

Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

NO. 26

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Avalon

Promoting sustainable rural development in vulnerable agricultural areas

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Dear readers,

In our last Information Letter we offered you to take part in the efforts to ban GMO in Europe. The campaign, held by international organisation Avaaz, aims to get 1,000,000 signatures for the petition to ban GM foods- this campaign has proved to be thus far successful, as more than 600,000 people have already signed in support. If you still have not joined the campaign, there is still opportunity to do so; https://secure.avaaz.org/en/eu_health_and_biodiversity/?fp

In the current Info Letter we will tell you more about inspiring success of the battle against GMO in Bulgaria, which presents an excellent example of joint actions efficiency. You can also read news about successful organic market development in Slovakia, where the number of organic farms recently grew at incredible rates and where there is still great potential for further growth.

For many consumers in Central Europe, issues of climate protection, fairness and regionalism are gaining in importance. It is not enough for them anymore to buy foods which are organic, they want to purchase products with a low CO2 footprint. Read more details in our first article.

One interesting initiative described in the article Grow Your Own, explains how people are now able to rent farm land in Germany and Austria on which to grow organic vegetables - the best way to produce food of highest quality.

We are also happy to announce that Organic Marketing Forum, which took place in the beginning of May in Warsaw, gathered participants from nearly 30 countries and gained increased interest from political authorities. One of the participants, who came to Warsaw from Kazakhstan shared with us his impressions about the event and his two weeks long journey.

We hope you enjoy reading our articles.

Christoph Arndt, Katja Bykova & Linda Huisman

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EKOCONNECT
Organic Agriculture Moving East


avalon

1. Climate protection, fairness, and regionalism: Impact on organic sales?

Organic products are usually healthier. In Germany, this conclusion was drawn from a review of 52 product tests carried out between 2002 and 2010 (Stiftung Warentest, 2010). 75% of the tested organic products have been without pesticide residues, while this was true for only 16% of conventional products. Eco-Products also differ in taste, since they remain largely unadulterated and without additives. Consumers are therefore prepared to spend more money for organic products. But does this also reward values such as low carbon emissions, fairness and regionalism?



Photo: EkoConnect e.V.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation has recently shown that as a rule, organic farming is more climate-friendly. This is mainly due to its deeply reduced energy use as a consequence of doing without energy-intensive mineral nitrogen fertiliser. Another advantage lies in the ability of organic farming to sequester carbon in the form of humus. However, if organic raw materials and processed foods are transported over long distances, perhaps even by truck or plane, the CO₂ emissions of organic food products can look rather off-putting (with a high "CO₂ footprint"). Fresh, low-processed foods from within the region and in season produce a much smaller "CO₂ footprint" compared to heavily processed food items, often convenience foods such as frozen french fries. For many consumers, issues of climate protection, fairness and regionalism are gaining in importance, and many are aware of the fact that organic products are not necessarily climate friendly, are not always based on fair partnerships and do not necessarily come from producers from within the region.

Organic traders and growers' associations have responded to the expectations of consumers to receive additional benefits for environment and society from the organic food they buy. Traders and associations also use these additional benefits as unique selling points of their products, making them stick out of the flood of organic food products on the market. Consumers want to buy not just "healthy" products, but also those that are "fair" to people and the environment. In this respect "fair" more and more refers to trade inside a given country or between two developed countries: Does the local farmer receive a fair payment? Does he create jobs subject to social insurance contribution? Do the trade relations in the value chain allow for long-term planning?

There are numerous examples of "organic," "regional" and "fair" initiatives in Germany. Since February 2010 the organic growers' association Naturland offers a "Fair Certification", which covers not only organic requirements, but also social and fair-trade standards. Naturland members and partners inside Germany as well as internationally can now sell their products under the label "Naturland fair". Another initiative is the action group "Fair & Regional" under the leadership of the Demeter Association of Berlin-Brandenburg. Members who have signed a common charter agree to comply with social standards and procure at least 80% of raw materials and foods from within the region. A third example is the association BioFairVerein, which several organic food companies have joined for the campaign "Organic – Fair For All". Products available under the label of this association range from dairy products, meat, bread, eggs, fruit and vegetables to dry products.

