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## Common Code for the coffee community

### An ambitious project for the mainstream market

*In Hamburg, Germany, on 10 September 2004, an international alliance from the coffee sector sealed a radical agreement to improve sustainability in the whole 'green' coffee chain.*

In January 2003 a multi-stakeholder initiative to produce a 'Common Code for the Coffee Community' was started by the German Coffee Association (DKV) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), on behalf of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The code will be open to voluntary participation by all stakeholders in the coffee chain who comply with its principles of sustainability. The principles, which are built on the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, have a social, an environmental and an economic dimension.

The just finalised draft code of conduct is the result of more than seventy representatives from the coffee industry, including farmers and those acting for trade and industry, non-governmental organizations and unions, working together for 18 months. The fact that big industries like Nestlé, Kraft Foods and Sara Lee have co-operated in the project gives great expectations for the future implementation of the code.

The code is now entering the implementation phase and is to be piloted around the world. Currently on-

going projects are present in Ethiopia, Uganda, Vietnam and El Salvador, and more countries are to follow.

#### Accessing the code system

Provided a group is organized into a sufficiently large unit (Common Code Unit) it can enter the system. A definition of a 'sufficiently large unit' is given by the National Common Code Body and the International Common Code Managing Body.

The first step in joining the scheme is to make a self assessment. This is a declaration of having received, read, understood and accepted the relevant documents as well as having excluded all 'Unacceptable Practices'. The next step includes verification of the self assessment by an independent third-party. Verification is carried out by checking compliance with the requirements of the code and rating the performance of the applicant. The third-party verifier must be approved and registered by the National Common Code Body concerned.

If the verification is successful and all participants along the chain are found acceptable the coffee can be marketed as Common Code coffee.

## news shorts...

### US ORGANIC FARMERS FEAR GMO CONTAMINATION

Nearly half of the US organic farmers surveyed by the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) consider the risk of contamination of their crops by GMOs to be low, while 30% see it as a 'high to very high' risk.

Since 1993, OFRF has conducted four nationwide surveys of certified organic farmers. These surveys represent the only effort to assess organic farmers' research and information needs, and to collect general demographic data about organic farmers across the US. OFRF's latest survey results were published in July 2004. *The Fourth National Organic Farmers' Survey: Sustaining Organic Farms in a Changing Organic Marketplace* is based on a 22-page questionnaire sent to certified organic farmers throughout the US, with 1,034 (18%) farmers responding. Although much of the survey is about production and marketing, here just results about GMOs are reported.

Just 2% of respondents said that they had lost sales due to actual or perceived GM contamination; 1% had lost their certification as a result of GM presence. Most farmers had never done any GMO testing, while one fifth of them had been asked to do testing by their certification body;

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### The Matrix

The core of the code is the 'matrix', which is used for assessing performance in terms of sustainability. In the matrix the social, environmental and economic dimensions are divided into categories, principles and criteria.

*Categories:* refer to the main aspects of production, post-harvest processing and trading of 'green' coffee, such as 'freedom of association' in the social dimension, or 'biodiversity' in the environmental dimension.

*Principles:* positive statements indicating the desired performance, such as 'Workers and producers have the right to establish, belong to and be represented by an independent organisation of their choice.'

*Criteria:* statements that apply to any Common Code Unit assessed to the scheme. The criteria, divided into red, green and yellow, are called the traffic light system. Red indicates that current practice must be discontinued; yellow indicates a practice that needs to be further improved within a transitional period; green reflects a desirable practice.

### Average yellow is enough

The code aims at achieving a continuous improvement through using the 'traffic lights system'. When a Common Code Unit has a Principle that has been given a red or yellow status it must change its performance. This improvement is to be stated in the management plan made up on the basis of a successful verification. The management plan should state how the Unit intends to eliminate all the 'reds' in an individually defined period of time, but within a maximum of two years. A re-verification checks the level of compliance with the Common

Code, monitors the continuous improvement process and allows a constant development of management plans.

But within this inclusive system of the Common Code, unsustainable practices as formulated in the red criteria are acceptable, if there is at least the same number of green criteria in the same dimension. This would result in an 'average' yellow, which is an acceptable performance level until next assessment round. If verification fails, the Common Code Unit loses its licence to supply Common Code coffee until it once again successfully passes verification.

### Third party audit

The whole system of verification is to be audited by independent third-party auditors, who must be registered and approved by the International Common Code Managing Body. The auditor will conduct unannounced random audits at all levels, including individual producers, the Common Code Unit and even the National Common Code Body, to verify their performance.

### Still developing

The Common Code for the Coffee Community is an interesting scheme under development. There are still some things that remain unclear. For instance, there is no mention about financing the different bodies involved, nor of the cost to the individual Common Code Unit of engaging in the scheme. The whole concept is dependent on a consumer demand for Common Code coffee; and all participating parties are committed to promoting the scheme, lets see how well they manage. ■

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*More information about can be found at:  
[www.sustainable-coffee.net](http://www.sustainable-coffee.net)*

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17% had tested their seed. Less than one in ten (8%) of the farmers claimed to have some extra costs related to GMOs, such as those for testing.

The sources of contamination rated to be the most likely were pollen drift and contamination of seed. Almost half of the farmers had taken active measures to prevent GMO contamination, of which the most common were:

- Communication with neighbours about GMO risks (24%)
- Increased buffer zone (19%)
- Discontinued use of some inputs (18%)
- Adjusted timing of planting (15%)

Finally, 55% of the farmers considered the regulatory framework around GMOs to be inadequate – surprisingly few in our mind. ■

The full report is available at [www.ofrf.org/publications/survey](http://www.ofrf.org/publications/survey)

## WORLD ORGANIC NEWS IS BURIED

The high quality bulletin on organic world markets, the *World Organic News* (WON) will cease to exist in November. The publisher was Agra Europe, a publishing house specialised in agriculture and food publications and conferences. Subscribers to WON are offered a subscription of *Eurofood*, which will feature a world organics section. ■

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## IOAS gain recognition by US Government agency

*The International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) recently announced its formal recognition by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), under their National Voluntary Conformity Assessment System Evaluation (NVCASE). Given that NIST is an agency of the US Department of Commerce, this represents a breakthrough in the IOAS' quest for formal government recognition of the accreditation work they perform. TOS asked David Crucefix of the IOAS about the recognition and its implications.*

**TOS:** *When did the IOAS learn about NIST and what led the IOAS to apply?*

**David Crucefix (DC):** I like to think of the NIST recognition of the IOAS as one of the legacies of Suzanne Vaupel, an American lawyer and previous Vice President of IFOAM who sadly died of cancer last year. During her work researching and preparing an IFOAM discussion paper in 2001 on standards setting, conformity assessment and the position of IFOAM in this wider world, she came across NIST. Suzanne, together with our Vice President Roger Blobaum, was involved in some early exploratory meetings held between NIST and IOAS to understand the role and function of the NVCASE programme and to clarify its relevance to us. She would have been very proud to hear of our recognition.

