

18th Organic World Congress

Written inputs from panelists
of the Main Track Session

3B: **Organics beyond food:**

Textiles, body care products, amenity horticulture and energy production (Panel
discussion)

Tuesday, 13 October 2014 (14:30-16:00)

Organics Beyond Food: Textiles, body care products, amenity horticulture and energy production

Background

Food production is the most evident result of Organic Farming. However, farm products are used for other human needs. Some of those Organic sectors beyond food, e.g. the amenity horticulture are in an early stage of development, but have big potentials. Awareness inside and outside of the Organic world and development of the value chain need to be further developed. Other Organic sectors beyond food, e.g. Organic cotton have made impressive progress during the past few years.

Session Objectives

Panel and participants will analyze the current state of development of non-food Organic products and identify needs for coordination and support structures. The discussion should raise awareness on the stage of development and provide information on successes and challenges to further develop these sectors within the global Organic World.

Leading Questions

- What is the importance of organic textiles, of organic body care products, of organic amenity horticulture and of organic energy production?
- What have been the main achievements so far, and what ambitions remain?
- Who are the main actors and how do they link to, coordinate with and integrate into the organic food sector and global organic institutions?
- What are the challenges and how do they need to be approached?
- Which are the main messages to the organic food sector and vice versa?
- Which developments are required, and which are anticipated?

Methodology: Panel discussion with 4-5 panelists.

Moderator/Rapporteur: Manjo Smith/David Gould

Speakers

- Andrea Bischof, Helvetas, Switzerland
- Francis Blake, Soil Association, UK
- Jaclyn Bowen, Quality Assurance International, USA
- Simon Ferrigno, Freelance Consultant, UK
- Liu Qing Dong, China Organic Food Limited, China
- Liesl Truscott, Textile Exchange, UK/USA
- Marci Zaroff, Marci Zaroff Sustainable Brands, USA

Francis Blake

Cotton is the world's dirtiest crop, using more pesticides than any other. Together with other fibre crops and the agricultural ingredients in cleaning and cosmetic products, they constitute the second biggest sector of farm production, after food and feed. Biofuels are also expanding rapidly, despite the questions about their sustainability in terms of both net energy gain and also displacement of food production (and rainforests). Amenity horticulture, both retail (garden centres, etc) and institutional/commercial (parks, golf courses, etc) provide an increasing interface with all manner of different consumers/public.

For all these reasons, it is good to see that the organic movement is embracing these new sectors and providing some clearly needed leadership:

- The Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS) has been operational since 2006 and is now the *de facto* organic textile standard worldwide;
- Textile Exchange, formally Organic Exchange, brings together all the main clothing and sports brands and provides excellent educational and other services;
- The COSMOS-standard is somewhat further behind GOTS but has the same aspirations – its five founding organisations represent some 90% of the certified organic and natural cosmetics sector;
- An EU research project is developing and exploring biogas production on organic farms;
- Several organic organisations are closely engaged with amenity horticulture, with standards and certification, consultancy and education.

It would be fair to say that IFOAM has not been as much at the forefront of all these as it might have been (though it did develop textile standards some years ago). Instead other groups have taken the initiative. A key, if internal, question is, whether and how IFOAM should concern itself with leading, uniting and assisting these initiatives – or have the horses already bolted out of the stable?

There are sound reasons for IFOAM to engage with them:

- They are all part of the wider movement and there is considerable cross-over, both structurally and strategically, with the IFOAM family;
- They use of raw materials of organic origin and so help to boost organic production;
- They reach consumers and other stakeholders who may not otherwise get involved with organic, therefore providing additional educational opportunities;
- And of course they provide cleaner, environment friendly alternatives to the negative impacts of non-organic production/manufacturing.

It is true that some horses may have already left the stable, but they are still close by and are travelling on the same road (to mix metaphors), so it is not too late.

In which case, the question is, how? That should be a key topic of this panel session.

