



Recommendations for development of the EU regulation for organic agriculture

In the last decade organic agriculture has undergone significant growth. Today, the sector is exhibiting organic industries and international trade together with a large number of different standards, labels and certification bodies.

The expansion has produced a need for simplifications of organic rules and more transparency in the regulation. Furthermore, there is need for a better understanding of how regulation can support the values behind organic agriculture and support communication between producers and consumers.

In this relation, the EU Commission has funded the research project Organic Revision with the objective to provide recommendations for the development and revision of the EU regulation for organic agriculture.

Regulation based on values and knowledge

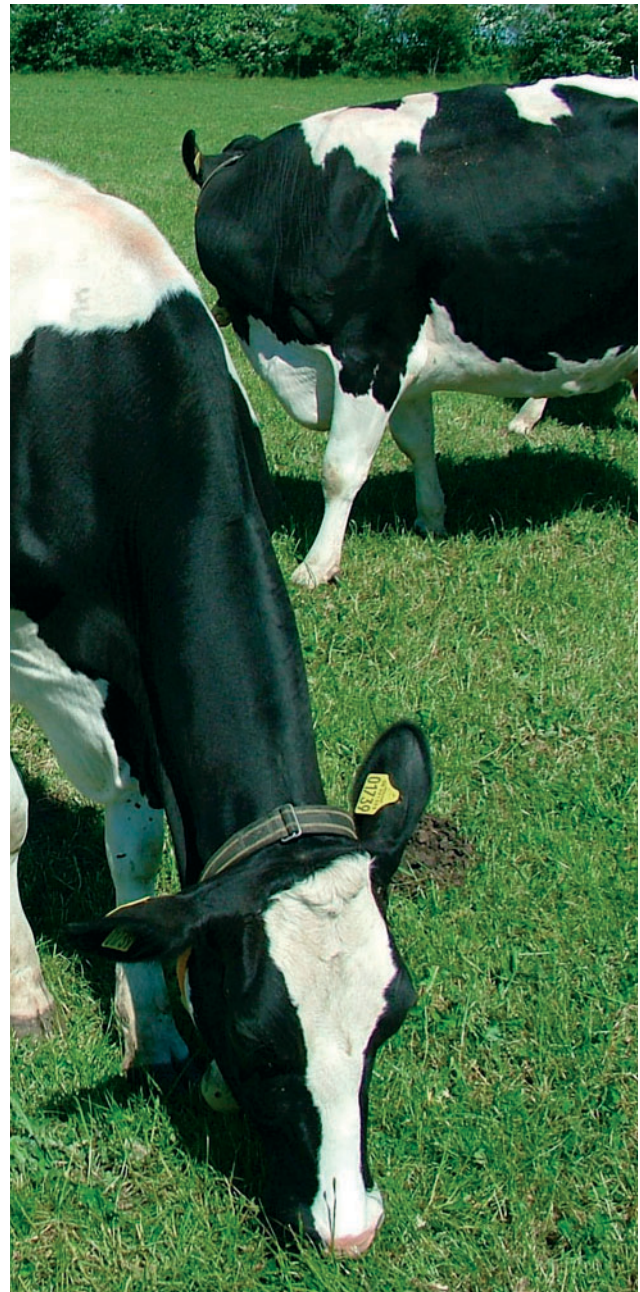
Originally, organic farming was a localised, self-regulating agricultural practice driven by distinct ethical values. In the last decades organic agriculture has undergone significant growth and development, and now it exhibits organic industries and international trade.

The organic sector is also characterized by a large number of certification bodies, different standards and labels, which can be confusing and difficult for consumers, traders and the organic farming industry. The EU regulation 2092/91 can therefore be of high importance for the credibility and harmonisation of organic standards.

The overall objective of the Organic Revision research project is to provide recommendations for development of the EU regulation for organic agriculture.

