IFOAM - STANDARDS OF BIOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS, with restricted validity to 2 years

July 1982

This document aims to define the rules to be observed by farmers and growers practising organic (biological) agriculture and marketing their crops and livestock products as the produce of organic (biological) agriculture. It goes without saying that each national organization is free to complete these regulations by adding rules of its own, provided that such additions are not opposed in principle to those given below.

I. The principle aims of agriculture :

1) To work as much as possible within a closed system, and draws upon local ressources.
2) To maintain the long term fertility of soils.
3) To avoid all forms of pollution that may result from agricultural techniques.
4) To produce foodstuffs of high nutritional quality in sufficient quantity.
5) To reduce the use of fossil energy in agricultural practice to the minimum.
6) To give to all livestock conditions of life that conform to their physiological needs and to ethical principles.
7) To allow agricultural producers a decent return and satisfaction from their work.

In order to attain, or at least approach these objectives, the organic agricultural movement has adopted certain techniques whose aim is :

1) Avoidance of those products (chemical fertilizers *, pesticides and other chemicals of various kinds) and those methods (forcing of plant and of animal growth, industrial methods of livestock management, etc...) which are in opposition to the principle aims.
2) Respect for natural ecological balances.
3) To do everything possible to ensure that the living organisme with which an agriculturist works (micro-organisme, plants and animals) become his allies rather than his enemies or his slaves.

Where compnomise is enevitable due to the ecological or to the economic conditions in which we live, then limits must be clearly defined. This document seeks to clarify which agricultural techniques are approved in organic agriculture, which are forbidden and which may in certain cases be tolerated.

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* "Chemical products", in opposition to "natural products", are products (simple or complex) obtained from :
- mineral products by chemical treatment
- natural plant material or animal tissues by chemical treatment
- chemical synthesis, whether partial or not

(definition according to A. DEHOVE)

II. Crop production :

1) Choice of crops and of varieties

Species and varieties cultivated must be as much as possible adapted to the conditions of soil and of climate, and so far as it is possible resistant to the attacks of pests and diseases. In each country, local organic agricultural advisors should be able to advise on the best adapted crops and varieties in the light of local conditions.

2) Rotations

Rotations chosen must be as varied as possible to maintain the fertility of the soil, produce healthy plants and give economic yields without need for recourse to chemical fertilizers. Towards this goal, rotations should include legumes or temporary pastures which include legumes,(roots UK), green manures and deep-rooting plants.

3) Manurial Policy

The manurial programme must aim at maintaining or incrasing the potential fertility of the soil and its biological activity. In particular, sufficient quantities of organic material must be returned to the soil to incrase or at least to maintain its humus content on a long term basis.

Organic materials produced on the farm must form the basis of the manurial programme (see Appendix I).

Mineral additives may be applied exclusively in their natural form, not subject to chemical treatment directed at concentration , or to rendering them more soluble. Mineral additives may be applied in relation to the results of soil analysis, in conjunction with observations made on the farm (flora, crop yields, plant resistance to parasites, health of livestock) and to a general mineral balance sheet of the holding that takes into account the mineral elements contained in any purchased organic manures or fertilisers.

Applications of nitrogen must be in an organic * form. All synthetic nitrogenous fertilisers are forbidden.

Applications of all manures and fertilisers, and particularly of nitrogen, should be effected in such a manner as to have no adverse effect on the quality of crops (nutritive quality, taste, keeping quality). Care must be taken to avoid excessive dressings of organic nitrogen which can have an adverse effect on the quality of foodstuffs (excess nitrates and nitrites) and on water.

A list of authorised manures and fertilisers is given in Appendix I.

4) Pest Management

In organic agriculture the aim is to grow crops under conditions where parasites willbe of no or little economic importance. Where organic husbandry is well carried out (varieties well adapted to the environment, a balanced manurial programme, fertile soils of high biological activity, correct rotations, companion planting, green manures, etc...), this result can be obtained in the majority of cases.

The natural enemies of parasites should beprotected and encouraged through provisions of conditions favourable to them (hedges, nesting sites, etc...).

