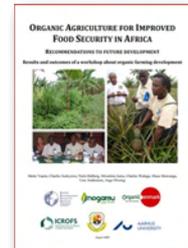


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# ICROFS participation in the First African Organic Conference

**The news from ICROFS include: News on the international board and national Programme Committee, EU calls, RSS-feeds on ICROFS news, and a freshly published workshop report from the 1st African organic conference published.**

This August issue of *ICROFS news* presents two research articles on herbs in the grassland and organic agriculture policy (pages 5 and 7).

In addition, the present newsletter contains three articles on news from ICROFS, including the latest developments on CORE Organic, the research vision initiative named Organic Research Centre Alliance (ORCA in short), and a review of a publication from the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IA-ASTD).

As usual, on the last page of *ICROFS news* you will find brief news on conferences, publications and other activities.

Below follows some brief news from ICROFS.

## News on the International Board

The ICROFS Board of Directors held its 4th meeting as a telephone conference on 17th of June.

Due to great flexibility of the board members it was possible to connect board members in time zones ranging from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. (California, USA to Beijing).

The main topic was the planning of the International Workshop on Organic Farming and Development in China to be held in October in Beijing 21-23 October 2009 back-to-back with the 5th ICROFS Board Meeting on 24 October.

The workshop in Beijing is a collaboration between China Agricultural University (CAU), ICROFS and ISO-FAR, and will aim at creating an overview of present research in organic agriculture and give suggestions for future topics to support development of organic agriculture in China.

## EU calls with agricultural themes

ICROFS calls the readers' attention to several European Union research calls in the staging of the EU Seventh Framework Programme.



Many of the EU calls have themes relevant to research in organic agriculture and environmental research. Look for calls at the *CORDIS* website: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

## Subscribe to ICROFS RSS feeds

ICROFS has revived the RSS newsfeed service for researchers and stakeholders of organic agriculture interested in news from ICROFS.



By subscribing to the ICROFS' news feeds, you will automatically receive current news updates from ICROFS as soon as a relevant activity or event is publicized on the ICROFS website or elsewhere.

Subscription is very simple. Just click the "RSS" link in the top right corner of [www.icrofs.org](http://www.icrofs.org). Then click "view feed XML" and you can choose MS Outlook to handle your RSS feeds automatically in the future.



## The 1st African Organic Conference

The First African Organic Conference held in Kampala, Uganda, held May, was a great success.

More than 200 participants representing a large number of institutions in Africa as well as institutions from outside Africa, mainly Europe participated in the conference.

The African conference theme was

## Your input to *ICROFSnews*

ICROFS listen to our readers's response with pleasure, as we are here for you!

Therefore, any responses are more than welcome, be it about the new format, suggestions to improvements, changes, content and more.

Contact us at: [simon.rebsdorf@icrofs.org](mailto:simon.rebsdorf@icrofs.org)



"Fast tracking sustainable development in Africa through harnessing Organic Agriculture and Biotechnology." Several aspects of this were addressed during the conference through presentations, posters and workshops.

## Workshop on food security

The theme and discussions of a sub-workshop co-organised by ICROFS was based on the findings of a recent UNEP/UNCTAD report: 'Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa'.

The workshop report "Organic Agriculture for Improved Food Security in Africa: Recommendation to Future Development" has been published and is available for download at [www.icrofs.org](http://www.icrofs.org).

## Get the workshop presentations

Via the below link, you can download presentations from the workshop on food security:

[www.icrofs.org/Pages/News\\_and\\_events/2009\\_conf\\_uganda1.html](http://www.icrofs.org/Pages/News_and_events/2009_conf_uganda1.html)

## ICROFS upgrades Organic Eprints

ICROFS will make an upgrade of Organic Eprints, the open internet archive for organic research, in the coming weeks.



The upgrade will bring more flexibility and better performance to all users, and new options such as RSS feeds and reference exports.

Furthermore, it will make life easier for the many editors working on Organic Eprints, providing more flexible ways of reviewing and updating information such as batch editing.

In connection with the upgrade we will close the depositing of papers for a few days and we hope for your patience in this regard.

# Organics and multifunctionality of agriculture



By Lise Andreasen, International Coordinator, ICROFS, Denmark

**This article attempts to relate organic agriculture to the emphasis on multifunctionality of agriculture in 'International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)' published earlier this year.**

'Agriculture operates within complex systems and is multifunctional in its nature'.

This is one of the key findings in the Global Summary for Decision Makers of the IAASTD.

Other key findings, such as: 'Emphasis on increasing yields and productivity has in some cases had negative consequences on environmental sustainability' and 'An increase and strengthening of AKST (Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology) towards agroecological sciences will contribute to addressing environmental issues while maintaining and increasing productivity' further supports that sustainability in its broadest sense must be addressed in AKST.

In the Global Report it is also stated that 'Successfully meeting development and sustainability goals and responding to new priorities and changing circumstances would require a fundamental shift in Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology (AKST), including science, technology, policies, institutions, capacity development and investment' and that 'The main challenge of AKST posed by multifunctional agricultural systems is to increase the productivity of agriculture in a sustainable manner.'