In a consumer assessment conducted in spring 2009, 44% of the respondents declared that they buy fair trade products. For these they spent around 266 million € in 2008 – 38% more than in 2007. This shows that consumers attach more and more importance to a fair economy as well as to the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions.

More information:

www.naturland.de/fairzertifizierung.html

www.fair-regional.de; www.biofairverein.de

Author: Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.

2. Exchange visit Avalon NL: Learning and tasting ...

In April a group representatives of organic agricultural associations from countries such as Georgia, Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine, visited the Dutch/Frisian brewer 'Us Heit' (our father) and tasted this natural Frisian Beer. They learned that the beerprocessor uses a lot of organic ingredients and that in the future the process might get an organic qualification. Visitors from all over Eastern Europe were taking part in the exchange programme organised by Avalon and were visiting various organic (agricultural) companies in the Netherlands. This exchange is part of the Network Programme to promote sustainable agriculture.



Toasting for fruitful cooperation
Photo: Avalon

During this five-day trip, representatives visited companies around the Netherlands to share experiences and exchange ideas. They visited the care farm 'Ons Verlangen' nearby Amsterdam where organic farming goes hand in hand with caretaking of disabled people. Furthermore they saw the processing of organic chips, cheese and canned foods at 'FZ Organic' in Wolvega and visited 'De Eerste' in Marknesse: organic dairy, vegetable grower, farm shop and cheese making company. They also visited the organic supermarket Ekoplaza in Bussum and had a meeting at the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality about the status of organic produce in the Netherlands.

DG Environment supported this project, which aims to share knowledge and support cooperation. The first sign of success has already been seen: a Moldovan company is now preparing to get organic chips made.

Check our website www.avalon.nl for a full report about this visit (see News or Events). Interested in future invitations or special programmes? Please check our website regularly.

Author: Linda Huisman, Avalon

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3. Grow Your Own – Fresh organic vegetables throughout the season

"Self-Harvest" – this is the term used to describe suburban organic farms offering the opportunity to cultivate vegetables, herbs and flowers on the farm's land. Not only do customers enjoy fresh vegetables from their own plots, but they also experience some recreational benefits. Families, especially with children, can see how crops grow and mature, while being exposed to the principles of organic farming.



By courtesy of Regine Bruno, "Grow Your Own" Information Point Austria

Trust is good – security is better: Of course we'd like to make sure that our vegetables come from a trustworthy source, but who has got the resources to take care of one's own organic vegetable garden? The concept of self-harvesting originally comes from Austria. Readily prepared plots with many different types of vegetables,

herbs and flowers can be rented from a farm for the period May through November for a single rent payment. The vegetables are sown or planted in long rows by the farm. These rows are then transversely divided to obtain single plots with a large variety of plants each, producing fresh food throughout the season. Customers sign a contract in which they are obliged to respect organic principles in all operations and to apply neither artificial fertilisers nor pesticides. They are also bound to have some control over weeds. Any additional plantings or sowings must be of organic origin in order not to jeopardise the organic status of the plot. Farms usually provide necessary garden tools, watering points as well as professional advice (i.e. announcing the "bug of the month" or issuing seasonal recipes). The management of the plot is returned to the farm after harvesting in November for tillage and winter preparation.

According to Kassel University, a vegetable plot of 85 m² with 20-25 vegetable types can easily supply a family of four with fresh vegetables all through the season. An additional benefit for the user is the recreational value of spending time in the countryside with the family which is often combined with a

picnic in the open air. The additional benefit for the farm lies in the opportunity to sell as well other farm produce such as flowers, milk, eggs and meat.

Experience in Austria and Germany has shown that the concept of “self-harvest” is doing particularly well in the outskirts of big cities. The main target group appears to be families from the neighbouring areas. Publicity for attracting customers is often done through local newspapers, local TV, radio and public events which provide a platform to make the project known. In Cologne, the carnival procession was used by organic farms who, instead of handing out sweets, distributed seed potatoes with attached advertising messages. A well-designed and accessible internet site is equally important for success.

