the law. The authors illuminate those text parts and put them into perspective. Since there are so many cross-references to other parts of the text of the law and to other European Regulations, the reader often might see these gaps only at second or third glance.

SCHMIDT and HACCIOUS scan the text of the regulation very critically. But moreover, they do not forget to mention positive improvements such as the clearing basic of article 30, paragraph 1 concerning irregularities: According to this paragraph, the control authority or control body shall ensure that no reference to the organic production method is made in the labelling and advertising of the entire lot or production run affected by this irregularity. Every sanction should be proportionate to the relevance of the requirement that has been violated and to the nature and particular circumstances of the irregular activities.

The authors see a very big critical point in the fact that the new Regulation did not achieve its own purpose which is to improve understanding, transparency and precise aims. Furthermore, some basic specifications can hardly be found in the text of the new Regulation such as the definition and labelling of organic food/feed or the determination for which kind of food business the Regulation is obligatory and for which not.

The present commentary helps the reader of the new Regulation a lot, regardless of being farmer, processor or retailer of organic food or feed. However, in spite of being expert or beginner in the organic sector, the book helps to avoid a lot of wasted time and speculation. It is reasonable that the authors will also comment the different regulations of the commission concerning imports, details of agricultural production, processing and control of organic food, which have been published only in parts so far. They will come into force together with the (EC) No. 834/2007, similar to the so-called appendices of the present (ECC) No. 2092/91. With regard to this, we want to point out that one should keep in mind the time of publishing of the present commentary: after the publication of further Regulations of the European Commission concerning the organic food sector, new questions might occur and some parts of the present commentary might lose importance or then would be written in a different way.

Schmidt/Haccius, EG-Verordnung „Ökologischer Landbau“ Eine juristische und agrarfachliche Kommentierung der VO (EG) Nr. 834/2007, ISBN 978-3-00-023652-5. Price: 30,00 €; Language: German.

Please send your order to hps@hpslex.de. Contents, preface and introduction can be seen at the webpage of the publishing house: www.hpslex.de/.

Note: The international website for effective European Law is available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>. After choosing the preferred language, there are several possibilities to search for documents: The new (EC) No. 834/2007 can be found at the following link: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:189:0001:0023:EN:PDF>. It is possible to change to other languages (top right) and download the Regulation as PDF file or read it online in HTML.

Latest news: the European Commission published the first formal draft of the new implementing rules of the Council Regulation EC No 834/2007. In the latest Newsletter of the IFOAM EU Group you can find a commentary on this draft: www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group/PDF_Publication/IFOAM_EU_Newsletter_revision_special_ed_21.4.2008.pdf

Translation: Anja Nowack

Proofreading: Irmina Pelc

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3. +++ PL: New Website online since February: InfoBio.pl is dedicated to business contacts in the organic market +++

Since beginning of February the new website called *InfoBIO.pl* – Informator Rynku Produktów Ekologicznych (website for information about the organic market) is online. The site addresses any business which is engaged in the Polish market of organic products: processors, wholesalers, retailers, but also farmers and associations.

The central issue of the website is a company database. Every interested company or association may provide basic data of the business such as address and contact information. Furthermore, it is possible to provide detailed information about the business, e.g. company profile, detailed range of products, photos of products. Through this, a potential client can find an appropriate contract partner more easily. The aim of this website is to offer visitors an efficient search for information and a direct approach.

Beyond, one can find general information at this website such as guidelines, regulations and laws, guidebooks, information material and interviews with experts of the organic sector.

Soon, the website www.InfoBIO.pl will also be available in English and German. Thus, the website supports the business approach throughout the whole European organic market.

The organiser team of *InfoBIO.pl* invites users to contribute to the contents of the website. Please, use the register form which is available on www.InfoBIO.pl.

Translation: Anja Nowack

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4. +++ Specialised organic retail report Europe 2008: The entire European Organic Market in one practical compendium +++

An international team of authors managed to characterise the entire European organic market within a single handbook. This ambitious project of Ecozept, bioVista and ORA (Organic Retailers Association) offers data about the organic market in 27 European countries. In addition to an analysis of the overall economic background and a synopsis of existing studies, the 16 co-authors pioneered in describing the role and the structure of the organic markets.

