

Working for Organic Farming in Europe



Activity Report 2007

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A letter From the President

Dear members,

The IFOAM EU Group came of age in 2007. After building up its resources and its reputation throughout the decade, 2007 culminated in it organising the European organic congress in Brussels, opened by Marian Fischer Boel, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. This high-calibre political event gathered some 300 participants representing both the organic sector in Europe and EU and national authorities.

Another key event was the eventual approval of Council Regulation (EC) no. 834/2007, the new organic regulation. The IFOAM EU Group was active all through the year on this and the ensuing implementing rules, meeting with senior EU officials, drafting responses and positions, and lobbying to ensure the legislation worked for, rather than against, the best interests of the whole organic community – from producers through to consumers.

The Group organised two seminars on CAP-related issues during the year: on organic farming and nature protection in Bari, Italy in March, and on organic farming and the rural development programme in Pulawy, Poland in July. These events were important, both to bring together organic representatives from around Europe, and to explore and highlight the role that organic farming can play in delivering CAP objectives.

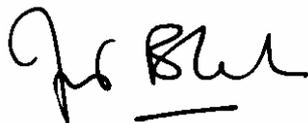
Looking more to the future, the IFOAM EU Group is also active in research. It has joined forces with ISOFAR (International Society of Organic Agriculture Research) to establish a research technology platform on organic food and farming, involving other stakeholders of the organic sector. Its first action was to develop a common 'vision for organic research 2025' as a guiding do-

cument for organic research in Europe.

The EU Group is also a partner in several EU-funded research programmes, including ORGAP, developing evaluation tools for organic action plans, and ORWINE (to recommend standards for organic wine production).

Organic farming is the only system of sustainable agriculture that is both properly defined and regulated by law. With an office in Brussels employing six staff and a membership structure that represents some 330 member organisations in the EU 27 and EFTA countries, the IFOAM EU Group has huge responsibilities to ensure the authorities recognise the benefits organic farming can deliver. We look forward to this challenge.

Yours sincerely,



Francis Blake, President



1. Advocacy for Organics – IFOAM EU in Action

From working out positions on the new Organic Regulation to having discussions with the responsible EU officials, to organising and taking part in important organic events, to setting up a platform for organic research, to growing and maturing as an organisation and establishing better on the Brussels lobby scene – IFOAM EU Group was through all these activities and many other vigorously engaged in advocating for the organic good and farming in Europe in the year of 2007.

With the much appreciated support of its members and the constant efforts of its management, in 2007 the IFOAM EU Group strengthened organisationally and developed further as *the* voice of the European organic sector vis-à-vis the European institutions.

Among other things in 2007 the IFOAM EU Group:

- ▶ Invited and hosted the visit of the EU Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Ms Mariann Fischer Boel at the world's biggest organic trade fair – BioFach in Nuremberg.
- ▶ Held meetings with the EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas as well as with members of the Cabinet of the Commissioners for Agriculture, Research and Health. All in all, the organisation could increase its representation and credibility towards the relevant high level policy makers on EU level. Throughout the year it had diverse and numerous meetings

with Commission officials, mostly (but far not only) with the Organic Unit of DG Agriculture.

- ▶ Was main contractor or partner in four EU-supported projects dealing with: research (ORWINE, partner); policy planning and evaluation (ORGAP, partner); compiling database of organic standards and recommendations for the improvement of the Organic Regulation (Revision project, partner, finalised in 2007); organisation of professional discussions and assembling stakeholder input regarding the policy framework for the organic food and farming in Europe (EU Commission co-funded seminars).

- ▶ Organised its biggest public event so far – the European Organic congress which took place in Brussels and assembled more than 300 members of the organic movements from around Europe.



