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Chilean organic legislation takes another step

On 10 May 2005, the Agricultural Commission of the Camera of Deputies in the Chilean Parliament, approved the project of Organic Law, which among other things, established the National Certification System; a National Competent Authority; protection for labelling products as 'organic', 'biological' or 'ecological'; sanctions, obligations for certification agencies; and, general guidelines to implementing a national system for controlling organic agriculture. The next step to becoming a national law is the approval by the entire parliament, which should take place within the next few months.

Under the proposed new system, the Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG), belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture, is going to be the Competent Authority. Certification agencies are going to need recognition and authorisation by the Authority to operate in the country. At the same time, SAG will deal with the registration of inspectors, operators, traders, exporters and importers and administration of an Official National Seal. SAG already has an internal manual with specific procedures to do this work and they are currently writing the Regulation of the Law with specific articles to operate the

new system.

This initiative is the result of the close work between public and private sector represented by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Chilean Organic Association (AAOCH) respectively. Chile is keen to be recognised by the European Union as a third country. It officially applied to the EU a few years ago and now the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture is officially answering some questions received from the EU as part of the normal procedure to get that recognition. It is expected that with the new Law, specific regulations and the new system of national control in place, some of the deficiencies in the Chilean system identified by the EU will be resolved. In addition, with the new system Chile can now apply for recognition by other regulations, e.g. the Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS). At the same time the new law will facilitate internal control of the country's domestic market.

Chile has many advantages for developing organic agriculture and this new legal initiative will contribute to an increase in both the area of organic land for new projects and the consumption of organic products in the country. ■

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