

Welcome address by the Austrian Presidency of the European Union

Given by Alois Potz, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria

"In Austria, organic farming has been playing an important role in the national agricultural policy. Thus, Austria has advocated to foster the development of organic farming also at the level of the EU. It is the aim of the Austrian Presidency to support the European Commission in its actions.

Like other EU countries, Austria is trying to make use of the Action programme for organic farming in the best possible way for the further development of organic farming.

The rural development programme is playing a central role in this process. The compensatory payments for environmental services comprise the largest part of the agri-environmental programme. About 25 % of this budget is paid to organic farms. The recognised environmental services are the reason why organic farming makes up for a large part in the implementation of the sustainability strategy, the biodiversity strategy and Natura 2000 objectives.

Among other things, the following activities are also means to support organic farming: Farmers' initiatives regarding innovation, processing and marketing. Other important aspects are extension, subsidisation of investments, public relations and efficient self-management of the Austrian organic farmers' association BIO AUSTRIA.

Apart from the subsidisation of rural development, the support of research is also very important, like it is in our host country Denmark.

I am convinced that this meeting will contribute essentially to the further development of organic farming."