## About the IAASTD

The IAASTD is the result of a consultative process initiated in 2002 by the World Bank and FAO to determine whether an international assessment of AKST was needed. This led to the endorsement in 2004 of the undertaking of the IAASTD as a multi-thematic, multi-spatial, multi-temporal intergovernmental process with a multistakeholder Bureau cosponsored by FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, WB and WHO.

## Responsibility and challenges

The growing awareness of human responsibilities for the maintenance of global ecosystems services is a red thread throughout the IAASTD where it is stated, for example in the Synthesis Report, that 'agricultural production based on less

exploitative NRM and strategies for resource resilience protection and renewal through innovative processes, programs, policies and institutions should be promoted'. The specific challenges of developing sustainable food systems posed by climate change is emphasized in the IAASTD as well as the challenges of meeting the needs of small-scale farmers particularly in diverse ecosystems in developing countries to create realistic opportunities for their development.

## Referring to organic

Reference is given to organic farming in relation to Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA) as well as Ecological agricultural systems – both systems are emphasized in the Global Report as having potential to improve productivity while conserving the natural resource base.

The IAASTD does, however, not give preference to a specific agricultural strategy. In the Global Summary for Decision Makers it is



## IAASTD

The IAASTD consists of a Global Assessment, five Sub-Global Assessment, and a Synthesis Report as well as Summaries for Decision Makers of each of the reports. They are all available at: [www.agassessment.org](http://www.agassessment.org)

stated that:

'The question of which strategies will be best suited to advance development and sustainability goals is controversial and reflects different social and political assumptions, interests and values.

In many areas of science and technology discourse, the tendency is for a single interpretation which attributes cause and effect to some events or situations and not to others. This selectivity has important implications for projecting science in specific directions.

Acknowledging competing well-supported narratives of science and technology approaches is crucial for designing effective policies. In many cases, AKST strategies that recognize the multiple functions required of sustainable agricultural systems (e.g., production, livelihoods, ecosystem services) already exist and some AKST recognize the biophysical, socioeconomic and cultural diversity among agricultural systems that necessitate domain-specific solutions.

For example, community-based innovation and local knowledge combined with formal AKST approaches, such as agroecology and agroforestry, can address issues relevant to rural poor people.'





# CORE Organic - the latest developments

By Fabienne Grousset, CORE Organic assistant coordinator, ICROFS, Denmark

## CORE organic

### The latest news on CORE Organic: : Presentation of research projects, regular FBN meeting, and CORE Organic proposal.

#### Presentation of trans-national research projects

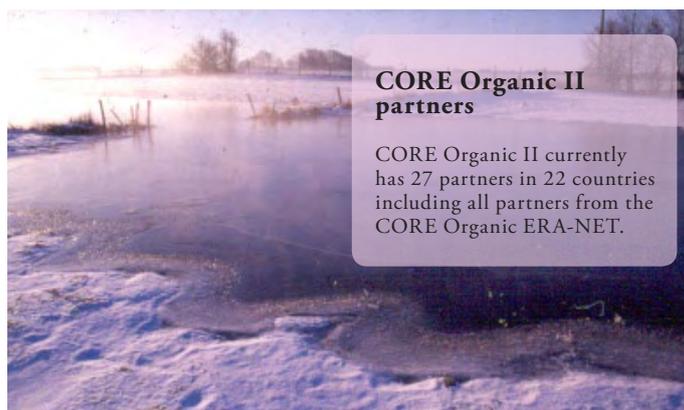
The coordinators of CORE Organic pilot projects and the CORE Organic Funding Body Network held a joint meeting in Rome on 8 June.

The meeting was attended by 68 participants from funding bodies, pilot projects, ministries, the EC, the technology platform "TP Organics", and other ERA-NETs.

The ERA-NET CORE Organic was conducted in 2004-2007 and launched eight trans-national pilot projects, funded by the participants' funding bodies. These projects are running for the period 2007-2010 and reached their mid-term at the end of 2008.

The joint meeting was an opportunity to present the projects and their preliminary results at mid-term, including new research needs and how research may benefit the organic sector. It also allowed a discussion between project coordinators, the CORE Organic Funding Body Network and other participants on experiences with trans-national research arising from such projects and future research.

Presentations were given by the DG Agri of the EC, the technology platform "TPOrganics" and the Plant Genomics ERA-NET.



#### CORE Organic II partners

CORE Organic II currently has 27 partners in 22 countries including all partners from the CORE Organic ERA-NET.

#### Benefits of trans-national research

The project participants saw the trans-national experience as very positive, and among the many advantages of trans-national research identified by the participants were:

- » joint efforts lead to greater external validity of the results
- » creating networks between national research environments and international research platforms, and exposing researchers and PhDs to a wide international network
- » exchange of knowledge and scientific inspiration
- » strengthening of interdisciplinary approaches
- » access to a greater variety of production systems and agro-ecological conditions, and making common use of facilities such as long term trials
- » increasing the critical mass for conducting high quality research.

#### Value of dissemination

The meeting noted the need to address dissemination

not only to the research community but also to end-users, and the role that national funding bodies can play in disseminating information to policy makers and the public.

