

Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

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S E P T E M B E R 2 0 0 9

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Dear readers,

On August 8, the European Commission published the Commission Regulation (EC) no. 710/2009 of 05/08/2009 in the Official Journal of the European Communities L 204/15 that lays down detailed rules on organic aquaculture of animal and seaweed production. Implementation of the new regulation which will come into force on July 1, 2010 will foster faster development of organic aquaculture and we can therefore expect significant interest of consumers in organic fish and seaweed products in the future.

We also welcome introduction of the new logo for GMO-free products in Germany, which was introduced in the middle of August by the Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection. The introduction of the GMO-free logo is another important step in the European struggle against cultivation of GMO crops and products containing GMOs. It is not only European consumers reject the GMO food; the organic sector has been warning for years that coexistence of organic and conventional and GMO crops is simply impossible. On one hand, this will increase consumer trust and on the other it will additionally encourage conventional farmers to choose GMO-free seeds for their fields and GMOs-free feed for their animals. Therefore, the introduction of the GMO-free logo is of special significance for organic farmers and the whole organic sector.

You will find out more about these topics while reading this information letter.

We hope you enjoy reading our articles.

Irena Fašalek & Dagmar Diener & Linda Huisman



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1. Czech Republic: Czechs bought most of organic food in retail chains in 2008

Czechs bought organic food worth 52.2 million Euros in the retail chains last year (which is 18 million Euros more than in 2007), thus raising their market share by 6.5% to 74%, reports the Green Marketing Agency. The share of specialised organic and health food shops in the total turnover decreased by 4.5% to 18% last year. The appearance of their private brands at the turn of 2007/2008 was observed parallel to the growth in retail chains, says Tom Vaclavik, the author and publisher of a yearbook dedicated to the Czech organic food market.

Private retail brands make up over 30% of the organic food offered by retail chains. Tesco supermarkets have the widest offer of organic food under its brand. The Tesco Organic brand comprises 108 different items. Interspar's Natur* pur follows with 98 items. Albert Bio has 60 items, Rossmann 49 items and the Billa chain had 40 items in July 2009. In June this year, supermarkets, hypermarkets, discount outlets and chemists shops in the Czech Republic offered 1,317 organic food items. As for health and organic food stores Czechs spent 12.7 million Euros last year, 11% more than in 2007. Their turnover lagged significantly behind the growth of the whole market (40%). "Specialised shops with organic and health food failed to benefit from the enormously increased demand for organic food in the last few years. Since 2005, they have lost 19% of market turnover," says Tom Vaclavik. Last year, organic food valued at 1 million Euros was sold directly on farms and in market places. Czechs also spent 430,000 Euros on organic food in restaurants, up to 260,000 Euros year-on-year. Baked goods were the fastest-growing organic food category last year. Their sales soared by 342%. The turnover of organic fruit and vegetables increased by 61% to 4.4 million Euros. Czech manufacturers exported organic food valued at 70.5 million Euros last year, 45% more than in 2007. Exports targeted mainly Slovakia, Poland and other East European countries. As for Western Europe, exports included mainly unprocessed organic products such as cereals and beef cattle. Organic farmers earned about 5.1- 5.9 million Euros from exports of organic products last year. Czech consumers spent in total 70.5 million Euros on organic food in 2008.

The organic food market in the Czech Republic has been growing significantly for several years. The growth reached 70% in 2007 and 40% in 2008. Vaclavik ascribes slower growth last year to the global economic crisis.

Organic food made up 0.75% of food consumption in the Czech Republic last year. The number of registered organic food producers grew from 176 to 429 last year. Despite this growth, over 50% of the total turnover is still achieved through imported organic products. The number of organic farmers in the Czech Republic increased significantly in the last two years and in June 2009 there were more than 2,500 organic farmers. They worked on over 10% of the farmland in the Czech Republic in the mid 2009.

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Proofreading: Ivlieva Julia

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2. Azerbaijan: Farmers fighting desertification

Desertification causes biodiversity loss and loss of productive capacity. It is a major economic, social and environmental problem that concerns many countries in all regions of the world. In Azerbaijan, desertification and salinisation left nearly half of the agricultural land unusable. Therefore, Avalon from the Netherlands and Ganja Agribusiness Association (GABA) from Azerbaijan started a project called farmers fighting desertification in Azerbaijan.

Within the framework of the project, an activity plan for the region of Belasuvur was created to combine organic farming and nature conservation. The activity plan included the establishment of demo-plots, pits for manure handling and compost preparation, a new tree nursery, biogas installations, training courses, research study, regional meetings between local residents and project target groups as well as extension visits.

