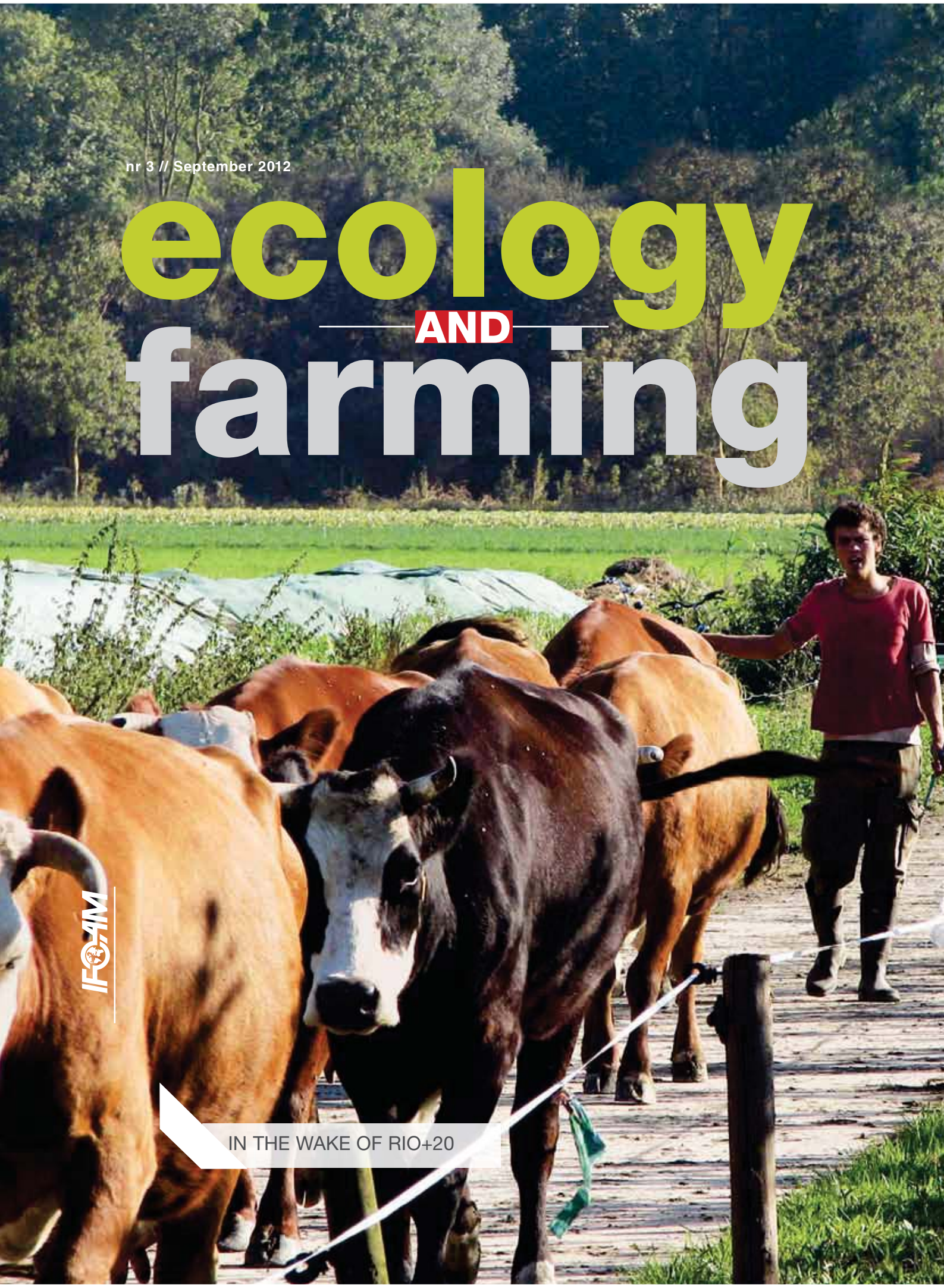
nr 3 // September 2012

ecology AND farming



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Studying biodynamic agriculture

IFOAM
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

presents

THE BONN SUSTAINABILITY DAYS: ADDRESSING OUR FUTURE TODAY

23-28 NOVEMBER 2012, BONN, GERMANY

The 2012 Earth Summit Rio+20 is history. Millions of people around the globe are disappointed about the official results. Behind the scenes, however, there is action. 'Sustainable development', 'green governance' and 'green economy' are not just another conference theme - the future of the planet is at stake. The 'Bonn Sustainability Days', an array of events with global participation, develop the commitments of the global organic movement and make palpable the enthusiasm of activists, farmers, students, scientists, politicians, citizens and consumers. Join in!



DAY 1

23 NOVEMBER - FREE PUBLIC EVENT

FOLLOWING THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF RIO+20: WE NEED ORGANIC AGRICULTURE!

The Bonn Sustainability Days open with a 2-hour event around the outcomes of the Rio+20 Earth Summit. Our high-level guests from around the world share their perspectives and engage with participants.

DAY 4

26 NOVEMBER - FREE PUBLIC EVENT (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)

THE 'SUSTAINABILITY FOR PEOPLE!' FORUM

'Sustainability for People!' is a half-day public discussion forum for citizens, consumers and professionals, where renowned international leaders of sustainability visions will share their practical experience in close-up, personal meetings with participants.

DAYS 2 - 4

24-26 NOVEMBER - EXPERT FORUM (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)

THE SUSTAINABILITY CAMP

The 'Sustainability Camp' is a three-day indepth discussion on sustainability guidelines and policy recommendations to shape the details of the organic sustainability vision. The think-tank includes experts' presentation of a road map for sustainability, panel discussions, workshops and field verification excursions, which produce conclusions that are translated into the Bonn Sustainability Declaration 2012.

DAYS 5-6

27-28 NOVEMBER - REGISTRATION REQUIRED

SUSCON: GREEN ECONOMY - FROM INTENTION TO ACTION

The conference draws attention to the importance of business and considers which economic model we should adopt for the future and what, in practice, constitutes a 'green economy'.

www.suscon.net

PRICE - SUSTAINABILITY CAMP: 300€ (-25% for IFOAM affiliates)
CONTACT: events@ifoam.org
REGISTRATION & DETAILS: www.ifoam.org/sustainabilitydays

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Gross National Happiness

IFOAM's main goal in participating in the Rio+20 summit was to ensure, in a nutshell, that the importance of organic agriculture would not go unheard. The inevitable paradigm shift from industrial farming to agroecological approaches exemplified by organic agriculture is long overdue. Hope persisted that this event would result in the concept of organic agriculture finding its way into policy recommendations.
In his article on Rio+20, Robert Jordan writes about how this summit was more about civil society and corporations than about governments. It is significant that the debates around sustainability primarily found fertile ground in the many parallel sessions organised and coalitions formed by civil society players.

Bhutan's consistent pursuit of GNH – Gross National Happiness – and pledge to become 100% organic still stands alone as an example of governmental commitment to the cause of ecological and social sustainability. Yet, it demonstrates that where there is a political will to achieve 'the future we want', a world of (alternative) possibilities will emerge.
As political leadership by governments on these pressing issues largely fails to materialise, the roles of both civil society and consumers become increasingly relevant: civil society organisations work to raise awareness of alternative solutions, while consumers, through the product choices they make, directly influence the weight of sustainably farmed products in the marketplace.

It is through its capacity to sustainably guarantee food security that organic agriculture can best demonstrate its relevance and importance on a significant scale. There are examples of community supported agriculture in Brazil and elsewhere, where consumers and farmers have direct contact with each other, creating a perfectly balanced demand-supply situation and laying the foundations for a local market by stimulating local production.

But while the role of governments in facilitating such action is still crucial, it has also become apparent that both consumers and NGOs can, and do, make a difference, placing the power – and responsibility - to effect change back in the hands of the people.

Denise Godinho

// ENTERING THE ORGANIC EXPORT MARKET: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS. (AGRODOK 48)

Authors: F.J. Koekoek, M. Leijdens, G. Rieks
Published by the Agromisa Foundation and the CTA

The demand for organic products is growing rapidly, creating new opportunities for small-scale farmers.

News

This Agrodok aims to enable smallholder farmers, their organisations and advisors to make informed decisions on starting and developing an organic export enterprise. It draws on the authors' experiences with the EPOPA (Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa) project that successfully ran in Uganda and Tanzania between 1997 and 2008. The Agrodok takes the reader through the steps that have to be followed to prepare for entering the organic export market. Topics covered include: the characteristics of the organic market, the principles and practices of organic agriculture, how to prepare for organic certification and how to implement and maintain an internal control system. Attention is paid to critical steps such as conducting feasibility and risk management studies, establishing and managing a supply chain and the need for a value chain that emphasises long-term commitments and relationships between partners.

Beyond these basic preparation issues, the next steps - such as marketing strategies and ongoing business management practices are also explored. The guide is illustrated by examples of how farmers and their organisations have worked together to create a successful export business.

The Agrodok also contains a list of websites for further reference, contact information for financial support and a glossary of terminology.

Agromisa Publications – The Agrodok Series
Agromisa is a not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to improve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in developing countries by sharing practical information and knowledge on sustainable agriculture. The target group is small-scale farmers living in rural areas in Africa, Asia and Latin America. To achieve this mission, Agro-

// CONFERENCE ON INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

The conference 'Integrated Pest Management – the way forward to sustainable agricultural production' took place in Brussels, Begium in June. It was organised by the International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association, the Pesticide Action Network and the International Organisation for Biological Control and looked at Integrated Pest Management as a means to reduce pesticide dependency through the uptake of environmentally-friendly crop protection.

The conference brought together key stakeholders from the EU- Commission, the Parliament, the research community and civil society, and also looked at the ongoing challenges of understanding the complexity of ecological and agricultural systems, ensuring long-term perspectives and changing mindsets. One of the presentations was from David Pimentel, Professor Emeritus of Entomology and Agriculture at Cornell University who demonstrated that the benefits of organic farming, in terms of higher water retention in soils and plant production, can contribute significantly to reducing dependency on pesticides. Further information on the conference can be found on http://www.pan-europe.info/News/PR/120619.html

misa publishes practical, easy-to-read guides on a wide range of topics such as plant and animal production, water conservation, food storage and processing, marketing and other topics relevant for the development of small-scale farming. There are 50 publications in the Agrodok series, all of which are available in English and French. Some are also available in Portuguese and Spanish.

Agromisa also provides a free Question and Answer Service through its website where people can ask questions that are answered by agricultural experts, including academics who are available through our connections with Wageningen University and Research Centre.

How to Order

Visit the website at www.agromisa.org, email www.agromisa.org, or contact Agromisa at P.O. Box 41, 6700 AA Wageningen, the Netherlands. Tel.: + (31) 317 412217, fax: + (31) 317 419178.

Agrodok publications are available free-of-charge for members of the Publications Distribution Service (PDS) of the CTA. Membership is open to inhabitants of African (excluding the Mediterranean), Caribbean and Pacific countries, who are working in the field of agriculture or rural development. To request an application for membership, write to: CTA, Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Co-operation, P.O. Box 380, 6700 AJ Wageningen, The Netherlands. Email: cta@cta.int. Tel.: +(31) 317-4671502, Fax: + (31) 317 460067.

// BIOFACH JAPAN 2012

From 21st to 23rd November 2012 the 12th Japanese trade fair for certified organic products will take place in Tokyo. In 2011 there were 170 exhibitors and more than 16,000 trade visitors. This year, there will be exhibitors from Argentina Germany, Australia, Italy, France, South Korea, Austria and the United Arab Emirates.

The Japanese are traditionally very health-conscious. As a result of the devastating tsunami in 2011, many people are paying even more attention to the quality of food. The demand for organic products (and natural cosmetics) is rising. The market is steadily growing. The estimated turnover is around 1 billion Euro, which is approximately 1% of the total Japanese food market. Japanese consumers attach great value to healthy, high quality food, and the term ‘organic’ is familiar to 97% of them. The middle class, which has a broad base in Japan, and the higher earners form the main clientele for organic products.

One of the organic pioneers, the consumers’ cooperative was founded in 1965. With more than 300,000 members and around 30 regional cooperatives, the cooperative is widespread in Japan. Its activities include joint direct purchasing from producers and processors, as well as the distribution of non-genetically modified, regional, organically grown food. Moreover, the organisation would like to contribute to increasing Japans’ self-sufficiency with regard to food, and to spread green ideas. In around 200 warehouses, a range of approximately 3,000 organic products is available for sale for the members of the cooperative. Meetings and training events also take place there. The cooperative also conducts partnerships with farmers, and runs a rice project and three dairies of its own. According to a study on the organic market (Organic Monitor), cooperatives are the second most popular places for purchasing organic products, after supermarkets.

