

## ■ | table of contents...

### Updates and reports

Towards partnership and action in Europe 1

The Copenhagen Declaration 3

### Country focus

Germany: the turn around in organic agriculture 4

### Standards and regulations

Chaos or harmony? Interface of national, international and private sector standards 8

Standards for international standards 13

### Certification and accreditation

IFOAM Accreditation 15

European co-operation for accreditation 18

The international Accreditation Forum 19

New on the Job 21

## Towards partnership and action in Europe

On 10–11 May 2001 the European Conference on Organic Food and Farming was held in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The European Organic Conference in Copenhagen on 10–11 May 2001, produced a strong declaration for an action plan for organic farming (see page 3). This declaration is seen as a major political breakthrough for organic farming in Europe. The Swedish Minister of Agriculture, currently chairing the European Council in agricultural matters (the EU has a system of rotational presidency), will bring the declaration to the Council for possible adoption. In addition, the Danish Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, who also attended the conference, wants to bring it to the summit meeting in Gothenburg in June.

Considering that the Declaration also calls for an analysis, and thereby possible revisions, of the EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), it is expected the countries resisting any agriculture reform, most notably France, may also have problems with this action plan. It was also notable that the EU Commission chose not to participate on the highest political level – the highest representative was Corrado Pirzio-Biroli, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Fischler. His approach was more reserved than the agriculture ministers from individual countries, and stated *'organic will remain a limited, albeit important and growing, sector.'*

Organic standards and labelling is-

issues featured in speeches and discussions throughout the conference. Significantly, the increased importance of organic standards was expressed by all ministers.

Ritt Bjerregaard, Minister of Agriculture in Denmark called for a better and a more simple regulation and challenged the details of the regulation saying: *'There are detailed rules about even minor elements of a stable construction and not all the rules are equally relevant everywhere in a European area spanning from southern Sicily to northern Finland.'*

Minister Bjerrgaard also addressed the problems of fraud, which plagued the EU organic sector last year when fraudulent organic grain, bought from other EU countries, was found in Denmark: *'Together with a more simple regulation we also have to strengthen our control across borders. There needs to be reliable systems of tracking and verifying the origin of products and a rapid system of information exchange between control bodies.'*

Finally she complained about the lack of mutual recognition and free movement of goods in the organic sector: *'The existence of a multitude*

See page 3 for the Copenhagen Declaration