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EU Parliament discusses revision of EU organic rules

In a report to the EU Parliament, the Agriculture Committee proposed a number of amendments to the new draft EU Organic Regulation. Amongst the many proposals there included a much stronger approach to GMO contamination. It suggested that any contamination with GMO, regardless of level, should exclude the product from organic labelling; in comparison the Commission's position is that if a product is contaminated at a level where it has to be GMO labelled, *i.e.* above 0.9%, it cannot be labelled as organic. In addition, the Agriculture Committee suggested that operators are required to prove products are GMO-free, *i.e.* implement a testing programme. A specific reference to the IFOAM standards alongside the proposed reference to Codex is introduced as a basis for equivalency, and the IFOAM Accreditation Criteria are identified as being comparable with ISO 65.

Other proposals by the Agriculture Committee included:

- The scope of the regulation should be extended to include textiles, cosmetics, catering and food services.
- Split operation, *i.e.* both organic and not organic, should be prohibited.
- There should be a total ban on manure from non-organic farms.
- All reference to tying the Organic

Regulation to normal food safety inspection systems (as regulated in Regulation 882/2004) should be dropped. The report states that '*Regulation 882/2004 (OFFC) is not an adequate reference regulation for inspection and certification of organic farming, as it refers only to food safety issues, not including the specificities of process inspections and certification of organic production.*'

- Claims about higher standards should be allowed.
- Certification bodies outside the EU should be allowed to sign cooperation agreements with bodies inside the EU as one basis for acceptance of imports.

Further, the report proposed amendments that gives the Parliament and the Council greater influence on the detailed rules yet to be developed. The Commission draft basically gives authority to the Commission to develop and approve those rules. The report also recommends more restrictive language regarding derogations. ■

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An update on the process of the revision of the EU organic rules will be published in a future issue of TOS.

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