Natural cosmetics are becoming increasingly popular. In the Guidebook for Export to Japan 2011, the analysis by JETRO (Japanese External Trade Organisation) testifies to the good prospects for the future for the sector. The demand for organic cosmetics has steadily risen in recent years, but industry experts see the lack of uniform certification and consistent labelling as an obstacle to purchasing. Only the French Ecocert certification and the seal for certified natural cosmetics of the German association BDIH are currently recognised. Since 2007, the two Japanese initiatives Japan Organic Cosmetics Organisation and Japan Cosmetics Association are working on the guidelines for organic cosmetics. The established natural cosmetics area will be there again at BioFach Japan 2012. More info on: www.biofach-japan.com.

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// CERTIFICATION STANDARDS FOR ORGANIC COTTON IN INDIA

India, the largest producer of organic cotton, is the first country to introduce organic textile standards at national level. India's export of certified organic products to various countries across Europe, Asia and the US increased by more than 160% in value and 110% in volume in 2011. Adoption of these standards might be a significant step towards securing traceability of products and recognition as well as acceptance by export partners.

The Indian government recognises the advantages of organic and biodynamic cotton farming in terms of sustainable development and its positive effects on the Indian farmers. However, currently 90% of Indian cotton farmers grow GM crops. India is the largest cultivator of Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) induced cotton and currently has 12,600,000 hectares. The use of Bt cotton in India is a highly controversial topic. Some farmers benefit from larger yields, higher profits and better living standards, others get trapped in debts when Bt cotton seeds become less immune to new diseases and require higher doses of pesticides and fertilisers. This has caused a serious crisis for small farmers who had big hopes for Bt cotton, as lack of irrigation and cost of pesticides not matching the profit has left them unable to cope. Consequently, the number of Bt cotton farmers' suicides in India has increased. According to a recent study by the Council of Social Development, it is difficult for farmers to switch to organic farming due to lack of available seeds. Seventy percent of Indian cotton farmers are small and marginal, and therefore more susceptible to fluctuation of the cost of cotton seeds and cost of pesticides.

GM cotton in India was promoted as universally the best option for farmers, but many have criticised the lack of education and training for its cultivation, which is quite different from traditional ways of cotton farming. Therefore, it is crucial that Indian cotton farmers understand the differences between growing GM and non-GM cotton, and are able to choose depending on their circumstances. The huge Bt cotton industry in India is a threat to its fragile but important organic cotton production. The newly introduced standards might secure India's position as the world's largest organic cotton producer.

News

// FUTURE FARMING IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND WATER SCARCITY

Conference on organic and low input agriculture, September 24-26, Larnaka, Cyprus.

The organic sector is a 'living laboratory' for practice oriented research and development of innovative methods and products and the organic research agenda has broad relevance beyond its own sector. Further development of low-external input and organic agri-food systems will depend on greater mutual knowledge by food producers, retailers, consumers and researchers. Such linkages will result in innovative solutions that create synergies between the production of healthy and safe food, and ecosystem services. Starting from an overview of several EU-funded organic research projects, the conference will assess the important contribution the organic sector has to make to the European research agenda, how stakeholders can best be involved in research and innovation, and what opportunities the programme Horizon 202 will offers for organic and low-input agriculture.

More information about the Organic Days can be found at www.organic-days.eu

Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction

PETER BRUL

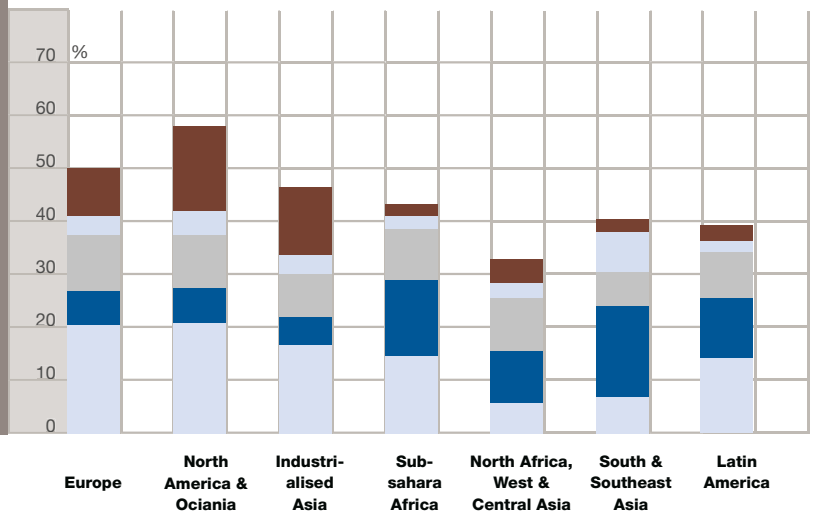
At a recent conference in Amsterdam, organised by the Organic Monitor, London, I was triggered by a speech from Robert van Otterdijk of the FAO about their global initiative on food loss and waste reduction. Globally this is really a big issue, as huge losses are involved. It was also an issue on RIO+20, where the FAO stated: 'The future of our civilisation is facing severe challenges'.

Table 1:

Roots & tubers

Consumption
Distribution
Processing
Post-harvest
Agriculture

Source: FAO



The Rio+20 conference focused on the future challenges facing humanity. The pre-conference UN report 'Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing' states that 'in just 20 years, the earth's population will need at least 50% more food, 45% more energy and 30% more water. Already by 2030, we will need 2 planets to produce enough resources for the world's consumers."

So it would really help if we could reduce the losses. Global food losses and food waste are immense. Annual losses of food are estimated to be 1.3 billion tonnes, enough to feed 3 billion people. At all levels throughout entire food chains there are losses, but the differences between chains (grains, fruits, vegetables, tubers, fish, etc) and between industrialised and developing countries are huge. On average more than 30% of production is lost post-harvest, but for vegetables it can be more than 50%. I have been working as a consultant in organic food chains all over the world. There are no scientific data about losses and waste in organic food chains, but my experience is that these are often much lower than in comparable, 'conventional', production. The main reason is that the awareness about food quality is in general much deeper in the organic sector, not only among agricultural producers, but also those involved in processing and trade and, last but not least, among consumers. Organic food has a premium price, which is an expression of the awareness of its value. FAO

LOSSES ARE VERY LOW IN SUPPLY CHAINS WHERE 'FOODIES' BUY THEIR ORGANIC FRUIT AND VEGETABLES, SUCH AS A FARMERS MARKET.

sees many different reasons why food gets lost and is wasted. In industrialised countries food gets lost when production exceeds demand. The way to reduce this (according to the FAO) is communication and cooperation between farmers. That is exactly the general praxis of organic farming. Organic trade chains are not just about trade, in the usual meaning of the word, but involve much more planning and communication, bringing producers and consumers together and achieving a balance between production and consumption. There is a long tradition of this in the organic industry, for more than 40 years wholesalers and growers of fruit and vegetables have come together long before the season starts to achieve the best possible production planning.

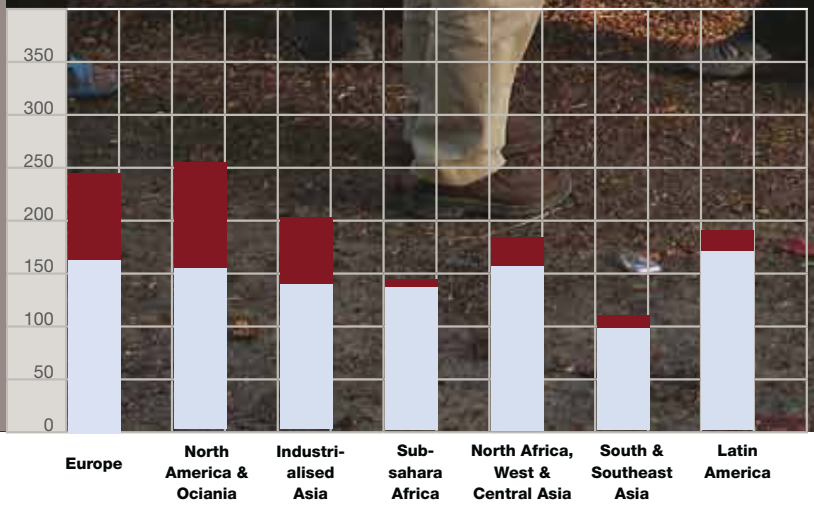
In developing countries food gets lost due to poor production planning, premature harvesting and inadequate storage capacity, The FAO's solution is to organise small farmers, encouraging them to diversify,and to upscale their production and marketing. This is exactly what consultancy and training to organic projects provides, often very successfully. In Agro Eco, my former consultancy company, we evaluated our projects and found out that more than 70% of the value chains we helped to establish (mainly with agricultural production in developing countries) still existed, sometimes after more than 30 years.The main reason why this was

Table 1:

Per capita

Consumer
Production to retailing

Source: FAO



and remains so successful is because we adopted a supply chain approach, that improved the efficiency of the food supply chains to benefit all the participants from farmer to consumer. As long as everyone benefits – which is normally the case in the organic industry – the supply chain remains functioning.

Poor storage facilities, packaging and a lack of infrastructure cause post-harvest food losses in developing countries and this can be prevented by investments in infrastructure, packaging and transportation. Organic production tries to make the chain more efficient, by making it shorter: developing a direct connection between the producer or the cooperative of smallholders and the distributor or importer. Together, they invest in processing facilities, which help to generate more income and are a tremendously effective tool for preventing the high levels of food losses that are common in developing countries. This is often a very useful part of B2B projects, co-financed by donor organisations, which greatly help to improve the investment climate for agro-industry. Because the risks are much lower with donor involvement, the willingness of organic food importers to invest in developing countries is much higher. And the results are generally very positive, because of the direct link between farmer, processor and importer. The processing unit is often a kind of joint venture between the farmers' cooperative and the buyer, which is a guarantee for the farmers that their products will be sold (for a good and stable price in the organic and fair trade markets) and for the buyer it gives a basis for making investments that will yield reliable quantities and qualities.

IN JUST 20 YEARS, THE EARTH'S POPULATION WILL NEED AT LEAST 50% MORE FOOD, 45% MORE ENERGY AND 30% MORE WATER.

In industrialised countries the causes of food losses and waste are often quite different. According to the FAO, large quantities on display and the wide range of products/ brands being supplied are the main causes of food waste in industrialised countries. In the organic sector the awareness of the (real) quality is often different. The quality of fruit and vegetables in health food shops was questionable in the past, because the focus was not on how the products looked, but on the inside. Shelf life was longer, often not very professional. That has improved a lot, but the intentions have not changed so much. This kind of awareness of quality is a guarantee to reduce losses. In conventional production, the focus is more on low price. Low priced products are much easier to waste, because they have less value. I am sure that losses are very low in supply chains where 'foodies' buy their organic fruit and vegetables (and other products), such as a farmers market. The chain is as short as it can be, direct from producer to consumer, the products are very fresh, the producer does not (so much) choose on appearance (as is the case in supermarkets) and finally, the consumer has a consciousness of product value. Foodies also use the rest of a meal the next day to prepare another meal, instead of throwing it in the waste bin.

I spoke with several importers and distributors of organic food. They are sure that food losses and waste are much lower than in conventional production. That is interesting, particularly against the background of the discussion that yields are lower in organic farming. Reduced losses can compensate this lower production. It is time for the organic industry to participate in this global campaign. The organic chains are probably already more efficient, but there are always ways to improve them. ■

FAO / Save Food welcomes partners to join the initiative www.save-food.org

ALEXANDRE HARKALY & PETER BRUL

Supporting the economic viability of rural areas

It is a general assumption that when farmers start conversion to organic production there will be a loss in productivity of around 25%. This need not be so if the farmer is well supported by good advisory services and technology. However the change varies enormously from case to case depending very much on the previous farming situation and the crops involved. Some crops are very productive under organic regimes and competitive with 'conventional' systems.

If production was previously very intensive, with high inputs of agro-chemicals, conversion will be more difficult and the decline in productivity likely to be greater. In low input agriculture, there is often no difference in productivity during conversion. Most developing countries do not offer any financial (or technical) support for farm production, at least not in the European, North American or Japanese styles.

What is the picture then in developing countries? What are the consequences? The system of subsidised farming in the rich countries and lack of support for agriculture in developing countries is one reason why agricultural products have been so cheap for the last few decades. That may sound a strange thing to say a time of rising prices for agricultural products, but the recent increases in prices are due to climatic problems and an increase of demand from developing countries. In six years there has been three global climate crises causing serious problems with food production! Although this causes problems for poor people in developing countries who spend a large portion of their low incomes on food, it is extremely important that farmers get better and more stable prices for their products. At present millions of farmers leave agriculture each year, because they see no future in it. This can lead to rapid environmental degradation and a breakdown in social structures.

