

Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

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Dear readers,

We are happy to present the 30th issue of our information letter. Because of your feedback, dear reader, we know that this letter is read by many people and that a lot of articles are transferred to other newsletters and websites. And we know that we indeed contribute a little bit to the dynamic development of organic farming in Europe and especially in Central and Eastern Europe. The development towards a more ecological agriculture is gratifying: in Latvia the number of organic food processing companies has doubled during the last year and has reached 62. During the same time the turnover of organic market in Poland has grown by 25%. You can find two inspiring articles about market growth in Ukraine in this issue. However, we have also had scandals about the fraudulent labeling of organic products in Italy and we still have some work to do in the further development of quality and security system of organic products.

In this issue we briefly report the results of recent research in health management in organic pig farming. You can also find out more about Ukrainian and Slovakian markets as well as read a success story about one of the biggest Ukrainian processors. Additionally, we introduce two international projects on networking and on organic retail sector.

At this point we also would like to say "thank you very much" to our volunteer translators who make it possible to send this letter to about 11 000 organic readers in 10 languages in 70 countries. We also thank our readers for their feedback and encourage you to send further suggestions for articles or comments on the topics or even about the translations to redaktion@ekoconnect.org. It's important for us to know what you think about our information letter. We hope you enjoy reading our articles!

Gatis Caics and Bernhard Jansen, EkoConnect & Martien Lankester, Avalon

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Avalon

Promoting sustainable rural development in vulnerable agricultural areas

Phone:

+31 (0)515-331955

Fax:

+31 (0)515-331980

office@avalon.nl

www.avalon.nl

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

info@ekoconnect.org

www.ekoconnect.org

**EKOconnect**
Organic Agriculture Moving East

**avalon**

1. A project attempting to strengthen the organic retail sector in South-East Europe



With the development of the organic market, increasing numbers of producers and processors and the growing consumer interest, the issues of educating managers and shop assistants are gaining more and more importance. Within the framework of the project “E(co)-Qualify”, nine partners are working together to adapt and transfer the existing knowledge about training in organic food retail from Western Europe to Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey.

This initiative is the third phase of a project “E(co)-Qualify”. In the first two phases, 20 partners from 10 countries have developed a comprehensive “Quality Assurance System” (further in the text - QAS) for continuing education and further training in organic retail in Europe. In the third project phase (“E(co)-Qualify III”, further in the text - project), the new system is being transferred into countries that have not benefited from the first two phases of “E(co)-Qualify”. The whole project is being funded by European Union Lifelong Learning Programme “Leonardo da Vinci”. The project coordinator and contractor is the [University of Thessaly](#) from Greece. Two know-how providers (partners of the initial projects), presenting their experience, views and outcomes are [Organic Retailers Association \(ORA\)](#) from Vienna, Austria and the [Institute Equalita](#) (Cologne, Germany). All together, [9 partners from 6 countries](#) are involved in the project, including 3 education and training providers.

The whole process of project application and approval started in October 2009 and took about 12 months. The “E(co)-Qualify III” started in October 2010 and is expected to end in October 2012. There are 5 meetings of partners planned during the whole duration of project. The main tasks are the analysis of the current situation in organic retail, testing, adaptation and creating the final version of “QAS” and spreading it between providers of qualification and training, professional associations, policy makers, businesses, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders interested in organic retail in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey. A need for new knowledge, skills and competences for organic food retailer sector is expected in particular in the fields of certification, accreditation, regulations and licensing in those South-Eastern Europe countries. The total budget of the project is nearly 350 000 EUR and 75% of it has been financed by the “Leonardo da Vinci” programme.

What are the practical benefits expected? Training and professional education institutions in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey will learn to know “QAS” and implement it in their daily training and education practices, therefore passing the knowledge about marketing of organic products directly to the organic retail sector. Besides that, the whole project “E(co)-Qualify” provides a platform for an e-learning system for training of owners, managers and employees in the organic food trade, which will be completed to a comprehensive distance learning system in the near future.

Author: Gatis Caics, EkoConnect with the support of Dr. Vladislav Popov (The Eurocenter - Land and Environment, Bulgaria) and Dr. Mariana Ivanova ([University of Agribusiness and Rural Development](#), Bulgaria); proof-reading by Kartini Kochar

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2. New research into health management of organic pigs

Avoidance of parasites, infectious diseases and illnesses in livestock without preventive use of allopathic medicines has always been a big challenge for organic farmers. In this article we will share some of the results of the Core Organic Project “CorePig”. One of the outcomes of this project is the technical guide “Organic Pig Production in Europe - Health Management in Common Organic Pig Farming” written by “CorePig’s” expert group and published by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL). Its focus is on maintaining the health of lactating sows, suckling piglets and weaner pigs.



