

Evaluating Inputs for Organic Farming - a new system

A new transparent evaluation process

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- **Where we are now**
- **What we are proposing**
- **How it works**
- **What we see as the advantages**
- **Questions for the conference**

Where we are now

The organic ideal is a closed system

- *but this is an imperfect world - we do need some inputs*
- *what inputs we allow is very critical*

Review of inputs involves many aspects:

- *understanding of organic principles and rules*
- *technical expertise (agronomic, ecological/environmental, toxicological, biochemical, microbiological)*
- *understanding of consumer concerns*
- *political considerations*

Where we are now (2)

The current system

- *MS submits a 'dossier' to COM for an amendment to Annex II*
- *COM tables the dossier at the SCOF*
- *detailed consideration may take place in a working group of the SCOF (~5 MS representatives, maybe 1-2 external experts)*
- *MS are responsible for liaising with the organic sectors in their country*
- *eventual decision taken by the SCOF*

Where we are now (3)

Issues with the current system

- *depends on the hard pressed Organic Unit in DG Agri*
- *involves no independent scientific or technical review*
- *decision based too much on the political level*

The European Organic Action Plan

- *recommends setting up 'an independent expert panel for technical advice'*
- *anticipates that this Organic Inputs project could provide the basis for setting up this panel*
- *its intended scope is wider than the brief of this project*
- *we have not addressed this wider scope*

What we are proposing

Objectives of a new system

- *to provide excellent, independent and transparent advice to the COM and the SCOF*
- *to ensure the advice is based on agreed criteria and follows clear procedures, respecting policy objectives, organic principles and consumer expectations*
- *to ensure/work towards consistency with other international organic initiatives and rules*
- *to utilise the expertise of the organic sector (and others)*

What we are proposing (2)

Main components of a new system

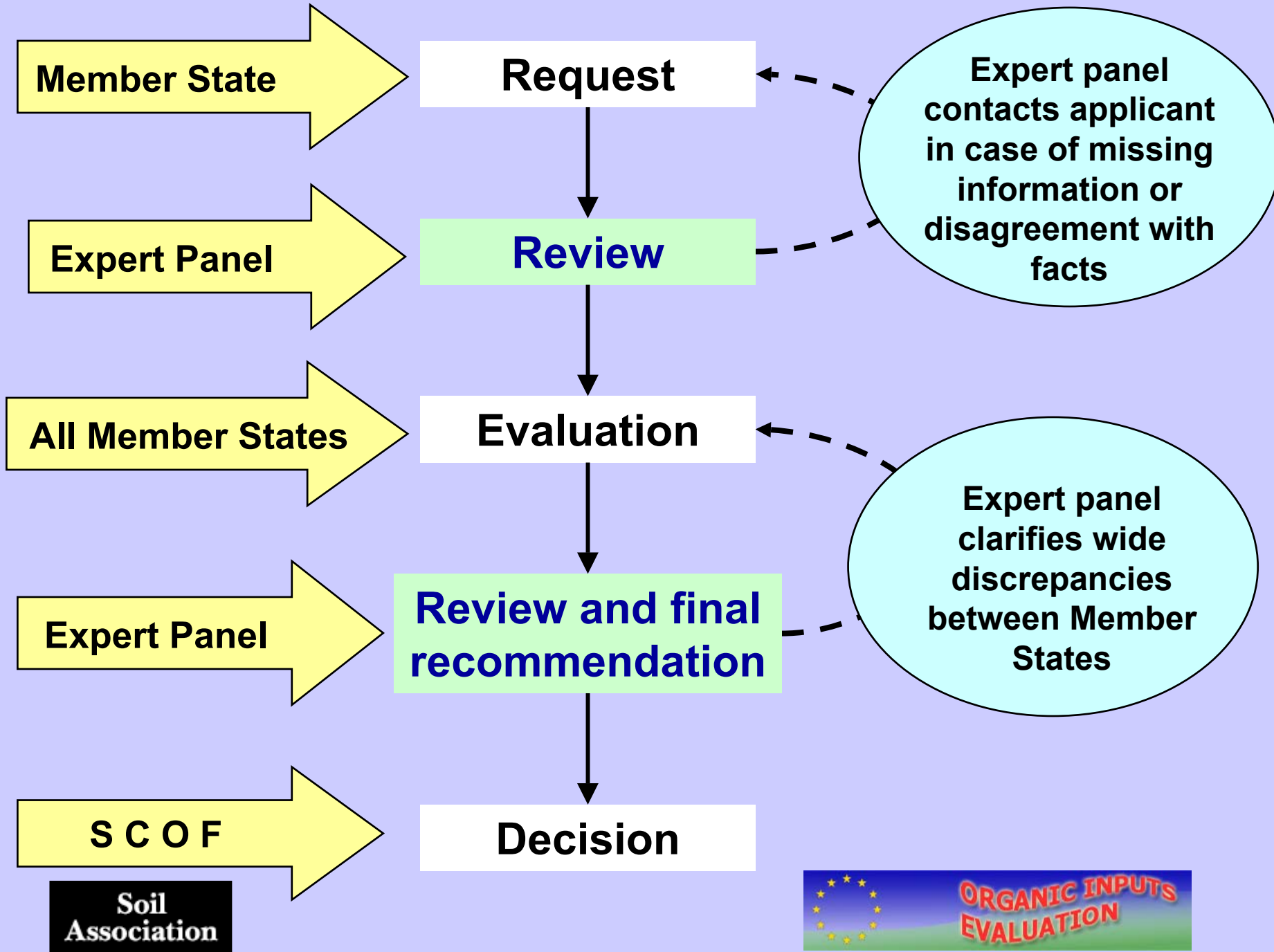
- *a new expert panel to review requests from MS for amendments to Annex II (A and B)*
- *the expert panel to provide independent technical evaluation of these requests to agreed criteria*
- *the SCOF (still) to take the final decision at the political level*
- *the expert panel could provide a template for national structures, for review and consultation within countries*
- *NB the expert panel will require adequate resources and administrative support to do its work effectively*

What we are proposing (3)

Composition of the expert panel (16 persons)

- *chair, appointed by COM or elected by the panel*
- *6 organic farming experts (agronomic and climatic spread)*
- *expert on marketing, standards, consumer attitudes*
- *expert in organic inspection and certification*
- *experts in:*
 - *soil science*
 - *chemistry/biochemistry*
 - *ecotoxicology*
 - *ecology*
 - *human health*
 - *plant protection*
 - *plant nutrition*

How it works ...



What we see as the advantages

- Provides a uniform, clear and transparent process
- Ensures consistent, expert technical review of requests for amendments
- Allows dialogue to reach consensus on the technical aspects
- Gives COM and the SCOF clear technical advice
- Maintains the final (and eventually, political) decision with the SCOF
- Provides a possible template for other areas and for national structures

Questions for the conference

Is the proposed process an improvement compared with the existing system?

Does the expert panel fulfil a useful role?

Does the expert panel have the right composition?