

Working for Organic Farming in Europe



Annual Report 2005

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A letter from the President

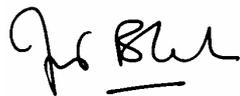
Dear friends,

2005 was in many ways a difficult, yet important, year. After the euphoria of establishing a Brussels office and seeing the beneficial effect that resulted, we had to knuckle down to reality and make sure we could maintain what we had established in the long term. For this, our financial viability was critical.

As a 'self organised' group within IFOAM, we have to pay our own way. In essence, this meant that EU IFOAM members had to take on the financial responsibility for the office. Following all the preparation work during 2005, I am delighted that this has now happened – therefore, the long term security of the office in Brussels is now achieved.

The most significant day for us came within the last fortnight of the year. On 21st December, the European Commission published the proposal for a revision of the organic regulation. However, preparation for this had taken up much of our time over the year (and continues to do so in 2006). Most notably, in October, we produced our 20-page recommendation for the revision.

Yours sincerely



Francis Blake, President

Other highlights of the year were:

- Key meetings with two Commissioners: Mariann Fischer Boel (Agriculture), and Stavros Dimas (Environment);
- Intensive work on the new Rural Development Programme, collaborating with other EU-level NGOs;
- Continuing, and successful, lobbying on the GM seed threat, to prevent threshold levels being set;
- We welcomed representatives from 2 of the ten new member states to complete the EU representation (besides Malta, where there is currently no IFOAM member).

I would like to pay tribute to all our European IFOAM members and to those who have generously provided funding - your support has enabled our important work to continue.

Lastly, a huge thank you to our hard working staff, who have made the organisation the effective force it has become in such a short time, and who put in hours well beyond the call of duty.



1. Advocating organic food and farming in Europe

Our strap-line says “working for organic farming in Europe”. A key part of that is to promote organic farming to the EU authorities, urging them to create a favourable environment for it to flourish. In 2005, we broadened and deepened our contacts with the EU institutions and held over 50 meetings with officials. In addition, the Group secured high level meetings with Commissioners, members of their cabinets and Directors of the Directorates General. Some examples are included below.

➤ The IFOAM EU Group was the first organisation to meet Mrs Mariann Fischer Boel, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, after her inauguration in January. We discussed the different aspects of organic food and farming within the Common Agri-

cultural Policy (CAP), especially the importance of proper recognition for it within the Rural Development Programme (RDP).

- The Commissioner for Environment, Stavros Dimas, received an IFOAM EU Group delegation in March. There, we concentrated on arguing for the lowest possible contamination threshold for non-GM seed.
- The IFOAM EU Group invited the responsible person for organic farming within Commissioner Fischer Boel’s cabinet to visit Biofach, the World’s premier organic trade fair, in Nuremberg, Germany. She met with a range of IFOAM member organisations and was able to experience the extraordinary diversity of organic food and farming.



Meeting with cabinet of Commissioner Fischer Boel at Biofach. From left: Alexandra Pohl (chair Policy Committee), Sabine Eigenschink (chair Regulation Committee), Francis Blake (President), Rosario Bento Pais (cabinet Commissioner Fischer Boel), Joost Guijt (Treasurer), Gerald Hermann (Executive Director IFOAM), Marco Schlueter (Co-ordinator), Gerald Alteni (sub-chair Regulation Committee).

2. Our work on the EU organic regulation

2.1. Ongoing development

The 'organic' regulation (no. 2092/91) continues to affect all our lives and continues slowly to develop. Issues covered during the year included the following.

- ✓ End of derogation for conventional feed at 24th August – we had consistently urged the Commission that this was possible for herbivores, but not for pigs and poultry, and that this needed to be addressed well in advance, so that farmers and feed mills can plan ahead. Regrettably the final ruling went to the wire.
- ✓ Dedicated feed production lines – it is not possible for several member states to achieve dedicated feed lines by 2007, so we campaigned for the requirement to be dropped.
- ✓ Additives and processing aids for livestock products – we con-

tinued to stress the critical importance of completing these lists, now several years overdue, before more unwanted additives become commonly used.

