

InterBioNotes

July 2010

By

Antonio Compagnoni in collaboration with Eleonora Bergoglio

With contributions from IFOAM EU

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

A different opinion by Antonio Compagnoni

BIOREGULATION

Commission withdraws wine proposal

The new EU organic logo is now in effect

Organic Aquaculture Dossier - launch of Italian version

GMOs - Freedom for Member States or Bluff Package?

BIOEVENTS

The 3rd IFOAM EU Group congress in Madrid addressed urgent challenges

The 4th IFOAM EU Group congress in Rome outlined the roadmap for further development of the Organic Regulation

IFOAM EU CAP post 2013 seminar in the European Parliament

IFOAM EU at Green Week and Bio Week

Terra Madre 2010, the meeting of Food Communities

SANA, the 22nd International Exhibition of Natural Products

BIORESEARCH

TP Organics Strategic Research Agenda

Shaping sustainable agriculture and food system - the strategic role of organic farming

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGES

The Italian Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change is born

EDITORIAL

A different opinion by Antonio Compagnoni

Back in the mid nineties I was member of the IFOAM EU board representing Italy – like now after a 10 years parenthesis in the IFOAM world board- and the issue of organic wine was one of my concern since the EU Organic Agriculture Regulation 2092/91 was explicitly excluding wine. In Italy since the very beginning of private organic rules (mid eighties) wine was covered, with – together with other specific oenological practices and products - set levels of total sulphites much below the ones of the conventional wine (if I remember well from 80 mg per liter to 120 depending of type of wine). When the new organic EU Regulation came into force, in 1993, many small and medium organic wineries, complying with the private organic standard, had to compete unfairly with newcomers – large wineries that just bought organic grapes and didn't change anything in their oenological practices and levels of sulphites. With this in mind and backed by both the IFOAM EU board and the Italian competent authority, I started working within the Commission and the Standing Committee to see what could be done to get wine covered by the EU Regulation. After some years of pressing the Organic Unit at the Commission got an official note from the Commission Legal Office stating that the competent body for regulating wine was the Wine Committee – that didn't want to get into organic wine. The powerful wine lobby stopped everything, afraid to admit that was possible to do something different and better for the consumers' health...

When I got back to the IFOAM EU board (Feb 09) I was happy to be in a very different situation: the new EU Reg. 834/07 was explicitly covering wine, there was an EU funded research project ORWINE involving organic producers from many countries, relevant EU organic research institutes and IFOAM EU, with conclusions clearly indicating the possibility to have specific and practicable rules including reductions of sulphites. But on the beginning of December 2009, just before the annual meeting with the EU Commission, I had to struggle to have the sulphite issue being on the IFOAM EU board agenda for discussion. It came out a position that – apart from 3 countries against it (A, D and NL) - was supporting the latest Commission position to keep a difference of at least 50 mg with the conventional wine levels, also with a derogation possibility left to the single Member States in case of unfavorable years.. I believe 50 mg is a practicable solution for the most of the organic wine producers (see ORWINE research). It corresponds for red wines to a reduction of about 30%, while for whites (more popular in central Europe producing countries) is about 20% less than conventional levels, for special wines that reduction gets even lower (only 7 percent less than conventional for example in *icewine*). Finally the flexibility of leaving Countries, not the Commission like in the conventional wines, can give producers a derogation if and when needed. I'm afraid of a too low or a too high difference between organic and conventional. Both options can block organic development. We need balance of different organic producers interest and the consumers interest / expectation, and the Commission position I think it is the most balanced.

Then this position was further opened by the Commission, allowing a three years possibility to still label organic grapes if producers couldn't make it. Fair enough, I personally think that this possibility could also be kept in order to have two kind of products (like in US NOP): organic wine and wine made with organic grapes.

Now discussion is still open in the IFOAM EU, and between organic associations in most of producing wine countries that are not at all satisfied by the outcome, hoping we will be able to give a positive and clear message both to the Commission to start the Regulatory process again, and to the market and consumers right expectations.

BIOREGULATION

Commission withdraws wine proposal

The European Commission withdrew its proposal for regulating organic wine-making at the EU level on 16 of June. There was no qualified majority of Member States to approve the Commission's proposal. Member States could not agree on the proposal of the level of SO₂ reduction (50mg/l) compared to conventional wine (including labeling option "wine produced from organic grapes" in case of non-compliance). Commissioner Ciolos said that he is "not willing to compromise on organic standards because it sends the wrong signal to consumers on the importance we attach to quality policy".

