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Work on harmonisation and equivalence continues

The work of the International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture (ITF) ended in 2008 with the adoption of two tools, the International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies (IROCB) and the EquiTool – a tool for determining equivalence among organic standards. With support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) the cooperative relationship between IFOAM, FAO and UNCTAD will continue with the objective to simplify the process for trade in organic products from one regulatory or private control system to another.

While the ITF project was mainly a political process, the new project ‘Global Organic Market Access’

(GOMA) is geared towards technical assistance and implementation of the ITF tools. Other aspects that will be supported are the development of common regional standards and other measures to gain recognition and access to importing country markets. The project will be managed by Diane Bowen, the previous Organic Guarantee System manager of IFOAM (and secretary of the ITF). The GOMA Steering Committee is composed of Nadia Scialabba (FAO), Selma Doryan (Codex Alimentarius secretariat FAO), Ulrich Hoffmann, Sophia Twarog (both from UNCTAD) and from IFOAM Andre Leu and Ong Kung Wai. ■

More information see www.itf-organic.org.

ISEAL to strengthen social and environmental standards

At ISEAL’s Alliance Annual General Meeting held in June it was decided to strengthen criteria for standard-setting and verification. The set of rules will comprise codes of good practice for standard-setting, impacts assessment and verification.

The ISEAL Alliance is currently revising the existing Code of Good Practice for setting Social and Environmental Standards. Systems in compliance include the Forest Stewardship Council, the Marine Stew-

ardship Council, certified organic agriculture, Fairtrade, the Rainforest Alliance, Social Accountability International and the Marine Aquarium Council. Additional good practice guidance on impacts assessment and verification is in development.

Among the joint activities agreed upon it was decided to include the development of recommendations for governments on the use of ethical labels in public procurement and an increased focus on the contributions of standards systems to address climate change. ■