Please find additional information (in German language) under:

www.selbsternte.at, www.wiz.uni-kassel.de/dfh/selbsternte/weitere_standorte.html

EkoConnect organises a seminar on topics of direct marketing in organic farming. Examples of self-harvest and home delivery will be shown. The event will take place from 11 to 16 October 2010 in Dresden (Germany). Please register at the EkoConnect web site starting from July 2010. Your contact at EkoConnect is Inka Sachse (inka.sachse@ekoconnect.org)

Author: Inka Sachse, EkoConnect e.V.

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4. Avalon and SOS Children's Villages combining forces in Ghana

Avalon also works outside the Central and Eastern European borders. Since 2009 we have been developing a project in Ghana, Western Africa together with SOS Children's Villages. In this project, we combine the family and community approach of SOS with the technical organic agricultural expertise of Avalon in one comprehensive action. Our main goals are: to set up a demonstration farm, to teach schoolchildren (12-18 yrs.) about organic farming and to involve youth (18-25 yrs) in working on the farm and learning them how to make a living in farming.



Youth singing to welcome project members
Photo: Avalon

This project is financed by the Schokland Fund (programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and aims to gain long term effects. In order to improve the food security and livelihood prospects of vulnerable rural communities, this project proposes to empower rural communities to build sustainable livelihoods in food production, thus ensuring their own food security and contributing to local food production, and thereby lessening their dependency on fluctuating food prices. To this effect, vulnerable families, their children, and the youth within these communities are targeted, to mitigate the negative effects of the soaring food prices for these communities today, as well as to invest in the generation that needs to bring about the agricultural development of tomorrow.

Author: Linda Huisman, Avalon

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5. Slovakia: Explosive growth in organic farm numbers and good potential for processing

Organic farming in Slovakia is still heavily export-oriented. The sizes of the mostly arable farms have been rather large (over 600 ha in the 1990s); however, recently the number of organic farms grew explosively (on an average by 30% per year since 2004) with smaller farms emerging in the mountains. Although the lack of domestic processing opportunities is still a bottleneck in Slovakia's organic sector development, an increasing amount of processing is done inside the country.



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The development of organic farming in Slovakia began in 1991 with a group of 37 large farms converting simultaneously. The next major impulse came in the late 1990s with an increase to 50,000 ha (1998) managed by 80 companies. After the accession to the EU, the organic area increased within a few years to 144,219 ha in 2009 which is 7.5% of the agricultural and 3.4% of the arable land (Naturalis, 2009). The number of organic farms in Slovakia (463) has grown exponentially since 2004. New organic farms emerged mainly in the mountainous Eastern half of Slovakia. Many of them keep livestock, and between 2003 and 2008 the number of organic cows has been increasing by 50% annually. Today, 68% of organic farms keep organically certified livestock. While the average size of the farms in the mid-1990s was over 600 ha, it decreased to 315 ha (with 100 ha of arable land) by 2009.

The largest organic farms have several thousand hectares each, producing mainly wheat, maize, barley (also malt barley) and sunflower. In horticulture, medicinal herbs play a role (e.g. lemon balm, camomile, mint) as well as asparagus and other vegetables which are cultivated for baby food.

From its inception, organic farming in Slovakia has been mainly export-oriented. Grains, pulses, and medicinal herbs were exported unprocessed to the EU countries and Switzerland. Today the medium-sized organic oil mill Búšlak (picture) produces organic sunflower and rape seed oil, and medicinal herbs are no longer exported as raw material but processed as teabags or essential oils. However, export is still an important engine for the organic sector development. Slovakia is popular with organic processors in Europe as it produces large, homogeneous quantities due to the dominance of large farms. With only one authorised inspection body (Naturalis) the organic control and certification system is transparent. Short haulage distances to the main organic markets in Europe are another advantage of the country.

