



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](mailto:info@ekoconnect.org)

Internet: [www.ekoconnect.org](http://www.ekoconnect.org)

November, 2005

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

Dear Readers,

this is the fifth issue of the EkoConnect Information Letter in 2005. This time, we focus mainly on Lithuania. About 1.800 Lithuanian farms are certified as organic with an increase of 50% per year. Another issue of great interest is the revision of the EU Regulation that we consider extremely important. With the imminent revision, many bases of the daily work of each organic farmer, processor and retailer in Europe are going to change. Especially the new EU member states which took over the current EU Regulation have the opportunity to mould the new Regulation with their contributions.

The EkoConnect Information Letter could be extended to 10 languages, thanks to volunteers from further countries. It now is published also in Slovenian, Czech and Hungarian. Stefan Simon is new as well, he took over Wiebke Deeken's job in the editorial department. You are welcome to send him suggestions on how to improve the letter. As an addressee you are warmly invited to use the Information Letter to distribute your news and send us interesting contributions. We would also appreciate you to forward the Information Letter to your colleagues and friends. If you did not receive the Information Letter directly from EkoConnect and/ or wish to subscribe it, please send an e-mail to: [info@ekoconnect.org](mailto:info@ekoconnect.org). The same address can be used to cancel your subscription. We are looking forward to your feedback.

The EkoConnect editorial staff,

Bernhard Jansen

Stefan Simon

\* \* \* \* \*

### Index

1. Country report: organic agriculture in Lithuania
2. Website on legal framework concerning European organic agriculture
3. Billa supermarkets introduce organic dairy products in their Czech stores
4. Light treatments on potato tubers increase disease resistance
5. New strategies to fight apple scab (*Venturia inaequalis*)
6. Adelaide: IFOAM Congress Declaration calling on governments and new world board elected
7. Organic agriculture in Austria
8. Illegal cultivation of genetically modified soya in Romania
9. Website on GMO-free regions in Europe
10. Educational trips to Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic
11. Russian internet shop selling organic products
12. Czech Republic: Awards for organic products and shops
13. IFOAM EU group publish position paper on revision of EU Regulation
14. Scholarships for students from Central and Eastern European countries
15. 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Cultivation Technique and Phytopathological Problems in Organic Fruit-Growing
16. Cross-border projects between Poland and Germany to foster organic agriculture
17. Marketing conference on organic agriculture in Krzywowa, Poland
18. Internship at EkoConnect

\* \* \* \* \*

### 1. +++Country Report: Organic Agriculture in Lithuania+++

In Lithuania, the largest and southernmost of the three Baltic states, the agricultural area (52% of the whole state extending over 65.000 km<sup>2</sup>) has always been of great importance. About two thirds of the agricultural area consist of arable farm land and one third of grassland. In many parts of Lithuania you will find mainly small and very small farms with farmers milking their one to four cows by hand and taking the milk to a collection point in the village next in size. Currently, 3.482.000 people are living in Lithuania and there are about 240.000 farms with an average space of 6 ha.

Public interest in organic agriculture in Lithuania increased at the beginning of the 1990s. A statement of the ministry of November 2004 says: "Organic agriculture is the agricultural system of the future for Lithuania." Consequently, the "Country Development Plan" for 2004 - 2006 that was passed by the government intends to increase organic agriculture to 5% of the whole agricultural area. This year, organic agriculture takes about 2%. The area that is cultivated according to ecological standards has increased by 27.434 ha in the course of last year and currently comes to 70.389 ha (2004: 42.955 ha, 2003:23.289 ha). This space is worked by 1.807 farms with an average size of just under 39 ha. The largest organic farm possesses an area of about 700 ha. While in 1997 only 106 farms were producing ecologically, in 2003 their number had already increased to 700 and in 2004 to 1.178. The increase was especially high between 2002 and 2005 (nearly 60% per year).

Three fifths of the certified organic space are cultivated with cereals, 26% are pastures, on about 4% fruit is grown and only 1% is cultivated with vegetables (incl. potatoes). 6% of the space lie fallow and 2% are used for horticulture.

