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EkoConnect Information Letter Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

Dear Readers,

this is the fourth issue of the “EkoConnect Information Letter Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe”. This letter is available in 7 languages (Bulgarian, English, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian and German). It is distributed to more than 1.200 experts, organisations and companies involved in organic farming in Central and Eastern Europe. As an addressee you are heartily invited to use the infoletter to distribute your news and send us interesting contributions. We would also appreciate you to forward the infoletter to your colleagues and partners. If you did not receive the infoletter directly from EkoConnect and/ or wish to subscribe it, please send an email to: info@ekoconnect.org. The same address can be used to cancel your subscription. We are looking forward to any further feedback.

The EkoConnect editorial staff,

Bernhard Jansen Wiebke Deeken

Index

1. Country report: The organic sector in Poland
2. Transnational network of Organic Livestock Breeding
3. Growth predicted for the organic market of Romania
4. Revision of the EC regulation 2092/91
5. Use of conventional feeding stuffs
6. The Open Gardens of Hungary
7. LOGO e.V. – active in Eastern Europe and Central Asia since 1995
8. Organic farming can save 30% energy
9. Organic Harvest Month in the Czech Republic
10. Funding for projects on genetic resources
11. Evaluation procedures for fertilizers in organic production
12. Pillnitz Summeracademy on Organic Animal Husbandry
13. New professional journal in Bulgaria
14. Newsletter on organic agriculture research in Europe
15. Organic marketing in Central and Eastern Europe
16. Organic Market Festival in Jelenia Góra, Poland
17. Conference on rural development in Central and Eastern Europe
18. Seminar on data collection about the European organic market

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1. +++The organic sector in Poland+++

In December of 2004 some 3.760 certified organic farms were registered in Poland half of it were in conversion. The organic area of these farms comprised 82.730 ha. This is equivalent to an organic share of 0.2% of the total number of Polish farms and about 0.5% of the agricultural area of Poland. The organic area consists mainly of permanent grassland (38.860 ha), arable crops (33.357 ha), perannual crops (orchards and blueberries: 3.203 ha) and horticulture (829 ha). The main arable crops are rye, oats, wheat and potatoes.

In terms of the area organic agriculture has the greatest extension in the regions (Województwo) of Zachodniopomorskie, Pod Karpackie and Warmińsko i Mazurskie. About 41% of the overall organic area of Poland is situated in these three regions. In terms of farms, however, the extension of organic agriculture is the highest in the regions of świętokrzyskie (547 Betriebe), Małopolskie (697), Lubeskie (393) and Mazowieckie(434). Altogether they count for 44% of all organic farms in Poland.

Even though there are some large organic farms, the structure of organic agriculture is in general rather small. 70% of the farms have less than 20 ha and only 175 farms (5%) have more than 100 ha. The average size of an organic farm is 22 ha.

A significant increase (from 555 to 1495 farms) of organic agriculture was set off in the year 2000 when the Polish government introduced grants for the first time and again in 2004 after joining the EU when the subsidies increased. The organic area increased by 66% from 2003 to 2004. The government is expecting that the number of organic farms will be doubled (about 7.500 farms) in 2005. The volume of processing of and the trade in organic agricultural products is still quite small but constantly growing. Approximately 30 of about 50 certified organic processors (22 in 2004) are currently active on the market, mostly involved in trade and deep-freezing. The largest number of companies are processing fruit and berries (frozen berries, jam and juice), followed by vegetables and grains. Only a few companies are processing herbs, meat or milk or producing organic feed stuffs. A list of organic processors has been published by the agricultural consultancy centre in Radom (Centrum Doradztwa Rolniczego w Brwinowie Oddział w Radomiu): www.eko.radom.com.pl. Due to the small scaled farm structure and the lack of processors, a significant part of the organic agricultural production is still sold on the conventional market or is meant for home consumption. Larger farms are also producing for the export market.

Organic food in Poland is mainly sold in specific stores together with other health food, regional products, non-industriell or dietetic food. A big share of organic products on the Polish market is still imported most of all from the neighbouring countries Germany and the Czech Republic.

A further growth of the organic sector in Poland is expected because the national and the regional governments of Poland as well as several companies are trying hard to push the development of organic agriculture. (Source: IJHARS 2005 and EkoConnect research)

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2. +++Transnational network of Organic Livestock Breeding +++

The "Transnational network of Organic Livestock Breeding" was founded in September 2004 with the financial support from the German Federal Programme for Organic Farming (Bundesprogramm Ökolandbau). Since then it is supplementing the "National Network of Organic Livestock Breeding". The basis for the activities of the network is the dependence of organic agriculture on breeding animals from conventional and industrial livestock breeding. Due to the lack of livestock breeding for organic purposes, organic farmers are forced to work with the same animals, races and lines as the conventional farmers do. The one-sided genetic determination of the animals towards high performances among other reasons often causes health problems. The need for action, however, varies significantly between the animal species.