From Scandinavia to Sicily, from Portugal to Turkey, from Poland to Romania: – organic sales boom and the new report shows the underlying forces, the protagonists and perspectives of this growth. Project manager Susan van Osch: „Our compendium provides a fast but exhaustive insight into the European market and shows international tendencies as well as national particularities. It’s a new important tool for any management decision”.

Burkhard Schaer (Ecozept) comments the accomplished work: “Finally we have fundamental data, decision guidance and principal addresses for all market players in a consolidated and accessible manual.”

The study was presented at the Biofach 2008, and now is published in report format. It addresses organic food processors, retailers and wholesalers, importers, associations, control bodies and market observers.

The project is co-financed by the initiators and sponsoring: BioFach – the world leading exhibition for organic products – and the organic food processor Sonnentor Kräuterhandels GmbH both supported the project. The study has about 300 pages and is offered for € 350 (plus VAT). It can be ordered at the Co-author EkoConnect e.V., Arndtstr. 11, D-01099 Dresden, Phone +49(0)351- 65 888 582; Fax: +49(0) 351- 2066174; E-Mail: stefan.simon@ekoconnect.org; Webpage: www.ekoconnect.org

Translation: Anja Nowack

Proofreading: Irmina Pelc

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5. +++ Research Institute of Organic Agriculture- Dossier 4: Quality and Safety of Organic products – Food systems compared +++

You will not be healthier only by eating organic food. But organic products are an important part of a sustainable and healthy diet. This dossier sets out the facts about the quality of organic products and shows how organic products differ from non-organic products in terms of quality and safety. This dossier examines the various aspects of food quality and presents a summary of current knowledge about the subject.

Results of nine years of research for differences between organic and conventional food: nutritional ingredients such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals have been analysed and qualified. In addition, also undesirable residues in food such as pesticides, mycotoxic substances, heavy metals and nitrate have been compared. One whole chapter is dedicated to the methods of holistic food examination. The dossier presents the European network of research centres: Food Quality & Health (FQH) focused on the interaction between organic food and human health (www.organicfqhresearch.org), the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), the University of Kassel, and the University of Warsaw. The dossier is completed by several aspects concerning taste, processing value and the positive impacts of organic production. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.fibl.org/shop/show.php?sprache=DE&art=1405>

Full title: Alföldi, Thomas; Granado, José; Kieffer, Edith; Kretschmar, Ursula; Morgner, Marion; Niggli, Urs; Schädeli, Alfred; Speiser, Bernhard; Weibel, Franco; Wyss, Gabriela; Schmidt, Wanda und Schmidt, Gernot (2006) Quality and Safety of Organic Products. FiBL-Dossier 4, 1. Edition. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau, FiBL), CH-Frick. Language: German, also available in French and English.

Translation: Anja Nowack

Proofreading: Irmina Pelc

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6. +++ Best of Organic - During the Organic Marketing Forum on May 26th and 27th, 2008 in Warsaw the best organic product of the year will be awarded! +++

In 2008 for the first time the 'Best of Organic' contest for the best organic product of the year will be carried out during the Organic Marketing Forum. The jury will consist of the expert audience of the Organic Marketing Forum. By organising this contest, EkoConnect, the organiser of this international exclusive organic trade event, would like to present the variety of European organic food to the international public in order to enhance the demand for organic food on the consumer level. New producers, processors and traders shall also be motivated to step into organic production. All exhibitors of the Forum are entitled to register their products for the award. Three top organic products of 2008 will be identified out of all applications. The participation in the contest is free of charge. The winners will be announced on May, the 27th, 2008 during Organic Marketing Forum 2008. The deadline for the submission to EkoConnect is April, 30th, 2008.

The Organic Marketing Forum is the central meeting of the organic food sector in Central and Eastern Europe and brings together traders, processors, producers and other food experts from all parts of Europe. Until editorial deadline, 240 participants from 22 countries have registered. Further information about the contest and the event can be found on: www.organic-marketing-forum.org or write to: Agnieszka.Bolek@ekoconnect.org, Phone +49 351 456 8039.