Already in 1993, the government supported the *Tatulos Programa (NPO)* of the Tatula Foundation – a pilot scheme for the conversion of the traditional private agrarian sector to organic farming. The main focus of the scheme is on the North of the country. Apart from specialised advice on technical matters concerning the environment, *Tatulos* offers as well to consult the farmers on questions regarding their conversion to organic farming and the marketing of organic products. In addition to that, the organisation granted from 1993 to 1997 interest free loans to farmers intending to converse to organic agriculture. Since 1997 the Lithuanian government has been supporting organic farming by law by making direct payments to organic farmers. This is one of the main reasons why organically cultivated area is increasing so quickly at the moment. The payments currently amount to €416 per ha of cereal, €551 per ha of vegetables and potatoes and €752 per ha of fruit. Grassland is supported with €116 per ha. There is no upper limit per farm.

*Ekoagros* is the name of the only authority that controls and certifies organic farms. It is accredited to IFOAM and represents the Lithuanian EU control centre according to Regulation EEC No. 2092/91 since 2004. Apart from the 1.807 producers of organic food, some 27 organic processors (10 of which are processing on their farms) are being certified this year. The association *Gaja* focusses primarily on lobbying for organic agriculture and on public relations.

Another organisation working actively for organic agriculture is the *Lithuanian Academy of Veterinary Medicine*. It offers further education courses, organizes exchanges of experts, teaches organic agriculture and researches in the field of organic pork production. At the *Lithuanian University of Agriculture*, where organic agriculture is taught as well, the main focus of research is on plant cultivation. At the Chamber of Agriculture at Kaunas two highly motivated advisors offer mainly seminars for organic farmers.

It is primarily the branches of the supermarket chains "*IKI*" und "*MAXIMA*" – spread over the whole country – and a number of special *Tatulos* shops in the North that market local organic products (primarily vegetables, bread, honey and herbs) and a wider range of foreign organic food. There exists a demand for a wider variety of organic products. Because of the cool Baltic climate especially organic fruit, vegetables and wheat of good quality are missing.

(Source: EkoConnect research 2005 and details by Ekoagros 2005 and Gaja 2004)

\* \* \* \* \*

### 2. +++Website on legal framework concerning European organic agriculture+++

The internet portal "Oekoregelungen.de" has been completely revised. The webpage provides information on legal framework and farmers' association guidelines for organic agriculture in European countries.

The homepage is arranged according to countries and is published only in German. It grants an overview of the central information on legal framework in each state. Moreover, the user can fall back on original sources and documents. Country dossiers include summarised descriptions of the legislation and feature the organic agriculture in the particular country. Besides, the page has links to the respective regulations, associations and control centres. The links provide easy access to more detailed information. Further information: [www.oekoregelungen.de](http://www.oekoregelungen.de)

### 3. +++Billa supermarkets introduce organic dairy products in their Czech stores+++

In September, the Austrian supermarket chain Billa introduced organic dairy products in its shops in the Czech Republic. The product range consists of seven yoghurt varieties, sour cream, and two kinds of cheese. The new selection is imported from Austria and sold in its German packaging under the Billa private brand "ja! Natürlich".

The promotional leaflet accompanying the introduction of the first ten products says that they are the beginning of a new line of private brand organic products in the Czech Billa shops. However, the Czech market cannot meet the high demand among Czech consumers for fresh organic products. Especially organic milk processing is very low in the Czech Republic, as well as the organic horticultural production. According to Tom Vaclavik of the Green Marketing Agency, the recent move of Billa shows that the Czech organic market is ready for a continuous growth market. Green Marketing aims to enhance the organic food and natural products business in the Czech Republic by providing valuable information and know-how to organic farmers, processors, retailers and traders. The organic market comprised 9 million EUR in 2004 and is expected to grow by 40 % this year.

Further information: [www.greenmarketing.cz](http://www.greenmarketing.cz); [www.billa.cz](http://www.billa.cz)

Source: BioFach Newsletter No 103

\* \* \* \* \*

### 4. +++Light treatments on potato tubers increase disease resistance+++

A systematic light treatment of potatoes can reduce the disease severity on the tubers. This was found out by scientists of the University of Göttingen. An illumination increases the glykoalkaloid content in the tubers which could induce antibiotic and anti-feeding effects against pathogens. In the project, light treatments with varying light spectra and duration - two treatments with different varieties - were carried out. The experiments were made with naturally infected and artificially inoculated tubers. By illuminating harvested tubers, the storage quality of seed potatoes can be improved. The illumination at the end of the storage period improves the development of the plant in the field. Further information: <http://orgprints.org/6021/>.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 5.+++New strategies to fight apple scab (*Venturia inaequalis*)+++

A well directed combination of measures can raise crop and quality of organic grown apples. This was found out by the experimental station Randwijk in the Netherlands. Two apple varieties (Santana und Topaz) which are resistant against apple scab were planted together with other varieties for the pollination. To minimize the scab the understorey was kept short and wire netting was put onto the fallen leaves. Moreover the leaves were sprayed with tea to fasten their decomposition. The harvest could be increased from 20 – 25 t to 40 t.