The organic sector in Slovakia has much potential to develop further. According to the Slovak agency for organic farming UKSUP, only 23% of the organic produce enters the market (the remainder being used for animal feed), of which nearly half is sold on the conventional market. While domestic demand for organic food is on the rise, organic milk is currently bottled abroad and imported back into the country. Slovak organic processors already produce various pastas and dairy products, and family-run dairy processing on mountain farms for an exigent domestic market sector is expected to mature.

Authors: Bianca Lieske, Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.

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6. Soil adjuvants – East and West learn from each other

Eastern Europe is leading the research on soil adjuvants to improve the nutrient availability in the soil, to increase the humus content and to strengthen soil life. This experience is now being used in the East and in the West.

Since the 1970s almost all Central and Eastern European universities with agricultural faculties have worked on ways to make use of soil bacteria to specifically aid farming. Research first focused on nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the nodules of legumes. In the 1980s, under the pressure of an increased fertiliser demand and a general lack of resources in the East, this research was intensified. The political changes in the early 1990s, however, interrupted these efforts. The accomplishments were at risk of falling into oblivion.

Private companies in Germany and research institutes in Central and Eastern Europe have now returned to this issue. Today there are market-ready products available not only in Eastern Europe but also in Germany, which are the result of joint research in the East and the West.

An example is the product Azobac from the company Agrel, which has been successfully used in organic farming in Russia. It is based on the bacterium *Azotobacter*, with which the universities of Budapest and Halle/Saale have been experimenting for a long time and which has brought about some impressive nitrogen fixation in the soil and a significant improvement in plant health. However, *Azotobacter* has also been found to diminish humus in the soil. A special cocktail of *Azotobacter*, *Azospirillum*, *Megatherium*, yeasts, and trace elements, which has been named Azobac, combines the fixation of nitrogen as well as the increase of available phosphate and potash now even with the formation of humus. The purely biological product is a concentrate with an application rate of 1.5 kg/ha diluted with water and applied with a field sprayer. Costs are about € 50 per hectare. Azobac is also used to accelerate straw decomposition after harvest to prevent *Fusarium*.



Photo: Ponomarenko

Other products are Biolan and Radostim of the Ukrainian company Agrobiotech as well as Agrostimulin and Humisol of the German company Agrostim. These products have largely been developed in Ukraine. Thus far they have been used primarily in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, but also in Israel and Germany. In Ukraine in particular they have been widely employed by organic farms. The question of whether any of these soil adjuvants may be used in organic operations can, however, ultimately only be answered by the respective control body of the organic farm.

For more information: www.agrel.de; www.agrostim.de; www.agrobiotech.com.ua; www.radostim.de
www.soils.wisc.edu/extension/pubs/2006noncon_with_ref.pdf

Author: Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.

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7. Bulgaria: GMOs banned for five years

Without officially declaring the country a GMO-free territory, which is not allowed by EU legislation, the new regulations in the Bulgarian GMO Act are written in such a way that there is virtually no place for growing GMO in Bulgaria.

In February 2010 the Environment and Water Committee of the Bulgarian Parliament agreed to a five-year ban on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). The ban followed a wave of protests in five different cities of the country – Sofia, Ruse, Varna, Plovdiv and Veliko Tarnovo. More than 15,000 signatures were collected supporting the petition “GM-free Bulgaria” and another 5,000 demanding a ban on the maize hybrid MON810. The Prime Minister Boiko Borisov received 2,000 postcards painted by children appealing to him to keep Bulgaria GMO-free.



Photo: Krassimir Yuskesseliev

According to the Sofia-based National Centre for Public Opinion Research, the great majority (97%) of Bulgarians think that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) should remain banned from agricultural operations. In response to public fears, Bulgaria's parliament voted to tighten an existing law on March 18th which now effectively bans cultivation of genetically-modified (GM) crops for commercial as well as scientific reasons.

The bill stipulates a distance of at least 30 km between the GMO fields and those protected under the Natura 2000 project or other natural parks. As Bulgaria is a relatively small country and this network covers almost one third of the territory, the thirty-kilometre margin between the GMO fields and the non-GMO fields in protected areas is virtually impossible to keep, which means that it is practically impossible to grow GMO in Bulgaria.

