

table of contents...

Updates and reports

New EU logo withdrawn1

Leader

Don't let standards prescribe or hinder business models 2

Standards and regulations

Are derogations the answer?3

Piece by piece5

Certification and accreditation

Private or public administrative service8

From quality management to impartiality11

Updates and reports

Organic aquaculture standards are best14

Certification Alliance launched15

Comment and opinion

Need for certified organic seed? 16

Did you know?

PETA turn kids off meat18

New EU logo withdrawn

Another 'new logo' to be found

The EU Commission has decided to withdraw the logo that was agreed on earlier this year, and was going to be introduced as the new EU logo. The reason, as reported by TOS in the previous issue (TOS no. 83), is that after the design had been approved it became apparent that the logo was too similar to a private logo belonging to the German supermarket Aldi.

As part of the search for a new 'new logo' the Commission will launch a competition open to all EU citizens to suggest a design. To allow enough time for its selection the Commission will propose to the Council that the introduction of the new logo – and with it the mandatory use of the logo – is postponed to 1 January 2010.

The regulation also contains a new requirement for a 'statement of origin'. However this requirement is linked to the mandatory use of the logo, and even though the Commission has not stated it, there are reasons to believe this will also be delayed.

The delay in introducing an EU logo will also give more time to

interpreting the regulation on how the logo should be used. The mandatory use of the logo on products produced within the EU is unambiguous, but a key issue for interpretation concerns the optional use on products produced outside the EU. In particular, it must be determined whether the EU logo and the origin indication should be optional for just products processed and/or packaged outside the EU or whether it also refers to raw materials produced outside the EU but processed in the EU. Processing companies, such as coffee roasters, have already looked into this issue when developing new packaging. ■

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Information given out by the Commission Spokesperson:

'The Commission has decided to launch a promotion programme this summer. As part of this programme, we will launch a competition, open to all EU citizens, to design a new logo. This will replace the draft logo which has recently been circulated. To allow sufficient time for a suitable logo to be selected, the Commission will ask the Council to delay by one year (to 2010) the date on which the EU logo becomes compulsory. Aldi did contact the Commission to say it felt there was a similarity between the proposed EU logo and its own private logo.'

Some processors were too quick; this jar of olives was found in a Swedish supermarket.



Don't let standards prescribe or hinder business models

Far too often standard-setters make standards that favour one business model over another, or even make certain business models impossible to function as a registered organic producer. For instance, some organic standards have the requirement that the whole farm must be converted; some also regulate parallel production or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs on conventional parts of organic farms. However, most of these standards are toothless, and instead of having the desired effect they just force people to split their operations

into separate companies, something that is often simpler for big operations. The end result is to actually have less control over the situation as the divided farm becomes two separate companies, and the inspectors have no access to the conventional part.

Other standards can have a detrimental influence on a farm's management system. Requirements for self-sufficiency of manure or fodder at the farm level may discourage cooperation between farmers, forcing them into non-efficient production methods. The same can be the case with crop rotations that are too rigid. For instance, farmers may wish to cooperate and switch land areas between each other to allow for specialisation, but if crop rotation standards are too narrowly applied this might not work.

The fair trade standards is a striking example of how a standard favours – or even prescribes – certain business models. These standards allow production from plantations and farmers' cooperatives, but not from contract-farming schemes. It is very hard to see why a contract-farming model cannot be fair, and the Fair Trade labelling Organisation has failed to explain the rationale behind this standard.

In the implementation of group certification, some certification bodies are of the opinion that the Internal Control system must be implemented by the farmer group itself, others that

it is the certificate holder's responsibility to implement it. Some even want to contract a third party for the Internal Control. Why not place the emphasis on how the control system works instead? In the end, of course, it is the certificate holder that is in charge and is held accountable if the system does not work.

The prohibition to delegate certification decisions is another such example. Multinational certification bodies with local offices can have the best of both worlds. With various local offices accredited for local market requirements it is relatively simple for them to offer clients certification for any market where they operate. But, when two independent certification bodies in two different countries want to cooperate, ISO 65 – as well as the proposed ISO 17065 – does not allow one body to take decisions on behalf of the other. Instead clients are forced to go through separate certification procedures by the two bodies. This applies even if both bodies are accredited by the same organisation and regardless of the procedures they apply to review each other. Thus, the standards provide multinational certification bodies a significant advantage over a business model where certification bodies cooperate across borders.

Such problems could largely be reduced if standard-setters focussed on the objectives they want to achieve when setting a standard rather than making prescriptive rules or unwarranted or unfair prohibitions that diminish innovations and business collaboration. ■

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PGS QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY IFOAM

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are quality assurance initiatives that are locally relevant and operate outside the framework of third party certification. They emphasise the participation of stakeholders, including producers and consumers.

The IFOAM PGS Task Force has developed answers to many of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding PGS initiatives. These questions are available on the IFOAM website at www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/PGS_FAQs.html ■

Such problems could largely be reduced if standard-setters focussed on the objectives they want to achieve. ■

Are derogations the answer?

This winter organic livestock producers in the UK received a letter from their feed suppliers saying that they will be unable to supply soya until the end of March. This letter emphasised the worldwide shortage of organic soya, which has resulted in this protein source becoming one of the most expensive items in the organic livestock diet.

The price of organic soya has increased considerably in recent years. This trend is likely to continue as a result of decreased production in major producing countries like USA, Argentina and Brazil. In addition, economic growth in China is resulting in a more varied diet, including more meat, leading to a rising consumption of soybeans. Most recently, supply of organic soya was held up when a contamination problem stopped all soya exports from China. This has created an immediate shortage.

The scarcity of soya is not the only factor affecting organic feed prices. In the last ten years livestock enterprises in UK have grown faster than organic arable production, resulting in a shortage of home-grown organic cereals and demand being satisfied by long distance imports of organic cereals from countries like Kazakhstan. Recent poor harvests in the EU, plus export restrictions in the Ukraine, as well as an increase in the use of cereals for the production of bio-fuels have further aggravated the shortages.

During a UK Advisory Committee on Organic Standards (ACOS) meeting, held on 8 February 2008, the committee recognised industry fears that supplies of some organic feed ingredients could be jeopardised.

According to the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), increases in feed costs will have an effect on all livestock farms, particularly the intensive livestock sectors, and predicts the need for higher volumes of feed due to the poor yields in summer 2007. However, the Soil Association believes that both the European Commission, DEFRA and the Competent Authorities of other EU Member States, have over-reacted on this matter.