Photo: Gatis Caics, EkoConnect

Housing. Appropriate housing is an essential factor in pig husbandry. According to the EU-Regulation, the area per lactating sow with her litter should be at least 10m², including at least 2.5m² outdoors. Organic weaners must be housed in a warm and insulated area but with outdoor access. Recently weaned piglets are experiencing stress due to separation from the mother, which means a lack of maternal milk and care, a new environment and often mixing with other piglets. Diarrhoea after weaning is frequent and causes health problems. The more space the weaners have, the less aggression and stress they will have and the more healthy they will be. It's advisable to keep litters together, however in a case of separating them, it's important to group piglets

according to size by keeping the smallest piglets separately to provide them competition-free access to feed, water and nest space. For the same reasons sick individuals should be placed in a separate pen.

To prevent health problems with sows, the lower and upper critical temperatures in housing on straw are normally approx. 7°C and 26°C for lactating sows and 12°C and 31°C for dry sows. Heat stress is more likely to be a problem for lactating sows, with high feed intake and metabolic activity for milk production, while dry sows will be more susceptible to cold stress because of their restricted feed level. Providing shade, wallows or water sprinkling systems helps to avoid heat stress, while huts or covered kennels and plentiful dry straw bedding for the sows helps to avoid cold stress. To avoid too cold environment for piglets, provision of supplementary heat from a heat lamp or floor heating is advised. If floors are not insulated, a good layer of dry bedding should be present in all places where piglets might lie.

Farrowing and lactation. To ensure good farrowing, enough space, privacy and exercise as well as sufficient straw and roughage are necessary for the sow. It's important to make sure that an intervention during farrowing does not happen too early and to follow hygiene standards (clean hands, long single-use gloves). Farmer supervision and intervention around farrowing allows: 1) removal of placental membranes around the piglet snout to prevent suffocation; 2) drying of the newborn pigs and positioning them under a heat lamp to avoid chilling; 3) extracting pigs from the uterus to avoid prolonged farrowing and 4) ensuring sufficient colostrum. At the same time pulling piglets out of the uterus can cause infections resulting in MMA (*mastitis-metritis-agalactia*) and fertility problems. Farrowing and the first week of lactation is one of the highest risk periods for health problems in sows, especially for vulval discharge and MMA. It's crucial to recognize and treat diseases as early as possible.

Piglet mortality is related mainly to crushing by the mother, weakness and starvation. A large litter size is one of the main reasons for piglet mortality due to longer farrowing duration, lower birth weight of piglets, reduced intake of milk and colostrum per piglet, lower number of functional teats than litter size and therefore higher risk of crushing by the mother during suckling. Mortality also increases in a cold environment when piglets become chilled and lie close to the sow to keep warm. To keep the piglet mortality low, it's necessary to provide good farrowing accommodation with sufficient space (lying area min. 2,2 x 2,2 m) and to design specific features to minimise crushing. It's advised to practice split suckling of large litters by shutting the stronger early born piglets, which have already suckled in a heated piglet nest for an hour to allow the weaker piglets to suckle without competition. Another possibility is to adjust the litter size by cross fostering to match the number of functional teats on the sow. Where necessary, piglets with higher birth weight should be separated.

Organic sows experience a longer lactation period (minimum of 40 days according to EU-Regulation, in some countries even 8 weeks) compared to 3–5 weeks in conventional farming. This requires provision of diets with high nutrient quality, high energy and high protein digestibility based on organic feedstuffs. Milk production varies during lactation: maximum level is reached around the 3rd and 4th weeks of lactation, but after that it is probably not sufficient to cover the nutrient needs for maintenance and growth of piglets. Ideally, suckling piglets should have access to feed adapted to their nutritional needs and digestive abilities from the first week of age as the sow's feed is probably not appropriate. The feeding area for the piglets must be setup in such a way that the sow cannot reach it, but it is beneficial for the learning process to feed piglets next to the sow.

Feed and water. Water supply for suckling piglets is necessary from the beginning of life and should be offered in troughs or bowls so that normal drinking behaviour is possible (nipple drinkers are not advisable). Water increases the appetite of the piglets and helps in case of diarrhoea. Sufficient water supply is especially important under warm conditions and when the end of lactation period approaches (4 weeks and older). It's advisable to change feed rations for the weaners slowly by mixing old ration step by step with new ration to facilitate adaptation. Weaners will hesitate to eat unknown feed and sudden changes may also impact the digestive system. Sufficient water supply for sows is a flow rate of 2–3 l per minute. The feeding regime should be adapted to the needs of farrowing sows.

