

**FORUM:** Environment Sub-Commission 2

**QUESTION OF:** International agreement on organic labeling standards

**SUBMITTED BY:** Belarus

**CO-SUBMITTERS:** Iran, Czech Republic, Greenpeace, Cyprus, Canada, Turkmenistan, Liberia, Senegal, Haiti, Sudan, Uruguay, Bulgaria, Greece, Zambia, Namibia, Morocco, Azerbaijan, The Gambia, Andorra

THE ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION,

*Recognizing* that certified organic farming is one of the most effective ways to reduce the negative environmental and health effects of chemically synthesized fertilizers, plant protection products, retardants, veterinary products, and other harmful substances,

*Realizing* that there are over 700,000 organic food manufacturers in the world and organic products account for 7% to 10% of the world's agricultural output,

*Acknowledging* that Organic Agriculture (OA) has the potential to increase the yields and incomes of farmers and manufacturers, therefore contributing to poverty reduction, environmental protection, and sustainable rural development,

*Emphasizing* that Organic Agriculture has substantially contributed to Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG1) (poverty and hunger) and MDG7 (environmental sustainability) and offers promising solutions to achieving a range of Sustainable Development Goals,

*Further recognizing* that "certified organic products" are defined as "those which have been produced, stored, processed, handled and marketed in accordance with precise technical specifications (standards) and certified as 'organic' by a certification body" by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),

*Observing* that one-third of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions could be linked to farming and food industries – production, processing, distribution, and consumption,

*Noting* the potential of organic farming policy and production in achieving zero-carbon farming by 2050,

*Noting with concern* issues regarding the harmonization of different organic certification initiatives and the weakening of the connection between the producer and the consumer in advancing transparency,

1. **Invites** countries that have not yet introduced organic certification system to do so using international organic conventions, such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission and International Basic Standards for Organic Production and Processing (IFOAM) guidelines, as minimum standards for developing national organic agriculture programmes, adjusted to the country's circumstances, needs and specific organic farming requirements, stipulated in technical codes;
2. **Calls upon** FAO to put in place coherent clarification of the standards regarding organic farming and manufacturing industry that the products have to comply with, by means such as but not limited to:
  - a) defining universally, terms such as "free-range", "cage-free", "natural" to allow consumers to make informed decisions
  - b) verifying the regulations currently in place with updated scientific research to guarantee that practice allowed are indeed environmentally sustainable according to an international agreement on organic products
  - c) creating a list of non-organic ingredients, such as harmful artificial substances, that do not comply with the definition of organic products
  - d) specifying the nature of previously unmentioned practices and make adjustments to current

standards, in order for them to become applicable to newly developed agricultural technologies,

- e) defining foods associated with religious practices such as halal meat as organic as long as they pass the environmental regulations of the organization mentioned in clause 3;
3. Asks for the merging of new labeling organisations with existing, collaborative associations which exist between national governments, industries, and NGOs, eliminating contradicting regulations to create one coordinated audit with which farmers can comply;
  4. Calls for member states to create local consultation institutions to provide producers with the necessary information for adopting organic agriculture and farming, especially in remote rural areas, including topics on such as but not limited to:
    - a) innovative technology and recent scientific research that can facilitate the efficiency of organic farming
    - b) natural methods to protect plants and animals from pests and common diseases
    - c) sustainable methods of growing plants and animals without degrading the environment, like the soil
    - d) organic certification application process and economic market prospects of organic agribusiness, as well as the service and support available in the certificate application process;
  5. Strongly urges enhancement of the transparency of framework supervision and its effectiveness in ensuring the quality of the environmentally-friendly products through all stages of the supply chain, through means such as but not limited to:
    - a) upgrading organic standards to incorporate newly risen concepts and issues from research, production model, science and technologies
    - b) distributing a yearly supervision report that analyses the implementation results and feedback from the organic certification system, identifying non-compliance
    - c) supervising all stages by specialized teams from third-party certification boards, on a regular basis, including:
      - i. the land and ingredients used for agricultural production
      - ii. storage and processing in factories;
  6. Requests the organic certification bodies to not only focus on small and easily calculated practices, but also to include promotion and recording of long-term large-scale practices like crop rotation, which are an important aspect of organic farming;
  7. Strongly recommends member states to adopt measures to make the organic certification process more accessible and appealing to small-scale farmers, in order to encourage the standardization of organic farming including measures such as but not limited to:
    - a) making certifying bodies more physically/spatially accessible in the marginalized rural regions, especially in developing countries
    - b) lowering the considerable cost of obtaining organic labeling, simplify the burdensome documentation process
    - c) promoting the combination of alternative certification systems including third-party certification, participatory certification, and non-profit certification programs according to local circumstances
    - d) encouraging groups of farmers to implement an Internal Control System (ICS) carrying out periodic inspection internally when otherwise deemed unaffordable and too administratively complex for individual farmers;
  8. Encourages further expansion of the use of cloud-based digital technology to enhance the transparency and trace-ability of organic products to reduce the chance of deception within the third-party certification system, through means such as but not limited to:

- a) allowing organic certification assessment and supply chain data to be monitored dynamically and making a real-time source of accurate certification data searchable to buyers, directly connecting the buyers with the certifiers to prevent greenwashing and deceptive sustainable advertisement
  - b) making visual and written documentation and records available for buyers to understand the production methods and trace each stage of the supply chain
  - c) creating a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section in national dialects, including information about the price lists for administration on specific control body's site
  - d) establishing a platform to allow information and data trade between control bodies, different partners and equipped specialists in order to improve transparent and effective coordination between different executive components in the processing of organic certification;
9. Suggests the creation of hazard-based assessment frameworks carried out by the FAO to identify regions with difficulties adopting organic farming in order to provide corresponding infrastructure development, capacity building, and technical assistance especially in the initial transitional phase to organic farming;
10. Endorses providing a “train-the-trainer” programme, explicitly targeting actor groups and executive teams of the organic certification body, in order to ensure the quality of inspection and technical services they gave to producers, including:
- a) offering information about international and national organic rules and regulations as well as opportunities like group certification and financial support on offer
  - b) establishing science-based professional skills for basic organic products such as:
    - i. nutrient management
    - ii. crop rotation
    - iii. pest management
  - c) providing risk management during the transition phase and long-term strategy
  - d) introducing an on-farm and hands-on experiential learning on an organic operation
  - e) outlining an organic marketing strategy and crop diversity;
11. Recommends introducing an organic certification system for a product's climate footprint to allow consumers to keep track of its climate pollution, by requiring the agricultural and industrial business to:
- a) measure all carbon emissions, including emissions from electricity for powering manufacturing facilities and machinery in the factory, and from its vendors and suppliers
  - b) reduce emissions by switching to clean and renewable energy, reducing air freight and adopting a more sustainable and environmentally friendly model of production
  - c) pay additional tax for non-compliance and receive subsidies from organic certification funds and national environmental funds for consistent compliance;
12. Strongly calls for UN budget support of economically developing countries in their measures to implement an efficient labeling system as the transition is difficult for them and represents a challenge to unify production at a national level.