

Principles of organic agriculture as formulated by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

L.W.M. Luttikholt

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), Charles-de-Gaulle-Strasse 5, 53113 Bonn, Germany (e-mail: l.luttikholt@ifoam.org)

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Abstract

To address globalization challenges, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) articulated the principles of organic agriculture through a worldwide participatory stakeholder process. The process aimed to bridge the values from the pioneers of organic agriculture to the present time of globalization and to extended growth of the organic sector. As a result the principles of health, ecology, fairness and care are now worldwide considered as the basis from which organic agriculture grows and develops. IFOAM institutionalized these four principles in its own work, for example in the revision of the Organic Guarantee System. The four principles offer a perspective on how to deal with the challenges of globalization. A response to these challenges seems to be to extend and further detail the standards so that, for instance, externalities can be included. However, stricter standards may not do justice to the principle of fairness, as they potentially undermine fair access to markets. Ideal would be a situation in which a balance between the principles and standards can be realized.

Additional keywords: externalities, globalization, stakeholder process, value-based agriculture

Introduction

The organic movement has been value-based from its very beginning. In the first half of the 20th century all founders of what is now called the organic movement were concerned about the development of agriculture at that time. Different schools of organic agriculture developed. With the expansion of organic agriculture in the 1970s and the development of different standards the need was felt for more co-operation. This led to the foundation in 1972 of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) by five organic agriculture organizations from South Africa, the USA and Europe. The history of IFOAM reflects the history of the organic movement worldwide. It started as a platform for exchange; by that time its members merely sought recognition in like-minded organizations from other regions. Besides this

platform function, currently the main activities of IFOAM are maintaining its Organic Guarantee System, working on harmonization in regulations and so in trade, and advocating organic agriculture at a worldwide and intergovernmental level.

Besides the development of a worldwide, so-called 'private' certification system there are government regulation systems, like the European regulation on organic farming. In the beginning the main idea behind these regulations was the removal of any barriers to free trade. The interest was not so much in the organic values. Governments realized that organic agriculture delivered public goods such as a better environment (sustainability) and improved animal welfare and they started stimulating organic agriculture. This led to a rather rapid growth in the last decades.

Challenges and opportunities accompany the continuous growth of the organic sector. The most important challenges are commodification, externalities and distant trade (Alrøe *et al.*, 2006). Commodification refers to the transformation of non-commercial relationships into relationships of buying and selling, based on the concept of private property. Commodification becomes problematic when common goods such as water, land and biodiversity, on which organic agriculture depends – more than conventional agriculture – are brought onto the market by excluding others from the benefits of these goods. Externalities are costs and benefits resulting from the processes of production, processing and distribution that are not accounted for and that do not enter into market transactions. It often is the other side of the coin of commodification. Distant trade introduces two potential problems: transport and (lack of) transparency. Transport can be translated into negative externalities in terms of energy use. Transparency may not be done justice with distant trade, as it is easier to make produce anonymous. All a consumer can do is to determine that a product is certified as organic, but it is hard for him to figure out the background of production, or to know the farmer. On the other hand, it is exactly the process of globalization of trade that triggered tracking and tracing systems to follow produce all over the world, of which organic third party certification is an example.

Through globalization of organic agriculture, not all externalities can be transferred into market transactions. This is due to the fact that organic standards so far prescribe the production and processing method, but not the (limits to) impact on the environment, or the way the produce is packed, transported and marketed. Furthermore, topics like prices of fossil fuel, allowing dumping practices and desertification – to name a few of the world's challenges – are beyond the direct influence of the organic sector. It can be concluded that the forces of globalization offer challenges to organic agriculture. Some people in the organic agriculture movement like the pioneers working in the sector over a long time, express their unease about its globalized growth (Woodward *et al.*, 1996). They are worried that the values and motives from which the organic movement started are no longer the values of the growing movement today.

IFOAM has taken up this challenge in an attempt to bridge the values of the founders and current developments towards globalization of organic agriculture. How this is done is described in this paper, after first giving more information about IFOAM and the participatory process it instigated to formulate basic ethical principles, as a source of inspiration for the future development of organic agriculture. These principles and

the value of ecological justice in particular suggest ways to resist the negative effects of globalization without impeding further growth of the organic sector. It will be argued that the principles truly reflect internationally shared values and can be used in formal, regulatory and informal settings. Although the principles themselves cannot solve all challenges of the organic movement, they provide for a basic attitude on how to see the challenges and respond to them.