Proofreading: Irmina Pelc

7. +++ Ukraine: Conference in Kiev on the Organic Sector Development successful +++

From April 10 to 12, 2008, 228 participants from 25 countries came together for the 'International Conference on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries' to discuss concepts, opportunities and strategies for developing organic food and farming systems for their countries which in their majority are at an early stage of development. With over 40 presentations from experts and leaders in the organic sector the conference addressed the importance of public and private cooperation, the need for organic action plans, the development of local and export markets as well as certification.

Organised by the Organic Federation of Ukraine, Organic Services, Germany and the National Agricultural University in cooperation with the Ministry of Agricultural Policy of Ukraine the conference stressed the importance of systematic approaches to organic sector development. The conference was supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the European Union (EU), IFOAM and several other organisations and interested parties. With a growing consumer demand for organic products, organic farming offers alternative strategies and solutions for rural development, thus enhancing economic and social prosperity as well as ecological sustainability.

The position of the Ukrainian Ministry of Agricultural Policy was presented in the opening speech by its representative Oleksandr Demydov. Several strong statements underlined the wish of Ukraine to further develop its organic sector: "We are aiming at 10% organic farming by 2015. We are ready to support organic market development and to introduce GMO (genetically modified organisms) free regions. Organic offers great opportunities for Ukraine."

Conference participants unanimously issued the Kyiv Declaration, which concludes that as rural communities are threatened by corporate monopolies and genetic engineering, regional development must be strengthened by all means. The declaration sounds support for public and private collaboration in developing national organic standards, certification and market development that shall focus equally on domestic, regional and export markets as well as on raising of consumer awareness. Financial support schemes shall target market development and not organic farming subsidies only.

For further information see www.organic.com.ua and ofu@organic.com.ua.

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8. +++ Dates and events+++

- Biol 2008 - International Organic Olive Oil Awards, April 30th to May 7th 2008, Bari, Italy (www.premiobiol.it/)
- **3rd Organic Marketing Forum – International Meeting on Processing and Marketing of Organic Food, May 26th and 27th 2008, Warsaw, Poland (www.organic-marketing-forum.org)**
- World Congress on the Future of Food and Agriculture, Planet Diversity, May 12th to 16th 2008, Bonn, Germany (www.planet-diversity.org/)
- BioFach China 2008, May 29th to 31st May 2008, Shanghai, China www.biofach-china.com/main/Page.html
- 22nd Meeting of the European Pasture and Grassland Association – Subject: "Biodiversity and Animal feed– future challenges for grassland production", June 9th to 12th 2008, Uppsala, Sweden (<http://www-conference.slu.se/egf2008/>)
- 16th IFOAM Organic World Congress – Cultivate the Future, June 15th to 24th 2008, Modena, Italy, (http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/owc/Organic_World_Congress.html)
- 2nd ISOFAR (International Society of Organic Agriculture Research) - Scientific Conference "Cultivating the Future based on Science", June 18th to 20th 2008, Modena, Italy, (http://forschung.oekolandbau.de/archiv/template_lang.php?id=530)
- 4th QLIF- Congress, June 18th to 20th 2008, Modena, Italy, (<http://www.qlif.org/Library/letter/july07.html>)
- 3th Bio Handels-Forum, September 16th and 17th 2008, Cologne, Congress for Information and Exchange, with attendant exhibition of Organic producers and Organic service provider, www.biohandelsforum.de
- BioFach Japan 2008, September 24th to 26th 2008, Tokyo, Japan www.biofach-japan.com/main/Page.html

- Conference New Developments in Science and Research on Organic Agriculture, September 3rd to 5th 2008, Lednice, Czech Republic (www.pro-bio.cz/bioak)
- 6th International Ecology Fair EKOBIS 2008, September 11th to 14th 2008, Bihac, Bosnia and Herzegovina (www.pkusk.com.ba/ekobis.html)
- The 5th International Scientific Conference on Sustainable Farming Systems, November 5th to 7th 2008, Piešťany, Slovakia (www.ecomit.vurv.sk)
- EKOGALA, International Organic Food Trade, 16th-18th May 2008, Rzeszów, PL (www.ekogala.pl)

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Best regards,
Your Editorial Team

