

■ table of contents...

Standards & regulations

European action plan for organic farming 1

Organic certified textiles 4

U.S. reconsiders inert ingredients in pesticides 7

Organic and Fair unite in the UK 10

Certification & accreditation

Social Accountability in Sustainable Agriculture 13

Updates & reports

Standards comparing technology as a line of business 16

Canadian reports 18

Greenland and the Faroe Islands 19

European action plan for organic farming

Weak in politics, strong in regulatory measures

Increased use of the EU logo for organic products, improved access to the EU market for producers outside the EU, improved control systems and increased cooperation between the certification bodies are identified as priority areas in a recent proposal from the EU Commission for a European action plan for organic farming. The proposal has a remarkable emphasis on issues related to inspections and labelling, but falls short of any deeper analysis regarding how organic farming fits into the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). Market development, research and training get some attention. The Action plan is now out for consultation and is likely to be finalised by the end of 2003.

On the initiative of the former Minister of Agriculture in Denmark, Ritt Bjerregaard, a conference on Organic Food and Farming, held in May 2001, initiated a process towards a European Action Plan for organic farming. The initiative was endorsed by the Council shortly thereafter and the Commission was asked to analyse the possibility of a European Union¹ Action Plan. The draft analysis is now being circulated by the Commission to the Member States and stakeholders for consultation. A final proposal is expected from the Commission before the end of 2003.

The effects of the CAP is not taken into the analysis

The report was supposed to give an analysis of all inhibiting and enhancing factors acting on organic farming as well as give proposals for actions. However as the document itself

states: 'This document does not discuss the interaction between organic farming and the development of the CAP in general.' As the CAP affects all farmers and farming systems in different ways, the exclusion narrows the scope of the plan, a point that is criticised by stakeholders. The original Copenhagen Declaration initiating the process also called for the plan to 'Analyse the relationship between, on the one hand the opportunities for the further development of organic food and farming and, on the other hand the Common Agricultural Policy and other international agreements including WTO and Codex Alimentarius.'

Regarding production, the report concludes that there is room for improvement of organic methods and calls for more research. Processing is identified as a problematic area, as the restriction of additives will have to lead to the development of new