

Abstract title: Organic certification of hotels, restaurants and catering in Germany

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Introduction Innovative Public Organic food Procurement for Youth (iPOPY) is a CORE Organic research project studying how an increased consumption of organic food can be achieved by means of suitable strategies and instruments linked to food-serving outlets for children, teenagers and/or youth. One part of the system given special focus is that of certification, using Germany as a reference case and comparing it with the iPOPY countries Denmark, Finland, Italy and Norway.

Objectives In order to explore how iPOPY countries deal with hotel, restaurant and catering operations claiming organic status, inspection bodies are interviewed as to their practical dealings with such operations. Since Germany has clearly regulated this area, an initial study analyses the current status quo amongst all German certification bodies.

Methods A questionnaire was devised to ascertain the size and scope of certified organic foodservice in Germany as well as labelling use. All 23 certification bodies were contacted and telephone interviews arranged, after an explanatory email with the interview guidelines enclosed had been received by the management. Telephone interviews took 20 minutes on average. Fieldwork was undertaken in January -March 2009. Participation was voluntary and non-compensated.

Results The dominant segments of the foodservice market being certified with some manner of organic claim in Germany are restaurants, institutional catering operations and hotels. Chains, franchises and objects such as bistros in retailing outlets do not figure significantly. The most common labelling used are an organic line, organic components, organic raw ingredients and combinations of these (multiple answers were permitted). Least common was labelling an entire operation organic, such as an organic restaurant. According to the estimations of the interviewees, more than half of the certified operations use less than 25 % organic produce (by purchasing volume).

Conclusions Multiple labelling options affords an important opportunity for foodservice operators to use at least some organic produce, without having to become an organic operation in one step. In the forthcoming months this survey will be conducted in Denmark, Finland, Italy and Norway. Since these countries diverge slightly in their approach to certification, the status quo will be instructive.

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