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## Twenty-four issues completed!

*That is two years, and an occasion to reflect on The Organic Standard. It is also an opportunity to present the people who work on the journal.*

I had been thinking about publishing a journal like *The Organic Standard* for some time. Two years ago now, I finally decided that my company, Grolink, should go ahead. I am glad that we did – not that we earn a lot of money from this publication (rather the opposite to be honest), but because it is very rewarding to work on a project that receives such positive feed-back from the readers.

The narrow scope of the journal and its rather high subscription price means that we assumed *The Organic Standard* has a very competent readership. To confirm this, a readers' survey was recently conducted, and the results are presented in this issue (page 17). It is apparent that reaction to the journal is positive and we are grateful to you for that. From the many comments it is also evident that the journal is on the right track and fully appreciated. Most readers made it clear that they value the journal's specialised focus and objective style. In addition, there were several suggestions for improvement and these will be given serious consideration.

Hopefully, many of you will have had time to check the searchable da-

tabase, the latest extended service provided to *The Organic Standard* subscribers. The database, found at [www.organicstandard.com/databas](http://www.organicstandard.com/databas), contains all the articles so far published in the journal, and to ensure that your investment in us is not encroached upon by free-riders the site is password protected.

Speaking about free-riders, it is a challenge to produce a publication that is circulated by e-mail. Occasionally it is apparent that a subscriber has forwarded *The Organic Standard* to others via e-mail. This is not allowed under the terms of the subscription. Printed copies can be shared with all the people you want, but electronic versions should not be passed on, no matter how easy it is.

The survey showed that most people do share printed copies with others. Continue to do that, we like the journal to be read. Alternatively, if you want to share *The Organic Standard* with other people in your organisation an easy solution is to take out a group subscription. In that way a wide group of co-workers can receive *The Organic Standard* direct to their individual e-mail systems.

Objectivity is a difficult thing.

Most readers made it clear that they value the journal's specialised focus and objective style.

## news shorts...

### POLL CONFIRMS THAT US CONSUMERS WANT HIGH ORGANIC STANDARDS

A majority (61%) of US consumers do not want milk, eggs, poultry, or meat to be labelled 'organic' if they are from animals fed antibiotics, hormones and pesticides, according to a nationwide consumer opinion poll conducted on behalf of the Organic Trade Association (OTA).

The results of the poll fly in the face of last minute legislation hidden in the 2003 Omnibus Appropriations Bill. Signed into law on February 20, the rider (Section 771) enables the label 'organic' to be put on products that come from animals raised on feed containing antibiotics, hormones and pesticides. See *The Organic Standard*, issue 23, page 1, for more information.

The poll also found that most consumers (78%) said milk, eggs, poultry or meat should be 100% organic to be labelled organic. The special interests behind the rider seek to reduce the organic feed content requirements.

'Consumers want the organic label to stand for stringent organic standards,' said Katherine DiMatteo, Executive Director of OTA. 'In less than four weeks, thousands of consumers, organic farmers, manufacturers, environmental organisations and other supporters have mobilised

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Most people would agree that true objectivity can never be achieved. Even the most objective reporter must select information and their judgement of what to select will to some extent influence the article. However, correspondents for *The Organic Standard* do their best to achieve objectivity in all their articles. Still this does not mean that they do not have opinions. In this issue the journal's regular correspondents are listed with a brief resume. This should give you an understanding of our background and where we are all coming from. Most of us are long term 'activists' in the organic movement or have a long-standing involvement with organic certification in the private sector. This means – of course – that we have strong opinions on the matters we cover. It is for this reason we decided not to have a regular editorial for commenting on recent developments; in any case I would feel it a burden to say something intelligent on such a regular basis. However, we do on occasion, write comment pieces. In earlier issues of *The Organic Standard* both myself and the assigning editor Ong Kung Wai have provided comment pieces for the journal. In this issue the editor, Joy Michaud, writes a strong attack on organic seed regulations (see page 21).

The focus of *The Organic Standard* is and shall be to report objectively on what is happening in the world of standards, certification, ac-

creditation and regulations. However, we believe that some personal comments from engaged people is also valuable input – wasn't the world transformed by that in the first place? You are also invited to give your opinions under the 'Comment & Opinions' heading. We don't guarantee that it will be published and you don't get paid for opinion pieces! But some things must be said.

The feed-back from the reader's survey shows that despite the fact that we have personal opinions we have managed to produce a journal with news and research that is considered to be unbiased. We will continue to serve you like that. ■

*Gunnar Rundgren  
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### Database

*The Organic Standard* has an online database that contains all the articles so far published in the journal. The database can be found on the website: [www.organicstandard.com/databas](http://www.organicstandard.com/databas)

The database is password protected. The password, which is changed every four months, is passed on to subscribers by e-mail. Anyone losing the password should contact the main office at: [office@organicstandard.com](mailto:office@organicstandard.com)

### Do you keep your news secret from the readers of *The Organic Standard*?

To keep readers of *The Organic Standard* up-to-date with events occurring in your organisation please ensure that the journal receives all your press releases or is included in your news and information services.

Please send any items of interest to [news@organicstandard.com](mailto:news@organicstandard.com)

## Tensions continue over direction of Brazilian organic certification

*A country-wide debate on the certification norms and technical standards dates back twenty years. Recent events have caused the discussions to intensify.*

In Brazil organic agriculture consciousness and consumption began in the late 1970s. By 1984 local standards established by NGOs working closely with farmers and consumers, were established. As exports of Brazilian organic products to Europe started, from the end of the 1980s, so did pressure for a Brazilian legislation on organic agriculture. Formal discussions between representatives from the Brazilian government, the private sector and non-profit making organisations, described as the third sector, started in August 1994.

Two different approaches have since evolved with respect to organic standards and certification in Brazil. They are:

*Participatory certification.* This is operated by informal networks, based on the work of NGOs (farmers' association, co-operatives, extension services, consumers' association, etc.) with rural and urban communities in low income counties. They are usually associated with local and regional markets, selling a diverse range of farm products directly from the farm, public fairs and through home delivery services.

*Auditing certification.* In these cases the certification body does not normally become involved with capaci-

tating, or with organising farmers and markets. They are usually associated with the export market and big enterprises, selling mostly commodities.

Whilst there is now agreement about the principles of organic agriculture and technical standards for an organic product, the two approaches differ on two very important points: the merits of certification, *i.e.* whether it is necessary to have a regulation for certifying organic products; and the certification norms *i.e.* the structural criteria and certification process.

During the 1990s many countries, mainly in Europe, adopted legislation, effectively ending the debate over the merit of certification. However, discussions have continued over the certification process. Proponents for auditing certification argue that certification will increase the acceptance of Brazil's organic products by high income countries. However, NGOs arguing against certification claim that its high cost will cause distress among small farmers and consumers. They claim there is a risk that certification bodies would have to amalgamate resulting in smaller ones being lost, and that other small organisations will

face difficulties meeting international accreditation norms and costs. Many of the NGOs currently only charge their farmer members a small monthly fee (about 3 Euros/US\$), and as well as the certification process provide resources for extension, education and project development. Auditing certification, with the consequential increased bureaucracy and greater demands on time to collect information, would exclude small farmers, especially the illiterate farmers.

Ultimately, as in all low income countries with few or no government policies to support organic agriculture, an auditing certification would make it more difficult for organic agriculture to expand among small farmers and consumers with a low income. There is also the question of the extent of the independence of a certification body, whose fees include a percentage of the operator's annual turnover.

The two opposing approaches to organic certification also differ in ethical and ideological aspects. For instance, the participatory approach believes in the appreciation of traditional and indigenous knowledge and a bottom-up decision process. Its concern is with the small farmers, and its philosophy is to work together to capacitate small family farmers and consumers in local markets, trying to give transparency in all activities in the network. The opposing view is that independent certification bodies, with a technical bias and a top-down decision making process, are better. Preferring to work with agribusinesses, such as the larger, richer farmers and big retailers, the export markets

Two different approaches have since evolved with respect to organic standards and certification in Brazil.

## news shorts...

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themselves to urge Congress to repeal the rider and preserve the integrity of the standards.'

The poll found that nearly three quarters (71%) of consumers believe Congress should not be able to change policies on organic agriculture regulations without public discussion. ■

For further information, visit the OTA website at [www.ota.com](http://www.ota.com) or its new consumer website at [www.theorganicreport.org](http://www.theorganicreport.org)

Source: Organic Newslines

### NEW ITALIAN DATABASE OF ORGANIC INPUTS

A new 'national registry for phytosanitary products for organic farming' was introduced at the Fieragricola in Verona, Italy. The registry is based on a representative selection of the products registered according to the categories laid down in EU regulations. A breakdown of the effective composition of each product as well as a declaration of the absence of GM materials is supplied by the manufacturers.