The Transnational network of Organic Livestock Breeding is now trying to identify smaller populations of cattle, pigs and chickens, which are suitable for organic free range outdoor systems. Consequently the exchange of breeding animals and the development of breeding programmes shall be initiated. The network wants to bring together breeding organisations, organic farmers, livestock breeding scientists and persons responsible for animal genetic resources in transnational cooperations considering at the same time the needs of the processing industries, trade and marketing aspects. Starting from Germany and Poland, four international meetings have been realised and now new partners from countries of Central and Eastern Europe are needed. These can be persons, organisations or institutes which are conscious about the problem of the dramatic losses of genetic diversity in livestock and which want to develop activities in this field. The network is focussing on Black-and-White Cattle (old type), Red Cattle (old type), the Saddleback pig and chicken races, which are suitable for free range outdoor systems.

For further information please contact the coordinator: Dr. Anita Idel, project management animal health and agrobiodiversity, Anita.Idel@t-online.de, Tel. +49 30 70509501, www.agrobiodiversitaet.net

3. +++Growth predicted for the organic market of Romania+++

The organic area of Romania accounted for about 75.000 ha in 2004 and is expected to rise up to 100.000 ha this year. In contrast the organic market in Romania is still small. A large share of the Romanian organic production is determined for export, although the share differs significantly between the different groups of products. While about 20% of organic milk products are sold outside the country, the export of organic plant products and honey comprises about 95% of the production. Most of the products are sold to Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Italy. In the last year organic products for about one million Euro (have been) were exported.

The most popular organic products among Romanian consumers are brown sugar from Brasil, bread made from rye and vegetable products replacing milk. On the national market homegrown organic vegetables, cheese, butter and eggs are offered. The prices for organic products are about 14-40% higher than the prices for conventional products.

According to a ZMP report (Central reporting organ for markets and prices, Germany) which is based on statements of the Romanian organic food importing company "Naturaland" the Romanian organic market shall triple in the year 2005 and reach a volume of about 3 mio. Euro. Naturaland is also planning to start an information campaign for consumers.

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4. +++Revision of the EC regulation 2092/91+++

Currently the EU Commission is planning to undertake a general review of the whole regulation, addressing topics such as the scope, organic principles, handling of (derogations heißt eher Schmälerung als Ausnahmeregelung: exceptions) and regional variations, certification, labelling, organic farming and GMOs and wine processing rules. A proposal by the Commission shall be published in late autumn. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is meanwhile working on a report of recommendations for the Commission. This is a chance for European organic agriculture organisations and regions to contribute with ideas and experiences to a healthy development of organic agriculture.

The revision and further development of the EC regulation is also the objective of the ongoing EU project "Organic Revision", which includes the comparison of the regulation with other organic farming standards, the analysis of ethical values of organic agriculture in Europe, and the possibilities to reduce the use of conventional feeding stuffs and plant propagation material in organic agriculture. Informations and results are published on the website: www.organic-revision.org

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5. +++Use of conventional feeding stuffs+++

Annex I B 4.8. of the Regulation EEC No. 2092/91 (shortly: EU reg.) is defining the preconditions for the use of conventionally produced feeding stuffs in organic animal production as a derogation until August, 24th of 2005. Such feeding stuffs must be included on the list in annex II C, the amount to be used is restricted, and they can only be fed, if the same feeding stuff is not available in organic quality. According to a recent decision of the standing committee on organic farming, the transitional arrangement has been prolonged while stepwise decreasing the percentages of conventional feeding stuff (reg. No.1294/2005). The new derogation allows the use of conventional feeding stuff, when it is not available as organic, for ruminants up to 5% (until 31 December of 2007) and for non ruminants up to 15% with a step by step decrease of 5% every years: That means from now on 15% until December 31st of 2007, 10% until December 31st of 2009 and 5% until December 31st of 2011 http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_205/l_20520050806en00160017.pdf .

IFOAM in contrast had claimed to require 100% organic diet for ruminants, an earlier reduction of the percentages allowed for pigs and poultry and a review and reduction of the list of allowed conventional feeding stuffs.