The problem of increasing production costs is particularly serious in the poultry sector. According to recent studies, the increase is pushing nearly one-quarter of UK organic poultry producers to think about stopping production; while still more are considering reverting to conventional production. According to a survey undertaken by the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the publication *Poultry World*, 46% of all poultry producers in the UK who responded were breaking even and 15% were making a loss. Last year the production costs rose by 4.2 p/kg of feed and 7.21p/dozen eggs produced

However, Lucy Barnard from DEFRA considers that *'there is no hard information, anecdotally the rapid increase in feed prices, and organic feed in particular, is forcing producers to reconsider their businesses and that sourcing has not been too much of a problem over the winter, though a temporary derogation for conventional protein sources for dairy feed needed to be issued in order to cover a short term shortage of soya expeller.'*

An additional cost

The whole of the UK poultry sector, including organic producers, is also facing extra costs associated with the introduction of the new Integrate Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) legislation. According to a case study presented in *Poultry World* last month, the application fee costs £3,000 (3,700 euros) and the annual subsistence fee is around £2,500 (3,100 euros), depending on size of operation.

IPPC is a regulatory system whose role is to ensure that industry (including organic livestock production) adopts an integrated approach to pollution control. The aim is to achieve a high level of protection for environment and human health.

Pig and poultry farmers must apply to the Environment Agency for a permit to operate if their livestock capacity exceeds:

- 750 sows.
- 2,000 fattening pigs over 30kg.
- 40,000 poultry (includes chickens, layers, pullets, turkeys, ducks and guinea fowl).

In the last ten years livestock enterprises in UK have grown faster than organic arable production, resulting in a shortage of home-grown organic cereals.

Prices of organic raw materials for organic feed (per tonne)

Raw materials	2007	Present price
Wheat	£220 (€270)	£330 (€410)
Full fat soya	£350 (€440)	£568 (€710)
Sunflower	£210 (€260)	£360 (€450)
Soya expeller	£340 (€420)	£540-£620 (€670-770)

Source: Poultry World, April 2008

The IPPC's aim is in line with organic principles as it demands integrated pollution prevention and control. It also enforces the large intensive operations to stay clean.

DEFRA and the Soil Association positions

On 1 January 2008 the new EU organic feed regulations came into force. The regulations mean that the use of non-organic agricultural ingredients for feeding herbivores (ruminants) is no longer permitted. However, because of the current feed crisis, DEFRA has allowed a derogation for dairy herds to use non-organic protein until the soya shipments from China resume. In the case of ruminants, the Soil Association has declared that it will work together with affected licensees to make sure that the nutritional need of their livestock is guaranteed, and at the same time that their organic status is safeguarded.

However, when asked about it, Francis Blake explains that 'Soil Association Certification (SACL) may require that meat, milk or eggs produced during the time of the derogation are not sold as organic, in order to protect consumer trust.'

He also concluded that 'just because DEFRA allows a derogation in an area doesn't mean that SACL will automatically hand out permissions

there. It will depend on individual circumstances - hence the importance of licensees contacting SACL as early as possible.'

'Certifiers could only give permissions to individual farms if the welfare of the animals would be affected by the protein shortage. Again the Soil Association urged DEFRA not to give this derogation. However, when they did, they felt they could not put their licensees at a disadvantage and agreed to apply it. Each application is considered by the certification committee and requires a vet's letter stating the welfare necessity before it is approved. Less than 20 farms were given permission.'

Lucy Barnard from DEFRA recognised that 'price is a real issue which will produce some realignment, particularly among those who are dependent entirely on bought in feed.' However she stated that DEFRA 'has no current plans to issue further derogations because the conditions for doing so do not currently exist. Feed is very expensive but it is available and the derogation provision is not

used to deal with cost issues arising from tight supply conditions. The situation is being kept under review and if derogations are needed within the terms of the conditions for authorising them DEFRA will authorise them.'

Conclusions

The current situation demonstrates, not only the dependence of current organic farming systems on external resources, but also the impact of shortages in international supply chains on UK feed prices. That situation will test the sustainability and resilience of these organic systems.

At the same time it is supposed that the current situation will persuade all the stakeholders involved, i.e. DEFRA, standards setting organisations, certification bodies and the producing sector, of the need to find realistic solutions. In particular, a more self-sufficient supply needs to be found, while situations where derogations or a revision of unrealistic feed requirements are acceptable as a solution must be assessed. ■

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Please contact the author for details on sources used.

'Soil Association Certification (SACL) may require that meat, milk or eggs produced during the time of the derogation are not sold as organic.'

Piece by piece

It has taken years to put together a unified European standard for natural and organic beauty products. Why it is so important to have one?

Harmonised standards for organic and natural cosmetics across Europe are due to be published and go out for consultation this summer.

This is a landmark for the industry and good news for consumers and industry buyers alike. Choosing truly natural and organic beauty care is beset by potential pitfalls, even for those who know their parabens from their lavender essential oil.

Standards like those of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV), with its cruelty-free bunny logo, the German trade body (BDIH), or the standards of cosmetics of various organic certifiers have no standing in law. Neither is there any legal definition of descriptive words such as natural, organic, fair-trade, eco-friendly, vegetarian or vegan and so on in the context of cosmetics. This means the way has been wide open for companies to create their own private symbols, and the result is a marketing free-for-all in the ethical beauty sector.

The use of the word 'organic' in connection with products that may have no trace of anything organically-grown is particularly misleading as consumers have been used to a regulatory standard for organic food since 1991. Unless people can identify the official organic logos (and not many can), they have no guarantee that their organic moisturiser lives up to the same purity or environmental standards as their organic chocolates, carrots or bottle of wine.

Certifiers and an increasing number of certified brands are keen to stop unscrupulous companies from advertising products as natural or organic, regardless of their ingredients. Louise Green of Neal's Yard Remedies, a company involved in the conception of UK organic skincare standards, believes that at the moment, the entire organic industry is threatened. *'With so many new companies jumping on the organic bandwagon, releasing unregulated products that may be only organic in name, the consumer is neither getting the benefit of truly organic skincare, nor able to support the underlying environmental ethics, and on finding that they have been cheated, may lose faith in the organic industry itself.'*

Around the table

However, the EU Commission is never likely to develop an EU natural and organic cosmetics regulation until the European certifiers have agreed on a common set of standards. Thus giving the organic certification bodies Ecocert (France), BDIH (Germany), Soil Association (UK), AIAB (Italy) and EcoGarantie (Belgium) the incentive to keep sending representatives to the table for over four years of complex discussions to reach some consensus.

The group has had to reconcile the different approaches of each certifier towards organic content, toxic substances and labelling.