There is a technical committee that verifies the correctness of the information. ■

The registry can be found at [www.biofito.it](http://www.biofito.it)

Source: Organic Newslines

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are encouraged. A higher regard is given to consumer concerns in high income countries where the exports are destined.

#### End of common understanding.

In 1994, when the Minister of Agriculture (MA) held meetings with public, private and third sector representatives to discuss developing a national regulation, the inclusion of participatory certification system was considered possible. It was called a 'credibility network'. In April 1995, a National Committee of Organic Products was created with representatives of NGOs active at the time (*i.e.* AAO, ABIO, APTA, COOLMEIA, IBD)<sup>1</sup>, members of government bodies (MA, EMBRAPA<sup>2</sup>, the Environment Minister) and universities. The Committee worked for two years without being able to resolve the members' differences over both the merits of certification and the model of certification to be used. The discord eventually erupted in the final meeting in which only some of the NGOs representatives in the Committee participated. The polarisation between the two camps resulted in two legal actions against the organic regulation: one is in the Congress (Legislative) and the other in MA (Executive).

#### The action in the Executive.

Whilst the dialogue within the National Committee of Organic Products collapsed, another forum, the Organic Forum, was established in mid 1997. This forum, comprising of fifteen to thirty NGOs per meeting, met four to five times to define the minimum technical standards and a common

peer review process. This led to the Normative Instruction (MAPA/IN - 007/99) being published in May 1999. This instruction established the standards for production, processing and labelling of organic products of plant and animal origin. It created a quality logo for organic products, expressed concern about human and ecological health, and tried to ensure transparency in every step of production in organic systems.

The MAPA/IN - 007/99 defines the general structure that will give direction to organic agriculture. It created a National Board of Organic Production (CNPOrg<sup>3</sup>) and State Boards (CEPOrg<sup>4</sup>), with parity (public, private and third sector) composition, whose primary function is to establish and discuss technical standards for organic agriculture and to accredit certification bodies. The certification bodies are required to be legal, non-profit entities such as NGOs, rather than a commercial firm or a public organisation, and must be accredited by government through CNPOrg. The accreditation process is not dealt with by MAPA/IN - 007/99. The last meeting of the National Board, at which the procedures for the accreditation process were discussed, was in December 2001. Up to the end of 2002, there were fifteen constituted State Boards, some active, some not.

In January 2002, MAPA/IN - 006/02, which deals with technical criteria for accreditation, was proposed by CNPOrg and published by MAPA. This Normative Instruction supports the auditing certification modality, including wild collection and small farmers group certification. It does

The Committee worked for two years without being able to resolve the differences over the merits of certification... ■

not recognise participatory certification, and excludes professionals involved in technical assistance and consumers from the certification process. The rules emphasising technique and science over traditional knowledge are expected to inhibit farmers' and consumers' participation on State Boards for organic agriculture. From the NGOs' perspective the rules neglect the fact that everybody is part of the solution and the bottom up approach. There is concern whether Brazil's small certification bodies, with a long-term history in the sector, will be able to meet the cost of complying with the auditing model based on ISO, European Union or IFOAM norms.

## Grassroots reaction

At the end of July 2002, the National Agro-ecology Meeting (Encontro Nacional de Agroecologia) or ENA, was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It attracted over 1,200 participants, who were composed of farmers, researchers, extension workers, consumers,

educators and policy makers. The meeting's objective was to suggest public policy advocacy for rural development using agro-ecological practices to facilitate providing safer food to society. Problems related to certification and the certification of small operators were highlighted. These included high costs, high levels of bureaucracy and data collection, the neglect of the existence of the participatory certification process, as well as the lack of an effective control over retailers.

As a follow up to the ENA, a meeting was organised by AOPA/ ECOVIDA-PR<sup>5</sup>, Minister of Agrarian Development (MDA) and PESAGRO-RJ/CNPq<sup>6</sup> to try to solve the problems with the certification process. This took place in October 2002, in Curitiba-PR. Worried that legislation and standards would exclude traditional processes managed by family farmers and consumers in local markets, an informal group made up of public and private sector organisa-

tions was formed during the meeting. The group, known as GAO<sup>7</sup>, has established subsidiary working groups to determine the legal boundary of each government power (executive and legislative), and to develop a transversal strategy beyond government with the participation of organised civil society.

## Legal action

Since 1996, at the initiative of a federal deputy, a Law Project (PLC-1957/96) has been going through the Brazilian Congress. In April 1999, another federal deputy supportive of organic agriculture, re-presented the Law Project in the Deputy Chamber. It is now in the Senate, identified by the number PLC-14/02, awaiting a vote.

The text of PLC-14/02 has similar grassroots involvement as MAPA/IN-007/99, and does not include accreditation criteria. The GAO Working Group on the Law Project PLC-14, however, found problems with the present text, e.g. the label 'organic product' is restricted to mean only certified products; and any claims on non-certified products are forbidden even in direct sales between farmers and consumers. In addition, the Law Project includes some technical standards the group felt would be better in a regulation, which is more dynamic and easier to change. The GAO is pushing for amendments on the Law Project, before voting. These new amendments would refer technical regulations and accreditation criteria to the Minister of Agriculture and Provisioning and Minister of Development, Industry and Trade.

## The challenge today

For many who work with organic certification and marketing in low income countries, the challenge is to

## A reflection on the nature of networks

Reflecting on informal and formal networks in change, Fritjof Capra mentioned the following at the World Social Forum 2003, in Porto Alegre, Brazil:

*'Big enterprises are ever more decentralised networks of small units. Any social group is formed by a network of formal and informal units that intercommunicates frequently. Formed by rules, standards and regulations, the formal networks countervail informal structures, characterised by creativeness, by spontaneity, by fluidity and by its floating character. Those informal structures [do not] even ... include verbal forms of solidarity. Leaders from any formal organisation – firm, school, family or country, should be careful to integrate facts, groups or social networks born spontaneously. To resist modifications means losing the opportunity to channel the impetus that carries structural changes toward a positive force or direction. The concepts, values and traditions based on competition and on a mechanist world vision should be replaced by perceptions and holistic practices that consider the whole and [should] be based on partnership and solidarity.'*

## news shorts...

### WAPOA – WORLDWIDE ADOPTION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PRINCIPLES FORMED

At its recent meeting held in Cuba at both Havana and Santa Clara, and hosted by the University of Santa Clara, the IFOAM World Board concluded the formulation of its mission statement. The statement expected to be released soon will underline IFOAM's mission for the worldwide adoption of organic agriculture principles. This mission will be known by the acronym WAPOA, a name that is likely to be heard a lot more of in the future.

Concurrent to the World Board meeting, a session to develop a consensus-based vision for the future of the Organic Guarantee System (25-26 March) was also held by the IFOAM World Board and IFOAM related bodies, *i.e.* the recently formed IFOAM Norms Management Committee, the IFOAM Standards Committee and the IOAS.

At the meeting, a memorial tree was planted in the memory of Suzanne Vaupel, the former Vice President of IFOAM who died in January after living with cancer for a year. Suzanne was active in the development of the IFOAM organic guarantee system. ■

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develop local markets and foreign markets without losing the different features that exist in both markets. In Brazil there are diverse formal and informal social-economic networks working with agro-ecology and organic agriculture. Their standards for organic agriculture are a product of the social dynamics within their respective networks.

On a national level, social networks are becoming more involved with production and consuming products from credibility networks. For instance, some municipalities in the South and Southeast of Brazil buy from groups of organically-managed family farms, organised to offer produce for children's meals in public schools. In another initiative ecological farmer co-operatives established partnerships with local schools, in which they gave organic compost to introduce horticulture in schools and talked to children about agro-ecology. Some consumer co-operatives, in which they pay a fair price for organic produce, are increasingly appearing on the scene in small and big cities. There are also schemes similar to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) systems in the Northeast of Brazil. In Ceara, for example, the cost of produce is in accordance with the estimated annual cost of production and distribution divided by the number of members in the co-operative.

The Brazilian NGOs see their challenge is to conciliate world visions based on domestic-civic conventions (strong personal links, local market, traditions, social values, informal networks) with those based on industrial-mercantile conventions

(technical standards, science, competitiveness, maintenance of clients, formal networks). The question of how to do this was posed by Bertil Sylvander for France, a high income country, in 1997. Today in 2003, it applies to Brazil, a low income country.