* of organic, not chemically synthetizied origin

All synthetic pesticides are forbidden. In case of need, recourse may be made to the products listed in Appendix II.

5) Weed Management

Weeds are controlled by a number of cultural techniques limiting their development (suitable rotations, green manures, a balanced manurial programme, early seed-bed preparation and pre-drilling harrowing, good seed-bed preparation, etc...) and by mechanical cultivations.

Flame weedings is allowed. All chemical herbicides are forbidden.

6) Growth Regulators

All growth regulators based on synthetic hormones are forbidden.

III. Animal Husbandry :

1) General Conduct of Animal Husbandry

Techniques employed in livestock management must be directed to maintaining the animal in good health without need for recourse to chemical therapeutic measures. To this end, it is necessary to select robust breeds, adapted to local conditions, and to have this factor in view when selecting breeding stock.

Housing and other environmental conditions must be adapted to the psychological needs of stock (see Appendix III).

Industrial methods of animal husbandry, as well as treatments directed to modifying animal behaviour, are forbidden. Definitions of industrial animal husbandry are given by national organizations in their own standards.

Veterinary medicine should, so far as possible, make use of natural therapeutic methods (homoepathy, aromatherapy, phythotherapy, etc.). Use of all chemical insecticides is forbidden.

2) Animal Nutrition

The diet must be balanced, of good quality, and produced according to the techniques of biological agriculture. In general, complementing feedingstuffs bought in should be the produce of biological agriculture. Departures from this rule, as specified in Appendix III, will be allowed where they are agreed upon by the national organizations representing biological agriculture.

Use of foods containing antibiotics, urea, synthetic amino acides, anti-coccidiosis products or hormones is forbidden.

IV. Storage, Conservation and Processing :

All chemical treatment as an aid to conservation during storage is forbidden. Irridiation and anti-sprouting treatment is forbidden.

The processing and transformation of primary products must be carried out withou chemical additives or treatment. An appendix to the present document clarifying the methods permitted in the case of each product will be issued later.

V. Conditions in which these Standards apply :

1) Liability

A producer can only sell this products with the label "Produce of Organic Agriculture" if he applies this minimal standards.

2) Conversion to Organic Agriculture

Conversion to organic agriculture must be effected according to a progressive plan aimed at conversion of the entire holding within a period which should be fixed by every national organization. In general. the time taken for conversion should not exceed one complete rotation. With livestock farms, conversion should take place more quickly.

In cases of particular difficulty, certain exceptions to the above rule may be allowed; for example, where orchards form part of a holding or where a conventional poultry unit forms part of a holding economically unviable without it. Such exceptions must be agreed by the national organizations representing organic agriculture.

In general, produce may only be sold with the description "Produce of Organic Agriculture" after a period of conversion of two years (third harvest). This period may be reduced to one year in the case of holdings where during the years immediately preceding conversion techniaues closely allied to those of biological agriculture have been employed. In such cases applicants must aupply details of techniques and of products used. The national organizations will then decide whether it is appropriate to reduce the period of conversion to one year.

During the period of conversion, produce may be sold under an appropriate labe; for example, "Produce of Organic Agriculture in Process of Conversion".

3) Labelling

A producer who has undertaken in writing to conform to the standards of one of the organizations subscribing to the present common international standards has the right to sell his produce with the label "Produce of Organic Agriculture".

It is desirable that this description should be elaborated upon on labels or on containers by a more precise description of the techniques e,ployed (e.g. "Produced without chemical fertilisers and sprays", etc.).

Producers who make use of specific methods, such as the bio-dynamic method, may state this on their labels.

4) Control

It is strongly recommended to national organizations that they subject their members to regular tests of their soils and of their produce. Tests made on produce should refer in particular to pesticide residues and, in the case of vegetables, to nitrites. Producers who have converted the entire farm are not allowed to have products in their possession forbidden by these standards.