An "organic agriculture seed fund" is to be established. GABA will help farmers harvest and clean the seeds and establish a sharing system. Farmers who can not afford to buy seeds will receive a few bags of seeds and after the harvest they will have to return the double amount of seeds to the owner. There

are also opportunities for group certification and inspection of dairy and meat production plants in conversion. Training and extension to sufficient number of livestock farmers is also one of the goals of the project. A 'critical mass' of producers would be able to influence the local Bilesuvar market and/or supply sufficient milk to the local creamery so that it would be interested in the production of organic cheese. A possible project sustainability strategy also includes the establishment of an ecological pilot region in Nagorno-Karabagh. This region is one of the naturally conserved biodiversity hotspots in Europe and it would be possible to put it on the map as an interesting destination for sustainable nature and agricultural ecotourism.

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3. 2nd International Conference on the Organic Sector Development spurs co-operation in organic agriculture in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

The 2nd International Conference on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian Countries took place on September 10-11 in Tbilisi. After the first conference had been carried out successfully last year in Kiev, the Georgian capital was selected as the next venue. The conference was organised jointly by the Georgian organic farming association Elkana, the German consulting body Organic Services, the Georgian State Agrarian University and the Organic Federation of Ukraine.

After having issued a call for papers, the organisers put together a varied programme with both plenary and parallel sessions. Session topics covered a wide range of issues connected with organic production, manufacturing and sale, i.e. plant production, animal husbandry, wild collection, certification of organic products, export markets etc. With wine making traditionally being an important agricultural sector in the region, especially in Georgia and Moldova, the conference also featured a viticulture and wine-making session.

Presentations provided information on current research projects as well as reports on practical experiences concerning special organic farming issues and analyses of the situation of organic agriculture in various countries.

In the final session, the 200 conference participants from 22 different countries adopted a declaration which is to be presented to their governments. The declaration calls for a strategic development of the agricultural sector in each country, presenting organic agriculture as a solution for sustainable development, food security, rural development and market access. Therefore, the declaration calls for a systematic support of organic agriculture by the governments and a ban of GMO due to co-existence not being viable.

For more information on the conference and the conference declaration please visit the conference website <http://organicconference.elkana.org.ge/>

Author: Dagmar Diener, EkoConnect e. V.

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4. Germany: New logo “Ohne Gentechnik” (GMO-free) expected in autumn



In mid-August, the Federal Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection introduced a new logo for GMO-free products - “Ohne Gentechnik”. The introduction of the new logo will enable the identification and easier recognition of GMO-free products and should establish a higher degree of transparency of purchased food. The adoption of the new standardised logo meets the demands of consumer associations and food business sectors.

Since the beginning of 2008, the GMO-free products in Germany are marked with the words “without GMO”. But this identification has been used very hesitantly because many people thought it was incomplete. There were complaints that for animal products, a legally stipulated waiting period was to be observed after feeding genetically modified feedstuff. Additionally, there was no standard seal until then – something that made the consumers insecure.

The new logo should now close these gaps and also regulate the animal products sector more comprehensively. Detailed criteria for awarding the logo have not yet been established and detailed rules should be laid down in the following months. In organic agriculture there is a wide embargo on GMO already and therefore all organic enterprises should be entitled to use the logo. The recently established association - which will be responsible for the rules and handling of the logo – had its first meeting in September. The standards will be based on the EG-Gentechnik-Durchführungsgesetz (eGGentDurchfG) and will be controlled by the German Food Control. First labels with the new logo are expected in autumn.

German organic associations welcome the initiation of the new logo because organic food is already produced without genetic engineering anyway. Additionally, every conventional farmer who avoids genetic engineering on his field and in animal food reduces the risk of contamination of organic products. This will mitigate the problem of coexistence on the fields and will disburden cooperation between conventional and organic farmers. For more information visit: www.bmelv.de and www.transgen.de.

Author: Bernardette Meier, EkoConnect e. V.

Proofreading: Ivlieva Julia

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5. Aquaculture – Commission Regulation (EC) no. 710/2009 is published

Commission Regulation no. 710/2009 of August 5, 2009 regarding laying down detailed rules on organic aquaculture animal and seaweed production for implementing the eco-regulation 834/2007 was published in the Official Journal of the European Union. It is valid from July 1, 2010. The new regulation can be found at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:204:0015:0034:EN:PDF>

Translation: Viktorya Traut

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6. Rapunzel founder Joseph William initiated a second march against genetic engineering

The march started on June 18, 2009 in Berlin. The goal of the 3-country march from Germany via the Netherlands to Belgium was reached in Brussels after about 1000 km walk on July 30: the EU Commission.

After the last march from northern to southern Germany in 2007, the initiator started the second march this year in Berlin with about 2,000 supporters. Among the supporters were many celebrities from politics, culture and health food and natural products industry like Vandana Shiva and Louise and Percy Schmeiser. The supporters did not march against genetic engineering, but for genetic freedom in a "non-partisan, non-denominational and above-galactic way."