Health and hygiene. Close monitoring of sows, piglets and weaners increases chances for early recognition and timely intervention in case of health problems. Early signs of disease for weaners include hanging tails, hollow flanks, soft faeces and muted general demeanour. A regular thorough cleaning and drying of pens during the fattening period of weaners is essential to diminish risk of parasite infections (mainly large round worm *Ascaris suum*, which causes liver white spots, and whip worm *Trichuris suis*). Cleaning and disinfection can help to control the most frequently occurring helminths in sows, such as the nodular worm (*Oesophagostomum* spp.) and the red stomach worm (*Hyostrongylus rubidus*), which are transmitted as free-living larvae. Disinfection has though very little effect on infectious helminth larvae, e.g. large round worm (*Ascaris suum*), which are protected by egg shells. It's also important to separate lying and defecation areas of animals.

The technical guide is published by FiBL on 12 pages with an overview of the most important results of the research. It is available in internet free of charge in [English](#), [German](#), [Swedish](#) and [French](#) languages.

Author: Gatis Caics, EkoConnect according to technical guide of "Health Management in Common Organic Pig Farming" by Barbara Früh (FiBL); proof-reading by Kathleen Hewlett, Soil Association

3. Organic farming and organic market in Slovakia

While Slovakia is mainly considered as an exporting country, a domestic market for both organic and health products has developed too. We provide a brief summary of a study carried out by EkoConnect.

Since Slovakia joined the EU in 2004, organic farming has experienced rapid growth. The number of organic businesses has risen from 127 in 2004 to 486 in 2010. 9% of the agricultural land was cultivated organically in 2010 (144.000 ha). Grassland covers two-thirds of the organic agricultural area. Nearly all the rest is farmland, mostly for feed production (50%) and grain (30%), with 1% used for permanent crops.



"Health shop" in Nitra. Photo: EkoConnect

While the average size of a Slovakian organic farm is 296 ha, there are some organic holdings with a few thousand hectares, which are cultivating mostly grain. Wheat, rye, barley and spelt are the most important crops; but peas, sunflower, buckwheat, oats, potatoes and feed grain are also common. The most common organic vegetables are asparagus, carrots, parsnips and beetroot, which are often used for the production of baby food.

A large proportion of the organic food produced in Slovakia is being exported - for example, milk to Czech Republic, ice cream to Germany, fruits and vegetables to Austria, and organic animals to Italy. Some of the foodstuffs which are processed abroad are then re-imported back to Slovakia. 100% of organic medical plants and herbs are processed in Slovakia and then exported – for example in tea bags. 50% of the organic vegetables are sold outside Slovakia. In 2002 most of the organic grain was exported, but nowadays approximately 75% of the organic grain is being fed to the farm animals or sold conventionally. Just approximately 5% of the organic raw materials are exported nowadays, mostly to Germany and Switzerland. Due to a rising demand for organic raw materials in Western Europe grain exports from Slovakia to other EU-countries are expected to increase.

There is currently only one private certification body in Slovakia, but two others are on the way to being licensed. In 2002 the Slovakian logo „Eko poľnohospodárstvo“ for organic farming and its products was introduced.



The processing industry is developing slowly but steadily. The first four organic processors appeared in 2001, and in 2010 65 processors were registered. For big conventional processing units with huge capacities it's usually not profitable to separately process small amounts of organic food, while small processors often have problems with bureaucratic obstacles and marketing. Amongst other products, processing of organic dairy products, herbal products, and grain is more highly developed, while there are no organic butchers yet. The production of organic feed is rising.

"Health shops" (offering healthy and natural, but not necessarily certified organic products) were the first to sell organic products in 2002. Starting from 2003 organic food was also available in supermarket chains.

The distribution areas for organic food are mainly the capital Bratislava and the financially strong West of Slovakia. The demand for special health products typically available in health shops has risen. Organic products with a healthy focus profit from this trend: juices, sugar- and gluten-free products, as well as products suitable for people with allergies. Supermarkets offer mostly basic organic products. Slovakian consumers are generally not well-informed about organic products. The main reasons for buying organics are "health" and "trend & style". There are no advertising campaigns for organic products at a national level.

Organic food imports account for approximately 70% of the market, particularly from the neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Austria and also Germany). The organic market turnover is about 4 Million € (2009) and has remained quite stable since 2006 with a total food market share of about 0.1%. Health shops and supermarkets share the market on almost equal parts, while other sale channels don't play an important role.

More detailed information about the organic market in Slovakia including the main processors, exporters, wholesalers, retailers and other possible business partners can be found on the EkoConnect website in German. Similar reports are on the way to be published for 13 other Central and Eastern Europe countries.

Author: Inka Sachse, EkoConnect; translated to English by Eugen Bohmke, proof-reading by Kathleen Hewlett, Soil Association

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4. The first steps to start with large scale organic milk and meat processing also in Central and Eastern Europe?