IFOAM as an organization

IFOAM was founded in 1972 and initiated the articulation of private standards on organic agriculture in the 1980s. Because of the site-specific character of organic agricultural practices and the worldwide engagement in IFOAM, the standards of IFOAM are ‘standards for standards’ and are therefore called the IFOAM Basic Standards (IBS) (Anon., 2005a). Certification bodies or farmer group co-operatives that want to adhere to the IFOAM system set their standards within the framework IBS provides. They have to apply for IFOAM accreditation at the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS), an independent non-profit organization. Once a certification body complies with IFOAM’s Basic Standards and Accreditation Criteria, it is awarded IFOAM accreditation by the IOAS. Continued compliance is assured through an annual surveillance system that includes yearly visits to the office of the certification body and, where appropriate, visits to foreign offices and operators (Anon., 2006a).

Besides implementing the private Organic Guarantee System, IFOAM influences governmental and intergovernmental standard setting processes, like the EU Regulation on organic agriculture and the ongoing revision of this regulation. Currently there are over 60 regulations on organic agriculture worldwide. IFOAM, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), took the initiative for a harmonization process to overcome trade barriers caused by differences in regulations and standards. Furthermore, IFOAM presents organic agriculture as a contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and realizing the objectives of international agreements such as the Agenda 21 of the Division of Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Over the years, IFOAM has maintained its platform function and now has 780 member organizations in more than 100 countries worldwide. Its members reflect the full breadth of the organic agricultural sector, from farmers’ co-operatives to certifiers, and from consultancy agencies to trade and consumer organizations.

To bridge the values from the pioneers to the developments in globalization and harmonization and also in its extended membership, IFOAM came to the conclusion that the basic values, the fundamental underpinning of organic agriculture, needed reflection and discussion. How can an organization claim to have articulated the values for a whole movement with such diverse membership? And how can the values be institutionalized and implemented for the organization and the movement as a whole?

Approach to articulating and institutionalizing values

From the end of 2003 until September 2005, IFOAM and its members were engaged in the articulation of the principles of organic agriculture. By the very nature of its organization, i.e., a democratic federation, the process within IFOAM was conducted in a participatory manner and not in a top-down way. The process was finalized at the federation's general assembly in September 2005, when the 'Principles of Organic Agriculture' were adopted.

Historically, IFOAM has included a list of principal aims in a preamble to the IFOAM Basic Standards, where they served as an introduction to the Standards. They were written to clarify the aims of organic agriculture and were directly connected with the standards. Over time they were changed as new chapters were introduced, e.g. standards on organic processing. The principal aims pointed at a future perspective, at the goal of organic farming, the horizon, and the reason why one becomes involved in organic farming.

In March 2003 the IFOAM World Board formulated IFOAM's mission as: "Leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. IFOAM's goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the principles of organic agriculture." IFOAM's mission statement and goal refer to the principles of organic agriculture. In order to move on from this general statement to tangible outcomes, it was necessary to enter into details as to what is meant by these principles.

To organize a truly worldwide participatory process, as many as possible different voices from inside and outside the sector must be heard, reflecting different points of view, perspectives and settings. Ideally, the persons would not only be involved in a reactive manner, but should even be deciding on the set up of the whole process. On the other hand, to be able to manage and co-ordinate such a participatory process, the group preferably should be small, so that the persons are enabled to interact and discuss detailed wording. To overcome the described potential tension between 'large and inclusive' and 'small and workable', the IFOAM world board formed a task force of 8 persons and a consultative group of over 40 persons to spearhead the review of the principles. Participants were recruited for both groups, taking into account diversity in background, region, gender and history in the organic movement.

Method, scope and purpose

To set the scope for the work, in January 2004, IFOAM's world board formulated terms of reference and a preamble and gave directions to the task force for the final result:

- An independent document, no longer *directly* connected with the IFOAM basic standards. This direction meant to increase the meaning of the principles. The application should be broader than only for standards. So the principles should be decoupled from the standards and be introduced for all organic agriculture, e.g. in informal settings, in policy making and advocacy.
- A slight change in point of view from 'principal aims' to 'principles'.

Where principal aims point at a future perspective, a horizon, the principles should reflect the basis, the ground on which organic agriculture stands. It is the starting point from which organic agriculture can develop. However, in practice the change in perspective is not as huge as theoretically described here. Respondents in the process expressed that the principles not only reflect their personal attitude, but they wish the principles to be a future perspective and vision for the world at large.

