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EkoConnect Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

Dear readers,

We can look back at a busy year: at the beginning of the year the prices for agricultural raw material from organic agriculture climbed up and reached likely unrealistic and unhealthy peaks. In addition, it was presumed that there would be a long time of lack in organic agricultural resources. In the middle of the year, the market changed, so that prices and sale opportunities cooled down again. Many people now ask how the financial crisis may influence consumer demand and thus the organic food market. As a matter of fact, we can see that in 2008 the turnover of organic food in Europe grew less strong than in the years before. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the organic food market will maintain its mean growth rate of the last years. Also organic agriculture will continue to spread in the world as the demand for organic products is linked to a steady trend of growing awareness of health and environment. More and more farmers, scientists and politicians realise the high value of organic agriculture in terms of sustainable use of resources and responsible way of food consume in the future.

The year 2009 will bring some changes in organic farming since the new EU legislation on organic products (EC) No 889/2008 will enter into force on January the 1st, 2009. You will find more information about this in this information letter. You will also find the link to the **Organic Marketing Forum** in Warsaw, where for the fourth time the important European organic processors and traders will meet on May the 25th and 26th, 2009. The registration is now open with reduced fees until the end of January 2009!

At the end of the year we would like to express our gratitude to all our partners which helped and supported us also this year in our common mission to encourage the development of organic farming. A big thank you goes also to you - dear readers of the "EkoConnect Information Letter" - for staying with us already for the fourth year of issuing our bulletin. Last but not least we have to mention and express our gratitude to our great translators which voluntarily help us by translating each of our issues to 10 languages. Thanks to their generous help readers of Infoletter are able to read the hot topics on organic farming each time in their mother language. Finally we wish you all and your families Merry Christmas full of happiness, enjoyment and peace and all the best for the coming year 2009!

Your Editorial Team,

Irena Fašalek & Anja Nowack & Bernhard Jansen

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1. +++ Poland on the good way to achieve the organic farming goals for 2013 +++

In Poland organic farming is of high politic and economic importance. According to the polish rural development programme the development of organic agriculture will provide new jobs as well as it will encourage development of rural areas and will foster environment protection. Through encouraging financial subsidies for conversion to organic production the country is on good way to reach the goal set for the year 2013 when 25,000 of farms and an area of 500,000 ha shall be certified as organic.

In 2007 the 11,887 organic farmers cultivated 285,878 ha which represents 1.8 % of the Polish agricultural area. First evaluations already show that in the year 2008 about 310,000 ha of land was cultivated under the organic control. More than half of the farms (7,385) are still in the conversion period.

About 44 % of the organic area is arable land and 51 % is grassland. Organic farmers produce mostly wheat, rye, barley, as well as oats and potatoes. Fruit production (especially cultivation of berries and apples) is also of higher importance and it covers an area of about 20,000 ha (2006). Since more than three quarters of the organic fruit area came under conversion period since 2006, most of the products will firstly be available on the organic market the upcoming year, when the conversion period will be finished. Until now, the products of animal origin is still of secondary importance, with the exception of milk and eggs. Organic beef and pork represent still less than 0.5 % of the organic food production.

Market research of the last years has shown that there is a growing interest among consumers for organic products. The main obstacle, however, is the lack of information about organic products and furthermore consumers do not always find organic products in the shops. There is also an increasing interest in organic production among the manufactories and retailers. The data from the Polish competent authority IJHARS show that in year 2007 there were 207 organic manufactories and retailers, whereas in 2005 there had been only 90. They are located mostly in the urban areas such as: Warsaw, Krakow, Poznan, and Białystok. There are about 250 small and medium organic shops in Poland such as Skarby smaku and Bliżej Natury. They have about 60 to 80 % organic products in their assortments. Besides the small organic shops, supermarkets like WSS Spółem and Piotr i Paweł have started to introduce separate shelves for organic products in their stores.

The “conversion boom” in organic farming can mostly be explained by the introduction of higher financial grants for development of organic agriculture after Poland had joined the European Union. The subsidies in the current financial period (2007-2012) vary from 67 EUR /ha (for grassland) to 395 EUR /ha (for permanent crops and berries). For arable land the farmer get paid 202 EUR/ha, for vegetables 333 EUR/ha, for other horticultural crops 167 EUR/ha, and for herbal plants the farmer gets 269 EUR/ha. During the conversion period the payments are up to 27 % higher (grassland and pasture). The following table shows the development of organic agriculture in Poland.

