

# Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

NO. 22

JULY 2009

## Avalon

Supports organic farming and sustainable rural development in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond.

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## EkoConnect

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## Dear readers,

“The importance of Central- and Eastern Europe in terms of demand for organic food as well as export possibilities for organic raw materials and high quality food products is still growing”. This is one of the final conclusions from the 4th Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw. The international conference for producers and traders of organic food and raw material took place on May 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2009 in the Polish capital. With about 380 participants from 30 countries, the number increased to about 20% compared to 2008. Further in this issue you can read more about what happened on the Organic Marketing Forum.

Other topics are suckler cows in Eastern Europe, news on GMO and country reports from Macedonia and Slovenia. We like to thank everybody who supports our work with providing data and information. We cordially invite all readers to send comments and articles to us for sharing with about 8.000 newsletter subscribers in more than 60 countries.

We hope you enjoy the reading,

Your Editorial Team,

Irena Fašalek & Dagmar Diener & Linda Huisman



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## 1. +++ Slovenia: Regional Organic products mostly sold at organic farmers' markets +++

Slovenia is a small country of stark contrasts with great diversity of culture, climate and geography. In Slovenia one can find mountains, seas, hills, plains, towns and small villages. Its diversity is reflected in land-use practices.

The largest part of Slovenia is covered with forest, which makes up for 66% of its total area. Less than 28% of the country's territory is occupied by agriculture, 37% of which is under arable land and gardens. A small part of the agricultural land is used for permanent crops (fruits, wine etc.); of which vineyards occupy the largest space.

The biggest part of the agricultural land constitutes meadows and pastures mainly located in the highland area. The origin of organic agriculture in Slovenia can be traced back to the late 1980's, when groups of individuals were formed because they were interested in biodynamic agriculture. These groups grew into many unions.

„Zveza združenj ekoloških kmetov Slovenije“ (The Union of Slovenian Organic Farmers' Associations) or „Biodar“ for short is the most important organization for organic farmers, which unites 8 regional associations of the whole Slovenia. At the same time Biodar is the trademark for organic products made in Slovenia. 1998 marks the beginning of the official control over eco-farms, with 16 farms already engaged in organic farming. The number of organic farms has increased to more than 2.150 and makes up 3% of all farms in Slovenia, which are certified according to EU-Directives and national law.

The largest part of the certified land that belongs to the eco farms (more than 30.000 ha) is composed of meadows and pastures (88%), arable land (8%), permanent crops (2%) and vegetable production (1%). Organic farms cultivate about 6% of the agricultural area in Slovenia. The inspection of cultivation, the processing and marketing of organic products is the subject of the three certified control bodies.

In the beginning organic products were sold directly at farm stands. After some time organic farmers' markets were organized. The organic farmers market in Ljubljana will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year and the same organic farmers market in Maribor is only one year behind. This second largest organic food market in Maribor was established 9 years ago. With help from promotional campaigns the demand for organic products is on the rise and has positively influenced sales revenue.

Today most organic products are sold in supermarkets. Health shops and direct marketing make up less than 10% of sales. Unfortunately, most of the products sold in supermarkets are imported and the share of domestic products is small. The reason for this fact lies in inadequate organization of processing and marketing distribution. First and foremost it affects meat production. The quantity of meat produced is sufficient, but processing and distribution issues have to be solved individually, and farmers have to find their own way to sell their goods at the market.

Therefore most meat products are still sold in a conventional way. But things are changing for the better. For example, in some stores Slovene organic dairy products are already on the shelves, and in some regions of Slovenia the marketing of organic meat has begun to be effective.

Last year the association „Biodar“ started a three-year promotion project that was aimed to introduce organic products to consumers and while creating stable and sustainable farmer-consumer relationships. For the first time in history, three years ago Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences (FKBV) of Maribor University offered a major focused on organic farming. This year the faculty will celebrate its first graduates. The FKBV also supports research projects in the field of organic farming. However, there are still some problems that remain unsolved, such as whether there is a correlation between the quality of products and cultivation methods as well as companion planting.