For example, the BDIH certifies only natural cosmetics, whereas the Soil Association certifies only organic. Ecocert's requirement for an organic product is that 10% of the whole product must be organic, which could mean as little as 20ml of organic floral water in a 200ml bottle of body wash. Though calculated differently, the organic content of UK-certified toiletries typically has to be much higher (95% of all non-water and mineral ingredients to qualify as 'organic'). There are also discrepancies between the certification bodies regarding permitted ingredients.

However the standards group is now on track to present the long-negotiated proposals for a European standard at the Organic World Congress of the international organic organisation IFOAM in June. After a consultation period, a realistic launch date could be late 2008 or early 2009. Individual certification symbols are likely to be retained. This will not, of course, reduce the number of symbols the consumer sees, but at least they will be equivalent and comparable.

Two tiers

Two levels of standards are proposed: one for natural and the other for organic products.

The organic level is most similar in structure to the current Ecocert standards, but the requirement to use certain organic, chemically-derived ingredients such as detergents or

'With so many new companies jumping on the organic bandwagon... consumers... on finding that they have been cheated, may lose faith in the organic industry itself.'

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IOIA CONFIRMS NEW NAME AT AGM

The Independent Organic Inspector Association (IOIA) held its General Assembly on 2 March, at Retalhuleu, Guatemala.

The General Assembly confirmed the proposed change of name from 'Independent' to International Organic Inspector Association (see report in TOS76, August 2007). The full implementation of the name change is expected to take up to a year.

A new board of directors (five members) plus alternates were elected. The IOIA's board of directors for 2008 is:

- Bob Durst (Chair)
- David Konrad (Vice Chair)
- Gene Prochaska (Treasurer, 2nd term)
- Monique Scholz (Secretary)
- Stephen Bird (Executive Member at Large, newly elected)
- Lidia Girón (Second Alternate, newly elected)

The outgoing Board members are Garry Lean, Maheswar Ghimire and Sue Baird.

In conjunction with the General Assembly, an advanced inspection training was held with an emphasis on changes to the NOP rule and the EU Regulation, including procedures for inspecting small farmers associations. ■

emulsifiers, is a brand new standard for all certifiers. It means tougher rules for many brands. The intention is also to encourage R&D in the organic raw materials market and, in view of the large proportion of surfactants used in products such as shampoo, could have a strong impact on the organic market of the sugars and oils used to make surfactants. Increased consumer demand would encourage manufacturers of the crucial functional ingredients to produce them from organic raw materials.

Still only voluntary

Of course, these will still be voluntary standards and establishing them as a legal requirement will take some time longer. After all, it took more than 15 years to get organic food and drink legislation into place. However, keenness among several leading brands should help maintain an impetus. One well known brand, Weleda, is spearheading a lobbying group called NaTrue whose mission includes tightening the legal definition of natural and organic cosmetics.

However, until EU legislation is brought into force, the question is whether brands are likely to sign up voluntarily to the audits, inspections and detailed paperwork trail that certification entails. A look at the UK market reveals that commitment to certification by eco-friendly cosmetics brands has thus far been mixed.

Several well-known companies who use many organic raw ingredients in their products, such as Barefoot Botanicals and Faith in Nature, have not opted for certification at all.

This is partly a result of the toughness of certification criteria – for instance, it is effectively impossible at present to produce a sunscreen or certain items of make up under the Soil Association standards. Lack of

awareness on the part of the general public about the behind-the-scenes issues associated with regulation and certification is another factor, because it limits the demand for certified products.

The trend, though, does seem to be changing. Media attention to organic certification in the consumer press has picked up over the last couple of years. This perhaps contributed to a 30% rise in the number of health and beauty brands certified by the Soil Association last year. Major international brands, such as Aveda, Clarins and Origins, have also shown an interest, and have started by having one or two simple products certified. In addition, Stella McCartney launched an exclusive skincare range that is certified by Ecocert. In the absence of developed natural or organic cosmetics standards in North America, brands such as Druide from Canada have also sought out Ecocert certification. In fact, Ecocert reports an 80% increase in the number of certified cosmetic products, bringing their total to over 5,500 at the end of 2007.

The key question is whether harmonisation will boost consumer demand for certified products. Will consistency in standards improve buying confidence? Samantha Burlington, a major online retailer of organic and natural skincare, is excited about the prospect: *'Once harmonisation happens it will be much easier for different parts of the industry to work together and speak to the consumer with one voice. I believe that once consumers understand certification better they will start to demand it, so more and more manufacturers will be encouraged.'*

But Moritz Aebersold of NaTrue and head of Weleda Switzerland, feels it is important that the industry

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CCOF CHANGE STANCE ON AERIAL SPRAY

On 10 March 2008 California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) revoked its support of aerial application of organically approved pheromones to control light brown apple moth (LBAM). CCOF explained that organic farming's principles are, among others, to use a diversified approach to solve agricultural pest problems with a preference to those that are the least disruptive to ecological systems. CCOF stated it supports the use of pheromones in ground applications as well as other ecologically integrated pest management approaches (IPM) but does not endorse aerial applications such as LBAM control measures due to potential human health and environmental concerns.

CCOF also urged the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to pursue diverse precautionary measures. ■

Source: CCOF

For more information please see <http://www.ccof.org/www/pdf/pr08-03-10LBAM.pdf>

should set its sights on a common logo for certified cosmetics products worldwide. 'Consumers and companies need one, single international symbol,' he says. This is an ambitious target, but at least agreement among Europeans is a stride in the right direction.

In a nutshell

Examples of where there is disharmony between current standards include:

- The Soil Association's restrictions on toxic and synthetic ingredients are broadly the strictest of the European certifiers.
- Two other UK organic certifiers, the Organic Food Federation and Organic Farmers & Growers, also have standards for beauty products. Their organic content requirements are the same as the Soil Association, a minimum of 95% of the total formula for an 'organic' label and 70% to qualify for 'made with organic ingredients' certification. The Soil Association is stricter in insisting that only the plant material part of organic floral waters can count towards the content calculation.
- France's Ecocert has two certification levels, organic and natural. For organic certification at least 10% of the total formula has to be organic. Additionally, 95% of all ingredients (excluding surfactants and emulsifiers) that could currently be organic must be organic. Beyond that, there is no requirement to use organic ingredients if available. Although parabens cannot be used as a preservative for a finished product, they are permitted as a constituent ingredients. The Ecocert natural level certification also requires a product to contain at least a 5% proportion of organic ingredients.
- Germany's BDIH natural cosmetics certification requires that a few

common plant ingredients must be of organic quality. Restrictions on toxic ingredients include a ban on parabens and sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS).