- A balance between ‘clear and short’ and ‘complete and holistic’.

The IFOAM world board wished the principles to be a short and clear description of the values of organic agriculture, easily to convey to outsiders and used for describing in a concise manner what organic agriculture is about. At the same time, the principles should do justice to all different settings, in which organic agriculture is practised worldwide, where different values are important, depending on the development of the sector and the cultural, social and economic context. The principles should not reflect one dominant view or regional perspective, but be inclusive and mirror the thoughts of the global organic movement.

With these challenging directions given, the work could begin. The task force sent out a first questionnaire to the consultative group about the purpose, function and form of the principles of organic agriculture.

The feedback resulting from the first questionnaire summarized that the principles

- are to be the foundation and framework of organic agriculture;
- will lead and unite the organic movement;
- give guidance (in standards, policies, in general) and inspiration (internally for the movement, externally for change);
- should be universal and are regionally applicable;
- should provide identity;
- should be simple and ethically normative.

Thematic areas and first articulations

A second questionnaire asked the members of the consultative group for input on ‘thematic areas’ on which the principles needed to be developed. The task force considered the input of the consultative group, grouped the input and identified the following over-all themes: ‘holistic health’, ‘livelihood – equity’, ‘biodiversity’, ‘soil’, ‘cyclical systems’, ‘animals’, ‘local markets / accessibility’, and ‘precautionary principle’.

The third round of consultations elaborated further on this and tested a first rough draft. From the eight themes that were initially identified, ‘local markets / accessibility’ and ‘biodiversity’ were not linked to a separate principle, but were considered to be a part of other principles. So six principles were articulated with first wording and were presented for feedback to the consultative group.

The task force on the review of principles of organic agriculture processed the input into a second draft. In order to be more inclusive the draft was translated into French and Spanish. This draft reduced the number of principles to four. ‘Animals’ and ‘livelihood – equity’ were both thought to be part of the more overarching principle of fairness. ‘Soil’ was considered to be a crosscutting theme and ‘cyclical systems’ was changed into ‘ecology’. This fourth round of consultation was sent out to all IFOAM

members and provided for a response time of almost two months, giving the respective member organizations the possibility to discuss the draft at their local or regional meetings. Also external stakeholders, like civil servants involved in government regulations, were invited to give feedback.

In the next step, the task force on the review of the principles of organic agriculture studied the comments and took due consideration of the suggestions. All feedback from internal and external stakeholders has been made publicly available, as well as the analysis and response of the task force.

Final draft and approval

The final recommendation for the review of the principles of organic agriculture was submitted to the IFOAM world board, and included a response to the internal and external feedback and a rationale of the task force for its recommendation. In its meeting of June 2005 the world board decided on the motion and wording for the principles of organic agriculture to be put forward to the IFOAM general assembly of September 2005 at Adelaide, Australia.

During an interactive session at the IFOAM general assembly, the so-called motion bazaar, in which more than 50 representatives of member organizations participated, 26 amendments were suggested to the world board for wording. The board considered nine of them to be an improvement of the text. Seventeen amendments that the board did not approve were voted upon, of which the two following were accepted:

To include 'food sovereignty' in the explanation of the 'Principle of Fairness'.

The notion of 'food sovereignty' expresses the right of peoples to decide on their own food systems and food values, and the right to produce their own food. This notion can be understood as a reaction to the globalized trade in basic food commodities, which often destroys local market dynamics. By amending the proposed principles with 'food sovereignty' the submitters wanted to express that organic agriculture plays a role in stabilizing local markets and positively contributes to local community development.

To include 'indigenous knowledge' in the explanation of the 'Principle of Care'.

By including 'indigenous knowledge' agricultural habits from different cultures that often have proven to be sustainable over thousands of years are respected. It adds to 'traditional knowledge' as it points to those cultures that are currently considered to be minorities and are in some cases even under threat of disappearance.

Finally, the IFOAM general assembly of September 2005 approved the amended principles of organic agriculture.

The final version of these principles is given in Appendix I. Out of respect for the intense process of formulation of these principles the wording has not been changed.