About me

I have been involved in the organic movement for almost 40 years, first as an organic farmer, then running the Soil Association's certification scheme. During this time, I helped found the IFOAM EU Group and was its president until 2009. In 2000, I moved across to the parent charity as standards director and in this role developed the SA's organic standards for both textiles and cosmetics. Realising these were both international industries, I was directly involved in setting up both the GOTS and the COSMOS-standard and currently represent the Soil Association on their boards.

Jaclyn Bowen¹

Jaclyn oversees QAI's organic certification programs, which include certification to the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), as well as to international organic programs. Under her leadership, QAI launched the NSF/ANSI 305 "Contains Organic Ingredients" certification program for personal care products with a minimum organic content of 70 percent (070). This certification program has gained significant momentum, being considered a personal care 'best practice' by the Organic Trade Association and requirement for sale on some major retailer shelves.

Jaclyn joined QAI in 2007 after working for QAI's parent company, NSF International, where she developed American National Standards. She has a master's degree in management and policy from the University of Michigan, a master's degree in quality from Eastern Michigan University's College of Engineering Technology, and a bachelor's degree in environmental biology from Michigan State University.

Description of Ideas:

Besides an overview of the emergence of organic cosmetics, we would like to include the growing demand for organic dietary supplements in the conversation. QAI just published a white paper, [Guidance on Formulation and Marketing of Organic Dietary Supplements Under the National Organic Program](#), on the issue. Despite the increase in demand for these products, many dietary supplement companies are not familiar with the complexities of the National Organic Program regulations.

What is the importance of organic textiles, of organic body care products, of organic amenity horticulture and of organic energy production?

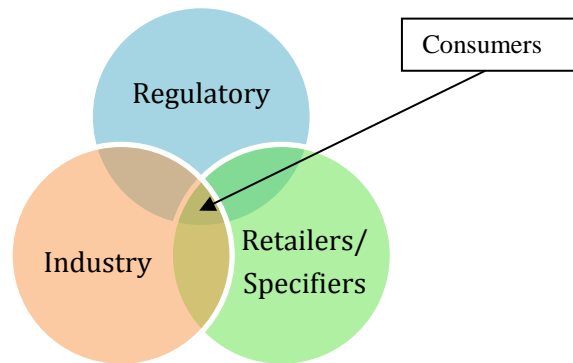
While organic has been typically perceived as a food issue, consumer demand and reality reveals it goes beyond that. The national laws need to be receptive to emerging industries as they innovate and formulate to meet the requirements. Emerging non-food sectors are important as they test the boundaries of the regulations and industry thinking.

What have been the main achievements so far, and what ambitions remain?

For cosmetics, the dialogue has started: There are several emerging private and public standards and certification programs. These pioneers are all vital for proper vetting when defining an organic cosmetic. This situation is reminiscent of the US organic food industry 30 years ago when the industry had to coalesce around the true pillars of organic in order to standardize the term to facilitate trade. When it comes to Dietary Supplements, the dialogue is just starting.

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Who are the main actors and how do they link to, coordinate with and integrate into the organic food sector and global organic institutions?



What are the challenges and how do they need to be approached?

While there is consumer demand and industry interest, the industry is currently challenged with formulating supplement and cosmetic products to a food standard. A “toolbox” is needed for these new industry sectors so they can make not only products that are organic, but also safe and effective. The issue of sufficient supply and raw materials remains.

Which are the main messages to the organic food sector and vice versa?

The common message is that we all support the proliferation of organic agriculture- the reduction of prohibited pesticides and GMOs. We need encourage and support innovation in emerging industry sectors.

Which developments are required, and which are anticipated?

Government discussion and retail support. The collaboration between Canada, EU, and the US is to be applauded. Just as the EU was an early adopter of an organic Aquaculture standard with Canada close behind, we see this same trend happening for the cosmetics and dietary supplements industries.

