



## Opening Channels of Communication between the Associated Candidate Countries and the EU in Ecological farming

There are huge differences in the historical background and the level of development among the Associated Candidate Countries (ACC). Organic agriculture is an area that reached different stages of development in the different countries. The different forms of organization, the legislative and economic framework and the cultural background impose different tasks on the AC countries in this area. In accordance with the described situation the main objectives of this project are to assess and analyse which development stages have these countries achieved in organic agriculture; and to open communication channels on different levels necessary for starting the harmonization and equalization process in organic agriculture.

The central instrument for the fulfilment of these objectives will be a complex data base with homogeneous information organized around the following six thematic units relevant to organic agriculture: plant protection, organic seed and propagation material, animal husbandry, agro-technology, weed management and soil fertility.

## Specific objectives of The Channel project

Since the characteristics of organic agriculture are very different in the participating countries, existing at different stages of development, with different forms of organization, legislative system, economic frameworks and various cultural backgrounds, we choose the following objectives:

- ▶ To assess and analyse the development stages that the participating countries have achieved in organic agriculture.
- ▶ To open communication channels at different levels in order to start the harmonization and equalization processes in organic agriculture.
- ▶ To monitor the current situation of organic farming in the participating countries.
- ▶ To create links between the stakeholders of the participating countries, which is necessary for the future harmonization in organic farming.
- ▶ To create communication channels between the new accession countries and the potential candidate countries and between these countries and the European Union.
- ▶ Dissemination of our common knowledge in organic agriculture.
- ▶ To create an interactive central data bank with all kind of information collected with the help of our working groups.
- ▶ To create a common website and discussion forum of the project for the communication and the dissemination of our knowledge.



### Potential impacts

The potential impacts of the CHANNEL project are:

- European Union gets a clear idea about the situation of organic farming in the new accession candidate countries and in potential candidate countries.
- The participating countries get a clear idea about the situation of organic farming in each other's countries.
- Harmonizing/equalizing the level of knowledge about organic agriculture in the member states.
- Familiarising organic agriculture in the widest possible scope of stakeholders and those interested.



## Themes and work groups

The central instrument for the fulfilment of project objectives is a complex database organised around six thematic units. These units are identical with our work groups:

### Plant protection

Since ecological farming refuses the use of GMO and chemical treatments, so the questions of plant protection are essential for its success. There are many unsolved questions requiring further scientific investigation on this field.

### Organic seed and propagation material

In ecological farming the question of seeds and varieties has not yet developed to a sufficient level. The varieties suitable for organic production are not determined. Specific measures in the seed production technology should be developed for each species, because there are huge differences between these and the conventional methods.

### Animal husbandry

The herd is an important part of the farms' production circle and it helps to overcome the imbalance between labour and income that is typical for agriculture. One more important fact is that organic animal husbandry contributes much to the gene preservation, since it mainly works (or should work) with indigenous breeds.

### Agro-technology

Technology gains a special importance in ecological farming. All activities should be carried out to fit the best to the cultivated plant. In order to achieve this, all activities should be carried out in accordance to the most recent developments of science and technology.

### Weed management

There is not one single control tool in organic weed management, but many different strategies to reduce weeds to a level where they do not impact yield essentially. Weed management in organic farming depends primarily on understanding the interactions between weeds, crops and environmental conditions.

### Soil fertility

Improvement of soil fertility is also very important, as organic farming manages without synthetic fertilizers, so sustaining and enhancing natural soil fertility is of much greater importance in organic than in conventional farming.

## Our work in practice

There are six workgroup leaders, who had the task to create questionnaires for collecting data on the fields of all the thematic units and we created also one general for getting information about the overall situation of organic farming in the participating countries. Data collection is carried out by the active involvement of the national representatives and under the control of the workgroup leaders. The national representatives send out the questionnaires to the target persons, who send them back after filling the data in. Then the data are supervised and put into the online form of the questionnaires on our webpage by the national representatives, who have the right to access the database. National representatives are responsible for the validity and correctness of the collected data.

There are three target groups for the surveys:

1. The first level is made up of public authorities and decision makers responsible for legal and administrative affairs in agriculture and organic farming. They provide the legal framework for organic agriculture.
2. The second level consists of farmers' associations and advisors. They are experts on the practical situation of the farms, they have direct contact with practice, so they are familiar with practical problems.
3. The third level consists of researchers working in the field of agriculture and organic farming. They have a scientific point of view to organic farming, either friendly or critical.



## Facts about CHANNEL

Data collection is carried out in two waves in all of the participating countries. The first wave was carried out from January to March 2005, and the second wave lasts from the middle of May to the end of July 2005.

### Project partners

**Hungary** CORVINUS University of Budapest  
Central Service for Plant Protection  
and Soil Conservation, Budapest  
National Institute for Agricultural  
Quality Control, Budapest  
Institute for Small Animal Research,  
Gödöllő  
Biokontroll Hungária KHT, Budapest  
Association of Hungarian Small Animal  
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**Germany** University of Kassel, Department of  
Organic Farming & Cropping Systems  
Center for Agricultural Landscape and  
Land Use Research, Müncheberg  
Federal Agricultural Research Centre,  
Braunschweig

**Austria** Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for  
Organic Farming and Applied Ecology,  
Vienna

**Bulgaria** Nikola Poushkarov Institute of Soil  
Science, Sofia

**Czech Republic** Faculty of Agriculture, University of  
South Bohemia, České Budejovice

**Poland** Agricultural University of Wrocław

**Romania** Institute of Agricultural Research-  
Development, Fundulea, Calarasi

**Slovakia** University of Veterinary Medicine,  
Kosice  
Slovak Agricultural University, Nitra

**Slovenia** University of Maribor, Faculty of  
Agriculture

**Estonia** Estonian Organic Farming Foundation,  
Tartu

**Lithuania** Institute of Botany, Vilnius  
Lithuanian Institute of Agriculture,  
Kedainiai

**Italy** Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of  
Bari, Valenzano  
University of Lecce

**Cyprus** Agricultural Research Institute of  
Cyprus, Nicosia

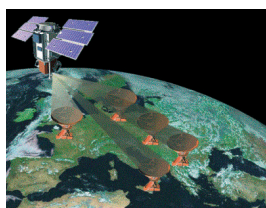
**Malta** The Genista Foundation, Kalkara

**Latvia** Priekuli Plant Breeding Station,  
Priekuli

**Turkey** Ege University, Izmir  
Uludag University, Gorukle-Bursa

### Project coordinator

László Radics, Corvinus University of Budapest,  
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## How to follow the project

The project has a website and we operate a data bank about the organic farming of the 16 participating countries. Please visit our website: [www.channel.uni-corvinus.hu](http://www.channel.uni-corvinus.hu). On the website our discussion forum, our new results and the summaries of our meetings can be found. Organization of 4 meetings, one of them is the final dissemination conference of the project held in Budapest, 5-7 April 2006. For information please contact Izóra Gál ([izora.gal@uni-corvinus.hu](mailto:izora.gal@uni-corvinus.hu)). Information about our partners are also available as well as registration to our final conference held in Budapest in 2006.