Numerous papers and scientific articles about the feasibility and possible consequences of 100% organic diet in organic animal husbandry have been published in the run-up to the decision (see f.e.: <http://www.organic-revision.org/feed/feed.html>).

Other amendments on the EU reg. published in August are concerning the products listed in Annex II (Extension of the possibilities for use of industrial lime and ethylene and the inclusion of calcium hydroxide, reg. No.1318/2005

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_210/l_21020050812en00110012.pdf) and some changes in Annex III inspection requirements (reg. No.1336/2005 http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_211/l_21120050813en00110014.pdf).

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6.+++ The Open Gardens of Hungary +++

The Hungarian Open Garden Foundation (Nytott Kert Alapítvány - NyKA) is a registered non-profit organisation, founded in 1999. NyKA works to demonstrate the principles of environmentally-sound livelihood and to address environmental, social and economic problems in practice and in an integrated way.

The projects and activities of NyKA comprise a CSA (community supported agriculture) based delivery service for organic food in the Gödöllő-Budapest area, an organic demonstration farm at Babat Puszta which is run in collaboration with the Institute for Environmental Management, Szent István University (SZIE-KTI), an organic producer consumer network, a social gardening programme and many associated activities like festivals, public farm visits, open days and workshops. The aim is to strengthen the connection between people and the land and inform about organic food production and environmentally sound behaviour.

The work of NyKA is inspired by the vision of CSA – an approach to farming which brings farmers and consumers into a direct relationship, and where the risks and benefits of agriculture are shared across the community instead of being left as a burden to the farmer. Consequently NyKA is building up sustainable food communities, where producers and consumers cooperate to protect the land, provide fulfilling work and produce wholesome and tasty food. NyKA also runs the webpage www.nytottkert.hu, where information is published up to date in Hungarian and English. For more information please contact: info@nytottkert.hu, Tel.: 0036-28-516-500, Fax: 36-28-516-501.

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7. +++LOGO e.V. – activ in Eastern Europe and Central Asia since 1995+++

LOGO e.V. is a German non-profit organisation which is contributing to the development of organic agriculture, nature protection and international understanding between East and West since 1995. Logo is organising exchange programmes for agricultural junior employees, realising workshops for knowledge transfer and sees itself as a contact point for East and West.

The main element is a programme of internships of 6-12 months for interested agriculture students from 45 partner universities in Belarus, Russia, Kasachstan, Kirgistan, Moldova, Ukraine and Usbekistan. Every year about 180 students are chosen and trained on organic farms in Germany. During the internship, the students are attended by former participants of the programme and they take part in accompanying professional seminars. Furthermore German agricultural junior employees can realise an internship in CIS countries organised by LOGO.

Most of the members of Logo are managers of organic farms in Germany and former participants of the internship programme. For further information on LOGO and the partner universities in Russian or in German please check: www.logoev.de

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8. +++Organic farming can save 30% energy+++

Organic agriculture can produce about the same yields as conventional agriculture while consuming about 30% less energy. This is the result of a longterm study realised at the Cornell University in the US. The study reveals that lower yields are to be expected mainly in the first four years of organic management but after that the yields increased significantly. Furthermore the water consumption was reduced considerably and especially in dry periods the organic crop was growing better than the conventional one.

David Pimentel, the professor for ecology and agriculture at the Cornell University had compared organic and conventional corn and soybean during 22 years. Besides the yields he analysed the soil texture, energy efficiency, humus layer, organic changes, nitrogen content and the amount of nitrogen leached from the soil. The study by Pimentel, Hepperly, Hanson, Douds, and Seidel is called „Environmental, Energetic and Economic Comparisons of Organic and Conventional Farming Systems“. It has been published in the American scientific magazine BioScience (Vol. 55, No.7, July 2005) and can be ordered at: <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/aibs/bio/2005/00000055/00000007:jsessionid=7lptc36j2ltik.victoria>.

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9. +++Organic Harvest Month in the Czech Republic+++

September 2005 will be celebrated as Organic Harvest Month in the Czech Republic. The Organic Harvest Month will consist of almost 50 different events, including open days at farms, tastings and samplings in organic shops and supermarkets, organic harvest festivals, seminars, farm visits, organic farmers markets and special organic menus in restaurants. Dozens of organic farms will open their

gates for visitors and encourage them to come and taste organic food. This years celebration should start a tradition of promoting organic food and farming in the month of September. With the slogan "Taste the difference" the campaign wants to encourage people to try the great taste of organic food for the first time and at the same time convince local farmers and manufacturers to engage in the good marketing opportunities on the fast growing domestic organic market.

