

*'Again, for certification to be effected all applicable requirements of 7 CFR Part 205, including onsite inspections (7 CFR §205.403), are required.'*

Mathews explained, 'NOP-accredited certifiers cannot use document review to allow non-NOP products to be recertified as NOP. The thing you have to remember is that the product must be inspected using all of the NOP procedures. The inspection is the key thing – an inspection done under another system is not allowed to be used for certification of a product that is labelled or marketed as NOP.' ■

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A copy of the NOP's policy statement may be obtained at: [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/NOPCorrespondence/CertificationofNonNOPAgProducts.html](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/NOPCorrespondence/CertificationofNonNOPAgProducts.html)

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## Executive Director

IFOAM – The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements with 747 members in 97 countries – is currently looking for a new Executive Director with placement at the Head Office in Bonn, Germany. The job description and more details are available on [www.ifoam.org/ed](http://www.ifoam.org/ed). Applications must be at our hands no later than 5 January, 2004.



*IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. Our goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the principles of Organic Agriculture.*

# Bulgaria

## *A relatively short organic history*

*Organic agriculture in Bulgaria has a relatively short history. The concept of organic agriculture was only introduced after the fall of the communist regime in 1990, when the process of land restitution started. Below is an account of developments over the following thirteen years and a report on the current status of organic agriculture in the country.*

The communist regime collapsed in Bulgaria in 1990. Following its fall agricultural land was divided up into small plots of land and redistributed among the population. As the new landowners – former workers from other industries, such as factories, cooperatives or offices – received their land many started to cultivate it, trying to make a living. These newly established, small, private farmers looked for interesting alternatives to the intensive, large scale farming systems carried out by the communist cooperatives. Organic agriculture seemed to be a promising option for some.

The Agricultural University in Plovdiv played the role of a pioneer in organic agriculture in Bulgaria. In 1993 the University created a 15ha mixed demonstration farm, now called the Agro-Ecological Center (AEC). Three years later in 1996, a group of the University's tutors created the Association for Organic Agriculture (Ecofarm), which is a membership association for organic farmers. Today, it comprises some sixty members.

In 1996 Bulgarian Foundation for Organic Agriculture (BIOSELENA) was created to promote organic agriculture, consult and train organic farmers and establish model farms in the Central Balkan region supported

by the Research Institute in Organic Agriculture FIBL, Switzerland. It was equally a key actor in lobbying for organic agriculture on government levels.

During the early 1990s, organic agriculture was not a priority for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). This was a period characterised by frequent political changes in the country, economic difficulties, serious inflation and financial insecurity, and it was only after 1999, that MAF started to get seriously involved in the development of organic agriculture in Bulgaria.

### **Organic movement**

The Bulgarian organic movement is as young as the country's concept of organic agriculture. There are several organisations trying to support the development of organic agriculture, and there is interaction between the different players. However, these efforts are neither very systematic nor very strong. Nevertheless, the range of activities of these different players is wide, covering many needs.

Consultancy to farmers interested in organic production is offered by the specialised advisory service of BIOSELENA. It has five consultants in the team, which offers their services in the central Balkan area. BIOSELENA further offers training and

demonstrations on certain production techniques, and carries out on-farm research into specific problems. BIOSELENA makes specific know-how on organic production available through a set of documents, and a monthly journal, *Bionovini*, keeps the organic movement updated on recent developments and upcoming events.

Ecofarm offers a consultancy service to its members and promotes organic agriculture on different platforms. Furthermore, it carries out introduction courses into organic agriculture for various interested organisations and institutions. The president of Ecofarm represents the organisation in the Commission for Organic Agriculture, the consulting body to MAF.

Bulgaria has an association for sustainable environmental solutions (Agrolink), which is actively involved in the development of strategy plans for regional and rural development in the country. The chairperson participates in the monitoring committee of the Special Assessment Programme

for Agricultural and Rural Development (SAPARD), an EU programme that includes a measure that supports organic farmers. It also offers consultancy and training in organic agriculture to various institutions and organisations.

In addition, a marketing cooperative, BioBulgaria, has some fifty members and is engaged in facilitating marketing of organic products in the local and export market. It has its own label (using the national legislation as standard). Its members produce a range of organic products, of which some, such as peppermint, rose oil and raspberries, are exported.

