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## EU Eco-label scheme to be extended

The EU 'Eco-label' is a voluntary scheme designed to encourage businesses to market products and services that are environmentally-friendly. On 2 April 2009 the EU Parliament approved, with a wide majority, a motion to revise the scheme so that its scope is extended to include new products such as processed food.

After EU Member State representatives have formally adopted the regulation in the Council of Ministers, processed food and feed products will be added to the list. The Commission will consider only awarding the eco-label to organic products.

Responding to these developments the IFOAM EU Group has expressed disappointment that the text on the Ecolabel does not exclude the labelling of food products from its scope. The IFOAM EU Group urges the EU institutions to stop interfering in functioning markets through inconsistent labelling attempts.

'The EU high level conference on agricultural product quality in Praha, 12-13 March, following on from the Green paper (3) clearly warned the EU not to go "walking into chaos",' said Francis Blake, President of the Group. 'But the current intention to

include food in the scope of the new Ecolabel regulation will do precisely that and will only serve to confuse consumers.'



The EU Eco-label

'It is clear that an Ecolabel for food products can only be used for organic products as the term 'eco' is reserved by EU regulation 834/2007 only for organic foods', added Marco Schlüter, Director of the Group. 'Organic food production is significantly better for the environment than conventional and there are already well established organic logos that consumers recognise and trust, and a new EU mandatory organic logo coming in July 2010. To add another logo, even with the best of intentions, is at best unnecessary and at worst detrimental.'

'However, the IFOAM EU Group remains open to discuss the possibility of including additional environmental parameters, e.g. for organic processing, in the current organic legislation 834/2007', continued Francis Blake. 'We support and understand the usefulness of an Ecolabel to encourage higher environmental performance for certain products. But this is precisely what organic farming and food processing has been doing for 85 years. Rather than trying to "reinvent the wheel", it is far better to invest in the existing wheel of organic farming and help to further develop that.'

The IFOAM EU Group offers its broad expertise to the EU Commission to assist in that process. ■

Sources:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm)

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