#### Regular FBN meeting

The Funding Body Network (FBN) held a regular meeting on 9 June 2009, which was attended by 23 of its 26 member organizations.

The FBN discussed issues linked to the monitoring of CORE Organic pilot projects at mid term. This is the first time that the network conducts such common monitoring, which is important to ensure that the projects are on track and able to deliver the best results of trans-national research.

The involved funding bodies saw the experience as positive and identified aspects which could be improved, both in relation to the continuation of these projects and for future call.

#### Future calls

In the expectation that the results of the evaluation of the proposal for the ERA-NET CORE Organic II would be available soon, the FBN

#### Learn about the 8 projects at a glance!

*[clickable links to presentations in Organic Eprints]*

FCP  
iPOPY  
ANIPLAN  
COREPIC  
PHYTOMILK  
QACCP  
AGTEC-Org  
PathOrganic

also started discussions on some specific points relating to the organization of future CORE Organic trans-national calls, such as the timing of commitment of funds to the calls and the steps to be taken towards the identification of research priorities.

#### CORE Organic II proposal: evaluation and negotiation

A proposal for a new CORE Organic ERA-NET was made in April 7, 2009. ICROFS as coordinator was informed by EU at the end of June that the independent evaluation of the proposal was positive, and the negotiations for the Grant Agreement have now started. It will take several months before they are completed. We will keep you informed!

#### More information

For more information on the CORE Organic Pilot Projects: [www.coreorganic.org/research](http://www.coreorganic.org/research).

#### Get the meeting report

The report of the meeting and presentations made by coordinators is available at Organic Eprints: <http://orgprints.org/15991>





# ORCA - a vision for future organic research for development

By Lise Andreasen, International Coordinator, ICROFS, Denmark

## Exploring the potential of organic agriculture by developing the global research network, the Organic Research Centre Alliance, ORCA.

ICROFS has supported FAO in the development of a global network of research to support particularly countries in the South to explore the potential of organic agriculture.

The vision of this new initiative is that: "organic research will be mainstream, robust, and valued by farmers and policy-makers worldwide by 2025" with the ultimate objective of an Organic Research Centre Alliance (ORCA): "to ensure that the environmental, economic, and social benefits accruing from organic research are shared worldwide and beyond the organic community, as a contribution to sustainable agriculture and poverty alleviation."

### A need for more research

Recent reports from international organizations such as UNEP, UNCTAD and IFAD state that organic agriculture can improve productivity, food security and livelihoods in smallholder farming systems in the developing world.

At the same time, developing countries are increasingly becoming suppliers of organic products particularly to markets in developing countries.

Research activities addressing organic farming systems and particularly organic farming systems in developing countries are, however, limited and there is a strong need for strengt-

hening the organic research capacity and increase the research efforts to realize the full potential and benefits of organic farming systems for food production, ecosystems services, climate adaptation and mitigation. This need is the driving force behind the development of the proposal for an Organic Research Centre Alliance (ORCA) – a proposal developed by the UNs Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in collaboration with particularly FIBL and ICROFS.

### A Global Research Agenda for Organic Farming Systems

The research needs of organic agriculture reflects the multi dimensional and holistic approach of the organic principles with focus on agro-ecological management. The research focus, therefore, is often different from the research focus of conventional research – which is the reason for the proposal for a research system designed specifically for organic agriculture.

One of the primary tasks that the ORCA will address is to develop and implement a process for establishing and updating a global organic research agenda. The global research agenda will guide the research to be undertaken by the research centres in the alliance.

### A network of 'centres without walls'

The intention with ORCA

is to create an international network of research centres that with support from donors have a specific responsibility to conduct and coordinate research in particular focus areas and to compile information on specific related resource areas of the organic farming and food system specifically addressing the needs of developing countries.

The research centres are envisioned to be formalized collaborations or consortiums of two or several research institutions hosted by one of the participating research institutions thus not having 'its own walls' as such.

The ORCA research centres will also network and collaborate at both formal and informal level with other research organizations – international and national, organic and conventional with specific relevance for organic farming, for

example, the established CGIAR institutions – and with the organic movement, training and extension organizations.

### ORCA focus areas

11 focus areas have been identified in the project proposal – 5 focus areas linked to specific agro-ecosystems, and 6 focus areas linked to components of the organic system that merit special attention.

The ORCA project proposal was finalized in July 2009 and will soon be submitted to potential donors for consideration.

### Download the project proposal

The project proposal for the Organic Research Centres Alliance (ORCA) can be downloaded at:  
[www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/organicag/files/ORCA-9july2009.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/organicag/files/ORCA-9july2009.pdf)

# Herbs in the grassland



By Karen Søgaard, Jørgen Eriksen, and Margrethe Askegaard, Department of Agroecology and Environment, University of Aarhus, Tjele, Denmark

Ongoing experiments have shown that herbs can constitute a significant proportion of the sward and that management affects the composition. However, the competitive strength and feeding value of the different herb species varied highly.

Many organic dairy farmers include herbs in the grassland seed mixture. There are different reasons for establishing herbs in the sward including higher biodiversity in the field, improved herbage quality with a beneficial influence on the animal and better marketing products regarding taste or food quality.