Key figures of organic agriculture in Poland				
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Farms	3,760	7,182 (+91%)	9,194 (+21%)	11,887 (+29%)
Manufacturers	55	90 (+64%)	163 (+81%)	207 (+23%)
Organic area (ha)	82,730	167,740 (+101%)	228,009 (+37%)	285,878 (+25%)

Source: Statistics of GHIJHARS

Authors: Anja Nowack and Bernhard Jansen

Translation: Irena Fašalek

2. +++ Romania: 33 % rise of the organic area in 2007 +++

The size of organic area in Romania has distinctly risen in 2007. According to Romanian ministry of Agriculture (MAPAM) there were 190,129 ha of land under organic control in 2007, which is an impressive 33 % more as in 2006 (143,194 ha). 31 % of this organic area is wild collection area, which grew by 44 % in 2007. The organic agricultural area has risen by 27 % and in 2007 it covered 117,273 ha which represent 2.2 % of the total Rumanian agricultural area. In 2007, the number of organic agricultural holdings was close to 4,000.

The organic plant production is mainly oriented on fodder crops and cereals. From 2006 to 2007, the area sowed with organic cereals has almost doubled to 32,222 ha. Nevertheless, the harvested yield of 65,127 t was only 34 % higher as the year before. Mostly flooding in 2006 and drought in the time of harvest have reduced the yield. Fruits and vegetables are being cultivated on a smaller scale. After the growth in 2006 the area of vegetable production has decreased back to the level of the year 2005. In 2007, organic producers produced 3,410 t of vegetables on 310 ha.

The fruit production is focused on production of drupes as fresh or dried fruit as well as berry production for frozen products. From 2006 to 2007, the area of the organic fruit production has more than doubled to 650 ha, and the production has even tripled to 1,255 t in the same period.

Of special importance are also products like honey, sunflower oil and organic milk. Production of organic meat continues to suffer from restrictive EU inspection policies and virtually nonexistent domestic consumption. The number of organic cattle even has decreased by 37 % from 9,900 to 6,265 dairy cows. As a consequence, organic dairy milk production went down by 31 % from 12.2 million kg to 8.5 million kg. The number of sheep and goats decreased from 86,180 to 78,076 animals. In contrary, the breeding of organic poultry has risen by 10 % up to 4.720 birds which laid 1,3 million eggs.

Romania is known mostly for its rich wild collection, which is with 58,728 ha (31 % of the organic area), the second biggest in Europe, after Finland. Mostly raspberries, cowberries, blueberries, sea buckthorn, blackthorn and dog rose as well as mushrooms are collected from nature. In 2007, the yield of wild collection was about 35,236 t.

According to the GAIN report, over 90 % of the organic production is exported, mostly to Germany, Greece, Italy, the UK, and to the US. Up to 70 % of the exported products are bulk commodities. Export is focused on wild fruits and plants, raw vegetable oil, grain, oil yielding plants and plants for industrial use. The Ministry of agriculture reports about 100 thousand tons of exported organic farming products in 2007. The value was said to be about 70 million Euros, which is an 40 % increase in comparison to the previous year.

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3. +++ New EU legislation on organic production will enter into force on January the 1st, 2009 +++

The Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products will enter into force on January the 1st, 2009. The new regulation includes detailed rules on production, packaging, transport, storage and control requirements of organic products and improves clarity for both organic farmers and consumers. Among others, the new legislation introduces the obligatory use of new EU organic logo. Old packages without the logo may be used until January the 1st, 2012. Products labelled as organic will have to consist of at least of 95 % of the agricultural ingredients of organic origin. The new legislation lays down also detailed rules in organic aquaculture and organic vine production. The new Commission Regulation (EC) 889/2008 with implementing rules was published in the Official Journal of the European Union (L 250 Volume 51) and is available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:250:SOM:EN:HTML>.