The event is organized by the PRO-BIO Organic farmers association and supported by the Czech Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, co-financed by the Dutch Avalon Foundation and sponsored among others by the two largest Czech organic companies: Country Life and Pro-Bio. (Tom Vaclavik greenmarketing)

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10. +++Funding for projects on genetic resources +++

Following the Biodiversity Action Plan for Agriculture the European Commission has launched a Community programme to promote genetic diversity and the sustainable use of genetic resources in agriculture throughout the European Union. The programme is called "Community programme on the conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture" (No 870/2004 of 24 April 2004).

The main objectives of the programme are to improve the conservation and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture and to promote, facilitate and improve co-operation and co-ordination of related undertakings in the European Community.

The programme covers the period from 2004-2006 and has an overall budget of 10 million Euro. The first call for proposals with a budget of 3,26 million Euro for 2005 has been published recently on the website of the EU Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/envir/biodiv/genres/call_en.htm. Depending on the type of action, proposals can be awarded a maximum of 50-80% of the total eligible costs. Proposals must be sent to DG Agri until September 30th. More information about the topic and the European Biodiversity Action Plan for Agriculture can be found on the following website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/envir/index_en.htm

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11. +++Evaluation procedures for fertilizers in organic production+++

The use of fertilizers and soil conditioners in organic production systems is regulated by the EC regulation 2092/91, Art.6 and the corresponding annexes I and II. Nevertheless, the range of products allowed varies greatly between member states. This is the background of a study which was realised by the EU-project "Organic Inputs Evaluation" and has recently been published by FiBL. The evaluation procedures for fertilisers and soil conditioners in several European countries are described and similarities and differences concerning the procedures in the respective countries are identified. The study with the title "Current Evaluation Procedures for Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners Used in Organic Agriculture" by Canali, Stopes, Schmid and Speiser (Editors) is available in English and German at: <https://www.fibl.org/shop/show.php?sprache=EN&art=1383> In the scope of the EU-project a conference will be held on October 13th, in Brussels. The conclusions of the projects work will be discussed with intereseted stakeholders. Participants are encouraged to contribute to the final recommendations for the harmonisation of evaluation procedures for organic inputs in Europe. More information and registration at: <http://www.organicinputs.org/conference.html>

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12.+++ Pillnitz Summeracademy on Organic Animal Husbandry+++

The "Pillnitz Summeracademy on Organic Animal Husbandry" was realised from August, 21st-26th of 2005 at the University of Applied Sciences in Dresden (HTW), Germany. This international course had been organised by the endowed professorship for organic agriculture of HTW Dresden in co-operation with the Akademia Rolnicza Augusta Cieskowskiego (Agricultural Academy) of Poznań, Poland and EkoConnect. The Summeracademy was financially supported by the German "Schweißfurth" foundation, the foundation for German-Polish cooperation (FWPN) and the German foundation "Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft". The participating students from Lithuania, Poland, Great Britain and Germany were learning and exchanging knowledge about organic animal husbandry during one week of lectures, on-farm visits and discussions. The "Pillnitz Summeracademy on Organic Animal Husbandry" was realised for the first time this year. It is planned to continue with the summeracademy next year and establish it as an annual course.

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13. +++New professional journal in Bulgaria+++

The Bulgarian NGO „Agrolink”, which was founded from experts in organic agriculture and turned out to be a platform for organic farmers and cooperatives, is now publishing its own professional journal. The magazine called “Living Earth” is published with the support of the British Ministry of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The magazine shall contribute to transfer regularly up-to-date information to farmers, organisations and institutions involved in environmental protection and sustainable development. This comprises information about production, certification and marketing of organic products as well as the worldwide development tendencies. In every issue a Bulgarian and a foreign producer of organic products is presented as an example in order to report about the problems, challenges and the success concerning the management and husbandry of an organic enterprise.

“Living Earth” is published in a printed version every three months. Related contributions and comments are welcomed by the editorial team. Questions and orders can be sent to: editor@agrolink.org (Svetla Nikolova). An own website is currently under construction and will probably be available by the end of September: www.agrolink.org.

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14. +++Newsletter on organic agriculture research in Europe+++

The EU-project „CORE Organic“ (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming) has launched the English newsletter “CORE Organic news”. This letter will be published four times a year up-to-date information about research projects, national research focusses, research institutions and events throughout Europe. The newsletter intends to make the orientation in the growing flood of information on organic agriculture easier and to link and present the organic agriculture research in Europe more clearly. The newsletter can be read or ordered from the website of the project: www.coreorganic.org. Further information about the project and the addresses of the contact persons are also available from this site.