All the organisations involved in training and providing consultations on organic production to farmers are faced with a particular challenge, which is the lack of a basic agricultural education of most practicing farmers in Bulgaria. Many of them became farmers after the restitution of land and lack a sound background knowledge of agricultural production in general. This has to be taken into

consideration when carrying out courses or preparing documentation on organic production, processing and marketing.

## Standards and legislation

The earliest attempts at creating organic standards in Bulgaria were carried out by both Ecofarm and AEC in 1997. The standards for organic production developed by these organisations were based on the IFOAM basic standards. Ecofarm and AEC also had their own trademark and have organised their own system of control and certification. However, certification never became important in the marketplace. This was due to the lack of interest on the farmers' side (they did not receive any premium for their organic products) and the lack of recognition by international traders (Ecofarm and AEC did not offer an accredited control system, nor worked with 'approved' standards). After the establishment of the national organic legislation in 2001, both Ecofarm and the AEC started working according to the

## *Organisations active in organic agriculture in Bulgaria*

Organisation	Contact person	Address	Tel/Fax	e-mail
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BioBulgaria Cooperative	Mr I. Tsurkanu	47 Ivan Vasov Str., Karlovo	+359-335-93277	igor_tzurkanu@hotmail.com
Agrolink	Mrs S. Nikolova	50 Yanko Sakazov Str., Sofia	+359-246-6675	n/a
Balkan Biocert	Mrs T. Husich	13 Hr. G. Danov Str., Plovdiv	+359-326-25818	www.balkanbiocert.com balkanbiocert@evrocom.net
Agrobioconsult	Katja Radeva	4 Ivan Botev Str., Sofia	+359-226-6968	ketmari@mbox.cit.bg
Stiftung Time Ecoproekte	Mrs M. Tanusheva	3 Wasrasdane Pl., Sofia	+359-298-09007	info@time-foundation.org
Agri. University Plovdiv, Faculty of Agronomy	Prof C. Yancheva (Vice Dean)	12 Mendeleev Str., Plovdiv	+359-326-33158	christina@au-plovdiv.bg
SGS Bulgaria	n/a	25A Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd.,	+359-294-33800	sgs_bulgaria@sgs.com

national organic regulations and gave up their own standards and control system.

In 1999, MAF published Regulation (Instruction) No 15 for organic plant production. This came as a surprise to many people in the Bulgarian organic movement, as organic agriculture had not been one of MAF's priorities up to then. The requirements of Regulation (Instruction) No. 15 on agricultural production, processing and marketing were in compliance with the EU Regulation 2092/91 on organic agriculture. It was planned that the inspection and certification responsibilities would be State implemented. The National Service on Plant Protection, Quarantine and Agrochemistry was chosen to carry out this task. However, the competence within the National Service on the topic of inspection and certification for organic production, processing and trade was limited and the system vulnerable to corruption. Private organisations in the organic sector, therefore, lobbied to change this part of the Regulation (Instruction).

In response to these activities, in autumn 2000, MAF created two working groups to propose changes to Regulation (Instruction) No 15, including synchronisation of the national regulation with the EU Regulations (EU Reg. 2092/91 and addendum 1804/99 on organic animal husbandry). These working groups were composed of representatives from different ministries and science and other institutes. Experts from different EU countries were also invited to present the advantages and disadvantages of their own country's experiences.

As a result, in August 2001 MAF published the two regulations (instructions), Nos. 22 and 35, regulating production, processing, labelling and marketing of plant and animal pro-

duction. This included the decision that the Inspection and Certification bodies shall be private rather than state organisations. Regulation (Instruction) No 22 defines the rules for organic plant production, processing and marketing. The requirements are equivalent with the 2001 version of the EU Regulation 2092/91. Regulation (Instruction) No 35 defines the rules for livestock production, processing and marketing. The requirements are similar, but not identical to the Regulation 1804/99 of EU on organic animal husbandry.

Both Regulations (Instructions) have the same text concerning Inspection and Certification agencies; 'it shall be carried out by legal persons, traders or non-profit organisations, approved by the MAF'. Changes or adaptations of the EU Regulation 2092/91 that took place after 2001 have not yet been incorporated into the Bulgarian legislation.