Whilst the IFOAM EU Group appreciates Commissioner Ciolos' commitment to organic agriculture, it considers it a missed chance that the proposal failed to reach agreement in the last minute. The IFOAM EU Group urged the Commission to follow the French compromise proposal to start with a 30mg/l reduction of SO₂ and suggested to increase the reduction level after some years of implementing a monitoring program (see IFOAM EU's letters from June 10 and June 15). The IFOAM EU Group demands that the European Commission should come back soon with a wine proposal instead of waiting for one to two years. More information at:

http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group-new/workareas/regulation/php/wine.php

The new EU organic logo is now in effect

The new EU organic logo came into effect on 1st of July 2010. The IFOAM EU Group has launched in June a dossier on the new EU organic logo: „10 Questions and Answers to the new organic production logo of the European Union". It provides information and interpretation of regulations related to the use of the logo through ten questions and answers that help to clarify the most common doubts; in addition, it shows three different examples of labeling for three different types of products and it shows extracts from the different regulations

The publication is available at: <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/positions/publications/logo>

GMOs - Freedom for Member States or Bluff Package?

The Commission is currently working on proposals to give EU Member States more rights to restrict or ban the growth of GMO on their territory. The proposals are planned to be published on 13 July. The draft proposals are under strong criticism not only by the organic sector, but also by small farmers groups, environmental groups and consumers' organizations due to their attempt of persuading Member States to become more welcoming to GMO approvals if they get the right to ban them on their territory in exchange. Moreover, the current drafts do not provide legal certainty to those Member States who want to ban GMOs. The situation of organic and GMO-free conventional farmers in member states where GMOs are grown is not sufficiently addressed. Many IFOAM EU member organizations demanded their national ministries in charge not to accept these proposals. More information at: http://www.ifoam-eu.org/media/2010/PR_IFOAMEU_GMO-NationalisationProposal_22.06.2010.pdf

Organic Aquaculture Dossier - launch of Italian version

During the 4th European Organic Congress in Rome on June 21-22 (see above), an Italian version of the IFOAM EU dossier "Organic Aquaculture. EU Regulations (EC) 834/2007, (EC) 889/2008, (EC) 710/2009. Background, Assessment, Interpretation" was launched. It follows the original English version which was launched during BioFach 2010 in Nuremberg. Earlier in the month, on June 4, the IFOAM EU expert Stefan Bergreilter, chair of the IFOAM EU Organic Aquaculture Expert Group, presented the Dossier in the European Commission, at the meeting of Working Group II

(Aquaculture) of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture. In his presentation Bergreilter also addressed the need for future revision of the Organic Aquaculture Implementing Rules. Richard Bates, DG Mare, presented the political process and scope of the rules. Maria Fladl, DG Agri, could not join the meeting but made available her presentation.

Find more documents and presentations at:

<http://www.ifoam-eu.org/positions/publications/aquaculture>

ACFA meeting -commission webpage:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/iwt/node/530>

BIOEVENTS

The 3rd IFOAM EU Group congress in Madrid addressed urgent challenges

The 3rd European Organic Congress, co-organized by the IFOAM EU Group and the Spanish Society for Organic Farming (SEAE), took place in Madrid on 7th of June to address the urgent challenges facing agriculture such as climate change and biodiversity loss, and what solutions organic agriculture can offer to combat these. The congress was attended by Spanish and EU level officials as well as experts in organic agriculture and/or national and EU agriculture policies.

More at: IFOAM EU - "Madrid congress report" and "congress photos".

For the detailed program and summaries of speeches, please visit:

www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org

The 4th IFOAM EU Group congress in Rome outlined the roadmap for further development of the Organic Regulation

The 4th European Organic Congress in Rome, organized by IFOAM EU and IAMB provided the first opportunity for over 200 participants from the EU, EFTA and Mediterranean countries to evaluate and discuss the new EU Organic Regulation 834/07 since it came into force on 1st January 2009.

The congress was organized as part of the INTERBIO project supported by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture. It highlighted several different issues, including rules for importing organic food into the EU, the needs of small farmers and operators, tools for inspection and certification, new standards for organic aquaculture, wine and processing, and complementary tools to the regulation. Congress participants agreed that it was essential to consider the role of the regulatory framework in the broader context of the need for appropriate policies to meet the challenges ahead. The potential of the whole-system, multi-targeted approach of organic food and farming must be exploited in the CAP post-2013, if the promise of public goods for public money is to be delivered. The conference called the organic movement to take more responsibility for the development of the regulation and re-gain ownership.

Find the Rome congress conclusions and more at: www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org

IFOAM EU CAP post 2013 seminar in the European Parliament

The IFOAM EU Group together with MEP Martin Häusling organized a public seminar about targets and necessary changes for the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). While the IFOAM EU Group launched its position paper "CAP post 2013- Smart change or business as usual?" at this occasion, representatives of WWF, Oxfam and the French platform PAC 2013 were invited to contribute comments and join the discussion with the MEP, parliamentary staff and other NGOs participating in the event. The paper is available at: www.ifoam-eu.org/workareas/policy/php/CAP.php

IFOAM EU at Green Week and Bio Week

IFOAM EU Group had the opportunity to present the organic principles and to highlight the

key role organic agriculture can play in applying responsible, sustainable solutions during this year's Green Week (June 1-4) and Bio Week (June 5-13). IFOAM EU was present at both events with a stand, distributing its most recent publications, and with staff, ready to provide information. Cooperating with Biofresh and Bioforum, IFOAM EU also took part in organizing organic catering in the EU institutions. More information at:

http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group-new/media/2010/PR_IFOAMEU_Green-Bio-Week_01.06.2010.pdf;

http://www.ifoam-eu.org/events/php/Green_Week_2010.php;