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4. +++ Bio Summit 2009 – How to Succeed on Growing Organic Food Market and What Chances Gastronomy Brings for Organic Food +++

The third annual Bio Summit 2009 Conference will take place next year on March 25th in Prague. The first two years opened space for discussions about the opportunities of organic food on the market and its further

development. For next year the organizers of Bio Summit, Blue Events and Green Marketing, decided to include in the conference program not only information and experience from manufacturing, marketing and retailing organic food, but also focus on the opportunities of organic food in gastronomy.

Organic food consumption has been growing rapidly during the last three years in the Czech Republic. The retailers welcome this trend and intend to offer their customers high quality organic food, ideally from local producers. Bio Summit conference will therefore include a panel discussion with leading Czech organic food manufacturers and retailers. "Together we will look for ways, how best communicate the advantages of organic food to the customers in times, when food prices rise and people start to prefer less expensive varieties," say the organisers of the event which also invite the participants to join together and taste the best of organic delicacies at an organic Gala evening after the close of the conference.

More information and on-line registration available at www.biosummit.cz or you can contact the Bio Summit office at info@BlueEvents.eu.



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5. +++ Help the European Commission to improve agricultural product quality +++

In October the European Commission has started an initiative to improve the agricultural product quality. With the publication of Green Paper the Commission challenges the citizens and organisations to give their ideas and to provoke debates on future development of geographical indications, the numerous food quality certification schemes and improvement of marketing standards for agricultural products. As stated on the European Commission web site: "The Commission believes that quality is one of the EU's strengths to compete on a global market and respond to consumer demand," therefore, as stated by Commission, "EU farmers must meet the challenges of consumer demand: providing the right product, in right quantities and of the right quality, at the right prices and global competition."

Regarding the consumer demand for organically produced foods the Commission noticed there was a steady increase in recent years with the growth in demand exceeding the growth in supply. The main challenge of the EU is to create a functioning internal market for organically produced products without losing or diluting the reputation and credibility of the organic label.

Citizens and organisations are invited to participate in Interactive Policy Making by filling out the online questionnaire of the public consultation on agricultural product quality.

The Green Paper is available in all European languages on the following web site:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/index_en.htm

The citizens and organisations are invited to contribute their opinion and advices on stated topics from October 15 until the end of December 2008. The issues about organic farming are discussed under the section 5 in the paper.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/>

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6. +++ New International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems in Denmark +++

A new International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS) has opened its doors in Denmark. In June 2008 the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries gave the Danish research centre DARCOF an international mandate with international board members from Africa, Asia, America and Europe. Danish DARCOF became a "centre without walls," and it changed its status and name to the "International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems", in short, ICROFS. As stated in the ICROFS newsletter, the centre, "aims to initiate, coordinate and monitor high quality research of international standard

in organic food and farming systems. Furthermore, the aim of ICROFS is to stimulate international and trans-national research and secure impact of the research results through support and dissemination.”

More information about ICROFS you can find at: <http://www.icrofs.org>.

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7. +++ Organic Marketing Forum 2009 – 4th International Meeting on Processing and Trade of Organic Food, Non Food and Raw Material in Warsaw on May 25th and 26th, 2009 +++

Under the motto “**Learn from each other – Develop with each other**” European business people and experts for raw material, food and non food markets will meet on May 25th- 26th, 2009 in Warsaw at the “Organic Marketing Forum”. At this international conference with accompanying exhibition in the Polish capital leading companies and experts from all parts of Europe will discuss the newest development in organic markets, exchange experiences and install new business contacts. About 450 entrepreneurs, experts and decision makers from 30 European countries will take part, which makes the Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw to one of the most important meetings for organic business in Central- and Eastern Europe.

“The national organic markets in the countries of Eastern and Western Europe show a dynamic growth. At the same time there is a remarkable increase of international collaborations. The Organic Marketing Forum offers a great opportunity to get to know these markets and their leading companies in a short time period”, says Mr. Bernhard Jansen, chairman of EkoConnect. EkoConnect – International Centre for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe e.V. organises the meeting in cooperation with the Polish organic association Ekoland, the Polish Agricultural Advisory Centre (CDR) and the Organic Retailers Association (ORA) under the patronage of the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the IFOAM EU Group. A reduced early registration fee is available until January 31st, 2009.