The coming Brazilian legislation is in danger of extinguishing the creative forces of the organic movement in the country. Formal and informal networks must learn to live together and to strengthen their dynamic links to create a positive force for change. A market ever more Fair than Trade is needed. ■

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1. AAO – Associação de Agricultura Orgânica (SP); ABIO - Associação dos Agricultores Biológicos do Rio de Janeiro (RJ); APTA - Assessoria a Projetos de Tecnologia Alternativa (ES); COOLMÉIA – Cooperativa Ecológica (RS); IBD – Instituto Biodinâmico (SP).
2. EMBRAPA – Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (National Brazilian Research Institution).
3. CNPOrg – Colegiado Nacional para a Produção Orgânica.
4. CEPOrg – Colegiado Estadual para Produção Orgânica, State Board for Organic Production
5. AOPA/REDE ECOVIDA – Associação de Agricultura Orgânica do Paraná Rede Ecovida (Parana Organic Agriculture Association).
6. National Council for Research – Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa
7. GAO – Grupo de Agricultura Orgânica (Organic Agriculture Group).

Formal and informal networks must learn to live together and to strengthen their dynamic links to create a positive force for change. ■

## Formal complaint over a decision overturn by NOP

*Massachusetts Independent Certifiers Inc. denied certification to a producer based on a controversial standard requiring outdoor access for poultry. This decision was overturned by the USDA after the producer appealed. Subsequently, the certifier filed a complaint protesting against the process NOP employed for addressing the appeal.*

In 2000 the Final Rule, setting forth the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), was published. Since then the U.S. organic industry has argued over the interpretation of the rule §205.239, which contains requirements for livestock living conditions. NOP has heard testimony from numerous parties about the application of its standards for outdoor access to the production of poultry – and has received comments ranging from the need for birds to have free access to pasture to the diametrically opposed opinion that laying hens must be prevented from going outside in order to protect them from disease.

The standard states:

*'The producer of an organic livestock operation must establish and maintain livestock living conditions which accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals, including:*

- (1) Access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight suitable to the species, its stage of production, the climate, and the environment;*
- (2) Access to pasture for ruminants;*
- (3) Appropriate clean, dry bedding. If the bedding is typically consumed by the animal species, it must comply with the feed requirements of § 205.237;*
- (4) Shelter designed to allow for: (i)*

*Natural maintenance, comfort behaviors, and opportunity to exercise; (ii) Temperature level, ventilation, and air circulation suitable to the species; and (iii) Reduction of potential for livestock injury.*

*The producer of an organic livestock operation may provide temporary confinement for an animal because of:*

- (1) Inclement weather;*
- (2) The animal's stage of production;*
- (3) Conditions under which the health, safety, or well being of the animal could be jeopardized; or*
- (4) Risk to soil or water quality.'*

With the intent of clarifying the meaning of the outdoor access requirement for livestock, on 29 October, 2002, the NOP issued a policy statement stating in part that:

*'Access to the outdoors simply means that a producer must provide livestock with an opportunity to exit any barn or other enclosed structure. Access to the outdoors does not require a producer to comply with a specific space or stocking rate requirement. Neither does the requirement mandate that an entire herd or flock have access to the outdoors at any one time nor does the requirement supercede the producer's responsibility for providing living conditions that*

*accommodate livestock health, safety or well-being.'*

*'To provide evidence of compliance [with standards on temporary confinement], producers must submit to an accredited certifying agent (ACA) a clear and verifiable organic production system plan... The conditions in which temporary confinement will occur should be supported and documented through historical data, research literature, educational material and/or producer experience with the applicable species. For example, historical weather data could be used to justify temporary confinement during certain months in order to ensure an animal's health, safety or well-being is not jeopardized. Further, a producer could use research literature to show that a decision to limit access to the outdoors until sufficient feathering has occurred is rational, prudent and in keeping with humane animal management practices. In the same vein, a producer could utilize his or her own experience supported by research data to show that confinement during peak water fowl migration is a reasonable approach in preventing catastrophic health problems caused from outside exposure to disease vectors.'*

In this environment of controversy and fluctuating policy positions, during the autumn of 2002 Massachusetts Independent Certifiers Inc. (MICI) wrestled with a certification decision that hinged on implementation of the NOP's outdoor access standard. After careful consideration, on 21 October, 2002, MICI denied certification to an egg producer, The Country Hen, because the certifier found the producer's plans for outdoor access plans were insufficient to meet the NOP standard.

When interviewed by the *New York Times* for a 26 February, 2003

## news shorts...

### GERMAN GOVERNMENT WANT REVISIONS TO EU DRAFT

The Bundesrat (Upper House) of Germany demands substantial revisions to the latest draft amendment of the organic EU-Regulation (see TOS 22, page 2-3). In its comment passed on 14 March 2003, the Bundesrat focuses specifically on the proposal to extend the scope of the regulation on the trade of organic products.

According to the Bundesrat, retailers should be excluded from this requirement if it can be guaranteed that no mixing of conventional and organic products may occur, e.g. for a supermarket that only sells organic apples and does not offer any conventional ones. The EU draft already proposes to exclude retailers who sell only pre-packed products. The Bundesrat further demands that the certification of single storage activities should only be required for loose products in containers, ships and warehouses. Control measures should specifically be applied to suppliers of processing companies and storage of unpacked raw material and semi-manufactured produce. Traders, caterers or haulage contractors should be released from the obligation to be inspected.

The Bundesrat also called for tightening of the EU regulations in some areas, such as the requirement for conversion of the total farm, the need to produce animal

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article, George Bass, the owner of Country Hen, said, *'I feel we give them plenty of space inside and we give them enough light and they are not in cages and we have 100% organic feed, and to my way of thinking that is the backbone of the organic poultry farm.'* However, MICI's conclusion was that the chickens did not comply with the National Organic Standards because they did not have *'adequate access to exercise areas, fresh air and direct sunlight'* and that the *'applicant was too restrictive in determining the hours and days the poultry would be allowed outside.'*

On 22 October 2002, the day after implementation of the National Organic Program, Mr Bass appealed against MICI's certification decision. Within a few days, and without gathering information about the case from the certifier, the National Organic Program informed MICI that the appeal had been sustained and MICI's decision to deny certification had been overruled.

Judith Gillan, a board member at MICI, said that the organization quickly protested against the USDA's unilateral action, *'We corresponded directly with the administrator saying we wanted to go on the record feeling uncomfortable with the process that did not allow us to participate.'* Edwin McGlew, President of the Board of Directors at MICI stated that the certifier has waited for almost four months without communication from the NOP on the matter, *'On 28 October 2002 we sent the NOP a detailed letter stating our concerns about the case, but we have not had any response to our letter to date.'*

On 26 February, 2003, MICI filed an official complaint with an Administrative Law Judge, stating its objections that the process used by the NOP to handle the appeal was not

fully compliant with the Final Rule's provisions on appeals (§681). MICI made the choice to follow this legal route because the Final Rule does not contain regulations addressing complaints and the complaints policy – posted on the NOP website on 28 October, 2002 – focuses on grievances against certifiers, not the accreditation agency itself. Farmers Legal Action Group in St. Paul, Minnesota is providing legal assistance to MICI and funds are being raised to cover the significant legal costs associated with filing the complaint.

Although the great majority of certifiers accredited by the NOP do require livestock producers to provide livestock with access to the outdoors, close examination of the issues related to MICI's complaint is bound to shed light on other examples of uneven application of the NOP's outdoor access requirements as well as the suitability of the standard itself.

For example, *The New York Times* reported that, in direct contradiction to the NOP's policies on outdoor access, the New Hampshire State Department of Agriculture, which provides organic certification services for producers in that state, allows egg producers to keep their chickens indoors if the producers have 'good reason' for doing so. Richard Uncles, one of the State of New Hampshire's certification staff, explained his opinion that the NOP's standard on outdoor access should be modified to reflect the realities of production practices, stating *'We have taken the position that to pay lip service to this access thing is not accomplishing anything.'* ■

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To read the entire text of the NOP's statement on outdoor access, see: [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/PolicyStatements/LivestockAccess102902.pdf](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/PolicyStatements/LivestockAccess102902.pdf)

## ISEAL initiates a 'Code of Good Practice'

*Last month the ISEAL Alliance circulated a draft Code of Good Practice on standard setting for voluntary process and production method standard-setting bodies. All interested stakeholders are encouraged to participate in a broad consultative process to refine the draft document.*

In March 2003, the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance circulated a draft Code of Good Practice on standard setting for voluntary process and production method (PPM) standard-setting bodies. The Code incorporates elements from:

- ISO/IEC Guide 59 Code of good practice for standardisation
- The WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement Annex 3 Code of good practice for the preparation, adoption and application of standards
- The TBT Second Triennial Review Annex 4, Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations with Relation to Articles 2, 5 and Annex 3 of the Agreement.

The ISEAL Code is proposed to serve as a tool for strengthening voluntary standard-setting and will represent minimum criteria against which to measure the credibility of voluntary standards. The draft Code is being refined through a broad consultative process. The ISEAL Alliance encourages all interested stakeholders to participate in this drafting process.