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## 2. +++ Macedonia: Organic has great potential in Macedonia+++

The agriculture sector plays an important role in the Republic of Macedonia's economy through its contributions to the gross domestic product (GDP), trade, employment, and rural development. From 2000-2005, the share of the agricultural sector in the overall GDP remained stable, averaging around 12%. As a result of these figures, agriculture makes an important contribution to Macedonia's foreign trade. The Republic of Macedonia possesses vast resources in its natural environment that supports the sustainability of the agriculture sector (fertile soils, a range of favourable climates, and a large area for agriculture activities). Agricultural land represents 49 percent of the total area; further 37 percent of the country is forested, while the remaining areas include lakes and urban areas. Because of its geographic position, land used for agriculture production in the Republic of Macedonia is located in the Sub-Mediterranean, Continental Sub-Mediterranean and warm Continental areas. This wide range of climate

provides the country with innumerable options of producing a diverse mixture of crops. Much of the land under cultivation in rural areas is operated as private family farms. From 180,000 of Macedonia's private farms, around half are considered to be small household farms averaging 1.4 ha. Although there has been a recent trend toward the specialization of these small-scale farming plots, private farms continue to be highly diversified and grow a large number of crops.

Organic production in Macedonia is still in an early stage of development. Nevertheless it has a high potential due to extensive traditional agriculture production, mainly in mountainous areas with very good environmental conditions suitable for organic production. Out of the total agricultural area in Macedonia, the organic share is around 1%. In order to make Macedonian organic production competitive against with international markets, the law on organic agricultural production, which was adjusted to the EU regulation, was adopted by the parliament in April 2004. New law draft on organic production to harmonize the existing legislation with the Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 and Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 has already passed to the parliamentary procedure.

As organic production requires financial resources during the whole production process, especially in the less developed and most environmental region farmers are not able to pre-finance organic certification costs. Therefore the Macedonian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE) marked 97.500 EUR for the Program to support the organic agriculture for the first time in 2005. Fifty organic farmers registered at MAFWE in 2005 to receive state support. In 2008 the budget of government support for the organic agriculture increased to 815.000 EUR. As result 226 organic farmers successfully registered at the ministry and received the state support for their production. The organic agricultural area increased from 226 ha in 2005 to 1,029 ha in 2008. By 2011, the Macedonian government would like the overall share of organic agriculture to account for 2% of agricultural area. Apart from the ministry, several organic associations are active in supporting organic agriculture on the regional level. Most of the regional associations are members of Macedonian Federation of Organic Producers (BIOSAN), which was founded in 2006. BIOSAN represents the interests of organic farmers and is active in promoting organic agriculture on national level. Several foreign international certification bodies are present in the country and in 2009 the first Macedonian certification body PRO CERT started its activity. .

Organic production in Macedonia is still not developed sufficiently in volume and diversity in order to be able to implement sustainable marketing activities of organic products. There are single initiatives for selling organic products locally, on green markets and on farm sales, but yet there is little demand and insufficient knowledge about organic agriculture among consumers. For the moment, there are no organic shops with the exception of several specialized and health shops, where consumers can find mostly domestic organic products. In recent years organic products could be found also in supermarkets from time to time and this trend is increasing. It is a vicious circle: there is not sufficient market for organic products to stimulate production on the one hand and on the other hand market development is hindered by the lack of quantity and quality. In 2009 MAFWE added new measures in order to promote organic farming – financial support for processors and for traders who start going organic. Companies like Alkaloid, (organic herb teas from wild collection), Vitalia (organic jams), Vinarija Grkov (organic wine), Kastel, Intermak (mushrooms) are pioneers in processing of organic products.

