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Press release

More than 5.5 Million Hectares of Organic Farmland in the Enlarged European Union

Official interest in organic farming data collection in all countries on the rise, but harmonisation is needed

(Berlin/Frick, 3.5.2004) By the end of 2002, more than 5.5 million hectares were managed organically by more than 160,000 farms in the 25 countries of the European Union, according to [new figures](#) (pdf) from the Institute of Rural Sciences at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. This constituted almost 3.4% of the agricultural area and 1.7% of the farms in the EU. Compared to the previous year, this is an increase of 9% in the 25 European Union countries, mainly due to strong growth in France, Spain and the United Kingdom.

At a recent conference in Berlin, Germany, the issue of organic data collection and processing and possibilities of improvements was discussed. It became obvious that the relevant authorities are highly interested in collecting and processing of statistical data on organic farming but that there is a great need for harmonisation of data collection - both on a national and on a European level. The event had been organised by the project European Information systems for Organic Markets (EISFOM), funded by the European Commission.

The seminar had more than 100 participants, including representatives of the European Commission, Eurostat, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), of statistical offices and competent authorities, as well as researchers and stakeholders of the Organic Sector.

“We are very proud that we can document the impressive development of organic farming with our figures, said project leader Nic Lampkin, but we are aware that methods of collection - which for a long time depended on the efforts of the private organic sector - vary from country to country. There is a need for harmonisation and quality assurance. “

This was confirmed by the seminar, which showed that on a national and an EU level in most cases the collection methods of the EU regulation 2092/91 are not harmonised with existing data collection systems, like the Farm Structure Survey, the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN/RICA), market data collection and others. There are however, also good examples of cooperation of competent authorities and Central statistics offices (Poland, Denmark, Finland, and France).

The seminar revealed that at the European level the data of the Community farm structure survey (2000, 2003), carried out by Eurostat, and now also contains organic farming data, comprising a wealth of information on organic farming. The General Directorate Agriculture of the European Commission has recently set up the Organic Farming Information System (OFIS) database, into which the administrative data for EU regulation can be delivered by the member states. Some of the information will be made public. Another good news gained at the seminar is that the full set of these administrative data including the „historical data“ will be made available at the end of 2004 on the Eurostat homepage.

The seminar also considered the particular issues concerning availability of trade, retailer and consumer level data, where much less data is currently available and such estimates as do exist, for example of the retail sales market value, are less reliable than the production data. Further work is needed to develop these aspects, involving collaboration between private and public sector agencies.

Conclusions from the seminar were among others that detailed reporting under EU regulation 2092/91 should be mandatory, that there should be cooperation / harmonisation of organic data with existing data collection systems and access to data should be improved. Case studies of some of the most innovative approaches presented at the conference will now be made to see what lessons can be learned for wider application.

The next EISFOM seminar will take place in October 2005 in Brussels. It will define a framework for a European Information System for Organic Markets. Further information is available from the EISFOM Homepage.

The conference proceedings including all papers as well as the results of the discussions and conclusions will be published by the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL, which is a project partner. The proceedings will be available both at the project homepage as well as the database 'Organic Eprints'.

ENDS

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- [Press photo](#) from the meeting

Links

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The EU statistical office

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Organic Farming Information System (OFIS) Database

[Organic Eprints](#)

Open source database for papers related to research in organic agriculture

[Statistics](#)

at Institute of Rural Sciences organic farming

Contact

Dr. Nic Lampkin, Project Coordinator, University of Wales Aberystwyth, Institute of Rural Sciences, Llanbadarn Campus, UK - SY23 3AL Aberystwyth Ceredigion, Tel (Temporary until 31/07/04): 0041 62 865 7213 Fax: +44-1970-622238, E-Mail nhl@aber.ac.uk; Internet www.eisfom.org

Editorial notes

EISFOM is an EU-funded Concerted Action whose aim is to develop a framework for reporting valid and reliable production and market data on the European organic sector, in order to meet the needs of policy makers, farmers, processors, wholesalers and other actors involved in organic markets. It has been formed by a network of researchers from universities, research institutes and market data collection agencies in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, Switzerland, who have been researching and publishing organic farming statistics for many years. The project is co-ordinated by the University of Wales in Aberystwyth and will run from 2003 to 2005. Further information on the partnership and objectives of the project can be found at this web site.

The project is financially supported by the Commission of the European Communities' Fifth Framework Research and Technological Development Programme. The views expressed in this press release do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission, nor do they in any way anticipate the Commission's future policy in this area.