Implementation and institutionalization of the principles

Having listed the principles, the question was how to implement them. First of all, as of December 2006 IFOAM members have translated the principles into more than 10 languages through discussions within one language group (e.g. Spanish spoken in Latin America and Europe) or in a single country (e.g. Denmark). This is a very important step as we are dealing with ethical principles and not with legal principles. With ethical principles it should ideally be possible that all stakeholders involved participate in the decision-making process. Moreover, this should be an ongoing process, as the principles should be disseminated and translated for each different situation (see Discussion).

When adopting the principles of organic agriculture, the general assembly instructed the world board to articulate the definition of organic agriculture, which should be short and concise and based on the principles. Currently IFAOM is undertaking a process to come to the articulation of the definition of organic agriculture, which is expected to be ready by mid 2007 and which will be put forward for confirmation to the general assembly in June 2008.

The principles form the basis for the revision of IFOAM's private third party certification system, the Organic Guarantee System, which is a thorough revision of the IFOAM basic standards and accreditation criteria. The revision aims to write the standards less prescriptive as to make them truly basic and to transform the accreditation criteria in such a way that the IFOAM Organic Guarantee System will be more accessible to certifiers from all over the world.

In order to adhere to the call of the general assembly to not only work on standards and third party certification, IFOAM developed other systems of verification that fit informal organic agricultural systems. For instance, participatory guarantee systems (Anon., 2006b) are systems whereby the verification of the production method is done locally, through community involvement. Local marketing of organic products makes costly third party certification superfluous. However, to be able to distinguish the products from non-organically produced ones, a certain form of guarantee is needed. The guarantee system is created by the very farmers it serves, encouraging and sometimes requiring direct participation of farmers and consumers. Confidence in the history of the product is created through open information and peer reviews. Communities using participatory guarantee systems base their local rules on the principles of organic agriculture. Instead of having detailed standards and detailed systems to prove adherence to standards, farmers in a participatory guarantee system should be able to explain to the community how their way of farming complies with the principles.

IFOAM also tries to implement the principles in the current revision process of the European regulatory system. At the same time, the European Commission has financed an international research project (Organic Revision EEC 2092/91) to suggest ways in which the organic ethical values could be taken into account in European regulation of organic agriculture. The report of this research project will be issued in the beginning of 2007. The research group studied the organic values empirically in so-called focus groups (Padel, 2005) and from literature, and came to the conclusion that the four IFOAM ethical principles are a good representation of the organic value

basis. The research group has added three values that are often mentioned in focus groups and in the literature, but that are not explicitly mentioned by IFOAM, although they could be derived from these principles. These values overlap several principles: sustainability, naturalness and system thinking.

The organic concept of sustainability as formulated in the Organic Revision project comes very close to the notion of 'ecological justice' as presented by Alrøe *et al.* (2006). This notion also overlaps several of the four principles of organic agriculture. Ecological justice is about a fair distribution of all environments – good and bad, including externalities – over all living creatures on the planet. With this it recognizes that the environment has value beyond the human nature in all its abundance and diversity. This notion defines the place of human beings as interdependent of ecological systems. It broadens the Principle of Fairness to all living beings. And exactly this attitude is one of the basics in organic farming, where man and nature are considered to be an integrated whole. The wording in the IFOAM principles of organic agriculture is such that it points to the duties and responsibilities of the practitioners, from farmers to consumers, reflecting with this the attitude of all persons who voluntarily function in this production system. It is of great importance, therefore, that new converters to organic agriculture are brought into contact with these principles.

Discussion

There are several ways to mitigate the negative effects of globalization. It has been the intention of IFOAM that the four principles could play a role here. An alternative solution would be that stricter standards are formulated, either in the IFOAM Guarantee System, or in international regulations. There is a tension between these two solutions. The first gives much more freedom to the producers, but involves risks. But stricter regulation also has its disadvantages, especially for organic agriculture, which regionally can be very diverse. The ideal situation would be a good balance between ethical principles and legal regulations.

Ethical principles and the challenges of globalization

The principles of organic agriculture, more specifically ecological justice, as mentioned in the 'Principle of Fairness' (see Appendix 1), assist in facing the challenges as brought by globalization. From the examples of conventionalization of organic agriculture mentioned by De Wit & Verhoog (2007) it is clear that they conflict with all IFOAM principles in some way or other. One might expect therefore that internationalization of the principles by the organic stakeholders could help in looking for solutions in which the negative effects of these developments for the environment, for animal welfare and for those who try to work with the principles (unfair competition) could be overcome. A precondition for this 'solution' is that the deliberation about the content of the principles of organic agriculture and the way in which to apply them in specific situations should be a continuous aim within IFOAM. Formulating the principles by means of a worldwide process of consultation is the first step, but their

implementation in the whole sector is necessary for the principles to be effective. This process has to be monitored in an active way (Padel *et al.*, 2007).