To explain what persuaded us to apply to NIST, we need to go some way back in IOAS history. As a non-government, international, sector-specific accreditor, IOAS has never fitted the general mould of the national

accreditors and the perspective of many governments that accreditation is a job for designated public or quasi-public bodies. Consequently, since its creation in 1998, the IOAS has continuously had to fight to demonstrate its competence to the regulators. It was felt that a stamp of approval from some higher authority would provide credibility to the IOAS allowing the regulators to use its work. Two routes seemed available to us; application to the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the NIST NVCASE programme. We decided to do both.

**TOS:** *The IOAS applied for NIST evaluation of accreditation to IFOAM Norms and ISO/IEC Guide 65. NIST, presumably, was not familiar with IFOAM Norms at the time. What gave the IOAS the confidence that NIST would be able to carry out a credible evaluation?*

**DC:** The NIST NVCASE programme operates much like an accreditor; in fact it is perhaps the nearest process there is to an accreditation of

It was felt that a stamp of approval from some higher authority would provide credibility to the IOAS. ■

## news shorts...

### JAPAN TO INTRODUCE ACCREDITATION FOR FOREIGN CERTIFICATION BODIES

The current system for recognition of foreign-based certification bodies for organic imports into Japan is based on the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture in Japan (MAFF) has established equivalence with the country where the foreign body has its head office. Apparently Japan is now exploring a system that would allow foreign certification bodies to apply directly to MAFF for approval or accreditation. Such a system is currently in place in the USA. The recent EU action plan has also proposed that the EU adopts such a system. To implement the system MAFF will develop more detailed criteria.

It is likely that the current system will be kept, so that an extra option is created. There are also discussions between the IOAS and MAFF about possible cooperation. ■

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accreditors. The NVCASE programme was set up to facilitate trade and to provide foreign regulators and buyers the confidence that US conformity assessment is conducted to international standards. Therefore, the NVCASE programme can accept applications in any field and brings in relevant experts to provide the appropriate technical perspective. This is what happened in our case and we were very happy with the conduct of the evaluation.

**TOS:** *Can you elaborate on the NIST process?*

**DC:** IOAS applied to NIST in late 2002, but under the NVCASE procedures a specific sub-programme for the application had to be established, and this took most of 2003. This involved a public hearing at which various interested parties including USDA were in attendance. The evaluation itself did not commence until February 2004. The two NIST evaluators reviewed our quality documentation and then looked at reality on the ground through a witness audit of one of our own evaluation visits followed by a visit to our head office. We had to make some small amendments to our document system, which were accepted in July, and the final panel decision was made at the end of August.

**TOS:** *Were there any surprises?*

**DC:** It was certainly an interesting experience being on the other side of an audit; having outside eyes scrutinise your system and work is always revealing. Having said that, our policy and procedures and work methods are constantly being improved through our own internal audits and reviews,

so we were well prepared. The issues that NIST raised were relatively minor, mainly document issues, which we fixed within a short period of time

**TOS:** *Is that the end of NIST's work or do they continue to monitor IOAS performance in some way?*

**DC:** The NIST approval is for two years during which they require a quite rigorous surveillance programme involving IOAS reporting every four months followed by a teleconference with IOAS staff. In addition, each year NIST will conduct a further witness audit by different evaluators and of different IOAS clients. In two years time, we will undergo a full re-evaluation. So the recognition is subject to continuous monitoring.

**TOS:** *The USDA's attitude to the international organic movement, including the IOAS, has sometimes been described as aloof and cold. I understand the USDA was consulted by NIST on the IOAS's application and could have objected if they wanted to. Does this signal a thaw?*

**DC:** Like any government department, the USDA will have conflicting constituencies to respond to. The IOAS has, however, tried to remain outside organic politics to a large extent and to do its job as an independent body. In fact, we pride ourselves on that. I think the USDA already recognised IOAS' competence, and the NIST recognition can only build on that. USDA personnel not only attended the NIST public meeting but were supportive of our moving forward with the process.

For our part we will continue seeking to liaise with the USDA and other

The issues that NIST raised were relatively minor, which were fixed within a short period of time. ■

## news shorts...

### ORGANIC STANDARD OPEN FOR REVIEW

Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA) is calling for recommendations for modifications to its Organic Standard – Version 7, which will be in first draft form by November. Industry members are also invited to comment at this time. A final draft will be available early next year, with Version 7 formally coming online shortly afterwards.

The Organic Standard is the Australian organic industry's most referenced text and applies to the majority of the organic industry. The Organic Standard is managed by BFA on behalf of its members, and proudly protects this Standard to ensure it remains firmly in the industry's hands – ensuring a practical standard. Feedback and comment from members during this time is important to ensure that BFA is able to continue to service the interests of needs of members. ■

*Members should send comments (secretary@bfa.com.au) to the National Office. Messages should be marked for the attention of BFA Organic Standards Committee – comments for Version 7 draft.*

*Source: BFA newsletter*

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governments to provide ever more effective regulation of the organic sector. That is all that matters.

**TOS:** *What does the IOAS expect from NIST's recognition? Does it constitute official recognition by the US government of both the IOAS and the IFOAM Accreditation Programme? Will it presage the USDA and other regulators' recognition of the IOAS and IFOAM Accreditation?*

**DC:** There are no guarantees and it is difficult to predict the reaction of organic regulators around the world. Essentially, NIST is a recognition of the competence of the IOAS (as judged against ISO61) to conduct accreditation against IFOAM Norms and ISO65. Nothing more, nothing less. The assessment was done by a government agency and this should answer the doubts from some regulators as to 'where IOAS gets its authority' or 'who oversees the IOAS'. Before we could only say, 'we have earned and demonstrated our competence and authority'. Now we have an independent US government body declaring that the IOAS operates to international standards and NIST will continue to monitor that the IOAS do so. National accreditors are given their authority by government. Now there should be no obstacles for a regulator to recognise IOAS competence.

The NIST recognition however, makes no judgement on IFOAM Accreditation in that it makes no assessment of the Norms themselves. How the Norms are seen by regulators is a separate issue, and is being addressed through the work of the International Task Force on Harmonisation. That the IFOAM Norms are a harmonising force is of little doubt. The will or interest of national and regional governments to use them as such is another matter.

**TOS:** *How will the NIST recognition affect the IOAS application for IAF membership?*

**DC:** Again difficult to predict the reaction of the group of national accreditors that make up the IAF and who have ultimate say over whether the IOAS application will be accepted. We hope that our NIST recognition will help them appreciate that we are doing a similar job, have common interests and that our membership will be a mutual benefit.