EkoConnect and [Research Institute of Organic Agriculture \(FiBL\)](#) from Switzerland organised a workshop about low input organic milk and meat production and processing for Russian speaking participants in the region of Dresden, Germany. Three days in October 2011 were spent mostly on organic farms. 25 farmers, processors and advisors from Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Poland used the opportunity to see some of the best examples in Germany.



Photo: Gatis Caics, EkoConnect

Different conditions of cattle breeding (housing, feeding, hygiene, health maintenance, milking etc.) and processing (planning and building of processing units, newest technologies, expenses, slaughtering, packaging, storage) were discussed in detail with representatives of each farm and factory as well as with accompanied experts.

The organic milk processing factory "[Gläserne Molkerei](#)" ("Glass Dairy") was one of the visited companies. A special corridor with walls made from glass offered participants a possibility to see the whole process of milk and cheese production in the factory from above. About 80 tonnes of milk are processed there every day with a maximum processing capacity of 6 tons per hour. The investments in building such a factory were approximately 11 million Euro. Milk is being delivered from many large scale organic farms (mostly with more than 100 organic dairy cattle) within a radius of about 200 km from the factory. Another visited organic farm "[Brodowin](#)" has -besides 260 dairy cows and 220 dairy goats- an on-farm milk processing unit with a capacity of nearly 10 tons per day. Investments for building it were about 2.5 million Euro. Organic free-range pig production was seen at "[Landwirt Bernd Schulz](#)" and large scale milk production and fodder storage in "[Agrargenossenschaft Großzöbern](#)". "[Biohof Ohler](#)" showed an exemplary organic pig meat production and beef cattle breeding as well as a small on-farm slaughter house. "[Vorwerk Podemus](#)" offered a possibility to visit the whole meat processing factory, and to discuss about the slaughter house, different stages of meat processing and storage.

Transparency is one of the keys towards consumer trust in organic agriculture in Germany. That is why most organic companies allow visitors to see their work and convince them that the whole process complies with the standards of organic farming. In addition, many of the farms showed their own on-farm shop. Organic as well as regional products are becoming more and more popular in Germany. "Box schemes" (the farm is delivering their fresh organic products directly from the farm to the door of the consumers) are nowadays also very popular in Germany.

During the workshop also lectures of experts were presented, for example, a presentation about planning, necessary resources and costs of building an organic milk processing factory. Mr. Eric Meili from FiBL Switzerland presented a comprehensive insight into the best practices in cattle breeding. Participants also learned that low input milk production with productivity of around 5 000 litres per cow per year in the right circumstances can be as profitable as high input milk production.

The organisers believe that with the growing demand in the local markets, similar projects will be seen to develop also in Eastern Europe. A few companies are already on their way.

Author: Gatis Caics, EkoConnect

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5. European Inter-Cluster Alliance for Organic Agriculture – a New Business and Networking Platform for Organic Players

"How to create a network of European stakeholders in the organic sector and encourage successful collaborations?" This question has been tackled by active stakeholder groups (clusters) in Turkey, Greece, France and Germany in the project "Inter-Cluster Organics".



In many European countries organic companies still play a pioneering role. Being the first to develop a specific organic activity in their respective regions, these companies face many obstacles and learn many lessons in the process. Activities are more easily adapted

within the context of an organized or associated group, but even in a regional network there is rarely all the specific know-how available which might be needed to build or develop up a new business, organization or activity. "Re-inventing the wheel" costs a lot of time, money and energy, and the knowledge you might need often is already successfully applied in other parts of Europe. So why not one profit from each other's know-how and experiences?

"Inter-Cluster Organics" (European Inter-Cluster Alliance for Organic Agriculture) has been established for the reasons outlined above. It is a unique business and networking platform which offers organic stakeholders the opportunity to present themselves, their activities, products and services on a common platform and share best practices. "Inter-Cluster Organics" aims to provide organic sector with the necessary infrastructure that encourages synergy by sharing experiences and best practices, ensuring the flow of information among various stakeholders in different countries and regions in Europe.

In order to best serve organic stakeholders, the project plans to analyze the region's needs with a "Needs Assessment Analysis". According to the analysis results, the knowledge gaps and also best practices among different regions and countries will be identified. The aim is then to fill the identified information gaps and strengthen the organic sector in Europe.

To profit from the Inter-Cluster Organics networking platform, organic businesses or organizations can participate in the needs analysis and can apply to enter the platform here: www.organicclusters.com.

For the chance to personally meet the member businesses and organizations, European Inter-Cluster Organic Alliance offer a networking workshop at "BioFach" fair in Nuernberg, Germany, on Thursday, February 16, 2012, 10.00-11.30 a.m. in the room "Helsinki", CCN East. The overall project will be presented and participants will have the opportunity to actively increase their network.