The leadership of IFOAM EU Group, Francis Blake and Marco Schlüter – President and Director of the Group, with the Agriculture Commissioner Fischer Boel during the European Organic Congress – Brussels December 2007

- Initialised an EU Technology Platform for Organic Research and the process to formulate a Research Vision for organic production.
- Took active part in the work of four Advisory Groups within DG Agriculture – the Advisory Groups on Organic Agriculture, Rural Development, Fruits and Vegetables and Quality of Agricultural Production.
- Aside from DG AGRI, IFOAM EU was also part of the DG SANCO Advisory Group on Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health.
- Integrated into its decision-making body - the management board - and into its work flow two new member states: Bulgaria and Romania which joined the Group in 2007 with full voting rights.

2. Work of IFOAM EU Group on the New Organic Regulation and Implementing Rules

The new EU Organic Regulation was naturally in the focus of the activities of the IFOAM EU Group since the start of the revision process back in 2005. Throughout the 2007 crucial steps were made in the revision of the EU organic legislation. The IFOAM EU Group has been following closely and taking part in this process on behalf of the organic producers, processors, retailers and consumers who will be all in one way or another affected by the new provisions. Further, the organic revision info page, set up in 2006, was regularly updated to keep the sector informed about latest developments.

In June 2007 the Council adopted the new Organic Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91) and with this concluded the first stage in the process of replacing the old regulation from 1991.

Having communicated through meetings and written comments the IFOAM EU stands on various articles and points of concern mostly to the Agriculture Commissioner and the DG AGRI Unit on Organic Farming, but also, as an example, to the Special Committee of Agriculture or the German federal minister on food and agriculture, the IFOAM EU then shifted its attention to the work on the Implementing Rules, which were about to shape the actual working of the newly adopted regulation.

The IFOAM EU Group took active role in the stakeholder consultation on the Implementing Rules which started in September 2007 with the circulation of a *Comparative Analysis Table on the Implementing Rules* and a *Draft Consultation Questionnaire*, inviting expert opinions. Although of the opinion that the questionnaire was not detailed enough for a true expert discussion, in September and October 2007 IFOAM EU promptly organised

internal input from its network of experts and worked out a reaction to this through two documents: *Comments on the Commission's Analysis Table and Response to the Consultation Questionnaire*.

Through them, the Group expressed its stands on questions concerning the exceptional production rules and their level of authorisation, the nature of controls and the positives sides of the risk based controls, the need for more elaboration in the area of poultry production, the way of calculation of organic content, and other issues of importance for the organic sector.

In addition to that, in commenting to various aspects of the Implementing Rules, it produced and sent to the relevant institutions position papers on:

- The Minimum Conversion Periods (Annex I.A. of Regulation 2092/91 which was later transferred to the Implementing Rules);
- The Labelling of Seed Mixtures;
- Sodium Carbonate in Annex VI B and Potassium Bicarbonate in Annex II B;
- Risk Based Inspections;

- The Exceptional Production Rules.

At the end of 2007 an IFOAM EU Organic Aquaculture Expert Group was established to influence the European Commission work on setting up the implementing rules in this area.

In the meantime the IFOAM EU Specialist Group for Organic Processing met in 2007 three times to discuss on a number of topics. The final changes to the Organic Regulation 834/2007, the assessment of the newly-set (for the first time) objectives and principles on organic processing, the development of understanding of the final Regulation, were the main tasks in 2007. On the other hand, just as it was with the whole IFOAM EU, the work of the Processors Group completely focused on the Implementing Rules towards the end of the year.

Parallel to this, the Processors Group exchanged observations on the different national organic markets and discussed market trends and developments.

3. Policy Work on the CAP, Environmental and Health Issues

3.1 CAP Health Check

CAP Health Check - the EC-initiated policy review of the EU Common Agriculture Policy and its ongoing reform, was another point of interest for the IFOAM EU Group during 2007.

The Group launched a position paper on this topic in October 2007.

The paper pointed to the CAP Health Check as an unique opportunity to improve the CAP - and organic policy within CAP, and provided reform proposals. In particular, the so called modulation up to 20 percent in order to shift money to rural development programmes was one of the major demands. Further, the

change of single farm payment scheme was another demand as it is currently in most countries based on the historic basis of 2000-2002 which normally favours intensively managed farms.