If small family farmers get too low prices and cannot support themselves, they will not think about investing in the future and the assets that support them. They will burn the surrounding bush, woods or forest for fuel or fertility. Although this has been going on for millennia, population pressure now means there is not enough time for land to regenerate and recover its fertility. Low wages and lack of social infrastructure (social and medical care, schools etc.) and poor working conditions can leave employees vulnerable to malnutrition, disease and not able to make the most of opportunities for their children, trapping them in a vicious circle of poverty and despair.

examples of improvements sponsored by Ecosocial's certified projects

One could shrug this off and say that is their problem, or their governments', but this is not so It is a global issue, where the principal of solidarity should exist between those who have more and those with less, particularly when they are linked by being at different ends of a supply chain. However this solidarity should not be exercised in a paternalistic way, giving should be done in a way that makes sense to the recipients and which can be transformed into something long-lasting, to enhance their quality of life and local sustainability. People leave the countryside because they do not see a future in agriculture. They go to places where they hope to find better circumstances for themselves and especially their children. The borders of the rich world are becoming increasingly fortified to keep these people out.

Solidarity should also involve local people deciding how resources should be spent. It should not be paternalistic. No one knows better than the local people what they need. Local decision making should be a fundamental part of making social and environmental investments.

Improving agricultural productivity:

- Construction of solar driers for agricultural produce, a courtyard for drying rice and storage silos for grain.
- Road improvements to facilitate transportation of people and merchandise
- Purchase of equipment (tractors, combine harvesters etc.)to make work lighter or carry out labour consuming tasks (e.g ploughing in rice straw immediately after harvest).
- Erosion prevention and control in fields.

Improving working conditions:

- Employees receive one paid day-off per week.
- Employees work in climate controlled conditions.
- Purchase of electric fork lift trucks.
- Promotion of family horticulture and aquaculture to improve the incomes of the employees of a mill;
- Transportation assistance for employee.
- Purchase of more comfortable and ergonomic chairs for employees.
- Installation of dust filters for reducing pollution.

Community development:

- Providing access to potable water for a mountain tribe.
- Assistance with (elementary and middle) school fees for employees' children.
- Higher education assistance fund.
- Environmental education for farmers' children.
- Education and training for employees and their families.
- Employee benefits programmes: that aim to improve the health, nutrition and welfare of employees.

Environmental improvements:

- On farm tree planting.
- Environmental restructuring of farms.
- Environmental conservation and recovery projects to stimulate environmental conservation and rehabilitate degraded areas.
- Installation of solar hot water panels.

THE PRIORITY IS TO INVEST IN THINGS THAT WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE FARMERS

This is the approach that Ecosocial takes. The text box gives a few examples of projects and communities that have benefited from Ecosocial. In trading organic products, traders themselves and the supply chain support the downstream raw material producers down the stream to develop the needed improvements be they social or environmental. And this is a never-ending process. The priority is to invest in things that will improve the quality of life for the farmers or among the immediate community, but once this has occurred investments can also be made in the surrounding community, so the project radiates life improvements beyond the project itself.

In economic terms what happens is that the whole chain (but in the end the consumer) pays for these social and environmental improvements by paying a premium on top of the price of the product. Conventional price setting follows market principals, supply and demand are evaluated and the world prices are regulated. Most organic projects do not follow that rule. They have a system to even out strong price variations so that production costs are always covered and a profit made. Ecosocial adds something extra to the price to allow quality of life improvements. This 'added price' is not fixed, it is the result of negotiation where the buyer agrees to paying for predefined improvements selected by the community themselves. Audits and checks control whether these improvements are really happening. This is a fundamental change to the 'fair trade' concept – it gives communities the chance to prioritise the improvements they want to see and in the space of a few years, these improvements can be seen and verified.

Ecosocial is not an organic seal: it is a fair trade, social and environmental one. The organic seal is given independently, during a separate evaluation. Ecosocial is based on organic standards, but its realisation is not. Ecosocial is involved in concrete social, environmental and fair trade actions. It is another development tool.

Ecosocial is based on a self managing principle. The community decides where to invest. It first carries out a preliminary study, identifying its priorities, which it sends to IBD . These priorities can vary and cover several areas. For example one community in Thailand saw the most pressing issues as education for children, food diversification and potable water for the community and an erosion control programme.

One community (Huaen in China) also prioritised erosion control and the building of 6 deep wells for irrigation, which led to a 30% increase in maize and millet productivity. They also prioritised several actions to improve working conditions and the comfort of employees. As Ecosocial is a never ending and ongoing process, communities have time to revise their priorities and will be able to introduce new ones such as training and research as their needs and expectations change.

Ecosocial projects often include some kind of technological input, even though agricultural communities do not often ask for advisory services, training, or research support, not seeing them as ways to improve productivity. It may be necessary to include this types of support in Ecosocial, (when not in the general organic rules!) to help the farmers to improve their economic results. There is often a lack of education and training in (organic) agriculture, even though this activity provides the socio-economic basis of these communities and their long-term wealth and well being. Organic farming needs a culture of innovation and development, in order to be sustainable. ■

GERA STUURWOLD & RUUD HENDRIKS

A combination of living together, working and farming

Studying biodynamic agriculture

If you are young and you have an interest in organic production and want to work in this field, Warmonderhof (in Dronten the Netherlands) may be of interest. Founded in 1947 it provides full-time training to students with a range of backgrounds from both within Netherlands and abroad. It covers biodynamic and organic arable farming, horticulture, livestock and fruit cultivation and provides learning by doing.

"The combination of living together, working and farming appealed to me, there is no other training at this level in Europe" said Gaia Firth a 21 year old, third year student on the vocational training programme in biodynamic agriculture at Warmonderhof. About twenty-five students start the four-year training each year. Virtually all eighty students live on the school grounds, also home to several companies who offer internships and practical learning experiences. Approximately fifteen percent of the students come from abroad, mainly from Germany and Belgium, with an equal mix of males and females.
Do Veltman, coordinator of the campus says: "many students at the intake interview talk about their appreciation of the atmosphere here. They usually have a huge drive to learn about the production of organic food".

Pressure

The students do much of the work on the eighty-five hectare farm: taking care of the animals, sowing, planting, harvesting and maintaining the equipment and the buildings. Do Veltman again: "they have theoretical lessons in the morning and practical work in the afternoon. There is a milking team and for four weeks all students have to start milking at 5.45 am. The carrot harvest and weed control is also intensive. In addition to this the students organise many activities, such as a monthly meal which they cook for people from the neighbourhood. Many young people have a sideline selling organic produce on the farmers' market or on a web shop". Ruud Hendriks, teacher and responsible for soil fertility adds ''rest, cleanliness and regularity sound very old fashioned, but students must learn these virtues or otherwise it will not work. Agriculture is a lifestyle, it is more than a job. If you walk around here at 11 pm in the dark most students have already gone to bed, you sometimes wonder if there are really so many young people living here".

Life on campus

"It is very social here", according to recently-graduated Sophie Easter (22): "it made me quite nervous in the the first few months". Another student said "you must enjoy the liveliness in the homes and you have to learn about boundaries. People are very respectfully to each other, also with students with autistic traits. But of course there are also sometimes quarrels".
Eight students rent rooms in student houses. They usually have dinner together. "I keep an eye on practical matters and watch over their welfare. Sometimes they find it tricky to manage balancing

A HUGE DRIVE TO LEARN ABOUT ORGANIC PRODUCTION

their rights and obligations to each other. But the hassle of washing-up and cleaning is instructive.In addition to the statutory tuition fee, students pay € 760 per year for the use of facilities and € 225 per month for their room. Veltman: 'life here is cheap because there are few temptations- the ice cream seller who was here yesterday does not comes very often. Students often eat cheap vegetables."

Learning Companies

For more than 40 years Warmonderhof was independent, but in the 1990s it merged with the Greenhorst, an agricultural training centre with several locations. However, the Warmonderhof Foundation and associated businesses remain the main drivers. Hendriks: "we have 3 entrepreneurs working on the farm, a dairy farmer, an arable and vegetable farmer and a fruit grower. Students feel the tensions that exist on a farm: how dependent the enterprise is on the weather and the possibility of the harvest failing. If you make a mistake you end up with the milk flowing in the gutter then this directly affects the operating result." Dairy farmer Verheye: "students do almost everything together. Every four weeks I get a new group: four from the 3rd year and two from the 2nd. They learn about the good times and the bad ones". Firth is happy that she is learning how to run a farm and a company and is hoping to go back to Belgium afterwards and start making cheese.

Regular, organic or biodynamic?

"There is still a large gap between organic and regular food production," says Hendriks, "this is very apparent for a young person making this choice". If your parents have a conventional farm or you come from an entrepreneurial family with a supermarket, then it seems that the choice for organic is a choice against your parents. Yet only this year alone in our region (Flevoland) twenty farms converted to organic production. Some of them might continue onto biodynamic farming. Biodynamic agriculture is more experimental and spiritual than organic farming. We work less on the basis of feasibility and focus more on using the possibilities on the spot. We look at what the soil itself offers as an opportunity. Firth: "there are students who have nothing with the biodynamic angle, sometimes because they do not know about it. You can get to learn about it here, and some change their opinion in the course of the training".

Curriculum

The curriculum is remarkably broad. "Because I come from a free Waldorf school art lectures are quite normal for me, but not everyone has a connection to such things", says Firth. "You learn to work with tools and to create beautiful things of wood or stone." Hendriks: "the art lessons stimulate creativity, a quality that is also useful for a farmer. Students often discover capacities that they did not realise they had."

There are six main subjects in the curriculum, each consisting of a number of components. These primary ones cover agriculture (animal husbandry, arable farming, horticulture, fruit growing and soil fertility) and engineering (tools, engines and farm buildings). In addition, there is economics (accounting, management and entrepreneurship), anthroposophy (perceptions, earth and human development, biodynamic preparations), arts (art, drama, games and end-of-year celebrations) and biology (zoology, botany, landscape and phenomenology).

Firth: "I came here because of the wide, varied curriculum. There is something for everyone. In addition, you have many opportunities after this training." ■

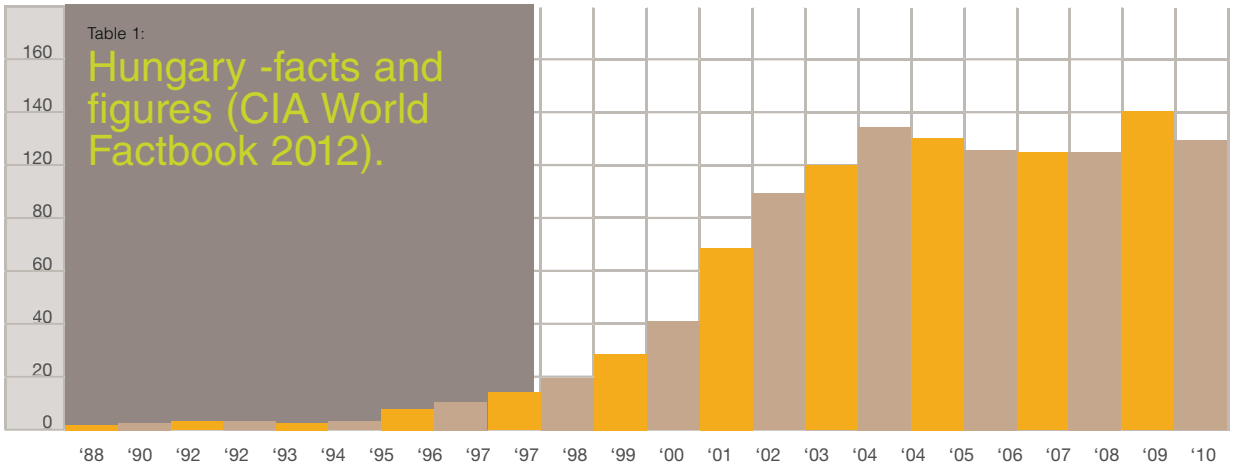
Weekly organic market in Újpest, Budapest.

ZOLTÁN DEZSÉNY & DÓRA DREXLER

Past, present and future

Organic agriculture in Hungary

Hungary offers good conditions for organic production. Its constitution bans the use of GMOs. Many of its low-intensity agricultural areas (mostly pastures, meadows, fallows) are free from the effects of agro-chemicals. There are currently 127,000 hectares of certified organic land (about 2.5% of the total agricultural area). More than 1500 enterprises produce approximately € 25 million (equivalent) of organically certified food. Yet it is also clear that the country's organic sector has not yet reached its potential and that there are numerous unexploited opportunities.