But no matter the target it is essential that the proportion of herbs is substantial, if the expected benefits are to be achieved. However, very often the herbs only constitute a very small part of the sward.

Available knowledge about herbs is limited. In an ongoing ICROFS project we investigate the establish-



ment and effects of management. The herbs are mixed with grass/clover seeds and broadcasted, and plots are examined on five organic dairy farms and in a field experiment at Research Centre Foulum.

## Botanical composition

In all the experiments herb seed constitutes 19% of the seed rate, which are much higher than normally used.

	% of seed	Farm number				
		1	2	3	4	5
Grass	66	32	43	54	34	18
White clover	12	36	24	14	43	51
Red clover	3	13	13	0	5	4
Chicorie	9	8	10	5	9	
Plantain	8	10	8	7	13	
Caraway	0	1	13	3	2	
Burnet	0	0	0	1	1	
Birds foot trefoil	2	0	0	1	2	
Sainfoin	0	0	0	0	0	
Chervil	0	0	0	0	0	
Total herbs	19	19	19	31	17	26
Weeds		0	1	0	1	1

Table 1. Botanical composition of the sward (% of dry matter) in pastures grazed by dairy cows on five different organic dairy farms. Results from first year after establishment.

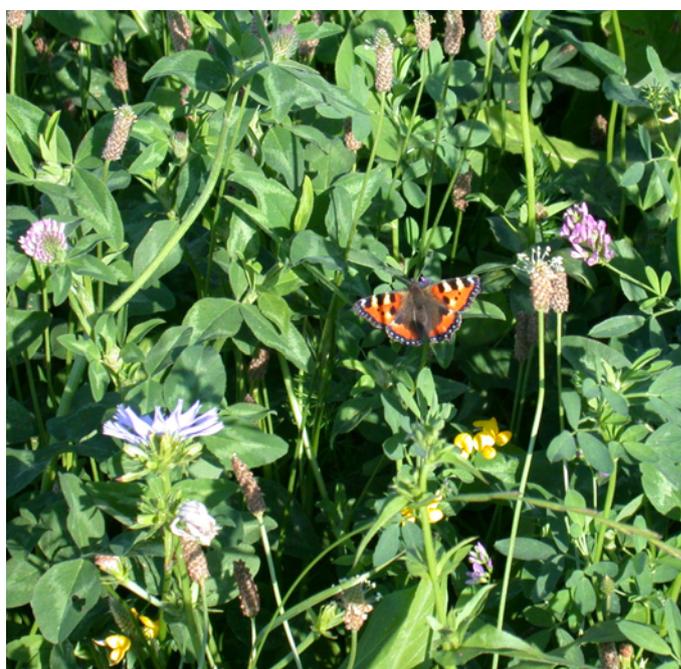
	IVOMD	NDF	Crude protein	Crude ash
Grass	75	53	13	8
White clover	76	29	23	10
Red clover	74	38	22	10
Chicory	72	37	14	14
Plantain	66	41	14	13
Caraway	83	27	16	15
Burnet	59	26	14	10
Birds foot trefoil	73	28	24	8

Table 2. Feeding value of the single species in the sward. In vitro organic matter digestibility (IVOMD, % of OM), neutral detergent fibre (NDF, % of DM), crude protein (% of DM) and crude ash (% of DM). Results from June 2007 of species in pastures on five farms.

In the plots on farms the herbs constituted 17-31 % of dry matter (DM), but the competitive strength of the single species varied considerably (Table 1). Plantain and chervil did not establish. They can establish very well in pure stand but did not in the grass/clover seed mix and there were only few plants. Burnet and birds foot trefoil establish fairly well with many plants, but they were small, and therefore the proportions of DM were

low.

Caraway plants were tiny in the first year, but got larger in the second and third year. Chicory and plantain had the highest competitive strength (Table 1). The composition of the traditional grassland species also varied considerably, with 18 to 54 % grass, 14 to 51 % white clover and 0 to 13 % red clover of DM. Variability between farms may be due to soil conditions and managements.