3.2 The Soil Directive

In April 2007 the IFOAM EU Group took a position on the proposed EU Soil Directive. The Group underlined its support for an EU wide protection for soil in a letter sent to the German Presidency and the President of the European Parliament.

The letter stresses that soil has always been the starting point for organic farming and the foundation of organic farm management and that it is the organic farming practices that work for the protection of soils.

3.3 Rural Development Programmes

In May 2007 IFOAM EU Group sent a letter to the Agriculture Commissioner Fischer Boel to draw her attention to a number of concerns of IFOAM EU Group regarding the national and regional rural development programmes. The letter pointed to main problems like the

3.4 GM Seed Labeling Threshold

Like the years before the Group also kept continuous strong attention on the problem of the labelling thresholds in non GM seed. In May, together with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and other organisations, IFOAM EU Group undersigned

The CAP discussion was part of the expert work within the two seminars organised by the IFOAM EU Group throughout the year (in Italy and in Poland) and the European Organic Congress in the end of the year.

Later in the year the EU Council postponed the decision on the Soil Directive. In a letter to the EU Environment Ministers, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the IFOAM EU Group and BirdLife International expressed dismay at the unwillingness of a certain group of Environment Ministers to face a very real problem in the EU countries: the continuing degradation of the soils. IFOAM EU strongly supported a push for EU wide legislation for soils protection.

lack of consideration of the Community strategic guidelines for the rural development programmes (which called upon the Member States to support the organic sector through their rural development plans), and the weakness of the undertaken agri-environmental measures.

a Letter to the Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas regarding the "online consultation on Community labelling thresholds for the adventitious or technically unavoidable presence of authorised genetically modified (GM) seeds in

conventional seeds", which was launched earlier in the same month on the internet. The letter expressed serious concerns about this consultation procedure and reiterated the IFOAM EU position of zero tolerance to the contamination of both conventional and organic seeds with GMOs. The IFOAM EU's firm stance on the issue has been that the presence of GMOs in seed should be identified and labelled at the detection level. The EU Group

met also the EU Commissioner for Environment, Stavros Dimas, to discuss the issue and line out its importance for the organic sector.

Later in the year the EU Group also signed a Letter to the 27 European Commissioners against approval of GM maize varieties. The letter specifically protested against the commercial cultivation of two new GM maize varieties (Bt11 and 1507) in the EU.

3.5 Input to the Commission's Health Policy

In the end of 2007 IFOAM EU Group took part in the DG SANCO (Directorate General of the EU Commission for Health and Consumer Protection) consultation on the *Future Challenges Paper: 2009-2014*. The

Group expressed opinions on topics like consumer protection, ethical consumption, consumer perceptions to high risk technologies and how best to communicate health risks to the common end-consumer.

4. Research

4.1 Research Priorities

In July the IFOAM EU Group prepared and forwarded to DG Research of the Commission a document summarising the most urgent research needs of the organic sector. It asked the Commission to take into account the formulated organic research priorities in the 7th Research Framework Programme. The summary and the subsequent interactions with DG Research were only a part of what the Group undertook in the field of research.

in the area of research: the establishment of an EU-wide Organic Research Platform including setting up a Research Vision for organic food and farming.

4.2 Organic Research Platform and Research Vision

In 2007 IFOAM EU Group in close cooperation with ISOFAR started one of its biggest strategic projects

In June in Hagenthal-le-bas, France, the IFOAM EU Group and experts from the organic sector gathered together to put a start to the development of an Organic Research Vision, a document that was to outline the organic research challenges and priority areas until 2025. The draft Research Vision was then publicly launched and subjected to extensive consultation through broad circulation, inviting input to the consecutive drafts, and discussions undertaken during the

Congress in December and at other events. Towards the end of the year IFOAM EU Group and ISOFAR (International Society of Organic Agriculture Research) were ready with the 4th draft of the Vision.