**TOS:** *Are there any other options the IOAS is still considering in terms of achieving recognition?*

**DC:** Whatever the decision on IAF membership, there is little more we could do beyond the NIST recognition to formally prove our competence. Having said that, working together is a human process and we are continuously looking to liaise with both government bodies and national accreditors, to let them observe what we do, to do joint audits and to share information. Some of these efforts have already borne fruit and we invite any regulator or accreditor to discuss with us ideas for collaboration to the benefit of the organic industry. We are also taking an active part in the work of the International Task Force on Harmonisation as this is an ideal forum to link with the various stakeholders in the organic regulatory system. ■

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## news shorts...

### ETHICAL ORGANIC CERTIFICATION NOW AVAILABLE

A breakfast cereal was the first product to be awarded the Ethical Trading mark of the Soil Association. The Organic Standard has earlier reported on the long road Soil Association has walked in developing a fair trade standard. First the SA tried to team up with the UK-based Fairtrade Foundation to introduce a joint scheme for fair trade applicable not only in the South as with traditional fair trade schemes, but also in the North. But opposition from the international Fair trade movement was hard and the Fairtrade Foundation pulled out. In order not to annoy the Fair Trade Movement the SA then opted for its own system under the flag of 'Ethical Trade'. Clare Marriage of Doves Farm, the company receiving the first certification told *World Organic News* that 'Ethical Organic offers a secure trading relationship for the farmer and guarantees a profit on the crop, which is very important for the long term future of British farming'. The SA plans to process a handful of applications for Ethical Organic certification. ■

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## Verifying organic status of foodservice operations

### Reflecting on a number of factors

*Foodservice operations, i.e. businesses that provide cooked meals to the public, have now been certified as organic in a number of countries such as Australia, USA, Switzerland, Sweden and the UK. These certifications are based on standards according to private certifying bodies. However, foodservice operations work under conditions very different to the vast majority of certified operations, and few are willing to take the organic-only option. While the market is underdeveloped it is wise to take a look at the consequences of certain elements being discussed and applied today.*

**F**oodservice operations are very varied, covering any business that provides food ready for consumption to the public. This includes anything from restaurants to hospitals, catering and schools. Over and above this heterogeneity there are mixed operations such as bakeries with an adjoining cafe or butchers with a midday menu. In addition, a single operation may have several outlets.

Most inspection bodies have their roots in agriculture. In time, they gained experience inspecting processing industries in which food is produced according to recipes and done in batches for storage. Foodservice operations, however, with their fast ingredient turnover and daily changing menus are very different to processing operations. Of the operations currently inspected bakeries, and butchers are closest to foodservice operators, though they also produce according to recipes and in batches; and while their product turnover may be higher than other processors it is not

as high, as rapid or as extensive as in commercial kitchens. To gain the trust of an operator an inspector needs to know something about the business. Few people in the organic certifying business are familiar with the foodservice sector, a failing that could result in a lack of affinity to the foodservice industry, causing much damage and frightening away prospective clients.

#### How organic?

Within a food service operation there are three factors that are relevant to certification:

- How organic produce is integrated into the operation's menu – does it offer full organic menus, or just an organic line, meal or dish?
- How long and how frequently is the organic offer available? Is the food sourced because it is a seasonal offer or because the operation is having an organic day or week? Or does the operation strive to offer organic menu/lines/meals/dishes all the time?

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### ANOTHER 000 STANDARD

As reported in TOS 23, the ISO is developing a standard for Food Safety Management System; the ISO 22000. The number and the name indicate its close relationship with the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 series.

The new standard is in its final draft stage, and industries and certification bodies are already picking it up. Main points in the management system is that it aims to enhance consumer satisfaction through effective control of food safety. It requires a demonstrable ability to control food safety hazards in order to consistently provide safe end products that meet both the requirements of the customer and of food regulations. The ISO 22000 applies to all kind of organisations within the food chain, from farmers to food services.

The new standard is a response to numerous national initiatives to develop food safety standards, *e.g.* in the Netherlands, Denmark and Australia. The standard intends to integrate the widespread HACCP standards and plans. It is also said to be easily integrated with an ISO 9001:2000 management system, not forcing companies to apply parallel systems.

As a side effect of this ISO venture a closer cooperation between the ISO and Codex

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- How much organic produce is sourced? What is the relative volume of organic produce to total volume of produce used by the operation.

In an operation that is fully organic, every ingredient or raw material sourced should be organic – or 95% of it all. This approach makes it very simple for the certifier, but in practice happens very, very seldom. Certifiers may be tempted to insist on this approach for organic food-services, but then the market would effectively be killed off. Not only would foodservice operations avoid this system, those using some organic produce in mixed operations would probably stop altogether.

A simplest approach is when an operation sells organic foodstuffs but does not process, change or transform it in any way, not even by changing the packaging. Examples of this include a food kiosk or hospital catering set-up where guests can buy pre-packaged snacks. Some canteens may sell individual fruit, and currently no-one verifies this type of set-up. Trade in organic produce on restaurant premises is usually found in combination with the use of organic produce in the operation.

A slightly different situation is found in country or farm restaurants that sell their own products on the premises. Usually this involves small scale production and may include home-made preserves, jams, cakes *etc.*, which are not necessarily certified organic and may even include wild sourcing or produce from an (uncertified) own garden. Here too, trade in organic produce coincides

with the use of organic produce in the operation. In such a case the production may be included in the inspection.

Yet another situation is when organic produce incorporated in a buffet. Many inspectors are of the opinion that if a consumer can see the source of a foodstuff for themselves *e.g.* if jam is left in its original jar, if muesli is left in the original package or breakfast cereals in the original box, then no certification is necessary because consumers can see for themselves. Such approaches are often used in hotels offering breakfast buffets.

### Organic food according to set recipes

The lack of set recipes in foodservice operations is a market reality that has to be taken into account when trying to follow product flow. Where recipes are used, operators often need to change them due to short-term supply shortages. Such flexibility is a sector reality. Some inspection systems have tried to force foodservice operators to inform them of every change to every recipe with the consequence of a dead market.

### Organic produce incorporated 'willy-nilly'

While UK's Soil Association was testing its guidelines for restaurants and caterers, which focus on menu claims, some leading chefs were quoted as preferring verification of organic status as a percentage rating. In theory such an audit is possible provided the product stream can be followed. However, what does a 50% organic operation mean exactly? The degree has to be related to some unit that has some relevance to the usual menu of an

What does a 50% organic operation mean exactly?

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Alimentarius has emerged.