Sources: Agrarisch Dagblad (12.07.2005); ZMP Ökomarkforum 2005, Nr.37

\* \* \* \* \*

### 6. +++Adelaide: IFOAM Congress Declaration calling on governments and new world board elected+++

At the 15th IFOAM Organic World Congress "Shaping Sustainable Systems" in Adelaide, Australia from September 20th to 23rd 2005, the more than 1000 delegates from 72 countries issued the Adelaide Declaration. It calls upon governments worldwide to actively endorse and practically support organic agriculture, as well as to allocate budgetary funds for investment into organic agriculture, at the minimum proportionate to the organic sector's production in their countries. Moreover the declaration asks the governments to internalize social and environmental costs in the prices of agricultural products and remunerate organic farmers for ecosystem services they provide. It also addresses on international agribusiness to listen to the consumer and to embrace more organic principles, and thus develop truly sustainable agricultural and food systems. For the complete text of the Adelaide Declaration, please visit

[http://www.ifoam.org/press/press/Organic\\_World\\_Congress\\_Results.html](http://www.ifoam.org/press/press/Organic_World_Congress_Results.html)

The new IFOAM World Board has chosen Gerald A. Herrmann, Germany, as its President and Mette Meldgaard, Denmark, and Alberto (Pipo) Lernoud, Argentina, as Vice Presidents.

Members coming from more than 70 countries, thus representing the broad constituency of the federation, established the quorum of the IFOAM General Assembly. The new World Board will serve a term of three years until the next General Assembly in 2008

### 7. +++Organic agriculture in Austria+++

In 2004, some 344.916 ha (without mountain pastures) were organically cultivated by 19.826 farms. 208.407 ha (61 %) were grassland and 130.547 ha arable farm land. In comparison to 2003, this means that the organic cultivated area has increased by 5 % and the number of farms by 6 %. Thus about 13 % of the total agricultural area, 9,5 % of the arable farm land and 11 % of the farms are organic.

About 50 % of the above mentioned arable farm land (64.696 ha) were used to grow cereals. On the remaining 50 % some 4.608 ha oilseeds, 11.244 ha grain legumes, 2.570 ha root crops (mostly potatoes) and 38.012 ha field fodder were grown. On 4.800 ha organic seeds were produced so that an extensive self supply with seeds for grain was possible.

After 1998 both the number of farms and the area declined, but during the last few years a new increase was noticed. While the organically cultivated area increased above the first maximum (290.355 ha), the number of farms could not reach the original number of 20.316 in 1998. This development is a result of the conversion of large area farms in arable farming regions (Lower Austria), while in mountain areas the number of organic farms declined (Tyrol). Further information: <http://land.lebensministerium.at/article/archive/4955>; <http://www.gruener-bericht.at/cms/> (in German)

\* \* \* \* \*

### 8. +++ Illegal cultivation of genetically modified soya in Romania +++

According to Greenpeace, Romanian farmers illegally cultivate GM Soya on a massive scale. On a nationwide fact-finding mission, Greenpeace discovered that illegal growing of Monsanto's genetically modified Roundup Ready Soya is taking place without the knowledge of the local authorities in ten counties out of Romania's total 42 counties, covering an area of approximately 100,000 acres.

Greenpeace further reports that former Monsanto Romania country manager Dragos Dima estimates 90 percent of Romanian Soya production to be genetically modified. According to Dima, many farmers are using a part of their gene-Soya harvest for sowing further areas. In addition to the problem of illegal crop growing, traditional cultures are being contaminated through cross-breeding and illegal selling of GM Soya seeds. During a press conference with the former Monsanto country manager in early October, Greenpeace has pointed out this situation and is calling upon the Romanian authorities to limit further damage to the Romanian agricultural sector and to safeguard the Romanian citizens' ability to choose. Further information may be found at [http://www.greenpeace.at/2436.html?&no\\_cache=1&sword\\_list+Rum%E4nien](http://www.greenpeace.at/2436.html?&no_cache=1&sword_list+Rum%E4nien)

