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## Comment on the newly published EU Action Plan

*Fifteen EU Member States already had one, and now the European Union also has one – an Action Plan for organic farming. Many of the EU Member States have quantitative targets in their plans, e.g. Sweden and Germany want 20% of their farmland to be organic by 2005 and 2010 respectively. The EU plan sets no such targets. It contains policy statements and proposed actions in markets, public policy, standards and inspections. The most interesting sections are those on inspections and standards, and for TOS readers outside the EU, proposals for a new system for import approval and accreditation of certification bodies. The omission of concrete actions on GMOs is seen as a shortcoming by the sector.*

From the outset EU organic policy has focused on regulating the sector. This emphasis was maintained in the Action Plan: out of a total of 21 presented actions, 14 are concerned with standards and control. Almost no new resources are allocated to organic agriculture, but the Commission claims that organic farming could and should get more out of existing programmes.

The Action Plan recognises that organic farming has dual roles:

- It creates a market for organic products so consumers can finance a production system they wish to support.
- It delivers public goods, primarily environmental benefits, that can be financed by public means.

According to the EU Commission these dual roles should be kept in

mind when designing policies for the organic sector.

### Campaign for the EU logo

In the market place, the plan calls for 'information-led demand'. Normally market campaigns within the EU are expected to be co-financed by the sector or the Member States. However, within the organic sector the Commission suggests that all the financing, particularly in regard to the campaign for the EU logo, should be provided by the Commission. National, private sector and governmental labelling schemes are still a major hurdle for a true free circulation of organic products in the EU, and it is known that many in the Commission would like to make the EU organic logo mandatory for organic products. However, there is resistance to this from both the stakeholders and many Member

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