Considering the natural conditions, Macedonia has high potentials for recognition and utilization of natural resources appropriate for further development of organic farming. There is also great potential in the collection of organic wild products (herbs, teas, mushrooms, berries), as wild collected products are showing increasing demand all over the world. So far just 1 % of the collected products are from certified areas. The potential in the organic livestock category is also recognized (especially of sheep and lamb) and lately the organic beekeeping gained on of growing importance.

Authors:

Goran Angelovski, Value Chain Coordinator, USAID Contractor, AgBiz Programm

Olivera Bicikliski, Macedonian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Unit of organic production

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### **3. +++ Europe: Genetically modified crops are not wanted on the European fields +++**

As a reply to our article in the 21st issue of the Information letter titled "World: 125 million hectares of "Frankenstein crops" Ms Anamarija Slabe from Slovenian Institute for Sustainable Development sent us

a different calculation of the GMO area from the Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) annual briefing: Who benefits from GM crops? The briefing explains that ISAAA (funded largely by the biotech industry) more than doubled the increase in GM crops to 22% worldwide in the last years by multiplying the actual surface area by the number of GM traits in the crops. "So, for a field of one hectare growing a GM crop which is tolerant to two herbicides and secretes insecticide toxin (three traits) suddenly becomes three fields, and ISAAA therefore triples its figures for the area under GM crop cultivation," states in the annual briefing of FoEI. According to the FoEI the total GM cultivation in the EU in 2008 dropped to 107,719 hectares compared to 110,007 hectares in 2007 which is a decrease of just over two per cent. In the EU, GM crops make up a tiny percentage of arable land (0.36%) and of all agricultural land (0.21%).<sup>i</sup>

The fact that the GMO's have no bright future in the Europe and European Union is shown in some recent political actions in order to protect the European farmers and consumers, which still remain sceptical on GMO. After Austria and Hungary succeeded in keeping the ban on Monsanto's genetically modified maize MON810 on the 2nd March 2009, the Luxemburg minister of environment Mars Di Bartolomeo banned the cultivation of MON810 just ten days later. On the 14th April German Agriculture Minister Ilse Aigner banned the cultivation of the MON810. So Germany became the seventh country in the European Union to ban the cultivation of MON810. In May 2009 Slovenia accepted the law which for the first time regulates and restricts the cultivation of the GM crops. The NGOs which participated in the draft of the law, welcomed the acceptance of the law which is one of the strictest in EU. Nevertheless they warned that Slovenia should introduce a moratorium on cultivation of MON810 soon, since there are several international studies which would justify the introduction of a national ban. Furthermore none of the other European countries outside of the EU grow GMOs (e.g. Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Serbia, Montenegro, etc), according to FoEI. Switzerland has a moratorium on growing GM crops until 2012. States that are at various stages of EU accession, such as Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia, do not grow GMOs.<sup>i</sup>

On the other hand according to the non-governmental organization and consumer rights group Food&Water watch, the US Embassies are seeking to overcome the growing international resistance to genetically modified foods. US diplomats are given the instructions to promote GMOs across Europe and belittle opponents of this technology as ignorant and against progress. US embassies and ambassadors have spoken in support of GMOs in most countries that recently joined the EU. For example in Cyprus, a proposed bill to require GM foods to be placed on separate supermarket shelves was discussed in the summer 2005. US Embassy in Nicosia sent a letter to Parliament members urging them to oppose the bill. "The bill is tantamount to a non-tariff barrier to trade in biotech goods and as such is in violation of your obligations as a member of the WTO," the letter warned. "It may also be inconsistent with your obligations as an EU member," as written in the paper "Biotech diplomacy": How US Embassies are pushing GMOs throughout Europe.<sup>ii</sup>