"The much-vaunted co-existence of conventional, organic farming and genetic engineering does not exist". If it goes the way it does now, about 170,000 jobs will be endangered, according to Joseph William.

On behalf of the silent majority of at least 72% of the population in the EU which opposes genetic engineering (in Germany there are about 80%) 35,000 signatures were symbolically handed over to Hannes Lorenzen on July 30. Lorenzen, an advisor to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the EU for the past 25 years, encouraged the supporters for their commitment to a GMO-free EU.

The actual formal act of passing the signatures to the Commission is scheduled for autumn after the EU holiday season. Until then, the "*Genfrei Gehen*" initiative can be supported with signatures and collecting the signatures. The lists of signatures are available on the website www.genfrei-gehen.de ready to download and will be collected until October 15, 2009.

Support for genetic freedom took place not only in the three countries that the march went through. In Poland, on the date of transfer in Brussels, there were marches in several cities such as in Krakow, where the march was initiated by the Polish coalition against genetic engineering.

The Polish coalition against genetic engineering as well as EkoConnect e. V. proposed to hand over the Warsaw Declaration and the "*Genfrei Gehen*" initiative to the EU Commission in autumn during the planned handover date. The Warsaw Declaration is a resolution for a genetic engineering moratorium in Europe which has been unanimously adopted by the participants of the Organic Marketing Forum 2009 from about 30 countries (www.organic-marketing-forum.org).

Author: Hans-Josef Brzukalla, EkoConnect e. V.

Translation: Viktorya Traut

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7. Future Central and Eastern European organic agricultural professionals came to Dresden to learn about organic animal husbandry

For the fifth time already, students from Central and Eastern European Universities came to the Saxonian capital city to learn about organic animal husbandry, to upgrade their knowledge about organic farming and to exchange their experience with their international colleagues. Since 2005, the annual Summer Academy on Organic Animal Breeding and Organic Animal Husbandry contributes to the education of young professionals.

From September 7 - 20, 2009 37 students and 17 experts from three German and seven Central and Eastern European Universities met in Dresden. This year, students came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine and Vietnam. Researchers and hands-on practitioners introduced the prospective agricultural engineers into the challenges and opportunities of organic animal husbandry. Lectures were all given in English. This year again, the Summer Academy was organised by the Faculty of Organic Agricultural Sciences of the University of Kassel together with EkoConnect in Dresden.

During the fourteen days of lessons, exercises and excursions to four organic farms nearby it was demonstrated how organic husbandry of dairy cows, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry could be done. Among others, students visited a biodynamic farm and got a deeper insight into the biodynamic farming approach and its principles. This year, special attention was given to the new EU regulation on Organic Farming ((EC) no. 834/2007) and ((EC) no. 889/2008). Another focus was the discussion of breeding aims for organic cattle and pigs. Other important subjects were animal health, animal feeding and nutrition as well as meat quality. Besides the technical contents, the Summer Academy gave enough space for networking and intercultural communication. "It is a very interesting and positive experience to us, to learn about organic agricultural animal husbandry in such an international environment, to visit organic farms in Germany and to be given the opportunity to listen to such experienced professors. We are certainly taking home a lot of new knowledge and fresh ideas for our future" says a student from the Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences from the University of Maribor in Slovenia which is one of the partner universities of the Summer Academy.

The project is funded by the EU ERASMUS programme and supported by Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft and Reudink Biologisch Voeders B.V. More information at:

http://www.ekoconnect.org/en_projekte_pillnitzer_sommerakademie.html

Author: Irena Fašalek, EkoConnect e. V.

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8. Percy Schmeiser: "You still have a choice"

Famous Canadian farmers Percy and Louise Schmeiser came to Europe this summer to speak again about their legal fight with genetically modified (GM) seed producer Monsanto in Canada and to support the European fight for a GMO-free continent.

The couple continues to travel around the world (especially in North America, Latin America, Africa and Europe) to warn against the introduction of GM seeds. The message from Percy and Louise Schmeiser is clear: You still have a choice; coexistence between conventional or organic crops and genetically modified crops has proven to be impossible in Canada. And the coexistence is also not possible in any other country in the world. Farmers in Canada have not been warned of the danger of introduction of the GMO, but you are warned now. Given their experiences of the last 10 years, the Schmeisers support every step towards a GMO free world. On the question whether Europe still has the chance to win the fight against GMO, Percy feels confident: "You ask whether you can avoid and stop GMO in Europe? Yes, you can."

Louise and Percy Schmeiser spoke in the Netherlands upon invitation of Avalon, Biologica and ZLTO.