VI. Revision of these Standards

It is proposed that the present standards should be revised every two years as follows :

The Agricultural Techniques Group of IFOAM should suggest modifications, which will be communicated to all members, at the latest, six months before the bi-annual General Assembly. The proposals of the Agricultural Techniques Group, modified in the light of suggestions from members, will be submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

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APPENDIX I

APPROVED MANURES AND FERTILISERS

1) Organic Manures Produced on the Holding

Farmyard manure, composted in heaps or on the surface;

Crop residues;

Green manures;

Straw and other mulches;

Slurry and urine (after stirring and, where possible, aeration);

Composte made from any non-polluted organic residues, produced on the holding or brought in.

2) Manures and Fertilisers Brought in

Slaughterhouse wastes;

Farmyard manures, excepting, in so far as it is possible, manures resulting from factory farming methods, properly composted or aerated (1 & 2)

Peat (without chemical additives);

Straw;

Seaweed and seaweed products;

Organic by-products of the foodstuffs and textile industries, provided that they are neither polluted nor contain chemical additives;

Composted sawdust, woodshavings and bark, provided that they come from untreated timber;

Guano.

3) Mineral Additives

Pulverised natural rock;

Calcareous and magnesium amendments;

Calcified seaweed;

Natural phosphates.

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1. Manures resulting from industrial animal husbandry may, in certain cases, be tolerated, but only after being composted (the composting process degrades antibiotics).

2. The problem of sewage sludge and of urban composts is a particularly difficult one. Due to the risk of pollution, it would seem prudent to forbid their use in organic agriculture. They constitute, however, a valuable source of organic matter which it is desirable to recycle.
Their quality depends on their origin and the manner in which they have been treated. In certain cases, it appears that dustbin refuse can be used safely. In the case of sewage sludge, more caution is necessary, since it often contains heavy metals.
If national organizations allow the use of dustbin refuse and/or sewage sludge, they should clarify the conditions in which these may be used and the guarantees that are given for them.

In certain cases, to be defined by each national organization and with the approval of technical consultants, the following products may be used pending further decision : basic slag, patentkali, natural potassium sulphate, trace elements in the form of salts, kieserite.

During the period of conversion Chilean nitrate of soda or urea (theoretically forbidden in biological farming) can be used, on a yearly basis, only after approval of the organization to which the farmer belongs to.

4) Compost Activators

Microbial activators;

Various plant-based preparations;

Bio-dynamic preparations.

APPENDIX II

PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

1) Biological Control

Introduction of predators or of parasites of noxious insects (e.g. trichogrammes);

Sexual lures;

Sterilisation of males.

2) Products for Plant Disease Management

Plant-based preparations;

Sulphur;

Copper salts;

Silicate of Soda;

Permanganate of Potash (only for seed dressing).

3) Products for Pest Management

Bacillus thuringiensis;

Pyrethrum;

Rotenone;

Quassia;

Pure paraffin oil;

Soft soap;

Nicotine, in cases of absolute necessity (to be used as little as possible and with precautions) and only if allowed by the national organization concerned;

Metaldehyde; the use of metaldehyde is not encouraged, but in case of extreme need must be allowed, preferably applied in some sort of trap, hidden from other wildlife, rather than overall application.

4) Various

Numerous preparations aimed at limiting the development of certain parasites and at re-enforcing the natural resistance of plants may be used: plant-based preparations (liquid manure made from nettles, decoction of equisetum, absinth, tansy, etc.)

APPENDIX III

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT AND FEEDING

1) Stocking Rate per Hectare

It is desirable not to exceed the equivalent of three large animal units.

2) Bought-in Feeding Stuffs that are not Organically Produced

Where it proves impossible to purchase certain feeding stuffs from organic sources, the national organizations may allow that a small proportion of the food consumed by livestock (a maximum of 20% on a dry matter basis) may be of non-organic origin. The use of such feeding stuffs may only be allowed after analysis for residues. Maximum levels of residues must be fixed by the national organizations.

3) Veterinary Medecine

A list of recommended veterinary products, also of products that may be allowed in certain cases, will be issued later. In the meantime, national organizations should seek to establish provisional lists of products which may be used by livestock producers.

In cases of veterinary treatment, with the use of chemical products, antibiotics, hormones and similar products, the treated animals and their products cannot be sold under the label "Produce of Organic Agriculture" during a period set up by every national organization.

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