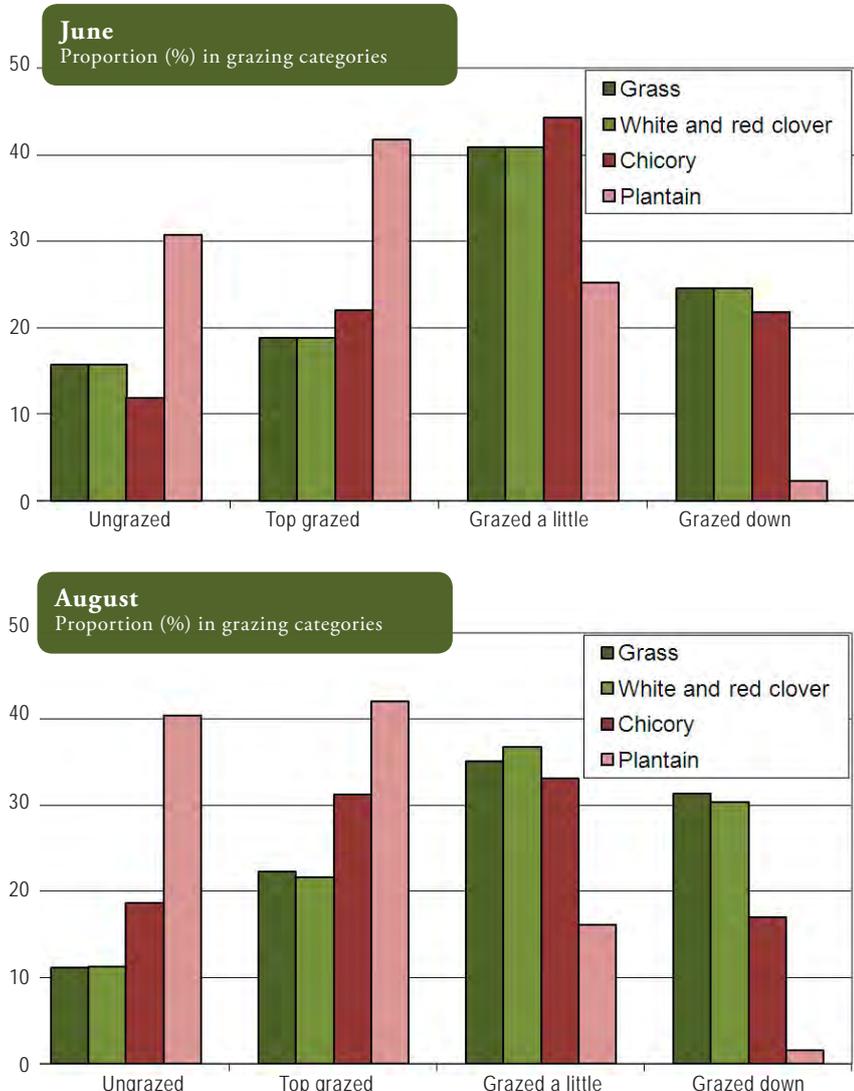


Figure 1. Proportion of the species grazed by dairy cows at different categories on five farms. Results from 2007.



**Expectations to the herbs**

- » A brand to increase the sale
- » Higher biodiversity in the field
- » Higher appetite and intake
- » Improved feeding quality
- » Improved animal health
- » Improved animal product

At Foulum we examine, how management affects the competition between plant species. With slurry application chicory competed better and the proportion of chicory in the sward increased. Opposite, with slurry the proportion of birds foot trefoil decreased. Plantain and caraway were affected by the cutting/grazing strategy, the proportion of both being higher under cutting than grazing.

**Feeding value**

The herbs, all dicotyledonous, had a lower NDF-concentration than grass, which primarily was perennial ryegrass (Table 2). Among the herbs plantain had the highest NDF-concentration and at the same time the degradability of NDF was very low. The digestibility of organic matter was also very low in plantain. The digestibility of burnet was

**Strong competitors:**

Chicory, long leaved plantain, caraway

**Weak competitors:**

Salad burnet, birds foot trefoil, melilot

**Difficult to establish in mixed swards:**

Sainfoin, chervil

surprisingly low considering the NDF-concentration. Caraway had the highest digestibility of organic matter and the digestibility did not decline during the growing season, which normally is the case for other grassland species. The degradability of NDF was also very high. The concentration of crude protein was grouped in two; the leguminous (22-24 %) and the non leguminous plants (13-16 % of DM).

The content of crude ash was high for some of the

herbs. Chicory, plantain and caraway had a high concentration of many minerals - but not always the same minerals. For instance chicory had a high concentration of sodium, magnesium, copper and zinc, and caraway a high concentration of phosphorus.

Thus, the herbage quality varied highly between species. But how this variation affects the feeding quality, palatability and intake of the whole sward in multi species grassland is uncertain.

**Palatability**

Normally the sward height in pastures on farms is relatively high, giving the dairy cows a high offer. Selection between species is therefore possible. The cows mostly ate the herbs as the grass/clover. Plantain was the only exception.

The cows especially avoided

the flowers of plantain but also the leaves to some extent (Figure 1). For the rest of the herbs rejection could take place, when part of the plants had been too old. This was the case for chicory in August shown in figure 1.

**The future**

The ongoing experiment provides new knowledge about growth and herbage quality of most of the herbs used for the time being. But there is still a lack of knowledge concerning the effects on nature/landscape, the animals' appetite and health, and the meat and milk products.

**Further reading**

You can read more on the website of the DARCOF III research project, ECOVIT:

[www.ecovit.elr.dk/uk](http://www.ecovit.elr.dk/uk)



# Organic Agriculture: a new field of policy for international organizations

By Henrik Egelyng, PhD, Senior Project Researcher, Danish Institute for International Studies, DIS, Denmark

Five years ago, some Danish researchers produced a knowledge synthesis on globalisation of organic agriculture. They formed the DARCOF III research project GLOBALORG and reviewed policies of international organizations with regard to organic agriculture.

This article provides a status on the extent to which the situation has improved for organic agriculture through the last five years regarding its standing with international organizations.

The present article examines global policy documents and development literature and analyse perspectives on the role of organic agriculture as a possible vehicle for sustainable development, even in low income countries. The article shows that not only has organics made entry in terms of projects and programmes in many low income countries but it is also gaining position in formal policies and strategies of international donor agencies and organizations.

