



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council conclusions on Organic Farming: Application of the regulatory framework and development of the sector

*3237th AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES Council meeting
Brussels, 13 and 14 May 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"CONSIDERING THAT:

1. Organic production and the organic foodstuffs sector in the European Union is established as a sustainable farming and production system which fulfils a dual societal role by responding to an increasing consumer demand for organic products while also delivering public goods which contribute to the protection of the environment, animal welfare and rural development.
2. Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007¹ and its implementing Regulations, Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008² and (EC) 1235/2008 constitute the legal framework on organic food and farming at EU level; and that it repeals Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91.
3. Good progress has been made in developing the organic sector and protecting consumer interests. Taking into account the experience gained from the application of the rules to date and considering the dynamic evolution of the sector, certain issues linked to the organic production method, and the need to ensure the smooth functioning of the internal market and control system make it appropriate to further improve the Union rules on organic farming.

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, OJ L 189, 20.7.2007, p.1

² Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regards to organic production, labelling and control, OJ L 250 of 18.9.2008, p.1

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4. The European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming³ was adopted by the Commission in 2004 providing a road map for the sector and the basis and justification for the policy and regulatory developments to date. The Council adopted Council Conclusions on the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming⁴ in 2004.
5. The Council in its Conclusions on the future of agricultural promotion policy⁵ encouraged the Commission to provide consumers with better access to information on the European production model and increase their level of familiarity with quality systems such as organic farming.
6. The Council is working together with the European Parliament and the Commission on the alignment of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 with the Lisbon Treaty.
7. The use of GMOs is strictly prohibited in organic production.

STRESSING THAT:

8. Article 41 of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling requires that the Commission should submit a report to the Council reviewing the experience gained from the application of this regulation (1st January 2009) and that the Commission shall, if appropriate, accompany the report with relevant proposals; the report presented to the Council on 18 June 2012 included a questionnaire to the European Parliament and the Member States.
9. This set of Conclusions builds on the issues voiced by Member States in response to a modified questionnaire prepared by the Irish Presidency; they present a political view of how the current organic production regulatory framework is functioning; how it could be made more effective and how it should evolve in the European Union; and provide a focus for policy development into the future.
10. The Commission has included in its Work Programme for 2013 the adoption of a legislative proposal reviewing the basic organic production regulation based on the discussion of the report with the European Parliament and the Council.
11. **WELCOMING** the Report⁶ from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of Council regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products adopted in 2012, which presents an analysis of the experience gained from the application of the regulation to date.

³ ST 10436/04

⁴ ST 13411/04

⁵ ST 18528/11

⁶ ST 10555/12

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12. **TAKING NOTE** of the set of five questions to the European Parliament and the Council included as an Annex in the report for the future follow-up of the regulatory framework.

**THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, in
accordance with their respective competences, to:**

13. Develop the organic farming sector at an ambitious level by reviewing the current legal framework, with a view to improving its usability while providing for a period of stability and certainty, and aiming at :
- further clarification and simplification;
 - addressing the current outstanding issues requiring further development;
 - clarifying the situation regarding protection of the use of the term 'organic' for non Annex I products;
 - providing guidance on the organic claims associated with the preparation of organic products in mass catering operations.
14. Continue to reduce to the minimum the various exceptions outlined in the regulations, while providing flexibility in the application of the production rules to accommodate the specific circumstances and stage of development of the sector at Member State level.
15. Acknowledge the work of the Expert Group on Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP) in relation to the approval, inclusion or deletion of various substances in the Annexes; and **CALLS ON** the Commission to review the current technical advice process with a view to improving its effectiveness while ensuring that the standards are not weakened.
16. Take specific measures aimed at protecting the reputation of the organic sector and meeting consumer expectations. Explore proposals for the adoption of a rigorous, proportionate, cost-efficient control regime which should include the unambiguous allocation of responsibilities between the relevant control stakeholders and a harmonised sanction regime agreed at European level.
17. Strengthen and enhance lines of communication between all control agencies and explore ways of further improving the production, presentation and rapid dissemination of relevant information, documentation and data.
18. Identify and overcome remaining obstacles in the legal framework to ensure fair competition and the proper functioning of the internal market in organic products; and **CALLS ON** the Commission to seek harmonisation in the interpretation of the regulations and implementing rules and provide guidelines where divergence may arise.
19. Encourage the Commission to improve the current mechanisms to facilitate international trade in organic products and require reciprocity and transparency in any trade agreements. Ensure that the import procedure is robust and does not put EU operators at a disadvantage.

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20. Support access for developing countries' products to EU markets where adequate guarantees can be provided that the controls are effective and the organic products meet EU requirements.
21. Enhance mechanisms for the gathering, reporting and dissemination of trade statistics and **INVITES** the Commission, in cooperation with Member States to assess the feasibility of establishing European electronic import certificates in order to facilitate and reinforce the control procedures at EU border⁷.
22. Encourage the promotion of the organic sector and increased consumption of organic produce. Take action to harmonise and guarantee application of the EU logo as a very positive measure to increase the recognition and differentiation of organic products in the market; raise public awareness and promote its use through on-line information and specific campaigns.
23. Review and update the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming to reflect the prevailing and future development of the sector and provide a vision and policy focus for the future.
24. Acknowledge the specific inclusion of organic farming in the current CAP reform proposals and consider further possibilities for providing financial support for organic production within this framework.
25. Continue to recognise and encourage the innovative dynamism and potential of the organic sector and support relevant research and innovation, in particular within the framework of the European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs)."

⁷ ST 16490/12

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