The ISEAL Code is proposed to be applicable to all bodies that approve standards using procedures based on

principles of consensus as well as standards that are not based on consensus. It is intended for standard-setting bodies that set voluntary process or production method (PPM) standards at an international, regional, national or sub-national level. Organic standards fall into this category.

Adoption of the Code is proposed to be voluntary. Standard-setting bodies should notify the ISEAL Alliance, if interested. Bodies accepting the Code are expected to set up procedures to resolve complaints regarding their compliance with the Code. No other compliance enforcement is proposed.

The proposed Criteria for Procedures for development of standards include requirements for:

- Written procedures, including an appeals mechanism, for impartial handling of any substantive or procedural complaints.
- Publication of standards related work programme at least once every six months.
- Stakeholders and other interested parties to be made aware of standards related activity, and the mechanisms by which they can participate in it.

- All stakeholders to be provided with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the elaboration of a standard.
- Impartiality to be maintained throughout all stages of the standards development process.
- The constraints on developing countries and disadvantaged groups that restrict their effective participation in standards development to be taken into consideration, including provisions for capacity building and technical assistance.
- The development of a new or revision of an existing standard to include at least two rounds of comment submissions with a period of at least sixty days for each round. This period may be shortened where urgent problems of safety, health or environment arise or threaten to arise.
- Comments received should be recorded and a written synopsis made of how each issue has been addressed in the standard revision.
- Formal approval of standards to be based on evidence of consensus.
- Standards to be reviewed on a periodic basis of at least every three years.
- Besides presenting administrative requirements on conformity assessment and marks of conformity separately from technical and/or performance requirements, conformity assessment procedures are to be no more onerous than necessary, and appropriate to the situation of the organisation being assessed.

The Code also has a section on advancement of international trade. It proposes that:

- Standard-setting bodies take ac-

The ISEAL Code will serve as a tool for strengthening voluntary standard-setting.

## news shorts...

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feed on farm as a priority and the reduction of permissible conventional feeding stuff and conventional liquid manure. In addition, the processing of seeds (e.g. pelleting of seed) should fall under the scope of the Regulation. ■

Source: *Agra Europe*

### COSTA RICA APPROVED

In the last issue of *The Organic Standard* it was reported that Costa Rica is now accepted on the list of third countries approved for imports of organic products into the EU. In the final voting a vast majority of the member states were in favour of inclusion of Costa Rica on the list. ■

### ORGANIC AQUACULTURE STANDARDS

The newly revised and probably best developed standards for organic aquaculture are now being translated from German into English. They were adopted on 2 December 2002 by the *Naturland* assembly of delegates. The standards cover cultivation of carp, cultivation of salmonoid fishes in ponds and net cages, marine culture of mussels and pond culture of shrimps. ■

For more information on *Naturland* aquaculture standards contact Stefan Bergleiter, e-mail: [s.bergleiter@naturland.de](mailto:s.bergleiter@naturland.de).

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count of relevant regulatory and market needs, as well as scientific and technological developments in the elaboration of standards.

- Standards should not distort global markets or international trade in ways not directly in line with the expressed objectives of the standard.
- Standards shall not inhibit commerce beyond that necessary to meet legitimate requirements for local compatibility, environmental protection, health and safety.
- International standards should be used as the basis for corresponding national or regional standards, except where they would be ineffective or inappropriate, such as in the case of fundamental climatic, geographic or technological factors.
- Standards shall include objective and verifiable criteria that do not create ambiguities in interpretation of the standard by consumers or other users.
- Standards shall not discriminate among products on the basis of the place of origin.
- Whenever possible, standards shall be expressed in terms of a combination of performance and management criteria, rather than design or descriptive characteristics and not favour a particular technology or patented item.

Participation in the standards development process is further elaborated as:

- A balance of interests among stakeholders in the subject matter to which the standard relates, including a balance of sectors, geographic and gender representation.
- Open membership to the standard-

setting body on a non-discriminatory basis to relevant bodies that support the goals of the standard-setting body, including participation at all stages of the standards development process, such as voting and adoption of standards, and dissemination and usage of the adopted standards.

- Participation of the standard-setting body in the preparation of international standards that address common subject matter.
- An obligation on the standard-setting bodies to coordinate activities on a voluntary basis at and between international, regional and national levels.

The draft Code represents a partial list of proposed criteria. Revisions to this draft, as well as additional criteria are expected to be incorporated through a drafting process, using consensus-seeking procedures among participating voluntary standard-setting organisations and other stakeholders. ■

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More information about how to participate in this initiative can be found on the ISEAL Alliance website at [www.isealalliance.org](http://www.isealalliance.org) or by contacting ISEAL, e-mail: [secretariat@isealalliance.org](mailto:secretariat@isealalliance.org).

The ISEAL Alliance was featured in *The Organic Standard*, issue no. 8, December 2001, pages 8-11.

For more information on ISEAL see website: [www.isealalliance.org](http://www.isealalliance.org)

The Code has a section on advancement of international trade. ■

## Interview with Pat Mallet, Executive Director of ISEAL

*With the ISEAL Alliance encouraging stakeholders to comment on the recently distributed draft Code of Good Practice The Organic Standard had a few questions.*

*Why is ISEAL embarking on such an initiative?*

The last few years have seen a tremendous growth in the number of new voluntary standards initiatives, particularly those that address social and environmental issues. Unlike certification and accreditation, where general operating procedures are agreed at a global level, there is no consensus for standard-setting. ISEAL members have prioritised the need to define best practices for voluntary standard-setting, both in order to strengthen their own procedures, and to begin to differentiate credible standards in the marketplace, on the basis of how they are developed.

*What are the reasons for incorporating elements from the ISO and TBT documents? Are there any criteria that are not covered by either of these documents?*

We have had an internal discussion amongst ISEAL members about whether we can adopt and apply one of the existing Codes outright (ISO Guide 59 or TBT Annex 3). Both of these documents provide a strong framework for setting standards, but include language that is not appropriate to voluntary social and environmental standards. However, we recognise that any new Code will have to mirror these documents as closely as possible in order to have international credibility and legitimacy. As a result, we are incorporating all the relevant elements from

these existing Codes, while bringing in additional criteria that are specific to voluntary social and environmental standards. Some of these additional issues are:

- Consideration of disadvantaged groups.
- Making standards freely available and in the public domain.
- Placing achievement of the objectives of the standard ahead of international trade considerations.
- Focusing on a combination of performance and management criteria.
- Seeking a balance of stakeholder interests among sectors, geography and gender.

*The Code is set to address PPM standard setting. In which way do Criteria for PPM standard setting differ from performance standards?*

It is important to point out that the TBT and ISO Codes both emphasise the use of performance standards, which can be interpreted to mean that standards should be expressed in terms of how the product performs. This is not wholly appropriate to process and production method standards where the emphasis is on how the product was produced. As a result, the criteria applied in the ISEAL draft Code is that standards be expressed in a combination of performance and management criteria. This is broad

enough to encompass both how the product was produced and how it performs. One of the questions to be discussed with stakeholders is whether there is value in limiting the application of this Code to voluntary PPM standards. It may be more useful to include language appropriate to PPM standards while still being applicable to a full range of voluntary standards.

*The procedures outlined in the draft Code emphasise participation and consensus building. It is also mentioned that the Code covers standards that are not based on consensus. Is this a contradiction?*

Yes it is. However, we wanted to avoid standard-setting bodies, which do not try to achieve consensus in standard-setting, from dismissing this Code, thinking that it does not apply to them. If they look at compliance with the Code as something they need to work towards, then one of the elements they can address is to bring their decision-making closer to a consensus model.

*The Code mentions taking account of scientific and technological developments in the elaboration of standards. Is this to discourage standard setting, where the scientific basis or evidence is not available?*

No, one of the strengths of voluntary social and environmental standards is that they address many fundamental issues that are not best addressed on a scientific basis. This criteria is included to ensure that standards are set up and periodically revised to reflect evolving best practices in their respective fields.

ISEAL members have prioritised the need to define best practices for voluntary standard-setting.