- ✓ Regional variation – the first result of still ongoing discussions was a discussion paper on Criteria for Regional variation: the necessity to allow for flexibility to address the (lack of) development and extremes of climate in the very different parts of Europe.
- ✓ Pesticide residues – in November, we produced a position paper on pesticide residues in organic foods. It challenges determining organic status by end-product analysis and supports the process-oriented approach. However, it emphasises the importance of thorough and consistent investigation in the few cases where residues are found.

2.2. Proposal for a new organic regulation

The main focus of the Group's work over much of the year was preparing for the planned revision of the organic regulation. This was anticipated in the European Organic Action Plan, published in 2004. In September 2005, the Commission circulated a 'key ideas' paper to stimulate debate, asking for responses within three weeks.

Due to our prior preparation, we were able to respond with a detailed paper outlining our recommendations for the further development of the regulation, covering areas such as:

- principles,
- scope and structure,
- processed food, additives and processing aids
- derogations and regional variation,

- functioning of the internal market,
- GMOs,
- inspection and certification, and livestock production.

A major concern was that the European Commission was not giving enough time, nor had sufficient procedures, to effectively involve stakeholders in this important step. As the revision has the potential to be the most significant development for the European organic sector since the regulation came into force in 1991, the Group urged that a fast

decision-making process must not be at the expense of consultation with the organic movement and its stakeholders.

The Commission launched its proposal on 21st December 2005. That day, we gave our initial reaction in a press release: a guarded welcome. Little did we realise how much of concern we had missed in our rushed review! More detailed scrutiny in the following weeks revealed very significant issues of grave concern. We have our work cut out in 2006.

3. Policy work for organic farming in Europe

3.1 Rural development

The IFOAM EU Group followed intensively the Commission work on the new Rural Development Regulation and the new financial period (2007-2013). The focus was the EU Strategy Guidelines, which were the basis for setting up national strategic plans. We secured a strong recognition of organic food and farming in the EU Strategic Guidelines and met different EU officials, including from the cabinet of Agriculture Commissioner Fischer Boel.

Further, we cooperated with a broad coalition of environmental organisations on the issue of the financing of the rural development measures and the agreement of the new Budget of the European Union. Various joint statements and letters were published and sent to the policy decision makers.

3.2 GM Thresholds in seeds

A continuing topic of our work was the focus on thresholds for GM contamination of non-GM seeds above which the contamination must be labelled. If these thresholds would be set above the reliable detection limit (0.1%), it will have a negative impact on the organic sector and be a very significant economic threat. After our success in 2004 preventing a decision on a disadvantageous draft proposal from the former Commission, we intensified our advocacy within a partnership of other European NGOs. The coalition met different EU officials, including the responsible Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, as well as cabinet members of other Commissioners.

3.3 Pesticide review (substances used in Organic Farming)

The Commission has been implementing a re-evaluation of all substances used as pesticides. This includes low risk substances, many of which are also allowed in organic farming and are thus listed in Annex II of regulation 2092/91. There was, and is, a risk that important substances for organic farming will not be allowed any more. This is not because they were assessed as dangerous, but

because of problems with the registration process and the high fees required for registration.

The IFOAM EU Group organised an expert meeting with the responsible DG, Health and Consumer Protection, to make them aware of the problem. As a result, the Commission set up a member state expert group for the particular case of organic farming.

4. Organic Research in the European Union

We are active in the research field and lobby for increased emphasis on organic farming research. Organic is at the cutting edge of sustainable agriculture, but it is still a relatively undeveloped system and needs further research. As the European Commission were setting up the new 7th Research Framework Programme (to start in 2007), we published our position paper "Organic farming in the 7th Research Framework Programme of the EU" in November, sending it to the Commissioner for Research, Mr. Potocnik.

The IFOAM EU Group participates in several EU-funded research projects.

Organic Revision Project – This three year project is compiling a database comparing all organic standards and is also concentrating on organic principles, livestock feeds and organic seeds. The IFOAM EU Group is actively involved as partner through its research officer, Victor Gonzalez (part time). The first results have been produced on the question of Principles of Organic Farming.