Still, the German court justified the rejection of the urgent application from the U.S. biotech company Monsanto to end Germany's ban with the explanation that the new studies could indicate that the poisonous substance in MON 810 could also have impact on other insects. A Luxemburg study showed that the genes of MON810 were found in bees, cows, honey, plants etc. Based on the article 23 of the European directive 2001/18/EC, the governments of the member states can prohibit the use and/or sale of GMO on its territory „as a result of new or additional information made available since the date of the consent and affecting the environmental risk assessment or reassessment of existing information on the basis of new or additional scientific knowledge, has detailed grounds for considering that a GMO as or in a product which has been properly notified and has received written consent under this Directive (2001/18/EC) constitutes a risk to human health or the environment“.<sup>iii</sup>

After numerous anti GMO initiatives, the future for the Polish farmers seems to look brighter. More than 100 organic associations are giving effort to achieve GMO free Poland. Also at the 4th Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw 380 participants of the forum called for an EU-wide moratorium on the authorization and the commercial planting of genetically modified organisms. Finally, after 8 years of conflict on this issue, Brussels has agreed with a proposal put by the Polish government according to which Polish farmers will have the right to block genetically modified foods, reports Polskie Radio. If one particular community of farmers does not initiate such declaration, the Polish government will have to set up a strict network of rules for them to fulfil before they can begin to grow GMOs. The regulation was accepted by the European Commission at the end of May. The Polish Ministry of the Environment plans to submit the regulation to the lower house of parliament, the Sejm, after June 23. If passed, it is expected to be signed as a law by the end of the year.<sup>iv</sup>

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i Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), Food Sovereignty, Who benefits from GM crops, [http://www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/Who\\_Benefits/full\\_report\\_2009.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/Who_Benefits/full_report_2009.pdf)

ii Biotech diplomacy: How US Embassies are pushing GMOs throughout Europe <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/world/europe/agriculture/questionable-technologies/biotechWeb.pdf>

iii Directive 2001/18/EC of the European parliament and of the council <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:106:0001:0038:EN:PDF>

iv Polskie Radio [http://www.polskieradio.pl/thenews/news/artykul109139\\_ec\\_accepts\\_polish\\_gmo\\_regulations.html](http://www.polskieradio.pl/thenews/news/artykul109139_ec_accepts_polish_gmo_regulations.html)

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#### **4. +++ Suckler cow husbandry: The ecological alternative for grassland in Eastern Europe +++**

The aim of suckler cow husbandry is to produce calves with low inputs of costs and labour by using large areas of grassland. Therefore the cows are not milked; the milk is only used for feeding the calves, who should reach a live weight up to 250 kg at the age of 8 months, when they get weaned off. Afterwards, these weaners can be fattened intensively. But often they are also further used for extensive pasture mast.

Russia, Ukraine and Belarus have wide areas of grassland that nowadays are highly under used. Furthermore, due to the governmental statism in Belarus, wide areas of marsh soils and wetlands are under tillage use which should - under aspects of ecology and economy - be transferred into permanent grassland. In Russia and Ukraine however the area of arable land overgrown with bushes (birches) increases, because many farms lack the money for an agronomic landuse. All these areas – the permanent grassland, the marginal sites and the currently not used arable land – could be transferred into an ecologically and economically worthwhile landuse through organic beef cattle husbandry. Most notably is the suckler cow husbandry for producing calves as well as the further extensive mast of heifer, bulls and oxen on pasture land.

Beyond Europe the extensive beef cattle husbandry is the most common form of cattle breeding. Also in Germany suckler cow husbandry enjoys great popularity – despite the abolition of animal related EU-bonus in 2005. Nowadays the land subsidies make suckler cow husbandry remain attractive. This bonus is justified, as with suckler cow husbandry a socially desired state of grassland is established that can only be reached by pasturing.

Remarkable in Germany is the high rate of organic production in suckler cow husbandry. In Brandenburg for example, the German federal state with the most suckling cows, 9% of all farms are operating ecologically (10% of the agricultural area is ecologically certified), nevertheless 22% of all suckling cows are kept in organic farms. Out of the 600 organic farms in Brandenburg at least 45% are keeping suckling cows (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2008). That shows a close relationship between organic beef production and suckler cow husbandry.