## news shorts...

### BIO-SIEGEL ON-LINE DATABASE

German consumers can now get all relevant information on the national organic logo, the Bio-Siegel, from the internet ([www.bio-siegel.de](http://www.bio-siegel.de)). The on-line database supplies current lists of the range of goods that carry the logo and provides other information about suppliers, market implementation, etc. A smart way to reduce costs is the password-protected area where product registrations can be made directly by suppliers, and where suppliers can also update contact details. ■

### GERMAN ORGANIC LEGISLATION IMPLEMENTED

The German organic agriculture legislation, *Öko-Landbau-Gesetz*, which focuses on the structural issues of the implementation of the Organic EU Regulation, came into force on 1 April 2003. See *The Organic Standard*, issue 11, page 16 for more information about the law. As a result of the legislation, the Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung (BLE) or Federal Institution for Agriculture and Nutrition has been issuing import authorizations since the beginning of this month. ■

BLE website: [www.ble.de](http://www.ble.de)

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*It is proposed that standards should not discriminate between products on the basis of the place of origin, whilst allowing for variations where there are legitimate climatic, geographical or technological factors. To what extent does the Code offer guidance on acceptance of regional/local variations to international standards? How does it address determination of equivalence?*

The Code itself sets out the basic criteria for standard-setting procedures. This Code will necessarily be accompanied by a guidance document that addresses how each of the criteria can be implemented in practice. What are acceptable local variations will fit into this guidance. I expect that questions of acceptable local variations and equivalence will both be part of the consultation process, and that they will feed into the development of the guidance document.

*Will standard setting bodies using the ISEAL Code, such as ISEAL members, be obliged to recognise and accept each other's standards on a similar subject matter?*

The Code does not cover the content of a standard, nor mutual recognition between standard-setting bodies. What the Code does do is take a step towards building trust and recognition between standard-setters. If standard-setters can have confidence in each other's procedures, then they are more likely to take the next step to look at where the content of those standards overlap and how that content can be harmonised. It is ISEAL's intention to use this Code as a stepping stone to increase harmonisation and mutual recognition of voluntary standards.

*How does the Code address the proliferation of voluntary standards worldwide? Will Standard setting bodies*

*using the ISEAL Code be obliged not to set separate standards on a similar subject, e.g. sustainable/organic forestry?*

The Code addresses proliferation by ensuring that standards are developed through a credible process. The issue of proliferation is not so much about the number of standards, as the varying credibility of those standards and lack of cooperation between standard-setters. Compliance with this Code can be used as a starting point for harmonising overlapping standards. However, I also think that competition among standards is sometimes good, so long as we are confident that the standards are credible and that compliance will result in positive social and environmental impacts. While there is no explicit limitation on who can develop standards in a given sector, I would like to note that the draft criteria include the suggestion to coordinate standard-setting activities on a voluntary basis at and between international, regional and national levels.

*It is stated that membership should be open on a non-discriminatory basis. What are the circumstances where it is justified to restrict who can be a member of a standard-setting organisation?*

This issue is definitely one for discussion. A point that has been raised before in this context is whether to limit the role governmental bodies can play in voluntary standard-setting organisations? This has been discussed by some ISEAL members within their own organisations, but deserves a broader review. One circumstance that is reflected in the draft Code is that standard-setting organisations should be able to justifiably limit their membership to those who subscribe to the goals of the organisation. ■

## Residues re-open argument on organic standards

*'The residue contents in organic food distinguishes [it] significantly from conventionally produced food. While in conventional products residues can often be detected...organic food [is] to a high percentage (95%) free of residues'*

Prof. Dr. Edelhäuser

**D**r. Edelhäuser is a food chemist at the Ministry for Nutrition and Rural Areas in Baden-Württemberg, a German Bundesland. His department is responsible for consumer protection and food surveillance, and deals specifically with residues and contamination. On the issue of residues Dr. Edelhäuser claims that organic and non-organic produce can be distinguished from each other by measuring the level of residues resulting from environmental contamination and drift found on the produce. Only a small percentage of organic products contain residues of plant protection substances. Taking into account the quality and quantities of these substances, Dr. Edelhäuser concludes that when organic products are found with pesticide residues above a defined limit a non-permitted practice has occurred or the produce has been mixed with conventional produce. Edelhäuser and his department defined the level where contamination from residues is considered as 'an analytical zero value' to be 0.01 mg/kg (limit of evidence). The Ministry assumes that all organic products that are produced in compliance with the organic EU Regulation would be below this limit. This means that all products with any pesticide residue higher than 0.01 mg/kg are, by definition of the department, produced under fraudulent practices. And as the

Ministry states: 95% of the organic products are free of residues, this means that 5% of the organic products contain residues and are therefore – from the perspective of the Ministry – produced under fraudulent practices.

Dr. Edelhäuser's department is the authority responsible for the surveillance of food production in Baden-Württemberg. In 2002 the Ministry initiated an organic monitoring programme for analysing residues in organic products. Within the programme the Ministry appointed three people from the states laboratories to deal with the analysis of organic products. When staff of the states laboratories detect pesticide residues above 0.01 mg/kg, the Ministry imposes financial penalties on the trader or producer of the products for false labelling and prohibits the further selling of the product. It also informs the competent authority on the results of the analysis, the conclusions it has drawn and the penalties imposed by the department. It does not seek informed advice from the competent authority or inspection bodies.

Dr Edelhäuser explained that the Ministry felt this programme was necessary as it was worried that the EU Regulation does not provide sufficient

room for manoeuvre and sanctions in fraudulent cases. The procedures required by the EU Regulation to prove fraud, when contaminated products had been detected, were considered to be too slow and, the Ministry felt, would have allowed contaminated products to be sold despite the suspicion of fraud. The Ministry sought for a solution to this problem and found it in the German food law. According to this law, residues of plant protection products in organic food are judged to be consumer deception if non-compliance with the EU Regulation can be established, based on the detected residues. However, all this is based on assumptions. As yet the Ministry has not provided any proof that products containing more than 0.01 mg/kg residues have been produced fraudulently, according to the organic regulation.

Hanspeter Schmidt, an attorney at law, harshly criticises the actions of the Ministry as illegal. He accuses the Ministry of reopening the 'fight on ideology and culture' between conventional and organic production. He felt that suppliers of organic products would be intimidated by the threat of a public court hearing in cases where they object to a monetary fine. Such proceedings would only be stopped by the authorities if the accused party pays thousands of Euros. 'Those who care for their public reputation, bows to the authority, not everybody can bear to be denounced as dishonest', says Schmidt.

Indeed, it is an old discussion in a new surrounding. Over the years the majority of public research institutions and laboratories have denied that organic products are better than

The Ministry believes that a pesticide residue higher than 0.01 mg/kg implies fraudulent practices.

■ The specific quality of organic agriculture is the production method itself.

conventional products. The EU regulation even requires that the label on organic produce does not claim that it 'constitutes a guarantee of superior organoleptic, nutritional or salubrious quality' (EEC 2092/91, Art. 10.2). This means that it is illegal in the EU to make any claims that organic produce tastes better, is more nutritional or is healthier for the consumer than conventional produce. Consequently the EU-regulation describes in detail the inspection regime for the surveillance of the organic production based on a procedural inspection system. Taking and analysing samples may be part of the inspection regime, but it is only obligatory 'where the use of unauthorised products is suspected' (EEC 2092/91, Annex III, Art. 5).

Fifteen years ago the organic movement fought hard to convince legislators that the specific quality of organic agriculture is the production method itself and not just the output, *i.e.* the final product. With the passing of the EU regulation 2092/91, the movement achieved its aim. The production method of organic agriculture and its inspection scheme, using procedural inspections of farms and companies instead of analysing the final product, were legally defined. The approach taken by the Ministry in Baden-Württemberg disputes this legal definition of the EU Regulation. While they argue that the procedures and inspection scheme foreseen in the EU Regulation would be too slow, they have simply redefined organic production by assuming that organic products produced in compliance with the EU Regulation would not contain any residues. Just as it was twenty

years ago, the Ministry is trying to reduce the organic production method to a 'zero-residue-production' and rejects the value of the inspection system according to the EU-Regulation. In a panel discussion during BioFach, Dr Edelhäuser argued that organic agriculture could no longer just tolerate drift from conventional farmers. His argument was not that conventional farmers should be made liable in case of drift, but that organic agriculture should not be allowed to take place where drift is possible. The resulting application of this argument would be the elimination of organic agriculture from vulnerable areas. For instance, in southern Germany, where the plots are small and narrow, and where it is often impossible to grow hedges between neighbours, organic production could not exist under these conditions.

Although the stance of Baden-Württemberg Ministry threatens honest and honourable organic producers, there has been only a restrained reaction within the organic movement. The Bundesverband Naturkost Naturwaren (BNN), an association of organic traders and processors, has remained silent in public, which may be due to how the BNN itself is dealing with residues. In 2001 the BNN implemented the 'orientation value', a system in which BNN members sign a contract with their suppliers that the maximum level for residues in organic products would be the 'orientation value'. If a product has a residue level that exceeds the 'orientation

value' it is suspected to be conventional. The BNN 'orientation value' serves as limit. If this limit is exceeded an investigation is carried out to determine the source of the contamination. Apart from two specific substances that have a higher value, the 'orientation value' for pesticides is 0.01 mg/kg. The difference between the BNN position and the Ministry of Baden-Württemberg seems, at first glance, to be quite small. However, the distinction in their attitude is quite substantial in one particular regard: where the BNN suspects fraud, the Ministry insists fraud has taken place. Nevertheless, the approach taken by the Ministry's can be seen as just one step further.