Furthermore, the same technical committee that has developed the ISO 22000 has also developed a standard for traceability (ISO 22519), which is out for a vote. ■

### THAI ACCREDITATION BODY OFFERS ACCREDITATION TO EU REG AND ISO65

The newly established Thai government accreditation body, the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS) launched its organic accreditation programme last month (September). Amongst the accreditation scopes offered is accreditation to the EU regulation 2092/91 and ISO65. Evaluation of ACT, a Thai private sector organic certification body, was carried out recently. ACFS also plans to offer accreditation to the NOP as well as IFOAM norms. Grolink, a consultancy company specialising in organic agriculture development was commissioned to assist in the development of the ACFS accreditation programme and training of staff. ■

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operation, e.g. an operation could claim a status of 50% organic by weight. A rating of 50% organic by turnover would simply state the amount of organic products bought, but not what is going into the food produced by the operation, which is often more important for public relations efforts. Percentage organic perhaps relates best to sourcing as in 50% of the value of the ingredients sourced is organic. Even then it may be slightly misleading as a consumer may think the restaurant is 'half organic' whereas it may be slightly less than half as organic products are usually more expensive than conventional products.

If a certifier found out that more organic produce goes into the system than is sold it would imply a loss for the operation but it would not be an issue for the organic integrity. However, if a certifier found out that more organic produce was being sold than actually being sourced, that would be fraudulent.

At the end of the day it is about being able to verify what is being claimed. That is the underlying principle, which is why such claims as 'Almost all our ingredients are organic' or 'We strive to use organic ingredients whenever we can' cannot be checked or verified in a certification system.

In foodservice operations organic produce may be used on a daily, weekly or seasonal basis. The shorter the period of use and the more frequent the changes, the more difficult it is for the inspector, especially when the inspection takes place only once or twice a year. This is especially relevant where there is almost parallel

use of a product, e.g. organic strawberries this week, conventional strawberries the following week.

### The labelling issue

*Organic dish or meal: e.g. 'organic lasagne', 'organic potato bake', or 'organic chocolate pudding'.*

For a meal or dish to be labelled organic there is consensus that at least 95% of the agricultural ingredients have to be certified organic.

In Europe and according to the EU Reg. No. 2092/91 the remaining 5% may only be conventional if listed in Annex VI, Section C, i.e. are ingredients that can neither be produced in the EU nor imported. Most of these relatively few ingredients do not play a significant role in recipes used in foodservice.

As long as an operation has an appropriate supply chain management system and/or an appropriate till system that captures data on the quantities of sold meals, thus facilitating control and verification, it is not difficult to check the supply chain. In this regard, having a good technological infrastructure is a plus in the foodservice operation.

The advantage of organic meals lies in the very easy communication with the consumer, who can decide for or against a meal on the basis of it being labelled organic. The disadvantage of organic meals lies in the sourcing and the danger of getting ingredients mixed up with conventional ingredients as they may be present in the kitchen in duplicate. All ingredients used in organic meals, including all herbs and spices and all fats and oils, must be certified organic. As a consequence many ingredients needed

At the end of the day it is about being able to verify what is being claimed. ■

## news shorts...

### ORGANIC SCOTTISH BRAND

As a result of cooperation between two UK certification bodies, SOPA and OF&G, organic food processors in Scotland will have access to a joint certification mark with a distinct Scottish appeal. SOPA mainly certifies farmers, and approximately 75% of the organic area in Scotland is certified by SOPA. OF&G, which works nationwide, certifies 1000 producers, and is also strong in the processing sector. Brian Kaye from SOPA says 'This joint venture breaks important new ground in terms of collaboration between two independent organic certification bodies.' ■

### UKRAINE JOINS THE COUNTRIES WITH AN ORGANIC REGULATION

Ukraine is in the process of drafting organic regulations. In February an expert working group was formed to move the process ahead. The process is supported by international experts funded by the Swiss Government. The law is supposed to cover minimum standards for organic systems, the inspection regime, the legal protection of the 'organic' label and a national logo for identifying organic products. The regulation will probably be based on the Codex Alimentarius. ■

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in small amounts have a negative impact on pricing and supplier management for the operator.

*Organic components (which the consumer can identify as an individual or separate component); e.g. classic side dishes such as rice, potato wedges, chopped tomatoes, salads, and also steaks, chicken breasts etc.*

Here only the ingredients of the organic component need be 95% organic. It does mean, though, that the fat used to fry the potato wedges and the spice mix, etc. must be organic too.

The advantage lies in the variety afforded the kitchen – and partially in the sourcing and storage as less items need be bought, while the quantities of what is bought can be greater. In addition, quicker menu changes are possible.

*Organic ingredients (organic raw materials); e.g. all of one ingredient is organic. For example, all the potatoes/beef/eggs/etc. bought by the operation is certified organic.*

The advantage of this approach lies in sourcing and storage. Since one or maybe more than one ingredient is sourced only in organic quality there can be no confusion for the employees and no mix-ups. Verification is also easier. Since only one source is used the volume bought will be greater, ensuring positive ramifications on the price for the operator and or demand continuity for the supplier. This variant strengthens the whole organic system and makes it sustainable.

*Labelling whatever is not organic*

This has been used for almost fully organic operations that have only a

few ingredients that are not organic; and it has been used where operations suddenly run out of or cannot source organic produce. However, the danger is that such labelling can get out of hand.

*Asterisk labelling*

Some operators would like to see asterisk labelling of organic ingredients introduced. This variant requires educated consumers and also may get out of hand.

### Conclusion

A good inspection system for food-service operations will be a balance between the preferences and needs of the certifier and the certification process, the supplier and sourcing, and everyday commercial kitchen reality. Many of the pros and cons are still being debated and those currently engaged in certification of foodservice operations are gathering very valuable experience. Many questions have been raised in this article for which there are currently few answers. Open debate about the factors discussed and how they impact on inspections must be encouraged. One forum created for this purpose as a consequence of European Network Initiative at the BioFach in Nuremberg earlier this year is the COOOH!-Forum (Certification Organic Out Of Home). Registration is by email to [oegs@oegs.de](mailto:oegs@oegs.de). The challenge is less to do with finding an acceptable system and more concerned with bettering the image of certification and communicating it as added value for an operation. ■

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It does mean, though, that the fat used to fry the potato wedges and the spice mix, etc. must be organic too. ■

## IFOAM has a new Executive Director

*Gerald A. Herrmann, from Germany, was appointed as the new Executive Director of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) on 17 September 2004. The appointment is for a one-year period, during which the search for a permanent Executive Director will be conducted. This appointment took place immediately after Zadok S. Lempert resigned from the position at a recent meeting of the IFOAM World Board in Seattle, USA.*

**G**erald Herrmann has been actively engaged in IFOAM leadership since 1992. He has served on several IFOAM committees and has been a member of the World Board since 1995. He will continue to serve as the organisation's Vice President and will remain a member of the IFOAM Executive Board.

Gerald Herrmann has twenty years experience in organic agriculture. He started as a freelance advisor to organic farmers and was engaged in the development of marketing structures and organisations. He built up an EU

inspection body and led a private German farmers' association for over ten years, helping the organisation gain worldwide acceptance as an IFOAM accredited private certification body.