Proposed Europe-wide harmonised standards

The cosmetic standards group will propose a standard that has two levels of certification, one for natural cosmetics and one for organic

The natural level will be similar to the current BDIH standards. The product cannot be described as 'organic' and any organic claim printed on the packaging must be clearly quantified.

The organic level will require that 95% of physically processed plant ingredients (oils, tinctures etc.) are organic and that a given percentage of chemically-derived plant ingredients (e.g. surfactants) are organic. This percentage is expected to evolve as the availability of organic surfactants etc. improves. Explicit labelling of the product's total organic content (minimum to be established) will also be required.

For both organic and natural certification, there will be a uniform list of acceptable processes for chemically-derived plant ingredients, as well as toxicity checks and a short and strict list of synthetic ingredients (mainly nature-identical preservatives) will be allowed. ■

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This is an edited version of an article which was first published in Organic & Natural Business.

Private or public administrative service

Is organic certification a private service or is it a service of the public administration? The EU Court ruled organic certification to be a private expert service unless Member States legislate otherwise. Put on your legal reading glasses and read on...

The conflict arose in 1999 in Austria. A private organic inspection body authorised to work in Germany complained it was denied permission by the Austrian authorities to work in Austria because it had no office there. Reciprocally Germany applied the same rule to Austrian organic certifiers. After a fruitless exchange of letters the EU Commission sued both countries in November 2005, and asked the EU Court to declare that both had failed to comply with the fundamental guarantee of freedom to provide services as laid down in Article 55 of the EC-Treaty. On 29 November 2007 the Court rendered its judgement, in both cases ruling in favour of the EU Commission.

The Court's judgements addressed the question of whether organic certification – as it is performed under Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 by private inspection bodies – is a service of the government. In other words, it considered whether private certification bodies execute a public administrative function. Is the conformity assessment under EN 45011 or ISO Guide 65 an act of public administration? Are inspection certificates issued by private certifiers administrative acts?

Before the EU Court ruling, the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig had concluded in 2006 that organic certifiers always act as

governmental agents.¹ The plaintiff, a German organic certifier, had challenged the Bavarian authorities. It had argued that it was being treated as a part of the public administration, and that such treatment could only be imposed by parliament. If the Bavarian authorities decided to treat the certifier as a subservient administrative entity fully susceptible to instructions – not only with respect to the law but also to all aspects of practicability as perceived by the Bavarian state authorities – it would have no recourse to any protection provided by basic constitutional guarantees, such as the protection of property or the freedom to render services.

The German Court explained that it was already quite clear, as written out in Articles 8 and 9 of Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91, that the inspection of organic farming enterprises is a public service, and that organic inspection by private inspection bodies should be perceived as an activity of agents of the public administration.

When referring to what it thought the EU lawmaker had intended, the Court explained that it understood the German Federal Organic Law took for granted the fact that organic certification is a public administrative func-

tion and that the position of organic certification as a public administrative function had already been defined by the Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91.

Was the German Court's judgement right? Or is it more accurate to consider organic certification to be a private expert service that is rendered by private entities under the supervision of the public authority in each of the Member States? If this is so it would take place on the basis of certification agreements after being permitted to practise within the framework of statutory law provided the law of the respective Member State does not nationalise organic inspection.

What was the opinion of the EU Court? It did not agree with the German court. To make its ruling it had to assess the legal nature of organic certification under Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91.

To clarify this the Advocate General, an independent counsel to the EU Court, stated that in her opinion where Member States have opted to place the inspection system exclusively in the hands of one or more State authority, questions regarding the freedom to provide services do not arise. Private bodies, in this case, are not competent to carry out inspections in such Member States. However, where private inspection bodies approved in one Member State wish to offer their services in another Member State, which has opted to give such bodies responsibility for inspection, the freedom to provide services in accordance to Article 55 of the EC-Treaty fully applies.

The Advocate General based her

The Court's judgements addressed the question of whether organic certification is a service of the government.

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IODINE FOLLOWS FOLIC ACID

After compulsory fortification of non-organic bread with folic acid in Australia and New Zealand (see TOS 74), bread in New Zealand bread is now set to become iodine fortified. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has decided to make it mandatory for bread manufacturers to replace non-iodised salt in breads with iodised salt. However, unleavened bread and organic products are exempted from this new policy. Bread manufacturers have until September 2009 to comply with the new regulation to allow time to make the required changes to manufacturing and labelling. It will also give the salt industry time to increase the production of iodised salt.

According to the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) the reasons for this step is to combat a growing problem of iodine deficiency among New Zealanders. This is because of low natural soil iodine levels, growing popularity of sea and rock salts, a general reduction in the amount of salt consumed as well as a shift from the use of iodine-based disinfectants in industry and home. ■

Source: NZ Herald

For more information please see http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c_id=206&objectid=10498883

finding on various considerations. May a supervisory authority verify, within its own territory, the inspections carried out by a body approved by the authority of another Member State? Can it require access to the offices and facilities of an inspection body in another Member State, either where it itself approved the body or where the body is approved in the other Member State? Is it permissible for a supervisory authority to verify the inspections carried out in another Member State by a body that has been approved by the authority? Is there a danger that an inspection body could escape supervision in respect of services that it provides in a Member State other than that in which it is approved?²

Referring specifically to the German and Austrian authorities, the EU Court replied that it would be possible for the supervisory authorities to obtain the guarantees required by Regulation No. 2092/91 and other consumer protection laws by using measures that are not too restrictive, such as proof of establishment. Some degree of guarantee could also be achieved through using the infrastructure and staff required to provide the services in Germany and Austria, respectively. In addition, the Court stated, 'should any irregularity be found in the inspections carried out in Germany by that body, Article 10a of Regulation No 2092/91 provides for a system of exchange of information between the Member States.'³

The Advocate General placed special emphasis on the work performed by private organic inspection bodies as operating production certification systems: 'In the present cases, approved private inspection bodies are subject to the supervision and control of the competent authority in

their home Member State. The private bodies themselves carry out the necessary inspections under the Regulation. They may apply sanctions, including those listed under Articles 9(9) and 10(3), for infringements by the operators. As Germany points out, they can also grant certain derogations. That said, the system put in place by the Regulation is one in which, essentially, the inspection bodies operate a product certification system under the supervision of the competent authority.'

The Court pointed to the fact that, where private organic certifiers operate in the Member States, they are supervised by governmental agencies. The Court takes such supervision as an indication that the private certifiers do not act as agents of the public administration, but rather perform expert services for which they enjoy the freedom to operate EU-wide.

