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Seminar on Organic Food and Farming research in Europe Brussels, November 26 2004

National report from: Switzerland

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- 1) Which are the **main research centres** and the leading scientists carrying out research on Organic Food and Farming?
 - **Research Institute of Organic Farming (FiBL)**³, private trust, active in organic farming research and dissemination since 1973. Overall budget in research and knowledge transfer for organic farming: 10 Million € 110 scientific and technical staff. A list of leading scientists is available from the FiBL Website⁴. Director: Urs Niggli. Responsible for research co-ordination with the 5 state Agroscope centres: Thomas Alföldi. Branch offices in Germany and Austria (FiBL Germany, FiBL Austria) with independent national budgets.
 - **Agroscope**⁵ Centres comprising 5 Federal Agricultural Research Stations at Liebefeld-Posieux (ALP, organic co-ordinator is Peter Gallmann), Zürich-Reckenholz (FAL, organic co-ordinator is Fredi Strasser), Tänikon (FAT, organic co-ordinator is Robert Kaufmann), Wädenswil (FAW, organic co-ordinator is Daniel Baumann) and Changins (RAC, organic co-ordinator is Raphaël Charles). Agroscope Centres have become increasingly involved in organic research projects since the year 2000.
 - Specialised **bio-dynamic research activities** (not publicly funded):
 - Agricultural Department of the Goetheanum, ⁶
 - Research Institute for Vital Quality, Ursula R. Graf⁷
 - Cereal Breeding Group of Peter Kunz⁸

National co-ordination between FiBL and Agroscope Centres is ensured by a joint co-ordination group led by Padruot M. Fried.

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³ www.fibl.org

⁴ <http://www.fibl.org/english/fibl/team-a-z.php>

⁵ <http://www.agroscope.ch/inde.html>

⁶ <http://www.Landwirtschaftliche-Abteilung.org>

⁷ <http://www.fiv.ch>

⁸ <http://www.peter-kunz.ch>

2) What **publicly funded research** is current or planned in your country on Organic Food and Farming production, and what budget is allocated to this research?

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

- Federal Office for Agriculture⁹: 7 million €per annum (via permanent staff of Agroscope Centers and grant to FiBL).
- Federal Veterinary Office¹⁰: 350,000 €per annum (grant to FiBL).
- Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape¹¹ and other federal and regional authorities: 150,000 €per annum (grants to FiBL).

It can be estimated that approximately **7.5 million €per annum** are presently allocated very specifically to organic farming research from public budgets.

In addition, the Federal Office for Education and Science is funding FiBL with **800,000 €for projects in the 5th and 6th EU-Framework**. These grants are comparable to what the EU spends on the research frameworks and therefore not taken into consideration as **national** public funding.

The research activities on organic farming are distributed among the research institutes as follows:

- FiBL, 50 % of all organic research (focus: soil management and plant nutrition, horticultural crop research, organic plant protection and biodiversity, livestock health, livestock breeding and ethology, socio-economics including policy, regulation and markets, food quality).
- Agroscope FAL, 25 % of all organic research (focus: soil management and plant nutrition, grassland and arable crop research, breeding (fodder crops), biodiversity, plant protection and landscape).
- Agroscope RAC, 10 % of all organic research (focus: grassland and arable crop research, breeding (arable crops, wine) and variety testing, horticultural crops (esp. aromatic plants)).
- Agroscope ALP, 5% of all organic research (focus: milk and meat quality/technology/processing).
- Agroscope FAW, 5 % of all organic research (focus: horticultural crops, breeding/variety testing, quality and processing research).
- Agroscope FAT, 5 % of all organic research (focus: Farm management, farm technology).

Main priorities of organic farming research in Switzerland:

- Optimizing all aspects of crop production (vegetables, fruit and wine growing, arable crops and grassland).
- Developing novel technologies for the control of pests, diseases and weeds.
- Optimizing organic seed production and breeding varieties in the context of organic farming.
- Developing outdoor systems for livestock.