Liu Qingdong²

What is the importance of organic textiles, of organic body care products, of organic amenity horticulture and of organic energy production?

Amenity Agriculture give people organic lifestyle guide. Organic Textiles, Organic Body Care Products, Organic Energy Products, Organic Baby Foods and so on are very important things. First, step by step set up globe standard, second in each main country set up organic raw material base, processing plant and sales center. Third, Organic Amenity Horticulture, we set up Theme Park, Traditional Medicine Regimens and so on.

The aspects are identified by IFOAM and IAAA.

- Organic farming experience: orchard, bamboo garden, tea garden, vegetable garden, etc., for the public to visit, to feed, to farm, and to purchase the produce.
- Organic forest tour: to provide forest recreational activities, such as forest tours, eco-classes and bird watching, in comply with relevant state policies and regulations.
- Organic farm, livestock grazing and captivity experience: cattle, sheep, pigs, chicken, geese and other domestic animals; grazing, milking (cattle and sheep), shearing, grasping pigs, chickens and other recreational activities.
- Food safety and processing experience: DIY organic flour, visiting food safety processing factory, etc.
- Fisheries: to use inland and coastal resources for recreation, fishing experience and diving; to hold seminars for aquatic plants and animals' protection.
- Organic education: using agricultural production operation guidelines to tutor visitors, such as public farms, family farms, and medicinal botanical gardens.
- Local ethnology, history, and culture: the unique culture or practices in different countryside, such as harvest festivals, historical sites and unique local tribal customs.
- Original ecological construction of amenity farms and estates: planning to construct traditional farms or buildings with rural facilities for leisure, accommodation, catering without destroying the natural landscape and the ecological environment.
- Recreation agricultural facilities construction: such as theme and amusement parks, ski / golf courses and resorts, skating rinks, castles, organic manors, etc.

² President, IFOAM Amenity Agriculture Alliance (IAAA), Chairman, China Organic Food Limited

What have been the main achievements so far, and what ambitions remain?

On May 1st, 2012, IAAA open head office in Beijing, China. Oct. 24th, 2012 register in Macao. On June 19th, we register one agriculture fund in Qianhai Shenzhen, which can get foreign currency go inside mainland China and RMB can invest abroad. This fund follow up IAAA to invest in worldwide for amenity agriculture.

IAAA help Macao government set up food safety law. On 2015 set up joint venture organic inspection body which can inspect EU rules, USA NOP, JAS and China rules. We can send Chinese inspector go abroad work and help foreign country people become China inspector to do China organic rules, this can help foreign country organic products go inside China Market.

IAAA with Macao government, Guangdong government set up traditional medicine regimens area.

IAAA set up initiative cycle organic agriculture system. This system can increasing organic agriculture output.

IAAA will organize amenity agriculture globe summit in Hainan Province in 2015.

Who are the main actors and how do they link to, coordinate with and integrate into the organic food sector and global organic institutions?

Till now ,the main actors start from China, Japan, USA, Italy, IAAA birthday on April 17th, 2012 and till end of June, 2014 is construction period. From July. 1st, start to work. IAAA will announcement in BIOFACH 2015.

We organize work team to study standard and rules of amenity agriculture.

IAAA will made organic life style and everything use organic products in life. So it is with food sector and non food sector together make global organic instructions; For example: we will release organic herb tea, organic golf and so on.

What are the challenges and how do they need to be approached?

Every new idea and organization from beginning is difficult. IAAA prepare 26 months to decreasing difficult.

Which are the main messages to the organic food sector and vice versa?

Unit Organic popular. Go inside normal life. Organic is not lower output. Find the right way.

Which developments are required, and which are anticipated?

Food Safety, Living Comfortable, Organic Dream: everything is organic including eating, living, travel and so on.

