



EkoConnect – International Centre for Organic
Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe e.V.

Phone: +49 (0) 351-20 66 172

Fax: +49 (0) 351-20 66 174

E-Mail: info@ekoconnect.org

Internet: www.ekoconnect.org

July, 2005

EkoConnect Information Letter Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

Dear Readers,

this is the third issue of the EkoConnect Information Letter Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe. We hope, that we succeeded in compiling an interesting selection of news and literature for you and as usual we appreciate critical comments from our readers. We would like to thank Mr. Darko Kolbl who wrote the country report on Slovenia, and we especially thank all the persons, who are so reliably helping us with the translations of the infoletter. We are very glad that we are able to publish the infoletter now even in lithuanian. This means, that it will be available from now on in bulgarian, english, lithuanian, polish, romanian, russian and german.

If you haven't got the infoletter directly from EkoConnect, but would like to get it regularly and for free, just send an e-mail to info@ekoconnect.org in order to subscribe. You can also use this e-mail to cancel your subscription.

With best regards the EkoConnect editorial staff,

Bernhard Jansen

Wiebke Deeken

* * * * *

Index

1. Organic farming in Slovenia
2. New organic inspection body in Poland
3. Development of organic agriculture in Hungary
4. Organic products in Czech supermarkets
5. Organic imports into the EU
6. IFOAM advises DG Sanco
7. Organic seeds in the Baltic states
8. Quality of organic products
9. Use of predators against *Sitophilus* in grains
10. Cultivation of oil radish can reduce nematode populations
11. Environmental agricultural programmes in Poland
12. Consequences of ten years GM crops in the US
13. Publication about leguminosae in organic farming
14. One year after the enlargement
15. Job at EkoConnect

* * * * *

1.+++ Organic farming in Slovenia +++

By the end of 2004 about 1580 farms, which is equivalent to 2% of all Slovenian farms had an area of about 22.790 ha (4,7% of the overall agricultural area) under organic management. This area is composed of 90.9% permanent grassland, 7.1% arable land, 1.5% orchards, 0.4% horticulture and 0.2% viticulture.

With the exception of the north-eastern region of Prekmurje organic farms are situated in all parts of the country. Most of the farms are dealing with both, plant and animal production (mainly cattle and sheep). Viticulture can be found in the north-eastern, south-western and south-eastern region. Organic orchards with apples, pears, plums, peaches and cherries are spread all over the country.

It was in 1997, when ecologically working farmers confederated for the first time and founded the 'Slovenian Organic Farmers Association' (S.O.F.A.). After the founding of several regional associations in the organic sector the 'Union of Slovenian Organic Farmers Associations' (USOFA), was founded as an umbrella organisation in June of 1999. Nowadays eight regional associations are members of the USOFA. About 820 farms are allied to these associations and offer their products with the related BIODAR logo. 37 farms are farming according to the bio-dynamic farming principles and are part of the Ajda-Demeter association, which has been founded already in 1991.

The compliance with the guidelines has been inspected since 1999 by the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Maribor and since 2004 by the inspection and certification body in Maribor.

The national financial support for organic agriculture has continuously been increased since 1999 and amounted to 584,7 Mio SIT in 2003 (2,5 mio Euro).

The organic market is still small: Only 15-20% of the farms sell their products as organic produce. Some of the farms have regularly stalls on markets, but most of the farmers offer their products directly on farm. The only food market chain selling organic products, fruit and seasonal vegetables included in the assortment, is 'Mercator'. More over organic products are sold in 10 specialised health food shops and on organic farmers markets in the cities of Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Kranj, Novo Mesto and Domzale.

The demand for certain products (cereals, oil seeds, vegetables, eggs, pork and poultry, milk and milk products) is partly exceeding the supply. Organic milk is sold as conventional on the market. Depending on the type, organic products can be sold 40-100%, sometimes even 200% more expensive than conventional ones. Nevertheless, the sales and import of organic products are reflecting an increasing demand. Comparing the market share of organic products of less than 1% to the situation in other European countries, the demand is likely to increase in the years to come. Imported organic products are cereals, milkproducts, soyproducts, legumes, oils, fresh and dried fruit, vegetables, sweets, cosmetics and beverages.