There is an explicit ban on introducing genetically modified variants of 6 crops that are strategic for Bulgaria's agriculture – these are cereals, fruit, vegetables, roses, tobacco and cotton.

The amendments also forbids growing crops approved by the European Commission such as the genetically modified potato, Amflora, developed by German chemical maker BASF, and three genetically modified maize types, made by US biotech firm Monsanto.

Under the law, fines for perpetrators were raised to up to one million levs (511,325 euros). Protesters said they were happy with the new law.

Mr. Milen Sotyanov from the Bulgarian Association Bioproducts said: “Bulgaria has committed to have 8% of all farmland covered with organic products by 2013”. So far, they are only 0.16%, but prospects are good: according to Bulgarian opposition party deputy Mr. Lyutvi Mestan, 70% of Bulgarian land is suitable for organic agriculture.

Author: Katja Bykova, EkoConnect e.V.

8. Fifth Organic Marketing Forum (OMF) in Warsaw – A Review

Like in previous years, this past May saw the Organic Marketing Forum opening its gates in Warsaw once again. With around 380 participants from nearly 30 countries, the number of visitors was stable while the number of exhibitors grew to 60. The share of Russian-speaking participants also increased. The repeated participation of both patrons – the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and IFOAM – proved how much the industry appreciates this event.

The importance of Central and Eastern Europe as a market for organic products, and also as a provider of raw materials and high-quality organic foods is growing steadily. This was underlined by the opening speeches of the patrons of the OMF, Mr. Artur Lawniczak (Deputy Minister of Agriculture) and Mr. Marco Schlüter (Director of the IFOAM EU Group). Mr. Jiri Urban (Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic) made clear that there is much work to be done in the journey of organic food from a niche industry into the minds and bellies of people.

The role of the Organic Marketing Forum in this process is that of a bridge for ideas, people, businesses, and products in the organic market sector. Today the OMF is the most important platform in Central and Eastern Europe for an exchange of experience and development of ideas on how to best implement other countries' experience in one's own circumstances. In over 20 presentations, entrepreneurs and experts described their own personal experience in building and developing the organic market in their countries – with Mr. Martin Ott, President of FiBL, being one of them.

Another report came from Burkhard Sonnenstuhl. The Bio-BreakfastBox is an initiative which he launched several years ago. The purpose is to present first graders on their first day of school with a healthy organic breakfast. For the OMF the German Bio-BreakfastBox Team sponsored 400 boxes while Polish partners provided Polish organic products, so that every visitor of the OMF received an authentic Polish Bio-BreakfastBox – as an example of an organic marketing strategy which has proved successful in Germany. Success was not long in coming: the American School in Warsaw decided to start a Bio-BreakfastBox campaign this year and UPS Poland offered the free distribution of the boxes throughout Poland. This is a very good example of how the industry can learn from each other across borders.

EkoConnect is the organiser of the OMF. Partners of the event are the Polish Association Ekoland, the Polish Advisory Service CDR, the Organic Retailers Association ORA, the Polish Association of Organic Food Producers Polska Ekologia as well as our Dutch partner in organic farming: Avalon. Without the support of the sponsors, however, the OMF could not have taken place. This year, EkoConnect is proud to welcome Polish sponsors for the first time. Polska Ekologia invited all OMF participants to excellent finger food snacks with the support of the Polish Minister of Agriculture: a powerful demonstration of the wide range of Polish organic foods.

The OMF traditionally closes with awarding the Best of Organic Awards. This year a smoothie made by Bio Food (Poland), a chocolate of Naturata (Germany) and cosmetics produced by Styx (Austria) received this prestigious award – a truly European result.

For May 2011 EkoConnect will once again invite participants to the Sixth Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw. The event will again take a focused view on the developments in the organic markets of Central and Eastern Europe. It is already certain that these markets will continue to evolve and take the role they deserve due to their substantial potential.

More information is available at www.organic-marketing-forum.org.

Authors: Hans-Josef Brzukalla, Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.



Photo: Ryszard Dziedzic

9. Riding 4000 km to join the Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw - a letter from Kazakhstan

It is well known that the Organic Marketing Forum helps to connect organic people from all over Europe. Surely the longest way was taken by our participant from Karaganda, Kazakhstan.

