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KENYAN NATIONAL STANDARDS UNDER PUBLIC REVIEW

So far there have been two attempts to develop National Organic Standards in Kenya. One was by the Kenya Institute of Organic Farming (KIOF) and the other by the Association of Better Land Husbandry (ABLH). During 2004, the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network developed the KOAN Organic Standards by harmonising the two standards and basing them on the IFOAM basic standards and the EU Regulations, with adaptations to the local conditions.

The standards were circulated widely for comments. Following that, The Kenya Bureau of Standards (KBS) formed a 'Technical Committee on organic foods' to develop the public Kenya Organic Standards. KBS is a statutory governmental organisation that develops national standards, on various issues, such as water and food. The KBS Organic standards/guidelines have reached the public review stage (DKS 1928: 2004) where the public is supposed to comment on the standards. The deadline for the public to comment on the standards is 8 July 2005. The technical committee will then discuss comments received and change the document accordingly. According to plans, the finalised document will then be gazzetted as an official Kenyan standard in August.

The plans also state that KBS will act as an accreditor for certification bodies. ■

Source: KOAN

Ethical principles and the revision of organic rules

Strong ethical principles are seen as a tool to evaluating the development of organic agriculture so that corrections can be made where they are considered necessary. This report explains how the EU project, Organic Revision, is expected to do just that.

Current trends in organic agriculture are characterised by large-scale production, the involvement of conventional companies, and global trade. There is a concern that this development threatens the ability of organic agriculture to function as an alternative, more sustainable food system, as an alternative choice for politically motivated consumers, and as a source of inspiration for mainstream agriculture and policy. There is, therefore, renewed interest in values and principles of organic farming that can guide the future development.

Formulating strong ethical principles is seen as a tool to evaluating the development of organic agriculture, correcting its course, and avoiding unwanted consequences. In particular, there is a belief that basic ethical principles can support the interpretation and development of standards of or-

ganic agriculture in existing conflict areas and in new areas of production, processing and trade. Moreover, they can serve directly as a guide for organic practices in areas where standards are difficult to set.

The function of ethical principles in the development of rules for organic agriculture is the subject of an ongoing EU-funded research project, 'Research to support the revision of the EU Regulation on Organic Agriculture' (see box below). A specific objective of the project is to identify the basic ethical values of organic agriculture and to integrate them into the development of the EU Regulation.

Identifying ethical principles

At the same time as the work in the Organic Revision project was formulated in 2003, the IFOAM World Board decided the principles of organic

Organic Revision is a three year project funded by the EU with the aim to develop recommendations assisting the commission with further developments of the EU regulation 2092/91 on organic farming. Work is undertaken on principles and values of organic production, on harmonisation of standards, and on reducing the dependency on conventional inputs in organic feed and seed. The project is also creating a database in which national and international standards on organic production are compared with the EU regulation. The project, coordinated by the Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF), has partners in eight EU countries and collaborates closely with the IFOAM EU group. Further details on www.organic-revision.org. ■



agriculture should be rewritten. To the benefit of both parties, the task of identifying basic ethical values was carried out in close cooperation. Two Organic Revision researchers, Hugo F. Alrøe and Henk Verhoog, have been directly involved in the IFOAM process as expert members of the Task Force and the Consultative Group, respectively.

The proposed principles that have resulted from the cooperation with IFOAM are shown in Box (right). They will be taken to identify the basic ethical values of organic agriculture within the Organic Revision project. Furthermore, the project will provide in-depth philosophical analyses of key ethical aspects and relate the proposed principles to empirical data about the values of organic farmers and other stakeholders in the organic agriculture movement in Europe. This will be used as a basis for making recommendations to the EU Regulation 2092/91. In this regard, it might also help to consider the principles outlined in the Codex Alimentarius guidelines for organically produced food, developed by a joint UN programme of WHO and FAO, which have been fully in place since 2001 (see www.codexalimentarius.net).

The revision of organic rules

It is expected that IFOAM's rewritten principles will play an important role in future developments of the IFOAM Basic Standards. The Organic Revision project, on the other hand, has a specific objective, which is to 'develop a procedure for balancing and integrating the basic ethical values of organic agriculture in the development of EU Regulation 2092/91 and other organic standards, in consideration of value differences among different stakeholders and public interests'.