While the organic sector grew quickly between 1996 and 2004, it has since been stagnating. The percentage of organic land in Hungary is just half of the European Union average and Hungary is one of the few European countries where the organic sector has not been expanding. This is partly due to a lack of effective policy incentives, such as suitable subsidies or administrative support, a lack of coordination of export marketing initiatives and of any broad awareness-raising campaign for domestic consumers. A large part of organic produce is still sold as conventional. Better cooperation between stakeholders is required for the sector to move forward.

The Hungarian Government recently approved the National Rural Strategy which aims to generate demand for high-quality, GMO-free, locally produced food. The document considers organic agriculture as a strategic sector which deserves strong support. The strategy sets very ambitious objectives for the future development of organic agriculture in Hungary. It aims to have 350,000 hectares of certified organic land by 2020, almost a threefold increase on the current total. It is anticipated that subsidies for organic conversion and for yearly certification costs will play a major role in achieving this. Organic producers will also receive priority in future calls from the Rural Development Ministry for diverse support programmes, such as the young farmers' initiative. Organic animal husbandry and apiculture will receive particular support, as these are priority areas within the Ministry's agricultural development policy. The National Rural Strategy also foresees the creation of an Organic Action Plan, which will set out a detailed programme for the sector's development.

Production volume and structure

Organic farming in Hungary first started in the 1980s. By 1988 there were just 15 organic farms. This figure rose to 108 by 1995, 471 by 2000 and reached its peak in 2009 when there were 1660 certified organic units. The area under organic cultivation grew from 1,000 hectares in 1988 to 128,690 in 2004 and 140,292 in 2009. Since 2009 the number of operators and the total cultivated area have decreased, dropping back to the 2005 level.

Grasslands make up the majority of registered organic land (51.7%), followed by arable crops (38.9 %), perennial crops (4.4 %), and vegetables (1.3 %). Although more than half the organic area is grassland, organic animal husbandry is relatively insignificant compared to crop production. In 2010 less than 100 farms kept certified organic livestock, which is less than one tenth of the organic produces. This is because most of the animals grazing on organic fields are not certified, as farmers consider the certification costs to be too high (and the existing regulations do not stipulate that only certified animals can be kept on organic grasslands). As a result organic grasslands receive substantial subsidies without creating any final organic product to speak of, showing the inadequate structure of the current support scheme.

The organic market – wholesale and retail structure

Today, organic products in Hungary have just a small market share. About 85% of total production is exported. Most of it leaves the country as raw materials or as low added-value produce. Most of the produce goes to the EU, principally Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and, outside of the EU, to Switzerland. At the same

Table 1:

Retail channels for organic products (Frühwald, 2012).

TYPE	SHARE
Malls, supermarkets	60%
Specialized stores	20%
On-line sales	6-7%
Farm sales	2-3%
Organic markets, fairs, events	6-10%

time, the majority of the (modest) organic assortments in Hungarian food stores are processed imports. Some estimates suggest that 90% of domestic organic consumption is made up of imports.

There is a significant lack of organic processing capacity in Hungary and this could provide interesting potential market opportunities for organic food processing companies. This market opportunity is further enhanced by Hungary's proximity to countries with large organic markets.

Supermarket chains are playing an ever-increasing role as distributers of organic products and, as elsewhere, it can be assumed that they will play a major role in expanding the domestic market. However, only few domestic organic producers can currently meet the volumes, quality standards and the regularity of deliveries demanded by the supermarket chains. Pilot projects for product development, quality assurance and cooperation in production are needed to help domestic producers tap into this market. The formation of farmers' production and marketing groups, organic farmers' markets and local producer-consumer networks can also be important vehicles for distributing certified local organic products and expanding the domestic market.

Factors that motivate the consumption of organic produce

In contrast to Western European countries, Hungarian consumers are mainly motivated to buy organic by health considerations. Studies have shown that organic products are favoured because they are free from GMOs, toxic chemicals, additives, artificial flavourings and colourings, preservatives, and are perceived as having a higher quality. Taste, nutritional value and price are less important motivating factors, and ecosystem protection plays a minimal role for most Hungarian consumers.

Although demand for organic products is growing, a large percentage of the population, even some of those who regularly purchase organic products, cannot define what organic means, and the difference from non-organic products. Effective outreach programmes and reasoned marketing campaigns are needed to disseminate credible information and to develop consumer awareness. Dissolving the misconceptions about organic production is crucial for increasing domestic consumption.

Future trends

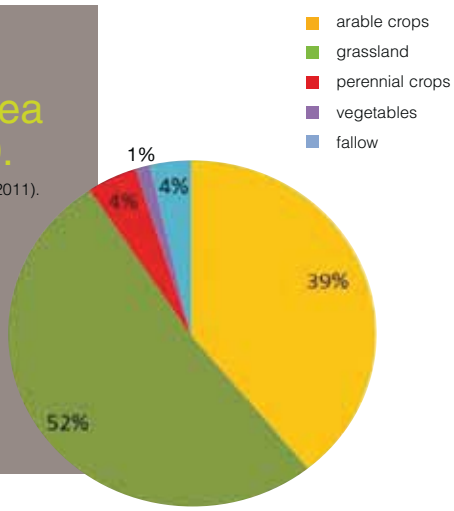
The future development of organic agriculture in Hungary depends a lot on the EU's Common Agriculture Policy, how this will be implemented nationally and, most of all, on the realisation of the new National Rural Strategy. Hungarian organic production needs a stronger practice-oriented research basis, there needs to be more dissemination work - underpinned by local scientific evidence - and efforts to increase consumer awareness in order to establish a stable and growing organic sector.

Cooperation and a better communication between organic stakeholders (producers, traders, umbrella organisations, certifiers, and research institutions) is crucial for effective lobbying work and for Hungarian agriculture to play a role in facing up to global challenges, such as climate change or water and oil scarcity.

Figure 3

Land use types of certified organic area in Hungary in 2010.

(Biokontroll Hungária, Hungária Öko Garancia 2011).



Hungary statistics

TYPE	SHARE
Area	93,028 km2
Population	9,958,453 (July 2011 est.)
GDP per capita (PPP)	$19,600 (2011 est.)
Total agricultural land	67.000 km2
GDP composition by sector	agriculture: 3.7% industry: 31.3% services: 65% (2011 est.)

It is anticipated that market demand for organic products will continue to steadily increase, and some organic farming methods will soon become mainstream agricultural practices. The development of organic agriculture could play a key role in maintaining Hungary's competitiveness on agricultural markets. This is increasingly recognised within current agricultural policy. Joint efforts by Hungarian organic stakeholders are needed to ensure the realisation of the promising policy plans.

Research

The Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (ÖMKi) is a private non-profit research centre, founded by the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in 2011. The aim of ÖMKi is to advance science and innovation in organic agriculture in Hungary. ÖMKi's motivated team works closely with many stakeholders in the Hungarian organic movement, initiating, coordinating and implementing innovative research projects, as well as providing training and extension services. This year it started to build up an on-farm experimentation network that has engaged many organic farmers. ÖMKi regularly organises workshops and vocational trainings for farmers and other stakeholders (often in partnership with other organisations). It has also established a popular PhD and postdoctoral scholarship programme in order to foster the development of a new generation of Hungarian scientists, who will be deeply involved researching organic agriculture and sustainable production methods. Thus, ÖMKi is striving to support the development and competitiveness of Hungarian organic agriculture and food production in the long run. ■

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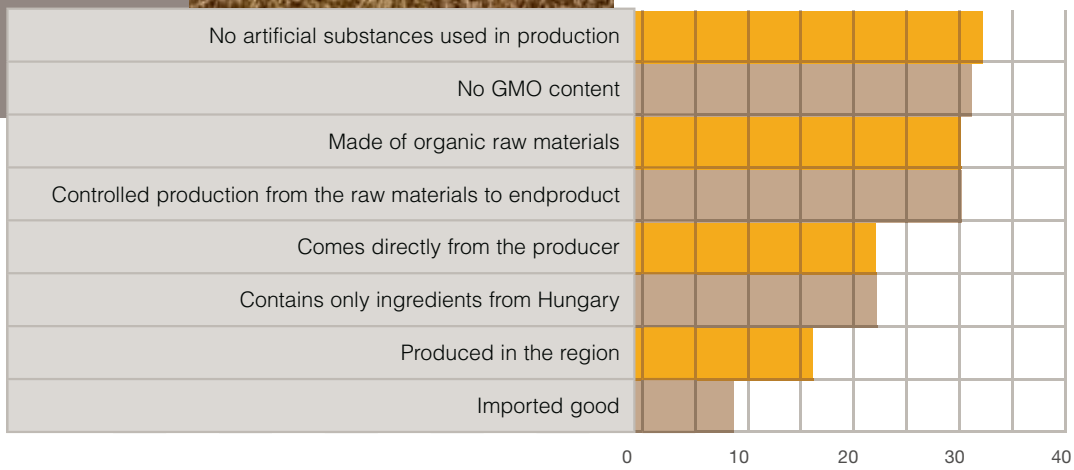
Table 3

Willingness of Hungarian consumers to pay premium

(%) for food characteristics (Füredíné Kovács, A. 2006).

An organic wheat field in western Hungary.



On certified organic produce

VICKI TORRES

A Californian consumer education campaign

With summer's peak organic produce in farmers' markets and stores, CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers), and organic farmers run a consumer awareness campaign. The kick off was at San Francisco's Ferry Plaza Farmers Market with two Northern Californian 'stars' of organic farming.

The 'Why Buy Certified Organic?' awareness campaign is part of ongoing education efforts by CCOF, the largest organic certifier in the USA with 2,400 members. Organic mushroom farmer, John Garrone of Far West Fungi, and organic peach farmer Carl Rosato, of Woodleaf Farm, were joined by CCOF representatives at the Ferry Plaza farmers market in San Francisco. They handed out postcards that outline what 'certified organic' means and how to find it in markets. These postcards are being distributed in farmer's markets statewide.

Garrone runs a 25-year-old, family-owned business that grows more than 40 types of organic mushrooms, including Shiitake, Tree Oyster, Lions Mane, Maitake and King Oyster. Rosato has farmed organically for 30 years and produces 200 varieties of organic fruit, including apples, pears, cherries, and peaches. He recently received a Steward of Sustainable Agriculture Award, an industry award given for his advocacy and organic farming research.

"We want to help shoppers who may encounter confusing labels such as 'pesticide free,' 'natural,' or 'sustainable,'" said CCOF Executive Director Cathy Calfo. "We want consumers to know that when they see the CCOF or USDA certified organic logo, they are truly getting organic products because our farmers must meet strict, verifiable, farming practices to be allowed to display that label."

The Ferry Plaza Farmers Market is run by CUESA, the Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture. This is a a nonprofit organisation dedicated to cultivating a healthy food system through the operation of the tri-weekly market and its education programs. Dave Stockdale, CUESA's Executive Director, said CUESA supports CCOFs new campaign because "it's important that our shoppers understand how their food is produced. CCOF's Organic Certification is a standard that consumers can trust and the new postcards will help our shoppers understand the purchasing choices they

WE WANT TO HELP SHOPPERS WHO MAY ENCOUNTER CONFUSING LABELS SUCH AS 'PESTICIDE FREE,' 'NATURAL,' OR 'SUSTAINABLE'.

are making." "By being certified organic we can ensure to our customers that we provide healthy, quality products that are produced without synthetic inputs," added Garrone, owner of Far West Fungi. "Farmers' markets allow farmers to develop a one-on-one relationship with customers and help educate them on the value of certified organic products. I'm glad CCOF is helping educate consumers to be sure of what they're buying."

Farmers' markets received negative attention two years ago when a few vendors were discovered passing off conventionally-grown produce as 'pesticide free.' CCOF's 'Why Buy Certified Organic?' campaign is part of its ongoing education efforts to inform consumers, help shoppers, and restore confidence. In a previous educational campaign, CCOF distributed Farmers' Market Best Practices Guidelines to their clients, and market managers. The photo-illustrated guidelines outline how to clearly display, identify, and label organic and non-organic produce, and suggest prohibiting terms like 'no spray' or 'pesticide free.' Many market sellers and managers have put these guidelines into use.