The intensive work on this document throughout the second half of the year was to prepare the basis for the establishment of a Research Technology Platform on organic food and farming, planned for 2008. Its aim was to unify forces and potentials in order to influence the research priorities of the European Union and to secure sufficient EU funding for organic research projects. The platform secretariat was to be settled at the Brussels office of the IFOAM EU Group.

4.3 Involvement in EU research projects

The undertakings of IFOAM EU in

5. IFOAM EU in public

5.1 Hosting Commissioner Fischer Boel at Biofach'07

For the first time in the long history of the biggest annual organic event – BioFach in Nuremberg - the IFOAM EU Group was the host of a visit of an EU Agricultural Commissioner to the event. At the invitation of IFOAM EU the current Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Mariann Fischer Boel attended BioFach and opened the fair. Together with the leaders of IFOAM EU, Commissioner Boel also attended many exposition stands and enjoyed the huge variety and richness of the exposed organic produce. For IFOAM EU it was of course an important opportunity to

the area of research extend to its participation in three research-related projects. That is, the Organic Revision project – a three-year project with the objective to develop recommendations for the ongoing revision; this project was successfully completed in 2007. Secondly - ORGAP, implemented by a consortium where the IFOAM EU Group was one of the partners developing evaluation tools for the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming; the projects will end in 2008. Thirdly – ORWINE, a three year project to develop processing rules for organic wine and recommendations for the new Organic Regulation (in 2007 IFOAM EU coordinated pilot farms in Hungary, Portugal and Spain). The results of the latter project will be available in the beginning of 2009.



The EU Commissioner Fischer Boel and the President of IFOAM EU Group Francis Blake at BioFach'07

discuss ongoing issues – above all the Regulation which was at that time still on its way (it was later adopted in summer) and the

planned participation of the Commissioner in the Organic Congress, organised by IFOAM EU later in 2007.



The EU Commissioner Fischer Boel took an informal walk through the huge halls of BioFach in the company of the President and the Director of IFOAM EU Group – Francis Blake and Marco Schlüter, and some of the board members of the Group (on the picture, to the left of Ms Boel – Thomas Dosch, President of Bioland and German IFOAM EU board member).

5.2 European Organic Congress – Brussels, December '07



The last highlight of a long and busy year was the European Organic Congress in Brussels on December 4-5, designed and implemented by the IFOAM EU Group as a major policy shaping event. The congress, which was attended by more than 300 participants from 34 countries, was opened with speeches from the Agriculture Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel and the Vice Chairman of the European Parliament agriculture committee Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf. In addition to that, the participation of high-level



From left to right: Ladislav Miko (Director of Directorate B in the European Commission: Protecting the Natural Environment), Julien Mousnier (cabinet of Commissioner Fischer Boel), Timothy Hall (Acting Director, Directorate E: Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Aquaculture), Hannes Lorenzen (Agricultural Advisor in European Parliament), Marco Schlüter (Director of IFOAM EU Group). Photo: Kai Kreuzer

speakers from OECD, Commission delegates from Commissioner cabinets, the so many representatives of the organic sector and of other core NGOs underlined the importance of the event.

The main focus of the congress was to work out a new political agenda for organic food and farming. It came up with conclusions and recommendations in the following areas:

- **New political agenda** – to ensure the further development of organic production in the future a new political agenda is needed outlining a consistent policy.
- **CAP Health Check** - to make organic farming a specific focus of the environmental measures to be developed as part of the EU's CAP Health Check;
- **Rural development** - to ensure that some of the proposed increase in rural development funding is targeted at organic farming;
- **Research** - to support the development of a dedicated organic research vision and research platform;



Working moment during the congress – IFOAM EU board member Anton Pinschhof poses a question.

- **Stakeholder involvement** - to improve the involvement of stakeholders in the process of reforming the EU regulation;
- **Ethics** – to maintain the integrity of organic food with reference to core values, to protect against devaluing the concept as the market expands;
- **GMO vs. Organic** – to continue campaigning for GMO policies that protect the GM free status of organic products and ensure that liability for contamination is consistent with the polluter pays principle.