## Introduction

The Global Report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) published by Island Press in 2009 as "Agriculture at a Crossroads", placed organic agriculture (OA) firmly among the policy options at disposal of policymakers pursuing internationally agreed policy goals of sustainable development. Only a few months later, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), announced UNCTAD would further step up its work on organic agriculture, now seen

as a key means of addressing Africa's food security crisis. And in June 2009, EuropeAid hosted a conference on the topic of organic farming as a development pathway, at the Info Point External Cooperation in Brussels.

As shown below, these reflections of breakthroughs for OA at the international development policy level are based on or follow a series of developments and efforts undertaken worldwide within the last half decade, particularly, and involving also the FAO, UNEP, as well as some internationally oriented research and bilateral donor organizations'. As a result, leading capacities at international development agencies now understands organic farming as a pathway to sustainable development. Through the UN system as a whole, some now promote OA as a component of the Green New Deal (GND) policy, while individual UN agencies – like the FAO and UNCTAD – have developed formal policies explicitly favouring organic agriculture as such.

## The last five years of organic agriculture

For what seems a very long time, the international de-



velopment community had a limited or rather stereotypical understanding of the developmental values of OA in resource-poor areas. Discussions were often based on narrow measures of yield of a certain crop or monetary value or imagined counterfactuals dreamed up from data from temperate countries and/or energy intensive agricultural systems. However, focusing on agriculture as a vehicle for pro-poor development, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) included an organic route on its map by 2006 and in May 2007, the Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations (FAO) hosted an international conference on the role of OA in food security.

## New understanding of OA

The conference marked a new and improved understanding of OA as possibly providing not only environmental sustainability, but livelihood and food security, also in resource poor and low input contexts. Then in 2008 the World Development Report 2008 - refocusing on agriculture after a quarter

of a century – acknowledged certified organic agriculture (COA) for its demonstrated success in terms of providing export value, also for developing countries.

## Food miles and footprints

While eco-efficiency, eco-taxes and pesticide taxes are concepts that have yet to find their way to a future WDR, the WDR vocabulary of 2008 already include "food miles" and "environmental footprints" – and the WDR does see a need to "reduce the environmental footprint of intensive crop and livestock systems" and reduce the impacts of "agro-chemical and animal waste pollution".

The World Bank, however, is yet to announce any major programme to help ensure that the essentially organic qualities of the majority of products by the great majority of African and Latin-American smallholders, can be duly and systematically appreciated and valued by, and therefore wholly paid for, in the world market as a whole.

Like any market, namely, the world market is an institution no more intelligent than public policies makes it, which is not a lot given the weaknesses of international governance. In parallel with these developments, some of the worlds leading developing nations have progressed simultaneously in embracing COA - a process of evolution that a team of Danish researchers have followed at close hold in Brazil, China, Egypt and East Africa. GLOBALORG collaborates with EMBRABA – a giant research body with 27 of its research centres

collaborating primarily on agronomic and technical aspects of organic production. In China, GLOBALORG collaborate with a Chinese partner, launching the first "organic" policy research project at the Chinese Center for Agricultural Policy (CCAP).

### Visible OA-progress

The progress of the organic sector in both these economic giants has reached a stage where it has become visible in the agricultural and food system policy agendas. At the same time, the little more than five-year old International Society of Organic Farming Research (ISOFAR), has gained capacity to undertake events at the global scale as demonstrated by the 2008 ISOFAR Conference in Modena, Italy. That capacity is required to help facilitate a global scientific society. ISOFAR is much needed as massive future efforts are required to document the multitude of biogeophysical and entropic aspects of the world's food and fibre system.

Such documentation is increasingly demanded by the world's nations, in a future where the environmental footprints, energy input-output accounts, global warming potential and GHG emissions, material flows, food miles, cradle to cradle (C2C) traits and other measures of agricultural production prove increasingly important. Important not only as essential institutional requirements for our food and fibre system to evolve along a more environmentally sustainable pathway, but as categories of measures increasingly elevated to a status where they – and the higher or lower levels of eco-efficiency they represent – will have "real dollar value" implications in future economic policy environments featuring carbon and energy taxes - and prohibiting agrochemicals having green house gas (GHG) effects.

In Denmark, the former Danish Agricultural Research Centre for Organic



Farming (DARCOF) significantly expanded, adding an international mandate and international board and becoming International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS).

### Lost interest in agriculture

Development studies long understood agriculture as an engine for development with forward and backward linkages and multiplier effects. By the turn of the century, however, most international organizations and International Development Agencies (IDA's) had lost interest in agriculture.

In this new millennium, balances of power over agricultural policies have partially shifted gravity from sector ministries towards a broader political realm matching a new economic paradigm of environmental and ecological economics, enabling a contemporary understanding of agriculture's multifunctional roles.