The Court stated: '... Regulation No. 2092/91 provides for the oversight of those bodies by the competent public authority. ... It is therefore apparent that private bodies carry out their activities under the active supervision of the competent public authority which, in the final analysis, is responsible for the inspections and decisions of those bodies, It follows that the auxiliary and preparatory role devolved on private bodies by that regulation vis-à-vis the supervisory authority cannot be regarded as being directly and specifically connected with the exercise of official authority, within the meaning of Article 55 EC, read in conjunction with the first paragraph of Article 45 EC.'⁴

The EU Court reasoned that private organic certifiers are independent fact finding and assessment

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MORE ISEAL MANUALS

The Emerging Initiative Programme managed by the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance has recently released five additional new manuals. The manuals cover issues related to stakeholder engagement, measuring impacts, conflicts of interest and trademark and labelling. There is now a set of ten modules, each with practical examples from ISEAL member organisations. An additional manual covering potential for new technology to enhance the engagement of stakeholders is in the pipeline.

Organisations planning to develop best practice application in the fields covered will obtain useful information and guidelines from these manuals. The manuals will also be a useful resource for academics, consultants, NGOs and anyone who is seeking to gain a better understanding of how voluntary social and environmental standard initiatives work. ■

Source: ISEAL

The entire series is available for download free of charge from ISEAL website at www.isealalliance.org/emerginginitiatives

service providers whose function is not, per se under EU law, that of a governmental agency. However, the Advocate General made it clear, that Member States are free to nationalise the private certification services on their territory. But where they do not do so, private certifiers are not agents or part of the public administration.

For Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 as well as the pending implementation of the new EU organic Regulation No 834/2007, it follows:

- Member States must decide on the nationalisation of organic certification themselves, as this decision has not already been rendered by EU law.
- Member States must observe the rules of their own constitutional law for such nationalisation decisions. Most Constitutions require a decision by parliament to provide for a proper democratic legitimisation.

In Germany, when the Federal Law on Organic Farming was enacted in 2002 and amended in 2005, no decision on whether to nationalise organic certification was taken by Parliament. This was because the Parliament believed, as the Federal Administrative Court pointed out, that this decision had already been taken on the EU level. However, the EU Court's decision made it clear that this was not the case. It follows, that with the implementation of Regulation No. 834/2007 this decision will need to be addressed in all EU Member States. In addition, it must be carried out in a transparent manner that ensures each State's Members of Parliament have understood the ramifications of their choice.

When the Commission presented its first draft for the total revision of Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 a reference to Regulation (EC) No.

882/2004, which harmonises public food inspection services, was perceived by many observers as a decision to nationalise organic certification. However, at the instigation of some Member States, particularly Germany, major sections of text on organic certification from Regulation (EC) 882/2004 were copied into the new Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. These texts have become special norms in relation to the general food inspection requirements, thus opening the issue up to further discussion. It appears that under Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 EU Member States are again faced with two choices, should organic certification be:

- A private service of private expert bodies under the supervision of public authorities.
- A public service of the administration with private certifiers acting as executive assistants only.

When the new organic Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 is implemented in 2009 this matter will have to be addressed by each Member State. Indeed, in accordance to the constitutional law of most Member States the answer will need to be rendered by their parliamentary law makers in 2008 and not merely by their administrations. ■

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Footnotes

- ¹ BVerwG, Decision of 13 June 2006, 3 BN 1.06/VGH 19 N 04.1774
- ² Opinion of the Advocate General Sharpston, delivered on 12 July 2007, Cases C-393/05 and C-404/05
- ³ European Court of Justice, 29 November 2007, Case C-404/05, Commission v. Germany
- ⁴ European Court of Justice, 29 November 2007, Case C-393/05, Commission v. Austria

From quality management to impartiality

A comment on the draft ISO 17065

The revision of ISO 65 has now been initiated. A meeting is to be held in Geneva in April where the 3rd working draft will be discussed. The new standard will be given the number 17065. It will still be some years before the final version is in place. The draft has very detailed regulations and definitions regarding impartiality, while the 'quality speak' that was so strong in ISO 65 has more or less vanished. In essence, though, the draft does not seem to mean any revolutionary change for certification bodies as much of the new text is simply an interpretation of the existing ISO 65.

The third draft of the new ISO standard is composed of 34 pages, compared to the eight pages (admittedly in smaller typeface) of ISO 65. However, two of the 34 pages are an alternative text, and the document contains some repetition that is likely to be weeded out, e.g. the requirements for the obligation of the certificate holder are repeated more or less identically in sections 5.1.2.2 and 8.4.5. It is clear that the IAF Guidance document for ISO 65 has provided much of the input to this revision. It is likely that the final text will be substantially shorter and more succinct.

The structure of the document has been changed considerably, but it is hard to see the logic in the order. In particular, it is not clear why management system requirements have been put at the end in the document, separate from all other requirements regarding the organisation, staff etc.

The Scope section of the document makes it clear that the working group considers many standards and certification systems, including organic systems, to be basically about processes and not the specification of

products. The draft clearly applies to the certification of services and processes as well, and it clarifies that the standard can be used for accreditation as well as for peer review or other assessment procedures. Those issues were not clear in ISO 65.

The definitions section has been expanded considerably, from one single term being defined to two and a half pages of definitions. Terms defined include impartiality; product; process; organisational control; and certification decision. Half a page is about defining 'product consultancy', which has a bearing on the extensive regulations about impartiality.

The draft introduces some general principles. However, it is made clear that the principles are not 'requirements', i.e. they are not part of the compulsory standards that have to be adhered to, but have been added so that they can be applied in unantic-

pated situations. Interestingly enough, principles of this type were present in the 1998 version of the IFOAM Accreditation Criteria (called General Criteria) but are not in the present version. The principles are Impartiality; Competence; Confidentiality; Openness; Access to information; and, Responsiveness to complaints and appeals.

The management of impartiality has been considerably expanded. In the current ISO 65 there is no specific section for this and the requirements are spread out throughout the standards, with the word 'impartiality' being used just six times. In ISO 17065 a section on management of impartiality covers two full pages and the word is used thirty times in the document. Impartiality also features as a basic principle, where there is almost one page devoted to it. One new requirement is that certification bodies will have to give a public statement showing that they understand the importance of impartiality. Most of the regulations are about conflict of interest, and there are many details aimed at ensuring certification bodies do not provide other services that might compromise them. It clarifies – in three different places – that two years must pass between a person or organisation providing a consultancy service and performing any certification related service to the same client. In essence, it is hard to find anything specific that makes the new ISO standard stricter on impartiality than ISO 65. Most of the requirements are just interpretations of the existing standards, but the sheer number

The definitions section has been expanded considerably, from one single term being defined to two and a half pages of definitions.

news shorts...