Since 2003 Gerald Herrmann has been managing his own company 'Organic Services', which has involved him acting as a consultant in several different areas of the organic sector. While he has now accepted the one-year commitment as Executive Director of IFOAM, he will also continue in his role as President of Organic Services.

*To learn more behind the headlines, TOS asked Gerald A. Herrmann a few questions on this unexpected change in IFOAM's leadership and on his view of his role in the coming year.*

**TOS:** *The IFOAM press release mentioned that Zadok's resignation took place at the recent IFOAM Board meeting in Seattle USA. It sounded rather sudden. How much of a surprise was it and what was the reason for his resignation?*

**Gerald A. Herrmann (GH):** For over two years the World Board invested heavily into reviewing IFOAM's management structure, eventually leading to the appointment of Dr Zadok Lempert as Executive Director in May 2004. Dr Lempert's background was not with the organic movement, however his expertise was convincing and promising, and we expected to see IFOAM make a tremendous leap forward. Dr Lempert put his full experience, commitment and energy into his new task and made a significant impact, e.g. restructuring Head Office in only a few months.

The World Board was not expecting Dr Lempert's resignation – and we have to admit that we had no contingency plan for such a situation. The World Board accepted the resignation expressing its appreciation and respect.

**TOS:** *What led the Board to offer the position to you? Was it offered at the meeting itself? Were there other potential candidates?*

**GH:** The demands made by the new management structure and the tasks ahead for IFOAM are growing fast; and the leadership position of 'Executive

### *What IFOAM says*

**Gunnar Rundgren, IFOAM President:**

'As Gerald Herrmann has a long and solid background in the movement and in IFOAM, he will be able to rapidly take up this interesting, demanding and rewarding job.'

Through the global uptake of organic farming and the increase of organic markets there are great opportunities for IFOAM. But it is also a challenge for IFOAM to respond to ever increasing expectations, from our members, from the public sector and the international community. I am convinced that Gerald Herrmann can lead the organization in the best possible way.'

**Sheldon Weinberg, IFOAM World Board Member, USA.**

'Deep knowledge of the global organic movement and complete familiarity with IFOAM's structures will enable Gerald Herrmann to succeed in this challenging job. We are pleased that he has agreed to make IFOAM his top priority.'

## news shorts...

### INSPECTORS OFFERED TRAINING IN MORE THAN JUST ORGANICS

As a result of the increased interest in combined inspections and certifications, as well as the mergers and acquisitions in the certification industry, organic inspectors are striving to increase their skills in areas such as Fair Trade, HACCP and ISO 9001. Recognising this, the Independent Organic Inspectors Association, based in the USA, has organised an ISO 9001:2000 Lead Auditor training session to take place in October.

ICEA, an Italian based certification body, has also taken the same route and organised a combined fair trade and organic inspection training in cooperation with the Fair Trade Labelling Organisation. ■

### ARGENCERT INCLUDE LIVESTOCK CERTIFICATION INTO ITS NOP ACCREDITATION

Argencert S.R.L. of Argentina has been authorised to add the certification of livestock to its current accreditation to certify crop, wild crop and handling operations under USA's NOP. The accreditation is effective immediately, and will terminate along with Argencert's current accreditation on 12 November, 2007. ■

*news shorts continued on page 14*

Director', under the guidance of the World Board, is essential for IFOAM's development. The World Board did not want to let its strategy lose momentum after Dr Lempert's resignation. Given my long experience working for IFOAM and for an internationally active organic organisation in an Executive Director's role, all members of the Board offered the position to me at that same meeting. I feel very honoured by the high degree of trust expressed by my colleagues, and accepted the responsibility.

For an immediate solution flexibility is needed, and that – being able to start immediately – was what I could offer, although the commitment originally did not fit my personal plans and obligations. As an external search for a qualified person takes time my appointment was a very logical move for the Board to make.

**TOS:** *Was it offered as a temporary position or did you accept it only as a temporary solution? If so, what made you do so?*

**GH:** I have dedicated nearly all my professional life to working in and for organic associations. This has been a very demanding task – and exhausting. When re-starting my own consultancy 'Organic Services' in 2003 I had a lot of fun and freedom making decisions on my own without being bound by organisational bonds.

In the situation I had to choose between two responsibilities. For the coming year I will set out clear priorities for IFOAM; however I asked the World Board to understand that I was only willing to accept a temporary commitment as Executive Director, allowing me to keep 'Organic Services' operational – making, of course, all consultancies transparent for to the Board to avoid any conflicts of interest.

**TOS:** *The one-year appointment while IFOAM search for a permanent Executive Director makes it a caretaker position. Meanwhile IFOAM is undertaking reviews of some fundamental aspects of its work. How do you see your role in this scenario? Will you be taking any initiatives?*

**GH:** Neither the World Board's position nor the Executive Director's is weakened due to my one-year appointment – just the opposite. As a member of the World Board and Vice President I have been part of the initiatives and steps being taken to develop and target IFOAM's activities guided by its mission statement. I see a synergy and enforcement of the Board's strategy as one of the Board members acts as Executive Director. The World Board, when appointing me, made it very clear that I have not only the trust but also the full executive responsibility as Executive Director. I am willing to take on that responsibility; however while the World Board has taken the initiative in reviewing fundamental aspects of IFOAM's work I do not want to overburden the organisation, its members or staff with even more new activities, especially bearing in mind that our General Assembly will be taking place in a year from now.

**TOS:** *Although you will be new to the job you are not new to IFOAM. You are a second term Board member and Vice President. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the movement?*

**GH:** IFOAM shows all aspects of a small and at the same time very big organisation; associated with these are weaknesses and strengths sometimes even contradicting themselves in the same area of activity. To give an example: while lobbying Codex Alimentarius for a global understanding of

■ We are a diverse (sometimes controversial), lively and active organisation.

what 'organic' is, we are looking into regional variations and flexibility on the local level.

IFOAM's greatest asset is its members. Without their local or regional activities IFOAM could not play the role of the only international organisation leading, assisting and uniting the organic movement in its full diversity.

Today IFOAM is well respected in the public as well as in the private arena. We are a diverse (sometimes controversial), lively and active organisation; anyone who has ever been to an IFOAM event – especially the General Assembly – experiences this spirit.

**TOS:** *What will be your priorities for the movement and head office in the coming year?*

**GH:** I will take initiatives to stabilise the Federation while the still ongoing rapid growth and change continues. We have to deal with both financial and structural challenges (e.g. regionalisation) and, at the same time, with increasing expectations from inside and outside the organisation. Projects and tasks will have to be prioritised, taking great care to follow IFOAM's mission and goals as they were set either by the membership at the last General Assembly in Victoria, Canada, in 2002, or by the World Board. This includes the review of some fundamental areas of IFOAM's work, including that of membership affairs and services to be provided for our diverse constituency.