MAF also designed a national logo, which is intended to support the

promotion of Bulgarian organic products. It has not yet gained importance on the market, but may in the future, when a local market is established.



At present, the private Bulgarian organic standards are of historical interest only; they are not in use and do not comply with relevant certification and marketing requirements. The process lost importance after the national regulations on organic production were approved and implemented. However, the approval of Regulations (Instructions) Nos. 22 and No. 35 was the result of several years of work and lobbying by the private organisations.

## Inspection and certification

The Bulgarian legislation regulates the inspection and certification of organic production, processing and marketing. It corresponds to a large degree with the EU Regulation.

## Country details

*Full name:* Republic of Bulgaria

*Location:* South East Europe

*Area:* 110,912 sq km

*Population:* 8.3 million

*Capital city:* Sofia (pop 1.1 million)

*Language:* Bulgarian. Turkish and Romany are spoken by minorities.

*Religion:* 85% Bulgarian Christian Orthodox, 13% Muslim

*Government:* Democracy (President: Georgi Parvanov; Prime Minister: Simeon Saxe-Coburgotski)

*Climate:* Temperate, with cold damp winters and hot dry summers.

*Currency:* Bulgarian Leva (BGN)

*GDP:* US\$34.9 billion

*GDP per head:* US\$1510

*Annual growth:* 2.5%

*Inflation:* 11.4%

*Major industries:* Food processing, machine and metal building, electronics, chemicals, textiles, ferrous and nonferrous metals

*Major trading partners:* Italy, Germany, Turkey, Greece, Russia, USA

*Member of EU:* No

*GDP by sector:* Agriculture and forestry 14.5%; service sector 57.7%; industrial sector 27.8%

*For more information on the current situation of the agricultural sector in Bulgaria see: [www.mzgar.government.bg/mz\\_eng/OfficialDocuments/Agry\\_report/Agri\\_2001/I.htm](http://www.mzgar.government.bg/mz_eng/OfficialDocuments/Agry_report/Agri_2001/I.htm)*

## news shorts...

### CONSTRAINTS REMAIN FOR SWISS EXPORTS TO JAPAN

The Japanese Ministry of Agriculture has recognised the equivalence of the Swiss organic legislation but for Swiss exporters, access to the Japanese market still seems a long way off. The opening of new markets for Swiss exporters is not as clear as official statements from the Swiss Federal Office of Agriculture (OFAG) imply and although the Japanese market for organic products is the third largest in the world the fact remains that access to it remains relatively limited.

'Behind the recognition of the equivalence of the Swiss legislation, you find a whole range of barriers to imports,' observes a Swiss expert of Japanese agriculture who makes a point of retaining anonymity. 'It is an empty agreement,' he adds, 'because to gain entry for Swiss organic products into Japan, the Ministry for Agriculture requires that the importer in Tokyo be accredited by a certification organisation. That does nothing but increase the costs of importation.'

Source: *The Organic Advantage*

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### Direct payments for organic production (Euro/ha)

	Years				
	1	2	3	4	5
Ethereal and herbal crops	225	225	225	180	180
Fruit and vegetables	391	391	391	313	313
Fodder crops	125	125	125	100	100

In particular, inspection and certification agencies shall be licensed by the Commission for Organic Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). In order to apply for this licence, agencies need to be accredited according to (BDS<sup>1</sup>) EN 45011 by the Executive Agency 'Bulgarian Accreditation Service' (EABAS). In 2001, EABAS was accepted as a full member of the European cooperation for Accreditation (EA) and was further offered to apply to join the Multilateral Agreement (EA-MLA) in several areas, including certification of products relevant for the organic certification bodies.

At present, two Bulgarian organisations are offering organic inspection and certification services:

**SGS:** An international certification agency with a national branch office in Bulgaria. It has been accredited by the Bulgarian authorities and was given a licence by the Commission on Organic Agriculture in July 2003.

**Balkan Biocert Ltd:** An organic inspection and certification body, fully owned by Bulgarian shareholders, most of them key players of the organic movement in Bulgaria. It has close co-operation with FiBL (Research Institute for Organic Agriculture) and the international certification body IMO (Institute for Marketecology), which assures co-certification until its accreditation

(national and international) is obtained. It is intended that Balkan Biocert will offer affordable certification to small farmers. Balkan Biocert carried out its first inspections this year (2003).