PACIFIC COLLABORATION

To ensure that organic products from Pacific regions are accepted internationally, a Regional Organic Task Force (ROTF) has been given the task of developing suitable standards as well as providing technical advice in the region.

Their views will feed into the standard development process. Harmonising Pacific organic standards is expected to facilitate certification and reduce related costs.

The task force held its second meeting in Nadi, Fiji on 17-21 March 2008, where members reviewed the second draft of the Pacific organic standards to finalise the document. The meeting was organised by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Apart from finalising the standards document, the meeting also considered various options to setting up an appropriate organic certification system for the whole region to cover both production and processing of organic products. ■

Source: SPC

of detailed regulations might pose new burdens on certification bodies to demonstrate compliance.

New, and linked to the issue of impartiality, is the establishment of a committee for safeguarding impartiality. The document provides two alternative texts for this, both of which state that there should be a committee or an 'equivalent mechanism' to safeguard impartiality. It seems that the writers of the document were somewhat obsessed with this subject and forgot that some kind of oversight may also be needed for other aspects of certification bodies' operations, such as the other five Principles mentioned in the standard.

The committee for safeguarding impartiality is supposed to be composed of representatives from various interest groups. This mechanism for allowing input from affected parties also exists in ISO 65, but in the current standard is used in the development of policies and principles regarding the content and functioning of the certification body rather than the narrow scope of safeguarding impartiality, as in ISO 17065. The draft gives the committee the right to take independent action, e.g. by informing authorities or stakeholders, should the management of a certification body not respect its advice. The requirement to give such power to a committee also existed in the IAF Guidance to ISO 65, but the author has never heard of any committee in a certification body ever taking such action. In organic certification bodies it is common to have fairly independent Certification Committees in charge of certification decisions, in fact this was a specific requirement in the IFOAM Norms, but no requirement of such a committee is foreseen in the draft.

Personnel

Requirements regarding person-

nel are considerably expanded, and the draft also clarifies that the terms and requirements apply equally to contracted freelancers as well as the permanent staff, which was not clear in ISO 65. The draft sets requirements for the monitoring and review of performance of all personnel, using techniques such as monitoring audit reports, feedback from clients and witnessed audits.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing (also called 'subcontracting') is another area that has been expanded from the current ISO 65. The draft elaborates over two pages how a certification body can ensure the competence of an organisation it contracts for part of its work. Similar to the current ISO 65, the draft does not allow the outsourcing of certification decisions. However, in a different part of the document (9.1.4) it states that a certification body can delegate certification decisions to personnel employed in an organisation in which it has majority ownership. This supports the business model of multinational certification organisations with national subsidiaries, while making life hard for alliances of independent certification organisations.

Transparency

Surprisingly, the draft has weaker requirements for publicly accessible information, which perhaps reflects a resistance to transparency (a word that is not used in ISO 17065) among certification bodies and sometimes among their clients. For instance, the current ISO 65 demands that information should be publicly available about 'the means by which the organization obtains financial support and general information on the fees charged to applicants and to suppliers of certified products'. It also requires

that 'a description of the rights and duties of applicants and suppliers of certified products, including requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of the certification body's logo' should be made available. The draft has no such requirement. The requirement for a directory of certified clients is still there and has been slightly expanded, which is interesting considering how many accredited certification bodies still refuse to make such information available.

Term definitions

ISO 65 is littered with the use of the word 'quality' in terms like 'quality management', 'quality system', 'quality policy' and 'quality policy'. The draft has almost no such references, even though it makes it clear that the requirements presented under 'Management system' is a subset of ISO 9001:2000. Many in the organic sector will welcome this change as they have argued that the current ISO 65 places too much emphasis on quality systems, and that the terms it uses are, in many cases, hard to understand and interpret. Certification bodies will now be free to sack their 'Quality Managers' or give them new jobs; they will not have to formulate a 'quality policy' anymore and they will no longer need a 'quality manual'. However, most of the actual requirements in ISO 65 are still there regardless of this change in terminology; and many have been developed further, for instance the requirements for Internal Audits and Management Reviews.

Certificates, or certification documents, will have to contain considerably more information in the future: items mentioned have increased from six to eleven, including a unique identification code; the scope of certification; the name and address of the

certification body; the identification of a certification mark and reference to the rules for its use.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is also regulated in greater detail. One clarification is that certification bodies will have to inform their clients 'in advance' (one must assume that this is in advance of an application, or re-application) which information will be made publicly available and which will be considered confidential. This makes it clearer that certification bodies wishing to publish inspection reports will be able to do so, provided the clients have been informed properly.

ISO 65 did not address whether a certification body can develop its own standards or not. This is a common practise within the organic sector, but some accreditation bodies have considered it to be an abomination. The draft clarifies that certification bodies can develop products requirements (standards).

The draft requires that interpretations of standards intended to cover all products of the same type should be made public. However, a decision that part of the standards do not apply to a product is not, according to the draft, considered to be an interpretation. This seems to be a rather controversial matter. The term 'evaluation' in ISO 65 is replaced by 'initial investigation'. Similar to ISO 65, the draft requires that the report or a summary thereof shall be provided to the applicant, with any non-conformities clearly identified.

Requirements on surveillance cover more than two pages, but there

does not seem to be any new requirement relevant to organic certification schemes. This is because the organic sector has little difference between the initial investigation and the follow up surveillance. Issues regarding termination and suspension of certification are given a page, and includes little 'new' regulations, even though ISO 65 has very little detail on the topic.

One item of good news for clients is that the draft requires certification bodies to consult with interested parties before making changes to certification requirements. For clients in the EU this may make little difference as most changes made to requirements are results of changes in EU legislation, for which no such consultation is prescribed, as one would expect accreditors to waive the adherence to that standard rather than challenging the European Union. The sections on handling complaints and appeals have been expanded and are now similar to those in the IFOAM Accreditation Criteria.

What is missing?

Considering how much the certification industry has developed it is surprising that there is no guidance in the document for multi-site (group) certification. The ISO 65 requirement that the certification body shall require that clients have records of complaints has been dropped, which is probably welcomed by many in the sector – IFOAM has always maintained that this requirement makes little sense when applied to farmers. ■

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Certificates, or certification documents, will have to contain considerably more information in the future. ■

Organic aquaculture standards are best

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recently published a study comparing aquaculture standards focusing on environmental, social and animal welfare and health issues. Eighteen different certification bodies (CBs) were selected for comparison. The result of the comparison is divided into three different categories namely 'Better choice', 'Need improvements' and 'Serious shortfalls'.