Is suckler cow husbandry in Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus) without governmental land subsidies economically reasonable? First of all, this should be answered by observing the revenues. Regionally produced beef in Eastern Europe often lacks quality (fatless, pale and diluted) and hence is a low-price product. With increasing income and health awareness, especially in areas of high population density, a growing demand for quality beef is developing. That means slowly grown meat from extensively kept cattle which shows a delicate mottle and is juicy and tasty. At the moment Russia is importing its quality beef mainly from South America, where it is produced in suckler cow husbandry and pasture mast in an effective and economic way. The possibilities for producing quality beef in the region also exist, so that the demand could be met on site. Several success stories of meat direct marketing in Russia and Belarus show, that it is possible to sell high quality meat very well in the high price segment.

The key to success in suckler cow husbandry is the farm management. A maximum number of calves with high daily gains should be produced at minimum costs and labour time, but under the usage of large areas. "Suckler cow husbandry should have no costs", say professionals in suckler cow husbandry. The practice saves costs, because:

- The cattle can be kept outside the whole year, that means the suckler cows stay even in winter time on selected, dry pastures; the climate changes observed in Eastern Europe show that outdoor rearing is more and more possible during the whole year.

- Expensive stable buildings make suckler cow husbandry economically inefficient.
- Suckler cows are not fed with concentrate, they are fed with hay in winter and in spring, during the calving period, with wilted silage, apart from that, the pasture has to produce the required forage.
- The input of energy and machinery is reduced to a minimum level, mainly tractor labour to care for the cattle, for haymaking and pasture care.

Therefore suckler cow husbandry is an extremely extensive method of production and hence strongly depends on the location: a big area of natural grassland is the precondition. This also gives an answer to the question of profitability of suckler cow husbandry in Central and Eastern Europe: It is only economically viable, if the grassland is available anyway on the farm. If costs arise for rent or purchase of land, the profitability is put into question. These costs can, as in Central and Western Europe, only be compensated by subsidies for landscape conservation.

Whereas for the farmer the aspect of profitability is most important in the assessment of suckler cow husbandry, for the society and politics environmental issues are equally important. In Eastern Europe intensive livestock husbandry is often enough causing environmental damages, due to inappropriate slurry storage or the effects of silage maize cultivation (erosion and loss of biodiversity) etc. Suckler cow husbandry on the other hand does not pollute the environment: it doesn't require forage cropping and doesn't produce slurry. Suckler cow husbandry utilises grassland that would otherwise get weedy and overgrown with bushes. As suckler cows do not require high quality forage, a staged cutting of small areas instead of an early cutting of the whole area is possible. The division into smaller plots and their different stages of cultivation are conducive to meadow nesting birds and also for a continuous bee pasture during the vegetation period. If there is enough grassland available (minimum 1,5 ha per cow), the use of fertilizer and pesticides can largely be dispensed with.

Even in the course of the climate change discussion suckler cow husbandry will get more importance. Eastern Europe is characterised by a large percentage of moor soils. If these are turned into tillage land, large quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> get released through the mineralisation of humus and peat. Suckler cow husbandry makes the utilisation of permanent grassland economically viable and therefore prevents its climate damaging tillage.

EkoConnect e.V. can procure consulting for farmers in Eastern Europe in the field of suckler cow husbandry and organic beef production.

Autor: Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect

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## 5. +++ Memorandum for reliable food production in Azerbaijan +++

On the 21 of May a memorandum of understanding was signed by three parties to work together towards achieving stable and organic food production in the Gazakh district of Azerbaijan. The intentions are to produce sufficient food to compromise the populations demand whilst protecting the environment.

Mr. Rauf Huseynov (Executive Power of Gazakh district), Professor Mirdamad Sadigov (Rector of the Azerbaijan State Agrarian University) and Mr. Martien Lankester (Executive Director of the Avalon Foundation) signed the Memorandum.