The present standards and regulations for organic agriculture represent

a compromise between the maximum that is desirable from an idealistic point of view and what is technically and economically feasible. If neither the basic values nor the relation between basic values and standards are made sufficiently explicit, as is the case in the present EU Regulation 2092/91, divergences between standards and values may prevail and value-related conflicts between different regulations remain unresolved. The inclusion of basic ethical principles can be a guide by which standards can be developed in a consistent, coherent and transparent way.

Even if the basic values are shared, organic agriculture may use different practices in different regions and local areas. Organic farming is based primarily on cooperation with natural systems as a means of agricultural production, and must therefore adapt its system to the local climatic, biotic, abiotic, and cultural conditions.

On the other hand, the EU has a policy of promoting trade across the borders of EU Member States and the main function of the EU Regulation is to harmonise production rules throughout. However, there are still substantial differences between and within EU Member States in the implementation of these rules. National and private label programmes play a very important role in the credibility and marketing of organic products in their respective home countries, however, the different standards, labels and certification bodies are seen as confusing and to be hampering trade. The harmonisation of standards is important in generating an equal playing field for trade in organic produce within the EU and for third countries wanting to export to the EU. But harmonisation of standards is frequently perceived as a problem among organic farmers due to their great dependence

The proposed Principles of Organic Agriculture as of June 2005:

Principle of health

Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal and human as one and indivisible.

Principle of ecology

Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

Principle of fairness

Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.

Principle of care

Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

The proposed principles have been presented and discussed at several occasions in and outside the organic movement throughout 2004-2005, and there has been a comprehensive consultation process with IFOAM membership and other stakeholders. In September 2005 the IFOAM General Assembly will vote on the principles. All drafts of proposed principles and details of the consultation process are available at an open website (<http://ecowiki.org/IfoamPrinciples>) and on the IFOAM website (www.ifoam.org/organic_facts/principles).

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IMO LAUNCHES ITS NEW HOMEPAGE

Swiss-based IMO has launched a new homepage and a new logo (see below). The new homepage does not just contain information about IMO, but also gives useful links to regulations and standards that IMO certifies against. A list of certified producers is also being produced – but as yet only the list of those with NOP certification has been completed.

Since 1 April 2005, IMO has been JAS approved. Apart from organic certification, IMO also offers certification of sustainably produced and safe products according to the following standards:

Eco-textiles: www.imo.ch/index.php?seite=imo_services_textile_en

FSC and other schemes: www.imo.ch/index.php?seite=imo_services_forest_en (for sustainable forest management and timber products).

EurepGAP: www.imo.ch/index.php?seite=imo_services_eurepgap_en (for integrated and safe production).

Utz Kapeh: www.imo.ch/index.php?seite=imo_services_utz_kapeh_en (for responsibly produced coffee). ■



see www.imo.ch

on local conditions and resources.

The question remains in what way the harmonisation of standards is best achieved. From the perspective of the Organic Revision, regionalisation of the regulations should be allowed because of natural and cultural variations. And the ‘harmonisation’ of the basic values – the formulation of common ethical principles and the inclusion of those as a basis for the regulations – should serve as an important precondition for such regionalisation.

Value differences

Even though there is a distinct common value basis in organic agriculture there is also a range of value differences within organic agriculture. This tension seems to have been present throughout the history of the movement, as evident by the separation into biodynamic and organic agriculture.

In addition, research from Denmark and Sweden indicates that there are clear differences between the values of ‘old’ and ‘new’ organic farmers. There may also be differences between geographic regions in Europe and between different groups of stakeholders in the organic movement (e.g. farmers, consumers, retailers and standard setting bodies). Consumer attitudes to organic food in Europe have recently been investigated in the OMIARD project. Similar studies on the values of farmers and other stakeholders have been carried out within the Organic Revision project. Seventeen focus group interviews with farmers and eight with other stakeholders of the organic movement were held in five countries (UK, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands). Each focus group discussion covered first associations with the term ‘organic’, personal motives for involvement, shared organic values, potential value conflicts, and the fu-

ture of organic agriculture. Preliminary results have been presented at BioFach 2005 (see box overpage) and a detailed analysis of the results, including a comparison with the OMIARD results on consumer values, is being prepared.