At least the BNN tried to deal with the problem of residues whereas the majority of the organic movement and the certification bodies in Germany do not seem to have a policy to deal with residues.

Recent scandals concerning contamination with chlormequat and nitrofen in Germany have shown that it is not sufficient just to deny the value of analyses in organic agriculture without a system for dealing with contamination. The organic movements need to develop policies that can cope with these issues, whether they occur unexpectedly, as with chlormequat, or are caused by fraud or unacceptable negligence, as in the nitrofen case. If a policy cannot be provided by the organic movement it is quite likely that the view point of reducing organic production to a zero residue production will gain the upper hand. ■

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Where the BNN suspects fraud, the Ministry insists fraud has taken place. ■

## news shorts...

### ISO CONSIDERS RECOMMENDATIONS ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY STANDARDS

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) convened an international advisory group, the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) to address concerns with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). On 17-18 February 2003, SAG met for the second time to develop recommendations. The Advisory Group agreed that it is appropriate for ISO to proceed with:

1. The development of a technical report that includes a survey of the 'state of the art' in the area of social responsibility and identifies issues to be taken into account with input from Advisory Group members in further activities in this area by the ISO.
2. Upon completion of the technical report, the Advisory Group will develop a justification document (Guide 72) for submittal to the Technical Management Board (TMB) to determine whether to proceed with a Management System Guideline Standard that specifically includes a process for self-declaration of conformity, and excludes conformity assessments involving third-party certification.

These recommendations were presented to ISO's TMB. The TMB was free to accept, reject or amend the recommendations at it saw fit. The TMB submitted its

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## Safety and traceability emphasised at Foodex

*At one of Asia's largest annual food and drink shows organic produce has grown beyond its niche status. This year the emphasis was on traceability and safety.*

**F**oodex Japan 2003, one of the biggest food and beverage trade shows in the Asian/Pacific area, held its 28th exhibition at Makuhari Messe in Chiba prefecture, near Tokyo, Japan on 11-14 March. According to the sponsor, over 2,500 companies from 78 countries exhibited at the show and nearly 99,000 visitors attended over the four days.

### Foodex organic corner

Fifteen years ago Foodex promoted only one or two organic products. However, this situation has now completely changed, and no longer do people ask 'What is organic?'. An 'Organic and Natural' corner was initiated a few years ago by Foodex, and at this year's show there was a large number of organic foods on display. The Foodex Organic and Natural corner is smaller than the equivalent in Biofach Japan. This year, however, two of Japan's biggest RCOs (Registered Certification Organizations), JONA and ICS Japan, had big exhibits and their certified products were promoted by their producers and processors. Organic products could also be found in abundance in foreign countries' corners.

### Safety and traceability

Even though most products are produced with the use of additives or

other chemicals, the key theme of this year's trade show was 'Safety and Traceability'. Over the last year, many food labelling problems and issues have emerged in Japan. With Consumers growing suspicious of food labelling, it has become necessary for food handlers, distributors and processors to be able to demonstrate an ability to trace products back to their source.

For several years, exhibitors have highlighted messages such as 'This crop is produced by using organic compost, with low chemical usage', 'Healthy, safe, good for the earth' or 'We buy only from contracted growers, face to face!'

This year, though, many of the exhibitors provided elaborate flow charts to explain the source of their products. Some exhibits even had computer demonstrations to show how they can trace the products', and what type of information they can supply to wholesalers or consumers.

Traceability is a general requirement in organic certification, the level of its implementation, however, is not consistent. The demand for traceability within the conventional sector in Japan will certainly push its development further. ■

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Traceability is a general requirement in organic certification, its implementation, however, is not consistent. ■

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own report to the ISO Council for consideration as a meeting on 13 March 2003. The ISO Council adopted the recommendations. ■

For more information visit: [www.iso.org/iso/en/commcentre/pressreleases/2003/Ref846.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/en/commcentre/pressreleases/2003/Ref846.html) or [www.iisd.org/standards/csr.asp](http://www.iisd.org/standards/csr.asp)

**JAMAICA DEVELOPS ORGANIC CERTIFICATION**

According the Organic Newslines, Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement (JOAM) [www.joam.org.jm](http://www.joam.org.jm) is moving ahead to establish a domestic certification organisation. The consultant, Ulrich Helberg, has been contracted to assist JOAM with the preparation of the draft Organic Production Handbook/Manual, the finalisation of the draft JOAM Organic Standard, and the development of the protocols for the establishment of a JOAM administered Organic Certification Programme in Jamaica. ■

**STANDARDS DROPPED BY DANISH ORGANISATION**

The Danish organic association LOJ decided at its latest general assembly to drop its own standards and inspection system. LOJ has kept its system since the mid-1980s when Denmark installed a governmental certification programme. ■

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CAAEE goes private

*Spain has a system of semi-public or public certification and control organisations linked to the governments of the autonomous regions (see TOS 14, May 2002, page 2-7). Until recently, all seventeen autonomous regions conformed to this system, but in Andalusia the situation has now changed. The Andalusian Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, which is the competent authority for organic certification in Andalusia, has approved a couple of private certification bodies, Sohiscert and Ecal, and has agreed to a change in the legal status of Comité Andaluz de Agricultura Ecológica – i.e. the Andalusian Organic Farming Committee – (CAAEE).*

CAAEE was the semi-public certification body that has operated within Andalusia since its formation in 1991. During the last year CAAEE has been discussing its privatisation with the Andalusian Ministry of Agriculture, and for the last month has gradually been making the change. As part of this privatisation process CAAEE chose to become a non-profit association, and to have a separate unit called CertiCAAEE that is dedicated to certification and control.

On 4 March, 2003, over six months after it was officially registered, CAAEE became the 'Asociación Comité Andaluz de Agricultura Ecológica', though it has kept its acronym 'CAAEE'. The new Association takes care of activities like membership services, publications, promotion of organic farming, education and training, project development, lobbying and communication. Completely separated from these activities, and with a staff exclusively dedicated to it, a separate unit called CertiCAAEE is in charge of certification and control. An important aspect to its new status as an independent non-governmental organisation, is the obligation that CertiCAAEE, like all private certification bodies in the EU, obtains

EN45011 accreditation. The work on this matter is expected to progress quickly.

CAAEE managers are convinced that the formation of CertiCAAEE is the best way to differentiate between the certification tasks and the rest of the organisation's work, and to offer a professional and efficient service to its licensees. The streamlining will also place the certification body in a better position to handle accreditation issues associated with USA and Japanese markets.

Regarding the eternal debate of whether a private or a public certification system is better for the licensees, CertiCAAEE believes that its licensees will not notice a big change. Often the main advantage of a public certification system is that the fees are low or that there are none at all. Unfortunately, despite being dependent on the Public Administration before its privatisation, CAAEE did not receive any funds from its government, and therefore had to charge fees to its licensees. Thus, the Andalusian organic operators will not experience a change in regard to fees. Fees have recently had to be reviewed, but they were not significantly increased, just structured

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# TOS readers are satisfied

*The Organic Standard (TOS) has now been published for two years. At the beginning of this year a survey was conducted to determine readers' opinions of the journal. The results showed general satisfaction.*

All TOS subscribers were sent a questionnaire, distributed by e-mail on 28 February, 2003. Subscribers were asked questions on whether the journal adequately covers relevant issues, and if the country and region features were useful. They were also questioned on what other subjects should be covered and if the journal offers information that is new and sufficiently in-depth. Thirty-two people, or about 20% of TOS subscribers, responded.

### Good and excellent

As many as 40% of the respondents think that TOS achieves excellent coverage of organic standards, certification, accreditation and regulation. Another 54% felt that the coverage is good, 6% chose the statement 'fair' and no-one selected the last two alternatives, poor or bad, to describe the journal's coverage.

Nearly nine out of ten respondents (87%) indicated that the articles in TOS offer new information and perspectives for two thirds or more of the time. One of the respondents com-

mented:

*'The articles ORGANIZE in a coherent fashion, a lot of what I already know. I appreciate that I can read and reference an orderly summary of information!!! Doesn't matter if I already know some of it. I use TOS frequently as a reference for preparing other documents and presentations.'*

Some of the most appreciated articles in the past have been on the following topics:

- Comparison of the major regulations.
- Contact information and statistics for all the government and regulation.
- Problems in Denmark.
- Scandals with organic grains.
- Harmonisation Conference report.
- USDA coverage.