In the short term, the priority is the Summit, which is at beginning of November. There, IFOAM's leaders, in-

cluding those from the regional groups, committees etc. and important stakeholders like the IFOAM Accredited CBs, will discuss areas of crucial development or strategy. They attend by invitation of the World Board who regards the Summit as an important preparatory step for the upcoming GA next year.

**TOS:** *IFOAM is reviewing the IFOAM Principles as well as the IFOAM Guarantee System; what are your thoughts on the direction they should be heading?*

**GH:** The review process of the Principles of Organic Agriculture (POA) is very inspiring. The input and interest shown by members who want to participate in the process highlights its importance. The review process will be a success if it is neither hijacked by people trying to preserve the past (with its 'golden' aura), nor used by those prepared to push principles aside to make, for example, their own market activities easier. The review of the POA is an important process for IFOAM in times that are changing very fast.

With both the review of POA and the Guarantee System, we should be careful to listen to our stakeholders and provide support of the process, which will only be achieved if sufficient discussion (and dispute) is possible. Leadership and democratic in-

put have to find a balance. The key word for the review of the Organic Guarantee System is 'accessibility', which I fully support.

**TOS:** *What do you see as the most pressing challenge for the future of the international organic sector, and future scenario(s)?*

**GH:** The organic sector is becoming 'mainstream', with all the associated negative challenges as well as positive opportunities this presents. IFOAM must work for those with no lobbying power, like small farmers and their families, and celebrate in the positive such as winning market shares with 'new' consumers.

For IFOAM the challenge is to keep the new stakeholders involved and win them over to the organic movement. If we are not successful in achieving that our influence on the direction taken by the worldwide organic movement will rapidly decrease in the future.

There are many other pressing challenges IFOAM must face. For instance, some of the challenges currently on the horizon are GMOs, the fragmentation of the movement, government domination, corporatisation and organic seeds.

We will not achieve our mission on our own; even more than ever we need to team with like minded organisations to cope with the multitude of tasks ahead. ■

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■ The review process will be a success if it is neither hijacked by people trying to preserve the past (with its 'golden' aura), nor used by those prepared to push principles aside

# Monitoring of fresh fruit and vegetables

*Results of a BNN Herstellung und Handel<sup>1</sup> project.*

In summer 2003 BNN Herstellung und Handel (German Association of Natural Food and Products for Traders and Possessors) started a monitoring system as an additional tool for furthering quality assurance and reliability of organic products. The project monitors pesticide residues in organic fresh fruit and vegetables. It is funded by the Organic Agriculture Programme of Germany's Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture.

After the first year, 475 samples of organic fruit and vegetables had been analysed, each for at least 250 different pesticides. Samples were selected based on relevant information such as seasonal aspects, volume of trade, and risk potential related to conventional products or laboratory information. BNN defines the strategy as 'prospective and risk evaluated'. The aim has been to optimise the processes in identifying possible contamination sources as well as to identify and isolate any 'black sheep' among organic products in the market.

Results from the first year substantiate what could be expected of products produced in a system that excludes the use of synthetically compounded pesticides, *i.e.* 92% of the samples contained no detectable residues or insignificant traces only. This high number of fruit and vegetable for which the BNN monitoring system found no single residue, can be seen as confirmation for proper

production and quality assurance systems applied in organic agriculture. No residues were found for example in apples, bananas, cauliflower, broccoli, strawberries, fennel, blueberries, pumpkins (Hokkaido), melons, mangos, nectarines and peaches, spinach, grapes, zucchini (courgettes) and onions. Residues of crop protectants that are permitted in organic systems were found in 2.1% of the samples.

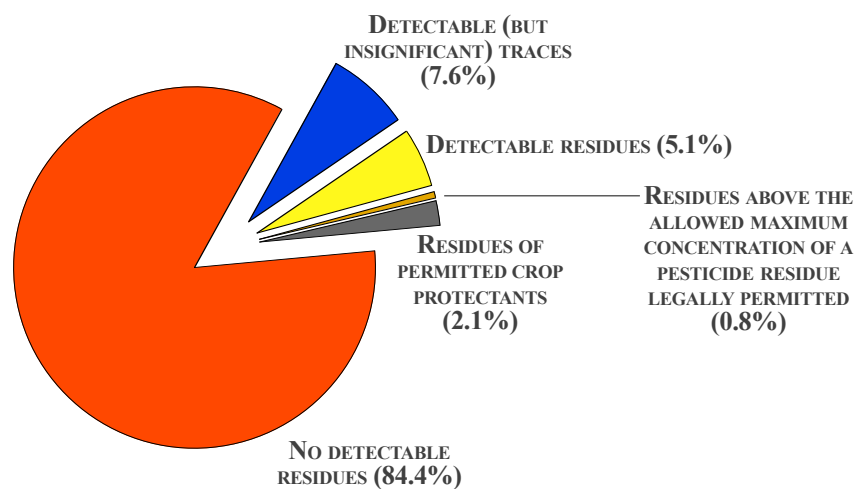
Significant residues, although below the allowed maximum levels, were found in 5.1% of the samples. Only 0.8% of the samples showed residues above the allowed maximum concentration of a pesticide residue legally permitted (see figure below).

## Challenge to identifying contamination sources

A recent analysis that detected pesticide residues on organic cucumbers demonstrates the challenge to identifying contamination sources. The contaminated cucumbers were found to have residues at the maximum residue limit (MRL) for pesticide legally permitted. The residues belonged to organochlorine substances, which had been prohibited since 1972 (Dieldrin) or since 1986 (Heptachlor). Once the contamination source was identified it turned out that several areas of the farm in question had soil that was contaminated. However, it was clearly no error or betrayal by the farmer. The residues had been in the soil a long time, and most plants leave them undisturbed so contain no residues in their tissue. However, plants in the cucumber family do assimilate these substances and hence became contaminated.

## *Pesticide residue in organic fruit and vegetables*

First year results of the project 'Monitoring-System for organic fruit and vegetables' of BNN Herstellung und Handel, funded by the Organic Agriculture Programme of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture.



Source BNN, August 2004

<sup>1</sup> German Association of Natural Food and Products for Traders and Possessors

## news shorts...

### IOIA OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TRAINING OF ORGANIC INSPECTORS

The Independent Organic Inspector Association (IOIA) offers annually two training scholarships, *i.e.* The Organic Community Initiative Scholarship and Andrew Rutherford Scholarship for organic inspection training.

The Organic Community Initiative Scholarship launched in 2002, is targeted for a non-US or Canada applicant who demonstrates the potential to positively impact their developing organic community. The Andrew Rutherford Scholarship is open to everyone. Both prospective and experienced inspectors are eligible to apply for the Andrew Rutherford Scholarship.

The scholarships are limited to attendance in an IOIA sponsored Basic Farm or Processing Trainings (not advanced trainings) in the year the scholarship is awarded. They cover tuition, room and board but not transportation or other expenses.