Due to a lack of state support, homogeneous production, supply and public information and education regarding the development of organic agriculture in Slovenia is advancing at a slow pace. Most of the financing for research in organic agriculture is coming from EU-programmes. Only a few organic agriculture areas are dealt with in the scope of broader research projects that are supported by the state. In general the contractors are the Institute for sustainable development in Ljubljana (ITR) and the Faculty of Agriculture in Maribor.

* * * * *

2.+++ New organic inspection body in Poland +++

Since april 7th of 2005 there is a new organic inspection body in Poland. It is called Biocert Malopolska Sp.z o.o. and is situated in Kracow. Biocert Malopolska is offering organic certification services in the areas of agricultural production, processing and import. The contact person is Mr. Janusz Olszewski, phone: 012-430-36-06 or 0 509 668 424, 0 505 027 627, e-mail sekretariat@biocert.pl. On the website of the competent authority, Inspekcja Jakości Artykułów Rolno-Spożywczych (IJARS), a list of the Polish inspection bodies has been published: <http://www.ijhar-s.gov.pl/index.php?idkat=248>.

* * * * *

3.+++ Development of organic agriculture in Hungary +++

In Hungary the organic agricultural production has experienced a strong growth during the last year. According to ZMP (Germany) the organic area has risen by 13% to 128.816 ha. The strongest growth of 22% can be noticed in the permanent grasslands area but also the share of arable crops has risen up to 62.201 ha. The area used for the cultivation of animal feed crops has been extended from 9.834 ha to 19.774 ha. The organic area for the cultivation of cereals and especially corn has been extended

as well, while the organic wheat cultivation is decreasing. The share of the organic area is now 48% for arable crops and 46% for permanent grassland.

Even the animal farming in organic systems has increased: especially the sectors of pigs and poultry have grown by 72% respectively 58%, cattle farming grew by 12%. This is also reflected in the higher fodder production. The organic stock of goats, sheep and horses however have been reduced.

* * * * *

4.+++ Organic products in Czech supermarkets +++

In the Czech Republic part of the organic production is marketed through conventional retailers. Six big food chains (Ahold-Hypernova, Billa, Carrefour, Delvita, Tesco und Globus) offer organic products in their stores. The range of the assortment varies from 20 to 80 different products. Nearly all of these retailers offer dry products and milk, some of them also offer meat. Organic vegetables however are still seldom to be found in Czech supermarkets. A big share of the products are marketed with the brand names of Pro-Bio or Country Life. The front-runners in terms of the organic assortment (Carrefour, Delvita) have also included many imported products in their assortment.

* * * * *

5. +++ Organic imports into the EU +++

The import of organic products into the EU is regulated by the Article 11 of EEC regulation 2092/91. For the import it has to be assured, that the product concerned has been produced and inspected according to rules that have been approved as equivalent to those of the EEC regulation. For countries, that are included on the list of third countries according to VO 94/92, (Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Israel, New Zealand and Switzerland), the approval of equivalency has been given on the state level. For imports from other states, the equivalency has to be checked and the permit is given for each individual case. This provision is an exceptional provision and will expire by the end of this year. The EU commission is at the moment proposing a prolongation of the provision for one more year. Most of the competent authorities in the new EU member states are at the moment preparing for and beginning with the handling of applications for import permits. In the Czech Republic about 50 import permits have been issued already for about 5 importing companies.

A workshop on the implementation of the import permit procedure was recently held in Brussels, where representatives from the new EU member states as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey exchanged experiences on the topic. The workshop was organised by the EU-Commission in co-operation with EkoConnect.

* * * * *

6.+++ IFOAM advises DG Sanco +++

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) has recently received a seat on the advisory board of the European Directorate General for Health and Consumer Affairs (DG Sanco). IFOAM has appointed Anamarija Slabe from the Institute for sustainable development (Inštitut za trajnostni razvoj) in Ljubljana, Slovenia for this post. Up to date IFOAM has already acted in an advisory capacity on agricultural issues for DG Agri.

* * * * *

7. +++ Organic seeds in the Baltic states +++

In the scope of a project on environmental friendly food production systems and the related requirements for plant breeding and seed production a seminar was held at the end of May in the city of Talsi, Lattvia. The participants, plant breeders, seed producers, variety testers, representatives of agricultural ministries and inspection institutions, advisors and scientists from Lattvia, Lithuania and Estonia as well as six other European states, analysed and discussed the situation of organic seed production in the Baltic states. The experts agreed on the high significance of selection and breeding of varieties that are especially appropriate to organic conditions. The main obstacle here is the question of financing. In the future the collaboration with breeders in other European states shall be initiated and enforced.