Author Inka Sachse, EkoConnect; translation from German Eugen Bohmke; proof-reading by Kartini Kochar

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6. A rapid growth of processing industry caused by increasing demand for organic products in Ukraine

Despite the facts that Ukrainian organic farmers receive no extra support for producing organically and there is still no organic law in Ukraine, organic processing industry continues growing with remarkable speed.

On 8th October 2011 Organic Open Air Exhibition "*Organichniy Dyvovray*" was held in Kiev. About 7 thousand consumers filled their baskets with organic products (vegetables, fruits, meat, milk, cheese, butter, flour, sugar, grains, cereals, teas, herbs etc.) represented by 33 exhibitors. Another big event held in Ukraine was the Organic Processing Conference on 27th October 2011, which brought together 165 participants. There are about 40 processors active in the local organic food market at the end of 2011, which is a remarkable growth as there were almost no organic processors three years ago.



*Organic Open Air Exhibition in Kiev, 2011
Photo: Association "BioLan Ukraine"*

As mentioned above, there is still no organic law in Ukraine, so no valid conditions exist to call any product organic or non organic. The last attempt to create an organic law was not successful because the proposal was not accepted (vetoed) by the president of Ukraine in 2011. At the moment a new proposal is being prepared. From about 17 certification bodies present in Ukrainian market at the moment, only one, "[Organic Standard](#)", is a local one. It certifies according to EU regulations and is recognized by the European Commission (UA-BIO-108).

So what are the reasons for growing demand for organic food in Ukrainian market? An answer from a representative of EthnoProduct: "Ukrainian consumers are sensitive to food quality especially when it comes to dairy products intended mainly for children. Mass media have played a great role in disclosing problems with conventional food production in Ukraine. And even though the term "organic" is still not widely understood, many consumers learn the difference from a growing number of articles in the press." According to media monitoring done by [Research Institute of Organic Agriculture \(FiBL\)](#), about 15 stakeholders regularly write about organic issues at their web-sites and publications, for example, [Ukrainian Organic journal](#), [Ukrainian Organic magazine](#), [Glossary Organic magazine](#) and [BioLan bulletins](#).

The Swiss-Ukrainian project "Organic Certification and Market Development in Ukraine" implemented by FiBL from Switzerland with the support of [Swiss State Secretary for Economic Affairs \(SECO\)](#) started in 2005 and was accomplished at the end of June 2011. It contributed to the growth of the Ukrainian organic sector and to

its integration in the world trade by providing access to new market opportunities. Different trade barriers, such as access to organic certification, were reduced. Ukrainian consumers received access to a wider range of certified organic products. With the support of the project the certification body "Organic Standard" has been established. However many other players have also contributed in successful development of the organic market, for example, [Association of Organic Production Stakeholders "BioLan Ukraine"](#) (established in 2002), [Organic Federation of Ukraine](#) (established in 2005), [Association of producers of organic products "Pure Flora"](#) (established in 2008) and others.

A complete overview of organic farming and market in Ukraine can be found in the just published [Organic Agriculture Country Report Ukraine](#), written by EkoConnect (in German language). The main players of Ukrainian market, including a list of the most important processing companies can be found in this report.

Author: Gatis Caics, EkoConnect with the support of Natalie Prokopchuk, Swiss-Ukrainian Project "Organic Certification and Market Development in Ukraine", FiBL. Proof-reading by Kartini Kochar

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7. EthnoProduct – the first Ukrainian processor to bring organic milk and honey to the shelves of supermarkets

With 8 000 ha of organic land, 2 000 milking cows and 320 employees, EthnoProduct is one of the biggest organic companies in Ukraine. Their organic milk is being sold well in supermarkets in Kyiv without much need of advertising, due to its high quality and news spreading by "word of mouth".

[EthnoProduct Group](#) was formed by four farms in the Northern Chernihiv region, which borders with the Kyiv region in the North-East. Each of the farms received organic certificates between 2009 and 2011. All of the farms are located 200-300 km from the main market which is Kyiv city. In order to introduce this company, we present an interview with a representative of EthnoProduct.



EthnoProduct organic milk, photo: EthnoProduct

EkoConnect (EC): What amounts (tonnes) of different products and raw materials does EthnoProduct produce and process per year?

EthnoProduct (EP): We are expecting to conclude 2011 (interview done on December 2011) with the total organic milk production of 1 800 tons. As our main focus in 2011 was on the organic milk production, our other categories such as honey or meat have not been as substantial. Next year, we plan to improve our milk production numbers and build up the production & distribution of organic beef. Our current orders are 6-7 tons of meat per month. We consider organic honey to be rather a supplementary product of bees' pollination. Our bees have produced a surplus of about 1,2 tons. Our commercial volumes of organic grains and legumes range from 1 000 to 1 500 tons each year and consist mainly of winter rye, lupines, vetch, oats and buckwheat.