Deadline for application for year 2005 is 1 November, 2004. ■

For more information check the website: [www.ioia.net](http://www.ioia.net)

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### Organic demonstrates better quality

During the spring (2004) several analyses of organic strawberry were taken; the samples contained no detectable residues whereas at the same time the press reported on highly contaminated conventional strawberries. This was confirmed by reports from the Chemische und Veterinäruntersuchungsamt Stuttgart (CVUA), who analysed 16 samples of conventional German strawberries and detected residues in them all. On average, five different pesticide were detected; but two samples had nine different pesticide residues.

### Pesticide residues in conventional fruit and vegetables

According to the new Pesticide Monitoring Report, 'Monitoring of Pesticide Residues of Plant origin in the European Union, Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein', issued in April 2004 by the European Commission, Health & Consumer Protection Directorate-General, fruit and vegetables contaminated with pesticides are sold and consumed in the European Union more or less regularly.

The report stated how 46,000 samples were analysed. In 44% of the samples, residues at or below the maximum residue limit (MRL) being legally permitted were detected, and in 3.3% of the samples MRLs were exceeded. Residues at or below the MRL were found most often in mandarins and oranges (78%), followed by pears (67%), bananas (56%), and peaches and nectarines (45%). MRLs were exceeded most often in spinach (13%), followed by beans (7%), mandarins and oranges (4%), and peaches and nectarines (3%).

MRLs are based on Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) data. Exceeded MRLs are indicators of violations of what is called 'Good Agricultural

Practice'.

Compared to the findings of the previous years the percentage of products for which residues were found increased. In 1999 'only' 36% of the samples contained residues. The number of samples exceeding the MRLs increased as well.

What is even more concerning is that the percentage of fresh fruit, vegetables and cereal samples with multiple residues is showing an increasing tendency, rising from 14% in 1999 to 21% in 2002. According to the report each fifth fruit or vegetable sample contained multiple residues. The report also indicates that a health risk cannot be excluded, particularly for vulnerable groups.

### BNN will continue monitoring

The BNN Herstellung und Handel organises about sixty members, including wholesalers, manufacturers and importers, mainly from Germany but also from France, Netherlands, Austria and Spain.

BNN and all monitoring participants considered the monitoring programme as a useful and successful additional quality assurance tool. The decision to continue the programme has already been taken although funding from the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture is only until the end of 2004. ■

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The monitoring report of the EU commission is on the website: [www.badische-zeitung.de/noframe/aktionen/2004/dokumente/pdf/monrep\\_2002.pdf](http://www.badische-zeitung.de/noframe/aktionen/2004/dokumente/pdf/monrep_2002.pdf)  
A summary of the report can also be found under [http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/fnaoi/reports/annual\\_eu/monrep\\_2002\\_sum\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/fnaoi/reports/annual_eu/monrep_2002_sum_en.pdf)

## news shorts...

### 20% GROWTH OF USA ORGANIC INDUSTRY IN 2003

According to a survey conducted by Organic Trade Association (OTA) of USA between February and March 2004, the US organic industry grew by 20% to reach US\$10.8 billion in consumer sales in 2003. Of that figure, 96% were sales of organic foods. Fruits and vegetables accounted for the largest portion of sales at 42%. Fruits and vegetables, together with other larger and more established categories, e.g. dairy, bread and grains, beverages, grew at more modest rates in 2003 compared to smaller and less established categories, e.g. snack food and meat and poultry.

The US\$10.38 billion figure in organic foods sales represented 1.9% of the total US food sales in 2003. Organic foods sales, however, have been steadily growing in the 17-21% range every year since 1997, according to the survey.

Non-food organic products had a penetration rate of 1.9% and a growth rate of 19.8% with a total of US\$440 million sales. This represents only 0.15% of total sales in their respective conventional categories in 2003.

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## Court case tests NOP's resolve to keep accreditation records secret

*The US Center for Food Safety intensifies its efforts to investigate the National Organic Program's accreditation process – this time lodging a complaint in federal court protesting the USDA's refusal to supply information. The lawsuit seeks release of documents detailing the qualifications and background of the organic food certifiers accredited by USDA as participants in the NOP of the United States.*

The Center for Food Safety (CFS), a not for profit organisation based in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, is concerned about the rigour of the accreditation system managed by the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP). Citing their uneasiness about the 'unexpected increase' in the number of certification bodies since the implementation of the USDA's accreditation programme, CFS had already tried multiple avenues to obtain information needed to allow evaluation of the accreditation process and its outcome. CFS' claim, filed in US District Court on 5 August, 2004, enumerates the organisation's attempts, on at least eight occasions, to obtain the documents under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), along with the USDA's denial or lack of response on each of those occasions.

'Certainly we don't want to just say new certifiers aren't necessarily good certifiers; if there just need to be

more certifiers to deal with the volume of product that's great,' said Joseph Mendelson, legal director for CFS. 'But given the numbers [of new certifiers] and USDA's unwillingness to give us the documents, we have our suspicions that USDA isn't doing its job and we want to take a look.'

In a recent press release about their legal suit, CFS explains, 'Appropriate certification of organic farms is the fundamental enforcement mechanism of organic food standards. Fuelling public concern over a reduction in the integrity of the new 'organic' label is the appearance of numerous new, previously unknown certifying agents applying to the USDA for accreditation. Since 2000, the number of organic certifying agents has jumped from 49 to over 120. This unexpected increase in the number of accreditation applicants raises troubling questions about possible 'sham' certifiers and the USDA's ability to properly assess the qualifications of the large volume of

CFS had already tried multiple avenues to obtain information needed to allow evaluation of the accreditation process and its outcome.

## news shorts...

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The survey also showed that organic foods are increasingly found in more mainstream retail establishments. Independent natural food stores represented less than 30% of sales in 2003. However, combined with the largest natural food chains (Whole Foods Market and Wild Oats) the entire natural foods and speciality retail channel still represented the largest portion of US organic sales at 47%. The mass market option, which includes supermarkets, grocery stores, mass merchandisers and club stores, accounted for 44%. Direct sales through farmers' market and co-ops, food service and exports made up the remaining 9%.

The survey was conducted by the Nutrition Business Journal on behalf of OTA. More than three hundred companies responded to the survey. ■

*For more information please visit: [www.ota.com/pics/documents/2004SurveyOverview.pdf](http://www.ota.com/pics/documents/2004SurveyOverview.pdf)*

Source: OTA

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new certifiers seeking accreditation.'

'Our suspicions are that there are certifiers popping up just to certify a couple of products, to standards that aren't as stringent as the program is written,' Mendelson said. 'Nobody besides the USDA really knows what the accreditation process really is,' he added. Mendelson believes that USDA's failure to release these documents threatens the integrity of the organic label. 'The decision on who is to certify organic produce needs to be in full view of the public; it cannot be influenced by large corporate interests,' he said.