Specific objectives are:

- To identify the basic ethical values and value differences of organic agriculture in Europe and develop a procedure for balancing and integrating the basic values in developments of the EU regulation
- To compare the organic standards from national and private organisations in Europe with the EU regulation in order to give recommendations on further harmonisation of the EU regulation
- To provide more knowledge on how to achieve 100 % organic rations in diets for livestock
- To provide more knowledge on how to reduce the use of seed and vegetative propagation materials from conventional sources in organic farming
- To discuss and disseminate project results with stakeholders



EU regulations

The EU regulations on organic food and farming can be found in the COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No. 2092/91 of 24 June 1991 on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs. The EU regulation is available via the Organic Revision web site: www.organic-revision.org



Project topics

The Organic Revision research project will focus on the following topics:

Basic values

Organic farming has a great dependence on local conditions and resources. Harmonisation and development of common regulations and standards in the EU regulation require that basic ethical values are taken into consideration. Conflicts between different values need to be made explicit when the organic production methods are evaluated, and changes to the organic standards are proposed.

It is the objective of Organic Revision to identify the basic ethical values and value differences in organic farming. A procedure for balancing and integrating these basic values in the advancement of the EU regulation will be developed. On this basis, recommendations on the development of EU Regulation 2092/91 and other organic standards will be provided.

Standards

In the project, organic standards from national and private organisations in Europe are compared with the EU regulation in order to give recommendations on further harmonisation of the EU regulation.

A public web-based database of differences between the major organic standards of Europe and other relevant standards in relation to the EU Regulation 2092/91 will be developed. Different

Member States and inspection bodies will update the database, and it is expected that the database will be used as a tool for stakeholders and policy makers.

The project will examine whether the selected organic standards comply with the EU regulation in the area of general provisions and crop production, and whether they set higher levels of regulation on animal production.

Finally, the goal is to identify specific areas in the standards where revisions in terms of harmonisation, regionalisation or simplification may be implemented in the EU Regulation and national standards, taking the basic ethical values into account.

Independency – Feed & Seed

The Organic Revision research project will provide specific recommendations on the derogations of the use of conventional feed and seed in the EU regulation.

The project will thus assess the availability of organic seeds and propagation materials and develop information exchange and decision criteria for the seed regime.

The project will also survey the supply and demand of organic feeds and feed additives and develop evaluation criteria for specific feed and feed additives, thus ensuring animal welfare as well as the credibility of organic agriculture. This is expected to reduce the dependency on inputs from conventional production in organic farming systems.

Facts on Organic Revision

Organic Revision (Research to support revision of the EU Regulation on organic agriculture) is a Specific Targeted Research Project supported by the EU Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme (Priority 8.1).

Project duration

The project was commenced on March 1st 2004 and it will last for three years.

Project partners

Associazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica (AIAB), Italy
Bundesanstalt für alpenländische Landwirtschaft (BAL), Austria
Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF), Denmark
International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements, EU Regional Group, Brussels
Louis Bolk Instituut, the Netherlands
Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Switzerland
University of Kassel (UNKA), Germany
University of Lund, Sweden
University of Wales, UK

Project coordinator

Erik Steen Kristensen, DARCOF, Denmark (scientific coordinator)
Lizzie Melby Jespersen, DARCOF, Denmark (administrative coordinator)

How to follow the project

The primary website for the Organic Revision project is at <http://www.organic-revision.org>

Interactive exchange of information will take place on EcoWiki (<http://ecowiki.org>) – a site for joint web work on organic agriculture and food systems. Organic Revision has its own homepage at this site. Here you can edit web pages and add new pages enabling you to take part in the discussion and submit knowledge within the theme.

All report deliverables and other relevant publications will be uploaded to the open access electronic archive, Organic Eprints (<http://orgprints.org>). Via the archives the publications will be available for all interested parties.

Organic Revision will also organize workshops for representatives of user groups, stakeholders and organic standard policy makers. In May 2006, the project will participate in a major organic congress to be held in Odense, Denmark. The congress will be held in collaboration with two other EU funded projects; QualityLowInputFood and Core Organic.