More information is available at www.organic-marketing-forum.org or please contact Monika.Swigon@ekoconnect.org, Tel. +49 351 456 8039

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8. +++ Dates and events +++

- 8th Trade Fair for Organic Products and Environment, Istanbul, Turkey, 15 - 18 January 2009 (www.ekoljifuari.com)
- 5th International QLIF Training and Exchange workshop; Driebergen, Netherlands, 21 - 23 January 2009 (<http://www.qlif.org/qlifnews/oct08/training09.html>)
- Scientific conference on organic agriculture Zurich, Switzerland, 11 - 13 February, 2009 (<http://www.wissenschaftstagung.de/index.html>)
- International Conference on Sustainable Production, Trade, Consumption and Lifestyle; NürnbergMesse, Nuremberg, Germany, 17 - 18 February 2009 (www.sustainability-conference.de)
- BioFach 2009, Nuremberg, Germany, 19 - 22 February 2009 (www.biofach.de)
- Biologica 2009; 2nd Exhibition of Organic Products, Thessaloniki, Greece, 5 – 7 March 2009 (<http://www.helexpo.gr/>)
- BioSummit 2009, Prague, Czech Republic, 25th March 2009, (www.biosummit.cz)
- Organic and Fair-Trade Fair „Fairena“, Munich, Germany, 27 - 29 March 2009, (www.fairena-messe.org)
- 15th Ecology Fair, Budva, Montenegro, 22 – 24 April 2009 (<http://www.adriafair.cg.yu/kalendar.asp>)
- BioFach India, Mumbai, 29 April - 1 May 2009 (<http://www5.biofach-india.com>)
- 1st Nordic Organic Conference: Focusing on food chain sustainability in Gothenburg, Sweden, 18 – 19 May 2009 (<http://nordicorganic.org/Nordic-coop.html>)

- 4th Organic Marketing Forum, Warsaw, Poland, 25 – 26 May 2009 (www.organic-marketing-forum.org)
- BioFach China, Shanghai, 27 - 29 May 2009 (www.biofach-china.com)
- International Scientific Conference “Fostering healthy food systems through organic agriculture – focus on Nordic-Baltic region” Tartu, Estonia, 25 -27 August 2009 (<http://www.njf.nu/site/seminarRedirect.asp?intSeminarID=422&p=1004>)
- Fair Nature – health, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1 – 9 October 2009 (<http://en.gr-sejem.si/>)
- 4th Annual Biocontrol Industry Meeting; Luzern, Switzerland, 19 - 20 October 2009 (<http://www.abim-lucerne.ch>)

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Best regards,
Your Editorial Team

+++ EkoConnect e.V.: Our goals, our work – and you! (Membership information) +++

EkoConnect is a not-for-profit organisation that enforces and supports the exchange of information, knowledge and experience in the field of organic agriculture. It was founded in 2003 and is based in Dresden, Germany. The organisation serves as a network for people and organisations involved with the organic sector in Western and Eastern Europe to meet and interact with each other.

Our primary focus is to **support activities and actors involved with sustainable development and organic agriculture within the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries**. EkoConnect also promotes rural development and the availability of organic products and foods in those markets. Activities include: being a centralized source of information, knowledge transfer between actors and organizations, networking opportunities and continuing education opportunities such as seminars and field trips and supports private and public facilities implementing structures for the organic agriculture. EkoConnect and its activities are overseen by an Advisory Board that guides the organization in terms of technical and strategic issues.

EkoConnect members include experts and organisations from all over Europe with years of experience in implementing organic agricultural structures. You can help support our work by becoming a **“supporting member”** or as an **“ordinary member”**. Supporting members pay an annual fee of at least 60 € for individuals and 600 € for organisations, institutions and enterprises. Ordinary members are expected to contribute actively to our work. Annual fees for ordinary members is at least 20 € for individuals and 200 € for organizations, institutions and enterprises.

We warmly welcome all new members! Please fill in the following application form and send it back to us:

Membership application at EkoConnect e.V.

I / We would like to support the work of EkoConnect and become a: supporting member
 ordinary member.

Surname:	Name:
In case of organisation, institution or enterprise, please name of the responsible representative:	
Zipcode and City:	Street and Number:
Country:	County:
Phone:	Mobile:
E-Mail-Adress:	Activity (farmer, processor, retailer, association,...)

I / We agree to pay an annual membership fee of € and will pay this amount via:

cash (enclosed) cheque (enclosed)

place, date, signature