For the authorization of varieties the testing of suitability for cultivation is of major importance. The testing should be carried out under the conditions of an organic production system. Since 2004 testing can be realized in Lattvia, as the only one of the three countries. Organic criteria should also be considered in the evaluation of the testings.

The use of organic seeds for organic production is still a big problem in the three Baltic states. A database for organic seeds has been developed already, but information about the availability of the seeds on the market is still missing and there is a general lack of seeds of organic origin. The propagation of organic seeds is a special challenge to the seed producers, because they have to do an even better job in order to comply with the quality requirements, applied usually in the conventional seed production. Due to the situation there will not be enough organic seeds available on January the 1st 2006, when the database system is going to be implemented. A detailed report of the seminar can be obtained (booklet or CD) from Ina Belicka, stende.selekcija@apollo.lv.

* * * * *

8.+++ Quality of organic products +++

Products from organic production differ significantly from conventional products. Studies from different countries have shown, that organic products in general have a higher content of certain valuable substances, such as certain vitamins, essential amino acids and minerals) and at the same time they are less polluted by harmful substances like nitrate and nitrit or residues from pesticides. Further more fruit and vegetable from organic origin often has a better storage capacity. But is it possible to scientifically prove the organic or non-organic origin of a product? The university of Kassel (Prof. Dr. Meier-Ploeger) in co-operation with several partners has effectuated a study to check and evaluate the applicability of different holistic examination methods in order to detect the origin of a product. The result of the study shows, that it is generally possible to determine the quality of product with these methods and make a statement concerning its origin. Further research will be necessary before the methods can be applied as a standard. The study (in German with an English abstract) can be downloaded at <http://orgprints.org/4815/> . Further contributions concerning the quality of organic products have been worked out in the scope of the Quality Low Input Food project (QLIF) and were presented at the congress "Organic Farming, Food Quality and Human Health" in January 2005. They can be read at <http://www.qlif.org/qlifnews/april05/con2.html>.

* * * * *

9.+++ Use of predators against *Sitophilus* in grains +++

After the filling of storage facilities with grains the pest *Sitophilus ssp.* can become active again. The most important measure against the pest is the precautionary efficient cleaning up of the storage facilities. If nevertheless an infestation with *Sitophilus ssp.* occurs, the use of the predator *Lariophagus distinguendus* is a good and cheap method, to control the pest. *Lariophagus* finds the larvae of *Sitophilus* in the grain stock and in the chinks and splices of the storage facility due to its scent. It can penetrate into the stock up to a depth of four meters. *Lariophagus* is placing its own eggs with its sting into the larvae of *Sitophilus*. After a few days the *Lariophagus* larvae will hatch out and eat the *Sitophilus* larvae. The larvae will develop to imago of *Lariophagus* and those will search for *Sitophilus* larvae again. Suitable moments for the application of *Lariophagus* are 3-4 weeks after the filling of the storage facilities, springtime, when *Sitophilus* is becoming active again, or against remaining populations in the empty stores. The predator can for example be obtained via APC AG in Nuremberg, Germany, which do also have an office in Praha www.apc-ag.de, www.apc-ag.de/cz/.

* * * * *

10.+++ Cultivation of oil radish can reduce nematode populations +++

In a research project in the scope of the German federal organic agriculture programme realised by the Federal Agricultural Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry in co-operation with different partners it has been shown, that the cultivation of certain varieties of oil radish as an intermediary crop can be used to highly reduce the infestation with the root-knot nematode *Meloidogyne hapla*. Legume species, vegetables and root crops are host plants for the nematodes. A high percentage of these crops in the crop rotation and at the same time a low percentage of cereals, short fallows and unsatisfactory weed control results in the continuous presence of host plants for the parasitic nematode. With the exception of the less favourable black fallow, no control measures for *M. hapla* in organic agriculture are yet available in practise and as a consequence great damage is caused by *M. Hapla* in organic potatoe and vegetable cultivation.

