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Fraud in France and in the EU

When the EU organic regulation was passed in 1991, expectations were high that organic fraud would be prevented. However, since that time several fraud cases have been discovered. It is quite clear that the practise is continuing at an alarming rate, and some consider it to be a major problem for the organic movement in the EU today.

Earlier issues of *The Organic Standard* have reported on cases of organic fraud in France. In fact, in the past few years several cases, involving large volumes on grain, have been recorded in France. These include:

- 4,400 tons in the case of 'Celtic Ambassador/VERGE' in 1998.
- 18,000 tons in the case of 'Bio Alliance/ DEL PINO' in 1999.
- over 50 000 tons in the case of 'Euro Grains/ GAUTIER' in 2000.
- 70,000 tons in the case of 'Green Négoce' in 2001.

All these cases are characterised by a complexity of traffic, front companies, an increased number of intermediaries for the transactions, discontinuities of inspection and cross border traffic.

FNAB, a French organic producer organisation, claims that the investigations of the cases reveal 'a flagrant lack of international co-ordination in the inspection of organic operators and in the judicial enquiries.' It notes that none of the recent fraud cases were exposed by a certification body as might be expected. Instead, it has been informants, FNAB or the official fraud inspectors who have revealed the scams.

In an effort to curb the fraud, FNAB established an initiative called, 'Commission Bio-Vigilance'. The Commission was given increased resources this year with the allocation of a specific grant from France's Ministry of Agriculture in France and through a partnership with FRAB-Bretagne.

The aims of the Commission's aims are as follows :

- To detect and bring fraud cases to justice.
- To initiate and train personnel in technical and legal aspects.
- To maintain contact with professional operators, certifiers, fraud inspectors and food inspectors.
- To identify and analyse the common elements of these cases in an

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