In general, the study found that organic aquaculture certification programmes are best in all aspects compared. For example, all organic certification programmes are ranked 'Better choice' in animal welfare and health aspects. Also none of the other types of certification programmes ranked as 'Better choice' or 'Need improvements' in environmental aspect.

Specifically looking at organic aquaculture certification programmes, Naturland, a CB in Germany had the best ranking standards, followed by BioSuisse, Switzerland and Soil As-

sociation, UK. WWF also identified five other aquaculture certification programmes but they were not included in the study due to insufficient environmental, social and animal welfare and health aspects within the

standards for comparison.

However, even though organic aquaculture certification programmes are considered the best, according to the study they still have significant shortcomings and lack an effective and credible regulatory framework. None of the standards analysed are in full compliance with the criteria defined by WWF. ■

Source: WWF

Ranking of organic certification body (CB)

Organic CB	Scores				Rank
	Environmental	Social	Animal welfare & health	Total	
Naturland, Germany	69	100	94	263	1
Bio Suisse, Switzerland	67	89	100	256	2
Soil Association, UK	83	61	100	244	3
NASAA, Australia	62	78	94	234	4
Bio Austria, Austria	83	44	100	227	5
Bioland, Germany	86	44	94	224	6
Biogro, New Zealand	68	44	89	201	7
Debio, Norway	59	44	89	192	8
Krav, Sweden	59	44	83	186	9
Agriculture Biologique, France	47	28	89	164	10

Comparison of positions of different CB categories

CBs category	Total CBs	CB position								
		Environmental			Social			Animal welfare and health		
		A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
General certification programme for aquaculture	3	-	-	3	-	1	2	1	-	2
Specific certification programme for fish	3	-	-	3	-		3	1	1	1
Specific certification programme for shrimp	2	-	-	2	-	1	1	-	1	1
Organic aquaculture certification programme	10	3	6	1	2	2	6	10	-	-
Total	18	3	6	9	2	4	12	12	2	4

Legend: A=Better choice; B=Need improvements; C=Serious shortfalls

Certification Alliance launched

Certification Alliance (CertAll) a partnership of eight certification bodies aiming to provide a low cost, all-in-one export certification service to organic markets worldwide was launched at BioFach in February this year.

The specific aims and objectives of Certification Alliance (CertAll) are stated as:

- To facilitate certification required by operators for export markets through partner organisations in the countries and regions where they operate.
- To operate a common export inspection service for all partner organisations as well as other certification bodies operating in the Asia region and elsewhere.
- To coordinate promotion and marketing of specified inspection and certification services of partner organisations developed under this agreement.
- To facilitate mutual recognition of certification between partner organisations.
- To facilitate institutional and competency development of partner organisations in organic and related inspection and certification services.
- To facilitate knowledge of and market confidence in products certified by partner organisations under this agreement in applicable markets.

The first meeting, initiated by Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand (ACT) and Istituto per la Certificazione Etica and Ambientale (ICEA) to discuss the collaboration, was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in March last year. The second meeting, where terms and conditions for the collaboration were set, was held in

Vientiane, Laos, in October.

The collaboration arrangement allows CertAll partners to offer a wide range of certifications available through each other. It includes a common fee schedule for inspection as well as a peer review. Accordingly,

organic operators in Asia, where seven of the eight partner organisations are based, can register with a service unit close to their operation to arrange certifications as required for access to European and North American markets, as well as those in Asia. Partners, in turn, enjoy opportunity of mutual sharing, learning and competency building to enhance each other's service performance in inspection and certification services. ■

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Source: Certification Alliance

For more information please see www.certificationalliance.org

Partner organisations

The eight partner organisations in CertAll are:

- Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand (ACT), Thailand
Contact: Weena Kruthngoen, Certification Manager, at: info@actorganic-cert.or.th; website: www.actorganic-cert.or.th
- Institute for Ethical and Environmental Certification (ICEA), Italy
Contact: Lorenzo Peris, at l.peris@tin.it; website: www.icea.info
- Organic Food Development and Certification Center (OFDC), China
Contact: Xingji Xiao, Director, at: xiao@ofdc.org.cn; website: www.ofdc.org.cn
- Promotion of Organic Farming and Marketing in Lao PDR (PROFIL), Laos
Contact: Phouvong Chittanavanh, Coordinator, at: phouvong@laoprofil.org; website: www.laosorganic.com
- Organic Alliance Malaysia (OAM), Malaysia
Contact: Jumat Majid, Certification Coordinator, at: jumatmajid@myjaring.net; website: www.organicmalaysia.com.my
- Organic Certification Nepal (OCN), Nepal
Contact: Basanta Rana Bhat, Chairperson, at: ecoscentre@wlink.com.np
- Sri cert, Sri Lanka
Contact: Thilak kariyawasam, Director at: tputhilak@sltnet.lk
- Organic Certification Center of the Philippines (OCCP), Philippines
Contact: Jacqueline Alleje, Board member, at: rizaldairy@pacific.net.ph

Need for certified organic seed?

The debate on the requirement in many organic standards for the use of organic seed continues. Below is a look at the current status.

Recently there has been much discussion within the organic world about seed, or more specifically the requirement to use certified organic seed for certified organic production and the repercussions thereof. The discussion was given greater impetus in January 2008 by the publication of a briefing produced by GRAIN, an NGO that promotes the sustainable management and use of agricultural biodiversity. The briefing, entitled 'Whose Harvest? The politics of organic seed certification'¹ takes a critical look at the threats and repercussions that are occurring or may occur due to the requirement for the use of certified organic seeds. This well distributed briefing received a strong response from various organic activists around the world.

The core of this debate starts with the fact that most organic standards, including those of the EU and US-NOP, have a standard requiring the use of organic seed in organic production when it is available. The critical point, and point of flexibility, has been in the availability part of the standard. With much less production of certified organic seed and fewer varieties than conventional offerings, this has opened the door to derogations when seed of the preferred varieties is not available as certified organic. It has also allowed flexibility regarding farmers saving their own seed of unregistered varieties and exchanging seed with other farmers or gardeners.