In the newest campaign, postcards will be given out by farmers selling organic products throughout California, including the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in San Francisco; other Bay Area farmers' markets; markets in Sonoma, Windsor, Modesto, La Mesa, Oceanside, Poway, Chico, Los Osos, Paso Robles, Cambria, and Templeton; plus Arizona markets – Town & Country in Phoenix and Old Town Scottsdale Farmers' Market.
Information on the postcard explains that products displaying the CCOF logo (left) meet U.S. Department of Agriculture's requirements for organically certified products and were reviewed by CCOF, a USDA-accredited certifier. Such foods must be produced without harmful or toxic pesticides, sewage sludge, petroleum-based synthetic fertilisers, radiation, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products must come from animals not given antibiotics or growth hormones.
Buying certified organic keeps additional antibiotics and hormones out of the food supply chain, limits the spread of genetically modified crops, and protects the environment, the postcard says.
Copies of the postcard and market guidelines are available on CCOF's website. ■

About CCOF
CCOF www.ccof.org (California Certified Organic Farmers), a nonprofit organisation, was founded in 1973 and is one of the USA's oldest and largest third-party organic certifying agencies. CCOF certifies, educates, advocates, and promotes organic through:
- a premier organic certification programme for growers, processors, private labelers, and retailers;
- programmes to increase awareness of and demand for certified organic product and to expand public support for organic agriculture;
- advocacy for governmental policies that protect and encourage organic agriculture.

CCOF certifies more than 2,400 organic operations in 33 states and three foreign countries and serves over 250 supporting members - consumers, suppliers, businesses and individuals - interested in supporting its work.

More info at http://ccof.org/programs.php.

STEPHAN DABBERT

The European organic certification system

Room for improvement

Scientists and certification experts from seven European countries have been engaged in a research project, investigating the EU's organic certification system and ways to optimise it. They identified numerous opportunities for improvement at all levels.

After the recent case of fraud with organic products in Italy in December 2011 there have been numerous press reports discussing the European organic certification system. These highlighted the fact that a criminal group declared conventional products as being organic over several years and sold these products, worth many million Euros, to other European countries. This event has raised questions and public concern about the quality of the European organic certification system.

Over the past three years a group of scientists and certification experts from seven European countries (Germany, Denmark, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey) have been investigating this system. Coordinated by the University of Hohenheim and funded by the European Commission, the CERTCOST project has extensively analysed the organic certification system and the research team has come up with recommendations for making the system more efficient and robust.

Certification systems can be judged on three main criteria: quality, cost and subsidiarity.

Quality: It is important that an organic certification system is able to guarantee the physical integrity of the product. The consumer must be able to trust that the production process follows organic standards. But it is not feasible to provide a 100% guarantee. Such a system would not be affordable. A good organic certification system should reduce the cases of non-compliance to the absolute minimum and communicate the reasons for these to consumers. When such cases occur, the organic certification bodies and public authorities should be able to react convincingly and clearly. A good organic certification system should be constantly evolving and improving, be transparent and communicate well with consumers (e.g. with the appropriate logos).

Cost (and the efficient use of resources): the cost of the European organic certification system was estimated to be at least € 70 to 110 Million a year (EU-27 in 2008). That is between 0.4 to 0.6 percent of the total revenue of organic sales in the EU. This money needs to be spent in a way that achieves the quality goals described above.

Subsidiarity: a variety of stakeholders are involved in an organic control system: Certification bodies, accreditation agencies, national authorities and the EU Commission, with the involvement

of two different Directorate-Generals: Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) and Health and Consumers (DG SANCO). Responsibilities within the system should be distributed to optimise the interactions between different participating organisations and institutions and provide the best possible system.

Recommendations for improvement

Based on these criteria, extensive analysis and many workshops with representatives of the organic certification system, the CERTCOST project identified the following six-point plan to improve the system:

1. Harmonise the supervision of the certification system, approval of control bodies and data collection. At the EU level, the different types of non-compliance with the regulations for organic farming should be clearly defined and the sanctions should be standardised. The organic regulation distinguishes between 'irregularities' and 'infringements', but does not explicitly define these terms or the difference between them. Data collection on irregularities, infringements and structural data about the operators involved in organic production, processing and trading should be based on uniform definitions. A Europe-wide annual monitoring report should be produced by the European Commission and made publicly available. The report should allow for a meaningful comparison of the implementation of the EU's organic farming regulations in the different member states. The last published monitoring report was released in 2007 and, consequently, is out of date. This report also states that 'it is still difficult to reach a clear conclusion as different definitions of the parameters and different data acquisition methods are used by the Member States'. It would be useful to harmonise the requirements for the accreditation of control bodies in the Member States and there should be more supervision of certification in third countries.

2. Further develop the use of risk-based inspection systems. The development of quantitative systems of risk-based inspection systems should be supported by additional research and development. The inspection systems should collect comprehensive data on organic operators. Modern and sophisticated statistical analysis methods can be applied to this data to identify companies with a high risk of non-compliance with the regulations. Organic certification should be more firmly based on a broader understanding of risk. This should not

only aim to minimise the possibility of non-compliance, but also aim to avoid the damage that non-compliance causes to the market and consumer trust. Some control bodies already practice this, for example by increasing their controls on companies with a large market share. Control bodies should introduce and/or improve their risk-based systems. These risk-based systems should increase controls on operators considered to be a high risk, and reduce controls on operators who pose a low risk. At present all operators are inspected at least once a year and only companies thought to be a high risk more often. The general design requirements for risk-based inspection systems should be defined at the EU level, but the detailed design should be left to the control bodies.

3. Raise consumer awareness of - and trust in - organic certification logos. Consumer trust in the new EU logo should be strengthened through appropriate communications. Where possible, synergies between public campaigns and the activities of private companies should be sought. The current activities to inform consumers about the new EU logo are not enough. Consumers still place more trust in the national logos, which they are more familiar with and are more willing to pay a premium for products that carry these logos. Use of these logos should continue until the new EU logo enjoys a similar trust. There are very different perceptions of private logos and consumer willingness to pay for these products varies accordingly. Politicians should refrain from direct interventions in this sector. It would be wise for the owners of these private logos to critically examine the value of their logo in the long run.

4. Strengthen the institutional basis of the system. The existing system with private control bodies, public control authorities or a combination of both should

THE COST OF THE EUROPEAN ORGANIC CERTIFICATION SYSTEM WAS ESTIMATED TO BE AT LEAST € 70 TO 110 MILLION A YEAR

be kept, as it provides Member States with a choice of institutional arrangements. The regulations currently allocate many tasks to the EU Commission. Consideration should be given as to whether the relevant units of the Commission have sufficient available resources to fulfil these tasks. Consideration should also be given to intensifying cooperation between the relevant units of DG AGRI and DG SANCO. Member States should check whether they can improve the distribution of the tasks between different government agencies and other stakeholders. In addition the different stakeholders should be more actively involved in the whole system, for example by creating a platform for control bodies and public authorities to share knowledge.

5. Increase transparency and enhance the provision of information to organic operators. Information on the web directed at organic operators should be offered in the respective languages of the member states. Control bodies should be encouraged to display their prices on their websites in order to increase transparency about the cost of certification. The EU's current website (http://organic-farming.eu), should be developed further.

6. Invest in the knowledge system: a European forum (e.g. regular conferences) should be established to provide a continuous and structured exchange of information on the implementation of the EU regulations on organic farming. This should involve stakeholders in all member states and should (at least) be co-financed by the EU. In addition special training for the different groups involved in the implementation of the system, is needed. The trainers of such trainings (at least) should be trained at the European level, an important element in harmonising implementation between Member States.

Ensure credibility

The recent case of fraud in Italy clearly shows that the organic certification system has weak points. Even if a completely foolproof system can never be guaranteed improvements are necessary. CERTCOST's six-point plan clearly shows how the problems can be addressed and how the organic certification system could be improved. Implementation of these suggestions is now in the hands of the governmental and private institutions involved in the certification system. Standardising the monitoring done by the various supervisory authorities in Europe would be a first important step. Equally important is the monitoring of national authorities by the European Commission – essential for establishing a level playing field. If the weaknesses in the current system are addressed diligently, consumer trust in the credibility of organic products can be sustained in the long run. ■

This article is based upon:
Stephan Dabbert (2011): IMPROVING THE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION SYSTEM. Recommendations from the CERTCOST project. Stuttgart Germany. http://www.certcost.org/Lib/CERTCOST/Deliverable/D24.pdf
More information at www.certcost.org

THOMAS BERNET & HELGA WILLER

Market strategies in different stages

How to stimulate organic market development

Organic agriculture generates tangible benefits for both producers and consumers. But it also produces wider public benefits, and it should therefore be a common concern to help the organic sector develop better and faster, rather than just leaving it to market forces.

The global organic food market was worth € 45 billion in 2010. The market for organic food has been growing at double-digit rates in many countries over the past decade, although the recent financial crisis has caused a certain slow down in some places. The largest markets are the United States and Germany with € 21 billion and € 6.6 billion respectively in 2011, both showing a growth rate of 10 per cent growth within that year. Other countries, like Denmark and Switzerland, have reached considerable organic market shares, with 6 per cent and more of the total food market. There are other countries where the organic market is still relatively undeveloped although it has a high potential. Yet, for all countries, the same question comes up: How can we most effectively develop organic markets so as to multiply the benefits for producers and consumers? Here are some principles and tips for this endeavour.

Understanding the market development process

It is important to remember that markets develop and undergo important changes over time. We can differentiate four main stages in organic market development, which relate to different levels of maturity and are characterised by specific external and internal factors (see Figure 1):

Stage 1: The development of organic systems

Organic production systems are established within a country. Pioneers establish not only a new production system but also distribution and sales channels to target specific customers. In richer countries (e.g. Western Europe, North America, Australia, the Arabian Gulf), these

pioneers are often farmers with a strong commitment to implementing and promoting more sustainable farming practices. In poorer countries (i.e. Africa, Asia, South America), foreign companies often act as pioneers, establishing organic farming in response to international market demand for organic produce. Since any start-up is difficult, these pioneers face plenty of challenges in developing not only their own business, but also the services needed to make their businesses prosper in the future.

Stage 2: An emerging organic market
The supply of organic products is expanding slowly but steadily. In countries, where produce is primarily domestically sold, direct selling systems (e.g. farmers selling directly to consumers) often appear alongside organic food shops. The latter are often specialised health food stores selling other healthy products, including non-food items. As consumers request a more continuous supply of a growing number of organic products, there is a clear incentive to broaden and expand production. This can encourage the launch of an early range of organic processed products, which help to upgrade the image of organic products (e.g. through improved labelling and packaging). In countries where organic production is export focused, the incentive to expand organic production mainly comes through demand from the international market. Since this demand is usually much bigger than the supply, there is a clear incentive to strengthen the different support services (i.e. organic extension, input provision, and certification).

Stage 3: A growing organic market
As consumer awareness and market demand grows in countries that have developed an internal niche market for organic products, organic retailing develops further. Supermarkets introduce organic product lines and more specialised trading and processing companies emerge, further boosting organic market development. At this stage, organic production is clearly stimulated by growing demand. Organic produce is clearly differentiated in the market as superior, and becomes more widely promoted in the retail sector, especially supermarkets, whose market share grows especially fast in countries where the organic market is developing. This leads to a mainstreaming as the volume, continuity of supply and diversity of available products increases considerably. In countries, where export has been the main driver for organic production, the domestic retail sector often starts to 'discover' and sell organic products. This is especially true for countries that produce final retail products i.e. labelled products for final consumption. For example, in Serbia, one can often find frozen organic berries and fruit juices in ordinary domestic supermarkets: both of which are important exports.

Stage 4: Maturing organic market
As organic food gains in reputation it becomes an integral of the national retailing scene. High-end supermarket chains often include organic products as part of their own differentiation strategy and to boost the company image. Such retail competition helps to consolidate the market for organic products at the top end of the market, involving both fresh produce and a wide range of convenience products. In some supermarkets, some organic products (e.g. eggs, fruits, vegetables, dairy products) may reach 15 or 20 per cent of the share of total produce sold. At the same time many food catering services and restaurants look to integrate organic produce as part of their standard portfolio in order to satisfy consumers' search for top quality food.

Approaches for stimulating the development of the organic sector

Strategies to stimulate the organic market should consider the specific developmental stage in order to target those factors that most constrain the organic sector. But there is no single way 'to do' market development, it only can be stimulated. In practice, this translates into a need to coordinate different actors within specific actions that can create a 'snowball effect', by efficiently working on those factors that add the most momentum to the development process. The key intervention areas that will need to be targeted will vary at different stages of the development process. Nevertheless, efficient stakeholder networking is of highest priority to boost capacity development within the sector.