“To introduce myself, my name is Zhandos Aitymov and I am from Kazakhstan. For two years I’ve been working online as a volunteer for EkoConnect. This year, for the fifth time, EkoConnect organized a Forum on Organic Marketing in Warsaw and invited people from both Western and Eastern Europe. I was among the participants.



| Photo: [Zhandos Aitymov](#)

There are different ways to travel to Warsaw from Karaganda in Kazakhstan. The fastest and most convenient way is by plane but for lower budgets, the local transportation system can offer train or bus rides. The last two options take almost a week, crossing Russia and Belorussia.

My journey to the Forum started a week earlier, on the 30th of April, when I took my first train at 6 a.m. from the city where I live, Karaganda. After 12 hours I reached Petropavlovsk, where I took a regional train of the South Siberian railroad to Moscow. This railway is quite famous because it is part of the longest railway worldwide known as the Trans-Siberian. On the third day I arrived in Moscow, where I took another train. This journey took me only one day and on the next day I was in Brest, a Belarusian city on the border with Poland.

Early next morning I took a train from Brest city to Terespol, taking only about 15 minutes. After the first and final visa check on the border I was in the European Union. From there I took a direct express train to Warsaw, and in the afternoon I was in Warsaw central station.

Looking back, I can say that the Organic Marketing Forum was fantastic.

All two days were spent meeting new people and seeing new products. I met representatives of various Polish, German and Austrian companies. I assisted with translation for the head of a Ukrainian distribution company “Aster - New Life Ltd”, which is not only going to work in the field of import and export of organic products, but will also actively participate in development of the Ukrainian organic market and legislative framework.

It was an interesting programme - I had a chance to visit a few presentations and the workshop about eco-films for organic products. At the dinner on the first evening we had a chance to meet in an informal atmosphere and talk in more detail on topics we were interested in.

On the last day we had an excursion to a Polish distribution company. We could see the entire technological chain of the process: from warehouse organisation, packaging and labeling to the delivery. It was really interesting to learn how an enterprise process in the organic sector can be organised in a foreign country.

I was glad to have been on the forum. Even if the way to the forum and back took approximately two weeks, it was definitely worth coming. I met the team of EkoConnect, got to know the organic market, new organisations, products, new knowledge and new people and have been encouraged to develop these themes in Kazakhstan.

I hope to meet you all on the next OMF,

Sincerely yours,

Zhandos Aitymov

Karaganda city, Kazakhstan”

10. 3rd International conference on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries on September 17-18, 2010 in Astana, Kazakhstan

The conference series which started in Ukraine in 2008 with focus on organic policy and action plans, and proceeded in Georgia in 2009 with emphasis on organic production will continue in Kazakhstan in 2010. It will take place in Astana on September 17-18, followed by excursions on September 19-20, 2010.

This year's conference will focus on organic farming and its interactions with rural development, nature conservation, ecotourism and biodiversity.

Conference

The programme will present practical and scientific knowledge and allow exchange of experiences among practitioners in the fields of grain, rice and seed production, animal husbandry, cotton growing and wild collection. It will broaden participants' understanding on the importance of intact agro-ecosystems as well as discuss market aspects and strategies for developing local and international ties to market players.

Excursion

Following the conference, participants are invited to join a two-day excursion to the Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve and nearby farms. The wetland is home to the world's most northerly population of pink flamingos, one of over 300 species of birds there. The aim is to establish an organic farming belt around the wetlands.