<http://www.greenweek2010.eu/>

SANA, the 22nd International Exhibition of Natural Products

The 22nd edition of SANA, the International Exhibition of Natural Products, will be held in Bologna from the 9th to the 12th of September in an international environment and with an eye to the Mediterranean, towards the opening of a free trade area which is soon to come. The elimination of quotas and duties will increase a fast circulation of goods and services, giving more opportunities, but also requiring more clarity on the issues to resolve. These problems will be discussed during a meeting scheduled for Friday 10, while a delegation of international buyers will be around for the four days of the fair. Furthermore, with the new operating agreement between the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, Federbio and ICE to support the internationalization of the Italian organic sector, the visit of buyers from US and South American has been planned. "Organic is coming out (with all its papers in order)" will be the theme of the show's core and the title of the conference which will present to operators and to professional organizations the regulation on the administration of organic food in restaurants, bars, cafes etc.

For more information visit the website www.sana.it

Terra Madre 2010, the international meeting of Food Communities

The fourth world meeting of Terra Madre food communities will be held in Turin (Piedmont, Italy) on October 21-25, 2010, parallel to the International Salone del Gusto. Terra Madre, launched by the Slow Food association in 2004, is a network of people that all over the world cultivate, transform, trade and cook, committed to strengthen local, traditional and sustainable production models. Terra Madre represents a different and more complex understanding of the quality of food products, taking into account environmental resources, the sensory characteristics of food products, the dignity of workers and the health of consumers.

Cultural and linguistic diversity will take center stage this year, and thus also the protection of ethnic minorities and indigenous languages, and the recognition of the value of oral traditions and memory. The opening ceremony of the 2010 meeting will include representatives of some of the most important indigenous communities in the world, speaking to the audience in their mother language. The workshops throughout the event are dedicated to a deeper engagement with various topics which are crucial for the future of agriculture and the Planet such as biodiversity, renewable energies and traditional knowledge. At the official closing ceremony a programmatic document will be presented with the proposals of the network for a sustainable future.

For more information visit the website www.terremadre.org or check the following contacts:

telephone: +39 0172 419611

e-mail: terramadre@slowfood.it

BIORESEARCH

TP Organics Strategic Research Agenda

On 9 of June TP Organics gathered representatives from the European Parliament, DG Research, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, and participants from the organic and related sectors, in order to present TP Organics' Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) for organic food and farming. Around 40 participants attended the event, which also saw, once again, strong support for the SRA's objectives on the part of a number of MEPs and Commission representatives.

More at: www.tporganics.eu

Shaping sustainable agriculture and food system - the strategic role of organic farming

The IFOAM EU Group launched its paper "Shaping Agriculture and Food Systems to Future Challenges – The Strategic Role of Organic Food and Farming". The paper outlines the strategic role of organic production systems towards the new EU Commission and the European Parliament. It is also meant to inspire discussion on national level. The paper further includes a couple of political recommendations for a coherent framework for organic farming policies.

Find the executive summary of the paper in English and Spanish. The full version will be published within days at: www.ifoam-eu.org

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGES

The Italian Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change is born

On the 7th of July the ICEA National Committee on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change has been established.

The Climate Committee has to organize the different technical and scientific expertise which are necessary to the research and development activities promoted or supported by ICEA which aim is to promote and valorize organic agriculture's potential as a strategy of mitigation and adapting to climate changing, to evaluate impacts produced by the introduction of regulations in climate changes and by national or international standards in organic agriculture, and to quantify (also through new methodologies) the balance between GHG and the carbon sequestration of the different phases of the agricultural and agro-industrial chain.

Moreover the Climate Committee will have the duty to verify, submit to the different stakeholders and to validate possible future ICEA standards relative to climate changes, contributing to the promotion and the constitution of a national table on organic agriculture and climate changes linked to the RTOACC (Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change), supporting its development and activities.

The ICEA Italian Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Changes is composed by Federbio (www.federbio.it), the Italian federation of organic agriculture representing 11 farmers associations, 10 certification bodies, retailers and supermarket chains; by the Centro Avanzi (www.avanzi.unipi.it) of the University of Pisa, specialized in agro-environmental research; by Chimica Verde (www.chimicaverde.net); and by the CURSA (www.cursa.it), a university consortium for socio-economic and environmental research. Chair of the Round Table is Lorenzo Ciccarese of ISPRA (Italian Environment National Agency) former member of IPCC, secretary is Paolo Foglia of ICEA, member of the RTOACC steering committee.

Organic sector's operators, environmentalists associations and consumers' associations, public and private research institutes from Italy which are interesting in participating to the Table activities can send their adhesion through the form available at the link:

<http://www.icea.info/tabid/57/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/357/Default.aspx>