Different varieties of oil radish, which were known to be highly resistant to the pest were characterised according to their susceptibility to *M. Hapla*. The lowest susceptibility was founded for the variety 'Commodore'. In micro-plot experiments it was shown that the cultivation of 'Commodore' could reduce the nematode by 96%, starting from a high initial infestation. The incorporation of oil radish as green

manure resulted in an additional reduction of the nematode population density. Field studies on two organic farms confirmed the low susceptibility of the oil radish 'Commodore' for *M. hapla*. A detailed report about the research project in German with an English abstract can be found on <http://orgprints.org/4296/>

* * * * *

11.+++ Environmental agricultural programmes in Poland +++

A publication by WWF-Polska in co-operation with the Ministry of agriculture and rural development in Warsaw shows a compilation about environmental agricultural programmes in Poland. The main supporting measures in the scope of these programmes are outlined on six pages, together with some background information. The fundamental conditions for participation are described as well as the respective amounts of financial support. The publication in Polish with the title „Program rolnośrodowiskowy, czyli rolnik strażnikiem przyrody“ is directed to farmers and can be downloaded from the internet at http://www.wwf.pl/informacje/publikacje/integracja/program_rolnosrodowiskowy.pdf

* * * * *

12.+++ Consequences of ten years GM crops in the US +++

The consequences of the cultivation of GM crops in the USA have been collected and described by Greenpeace. The results from several investigations show, that the technology did not keep the promises concerning higher and more stable yields, less use of pesticides and herbicides and absolut controllability. In contrast a higher use of such agrochemicals, a higher probability of the occurrence of resistant pests, the uncontrolled dissemination of genetic modifications and higher costs for the farmers have come true. The short publication in German with the title „Zehn Jahre GVO-Anbau in den USA – eine Bilanz“ can be downloaded from http://www.greenpeace.de/themen/gentechnik/anbau_genpflanzen/artikel/10_jahre_anbau_von_genpflanzen_eine_bilanz/

* * * * *

13.+++ Publication about leguminosae in organic farming +++

The Austrian agricultural publishing house Agrarverlag has published a new guide on legume species as fodder or for threshing in organic farming. The book is written for farmers, advisors and scientists and gives a broad overview over the most significant cultivation methods of legumes as main or intermediate crop. Numerous texts, tables, diagrams and pictures describe the cultivation of leguminosae in general and especially in organic agricultural systems. Among others the applicability of certain varieties, fertilisation and nutrient balance, control of weeds and pests, fodder value and profit margin are being addressed in detail. Every crop is described in a systematic overview. The book in German with the title „Futter- und Körnerleguminosen im biologischen Landbau“ can be ordered at the Austrian agricultural publishing house www.avbuch.at.

* * * * *

14.+++ One year after the enlargement +++

The current issue of the German magazine „Ökologie und Landbau“, which is edited by the German Foundation for Ecology and Farming (SÖL), focusses on the enlargement of the EU in 2004. Under the title “Zwischenbilanz – ein Jahr Osterweiterung” the topic is outlined and discussed in nine articles. Besides an introduction and an overview over the situation of organic agriculture in the new member states there are detailed articles about the market and marketing in particular countries, research in organic agriculture, an appraisal on the so called co-existence of organic farming and genetically modified crops, a country report about organic agriculture in Poland and an article about the Polish-German co-operation in the field of animal breeding for organic agriculture. The issue no. 134 2/2005 in German can be ordered at Oekom-Verlag <http://www.oekom.de/oekolandbau/index.htm>

* * * * *

15. +++ Pillnitz Summer Academy on Organic Animal Husbandry +++

The Pillnitz Summer Academy on Organic Animal Husbandry is an international intensive one-week training course about organic animal husbandry. Students will be taught practice oriented knowledge about organic livestock breeding, nutrition, husbandry management etc., especially focussing on

cattle, pigs and poultry. Another important element of the course is the meeting, exchange of ideas and discussion between students and teachers from different European countries who are dealing with organic animal husbandry.

The Summer Academy is being organised and effected by EkoConnect, the professorship for Ecological Agriculture at the University of Applied Sciences HTW in Dresden, Germany and the August Cieszkowski Agricultural University of Poznan, Poland. It will take place in 2005 from August 22nd – 26th in Dresden-Pillnitz, Germany.

Advanced students of agriculture from countries of Central and Eastern europe (including Germany) and with a special interest in organic animal husbandry can participate in the course. There are 8 scholarships to be given to students from countries of Central and Eastern Europe. For further information please send an email to: info@ekoconnect.org.

* * * * *

16.+++ Job at EkoConnect +++

EkoConnect is offering a job to a trainee. More information (in german) on the EkoConnect homepage: www.ekoconnect.org