### More on private standards

It was clear that respondents wanted coverage on private standards in organic agriculture to be increased. Other issues are covered more or less to respondents' satisfaction. The countries from Central and Latin America and European countries out-

and widening every year. For instance, livestock production has increased significantly since the approval of the EU Regulation for organic livestock in 1999, and new areas of production such as aquaculture and 'ready-to-eat' food are appearing. In addition, the number of licensees wishing to export to the US and Japan is increasing. Under its new legal sta-

### Facts on TOS subscribers

Total number of subscribers: 174

Estimated number of readers: 500

### Subscribers by region (%)

Africa .....	4
Asia .....	15
Europe .....	53
Latin and Central America .....	5
Middle East .....	2
North America .....	17
Oceania .....	4

### Subscribers by sector (%)

Authority .....	11
Certification .....	31
NGO and international organisation .....	11
Production and trade .....	22
Research and consultant .....	18
Other .....	7

side the EU need more coverage, according to the survey results.

### Good match

Analysis of the respondents shows that there is a good match between the field of activity and region and the actual situation amongst the subscribers (see box above). European readers make up the largest proportion of readers, followed by North American and Asian readers. The certification sector is best represented amongst the readers followed by consultancy. Two

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in a different way.

At the moment CertiCAAE has about 3,800 registered producers managing 240,000 ha, of which most are olive growers, and about 200 processors, many of which are olive oil processors. However, the range of activities of its licensees is very diverse

tus, CertiCAAE will be more independent and efficient in dealing with the new challenges of the certification of organic products in Spain. ■

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## news shorts...

### UK SUPERMARKET TO WITHDRAW ORGANICS LEAFLET

Tesco, a major UK supermarket, is to withdraw a customer education leaflet about organic produce after the Advertising Standards Authority ruled that it was misleading by omission.

After receiving a complaint from a member of the public, the ASA looked into the matter and found that the 'Organic your everyday choice' leaflet implied that organic food was safer and healthier than conventional food.

The ASA said it considered that, although the evidence submitted by Tesco showed organic farming might be the right choice for readers who were concerned about the effect of intensive food production on the environment, the advertisers had not provided evidence that it was the right choice for readers concerned about the effect intensively farmed food might have on their health. The ASA asked Tesco not to repeat the claim unless they held documentary evidence to prove it.

'We are disappointed the ASA had these concerns as we work very hard to ensure information we give our customers is accurate and presented in a factual way,' a Tesco spokesman was quoted as saying by *The Grocer*.

Source: [just-food.com](http://just-food.com)

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thirds of the respondents have read the journal for more than one and a half year.

### What's missing

The section of the survey in which respondents could comment on what they would like to see in the journal contained many good suggestions. To mention just a few:

- More survey and reporting on trade disruptions due to organic regulations.
- More information on issues of fair trade, and whether organic farmer farmers in the less developed countries are getting any economic benefits from growing products for developed country consumers.
- *The Organic Standard* tends to be a bit shy of IFOAM issues – for example harmonisation – understandably this is necessary to provide good balanced journalism but perhaps you are being over cautious.

- Reporting on current scandals could be better. We need to know how the various systems are failing.

### Better journal

From the TOS editors' point of view, the survey results are very encouraging. It could be argued that thirty-two respondents are too few to provide a sound basis for making extensive conclusions, especially as the responding subscribers are likely to be those most interested in the journal and most likely to give positive responses. However, the satisfactory results are a good indication, and will be used to make TOS even better in the future. ■

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### More feedback please

TOS encourages readers to provide feedback on how to improve the journal. Please send any comments to [assignment@organicstandard.com](mailto:assignment@organicstandard.com).

#### ADVERTISEMENT

## Certification Manager Training

### One-week training course for certification managers

#### Target group:

Persons in charge of newly established certification organisations.

#### Date:

28 July to 1 August, 2003.

#### Place:

Torfolk, Värmland, Sweden.

#### Main trainer:

Gunnar Rundgren, Grolink AB.

#### Fee:

1,600 Euros, including training, training materials, food and accommodation.

More info: [gunnar@grolink.se](mailto:gunnar@grolink.se)

The training includes both theory and practice and will give the needed basic information for running an organic certification organisation.

The number of participants are limited to six. The training is conducted in English.

The fee does not include travel to the training centre or insurance for the travel and the stay in Sweden.

## Grolink

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# The people that create TOS

## Gunnar Rundgren

Organic farmer since 1977. Chief Executive Officer of Grolink AB (www.grolink.se).



Initiator of several organisations for organic agriculture in Sweden, including KRAV, the certification programme of which he was the Director for the first eight years (1985-1993). From 1994 to 1998 Gunnar managed the international inspections for KRAV, performing inspections of everything from coffee to textiles in twelve different countries. Served as the first President of the IFOAM Accreditation Programme Board (now the IOAS) 1992-1997. IFOAM World Board member from 1998 and IFOAM President from 2000 to the present. *Publisher of The Organic Standard.*

## Ong Kung Wai

Social worker with Biodynamic Agriculture and Rural Development train-

ing. Studied and worked in Asia, Europe and USA (1981-1993) before settling back in Malaysia in 1993. Now works as consultant, also serves as Chairperson of Organic Alliance Malaysia, Management Committee member of ACT Control, an Asian regional inspection service, IOAS Board member since 1996 and IFOAM Norms Management Committee member. *Assigning editor of The Organic Standard.*

## Joy Michaud

Trained as an agricultural scientist with a PhD in Grassland Agronomy. After working in research and extension in UK, USA and the Caribbean moved to the UK with her



husband in 1989 to become an organic grower, eventually specialising in chilli pepper production, and running a photographic business selling pictures of organic agricultural systems. Joy's editing work started with a current affairs book publishing company, where she initiated and ran its pro-environmental journal. She was editor of the Soil Association's technical journal from 1995 to 1999, as well as the organisation's technical bulletins; and has been the editor of IFOAM's English language magazine, *Ecology and Farming* from 1999 to the present. *Editor of The Organic Standard.*

## TOS office staff:



*Christina Holmberg* handles the subscriptions and the distributions of TOS. She is an assistant at Grolink AB in Sweden.

*Pelle Fredriksson* takes care of the Public Relations and Marketing of TOS. He is a Swedish consultant in the Grolink AB consultancy network.



## TOS correspondents

*As well as experts in their field being asked to write on various topics, TOS has regular correspondents covering regions and subjects throughout the world.*

*The correspondents are listed below.*

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Africa: Francophone and other areas

Coordinator of Agrecol Afrique, a NGO that provides training and information in organic agriculture. Duties include training producers to help access external markets and explore the local opportunities for the internal market.

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Teaches agriculture at a Chinese university and is also active in organic inspection and certification.

*continued overpage*

*TOS correspondents continued*

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Beate Huber e-mail: Beate.Huber@fiBL.de EU: Germany	Director of FiBL Berlin e.V. (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture), Consultant in regard to certification, accreditation in the EU, Eastern Europe and Asia, board member of IOAS
Eva Matsson e-mail: eva@grolink.se EU: Commission & Regulation, IFOAM accreditation and standards	Consultant engaged in assisting with the development of local certifying bodies in Uganda, Tanzania and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Has worked with standards and certification in Sweden and internationally for over ten years.
Gunnar Rundgren e-mail: gunnar@grolink.se EU: Nordic & Baltic regions	See page 19
John Dalby e-mail: john.dalby@mac1inet.co.uk EU: UK	Currently a consultant in organic certification, having worked in the organic sector for twenty-two years as a grower, inspector, advisor and certification manager.
Nuria Alonso e-mail: nuria_alonso44@hotmail.com EU: Spain & Portugal	Degree in agriculture. Born in Spain, but most part of education and work experience in organic issues in the UK and elsewhere. Consultant specialising in international organic certification and accreditation.
Gabriella Soto e-mail: gabisoto@racsa.co.cr Latin America: Central America	As a soil ecologist conducted research on compost and soil ecology on organic farms at CATIE. Organic inspector, President of the National Organic Certification Agency Eco-LOGICA, and Inspector Training Coordinator for IOIA.
Fernanda Ffonseca e-mail: ffonseca@webcorner.com.br Latin America: South America	Researcher on socio-economic and public policies for development, member of National Organic Production Board, small farmer.
Cristina Neves e-mail: cpneves@cnpab.embrapa.br Latin America: Brazil	Director of EMBRAPA, the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture research institute, and a member to the Brazilian Board of Organic Agriculture. Worked on developing the organic sector in Brazil.
Lynn Coody e-mail: LynnCoody@cs.com North America: USA (include NOP) & Canada	Manages a consulting business, Organic Ag Systems, that focuses on assisting certification bodies to comply with the US National Organic Program, ISO 65, and other conformance assessment systems.
Tim Marshall e-mail: timmar@box.net.au Pacific: Australia, NZ	Co-founder of NASAA and a member of many industry and government committees on organic issues. Currently, an environmental trainer and writer, and an organic certification consultant in Australia, Asia and the Pacific.
Rod May e-mail: capck@netconnect.com.au Pacific: Codex/Australia	A farmer – vegetables (mainly potatoes), fruit (apples etc), nuts, livestock and organic grapes and wine – chairman of the Organic Federation of Australia and a member of the NASAA Board.

