

ORGAP Project – Evaluation toolbox for the evaluation of action plans for organic food and farming

The ORGAP-Project has developed an evaluation toolbox for the evaluation of the European and/or national action plans based on analysis of national action plans and expert/stakeholder consultation.

Introduction

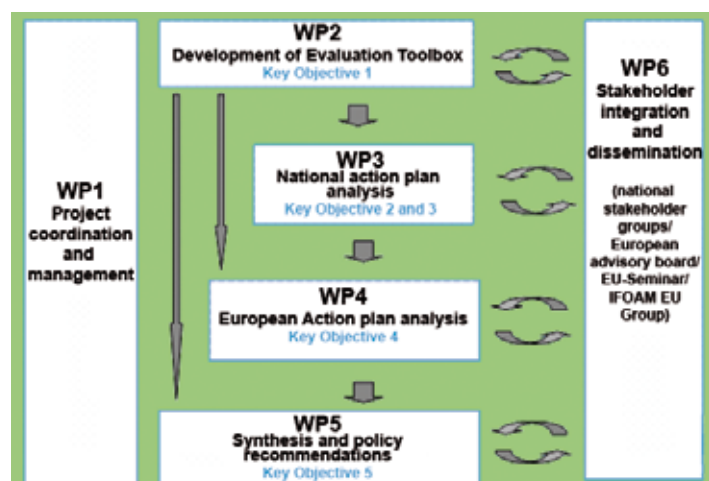
The European Commission released in June 2004 the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming (EUOAP). In May 2005 the 3-year, EU funded research project ORGAP ("Evaluation of the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming") started with 10 partners from 9 countries (CH, UK, DE, IT, DK, SI, CZ, NL, ES) and IFOAM EU Group.



Fig 1. The ORGAP project team – meeting in Frick (Switzerland)

Objectives and methodology

The overall objective of this project is to give scientific support to the implementation and evaluation of the EUOAP. This was achieved by the identification of a set of suitable indicators and concepts as a basis for the development of an integrated evaluation tool to assess the long-term and short-term effects of the implementation of the EUOAP.



Results

Comparison of national organic action plans

A comparative documentation about national action plans for organic agriculture describes the current status quo of eight national and regional action plans for organic food and farming. The case study action plans vary with regard to their development process, targets and objectives, and emphasis of measures on certain areas. These differences are due to quite different political/socio-economic framework conditions for organic farming in these countries at the time when these plans were established (Stolz, Stolze, Schmid, 2006).

Meta-evaluation of evaluations of national organic action plans

The insight into already conducted evaluation studies in the field of organic action plans in Europe contributed to a methodological learning process, which helped to optimize the ORGAPET toolbox and provided information on the content level about the success and failure of organic action plans in general (Dabbert & Eichert, 2007).

ORGAPET development

The Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET) is a collection of different evaluation tools, including participative techniques, quantitative assessments and methods to identify relevant indicators, which could be used selectively to meet the needs of a particular assessment of national or EU action plans. The toolbox for use on-line (www.orgap.org) is structured around 'compartments' or sections containing 'tools' fulfilling different functions. Each section contains an overview paper and a series of Annexes detailing a range of methodological approaches (including written materials, relevant software and other items) and examples of how these have been applied in specific cases. The structure of ORGAPET is presented in the following table.

Tab. 1 ORGAPET Contents

Part A: Background and context

- A1 Introduction to ORGAP and action plans
- A2 Nature of policy evaluation and organic action plan evaluation
- A3 Influences on the development of organic farming – programme theory and results of previous research
- A4 Working with stakeholders – participatory and partnership approaches.
- A5 Planning an Evaluation

Part B: Evaluating programme design and implementation

- B1 Describing programmes and their management
- B2 Evaluating stakeholder involvement
- B3 Conflict and synergies

Part C: Evaluating programme effects

- C1 Defining objectives
- C2 Defining indicators
- C3 Key indicators
- C4 Using expert judgement

Part D: Synthesis

- D1 Integrating and interpreting results
- D2 Examples of existing evaluations

ORGAPET testing and assessment by stakeholders and evaluation experts

Comments on the ORGAPET toolbox were collected via a comprehensive testing process in all ORGAP participant countries and were used for their revision (Dabbert and Eichert, 2007).

Focus group discussions on the national implementation of the EUOAP

Focus group discussions with stakeholders were held in 8 EU member states. The main conclusion was that the level of implementation success of the EUOAP in any member depends on the willingness, capability and comprehension of their affected and involved stakeholders (based on theory of Vedung, 1997). On a more general level the analysis revealed a deep scepticism about the market orientated basis of the EUOAP. (Michelsen and Tyrol Beck, 2007).

Project Website: All reports can be downloaded from the Project website: www.orgap.ch. Newsletters and a web-based discussion forum related to the European Action plan are offered.

The project was carried out with financial support from the Commission of the European Community under the 6th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.

References

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