Facilitating capacity development through efficient stakeholder networking
Whereas in many of the pioneering countries, the organic market has gradually developed through the initiative of individuals or groups of farmers or other market actors, there are cases where the government or international donors have promoted the development of the organic sector. In developing countries with good export potential, bigger companies involved in trading and processing organic foodstuffs also are sometimes active in stimulating organic sector development.
When comparing different organic market development processes and con-

Figure 1:
Main stages in organic market development.

texts in different countries, one common factor that influences successful organic market development is meaningful capacity building among the actors directly involved in the organic business (e.g. farmers, traders, processors, retailers), stakeholders who provide essential services (e.g. extension, certification, inputs) and policy makers. Experiences in different countries show that this is best achieved when there are institutional arrangements in place that promote efficient stakeholder involvement and networking. Such stakeholder platforms go far beyond knowledge and skill development. Interactions between chain actors not only lead to the sharing of business-relevant information but also generate other essential insights, trust-based relationships, and collective action. All these aspects contribute to creating a prospering organic sector.

The impetus for creating such a networking structure can come from different actors. In pioneer countries, it is usually the 'organic actors' who form their own platforms using them not only to learn from each other but also to build an advocacy platform for the organic sector. In other countries, (such as Saudi Arabia) the government takes a clear lead in initiating such a stakeholder platform, (in this case financially supporting different networks and the creation of the Saudi Organic Farming Association - SOFA). In other countries, such as Uganda, Tanzania, Albania, Ukraine and Serbia, international donors (e.g. Sida, SDC, GIZ) have stimulated such stakeholder interactions as part of special organic sector development projects.

Conclusions

The demand for organic products has grown considerably, and is likely to grow further. Stakeholder platforms, able to plan and coordinate joint actions, can accelerate this process. Good facilitation of such stakeholder platforms is essential to focus and guide the definition and implementation of interventions in such a way that the different sector stakeholders are involved and have a sense of ownership. One very practical way to start this process is to undertake a survey of the organic sector and market chains. The findings of such a survey, together with the contacts established in undertaking it, can serve as an entry point for starting such stakeholder platforms. Where government officials can be involved, such survey findings can ideally be transformed into a National Action Plan for Organic Agriculture. Such an agreed action plan prioritises and guides the needed interventions and specifies the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in the stakeholder platform. Ideally, such stakeholder platforms are implemented in an early development stage of the organic sector, facilitated by a rather neutral government or non-governmental entity (Albania and Saudi Arabia are good examples here). When the organic sector is more developed, such stakeholder platforms might grow out of the initiative of key actors present in this sector, such as organic producer associations, committed supermarkets, research institutes and governmental entities (Switzerland is a good example here). ■

Ensure credibilityAbout the authors:
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ANETT MATTHÄI & JULIA EDMAIER

Certifying natural and organic cosmetics

A new joint initiative

The natural and organic cosmetic sector in Germany expanded considerably in 2011, in stark contrast to the country's cosmetic sector as a whole. For some time, many consumers have been aware of the benefits of organic food and this is now beginning to percolate through to their thinking about cosmetics.

The cosmetics sector is increasingly responding to this by converting to cosmetics based on natural or organic raw materials. The NATRUE standard has recently been established to verify standards in the industry by providing third party certification. It currently provides three labeling options for cosmetic products:

- Natural cosmetics
- Natural cosmetics with an organic portion
- Organic cosmetics

Although NATRUE favours the use of organic raw materials, this is not a mandatory requirement for all labeling grades. As growing businesses, natural and organic cosmetic producers face many challenges in sourcing raw materials, particularly for products that do not use genetically modified materials in any production step.

Verification of the processing steps and chemical modification in natural cosmetics

Certifying multi-ingredient products, such as natural and organic cosmetics, is challenging and involves taking many issues into consideration. Not only does the source of the raw materials need to be considered but also the processing and/or chemically modifications of the materials employed in manufacturing the final product. The NATRUE standard sets criteria that define the substances that are allowed and prohibited as well as the permitted and forbidden chemical reactions used in the processing.

To become accredited a certification body needs expertise in the fields of chemistry, manufacturing processes, the raw materials used in cosmetics and the relevant legislation. This expertise is necessary as many ingredients used in cosmetics can be produced in different ways, not all of which are acceptable for certified natural cosmetics. Equally the production process might be acceptable, but the natural raw material might not comply with requirements. For example, citric acid can be extracted mechanically from lemons (organic or conventional), but can also be produced by using microorganisms, such as the funghi Aspergillus niger to ferment molasses. Although both citric acid products would be acceptable as natural cosmetics, the certification body needs to verify that the production process and the input, (e.g. no GMOs used in the fermentation process) conform to the standard. The certification body needs to have expertise about both raw materials and production processes in order to guarantee conformity with the requirements.

Social and environmental responsibility

In addition to the demand for natural and organic beauty products, social criteria are also becoming more important in the cosmetics sector. A large number of raw materials used in cosmetics, such as palm oil, shea butter, honey or plant extracts, are grown or collected

FUTURE DEMANDS ARE LIKELY TO EXTEND TO FAIR WORKING CONDITIONS FOR ALL ACTORS IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

by smallholder producers. This provides many marginalised families around the world with an important source of income. Manufacturers and brand owners of cosmetic products can play a role in being globally responsible by employing internationally recognised social certification systems, such as Fair Trade. These schemes require healthy and good working conditions along the supply chain and a fair distribution of value added, in addition to environmental sustainability and animal rights considerations (e.g. a prohibition on animal testing). Products that contain a substantial portion of certified ingredients can also be labelled with the Fair for Life seal, so consumers can easily identify responsibly produced and fairly traded cosmetic products.

Preparing for future developments

The ingredient related and processing criteria for certified natural and organic cosmetics are already well defined. Future demands are likely to extend to fair working conditions for all actors in the supply chain, preserving biodiversity and reforestation to enhance the future options for the cultivation or wild collection of raw materials. To prepare for this, the Institute for Marketecology (IMO, a Swiss based international organic certifier), and EcoControl (the best-known certification body for natural cosmetics) have started to cooperate together and share their expertise. This will allow them to provide joint tailor made audits that can save time and costs on both sides. At present we are offering cosmetic products certification combined with the Fair for Life Programme and/or with organic raw material certification (according to different standards). A further possibility is to jointly certify with the FairWild standard, which guarantees socially and ecologically sustainable wild collection of raw materials. IMO and EcoControl look forward to cooperating together and helping producers on their way towards more sustainable cosmetic production. ■

IMO's cosmetic website can be found at www.imo.ch

EVA MATTSSON, NURIA ALONSO, GUNNAR RUNDGREN & CARLOS ESCOBAR

Participatory Guarantee systems and more

News on standards, certification and legislation, compiled by the team of 'The Organic Standard'

Vietnam Organic PGS

Vietnam has a organic participatory guarantee system (PGS) project, made up of 170 growers, mainly women, who sell their vegetables in cooperation with a company that does home deliveries.

This organic PGS, which started in 2006, was set up through a project supported by ADDA (a Danish NGO) and the Vietnamese Farmers' Union (VNFU). The project focuses on three main areas of development: production, local market development and certification. The production standard the groups follow is based on the Vietnamese official organic standard. This has been reformulated into 22 rules, which the farmers are obliged to follow.

Zambia hosts the African Organic Conference

The 2nd African Organic Conference took place in Lusaka, Zambia, on 2-4 May 2012. The conference provided a forum to discuss different topics including organic policies and action plans, private sector initiatives, research and options for co-operation on organic standards in Africa. Organic agriculture in Africa is growing rapidly. More than 1 million hectares of arable land and at least 530,000 farmers are certified as organic. Most of the certified organic production is exported, but there are good organic markets in South Africa and Egypt and emerging markets in Senegal and Kenya.

Bolivia supports PGS

Bolivia has approved a National Technical Rule of Participatory Guarantee Systems for the local and/or national trade of organic products. The rule puts into practice the recognition (in a previous law of 2006) that alternative guarantee systems are a valid type of organic certification.

EU: Amendments on organic feed published

Regulation (EU) No 505/2012, amending Regulation (EC) 889/2012 (on organic production ,labelling and control) was published on 14th of June.
The regulation maintains the possibility of introducing 18-week old conventional pullets into organic production (until 31 December 2014) so long as they have been feed with organic feed and their health care has been in accordance with organic standards. The provision to use up to 5% non-organic protein feed for pigs and poultry also remains until the end of 2014. Additionally, Annexes V and VI of the Regulation 889/2008 (the feed annexes) were amended and a correction was made to Annex VIII.

VIETNAMESE ORGANIC PARTICIPATORY GUANRANTEE SYSTEMS

List of NOP operators available

A list of all operators certified by the USA's NOP is available at http://apps.ams.usda.gov/nop
At the end of 2011, 17,673 organic farms and processing facilities in the USA were NOP certified, an increase of 478 since the end of 2010. Worldwide, there are now 28,779 organic operators across 133 countries certified by the NOP.

There was a slight decrease in the number of international operations from 2010, which reflects the decline of operations based in Canada due to the USA/Canada Organic Equivalency Arrangement. After 1 June 2012, when the USA/EU agreement came into force, statistics will also reflect the decline of operators from EU Member States.

EU Regulation under review

Earlier this year the European Commission (COM) announced that there will be a review of the organic regulation in 2013. One key issue of this revision process is the control system, its supervision and effectiveness, which requires more enforcement rather than more legislation. The process has already started with the publication of the 'Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Application of Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 on Organic Production and the Labelling of Organic Products'. The next steps will be an independent evaluation of the organic regulation, which will be performed by an external body contracted by the COM, and a further debate on some specific issues which the EU Parliament, the Council and other stakeholders will be invited to participate in. The issues to be discussed include: the simplification of the legislative framework, the coexistence of genetically modified crops with organic farming, the improvement of the control system and the equivalence regime in organic trade. The results of this process are expected by the second half of 2013.

Canada adopted Organic Aquaculture Standards

The Canadian Organic Aquaculture Standard was adopted in May this year. This is an important development for a country with a vibrant aquaculture industry which, until now, did not have a standard for organic aquaculture.
The standard is a private initiative and it is not under the scope of the Canadian official regulation for organic food. This means that organic aquaculture products cannot display the Canadian Organic logo and are not included in the bi-lateral trade agreements with the EU and the USA. ■

The Canadian organic logo, which cannot be displayed on aquaculture products

SALVADOR GARIBAY

Second World Conference on Organic Beekeeping:

a week for the bees, the environment and the society

The first World Conference on Organic Beekeeping was held in Bulgaria in 2010, and provided a first opportunity for those involved in organic beekeeping to develop a setting in which to exchange experiences and seek appropriate solutions.

The second such event was held from March 19 to 25, 2012 in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico (www.ecosur.mx/abejas). This week-long conference was organised under the leadership of FiBL, Naturland and Ecosur, with the support of a variety of Mexican organic farming organisations and associations. The event surpassed all expectations, with some 500 people attending, representing approximately 70 beekeeping organisations from 24 countries throughout the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

During the first three days, nine training courses were held, covering technical topics such as current organic beekeeping standards and requirements for honey product safety (innocuity), as well as upcoming topics such as biodynamic beekeeping and organising joint activities for beekeepers. Approximately 200 people participated in these courses, which provided opportunities for intense exchanges.

The conference continued with 60 talks on a variety of organic beekeeping issues including management, diseases (including specific biological control methods for pests such as varroa) and research topics. There were opportunities for participants to ask questions and five videos were shown covering relatively unknown aspects of beekeeping: in mangroves, in coffee plantations under agroforestry systems (where bees plays an important role in pollinating coffee and wild plants) and with native bees (meliponiculture), which has been used by the Mayas since ancient times.

A central topic was the effect of genetically modified crops on beekeeping. This is a serious problem given the decision by the European Union (the importer of most Latin American honey) to prohibit marketing of conventional honey containing pollen from genetically modified crops that are not authorised in the EU. (For organic honey, the principle of zero tolerance is applied to GMO contamination). This topic was the subject of a group of talks, a round table, a press

A CENTRAL TOPIC WAS THE EFFECT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS ON BEEKEEPING.

conference, and a declaration written by the attending beekeeping organisations to pressure the Mexican government to set a ten year moratorium on planting GMO soy and corn. During the conference, more than 400 participants signed a petition to the Mexican Agriculture Ministry to abandon the idea of sowing more than 80,000 ha of GMO soy in the Yucatan peninsula. This is a region rich in flora and fauna with many small-scale organic beekeepers who will be adversely affected by the loss of biodiversity and the possible contamination of their honey with GMO soy pollen.