More about the Monsanto vs Schmeiser story and the way Percy Schmeiser supports Anti-GMO campaigns in Europe can be found at: www.percyschmeiser.com

Author: Hans-Josef Brzukala, EkoConnect e. V.

Proofreading: Ivlieva Julia

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9. Romanian Organic Forum in October 2009 – registration now open

Bio-Romania and its cooperation partners EkoConnect, Romanian Ministry for Small and Medium Enterprises and International Trade Centre will organize the *Romanian Organic Forum* in Bucharest.

This conference will be a high level training event and business meeting for organic farmers, processors and traders. The aim of the two days meeting is to show successful marketing strategies, provide updated information and know how on the organic market and to show best practice examples on selling organic products. In addition the event will be a perfect place for Romanian and international active companies to get a good overview about the Romanian organic market and to meet the key player and

organisations. The event takes place on the 22nd and 23rd of October 2009. The program and more information is to find at www.organicforum.ro and www.ekoconnect.org .

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10. Polish Golden Cross of Merit - Warm Greetings from EkoConnect

We are pleased to announce that on September 12, 2009 during the country's organic harvest festival the Polish Golden Cross of Merit was awarded to a number of celebrities of the organic movement. Nominated by Lech Kaczynski, the President of the Republic of Poland, the following personalities have been honoured for their outstanding achievements:

Dorota Metera (Bioekspert), Prof. Józef Tyburski (University of Warmia and Mazury), Zbigniew Przybylak (publisher of EKOARKA), Urszula Cackowska-Wyrwicka (organic farmer), Jadwiga Wietrzna-Łopata (ECEAT and ICPPC), Danuta Pilarska (Ekoland), as well as Michał Leszczyc-Grabianka (editor of Radio Maryja). The latter received the Order of Poland's Renaissance.

The awards were handed over by Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski, the agricultural advisor to the President, during the harvest festival.

We congratulate all award winners, rejoice with you in the distinction you received and perceive this as recognition for the entire organic movement in Poland.

EkoConnect e. V.

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11. Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Place	Topic	Link/Contact
28.09 - 01.10.2009	Avalon Conference	Sofia, Bulgaria	Climate change, Biodiversity and ecological agriculture	www.avalon.conference.org
01.10 - 03.10.2009	Biostyl	Bratislava, Slovakia	International Trade Fair on bio products, ecology healthy life style	www.incheba.sk
04.10.2009	Bionord	Hamburg, Germany	Fair for organic trade	www.bionord.de
05.10 - 09.10.2009	Organic Marketing Seminar	Berlin, Germany	EkoConnect - Avalon - Organic Marketing Seminar for Russian speaking participants	www.ekoconnect.org
22.10 - 23.10.2009	Romanian Organic Forum (ROF)	Bucharest, Romania	Conference on organic products marketing	www.organicforum.ro
22.10 - 25.10.2009	Health life	Almaty, Kazakhstan	Trade event on the production and distribution of natural and organic products	www.life-expo.kz
05.11 - 08.11.2009	Ecofestival	Athens, Greece	Bio products	www.ecofestival.gr
16.11 - 20.11.2009	Training	Dresden, Germany	EkoConnect - Avalon - Training on organic farming for Russian speaking participants	www.ekoconnect.org
24.11 - 27.11.2009	Ingredients Russia	Moscow Russia	The Russian market for organic and natural raw materials	www.ingredients-russia.com
01.12.2009	IFOAM Congress	Brussels, Belgium	European Organic Congress on climate change, biodiversity and global food crisis in Brussels	www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org
08.02 - 12.02.2010	Nutra Bioorganic	Moscow, Russia	The first Russian trade fair on organic food	www.bioorganic.ru
17. 02 – 20. 02. 2010	BioFach	Nuremberg, Germany	World Organic Trade Fair	www.biofach.de
06.05 - 07.05.2010	5 th Organic Marketing Forum	Warsaw, Poland	International conference for European organic food, natural raw materials and merchandise trade	www.organic-marketing-forum.org

Translation: Viktorya Traut

Did you enjoy the information letter?

If yes, please be sure to recommend it to your friends and colleagues.

This information letter is a joint project of EkoConnect and the Avalon foundation and this year it replaces the "EkoConnect – Information letter on Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe" and the "Avalon Network Newsletter". If this information letter was forwarded to you and you would like to receive it directly, please send a short e-mail with the subject 'Subscribe Information Letter' to redaktion@ekoconnect.org

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter any longer, please send us an e-mail with 'Unsubscribe EkoConnect Information Letter' as a subject.

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 in the organic sector in Western and Eastern Europe in order 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 the 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 fee 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:	
Zip code and city:	Street and number:
State:	County:
Phone:	Mobile:
E-mail address:	Activity (consultancy, farmer, processing etc.)

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

cash (enclosed) cheque (enclosed)

place, date, signature