A great advantage of working with ethical principles is that it gives more freedom to the organic stakeholders to develop solutions themselves. It stimulates personal creativity much more than if one has to follow strict rules. Examples are the innovations in marketing and trade, like the earlier mentioned participatory guarantee systems, the development of local markets and group certification through internal control systems (Anon., 2006c). The latter is a form of third-party certification that can be applied by farmers' cooperatives. It implies openness and willingness to share innovations even with conventional agriculture. As the preamble of the principles suggests, the principles should be seen as an example on which *all agriculture* is to be based. The organic movement cannot act as if organic production and consumption takes place in a complete separate world from the conventional one. Since the systems interact and compete, organic agriculture should present itself as a sustainable model for all agriculture and trade.

Although still under development, real life examples of the 'alternative' systems, like participatory guarantee systems can compete in practice with 'ordinary' trade, because the issues of common goods and transparency are tackled at a local level, which is a positive incentive for citizens to engage in these systems. The stimulation of local production and market systems will not replace global markets, but it can help in reducing the negative effects of globalization. Organic certification, one of the first and most trustful tracing systems, actually brings the producers and consumers closer to each other, through its mediating process that is based on trust. This can again be a source of inspiration for the global players on the market. An example is the recently developed market brand Nature and More (Anon., 2006d), which expands the system by including not only ecological considerations but also other specifications like social justice and quality of the product.

Stricter standards?

Another response to the challenges of globalization could be to extend the standards and to make them more detailed. With extending the standards, rules on externalities and distances could be included. With making standards more detailed, practitioners who operate on the 'borderline' (hardly complying with standards, not in line with the principles) can be excluded from being certified. However, dilemmas may arise here.

The more extended and detailed the standards are the higher the hurdle to put them into practice and to prove the practices as a basis for certification. Therefore chances to enter the certification and the trade system are not fairly distributed; obviously producers in so-called third-world countries face most difficulties to enter the system. As explained above, participatory guarantee systems may offer a solution in the context of local marketing; however, they do not help in entering long distant trade relations. More extended and detailed standards may exclude farmers in situations where currently organic agriculture is a development path out of poverty and food insecurity.

The more detailed the standards are the less opportunity there is for innovation and development. Detailed standards tend to be prescriptive, exactly and precisely stating

what a producer or processor should or should not do. With this there hardly is any incentive for the practitioner to find creative solutions to problems within the production systems; most likely the new solutions will not fit the detailed standards. And if a new solution is found, the regulations should be changed accordingly and in the same detailed manner. This requires a long lobby path, for which not everybody may have the energy and time. In a research project about the role of private regulation systems compared with governmental regulation Van Der Grijp (2006) found that private regulation systems like the one of IFOAM are much more flexible.

Another dilemma concerns the 'punishment', by ways of higher prices, of those citizens who base their way of living and their consumption pattern on ecological justice. Since the highest share of trade in (conventional) agricultural products is not based on ecological justice and the principle of fairness, a stricter implementation of the principles (including externalities and distance) implies greater unfairness in terms of market competition with conventional products. This again leads to disincentives for consumers who potentially might be interested in products from organic agriculture.

Some standards or rules will always be needed, preferably in the form of basic standards. At the same time, however, standards have made globalization and conventionalization of organic agriculture possible. The ideal solution, therefore, would be a situation in which a balance between principles and standards can be realized. As mentioned before, the Organic Revision project provides suggestions of how the organic principles could be integrated in European regulation, which is undergoing revision at present. Mentioning the principles somewhere in the regulation will be a great stimulus for the organic movement, particularly for new converters, to realize that the organic values are of importance.

Conclusions

Globalization in trade influences organic agriculture and is a challenge to it because it may lead to the conventionalization of organic agriculture, with negative effects on the environment, animal welfare and rural development, and thus on the image of 'organic'. Organic agriculture takes place in the real world and cannot dissociate itself from globalization. The principles of organic agriculture as formulated by IFOAM are based on a worldwide participatory process and have worldwide acceptance. They are meant to be the basis of organic practices in certified and informal settings. Furthermore, they function as a basis and direction for development of organic agriculture in a globalized world.