Action Plan project – The IFOAM EU Group is one of ten partners in the ORGAP project which aims to develop tools for evaluating the EU organic action plan. Victor Gonzalez works part time as research officer for this project and Alessandro Triantafyllidis, the Italian board member, has a seat in the advisory group.

Organic Wine Project – This new three year project was accepted at the end of 2005. IFOAM EU Group is part of the consortium. The Project will start at the beginning of 2006 and aims to develop processing rules for organic wine.

Organisation of ORGIN workshop – The IFOAM EU Group organised a conference for the Organic Inputs Evaluation Project in Brussels in October 2005. At this final meeting, the project partners presented their proposed procedures and criteria for evaluating fertilisers and pest control products in the context of the organic regulation.

5. The IFOAM EU Group in the Public

5.1 Publications

The IFOAM EU Group publicises its activities and positions through a range of media.

- ✓ Seven editions of the newsletter were produced. These are sent to all IFOAM members in the EU, EFTA and accession countries, as well as other key contacts and stakeholders.
- ✓ A number of articles about the IFOAM EU Group have appeared

in a range of organic and trade magazines.

- ✓ Through 2005, the Brussels office has intensified its press work, producing a total of eight press releases.
- ✓ We produced the first IFOAM EU Group flyer introducing our work for interested parties.

5.2 Participation at Brussels Green Week, Brussels

The IFOAM EU Group participated for the first time with the Green Week yearly organised by DG Environment. The fifth annual Green Week 2005 was entirely devoted to "climate change under the slogan "Get to Grips with Climate Change." The IFOAM EU Group was present with a booth at the exhibition and communicated the important contribution that organic farming makes to stop climate change.



Green Week team: Gundula Azeez (Soil Association), Andrea Rodriguez and Natallie Vassilevskaya (Trainees IFOAM EU Group), Marco Schlueter (Co-ordinator).

5.3 Organic Week in EU canteens

We agreed with the Austrian Presidency to organise, during their Presidency in May, an Organic Week in the canteens of the EU institutions. One organic meal per day was offered. This private-public partnership aimed to support the role which public procurement can play to boost organic food and farming. The initiative can be seen as a symbolic contribution to the European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming.

5.4 Speaking at conferences and events

The IFOAM EU Group was represented at several events during 2005, and provided speakers at conferences, seminars and fairs. The most prominent engagement was the IFOAM EU Group's patronage of the Bioacademy in Lednice, Czech Republic. We have been pleased to establish a long term partnership with the organisers to support the development of organic food and farming in Central and Eastern Europe.



President Francis Blake opened the Bioacademy in the Czech Republic.

6. IFOAM EU Group – internal work

6.1 Report from Office in Brussels

After having moved successfully to a new office at the end of 2004 (home of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Brussels office has consolidated its presence in Brussels. The coordinator, Marco Schlüter, was supported during the year by five different people, some on internships, working on a range of

projects at the Brussels office. These were: Kathrin Baechthold, France (01/10/04 – 30/04/2005), Natasha Vasilevskaya, Belarus (01/03 – 31/07/2005), Andrea Rodriguez, Columbia (01/05 – 30/10/2005), Lena Wietheger, Germany (from 01/09), Laurent Dombret, Belgium (from 01.11).

6.2 Involving member countries

The involvement of the new member remained a priority during 2005 and built on the success of 2004, when seven out of the ten new member countries elected board members. This year we welcomed board members from Slovakia and an expert from Cyprus. Greece and Finland elected also a new board member with the result of getting more engaged in the group's work.

The coordinator concentrated on the new member countries and managed to visit our members in Latvia, Estonia, Czech Republic and Romania. He also participated at the IFOAM's General Assembly in Australia.

6.3 Work of the Board

The IFOAM EU Group board, elected by the IFOAM member organisations in each member state, aims to visit different countries for its board meetings. In 2005, the meetings were held in Austria in March, in Estonia in June, and as usual in Brussels in December.

In Brussels, the board held its annual meeting with Commission officials, discussing all current issues related to organic farming. Mrs Isabelle Peutz, head of unit that includes organic farming, was present. The main topic was the process of the not-yet-published revision proposal of the Organic Regulation.



The IFOAM EU Group board met the Organic Unit of DG Agriculture, European Commission.