For achieving this goal, new technologies and scientific results will be applied in production by adapting international experience on the base of contemporary (training)–production–processing–marketing principles. For this purpose modern extension network, demonstration organic farms and processing facilities will be established in Gazakh district.

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## **6. +++ 2nd International conference on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries' in Tbilisi, Georgia, September 10-11, 2009+++**

This 2nd International conference follows the successful 1st International conference in Kyiv, Ukraine held in April 2008 with more than 220 participants from 25 countries attending. Participants of the 1st conference stressed their intention to continue fruitful discussions of topics which are in the interest for the region.

The 2nd International conference will encompass various aspects of agricultural production focussing on practical experiences and research of plant production and wild collection, horticulture and viticulture, animal husbandry, wine making and processing. The new EU Regulation on organic farming as well as certification aspects - including others then organic - will present the second focus of the conference. The third focus will include domestic and export market experiences and developments.

For more information see the conference website [www.organicconference.elkana.org.ge](http://www.organicconference.elkana.org.ge), or send an email to [conference@elkana.org.ge](mailto:conference@elkana.org.ge)

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## **7. +++ European Voluntary Service supports the development of organic farming +++**

EVS (European Voluntary Service) is the program designed for young people aged 18 – 30. People who are interested in travelling, getting to know other cultures and habits. It is aimed for people who, in return for their time, ideas and abilities, gain new experiences, skills, friends and have a chance to learn or improve a foreign language. Projects are varied, starting from collecting seaweeds in Iceland, to taking care of children in a Portuguese kindergarten, working in a theatre in Italy or in a radio station in Austria, as well as (like in my case) working in the International Centre for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe in Germany. Important is to choose a project which is consistent with the interests and gives opportunity to contribute ourselves into the project. The choice is all up to you.

As far as I am concerned, I knew what I want and what I don't want. I knew I want to learn German, get to know more about German culture, people, get experience in my education area and it all should take place in a bigger city.

That is why I have found myself in EkoConnect. Even though it is not so far from a Polish border, some cultural differences and traditions are still a bit shocking for me. Nevertheless I must admit I like German way of celebrating life and spending time. Especially in such a beautiful, historic and full of cultural attractions (concerts, theatre, seasonal events, etc.) city like Dresden or Swiss Saxony There is no chance to be bored, all the more in good company. And I can not complain about that, because colleagues from work as well as other people I learned are very friendly and open. I feel also lucky that I work mostly with young people and instead of one I have two tutors (one of them takes care of a financial part and the other one takes care of a cultural-entertaining part).

The beginning of the project was not very promising. But now, from a perspective of time, I understand it was kind of few weeks long "Outlook's" baptism of fire which all EkoConnect's trainees must go through. It was worth waiting till its end. Since then it has been no place for work monotony. Not only I have learned how to use new programs, but also I have gained experience in things I have never done before and which I found as my personal challenges. I feel like I am a real member of the organization and I have the influence on what is going on here.

Working in EkoConnect enabled me also to visit Prague, take part in some interesting lectures (in Germany and Poland) regarding organic agriculture, participate in the organic fair of Ekogala in Rzeszów and help to organize and attend a big event of the Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw. Currently, I realise my own long awaited project – the Summer Academy which is a chance to improve my organizational skills, learn more about organic agriculture and get to know people from all over Europe. Besides, as an EVS volunteer I took part in a seminar in Weimar where I was able to exchange experiences and make friends with other volunteers working in Germany. I look forward to one more seminar in Heidelberg which I am going to visit soon.

The time spent working at EkoConnect gives me the opportunity of a better knowledge of myself and to experience myself in the new situations. Starting the project, I did not expect too much. Life is life and not everything goes in the way we want it to go. However, I am happy that almost all my hopes came

true and even more. I think that the year here is very felicitous and the only thing I regret is that all goes by so fast and in few months I will have to pack and go back home.