### Analogy to car industry downfall

This new paradigm – involving criteria such as eco-efficiency, energy (i.e. embodied energy) and global warming potential (GWP) and other increasingly operationalisable sustainability indicators – is destined to wreck the same kind of havoc on old-fashioned energy-intense food, fibre and farming systems that the absence of clear

policies based on similar indicators has now wrecked on the western car industry. As pointed out by a remarkable article published by "Economist" in July 2009, it was the absence of green taxes that killed the US car industry, leading that industry towards an unsustainable SUV market instead of innovating environmentally sustainable cars. Now, in a world increasingly suffering from not taxing pollution and resource use very much and having weakly operationalized and enforced energy- and eco-standards in the global food system, low income countries (LICs) enter the market with comparative advantage and major de-facto or "non-market organic" areas rather ready for certification.

### International development agencies may help

International development agencies could now act to help generally reform national and international institutional environments to become far more conducive to sustainable agricultural methods by backing

up green taxes, as per the Green New Deal. Yet, opportunities to help exist, even for donors whose eyes are blind to the role of the state and public policies as provider of institutional requirements for sustainable development.

Such donors, often wishing to focus all their efforts on market driven options and the private sector, can take note that pioneering companies like the Danish "Thiese" and "Solhjul" have demonstrated how business and development can be successfully combined, also in Africa.

In any case, donors no longer face any shortage of advice on how to help development of OA in the South. They can, for instance follow the example of the Swedish development agency and assist African farmers to go certified organic and thus enhance the farmers' capacities to compete in global markets. They can choose among no less than 50 more concrete recommendations compiled by UNEP, UNCTAD and the Capacity Building Task for on Trade, Environment and Development, all aimed at giving recognition and encouragement to the organic sector – and to remove obstacles and biases against OA (CBTF 2006).

Yet, a host of scientific and technical research-demands arise from the expansion



of certified OA. Indeed, an Organic Research Centres Alliance (ORCA) has been proposed to internationally network and strengthen existing institutions with scientific credentials and help empower the same to become centers of excellence in transdisciplinary organic agriculture research. COA, with its stringent rules on external input use has to be even more innovative than conventional agriculture, to solve production and processing problems.

Projected increases in COA raise additional opportunities for OA research institutes to contribute to development goals, through helping to develop, maintain or optimize agricultural productivity and soil nutrient levels whilst controlling costs, improving labor efficiencies and harvesting synergies from crop rotations, crop-livestock systems and all the other ecologically based principles characterizing OA.

#### A greener CAP

Perhaps, it was the recognition of such synergies and multiple positive externalities of OA that once led the European Commission to realize how opportunities existed and exist for harvesting "dividends" of public policy through a greener CAP. Low income countries (LICs) are often in a completely different situation with no dividends to harvest (as governments



in poor countries hardly pay subsidies) and no significant volumes of non-renewable resources use and pollution to tax (as LIC farmers use little fossil fuel, fertilizer and pesticides). On top, significant constraints remain for LIC farmers to profitably produce, process and market organic products for export, and even more: for being rewarded as environmentally benign producers, in their own domestic markets as well. Yet, low wages and tropical geographies, may add comparative and potentially competitive advantage in some cases.

#### Premium prices may decline

Of course, the current organic price premiums may decline in the long term, as supply catch up with demand in this or that organic product line. A lower price premium will then make OA less economic for many small producers in LICs with poor rural infrastructure and services.

Still, organic practices in low external input systems can increase combined market and non-market gains significantly for organic methods to remain preferable. All this is of the essence to African countries in particular, continuing to face strategic choices on their future agricultural development, where views remain split between one continuing to draw on the Asian Green Revolution along with gmo's and proprietary technologies - and then a different one focusing on the absence in Africa of the kinds of economic, geographical, infrastructural, institutional and geopolitical conditions that charac-

terized Asia at the time of the Green Revolution ([www.resakss.org](http://www.resakss.org))

#### Concluding thoughts

International organizations have moved beyond only putting COA into a development policy perspective [cf. ref. 2]. The FAO is promoting ORCA - one ORCA promoter has become USDA Deputy Secretary - and leading UN agencies have clear policies on or supports COA. In 2005, when two Danish authors proposed "a global research programme for organic food and farming", published in 2006 by CABI [cf. ref. 4], the authors hardly dared hope that any such programme would be reality by 2009. Now, indeed OA has become "A New Field of International Development Policy" [cf. ref 1], is among the "Options for Enabling Policies and Regulatory Environments" and emerging as a component of the low input paradigm destined to provide adapta-

tion and mitigation solutions for our common future in the "greenhouse", i.e for a climate changing world.

So, we believe COA has come of age as a new field of international development policy and now we dare hope the global movement of organic consumers and producers can strengthen their indispensable global role in keeping OA on the international policy agenda even further.

What we hardly dare hope now, is for a near-future transition towards an institutional environment fully conducive to organic farming. A transition drawing full policy consequences of future generations depending on the multi-functionality of the agricultural system and on the biosphere as a whole, rather than on a man-made monetary subsystem. Policy consequences a la the Green New Deal, which does embrace OA.

A most challenging overall institutional constraint with regard to how far a purely market driven COA can be instrumental to a global transition to sustainable agriculture was discussed by this author in ICROFS *Nyt* 2009; 2. With so many active IOs entering the game and the prospect of a Green New Deal, this new field of policy can only become even more exiting in the years to come.