Development of stricter and more detailed standards might actually do no justice to the principles, as they may undermine fair competition and access to markets. Nevertheless, some standards will always be needed, even if they are minimum standards. But standards have made globalization of organic agriculture possible. The ideal solution would be a situation in which a balance can be realized between principles and standards.

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Appendix 1

Principles of Organic Agriculture

Preamble

These Principles are the roots from which organic agriculture grows and develops. They express the contribution that organic agriculture can make to the world, and a vision to improve all agriculture in a global context.

Agriculture is one of humankind's most basic activities because all people need to nourish themselves daily. History, culture and community values are embedded in agriculture. The Principles apply to agriculture in the broadest sense, including the way people tend soils, water, plants and animals in order to produce, prepare and distribute food and other goods. They concern the way people interact with living landscapes, relate to one another and shape the legacy of future generations.

The Principles of Organic Agriculture serve to inspire the organic movement in its full diversity. They guide IFOAM's development of positions, programs and standards. Furthermore, they are presented with a vision of their world-wide adoption.

Organic agriculture is based on: the principle of health, the principle of ecology, the principle of fairness, the principle of care. Each principle is articulated through a statement followed by an explanation. The principles are to be used as a whole. They are composed as ethical principles to inspire action.

Principle of Health

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

This principle points out that the health of individuals and communities cannot be separated from the health of ecosystems – healthy soils produce healthy crops that foster the health of animals and people. Health is the wholeness and integrity of living systems. It is not simply the absence of illness, but the maintenance of physical, mental, social and ecological well-being. Immunity, resilience and regeneration are key characteristics of health. The role of organic agriculture, whether in farming, processing, distribution, or consumption, is to sustain and enhance the health of ecosystems and organisms from the smallest in the soil to human beings. In particular, organic agriculture is intended to produce high quality, nutritious food that contributes to preventive health care and well-being. In view of this it should avoid the use of fertilizers, pesticides, animal drugs and food additives that may have adverse health effects.

Principle of Ecology

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

This principle roots organic agriculture within living ecological systems. It states that production is to be based on ecological processes, and recycling. Nourishment and

well-being are achieved through the ecology of the specific production environment. For example, in the case of crops this is the living soil; for animals it is the farm ecosystem; for fish and marine organisms, the aquatic environment. Organic farming, pastoral and wild harvest systems should fit the cycles and ecological balances in nature. These cycles are universal but their operation is site-specific. Organic management must be adapted to local conditions, ecology, culture and scale. Inputs should be reduced by reuse, recycling and efficient management of materials and energy in order to maintain and improve environmental quality and conserve resources. Organic agriculture should attain ecological balance through the design of farming systems, establishment of habitats and maintenance of genetic and agricultural diversity. Those who produce, process, trade, or consume organic products should protect and benefit the common environment including landscapes, climate, habitats, biodiversity, air and water.

Principle of Fairness

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

Fairness is characterized by equity, respect, justice and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and in their relations to other living beings. This principle emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties – farmers, workers, processors, distributors, traders and consumers. Organic agriculture should provide everyone involved with a good quality of life, and contribute to food sovereignty and reduction of poverty. It aims to produce a sufficient supply of good quality food and other products. This principle insists that animals should be provided with the conditions and opportunities of life that accord with their physiology, natural behaviour and well-being. Natural and environmental resources that are used for production and consumption should be managed in a way that is socially and ecologically just and should be held in trust for future generations. Fairness requires systems of production, distribution and trade that are open and equitable and account for real environmental and social costs.

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.

Organic agriculture is a living and dynamic system that responds to internal and external demands and conditions. Practitioners of organic agriculture can enhance efficiency and increase productivity, but this should not be at the risk of jeopardizing health and well-being. Consequently, new technologies need to be assessed and existing methods reviewed. Given the incomplete understanding of ecosystems and agriculture, care must be taken. This principle states that precaution and responsibility are the key concerns in management, development and technology choices in organic agriculture. Science is necessary to ensure that organic agriculture is healthy, safe and ecologically

sound. However, scientific knowledge alone is not sufficient. Practical experience, accumulated wisdom and traditional and indigenous knowledge offer valid solutions, tested by time. Organic agriculture should prevent significant risks by adopting appropriate technologies and rejecting unpredictable ones, such as genetic engineering. Decisions should reflect the values and needs of all who might be affected, through transparent and participatory processes.

Source: Anon. (2005b)