Author: Iwona Matyjias, European volunteer service, EkoConnect

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## 8. +++ Big step ahead at 4th Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw +++

The economy crisis was not the topic at the 4th Organic Marketing Forum. Rather, the actual topic was the strategies for meeting even better needs of customers and consumers. In addition, many companies are looking for ways to more sustainable growth of their business. "There is a continuous interest in reliable partnerships in the organic food as well as in raw material sector of Eastern as well as Western Europe", concludes Bernhard Jansen, chairman of the organiser EkoConnect after the successful closure of the forum in the Polish capital.

For the first time, about 10% of the participants came from Russian speaking countries, in which a large number of regional market initiatives are emerging at the moment. Also in the host country Poland the growth in organic agriculture continues: An increase of more than 50% of organic cultivated area and 40% in numbers of enterprises for processing in 2008 are impressive developments that also show significant growth of the organic market. The risen number of participants and the great atmosphere at the Forum indicate a continuous rise of the positive development of organic agriculture in the new EU Member States and in Eastern Europe.

The conference presentations about the changing markets and expectations of the consumer reported by Volkert Engelsmann (Eosta) as well as the developments in Russia, Rumania an Croatia were also of a special interest for participants. In total 24 presentations and reports were given by experts and entrepreneurs as well as 4 thematic workshops about special organic markets took place.

Over 60 companies presented their products in the accompanying exhibition, whereas the participants recognised an increase of quality in the exhibition. The winner in the "Best of Organic" – contest has been the Polish company Janton S.A. with its wine "Aronica". The second price went to the German Naturata AG and the third to the Polish Cheese manufacturer Frackowiak SP.J.

A further highlight of the event was the "Warsaw declaration of a moratorium to the use of GMO", which was adopted by the forum participants in presence and with support of the Polish Vice-Minister for Agriculture Artur Lawniczak. With this declaration, the participants claim from the governments and enterprises in Europe to comply a moratorium for the admission and use of GMO in agriculture and to respect the consumers rejection of genetic manipulation in food production.

The Organic Marketing Forum took place under the patronage of the Polish Ministry for Agriculture and the IFOAM EU Group. The forum was organised by EkoConnect in cooperation with the Polish organic farmers' association Ekoland, the national Polish advising service for agriculture (CDR) and the Organic Retailers Association (ORA). The forum was supported by the Avalon Network Programme funded by the European Union DG Environment.

More information and the text of the GMO declaration at [www.organic-marketing-forum.org](http://www.organic-marketing-forum.org).

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## 9. +++ Avalon Events Bulgaria this fall +++

From 26th of September until the 2nd of October Avalon is organising several events in Sofia, Bulgaria.

### Avalon Network Meeting

From 26 until 27 September the Avalon Network Meeting is being held. The meeting is exclusively for Avalon Network members. The themes on the first day are: Participatory Education for Environment, Ecology and Organic Farming. Furthermore the role of Simulation Games in Participatory Education is being discussed and demonstrated. The last day is about networking, lobbying and advocacy for organic farming. Members of the Avalon Network will receive an invitation.

**Avalon Conferences**

During the next days, from the 28th of September until the 1st of October, Avalon organises 2 conferences; one on climate change and organic farming (28th and 29th September) and the other on organic farming, business and biodiversity (30th September/1st October). These conferences will be held in Sofia as well.

Further information on these events can be found at [www.avalon-conference.org](http://www.avalon-conference.org)

**More about Avalon**

Avalon is an international, non profit organisation, established in 1991 in the Netherlands and active in the field of organic agriculture, agri-environment and sustainable rural development. Avalon supports rural communities in building sustainable rural societies in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond, thus strengthening nature and environment, social conditions and local economies. In cooperation with local organisations, governments, universities and associated experts Avalon has activated a wide range of projects on the cutting edge of organic agriculture and nature conservation.