EC: Does EthnoProduct also buy raw material from other farmers? **EP:** Our organic milk that we distribute directly in Kyiv supermarkets is produced only on our farms. From the beginning, we planned to rely on our own organic fodder. However, we're purchasing organic maize from another organic farmer in Poltava region this year in our attempt to support and promote internal market development for organic raw fodder and to stimulate (with organic premium prices) Ukrainian organic farmers to continue to produce organically.

EC: Where do you sell your products in Ukraine? **EP:** We originally started our distribution of organic produce through organic stores and online shops, most of them based in Kyiv. Currently, most of our sales go through the two largest supermarket chains in Ukraine, "Silpo" and "Velyka Kyshenya" and a number of premium food stores. A total number of 69 stores in Kyiv sell our organic produce.

EC: What is the difference between the prices of EthnoProduct products and conventional products in the shops in Ukraine (for example, milk)? **EP:** EthnoProduct has brought a unique product to the market: organic raw whole milk. The milk comes directly as produced by our organic cows with the natural fat and protein content. Therefore, it is hard to compare such milk to any other product on the market shelf. Nevertheless, if we compare the price of our milk with premium conventional milk, the organic price premium is only 15%.

EC: Do you export your organic products and raw materials? **EP:** EthnoProduct Group has done foreign trade of organic grains and legumes such as winter rye and lupines through the Ukrainian representative of the Dutch company "Biocore". We would be interested to explore new markets for our organic spelt and buckwheat and produce value-added organic cereal products for export.

EC: Do you feel any competition between the organic processors in Ukraine? **EP:** There is no competition for organic producers in Ukraine from the point of view of the limited offer on the market. We,

personally, strongly promote all other organic brands produced in Ukraine. At the same time, it is not easy to be the first with organic milk on the shelves of the supermarkets as the "competition" has come from some of the farm-made dairy products that claim to be organic without any certification. In a market that is just being established, such a misleading practice is much more dangerous than any potential competition between truly organic producers.

EC: What are EthnoProduct's main development plans for the nearest future? EP: We plan to increase first of all our milking herd by purchasing heifers in addition to our internal genetic potential. But we realize that this expansion will only be possible with the improvements in our feed production. Therefore, we have focused on the manure composting and distribution on the fields and more advanced technologies such as biodynamic farming. Together with a biodynamic farmer working in Ukraine, Rainer Sax, we put into the ground almost 2 000 units of horn manure also known as BD Preparation 500. In our attempt to improve our organic pastures and hay fields, we cooperated with Hans Ramseier, professor at Bern University. Our development plan is not limited to the expansion of dairy production only. We are looking into best use of our organic pastures also for goat milk production and sheep grazing. In 2011 we also did small pilot projects with pumpkin and potatoes.

The interview was made by Gatis Caics (EkoConnect), proof-reading by Kartini Kochar

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8. BioFach 2012: more than a world's leading exhibition

BioFach, the World Organic Trade Fair, and Vivanness, the Trade Fair for Natural Personal Care and Wellness, invites representatives from the international organic sector to Nuremberg as every year from 15th to 18th February 2012. Some 2 400 exhibitors (200 of them at Vivanness) and 44 000 trade visitors are expected. Besides the usual variety of the global range of organic products, the exhibition duo again presents a large number of other highlights.



Photo: BioFach

The Country of the Year lends a special flair to the four days of the exhibition in 2012, when India's organic sector presents its products to a professional audience on area over 1 000 m² in size in halls 5 (food) and 8 (textiles). At the congress, which attracted some 8 000 visitors to its 150 presentations, panel discussions and workshops last time, the various forums and themes focus on one question: What exactly distinguishes a truly sustainable food industry and how does the organic sector define sustainability as one of its core themes? The patron of the global family of BioFach exhibitions, the [International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements \(IFOAM\)](#), and BioFach's national supporting organization, the [German Federation of the Organic Food Industry \(BÖLW\)](#), draw attention in 2012 to ecological, social and economic sustainability matters in the sector.

The heart of BioFach, the food segment, celebrates a premiere this year. Lovers of fish specialities of organic quality can look forward to a special highlight in 2012: the Fish Market opens in hall 6! Here in the atmosphere of a maritime market, trade buyers looking for certified fish and seafood products can source information and taste culinary fish creations on the spot. The Fish Market is a joint project of BioFach and the [Naturland](#) association. The highly topical theme is enhanced by the Fish Forum 2012 on 16.2.2012 in the Seoul room of NCC Ost.