5.3 The IFOAM EU European Seminars and Participation in Other Events

European seminars - In the year of 2007 IFOAM EU Group continued to maintain the expert discussion as well as to increase its public profile through the delivery of seminars in different EU countries. The Group organised two seminars, co-financed by the European Commission: a seminar which took place in March

2007 in Bari, Italy, and centered around a discussion about organic farming and nature protection as tools for sustainable growth; and a second seminar, focused on the CAP Health Check, the new Organic Regulation and the Rural Development Programmes, which was delivered in Pulawy, Poland, in July.

Green Week - As it became tradition over the last years, the



The team of the Brussels office of IFOAM EU Group during Green Week 2007

Bioacademy - As already established IFOAM EU also patroned the Bioacademy in Lednice, Czech Republic. In 2007 IFOAM EU Group

6. Finance

The issue of finance kept the IFOAM EU Group rather busy also in 2007, but nevertheless in the end it was overall a successful year, also from this point of view.

In line with the financial concept the targeted amount raised from membership fees was to increase step by step to 140,000€ by 2008. About 110,000€ revenue from membership in 2007 was a good step forward in this direction.

However, as the membership fees increased significantly over the last two years, this issue will remain a high priority also for the years to come.

IFOAM EU Group took part in the annual Green week of the European Commission.

Green Week 2007 took place in the Charlemagne Building of the European Commission in June. The IFOAM EU Group was represented at this event with an information stand. The topic of the Week was "Past Lessons and Future Challenges". In this context, IFOAM EU Group stand was inspired in the past lessons and future challenges for the organic movement, with a focus on the development of organic farming in the EU, the EU policies with impact on the organic sector and the Organic Regulation.

invited and hosted at the event the Head of the Organic Unit in DG Agriculture, Ms. Isabelle Peutz.

Other sources of income in 2007 were donations and funding grants from the European Commission and other donors.

Donations from:

VBP, Synabio, SIPAL, Organic Services, Wagner Tiefkühlprodukte GmbH, Ludwig stocker Hofpfisterei, Agrano, Marktgesellschaft Naturland-Betriebe, BioAustria and Biokontroll

Grants from:

- Flemish government
- The European Commission - CAP grant to co-finance 3 seminars implemented by IFOAM EU in 2006 and 2007, and smaller grants within the projects Revision, ORGAP, ORWINE, EVS.

7. Contacts

IFOAM EU Group board members (and substitutes) in 2007
Austria – Sabine Eigenschink (Thomas Fertl)
Belgium - Leen Laenens (Roland Cartryse)
Bulgaria – Svetla Nikolova
Czech Republic – Karolina Dyrtrtova (Jiri Urban)
Denmark – Sybille Kyed (Birgit Ingvorsen)
Estonia – Merit Mikk
Finland – Esa Partanen
France – Anton Pinschof (Marie-Christine Monnier)
Germany – Thomas Dosch (Alexander Beck)
Greece – Charikleia Minotou (Christina Vakali)
Hungary – Acs Sandorné (Ferenc Frühwald)
Iceland – Olafur Dyrmondsson (Gunnar Gunnarsson)
Ireland – Eveline Gill (Mary Linch)
Italy – Alessandro Triantafyllidis (Fabrizio Piva)
Latvia – Dzidra Kresimane (Aistara Guntra)
Lithuania – Antanas Svirskis
Luxembourg – Raymond Aendekerck
Netherlands – Marian Blom (Maike Raaijmakers)
Norway – Gerald Altena (Grete Serikstad)
Poland – Maria Staniszewska (Urszula Soltysiak)
Romania – Ion Toncea
Slovakia – Jana Tomasikova (Zuzana Lehocka, Marta Klimekova)
Slovenia – Anamarija Slabe (Boris Fras)
Spain – Victor Gonzalez
Sweden – Marianne Schönning (Kjell Sjödahl Svensson)
Switzerland – Otto Schmid (Hans Ramseier)
United Kingdom – Francis Blake (Christopher Stopes)

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