Simon Ferrigno³

Simon Ferrigno has been working in the cotton sector since 2000, researching the problems with conventional cotton and the alternatives, notably organic, which he has promoted for many years. Simon is also involved with other initiatives such as the Better Cotton Initiative (advisory committee member) and his research projects have covered most of the major sustainability schemes. He is also the author of 'An Insider's Guide to Cotton and Sustainability', published in 2012 (MCL Global, March 2012, 136pp).

Phil Monday, Consultant Organic and Sustainable Horticulture and Agriculture
Phil Monday spent 10 years in Southern Africa training small holder farmers in sustainable and organic agriculture and worked on organic cotton projects in Zambia and South Africa. Phil also worked with PAN-UK on organic cotton projects in Benin and represented PAN on the Better Cotton Initiative council. Phil has also helped produce training materials for several tropical organic crops and farming techniques.
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Cotton is a good example of an organic sector facing increasing competition from other sustainability initiatives, at the same time being affected by price and demand volatility and the global economic slowdown. The organic movement must recognise both the threat from other, often lower entry initiatives and the opportunity to position organic as the most sustainable option. This is where problems lie: in a recent study of cotton sustainability initiatives by the authors, organic cotton projects came out both best and worst, with an overall conclusion that the quality of the intervention and its staff had more impact than the standard itself. While a good organic project was the best overall because of the quality of its structures and staff another was failing, with the other initiatives in between. Without a more rigorous approach ensuring the quality of organic projects there is no differentiation for organic cotton against easier and cheaper programmes offered by others such as the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) or Cotton made in Africa (CmiA), towards which donors and buyers are flocking, while organic cotton production is declining or stagnating.

To stay ahead, organic cotton must ensure that all production follows best practice (structure, research, extension, pest management, soil fertility, social and gender issues, support structures) and verify this: concrete results are the only way to promote a visible and healthy organic cotton sector and to eliminate bad or lazy practices that do not deliver farmer and ecological benefits.

The main competitors for organic are the Better Cotton Initiative and Cotton made in Africa, backed by retailers, donors and NGOs and whose production numbers have or will soon overtake organic cotton, but behind and challenging are Fairtrade cotton and other initiatives such as the private work of Cotton Connect in their REEL programme.

³ Freelance researcher and writer, Sustainable & Organic Farm Systems.
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Working with organic, conventional and sustainable cotton schemes, we can suggest solutions. These begin with ensuring that the highest standards and responsibility in trade are core to organic. The organic standard alone is not sufficient to ensure organic stands out from the increasingly crowded sustainable cotton scene. The types of support offered by good programmes need to be the norm, not the exception, and understanding what makes these work is essential.

Then we need to understand the basis of the other initiatives. BCI is based on FAOs definition of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and CmiA on FAOs Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). While both see organic as complementary they also talk of organic as 'niche', and tend to damn it with faint praise. They are not averse to promoting themselves as the only mainstream options, although no one can say how much of the world's cotton could be organic with more support, including finance and research.

However, our study found a weakness in that mainstream initiatives may rush to grow and leave farmers at an entry level, without sufficient attention to improving. The slower growth of good organic projects enables better embedding among farmers. One suggestion for organic is to build on this and to demarcate itself from others by results. Organic can never be cheaper, and should not try to be, but it can reach deeper. Organic cotton can also show farmers combating climate change, and is the only system to offer a viable alternative to rising fertilizer and pesticide costs. Certainly there are common interests between sustainability initiatives (lobbying for supportive policies, funding and consumer and business change), but organic also needs to be more vocal in making its own case and refusing to be labelled niche, while keeping its own house in order and not accepting second best. Brands often express some caution about organic: not knowing what it is and not trusting it is what it says it is. This needs to be countered. To support organic, more needs to be done to ensure organic cotton is recognised as a superior product that can be marketed through other initiatives as well on the basis of equivalence.

Finally, to ensure organic is the best, a code of practice is needed alongside certification to ensure all farming projects follow best practice and monitor and respond to any issues. Organic cotton projects should always aim to improve the quality of life of the farmers involved and also the quality of the environment in which they farm.