# The organic seed rule

## Damaging and unnecessary

*A few years ago the EU Regulation introduced a standard requiring certified producers to use organic seed. Many in the European organic movement seem to accept the standard unquestioningly, and are now struggling to conform to its requirements. Others have complained about the standard, but its validity has never been seriously questioned. The following piece is a personal opinion that challenges the place of a organic seed rule in organic standards.*

When organic standards were first developed they were clearly a positive step for the fledgling organic movement. A lot has happened since those early days, most of which has been to the benefit of the organic movement. However, today the organic movement has become a highly regulated international industry, and there is a danger that one of its tools, that of standard-setting, is becoming too intrusive. A classic example of standard setting going 'too far' is the rule on organic seed. This standard is one of the most irresponsible and short-sighted steps taken in the name of 'organic integrity'.

To have merit an organic standard must fulfil two criteria. It must be based on good science and, equally importantly, must contribute to the perception of the products' 'organic-ness'. The organic seed standard does neither. Moreover it has very serious implications and full compliance to this rule will be detrimental to the organic movement worldwide.

### The scientific argument

To consider the scientific argument it is first necessary to define a 'seed'. A seed is simply a package of genetic information wrapped and delivered in a small amount of plant tissue. It is

the genetic material that has value and is what a farmer is seeking to obtain with every seed purchase. This genetic material is the plants' fundamental building plans, and – provided the variety has been bred through a natural process, *i.e.* is not a GMO – at this molecular level the concept of 'organic' or 'non-organic' is quite irrelevant. The genetic details in a seed will not be altered or influenced in any way by the management system under which its immediate parents were raised<sup>1</sup>.

So what is 'organic seed'? Organic seed means that the parent plants were grown under certified organic management. In other words, the seeds' 'packaging', the plant tissue carrying the genetic material, is certified organic. But why is this seen as essential?

Organic standards have always listed prohibited substances that are deemed to be so bad for the environment that on no account can they be allowed into an organic system. However, standards have never tried to completely eliminate every single non-organic element from organic farms or from organic food. Non-organic manures, animal feed, and

plant-based mulches are all examples of products that, under certain circumstances, are all allowed on organic farms. Water is another example. Standards make little attempt to control the source of water for irrigation or livestock drinking troughs.

Why has seed tissue been singled out as a special case? Unlike manure, mulches, feeds and water the physical quantities of plant tissue related to seeds that could be introduced onto a farm are minuscule. Contamination with a prohibited substance from seed tissue is also highly improbable. Non-organic seed does not mean 'treated' seed. Treated seed, *i.e.* seed coated with a fungicide, quite rightly should be prohibited. Non-organic, untreated seed will have had nothing applied to it, although undesirable pesticides and fertilisers may have been applied to its growing parents. Can anyone be genuinely worried that in any credible way non-organic seed will contaminate the land? This rule makes less sense than prohibiting visitors on organic farms because of the non-organic mud on their boots.

### Organic integrity not enhanced

If the scientific basis for the standard is weak, the argument that it will improve the perception of organic-ness is equally unconvincing. Do consumers care? They might be concerned about non-organic feed given to livestock; that a cow raised non-organically can be 'converted' to produce organic milk; that non-organic day-old chicks can be bought and later sold as organic; or even that fair trade is not an integral part of most organic standards. But whether producers use organic seed or not is hardly an issue

1. 'Organic seed' should not be confused with seed of varieties that have been bred through an organic breeding programme. The organic status of a seed is simply a statement of how the immediate parents were raised. Any seed variety (except GMO seed), including seed from organic breeding programmes, is only 'organic' when it is produced by a registered organic seed producer.

## news shorts...

### NEW IMPORT REGULATIONS FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTS IN SWITZERLAND

On 1 January 2003 new Swiss requirements for the import of organic products came into effect. These adaptations were made in response to changes in the requirements of the EU-Regulation, which came into force on 1 November 2002. The Swiss law requires that all consignments are accompanied by a certificate. The certificates for imports had been revised. ■

*The adapted version of the regulation can be found on [www.admin.ch/ch/d/as/2002/4292.pdf](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/as/2002/4292.pdf)*

### ACTION PLAN FOR ORGANIC FOOD AND FARMING

In order to develop an 'Action Plan for organic food and farming', the EU Commission invited stakeholder organisations and citizens to give their opinion on the proposals made in a Commission working document as well as to submit further ideas. ■

*The results of the recent consultation are now online at: <http://europa.eu.int/y>*

consumers care about. What about producers? Do they feel the use of organic seed improves the quality of organic standards? Many complain about conforming to the standard, but support for is resoundingly lacking.

### Damaging to the organic movement

The arguments for the need of this standard are lacking, while its relevance to the organic integrity of any product is clearly missing. Its implementation, however, does have serious implications. It is damaging to the fundamental principles organic farming systems. Organic farming is about diversity. Until now organic standards have worked with nature rather than against it, encouraging biodiversity in every way they can. The organic seed requirement takes a radically different approach; it is restrictive, discouraging biodiversity at all levels. In a system where only certified organic seed can be used, the enormous wealth of varieties available to all farmers is unavailable to organic farmers. Organic farmers cannot even collect their own seed, naturally selected to be adapted to the farm's environment, unless their business is registered for organic seed production.

While biodiversity is good for life in general it is also the basis of organic pest and disease control. The greater number of varieties grown, each with their own individual response to a pest or disease, the less likely any pathogen will become a problem. Varieties can be chosen for a particular resistance or for any morphological or adaptive characteristic that make them limit the spread of pathogens on a particular holding. As a general rule of thumb, the more spe-

cies and varieties grown on a holding the greater the potential health of all the crops. Where does that leave organic farmers whose choices are limited to varieties pre-chosen by seed companies?

Which brings up the question of how seed companies select varieties for organic seed production. Seed companies are commercial businesses, so organic seed, which is expensive to produce, must make money. Even dedicated organic seed companies running on genuinely philanthropic lines must make enough money to be in business. It is highly unlikely that seed companies could ever justify producing organic seed of obscure varieties, so effectively only popular varieties of common place crops will be available as organic.

Farming communities, the world over, tend to be conservative. However, in every region there are normally a few innovative individuals, prepared to experiment with new ideas and take risks in the pursuit of learning. Organic farmers are often these pioneers; open-minded and ready to improve their craft. But the organic seed rule creates a situation that prevents the use of any crop until it has become mainstream, and discourages experimentation with new techniques because of high seed costs. In short, it develops an environment that encourages organic farmers to be mediocre instead of exceptional, followers instead of leaders.

And what of farmers in developing countries? The organic movement is becoming more global, and third world producers are learning the value of organic systems for improving their own environment while benefiting

The organic seed rule creates a situation that encourages organic farmer to be mediocre instead of exceptional. ■

## Manager of new certification body

Maida Hadziomerovic has been employed as the manager of Organska Kontrola (OK), the recently founded certification organisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Maida has been working for the Agriculture Institute in Sarajevo at the plant protection department. She received training in organic inspection and certification from IMO, KRAV and Grolink AB, and has been working as a local inspector for KRAV since 2001.



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from the enormous markets in richer countries. Standards, inspections and certification are both the key and the threat to encouraging this development. Acknowledging this, certification bodies are addressing the issues with programmes like group certification, and many are collectively working with IFOAM through a series of workshops. However, the organic seed requirement could threaten all these positive advances. How can producers in developing countries hope to acquire certified organic seed?

Derogations are not the answer. Derogations are only justified for a limited period. If a standard has to depend on a system of derogations to function in the long-term then there is a flaw in its conception.

The world environment, human health, and ultimately food security, will benefit as more farmers adopt organic principles. The role of the organic movement should be to nurture this development, creating conditions that give farmers the confidence to

turn to organic methods. Certification is simply the icing on the cake, giving the produce a competitive advantage over conventional counterparts; certification should never be the ultimate goal. Likewise, standards are valuable as a tool, but used irresponsibly will create an exclusive rather than an inclusive mentality, and will ensure that the organic club will always remain a niche movement.

Clearly some standards are better than others, but the organic seed standard is a truly bad standard. Its introduction does not improve the 'organic-ness' of any product, and it will hold the organic movement to ransom, hold it back rather than progress it further. Biodiversity, so essential to the natural environment and healthy biosystems, requires unrestricted choice. To ensure a dynamic organic world, choice for seeds and animal sperm should never be restricted. Any one who believes otherwise does not understand the basis of organic production. ■

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