⁹ <http://www.blw.admin.ch/index.html?lang=en&PHPSESSID=2cec5c184b710c6a710b15da60645d75>

¹⁰ http://www.bvet.admin.ch/0_navigation-d/0_index-intern.html

¹¹ <http://www.umwelt-schweiz.ch/buwal/eng/index.html>

- Improving animal health by herd management, holistic health approaches and biocontrol remedies (focus: mastitis, parasites).
- Cattle breeding in the context of low input and organic farming systems.
- Macro- and microeconomic aspects of organic farming.
- Scientific background of organic regulations (production, processing, distribution).
- Consumer attitude, market research and statistics.
- Improving organic systems, landscape and resource management.
- Safety and quality of organic food.

3) Are there any **trans-national collaborative research** programmes in which your country is involved?

Switzerland will be involved in the **ERA net Core Organic** (ERAC-CT-2004-011716) which started 1st October 2004 (for a duration of 36 months). The representative of Switzerland in the Governing Board of this ERA net is Urs Gantner, head of the research unit in the Federal Office for Agriculture (Berne) (funding agency of Swiss agricultural research) and in the Managing Board is Urs Niggli (FiBL).

Organic Farming has been a topic in **3 Interreg** programs between France (Region of Alsace), Germany (Region of Baden-Württemberg) and Switzerland (Northwestern Switzerland). In these Interreg programs, the following research themes have been addressed trans-nationally:

- Production technique and variety choice in organic fruit production (with FiBL as partner).
- Organic markets and subsidy schemes in Germany, France and Switzerland (with FiBL as partner).
- Socio-economic strategies for dairy production and forage production in hilly regions (with FiBL as partner).
- Organic production of protein crops for dairy feeding (with Agroscope FAL as partner).

Already now, there are numerous trans-national research projects, in which FiBL is a partner. This applies to the German Federal Organic Farming Scheme, where several projects are carried out by FiBL, mostly with its German sister institute FiBL Germany and together with research stations and universities in Germany.

A related activity is FiBL's involvement with the international archive **organic eprints**, an internet accessible database, which documents current organic farming research. FiBL cooperates in this project with the Danish DARCOF – who set up the database - and with the German Federal Authority for Food & Farming BLE. This database already now gives a good overview of current organic farming research in Europe and it should be substantially enlarged within the above mentioned project CORE Organic.

Collaborative research efforts related to organic farming are also happening as part of the **European research framework programmes**. FiBL involvement in the research framework research programmes 4 to 6 (total 19 projects) has been on a wide range of themes. Under the recent calls many projects related to policy, market and economical issues are being funded¹².

4) Are there areas where you think there is scope for **co-ordinating national programmes** at a European level to overcome fragmentation?

There is an excellent list of future research priorities of the organic industry developed by the IFOAM-EU group. We support the priorities set by this important stakeholder of the organic industry (comprising organic farmers, processors, traders and R&D organisations).

Particular attention on an European level should be given to:

- Soil health and link with plant health in organic and low input farming systems.
- Effectiveness and efficiency of different breeding concepts for **crops** for low input and organic systems (conventional breeding, marker-assisted breeding, participatory and site specific breeding).
- Effectiveness and efficiency of different breeding concepts for **livestock** for low input and organic systems (conventional breeding, marker-assisted breeding, QTL breeding, participatory and site specific breeding).
- Further developing of holistic concepts for livestock health.
- Psychological and sociological attitudes of consumers and different market actors in dealing with organic food.
- Food processing technology for organic foods in order to support innovations of SME
- Organic/low input farming, soil fertility and biodiversity
- Organic/low input farming and nutrient losses and recycling

5) Has your country an **Action Plan** for Organic Food and Farming?

In Switzerland, schemes supporting organic farming (as aid to conversion and as subsidies for sustaining) have been existing since 1992. Marketing support is also given to the organic industry, mainly to the farmers organizations. Research and advisory work has been supported by the Federal government and by local authorities since 1990 in a considerable way. At the moment, no further schemes such as an Organic Action Plan is under consideration.

¹² <http://www.fibl.org/forschung/eu-forschungsprojekte.php>