This standard has been generally accepted for a number of years by most certification bodies. However, there has been interest by some stakeholders in the organic movement to move towards stricter requirements for derogations or to change the standard to require use of certified organic seeds and planting material in practically all situations. The question of how to determine whether a seed variety is available as certified organic or not, has been left rather open or has fallen on the farmer to show an attempt to source the seed. But it is now increasingly being determined by databases on organic seed availability. Such databases were required as part of allowing a continuing exemption to requiring certified organic seed in all cases according to the European Commission in 2003. Certification bodies and national governments may declare that derogations will no longer be allowed for a certain variety when there is a registered certified organic source on such a database. Recently, interpretation has become even stricter: when there is determined to be sufficient availability in varieties and production quantities of seed of a certain crop, all derogations have been closed for the specified crop whether in a certain country or the

EU as a whole. Belgium, for example, closed derogations for nine vegetable species based on the above conclusion in 2005. When this type of closure is applied, it does not mean that all varieties that are available conventionally can be found organically, only that the determining body feels there is sufficiently diverse availability to allow for closure. Although this may not have been the intention, combined with other regulations regarding registration of seed varieties and no clear mechanism for bringing new varieties onto the organic list, the list in such a closure situation, effectively becomes the list of allowed varieties for organic production. This, as pointed out in the GRAIN article, is particularly disturbing and incongruent with organic principles, in that it effectively illegalises farmer variety development, seed saving, and small scale seed exchange and sales between farmers and gardeners.

A shift in the seed business

As proponents of stricter conditions for derogations point out, by closing the option of using conventional seed, organic farmers are forced to demand and buy organic seed, thereby creating solid impetus for increasing production and availability of certified organic seed. This can be observed in the increasing market for certified seed where such strict requirements now exist. This is likely to benefit those organic farmers producing seed for sale and seed companies focusing on organic seed. At the same time, though, these regulations combined with the mainstreaming of the organic sector into an important sector of the

The list in such a closure situation, effectively becomes the list of allowed varieties for organic production.

agricultural market, have brought a shift within the seed business. Now major seed corporations that have had no interest in organic seed production, have started to develop their own organic seed lines or are buying smaller seed companies with an important organic seed presence to put in their portfolio. Such a shift brings fear to many in the movement of what may be a resurrection of dominance by these companies over the lives of organic farmers who worked hard to free themselves from dependence on outside agriculture inputs and the costs and conditions that come with such dependence.

The issue of organic seed emerged within the EU, but it is important that the focus is re-adjusted. It is critical to remember – as pointed out in the GRAIN article – that the EU market is the most important organic market for organic exporters from developing countries. In such countries the organic movement is not nearly so well developed and conditions are very different, and many do not yet have any seed companies producing or marketing certified organic seed. In certain countries, even getting hold of untreated seed for many crops is impossible for farmers unless they can produce their own seed or band together to create enough buying power to demand a special untreated lot of seed for their use. In almost all circumstances, the only organic seed source is from the network of organic farmers themselves, and this is not normally certified, whether by organic or other regulatory standards. In addition, changing diets and promotion of new varieties since the Green Revolution, has meant a great loss of traditional open pollinated seed varieties, and now for many important economic crops, such as most maize types and numerous popular vegetables, there

are no known sources of non-hybrid seed on the market. This means that at present for certain economic crops, farmers are totally dependent upon buying conventional hybrid seed and paying the prices dictated.

Biodiversity at risk

Earth Net Foundation, an organic organisation in Thailand, believes – as most organisations in the movement do – seed grown under organic conditions is preferable. However, experience has shown that for success in organic production, the more critical factor is to have a variety that is well adapted to local conditions and meets the grower's other needs as to taste, appearance, timing, etc. In the diverse conditions of small farmers in Thailand and much, if not all, of the world, this is best met by continual selection and adaptation of varieties by the farmers who use them or their neighbours. This biodiversity of varieties will also continue to be critical as source material for breeders and for protection of food production under changing environmental conditions.

Returning to the original focus of this discussion, it is appropriate and timely to continue this debate. In discussion, however, it is important to recall the core objectives of the organic movement in this subject area:

- To be free from the need to source seed and planting material from conventional production.
- To support development of organic seed production in diversity of varieties and in quantity.
- To protect and support farmers' rights to control, select, and develop

their own seed stock.

- To protect farmers' rights to do informal exchange and sales of seed with fellow farmers, gardeners, and neighbours.
- To protect and encourage farm biodiversity, including in plant crop varieties and animal breeds. Regulation should not pose a barrier to variety selection work or introduction of new varieties under organic conditions (except prohibition of genetic modification technologies and GMO seed use).
- Regulations need to be flexible enough to allow emerging organic movements to develop and participate in organic global commerce.

Backward step

Although some of the threats to these objectives come from seed registration rules and seed commerce regulations, stakeholders in the organic movement must be careful to help break down such obstacles rather than adding an additional layer of regulation that harms development of the organic movement and potentially puts organic farmers back in the hands of seed corporations. It may be convenient to have a simple list and a yes/no answer, but this is not the best solution. There is a need to work together to find answers that meet these objectives without stomping on the movement's own feet. ■

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¹ The briefing can be viewed at www.grain.org/briefings/?id=207

In almost all circumstances, the only organic seed source is from the network of organic farmers themselves, and this is not normally certified. ■

did you know?

PETA turn kids off meat

Activist groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are reportedly affecting children's meat-eating habits, according to research by the Pork Checkoff.

A survey conducted by Pork Checkoff included four focus groups of ten children aged nine to 14 from around the United States and an online survey of 350 children in the same age bracket. More than half of the children surveyed said they have heard of 'animal rights' organisations.

Nearly a quarter of those who have heard of these organisations, said they have impacted their meat-eating habits.

One-third surveyed indicated they have heard of or visited the PETA website. Amongst them, one-third reported having seen a video concerning animal care or meat consumption. More than half (53%) indicated the website/video had impacted their meat-eating habits. ■

Source: Meatingplace.com

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TOS opens galley of back issues

Since its inception in April 2007, TOS has primarily been targeted towards subscribers. Articles of back issues are available only to subscribers on the online searchable TOS web database. In conjunction with its seventh publication year, TOS now has an online gallery store where all its back issues and single articles are available for everyone. Each single TOS issue, as well as articles, are on sale separately. TOS gallery currently has over 500 articles starting from TOS 57, January 2006 to TOS 83, February 2008. A complete list of articles and issues as far back to TOS 1 is expected within the next two months.

TOS gallery is currently set up for non-subscribers who are interested to purchase single issues or articles. A plan to develop facilities for TOS subscribers to download single articles or issues is in the pipe. Articles will include original tables and graphics in PDF format instead of the text only format from the current online TOS web database.

Purchases are conducted online through the services of online payment processing agents such as PayPal, PayTreck and MoneyBookers. Once payment is confirmed download links will be forwarded almost immediately. Transactions are protected and secured with Secure Socket Layer (SSL) technology provided by the payment processing agents. ■

For more information please see www.tosgallery.net

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