There was a discussion with Mexican officials at SENASICA over their interpretation of the quality and innocuity requirements for harvesting and processing honey set by the European Union. SENASICA's requirements seem to be far-more demanding than those set by the EU, and very few beekeeping groups in Mexico can currently meet these requirements or access export markets. Latin American countries have different understandings about how to meet the new EU regulations, and the Mexican authorities have adopted the strictest interpretation. Mexican organic beekeepers have petitioned their government for greater flexibility, pointing to Argentina and Nicaragua as honey-exporting countries that do not have such extreme requirements.

The First Organic Beekeeping Fair took place at the same time as the conference and was open to the general public. Approximately 30 Mexican and international presenters displayed their honey, beekeeping equipment and inputs, quality control and certification services, and ways of financing beekeeping projects. This fair generated much interest among the conference attendees and members of the public who came along to find out more about beekeeping. The Honey Contest generated great enthusiasm and attracted 29 samples from a range of countries. The jury, presided over by Italian expert Lucia Piana, awarded first prize for organic honey to the Maya Vinic cooperative, second prize to the Mieles del Sur cooperative (both from the Chiapas Highlands Region, Mexico). Third place was awarded to the Research Institute for Organic Agriculture of Switzerland (FiBL).

During the emotional closing ceremony, it was announced that the next World Conferences on Organic Beekeeping would take place in Italy in 2014 (organised by the Conapi Cooperative) and in Argentina in 2016 (organised by the Coopsol Cooperative). The organisation and structure of these conferences were also discussed and it was agreed that organic beekeeping would play a greater role in coordinating and organising these conferences with support from FiBL, Naturland Ecosur, IFOAM and Apimondia.

After the great success of the 2012 conference, it will be a great challenge to organise these upcoming events, but it is clear that the two host organisations will devote themselves to surpassing the achievements of this second conference. ■

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NICK PARROTT

Keveral farm

Back to the roots

Nick Parrott first visited Keveral, an organic farm and community in deepest rural Cornwall thirty years ago. He stayed for six months; the beginning of his association with the organic world, even though the word 'organic' had no legal foundations then.

When I realised the significance of this anniversary I decided it was time spend a few days 'exploring my roots', to revisit a place that has inspired me much, and see how one of Britain's pioneer organic farms has fared and evolved in the past thirty years. So this year I returned for a four-day stay.

Thirty years ago the house had no electricity and the water was supplied from a spring by a ram pump. Most people there were inspired by the 'back to the land' philosophy of the time and in being self-sufficient (often inspired by John Seymour). The woods surrounding the property were the source of fuel, which was chopped and sawed by hand (though at some point a compromise with modernity was reached and a chain saw purchased). We had two cows, a Jersey and a Friesian, to keep us in milk and cheese and supply manure for the walled garden. We ate from the same pot: literally and figuratively.

Thirty years on it is still a community, although much more disparate. Individuals and families cater for themselves, have their own budgets and sources of livelihood (some on-farm some off-farm, some mixed). There are a range of farm based businesses: an apple-presser, a mushroom cultivator, an organic vegetable box scheme, a business that sells fine herb shoots to exclusive Michelin-starred restaurants, camping and yurt hire. In short, the classic range of 'rural development' activities, described by Jan Douwe van der Ploeg and his team from Wageningen. The farm is approximately 30 acres - half of it woodland – and generates 4 full-time-equivalent jobs. Most farms of this size in Britain barely support one person.

Keveral is one of the oldest certified farms on the Soil Association's books. Many thousands of trees have been planted there over the past thirty years, including forty varieties of Cornish apples. Not all of these varieties are productive and some may be culled or at least only maintained for historical or genetic interest.

When I lived at Keveral I asked myself why we couldn't make a viable living from 30 acres of land? Anywhere else in the world we would be resource rich. As

KEVERAL IS ONE OF THE OLDEST CERTIFIED FARMS IN THE UK

it was we were poor as can be (though partly by choice).
The answer to this question came with hindsight: we didn't know much about farming! Also, like many organic pioneers, most people there at that time were more interested in living lightly (or in today's parlance 'having a small ecological footprint') than in engaging in markets. As we didn't own the land or house we had no means to raise capital. There was no 'organic market' as such then: no legal regulation to define organic production methods and no public interest. The only place where people could buy organic food was in a few whole-food stores which carried a small range of 'fresh' organic produce often as a loss leader to draw in customers from the supermarkets (which were looking to capture their market share). But the range was limited, its freshness debatable (weekly deliveries at best) and the presentation would not draw attention from any but the most avid convert to the cause.

In the wider world these things have all changed enormously over thirty years, but how have things changed at Keveral? Today the various enterprises at Keveral display varying degrees of market-orientation, according to the interests of the owners. There are no grazing animals (save two horses), which is probably a lost opportunity in terms of maximising agroecological potential (converting pasture into protein and manure) but keeping livestock requires specific skills and dedication. This is at least partly compensated for by foraging the ample supplies of seaweed from the nearby beach (something I argued for thirty years ago!).

After an all-too-short four days stay I left with two abiding impressions. The first was of the huge diversity of flora which the community members are stewards of: the bridle lane leading to the sea is profuse with ferns, flowers and edible herbs. One square metre of slate walling probably has more species than a 100 acre conventional farm under a mono-cropping system. The micro-greens business cultivates more than 150 varieties of herbs and flowers and the orchards contain more than 40 varieties of Cornish apple trees. This was matched by the huge diversity of bird life. My companion is a conservationist and was constantly amazed by the wealth of plants and birds around us Cornwall's almost sub-tropical climate helps enormously to enhance this diversity but the absence of agrochemicals and intensive cultivation for more than thirty years surely also plays a role.

THE BRIDLE LANE LEADING TO THE SEA IS PROFUSE WITH FERNS, FLOWERS AND EDIBLE HERBS.

Secondly, for more than thirty years Keveral has been a space for experimentation, where community members, interns and short term visitors come together and share experiences and knowledge. Many of the early residents

Gathering shoots in the polytunnel

went on to establish their own holdings in Cornwall or further afield. (I came across one ex-resident running permaculture courses in Portugal).

For sure, many of these ideas didn't work. Our idea thirty years ago about keeping pigs collapsed after they repeatedly escaped from the field and found their way to a caravan site at the bottom of the valley – much to the displeasure of the site's owner and the amusement of the children watching us try to round them up.

Both these things are hugely valuable and taught me that agriculture is about more than producing food commodities. I learnt a lot in my six month stay at Keveral and the gardening skills and knowledge still come in useful today. Keveral and the organic movement have grown and changed enormously over the past thirty years – what will they look like in thirty years time? ■

Nick Parrott runs an editing company that specialises in sustainability issues (www.TextualHealing.nl) and is English language editor of Ecology and Farming. Keveral farm's website can be found at: http://www.keveral.org/ For more information, contact: salvador.garibay@fibl.org

New opportunities for the organic movement

ROBERT JORDAN

In the wake of Rio +20

Rio+20 was the biggest sustainable development and knowledge exchange 'fair' that the world has ever seen. Rio+20 has done for sustainable development what Copenhagen (CoP15) did for climate change in 2009: putting it at the forefront of the international agenda, raising global awareness and building countless new collaborations. IFOAM was very active and visible throughout the 2 weeks of official meetings and estimated 3000 fringe events that took place all over Rio.

IFOAM was joined for the first time at a major UN event by the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers' Organisations (INOFO) and Young Organics, collaborations that brought greater integrity and intensity to IFOAM's messages and activities and which actively connected IFOAM's work to a much broader constituency.

For IFOAM there were several highlights at Rio. The Prime Minister of Bhutan gave a 30-minute introductory speech to IFOAM's official UN Sustainable Development learning event. IFOAM's President was invited to present a keynote address to the European Union's main agriculture event. And IFOAM's official side event, where the USDA and European Commission in conjunction with the World Food Programme played a major role, was a strategic success.

Rio+20 was much more about civil society and corporations than it was about governments. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are now forming increasingly powerful coalitions. The UN has been actively encouraging this process, facilitating the participation of civil society in the Rio process as well as in the recently reformed Committee on Food Security at FAO. It is increasingly clear that governments are no longer able to provide the leadership or deliver the changes that society wants. Change is going to have to come from the bottom up. The organic movement will need to find new ways to usher in the sweeping changes needed in our food and farming systems. Youth involvement and social media will probably play a major role in driving the 'organic spring' required to avert the hunger, ecological, economic, health, obesity crises now facing humanity.

As Vandana Shiva put it during Rio+20; ''we have been told by corporations that there is no place for people in food and farming systems but food is where change will come from. The way we grow the food, the way we grow and save seeds, the way we distribute our food -corporations have taken over all these spaces. Each of these spaces is there to be occupied by the Youth."

Rio+20 certainly achieved one of its key objectives of renewing political commitment to sustainable development. It bought a commitment to strengthening the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and establishing a high-level political forum on sustainable development to replace the existing Sustainable Development Commission. It agreed to set-up an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder process to develop global sustainable development goals (SDGs) that are coherent with and integrated within the UN's post 2015 development agenda which will supersede the MDGs.

The outcomes of Rio+20 can be read in ''The Future We Want" a fifty-three document that sets out the agreed priorities for the actions required to respond to many of the world's most pressing issues. It is an important document that the organic movement should use to guide its strategic development. It provides numerous thematic entry points (see text box); This document should be an important strategic resource for the organic movement, which can provide a valuable vehicle for engaging other stakeholders in projects, programmes, initiatives and commercial ventures for accelerating organic agriculture's contribution to addressing global priorities.

While the outcome document is built around the concept of the green economy, the eradication of poverty and hunger are at the forefront. This should provide the organic movement with some clear guidance on how to engage with stakeholders. From the perspective of the developing world, poverty and hunger are the greatest challenges and the organic movement must directly address these issues if it is to gain political

The themes within The Future We Want

RIO+20

- Poverty eradication
- Food security nutrition and sustainable agriculture
- Water
- Sustainable cities and human settlements
- Health
- Employment and decent work
- Least Developed Countries (LDCs)
- Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs)
- Africa
- Disaster risk reduction
- Climate Change
- Forests
- Biodiversity
- Desertification land degradation and drought
- Mountains
- Chemicals and waste
- Sustainable consumption and production
- The empowerment of women.

Rio+20

traction, be seen as relevant and deliver results. This has been the approach of IFOAM in recent years and no less so than at Rio where IFOAM's strongly promoted organic agriculture as an affordable and accessible form of farming that can double yields and increase the incomes of the world's vulnerable, poor and hungry subsistence farming communities.

Developing countries would like to achieve food security without what they see as the burden of addressing sustainability. The organic movement needs to place more emphasis on the potential of organic farming to reduce poverty and eradicate hunger. This is a key message for stakeholders in developing countries. This is reinforced in the 'Food Security and Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture' thematic priority of the Rio agreement (The Future We Want) that purposely avoids coupling food security with sustainable agriculture. The developing world is where OA can demonstrate its relevance and importance on a significant scale and where action is most urgently needed.

IFOAM has made an official Rio+20 Voluntary Commitment to systematically collaborate with other organisations to promote the implementation of the Rio agreement. IFOAM intends to make the knowledge, expertise and systems of its global networks more readily accessible to stakeholders including farmers, local communities, governments, agencies and businesses. One aspect of this will be to support capacity building and disseminate best practice in organic production and marketing. IFOAM believes such an approach can improve nutrition and livelihoods, increase resilience to climate change, reduce hunger, and regenerate ecosystems, land, soil, water and biodiversity. Strategically IFOAM will build on the new partnerships emerging from its advocacy work with the intention of piloting new-on-the-ground collaborations.

These collaborations will be in line with the priority themes of Rio, with a particular focus on food security and contributing to the Zero Hunger Challenge (ZHC) launched by Ban-Ki-Moon during Rio+20. The ZHC is a systemic pan-UN approach to tackling hunger that will give a platform and visibility to people all around the world (including IFOAM members and partners) that are working hard on tackling hunger. IFOAM attended the ZHC launch in Rio and is participating in the initial stakeholder meetings. It is hoped that it will provide a platform where organic agriculture will have an equal footing with other systems and be able find new partners and collaborations.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOS) ARE NOW FORMING INCREASINGLY POWERFUL COALITIONS.

The Future We Want recognises the need to revitalise the agricultural and rural development sectors in developing countries. It sets out a number of key priorities which are of potential relevance to the organic movement. These measures include: enhancing agricultural research, extension services and training and education to improve agricultural productivity and sustainability through the voluntary sharing of knowledge and good practices. Other priorities include improving access to information, technical knowledge and know-how for farmers to give them more choices for achieving sustainable agricultural production.