#### Further reading

- 1: Organic Agriculture: A New Field of International Development Policy. <http://orgprints.org/12508>
- 2: Organic Agriculture in a Development Policy Perspective. <http://orgprints.org/7578>
- 3: Afrika – Fremtidens Økologisk Kontinent. <http://orgprints.org/14814>
4. [http://www.cabi.org/bk\\_BookDisplay.asp?PID=1937](http://www.cabi.org/bk_BookDisplay.asp?PID=1937)
- 5: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/infopoint/conferences/2009/06-24\\_organicfarmingindex\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/infopoint/conferences/2009/06-24_organicfarmingindex_en.htm)
- 6: [http://www.fao.org/organicag/ofs/docs\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/organicag/ofs/docs_en.htm)
- 7: [http://www.unctad.org/trade\\_env/topicOA.asp](http://www.unctad.org/trade_env/topicOA.asp)
- 8: Izac, A.-M.; Egelyng, H. et al. (2009) "Options for enabling policies and regulatory environments," in McIntyre, B.D. et al (eds.). *Agriculture at a Crossroads - Volume I: The Global Report - International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology for Development*, chapter 7. Volume I: The Global Report Volume I: The Global Report. Island Press. (<http://www.islandpress.org/iaastd>).



Dr. Henrik Egelyng discussing the UN's green new deal as member of a panel of the Asia-Europe Environment Forum roundtable on "The Accounting of Nature: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Asia and Europe" - hosted by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 29 - 30 June 2009 in Hayama, Japan.

## Organisation



### TP Organics research agenda

The research Technology Platform 'TP Organics' has held its annual Stakeholder Forum in Brussels in July, and presented the first draft of its second major publication – the TP Organics Strategic Research Agenda.

This was an important further step in developing concrete research ideas that would work towards making better use of organic food production and reinforcing its contributions to the solutions for global challenges like climate change, loss of biodiversity, food security and migration from rural areas.



The first draft of the Strategic Research Agenda has received many constructive comments in the first on-line consultation in May-June.

The revised Strategic Research Agenda will be presented for another round of public consultation on the TP Organics website from mid September.

Follow the work on the official TP Organics website:

[www.tporganics.eu](http://www.tporganics.eu).

### About TP Organics

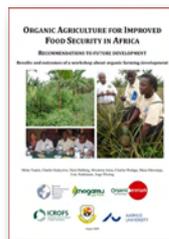
TP Organics is a platform for organic food and farming research which joins the efforts of industry, research community and civil society in defining organic research priorities and defending them vis-à-vis the policy-makers.

## Publications

### New report from African workshop

As described on page 1 of this newsletter, the workshop report "Organic Agriculture for Improved Food Security in Africa: Recommendation to Future Development" has been published and is available for download at [www.icrofs.org](http://www.icrofs.org).

The workshop took place in Kampala, Uganda, and was part of the successful 1st African Organic Conference.



## Congresses

**2<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries**  
Tbilisi - Georgia  
September 10-11, 2009, Georgia State Agriculture University, Tbilisi, Georgia

### 2nd international Conference on the organic sector development

10-11 september 2009, Tbilisi, Georgia

In six plenary and seven parallel sessions, 46 speakers from 18 countries (e.g. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine) will speak on the topics including:

- » Plant production
- » Wine growing and processing
- » Animal husbandry
- » Standards and certification
- » Domestic market development

For further information, visit the conference website at:

<http://organicconference.elkana.org.ge>

### International Conference on OA in Scope of Environmental Problems

[February 3-7, 2010, Famagusta, Cyprus]



The International Conference on Organic Agriculture in Scope of Environmental Problems will be organized between 03-07 February 2010 on the island of Cyprus under the auspices of local authorities.

Deadline for abstracts is 15. September 2009.

Read more at the conference website: <http://organic.emccinstitute.org>

## Workshops



### Organic food authentication - Challenge or utopia?

30 Nov. - 1. Dec. 2009, Geel, Belgium

The development of a strategy to authenticate organic food products is desirable in support to the certification and inspection systems. This workshop presents a balanced overview of the state-of-the-art research in this topic. Participants will have the opportunity to brainstorm and identify the best approaches for meeting the challenges of organic food authentication.

#### Workshop themes:

- » regulations and certification systems
- » fraud cases
- » potential "markers"
- » potential analytical tools
- » challenges & research needs

#### More information and registration:

<http://irmm.jrc.ec.europa.eu/html/events/events/organic.htm>

## Fairs



### BioFach 2010 theme: Organic + Fair

[February 17-20, 2010, Nuremberg]

The arrangers of the international organic world fair, BioFach 2010, have replaced pointing out a "Country of the year" with the theme: "Organic + Fair."

Thus, the world fair focuses on organic and fair trade labelled products.

In 2009, Denmark enjoyed the title of "Organic country of the year," which meant a great export push for Danish organic enterprises.

BioFach 2010 runs from Wednesday 17. to Saturday 20. February 2010 in Nuremberg Messezentrum.

Read more at the BioFach website:

[www.biofach.de/uk](http://www.biofach.de/uk).