

EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
RESEARCH DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

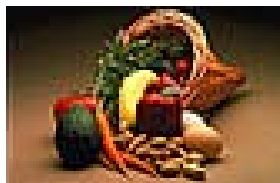
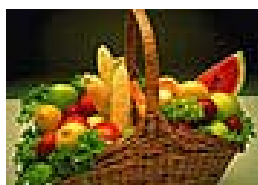
Directorate E.03 – Safe food production systems

## Seminar on Organic Farming Research in Europe

*“How to facilitate the development of transnational co-operation in research in Organic Farming by member and associated states”*

Brussels, 24-25 September 2002

**Consolidated report summarising individual contributions**



Brussels, October 10, 2002

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## SWITZERLAND

### Status quo of Organic Farming research in Switzerland

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#### Introduction

Switzerland has been leading in organic farming research for more than 70 years. The first research work started in 1930 by the privately financed biological laboratory at the Goetheanum in Dornach (CH), first by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer and then by Lilly Kolisko. The activities of the Goetheanum have been focussed exclusively on biodynamic aspects of organic farming from then on up to today. In 1973, scientifically focussed research work started at the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL). Several small institutes, permanent working groups and breeders started activities in different fields of research in the 1980's and promoted biodynamic research (e.g. holistic quality assessment, biodynamic plant breeding). The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich and the Federal Research Station for Agricultural Economics and Engineering (FAT) became leading in the 80's in all aspects of animal welfare and ethology. In 2001, the Swiss Federal Research Station for Agroecology and Agriculture (FAL) came in with organic farming research in arable crops, grassland management, crop breeding and landscaping. FiBL and FAL have conducted a long-term experiment (DOK trial) since 1978

#### Current and planned research activities in organic farming

Switzerland wants to promote research in **all** fields of organic farming:

- Crop production (arable crops, grassland, and horticultural crops) in breeding, variety testing, production technique, plant protection and quality improvement.
- Animal husbandry (small and big ruminants, poultry, pigs and bees) in breeding, free-range systems, feeding and housing.
- Animal health (ruminants, poultry and pigs) focussing on herd management, prevention, biocontrol and complementary medicine.
- Socio-economics focussing on farm management and economics, markets and consumers, policy assessment and sociological studies.
- Biodiversity and landscape improvements.
- Processing methods and technical procedures esp. milk and other produce.

The major state funding for organic farming research is granted by:

- Federal Office for Agriculture: 4 to 5 million € per annum, increasing from 2004 on (start of the new research programme of the 6 federal research stations and of FiBL).
- Federal Veterinary Office: 350,000 € per annum.
- Federal Office for Education and Science (funding Swiss partners participating at EU-activities): 500,000 €.

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- Different other federal and regional authorities: 500,000 € per annum.

It can be estimated that approximately 5 to 6 million € - per annum - are presently allocated very specifically to organic farming research from public budgets. In addition, much research work at the agricultural research stations is done both in Integrated Production and Organic Farming systems.

### **Main research centres in organic farming**

**Research Institute of Organic Farming (FiBL)** since 1973. Overall budget in research and knowledge transfer for organic farming: 7.5 Million €: 85 scientific and technical staff. Director: Dr. Urs Niggli. Branch offices in Germany (FiBL Berlin and FiBL Frankfurt). Leading scientists see <http://www.fibl.ch/buehne/fibl/team-a-z.html>.

**Swiss Federal Research Station for Agroecology and Agriculture**, CH-8046 Zurich. Research focus in organic arable crops and grassland in evolution. Contact person: Dr. Padruot M. Fried, Head Department for Production Systems.

For more information on the activities of FAL und of the 5 other Swiss Federal Research Stations see <http://www.sar.admin.ch> .

### **Specialised bio-dynamic research activities:**

- Agricultural Department of the Goetheanum: <http://www.goetheanum.ch>
- Research Institute for Vital Quality, Dr Ursula R. Graf <http://www.fiv.ch>
- Cereal Breeding Group of Peter Kunz, <http://www.peter-kunz.ch>

### **Co-ordinaton of national programmes at a European level**

#### **General remarks**

The level of organic farming research is extremely different among European countries. Joint activities at European scale will give important and immediate impacts to those countries started only recently with organic farming research.

During the last 2 decades, organic farming has succeeded in reaching an optimum of productivity, professionalism and quality (of environment and food) as it is inherent to the original concept and as it has been improved by on-farm-research. Nonetheless, several severe problems in production have remained unsolved for years and new problems have arisen with the expansion of organic farming and the diversity of production fields. This new situation cannot be tackled with surveys and on-farm R&D. It must be complemented with in-depth experimental research and with new approaches and methods. This cannot be done successfully without synergies on a European level and without a common understanding of how organic farming should be developed further.

#### **Fields of research where joint efforts at European level are especially important:**

- Crop breeding programmes (with global methods/techniques/concepts and local adaptation)
- Animal breeding programmes (ditto)
- Animal health research focussing on herd management, prevention and complementary therapy)
- Disease control strategies
- Pest control strategies especially in the Southern part of Europe

- Novel techniques of weed control (“weed roboters” with sensors and GPS or biocontrol techniques)
- Securing strategies for the crop, feed stuff and animal food supply chain.
- Health studies on product quality and diet.

Furthermore, communication, exchange of researchers, data supply and availability of research results have to be improved by appropriate services and schemes.

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