BioFach and Vivanness give exhibitors and visitors far more than a variety of international products from organic food to natural cosmetics. The exhibition duo offers the sector valuable contacts in addition to products and brands, and scope for creativity as well as knowledge. They are the platform for the market and its products, but also for the people who make up this sector. They are used for networking and PR. They create impetus for the future of the organic sector. This is made clear in no small way by about 1 150 media representatives from 37 countries and the large number of over 100 political representatives who travelled to Nuremberg in 2011. One important aspect for shaping the future is knowledge and information, and the BioFach Congress does justice to this fact again in 2012. It is the biggest congress of its kind – worldwide.

More information is available at www.biofach.com, the latest trends and news at www.oneco.biofach.de and the list of exhibitors and their current product information can be found at www.ask-biofach.de and www.ask-vivanness.de.

Author: Barbara Böck from *NürnbergMesse*, proof-reading by David Barker

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9. Organic Marketing Forum 2012 in partnership with BioFach for the first time

Organic Marketing Forum (OMF) is the leading organic exhibition and conference for Central- and Eastern Europe, playing the role of a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe. As they have done each year, producers, processors, traders, retailers, consultants and experts will come together in 2012 to find new trade partners for their organic products as well as to discuss recent strategies and trends in the organic market.



Photo: Inka Sachse, EkoConnect

[OMF 2012 - 7th International Meeting on Processing and Marketing of Organic Products and Raw Materials](#) will take

place in Warsaw from 7th to 9th May. The focus of OMF 2012 will be the exhibition - a one-day event taking place on May 8th.

Udo Funke, the chief organiser of the [BioFach fair](#): "As the world's leading trade fair for organic products, BioFach gathers together the organic industry from the whole world once in a year in Nuremberg. Therefore we have a strong interest in further successful development of the growing global organic market, in which Central and Eastern Europe is starting to gain more and more importance. That's why we are pleased about the cooperation with EkoConnect and are looking forward to a further successful collaboration which supports organic movements both in Central and Eastern Europe and worldwide." Bernhard Jansen, the chairman of EkoConnect, the main organiser of OMF, also points out the positive development: "The East is the fastest growing part of the European organic market with great future prospects. We are glad about the new partnership with the world's leading organic fair - BioFach. It helps us to offer an even higher quality of business contacts and information to the main players of the organic sales and purchase markets."

Besides BioFach, the other partners of OMF 2012 are the Processors Association "[Polska Ekologia](#)", the Polish Organic Farming Association "[Ekoland](#)", the Polish Advisory Centre [CDR](#) and the [Organic Retailers Association \(ORA\)](#). OMF takes place under the patronage of the [IFOAM EU Group](#) and the [Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development](#).

The four official languages of the event are English, German, Polish and Russian. Online registration and more information is available at www.organic-marketing-forum.org.

Authors: Magdalena Saczyna and Gatis Caics, EkoConnect; proof-reading by Kathleen Hewlett, Soil Association

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10. 4th International conference on the organic sector development in Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries

The conference will take place on April 13–14, 2012 in Izmir, Turkey. It will be the 4th of a series of conferences focussing on the organic sector development in Central and Eastern European, Central Asian and neighbouring countries. The conference aims to strengthen both the region as a supplier of high quality organic products and the development of local organic markets. It will take place parallel to the organic trade fair "Ecology Izmir".



The call for contributions is open until February 24! Everyone active in the organic sector is given the opportunity to shape the conference programme by contributing a proposal for one of given thematic sessions.

More information is available on the website turkey.organic-conference.info.

Author: Susanne Krause, Organic Services

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11. BioAgra 2012 - Trade Exhibition of Organic Farming in Bulgaria

BioAgra 2012 will be held for the first time within the framework of the 21st International Agricultural Exhibition AGRA in Plovdiv, Bulgaria from 6th to 10th March 2012. The exhibition is aiming to highlight organic farming as a production system that respects the environment and animal welfare and to showcase organic products as a healthier alternative. The major exhibition categories will be organic crop growing, livestock breeding, organic non-food products, organic farms, certification organizations, consulting companies, NGOs and organic retail sector. BioAgra will be accompanied by a comprehensive business events programme including a con-

ference on "Marketing of Organic Farming" and an "Evening of Organic Food". The event is organized in partnership with the AVALON Foundation and the Agroecological Centre at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv. More information is available on the [website of the event](#).