A significant point of contention between CFS and USDA was the cost of researching and copying the information requested through the FOIA. CFS had cited its status as a nonprofit organisation and had asked for a waiver of the usual fees associated with research and copying information obtained through a FOIA request. In August 2002, USDA said it would waive the fees if CFS 'narrowed its request to a more manageable size'. However, when CFS did so, the USDA again denied their request for information. The most recent reason given for USDA's denial was that CFS' request would not 'contribute to public understanding'.

'We have bent over backwards with patience to narrow our requests to meet their concerns about the volume and scope' of the request, Mendelson said. Originally, USDA estimated the cost of meeting the request at around \$100,000, according to Mendelson, who said that cost has now been scaled back to about \$8,000. Even so, he said, 'We're a

nonprofit organisation; \$8,000 is a significant chunk out of our budget. We also think it's legally wrong and that it sets a precedent for all the other work we do. They're wrong by law and we're not going to concede.

Mendelson said CFS is 'content to take the narrower request right now and take a sort of slice-of-life look, and we can go back if we want to ... go broader and request more documents.' But by 'using the fee waiver to delay and prevent giving us the documents', the USDA is attempting to cut the public out of debate. 'This type of attitude ... sends a very poor message,' he said. 'This program should be a model for consistency of information to consumers. ... Unfortunately, I think this is one action where it's really going to hurt the organic label.'

Many in the US organic industry, and the National Organic Standards Board, have called for the permanent appointment of a peer review panel to oversee NOP's accreditation program. Despite USDA's acknowledgement of the intense public interest in the creation of a permanent oversight body, the agency has made no moves to establish it. ■

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*More information about the Center for Food Safety and its lawsuit may be obtained through the organisation's website: [www.centerforfoodsafety.org](http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org) Contact information for Joseph Mendelson III, Legal Director is: Center for Food Safety, 660 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20003. Tel: +1 -202-547-9359. A list of the certifiers accredited by the NOP may be viewed at: [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexIE.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexIE.htm)*

'The decision on who is to certify organic produce needs to be in full view of the public; it cannot be influenced by large corporate interests.'

## news shorts...

### CERTIFICADORA CHILE ORGANICO RECEIVED NOP ACCREDITATION

Certificadora Chile Organico (CCO) is a Chilean control body established in 1998, which participates in Latin American Certifiers Group. On 25 August 2004, CCO received NOP accreditation for crops, wild crops, livestock and handling operations. The information was published on the USDA website on 2 September. This is the ninth Latin American certifier to receive NOP accreditation.

According to Virginia Zenteno, CCO's Director, NOP accreditation of CCO will 'open the doors for organic products from Chile into international markets such as United States'. She added, 'it is very important for development of Chilean organic movement'. She also believes that access to NOP accreditation is straightforward if the certifier has a good quality system in place. ■

*For more information contact Virginia Zenteno  
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website: www.ccochile.cl*

## FAO project to support organic agriculture starts up in Latin America

In Latin America organic production and certification is not homogeneous. The issue is dominated by the absence of national laws and few countries are able to fulfil the requisites of the importer countries, thereby, losing important marketing opportunities. In fact, the majority of the Latin American countries are unaware about the requirements of international organic markets, and lack any technical specialised capacity, have poor basic structures and no precise national organic policy.

Within this framework, and based in the interest expressed by several countries of the Latin America region, the FAO Regional Office has just started to execute a regional Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) called 'Support to organic agriculture and institutional strengthening of organic certification'. The project will run for a duration of 16 months and will be conducted in Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

The main objective of the project is to give technical assistance to the participating countries in order to establish a legal and institutional framework for organic production and certification, both for local markets and for export. Further objectives are to establish pilot trials in each country illustrating integrated systems between production and marketing, which can be repeated in other zones of the region. In addition, organic products will be promoted to the Latin American consumers in order to de-

velop local markets.

The project will fund the services of an international consultant in organic agriculture (three months); a TCDC expert (Technical cooperation among developing countries) in accreditation and certification ISO65 (five months); a TCDC expert in participative certification (five months); 12 national consultants (29 months in total); and FAO technical support (6 weeks missions). Resources will also be provided to cover the costs of training events at regional and national level, supplies and contracts. The project will also cover travel expenses and general and direct operation expenses.

At the end of the project, it is expected that small producers in each country will be selling their organic produce in the local markets; national legislation proposals on organic certification will have been developed; at least two national certifying bodies in each country will be trained in ISO65 normative and five national accreditation bodies will be trained in ISO61 at regional level. In addition, a series of booklets and training materials for the promotion of the organic products will be published. ■

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## did you know?

# Hemp foods now legal in USA

Three years ago the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced a new law banning hemp ingredients in natural and organic food products in the USA. A long and costly legal battle ensued, waged by the Hemp Industries Association, and bolstered by public interest groups including the Organic Consumers Association. At the end of September the US federal government finally backed down, making hemp foods, once again, legal.

Hemp seed is most commonly used as a nutritional supplement in a variety of foods. It offers an ideal balance of two essential fatty acids (omega-3 and omega-6). Despite Bush Administration propaganda, hemp foods contain insignificant lev-

els of the chemical in marijuana that results in psychotropic effects. In that sense, eating hemp foods does not interfere with workplace drug tests, and, in fact, have lower levels than that found in poppy seeds in muffins and breads.

It is still illegal for US farmers to grow industrial hemp. However, hemp from Chinese, Canadian and European farmers, who supply a rapidly growing international market for hemp food ingredients, animal feed, clothing, paper, nutritional supplements, and bio-diesel fuel, is now available. ■

*For more information check the website: [www.organicconsumers.org/organic/hempvictory092804.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/organic/hempvictory092804.cfm)*

*Source: Organic bytes*

## Organic pet food sales increasing

According to the Organic Trade Association (OTA), US organic pet food sales were up 63% last year, growing at nearly three times the rate of human organic food sales.

The growth rate is all the more interesting, given that the USDA has yet to finalise specific standards for pet food and only one of the current pet food brands carries the USDA organic certification seal on the bag. This specialised niche is becoming a significant market in the US, after starting just a couple of years ago. A bag of organic pet food often retails for up to twice the price of conventional pet food. However, at just US\$14 million in sales, it remains a tiny fraction

(0.09%) of the \$15 billion total pet food sales in the US.

In Europe there are a number of private certification bodies, e.g. Krav (Sweden) and Skal (The Netherlands), certifying organic pet food under their private organic seals.

One factor influencing pet owners into buying organic food for their pets is that more pets are now dying of tumours than they did in earlier times. Whilst some believe their pets will keep healthier, there is no research or proof that organic food can ensure a longer and healthier life to dogs and cats, according to experts in the US. ■

*Source: USA Today  
Based on an article by Bruce Horovitz*

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