7. IFOAM EU Group finance

a. Summary of 2005 audited accounts

The accounts were audited independently by VRC Registered Auditors.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		
	2005	2004
Income	153,423.29	75,791.10
MS fee	52,709.37	24,259.39
Projects	48,785.00	30,417.00
Private funds	8,575.00	9,166.00
Governments funds	16,000.00	2,675.14
Others	2,728.22	458.49
Income UK	8,854.75	7,565.08
Accrued income	15,492.97	1,250.00
Currency exchange gains	277.98	
Expenses	152,392.44	55,268.92
Salary and external services*	1,430.60	5,740.74
Travel and postage	7,332.75	2,340.91
Furniture and equipment	709.28	3,824.15
Rent	9,150.00	2,950.00
Communication and office supplies	7,183.74	5,261.81
Internal organisation	1,211.50	706.79
Public relation and conferences	6,48.78	2,265.36
Research project	28,659.78	31,055.64
Fees and donations	90,436.88	1,123.52
Surplus (deficit) of the year	1,059.98	20,522.18

*The co-ordinator was sent by the IFOAM head office to the Brussels EU Group office. Further salaries are booked under the research projects. This explains the fact of the low amount of salaries.

IFOAM EU Group End Balance Sheet

	2005	2004
ASSETS		
Fixed assets		
Depreciation fixed assets		
Receivables	15,492.97	1,250.00
Prepaid expenses	32.49	
KBC savings account €	51,216.23	50,683.95
KBC bank account €	1,270.93	728.37
CAM bank account €	1,808.95	2,577.35
Utskrivet Banken €	0.00	7,479.31
HSBC bank account £	3,568.33	11,190.35
Petty cash	255.48	43.67
Proton	20.00	
Total assets	73,665.38	73,953.00
LIABILITIES		
Reserves	59,112.96	38,590.78
Surplus (deficit) of the year	752.87	20,522.18
<i>Members' equity</i>	<i>59,865.83</i>	<i>59,112.96</i>
Invoices payable	12,242.26	3,136.68
Accrued charges project	1,557.29	11,703.36
Total liabilities	73,665.38	73,953.00

b. Donors

The IFOAM EU Group gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the following organisations during 2005:

- Flemish Government, Belgium
- Sheepdrove Trust, UK
- Triodos Bank, UK, the Netherlands and Belgium
- Avalon foundation (supporting Board Members from new Member States), the Netherlands

8. Contacts

IFOAM EU Group board members (and substitutes) in 2005
Austria – Sabine Eigenschink (Alexandra Pohl)
Belgium – Leen Laenens (Roland Cartryse)
Bulgaria – Svetla Nikolova (observer)
Czech Republic – Tomas Zidek (Jiri Urban)
Denmark – Knud Soerensen (Birgit Ingvorsen)
Estonia – Merit Mikk (Airi Vetemea)
Finland – Esa Partanen (Katarina Rehnstroem)
France – Anton Pinschof (Marie-Christine Monnier)
Germany – Thomas Dosch (Alexander Beck)
Greece – Dimitris Sotiropoulos (Dimitris Dimitriadis)
Hungary – Acs Sandorné (Ferenc Frühwald)
Iceland – Olafur Dyrmondsson (Gunnar Gunnarsson)
Ireland – Helen Scully (Richard Mee)
Italy – Alessandro Triantafyllidis (Ricardo Cozzo)
Latvia – Dzidra Kreismane
Lithuania – Antanas Svirskis (Nijole Daugeliene)
Luxembourg – Raymond Aendekerk
Netherlands – Joost Guijt (Maaïke Raaijmakers)
Norway – Gerald Altena (Grete Serikstad)
Poland – Maria Staniszewska (Urszula Soltysiak)
Portugal – Alexandra Costa (Niels Rump)
Slovenia – Anamarija Slabe (Boris Fras)
Spain – Victor González (Carolina Suárez)
Sweden – Marianne Schönning (Kjell Sjö Dahl-Svensson)
Switzerland – Otto Schmid (Hans Ramseier)
United Kingdom – Francis Blake (Lawrence Woodward)

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