Author: Dr. Vladislav Popov, Avalon Bulgaria

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12. Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Place	Topic	Website
15.2.2012.- 18.2.2012.	BioFach & Vivanness	Nuremberg, Germany	World's biggest trade fair for organic products	www.biofach.de www.vivanness.de
20.2.2012.- 22.2.2012.	Eco-Fruit 2012	Hohenheim (Stuttgart), Germany	15th International Conference on Organic Fruit Growing	www.ecofruit.net
06.3.2012.- 10.3.2012.	BioAgra 2012	Plovdiv, Bulgaria	Exhibition of organic products within the Agricultural Exhibition AGRA 2012	www.fair.bg/bg/events/agra12-bg.htm
20.3.2012.- 30.3.2012.	7th Pesticide Action Week	worldwide	Raising awareness on the health and environment risks of synthetic pesticides. Nearly 1 000 events across France and 16 other countries on 2011.	www.pesticideactionweek.org
01.4.2012.- 02.4.2012.	Natural and Organic Products Europe 2012	London, United Kingdom	Trade exhibition for natural, sustainable, organic and healthy lifestyle products.	www.naturalproducts.co.uk
12.4.2012.- 15.4.2012.	Ecology – Izmir 2012	Izmir, Turkey	Turkey's leading trade fair for organic products	www.ekolojiizmir.com
13.4.2012.- 15.4.2012.	Conference on the organic sector development	Izmir, Turkey	4th International conference on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries	turkey.organic-conference.info
17.4.2012.- 18.4.2012.	6 th European Organic Congress	Copenhagen, Denmark	Organic and high nature value farming shaping future food systems	www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org
20.4.2012.- 22.4.2012.	Biostyl 2012	Prague, Czech Republic	7 th Fair of Healthy Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyle	www.biostyl.cz
07.5.2012.- 09.5.2012.	Organic Marketing Forum 2012	Warsaw, Poland	The main exhibition of organic products and conference for organic sector for Central and Eastern Europe	www.organic-marketing-forum.org
16.5.2012.- 19.5.2012.	Jordan Natural & Organic Food Expo	Amman, Jordan	Natural and organic food products exhibition and conference	www.organicfood-jo.com
24.5.2012.- 26.5.2012.	BioFach China	Shanghai, China	Trade fair for organic products in China	www.biofach-china.com
05.6.2012.- 07.6.2012.	HEALTH LIFE - 2012	Moscow, Russia	International Forum in the field of manufacturing and promoting healthy life style products and services	www.life-expo.ru

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If yes, we would appreciate it if you recommended it to your friends, partners and colleagues. But if you have any comments, criticisms or other suggestions for improvement, please contact Avalon or EkoConnect. Your feedback regarding the topics as well as the quality of articles and translations is very important to us.

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This information letter is a joint project of EkoConnect and Avalon. Translations are done with the support of our volunteer translators. If you are interested to help us with translating, please don't hesitate to contact us, as we are always happy to receive more support.

With Best Regards, Your Editorial Team

Avalon is an international, non-profit organisation, based in the Netherlands and active in promoting organic agriculture. Avalon supports rural communities in the Central and Eastern European region and beyond in building sustainable rural societies. In this way we support nature and environment, social conditions and local economy, always in close cooperation with local organisations such as communities, farmers, governments, etc.

Avalon Network

One of our main goals is to **connect organisations, governments, universities, and associated experts by informing and discussing about organic agriculture and nature conservation**. Knowledge and capacity building as well as market and chain development play an important role in agro-environmental policy programmes. Activities include seminars, training of trainers, demonstration farms, institution development and capacity building projects.

Bringing together all stakeholders results in a vast network of more than 150 actors in the field of organic agriculture, nature conservation, biodiversity and sustainable rural development. This network links people who are active in Avalon projects with each other and with professionals on EU and international level. Avalon facilitates this network by providing communication and capacity building tools.

Membership registration

Do you want to become a **network member**? Please fill out the application form on our website (www.avalon.nl). Are you already a member? Then please invite co-workers, friends or other stakeholders to become a network member.

EkoConnect is a non-profit organisation based in Germany which enforces and supports the exchange of information, knowledge and experience in the field of organic agriculture. The organisation serves as a network for people and organisations involved in the organic sector in Western and Eastern Europe in order to meet and interact with each other.

Our primary focus is to **support activities and actors involved with sustainable development and organic agriculture within the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries**. EkoConnect also promotes rural development and the availability of organic products and foods in those markets. Activities include: being a centralized source of information, knowledge transfer between actors and organizations, networking opportunities and continuing education opportunities such as seminars and field trips and supporting private and public facilities implementing structures for the organic agriculture. EkoConnect and its activities are overseen by an Advisory Board that guides the organization in terms of technical and strategic issues.

Membership registration

EkoConnect members include experts and organisations from all over Europe with years of experience in implementing organic agricultural structures, but also non-experts who are interested in learning or supporting the organic idea. You can help to support our work by becoming a **"supporting member"** or as an **"ordinary member"**. Please fill out the application form on our website (www.ekoconnect.org). Are you already a member? Then please invite co-workers, friends or other stakeholders to become an EkoConnect member.



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