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IFOAM revises Norms policy

First published for a round of comments in April 2005, the Final Draft of IFOAM's new Norms Revision Policy is now up for approval by IFOAM members through an electronic vote. The new policy covers five different ways that IFOAM Norms could be revised:

- Regular revisions.
- Inclusion of new items in the IFOAM Norms.
- Urgent revisions.
- Changes resulting from Norms Interpretations.
- Changes to the lists of Inputs, Additives and Processing Aids.

A five steps *modus operandi* is proposed for all the five revision processes. That is:

- *Initiation*: the eligible parties and the steps for making a revision proposal.
- *Decision to Commence*: the responsible party for decision to commence.
- *Revision Process*: the steps and parties involved in the revision process.
- *Decision Making*: the responsible party and procedures for approving a revision.
- *Implementation*: the period approved changes have to be implemented by Norms users.

According to Matthias Fecht, IFOAM Organic Guarantee System Coordinator, the revision reduced the number of documents regulating all of the above from nine (six Policies and three Procedures) to two (one Policy and one Procedure). Revisions of the IFOAM Norms according to the new policy will comply with the ISEAL

Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

Besides greater transparency arising from the streamlining, the new policy facilitates greater participation, e.g. members and other stakeholders can shape the scope of regular revisions through commenting on a revision plan instead of reacting to the first revision draft as previously. Other stakeholders can also request urgent revisions as well as initiate inclusion of new areas.

Eighteen comments from eight countries were received; eight from France, three from Sweden and two from Germany. Comments in general were reportedly positive and constructive, leading to some changes in the final draft and the draft procedure e.g. an invitation to IFOAM members to propose any kind of revision of the IFOAM Norms for inclusion in the revision plan. Also measures to shorten the time to complete a revision circle, e.g. membership will be asked to make motions on the 2nd revision draft instead of a 3rd draft as previously, except in extraordinary circumstances. And, instead of two separate ballots, first on motions and then on the complete final draft, there will only be one ballot, where the membership vote both on the motions and to approve undisputed parts of the draft.

Requests to revert approval or ratification back to a General Assembly instead of using an electronic ballot were considered to be outside the scope of the revision. ■

For more information on the IFOAM Norms Revision Policy, contact Diane Bowen at d.bowen@iffoam.org