Registration

The following international stakeholders, in particular from Central and Eastern Europe and Asia, are invited to participate:

- farmers, processors and traders
- environmental and rural development NGOs, regional and national government officials, farmers' and consumers associations
- organic experts like researchers, certifiers, consultants and market experts

Online registration is possible until 31st of August 2010 at www.conference.organiccenter.kz

The conference is organised by the Organic Federation of Ukraine - Ukraine, Organic Services GmbH - Germany, the Foundation of Integration of Ecological Culture (FIEC) - Kazakhstan and the Agro Eco Louis Bolk Institute – The Netherlands. For more details, please visit www.conference.organiccenter.kz

Authors: Susanne Krause, Organic Services and Jackeline Mekkes, Agro Eco Louise Bolk Institute

3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on the organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries



Gerald A. Herrmann,
Organic Services GmbH

11. Upcoming Events 2010

Date	Event	Place	Topic	Link/Contact
12.07.- 16.07.	Seminar: Organic potatoes – opportunity for Eastern Europe	Latvia, Cesis	Seminar in Russian for large farms considering converting into organic potato production: market situation, production technology, packaging	www.ekoconnect.org
17.07.- 18.07.	Oekologika	Blaubeuren, Germany	Trade and Consumer Fair for Organic, Health, Nutrition, Environmental Protection, Clean Energy and Future	www.oekologika.com
03.09.- 05.09.	4th European Seminar on AgroBiodiversity and SAVE Meeting 2010	Castle Criewen, Berlin, Germany	“AgroBiodiversity – a crucial part of Biodiversity”	www.wildpferdhege-liebenthal.de
06.09.- 19.09.	Summer Academy. Organic livestock production	Dresden, Germany	Project for agricultural students founded by ERASMUS-Program.	www.ekoconnect.org
16.09.- 18.09	GMO-Free Europe 2010	Brussels and Ghent, Belgium	At the session in the European Parliament demands to the public and to institutions in Brussels will be presented. For two days there will be retreat to Ghent for exchanging experiences, ideas and strategies, for discussing the challenges ahead and for preparing joint activities on GMOs as well as related issues.	www.gmo-free-regions.org/gmo-free-conference-2010.html
17.09.- 18.09.	3rd International Conference	Astana, Kazakhstan	Organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries	www.conference.organic-center.kz
11.10.- 16.10.	“Self-Harvest” & direct marketing	Dresden, Germany	Seminar on topics of direct marketing in organic farming. Examples of self-harvest and home delivery will be shown.	www.ekoconnect.org
15.10.- 17.10	Natura Food	Lodz, Poland	The fair will be accompanied by conferences, presentations, seminars (including the nature B2B), culinary demonstrations and competitions	www.naturafood.pl

Did you enjoy this information letter?

If yes, please be sure to recommend it to your friends and colleagues. But if you have any comments, critics or other ideas for improvement please send an email to: Linda.huisman@avalon.nl

This information letter is a joint project of EkoConnect and Avalon 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

Avalon is an international, non-profit organisation, based in the Netherlands and active in promoting organic agriculture. Avalon supports rural communities in the Central and Eastern European region and beyond in building sustainable rural societies. In this way we support nature and environment, social conditions and local economy, always in close cooperation with local organisations such as communities, farmers, governments, etc.

Avalon Network

One of our main goals is to **connect organisations, governments, universities, and associated experts by informing and discussing about organic agriculture and nature conservation**. Knowledge and capacity building as well as market and chain development play an important role in agro-environmental policy programmes. Activities include seminars, training of trainers, demonstration farms, institution development and capacity building projects.

Bringing together all stakeholders results in a vast network of more than 150 actors in the field of organic agriculture, nature conservation, biodiversity and sustainable rural development. This network links people who are active in Avalon projects with each other and with professionals on EU and international level. Avalon facilitates this network by providing communication and capacity building tools.

Membership registration

Do you want to become a **network member**? Please fill out the application form on our website (www.avalon.nl/network). Already a member? Then please invite co-workers, friends or other stakeholders to become a network member.

EkoConnect is a not-for-profit organisation based in Germany which enforces and supports the exchange of information, knowledge and experience in the field of organic agriculture. 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 supporting 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.

Membership registration

EkoConnect members include experts and organisations from all over Europe with years of experience in implementing organic agricultural structures, but also non-experts who are interested in learning or supporting the organic idea. You can help support our work by becoming a **"supporting member"** or as an **"ordinary member"**. Please fill out the application form on our website (<http://www.ekoconnect.org/membership.html>). Already a member? Then please invite co-workers, friends or other stakeholders to become a EkoConnect member



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