\* \* \* \* \*

### 9. +++ Website on GMO-free regions in Europe +++

The website <http://www.gmofree-europe.org/> (an initiative of Friends of the Earth Europe) provides extensive information on GMO free areas in Europe, together with specific country information concerning genetic engineering issues. The website also provides a lobby letters to call on EU authorities to continue to support GM-free areas in the future.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 10. +++ Educational trips to Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic +++

In 2006 and 2007, the association ProZept will continue to offer expert educational trips to selected European member states in order to delve into issues of ecological agriculture and sustainable tourism. ProZept is addressing all who have a professional interest in organic agriculture or in the processing industry and trade in the above mentioned countries. The trips' key focus will lie on learning more about specific vocational training, including information on what types of formation and continuing education are being offered, how the state supports these initiatives and which organisations work together to foster learning. In addition, the trips will convey insights into the state's approach to regional development and setting-up of control institutions. During the educational trips, there will also be ample opportunity for discussion and exchange with relevant actors and practitioners. As the educational trips receive financing from the EU *Leonardo da Vinci* programme, the participation fees have been kept to a minimum. The actual trip dates are being published at the end of November. The organisation of the trips is handled in cooperation with ProZept, EkoConnect and the Competency Centre Ecological Agriculture Niedersachsen. Further Information (in German) and applications forms can be requested from: ProZept e.V.; Clauida Rubart; Telephone: +49-4472/77910-21 [http://www.prozept-ev.de/leonardo\\_aktuelles.htm](http://www.prozept-ev.de/leonardo_aktuelles.htm)

### 11. +++Russian internet shop selling organic products+++

Recently an internet shop has been offering a small range of organic products to Russian customers. The growing variety of products includes bread, juices, coffee, snacks and pasta at the moment. According to the BioFach Newsletter, the selection of products will be extended considerably. The homepage of the internet shop is available in Russian and in English. Moreover, it offers some information on organic farming and the organic movement in Central and Eastern Europe to the customers. According to the April issue of the new supermarket magazin Bio-Vitrina, the Russian organic market comprised 30 producers for organic products at the end of 2004. The Bio-Vitrina reader gets to know that Russia has 30,000 ha of certified organic production area and some 70,000 ha of wild collection. [www.organictrade.ru](http://www.organictrade.ru)

\* \* \* \* \*

### 12. +++ Czech Republic: awards for organic products and shops+++

Four Czech organic products were awarded at a prize-giving ceremony in Prague at the end of the Czech Organic Action Days in September. The Environmental Partnership Foundation (Nadace Partnerství) presented the organic awards in collaboration with the Czech farmers association Pro-Bio for the fifth time. The Environmental Partnership Foundations are working in Bulgaria, the Czech Republik, Romania, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (<http://www.environmentalpartnership.org/>).

Mr. Jan and Mrs. Hana Zeman, owners of the Albio health food shops and the Albio restaurant in Prague received this year's first prize for bread from their organic bakery. The prize money amounted to 20,000 Czech crowns, equivalent to 650 EUR. The award in the category 'health food shop' was recieved by Country Life in the Melantrichova road in Prague.

(Source: Pro-Bio)

\* \* \* \* \*

### 13. +++IFOAM EU Group publish position paper on revision of the EU Regulation+++

As mentioned in the 4<sup>th</sup> Information Letter, the EU Regulation 2092/91 will be reviewed by the EU Commission. Relating to the revision, the IFOAM EU Group approved on October 14 its position paper suggesting concrete measures on how to improve the Regulation for the future needs of organic farming in Europe. Among other points, IFOAM demands that the Regulation has a stronger orientation towards organic agriculture principles. Moreover, the present scope of the regulation has to be retained in the future (e.g. unprocessed agricultural products and foods). The control instructions have to be coordinated in a better way.

This Regulation has been of great importance to the growth of the organic sector. Therefore, in its paper, the IFOAM EU Group warmly welcomes the Commission initiative to overhaul the "organic Regulation" in order to ensure that it reflects the many changes of the past better and that it can cope with the dynamics and challenges of the future. However, a major concern of the Group is that the EU Commission did not grant enough time to sufficiently involve the stakeholders into the process of this important step. Now the associations working with organic farming in the new EU member states have the opportunity to make their contributions to the Revision.