Besides these Bulgarian organisations, several other international certifiers, such as SKAL, ECOCERT, Lacon, and QC&I, offer their services in Bulgaria, mostly to producers who export to the country of origin of the certification agency.

### Financial support for organic agriculture

Bulgaria does not have a specific national programme to support organic agriculture. However, there is a support measure for organic producers within the scheme of direct payments of SAPARD, which is known as 'Measure 1.3'. This support measure, which is a pilot project for direct payments, covers the total territory of the country, but only relates to three groups of crops.

Measure 1.3 will be implemented over a period of five years. The Measure received its official recognition from Brussels in spring 2003. Accreditation is expected to be received by the end of 2003, which would allow its implementation to start in 2004 (see table above).

There are several possibilities for obtaining financial credit in agricultural production, these include State Funded 'Agriculture', SAPARD

<sup>1</sup> Bulgarian State Standard.

## news shorts...

### ECOCONTROL NO LONGER LICENSED AS AN INSPECTION BODY

German authorities withdrew the approval of Ecocontrol GmbH as an inspection body according to EU Regulation 2092/91 on 21 August this year. The move followed a restructuring process within the Ecocert group in which it was decided to cease the activities of Ecocontrol and the announcement of its insolvency in spring 2003. Ecocontrol, situated in Northeim, was part of the Ecocert group. The personnel of Ecocontrol GmbH were put at the disposal of Ecocert SA, the head of the Ecocert group that is registered in France for the administration of its international certification work ('international' refers to all countries outside of the EU, i.e. 'the third countries').

Ecocontrol's clients will experience little change. INAC, another German inspection body located in Witzenhausen that has become part of the Ecocert group, has taken over control of the German clients and has hired the staff who attended them.

The foreign certification activities previously handled by the staff of Ecocontrol will now be handled directly by Ecocert SA. The former office of Ecocontrol in Northeim will remain as a branch office of Ecocert SA. Most of the staff switched from

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Measure 'Investment in Farms', and commercial banks. However, because of the high requirements from the commercial banks in respect of the guarantee (most often up to 200 %), most of the small farmers (10-30 ha), such as the organic producers do not have access to these credits.

There is one credit line specialising in supporting organic agriculture. This credit line is backed by the Swiss Government via the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and is serviced from local Banks. The credit conditions are:

- Margin of the investment – up to 25,000 BGL (about 11,500 Euros).
- Sinking period – to five years, gratis period to one year.
- Interest per year – nearly 11% (this varies, depending on the country's interest rates).
- Guarantee – 120%.

### Market

Data on organic production in Bulgaria is sparse, making it very difficult to estimate the size of the production. Currently MAF is engaged in listing all the producers, processors and traders of organic products in the country, but the information is not yet complete or available.

It is, however, clear that the local market is yet to be developed and that most of the organic production in Bulgaria at present is aimed at export, mainly to Western Europe. Several commercial companies produce organically and export all of their harvest. As such, the development of organic agriculture in general in Bulgaria, is not of their primary concern, it remains difficult to get detailed information on their production as well

as their size. The main products exported are herbs, roses, essential oil cultures, berries and some honey. The Marketing co-operative, BioBulgaria, supports processing of organic products, as this seems to be a bottleneck for certain products. BioBulgaria also aims to develop a national market to make the whole production chain more sustainable for producers and attractive for small scale farmers.

Regarding the small family farms, many managed as organic have not been certified, as the costs are too high and the advantages of certification not yet been made clear. This situation may change with the establishment of Balkan Biocert, as it is a Bulgarian inspection and certification service available at local prices.

The local demand for organic produce is still very low. In the past people struggled to cope with the radical changes in the economy and political system and to survive despite the poor economy. However, the economic situation is improving; Bulgaria aims to join the EU in 2007, and the media shows an increasing interest in the local activities in organic agriculture. ■

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### Further information:

*Bulgarian Regulation Ordinance No. 22:  
www.mzgar.government.bg/mz\_eng/  
Begin/Eco/Bioplant.htm  
Bulgarian Regulation Ordinance No. 35:  
www.mzgar.government.bg/mz\_eng/  
Begin/Eco/Bioanimal.htm*

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