Producers identified a range of conflicts within the organic values, such as a potential conflict between higher productivity and lower product quality, and most importantly between farm survival and income and other organic farming values. Such conflicts between different values should be made explicit when the organic methods of production, processing and trade are evaluated and changes to the standards of organic agriculture are proposed. With this goal in mind, the Organic Revision project is developing an open database for organic rules that will show differences between the EU Regulation and other organic standards and which will be open to suggestions and recommendations on how to revise the rules and why to do it.

Conflict areas

Apart from the work on identifying common ethical principles and the empirical work on value differences, the Organic Revision project will also investigate concrete conflict areas in relation to the revision of the EU Regulation 2092/91 and make recommendations on the derogations on the use of conventional feed and seed.

Philosophical case studies will be carried out on the interplay between different organic farming values, public interests, and technical and economic concerns in selected areas of the current debate and conflict. Examples of such areas are non-use of antibiotics, use of copper for spraying, free-range for animals, mutilation of livestock, use of conventional and synthetic feeds, use of conventional

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EUREPGAP INTEGRATED AQUACULTURE ASSURANCE UPDATED

In June, EurepGAP published the updated version (2.1) of the EurepGAP Integrated Aquaculture Assurance. The new standard enables aquaculture farms to ensure that their product meets the demands of the retail and food service market. To retailers this means that along with horticultural, arable and livestock products, farmed fish is now available according to EurepGAP standards. The standard covers all production stages up to slaughter and the Chain of Custody of operators

The EurepGAP Aquaculture Assurance Standard was developed and is supported by the EurepGAP IAA members. ■

Documents can be seen on www.eurep.org/fish/Languages/English/documents.html

ONE NEW APPLICANT AND ONE WITHDRAWAL

Early in June, the IOAS announced a new application for IFOAM accreditation. The applicant, Ecoland e.V., Germany, a farmers' association, is the fifth German organisation to join the programme.

Late in June, the IOAS announced that Organic Farmers and Growers of the United Kingdom have withdrawn from the IFOAM Accreditation Programme. ■

manure, anaerobic versus aerobic processes, use of conventional breeds and seeds, use of hybrid varieties, and local versus global trade.

With regard to the use of conventional feed, two preliminary reports on the possibilities for 100% organic feed have been made available on the Organic Revision website. The preliminary conclusions indicate:

- There are sufficient cereals and pulses to feed all organic livestock, but further provision of alternative organic high quality protein sources need to be encouraged.
- It is possible and recommendable to avoid feed and protein sources of non-organic origin in the production of organic poultry and pigs without compromising animal health and welfare.
- This is suited to redirect poultry and pig production from a quantity related production process to a more quality oriented one, and to provide a clear distinction between organic and conventional production, which is expected to be essential for the

confidence of consumers and the development of a separate market.

The last point illustrates that a conflict between quantity and quality of production can also apply to the organic sector.

Results

It is expected that a report on values of organic producers compared with other stakeholders will be available in September 2005. The open database for organic rules is expected to be publicly available from December 2005 on www.organicrules.org. A report on the procedure for balancing and integrating basic ethical values and value differences in the development of organic is planned to be published in 2006. ■

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Preliminary results of focus groups

Preliminary analysis indicates that the following values of organic producers appear important across all countries in which focus groups were conducted:

- Sustainability
- Closed production cycles and/or low use of external inputs and related issues, such as self-regulation, protection of non-renewable resources, energy saving
- Professional challenge and related issues such as personal and professional development, greater freedom and independence
- Health and food quality and related issues such as taste, freshness, low residues, no harmful chemicals for workers

Many of the values of producers converge with the four principles of organic production proposed by IFOAM (see box on page 9). The ability to secure an income from farming is important to many producers, but they would not like to see this dominating over all other values. Other important values mentioned included, own independence and flexibility, local production and regionality, and the integrity of the organic system.