[http://www.ifoam.org/about\\_ifoam/around\\_world/eu\\_group/pdfs/IFOAMEUpositionpaperRevision.pdf](http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group/pdfs/IFOAMEUpositionpaperRevision.pdf)

\* \* \* \* \*

### 14. +++Scholarships for students from Central and Eastern European countries+++

Graduates from Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary, who would like to continue their studies (postgraduate/ Ph.D. studies) at a Bavarian university can apply for a scholarship for the academic year 2006/07. The scholarship is donated by the Bavarian Ministry for science, research and art. It is limited to one year but can be extended for two more years. The 8400 € per year will be paid monthly (700 €). A familly allowance of 160 € per month is possible. Further information: <http://www-cgi.uni-regensburg.de/Einrichtungen/Bayhost/stipendien.shtml>.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 15. +++12th International Conference on Cultivation Technique and Phytopathological Problems in Organic Fruit-Growing+++

For the 12<sup>th</sup> time the scientific conference "ecofruit" will take place in Weinsberg (Baden-Württemberg/ Germany) from the 31<sup>st</sup> of January till the 2<sup>nd</sup> Februar 2006. This conference is intended to bring together about 100 active researchers and advisers from all over Europe. They are involved in organic fruit growing to discuss latest results and methods. The conference is organised by the community to

promote the organic fruit growing (Föko e.V.) and the Governmental Research Station for fruit and wine growing (LVWO) in Weinsberg (LVWO). The main object is the coordination of research and to organize joint research projects. The official language of the workshop is English. Contributions are possible in English and German. Oral presentations will be simultaneously translated to English. <http://www.foeko.de/ecofruit.htm>

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **16. +++Cross-border projects between Poland and Germany to foster organic agriculture+++**

Interreg III is an EC initiative of the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRE) for the cooperation between the regions of the European Union. Interreg III-A specifically focuses on cross-border cooperation. The programme aims to foster the growth of cross-country economic and social poles through the implementation of common development strategies. Projects can be set up in all border regions of the EU (including on EU outside borders). Within the framework of the Interreg III-A programme, EkoConnect has recently initiated the project "Organically Growing Together – Measures to Support the Cross-border Cooperation in the Field of Organic Agriculture in the Border Region Saxony-Lower Silesia." As part of this project, actors of the organic agriculture and food industry from the German East Saxony and the Polish Lower Silesia will meet and be encouraged to work together to promote organics agriculture in the Euroregion.

On 27 October 2005, the opening event was held in Görlitz, with 60 participants from Poland and Germany. Farmers, consultants, representatives from the processing industry and marketers learnt through various presentations about the current situation of the organic farming in the Euroregion and were invited to discuss which further steps need to be taken.

Similar projects to foster cooperation across borders can be developed in other border regions. EkoConnect will readily assist interested organisation with project development. For further information, please consult [www.ekoconnect.org](http://www.ekoconnect.org) and [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/interreg3/abc/voleta\\_de.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/interreg3/abc/voleta_de.htm)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **17. +++Marketing conference on organic agriculture in Krzyzowa, Poland+++**

On 21 and 22 November 2005, the Foundation Krzyzowa and EkoConnect hold a conference on the marketing of products from organic agriculture. The two day conference takes place in Krzyzowa, just south of Swidnica, Lower Silesia. Experts and organic agriculture representatives from Poland, Germany, Czech Republic and Austria will present their marketing initiatives and exchange information on marketing know-how. The conference addresses farmers, processors and marketers of eco products. The programme can be found on the Internet at [www.krzyzowa.org.pl/CM/content.php/default/start](http://www.krzyzowa.org.pl/CM/content.php/default/start)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **18. +++Internship at EkoConnect+++**

EkoConnect – International Centre for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe offers internship opportunities to students or graduates with knowledge of organic agriculture and an interest in working for Central and Eastern Europe. The interns will assist in the preparation of events and the drafting of the EkoConnect Newsletter. Interested candidates should have a good knowledge of either English or German and an Eastern European language. In addition, they should have a team work attitude and enjoy developing new initiatives. The internship duration will range between three and nine months. For more information, please call 0049-351-456 8038 or email [stefan.simon@ekoconnect.org](mailto:stefan.simon@ekoconnect.org) and visit [www.ekoconnect.org](http://www.ekoconnect.org)

Übersetzung/Translation: Waltraud Toews, Verena Oberrauch