Rio+20 is an important milestone for the world and for the organic movement. The 'Future We Want' provides a roadmap for IFOAM and its members to engage more fully with the global sustainability agenda. This can be best done through expanding and strengthening the IFOAM Global Action Network and significantly stepping up engagement and collaboration with a much broader range of external stakeholders and partners. ■

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As diverse as organic farming itself

DAVID GOULD

Standards and certification: means, not ends

Organic food and farming is not just about standards and certification but are part of a holistic concept for sustainable development. Organic standards and certification should be understood in the context of the broader objectives of the organic movement.

MOST ACCREDITATION BODIES ARE NATIONAL BODIES THAT ACCREDIT ALL KINDS OF CERTIFICATION ACTIVITIES

When most people think about organic products they think in terms of certified products, and with good reason. Worldwide, there are over 70 countries with governmental organic regulations (plus over two dozen that are drafting regulations), plus dozens of privately-owned certification standards. There are more than 500 organic certification bodies (CBs) active in the world, each serving one or more of these regulations and/or standards.

With so many different schemes, one might think there is a lot of difference among them. Some are stricter than others, but overall the content of these standards is quite similar. However, these minor differences create complications for those who want to trade their products across countries and markets. Is one standard 'better' than another? How do we know you really check your producers meet your standard? How can we trust that you are 'really' organic?

Standards and certification

Unpacking these issues a bit further, there are two main aspects to consider: standards and certification. While many people think the two are synonymous or inseparable, this is not true. Standards describe a set of practices for people to follow, or a set of requirements a product must have. They are about practices; most of which relate to environmental facets of farming, or the materials that can or cannot be used when a product is labelled as organic in the marketplace.

At their best, standards are a summary of the best collective thought on a given subject, the aspects required to achieve a desired outcome. In this sense, standards can exist without ever being linked to certification. Certification is a formalised way of confirming compliance with these standards.

Certification is valuable and needed in certain circumstances – mainly when there is a lack of familiarity or trust between producer and consumer. The more the consumer knows about the producer and the way the product was made, the less the need for external confirmation. Certification is thus a substitute for the confidence that comes from first-hand knowledge. Generally speaking, the greater the distance - literally or figuratively - between producer and consumer, the greater need for certification.

This explains why governments have come to rely on certification for organic products: goods are traded all around the world and the people who buy them want to believe they are getting what they think they are paying for. Meeting such expectations in a consistent way from one product to another serves the public interest and helps to protect the integrity of the organic label. Assuring the credibility of certification is a major concern. When governments or any private organic standard owner think about whether

or not an organic product should be accepted, they look at how well the standard matches up with their own organic standard and how good the verification process is. One without the other is not enough; no matter good a standard might be, if you can't trust that it was actually followed by the producer, what good is it? On the other hand, if the checking is very good, but the standard is too weak or not meaningful, then what's the point?

Finding solutions

Standards: equivalence not compliance

The organic movement's goal is the widespread adoption of organic practices. Too much 'in-fighting' over minor differences between organic standards undermines this. For many years, requiring absolute compliance between standards, in terms of all the many detailed requirements, was the norm. These minor differences created barriers to trade.

As the market has matured, the understanding that standards are a norm of practices, a baseline of expectations from operators, is becoming the new approach. This approach is based on the concept of equivalence, which acknowledges that different organic standards are written by people living in different regions with different cultural and agronomic conditions. This diversity logically gives rise to a certain tolerance for 'regional variation' among standards, which can be tolerated as long as the standard as a whole agrees with the Principles of Organic Agriculture and contains certain critical elements deemed necessary for a standard to be adequately robust.

SHORTER SUPPLY CHAINS FROM FARMER TO CONSUMER ALLOW FOR NEW WAYS OF VALIDATING CLAIMS ABOUT ORGANIC PRODUCTS.

The granting of equivalence by one country to another facilitates trade. This can be done unilaterally (one programme recognising one or more others), bilaterally (two programmes agree that they are equivalent to each other), or multilaterally (many recognising many). While all of these types of agreements are a positive step, there remains a question of efficiency: for example, do the math for how many bilateral agreements would be necessary for all of the different organic standards in the world to recognise each other one at a time – that is a LOT of bilateral agreements – and a LOT of redundant work!

IFOAM, in partnership with UNCTAD and FAO, have developed a solution: a common reference point for all standards to compare themselves to, noting their respective variations from it – regional or otherwise – and giving justifications or explanations for the differences. COROS – the Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards – is an organic standard developed through a multi-stakeholder consultation, which reflects the core content of all organic standards. Owners of standards (governmental or private) can compare their standard to COROS and share the results of this comparison with all.

In addition, the IFOAM Secretariat performs an assessment of standards using its team of experts, who provide a con-

Limitations of the Certification Paradigm

Certification is the main way to gain entry to the organic market, but limiting market access to only certified products may not be the best long term strategy.

It can be costly. Producers in developing countries – where there is generally less certified organic market activity - sometimes pay more for certification than in developed countries. In countries with no active locally based CB, the costs for foreign inspectors, their travel costs, and the cost of administrative services by CBs based in countries with higher costs of living can make certification financially unfeasible – more costly than the actual benefits.

Setting up a local or national CB in a developing country (or anywhere else) is a major undertaking. Aside from the actual legal establishment, the recruitment and training of staff and gaining enough clients to have a viable business, there are hurdles of achieving recognition by importing markets such as the EU, US, or Japan. This involves costly accreditation and lengthy review procedures, which can take years to complete. If there is no local market or other short term benefit to getting certified by these CBs, there is little demand for their services.

It suffers from increasing bureaucracy. Certified producers everywhere complain about ever-increasing amounts of paperwork, which drains time and energy from 'real' work in the field. Some farmers in developing countries cannot read or write, creating a further barrier to certification.

THE RESULT: The costs of certification can often outweigh the benefits excluding farmers from the certified market and leaving them to look for other outlets.

sistent yardstick for doing these assessments. Standards deemed equivalent to COROS can be included in the IFOAM Family of Standards, a grouping that shows which standards are credible, that draws a line between what is organic and what is not. (A list of currently recognised standards can found at http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/family_of_standards/familiy_of_standards.html)

Certification: confidence via accreditation – preferably international accreditation

Who decides if a certification body (CB) is credible? The main answer is through the process of accreditation – essentially the certification of CBs. This involves an accreditation body evaluating the ability of a CB to apply standards in a consistent, impartial and transparent way. In short, the accreditor checks that the CB is procedurally competent and technically knowledgeable. That means the accreditor also has to have these same competencies. Governments rely heavily on accreditation as a measure of the credibility of CBs, and not only in the organic sector.

Most accreditation bodies are national bodies that accredit all kinds of certification activities in their native country. If a CB is active in more than one country, this means either that they must either attain multiple accreditations for the same activity (i.e. organic), or have their credibility recognised by another government and/or national accreditation body. Sometimes this works smoothly, sometimes it doesn't; when it doesn't, it usually raises trade barriers and increases bureaucracy and costs.

International accreditation can be a better model for organic certification. International accreditation bodies operate internationally in a particular sector, rather than nationally in a wide variety of sectors. This creates certain advantages including the ability to build greater expertise in evaluating the specific sector – organic in this case. Additionally, international accreditation bodies can accredit certifiers worldwide, thus establishing a basis for equivalence and recognition of certificates issued by different CBs around the world.

Currently there is only one international organic accreditation body, the IOAS – the International Organic Accreditation Service.

In the European Union, legislation is afoot to only allow national accreditation bodies to accredit the activities of CBs in the EU. The law does not yet strictly apply to the organic sector, but revisions in the near future may make it so. By contrast, the EU organic regulations now are moving toward greater use of equivalence as a strategy to expand the sector. A recent landmark bilateral equivalence agreement with the US National Organic Program has removed decades-old trade barriers. In terms of certification, individual CBs are now able to apply for recognition by

the EU import authorities, also making it easier for products to enter the EU market with less bureaucracy. In each case, an evaluation of each CB's standard and competence is done by the EU. The IOAS often writes the report on which these decisions were based, and CBs who used the IOAS for this purpose have had a far higher success rate.

Keeping track of broader goals

As the title of this article states, standards and certification are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. While the organic movement sees itself as a playing a key role in promoting global sustainability, it also recognises that organic standards still have a way to go to fully encompass the full meaning of sustainability. Organic principles are not only concerned with environmental aspects, but also right livelihoods for farmers and farming communities and promoting a clearer public understanding of the interconnectedness of agriculture, health, economic well being, and social justice. So how does the organic movement further these elements?

The floor and the ceiling

Organic standards describe practices that serve as a core around which truly sustainable development can occur. It might be better if existing organic standards encompassed a fuller spectrum of sustainability, particularly socio-economic criteria. Organic standards are always improving over time, as knowledge and experience grows. While the commonality among organic standards – as expressed in COROS - reflects a 'middle ground'. There are also some organic standards that prescribe additional practices and requirements and are more 'leading edge'. These standards are of inestimable value to the organic community and its vision, as they broaden and deepen the impact of certified organic production. But adding too many extra requirements into all standards all at once could be too much of a burden on organic farmers that could backfire by creating unrealistic expectations or drive producers out of the certified market – which is still the main market. Standards and certification will continue to play an important role in defining the market for organic goods for the foreseeable future. Standards that reach for the 'ceiling,' that try to raise the bar of performance, have an influential role to play.

Moving forwards

We need to keep finding innovative ways to attract more farmers to organic practices and make more organic products accessible to consumers. One way this currently happens in developing countries is through group certification, whereby cooperatives of similar farmers jointly market their crops through a common channel. They are certified – and sometimes de-certified – as one entity. While it is not always easy for a CB to certify hundreds, or even thousands, of farmers at once, it is possible to do this credibly as long as there is strong internal management of the group, to show that only products compliant with the standard reach the market. It can be a highly efficient and cost-effective way for farmers to enter certified organic markets. Usually these are export market streams, but not always.

But in order to really mainstream the organic sector, the development of local demand and markets for organic products needs to happen in every country. Raising awareness of the benefits of organic practices for both farmers and consumers through research and gathering helps drive this process. The knowledge gained from these experiences can further improve standards.

Shorter supply chains from farmer to consumer allow for new ways of validating claims about organic products. Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are one avenue with great potential: here groups of farmers and consumers agree to a common set of requirements (which could be included in the IFOAM Family of Standards) and the consumers do the checking of the producers instead of a certification body. This close familiarity saves money, increases learning, and can be just as credible (if not more so) than certain kinds of distant certification schemes. In Brazil and India, PGS have gained governmental endorsement as a form of assurance that is equivalent to more typical third-party certification, enabling thousands of smallholders to enter the organic market locally and nationally. Similar efforts are underway in other countries. While PGS markets tend to focus on markets closer to home, it is not illogical to imagine a next step whereby such recognition also extends to international trade. PGS are active in at least 20 different countries, on all continents. (http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs_projects/pgs_projects/index.php).

Someday, when the longer-term vision of the organic movement is realised and the majority of farmers and agricultural products on the market are organic, maybe certification won't be as crucial – organic production will just be the way people do things, because it has been widely accepted as the best way. But the standards still will be just as important – the guide for what people should do. ■

An earlier version of this article appeared in 'Rural 21'

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www.salonedelgusto.it

NOVEMBER 6-7, 2012
The 7th European Bioplastics Conference
Berlin, Germany
http://en.european-bioplastics.org/

NOVEMBER 21-23, 2012
Biofach Japan
Tokyo, Japan
www. Biofach-japan.com

NOV 29-DEC 1, 2012
Biofach India
Bangalore, India
www.biofach-india.com

JANUARY 22-23, 2013
Sustainable Food Summit
San Francisco, USA
www.sustainablefoodsummit.com

Bertus Buizer

JANUARY 23-24, 2013
Biovak, organic farmers fair
Zwolle, Netherlands
www.biovak.nl

FEBRUARY 13-16, 2013
Biofach
Nuremberg, Germany
www.biofach.de

MARCH 7-10, 2013
Natural Products Expo West
Anaheim, California, USA
www.expowest.com

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Ecology & Farming is a magazine for all elements of the organic movement - from organic farmers' associations to organisations from the organic food industry and Fair Trade; from research institutions to certifiers; from organic consumers to organic advocates. Ecology & Farming provides information on key issues in the organic sector and offers the space for discussions on the topics of the day. The articles published in Ecology & Farming reflect the opinions of their respective authors and should not be interpreted as an official IFOAM position.

IFOAM The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements is the umbrella organisation for the organic movement. Established in 1972, IFOAM has over 800 affiliates in more than 100 countries and represents the common interests of the organic movement based on the principles of organic agriculture (ecology, health, fairness and care). IFOAM's mission is to lead, assist and unite the organic movement in its full diversity.

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