For more information look at: [www.avalon.nl](http://www.avalon.nl)

## 10. +++Dates and events +++

- Organic Agriculture Development, Høje, Sweden, 31 July - 25 August 2009 (<http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=1728&a=41087>)
- International Scientific Conference "Fostering healthy food systems through organic agriculture – focus on Nordic-Baltic region", Tartu, Estonia, 25 – 27 August 2009 (<http://www.njf.nu/site/seminarRedirect.asp?intSeminarID=422&p=1004>)
- Tech & Bio, European organic and alternative farming exhibition, France, 8 – 9 September 2009, ([www.tech-n-bio.com](http://www.tech-n-bio.com))
- 2nd International conference on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries' in Tbilisi, Georgia, September 10-11, 2009 ([www.organicconference.elkana.org.ge](http://www.organicconference.elkana.org.ge))
- SANA, Italy's largest organic food show, Bologna, Italy, 10 – 13 September 2009 ([www.sana.it](http://www.sana.it))
- BIOBERNAI, Trade fair for organic products in Alsace, Strasbourg, France, 11 – 13 September 2009 (<http://www.biobernai.com>)
- SEAE Technical Conference on organic production in Mediterranean, Mallorca, Spain, 16 – 19 September 2009 ([http://www.organic-world.net/35.html?&no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=17](http://www.organic-world.net/35.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=17))
- BIOSUED, Augsburg, Germany, 20 September 2009 ([www.biosued.de](http://www.biosued.de))
- International Congress on Organic Cotton in Interlaken, Switzerland, 21 – 25 September 2009
- Avalon Network Meeting Sofia, Bulgarien, 26 - 27 September ([www.avalon.nl/network](http://www.avalon.nl/network))
- BIO Cordoba 2009 – XIV organic food trade show, Cordoba, Spain, 24 – 26 September 2009 ([www.biocordoba.com](http://www.biocordoba.com))
- Avalon Conferences on climate change, organic farming, business and biodiversity, Sofia, Bulgaria, 28 September – 1 October ([www.avalon-conference.org](http://www.avalon-conference.org))
- BIOSTYL, International sales trade fair of healthy nutrition, ecology and healthy lifestyle, Bratislava, Slovakia, 1 – 3 October 2009 ([www.incheba.sk](http://www.incheba.sk))
- BIONORD, Professional trade fair for organic food products, Hamburg, Germany, 4 October 2009 ([www.bionord.de](http://www.bionord.de))
- EkoConnect – Avalon - Seminar on Organic Marketing for participants from Russian speaking countries, 5 – 9 October in Berlin, Germany, ([www.ekoconnect.org](http://www.ekoconnect.org))
- SALON ZEN ET BIO, Trade fair for organic products, health and wellness, Nantes, France, 09 – 11 October 2009 ([www.salon-zetenbio.com](http://www.salon-zetenbio.com))
- NATEXPO, Paris, France, 17 – 19 October 2009 ([www.natexpo.com](http://www.natexpo.com))
- Romanian Organic Forum (ROF) – conference on marketing of organic products, Bukarest, Romania, 22 – 23 October ([www.bio-romania.org](http://www.bio-romania.org))
- HEALTH LIFE, Almaty Kazakhstan, 22 – 25 October 2009 ([www.life-expo.kz](http://www.life-expo.kz))
- BIOTERRA Conference, Cluj, Romania, 24 – 25 October 2009 ([bioterra@internet.ro](mailto:bioterra@internet.ro); [www.greenagenda.org/bioterra](http://www.greenagenda.org/bioterra))
- ECOFESTIVAL, Organic products & services exhibition, Athens, Greece, 05 – 08 November 2009 ([www.ecofestival.gr](http://www.ecofestival.gr))
- SALON MARJOLAINE, Trade fair for organic products and environment, Paris, France, 7 – 15 November 2009 ([www.salon-marjolaine.com](http://www.salon-marjolaine.com))
- EkoConnect – Avalon – Training for trainers on organic agriculture for participants from Russian speaking countries in Dresden, Germany, 16 – 20 November 2009 [www.ekoconnect.org](http://www.ekoconnect.org)