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15. +++Organic marketing in Central and Eastern Europe+++

A new book about marketing-chain-management on organic markets in selected countries of Central and Eastern Europe is going to be published in September. The book is based on the dissertation of Katharina Reuter, who is a member of the steering committee of EkoConnect since its foundation. In her work the author reveals strategic recommendations for further market development for organic products in Central and Eastern Europe. For the first time the characteristics of these markets are scientifically analysed and clearly described. The book has a strong practice orientation, e.g. a successful market development is illustrated with the help of numerous cases of best-practice. Optimising the market organisation along the entire marketing chain by applying a marketing-chain-management is a fundamental precondition for the growth of the organic markets in Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time this is an amplification of existing organic marketing concepts. The analysis is focussing on the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, besides the countries of German language. The president of the International Society of Organic Agricultural Research (ISOFAR), Prof. Köpke, states in his preface of the book: “This book highlights an important issue at the intersection of science, practical marketing and agricultural policy. It can be considered as a milestone on the roadmap for Organic Agriculture going east.” The new publication offers valuable tools for the successful development of organic markets to politicians, associations, scientists and economists. It is published in German and can be ordered at: Verlag Dr. Köster, Berlin www.verlag-koester.de . ISBN-No.: 3-89574-579-0. For more information you can also check: www.ekoconnect.org.

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16.+++ Organic Market Festival in Jelenia Góra, Poland+++

On September 18th from 10a.m.-4p.m. the 18th Organic Market Festival will be held on the central market of Jelenia Góra, Lower Silesia. This event is organised by the local centre for agricultural consultancy in Wrocław (Dolnośląski Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego). The aim of the event is to promote a healthy lifestyle, ecological tourism, education and the consumption of organic food in the region. Organic farmers and processors of organic products as well as artisans will have the chance to present their farms and products to the public. Visitors can get information about organic products and regional sources of supply. Moreover they have the chance to get directly in touch with the producers.

The market is accompanied by cultural performances and an information programme which is also focussing on ecological issues.

Interested exhibitors can register at the Lower Silesia centre for agricultural consultancy in Wrocław (Dolnośląski Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego and arrange a boost. phone: 0048 75 755 30 81/82 (Mr. Grzeńkiewicz, Mrs. Larek-Drewniak) or 0048 75 732 69 17 e-mail: andrzej.larek@dodr.pl, pzd.boleslawiec@dodr.pl (Herr Larek).

Another market for regional products of Lower Silesia was held on September 10th-12th in Książ. This market is organised by the organisation for regional and local products of Lower Silesia (Dolnośląskie Stowarzyszenie produktu Regionalnego i Lokalnego) in Wrocław. For more information: www.produktregionalny.pl, proregion@isp.pl, phone: 0048 71/ 78 72 124 (Maria Centkiewicz).

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17. +++Conference on rural development in Central and Eastern Europe+++

The second international scientific conference on rural development will be held on November 17th-19th at the Lithuanian Agricultural University (Lietuvos Zemes Ukio Universitetas), Faculty for Economy and Management. The conference is focussing on the challenges of globalisation and integration for rural development in Central and Eastern Europe. The problematic areas of rural development in Central and Eastern Europe and the preconditions of the integration into the EU and onto the world market will be discussed. The conference languages are English and Lithuanian. The conference is organised by the Lithuanian Agricultural University in cooperation with the national Ministries for Agriculture, Environment, Education and Science together with other national and international scientific institutions. For more information please check the conference homepage: http://www.lzua.lt/rural_develop/. You can also register and hand in contributions via this website.

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18. +++Seminar on data collection about the European organic market+++

On November 10th and 11th the second EISfOM Seminar will be held in Brussels. The European Project "European Information System for Organic Markets (EISfOM)" aims to develop a framework for the collection and processing of relevant, up-to-date, reliable and comprehensive data on organic production and markets. A first seminar had already been held in April, where the state of the collection of data about the organic market in Europe had been presented. On the second seminar a framework for an European Information System for Organic Markets shall be defined. Recommendations for this framework have been worked out in the scope of the project. However, the second seminar is open to all parties interested in the subject of organic data collection and processing in order to meet the data needs of policy-makers, regulators, farmers, processors, traders, retailers and others. Participants are offered to submit an A4 abstract on activities and experiences for inclusion in the conference proceedings. For more information please check: <http://www.eisfom.org/workshops/brussels/index.html>