



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2004/2202(INI)	Procedure completed
European action plan for organic food and farming		
Subject		
3.10.09.04 Organic farming		
3.10.10 Foodstuffs, foodstuffs legislation		
Geographical area		
Bulgaria		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development		21/09/2004
		Verts/ALE AUBERT Marie-Hélène	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2611	18/10/2004

Key events			
10/06/2004	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2004)0415	Summary
18/10/2004	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
18/11/2004	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
03/02/2005	Vote in committee		Summary
11/02/2005	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0039/2005	
10/03/2005	Results of vote in Parliament		
10/03/2005	Debate in Parliament		
10/03/2005	Decision by Parliament	T6-0072/2005	Summary
10/03/2005	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2004/2202(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/6/23726

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document	COM(2004)0415	10/06/2004	EC	Summary
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES1657/2004 OJ C 157 28.06.2005, p. 0167-0172	16/12/2004	ESC	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A6-0039/2005	11/02/2005	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T6-0072/2005 OJ C 320 15.12.2005, p. 0171-0242 E	10/03/2005	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2005)1475	06/04/2005	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2005)1714/2	07/06/2005	EC	

European action plan for organic food and farming

In this Communication, the Commission intends to assess the situation and to lay down the basis for policy development in the coming years, thereby providing an overall strategic vision for organic farming's contribution to the common agricultural policy (CAP).

In designing a global policy concept for organic farming, the dual societal role of organic farming should be recognised.

1) Organic food marketing, responding to the concerns of some consumers, and should therefore be rewarded by the markets and hence be financed by the consumers. The development of organic farming will, in this respect, be governed by market rules.

2) Organic land management is known to deliver public goods, primarily environmental, but also rural development benefits and in certain respects may also result in improved animal welfare. Seen from this angle, the development of organic farming should be driven by society.

In order to ensure stable market development, there needs to be a balance between supply and demand.

The Commission analysis has shown that more emphasis should be put on facilitating the development of the market. The current market share is on average about 2% in EU-15. In order to increase this figure or even to maintain the current figure in the long run, more focus on consumer expectations is needed. Consumers need better information on the principles and objectives of organic farming as well as the positive impact on, for example, the environment. At the same time, it is important to safeguard the integrity of the inspection system.

The internal trade of organic products is hampered by the many different national and private standards and their implementation, which can make it very complicated to sell organic products in other Member States. The developing of common objectives, development of a multilateral concept of equivalence, further harmonisation of inspection requirements and more emphasis on the EU logo would help to minimise these problems.

To facilitate the expansion of organic farming, but also to increase production capacity, new information and, above all, new technologies are required. It is therefore essential to ensure the necessary research into organic farming and processing methods. At the same time, the gathering of statistical information about production and the market should be improved.

One of the objectives in the 2003 CAP reform was to promote production that supports environmentally friendly, quality products. Organic farming is an important device towards the attainment of this goal.

Organic farmers are currently entitled to receive support from the first pillar of the CAP through direct payments and price support measures. More importantly, organic farming is fully integrated in the rural development policy in the second pillar of the CAP and has a prominent place in the agri-environment measures. The 2003 CAP reform has provided a useful framework for the future development of organic farming and has made a range of instruments available to Member States.

Based on this analysis and building upon the achievements already accomplished, the main proposals in the Action Plan concentrate on:

- an information-led development of the organic food market, by increasing consumer awareness, providing more information and promotion to consumers and operators, stimulating the use of the EU logo, including on imported products, providing more transparency on different standards, and improving the availability of production, supply and demand statistics as policy and marketing tools;
- making public support for organic farming more effective by encouraging Member States to make a more coherent and greater use of the

different rural development measures, for example, by means of the national action plans, and by strengthening research on organic farming;

- improving and reinforcing of the Community's organic farming standards, import and inspection requirements by defining the basic principles of organic agriculture and thus making its public service explicit; increasing transparency and consumer confidence; by establishing an independent committee for scientific and technical advice; by a further harmonisation and reinforcement of the standards making use of international organisations; by improving standards, for example, with regard to animal welfare; by completing the standards for areas not yet covered such as aquaculture or environment-related standards such as fossil energy use, etc.; by explaining the standards laid down for the prohibition of the use of GMOs; by increasing the efficiency and transparency of the inspection system and, finally, by making import provisions more efficient.

European action plan for organic food and farming

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Marie-Hélène AUBERT (Greens/EFA, FR) on the European action plan for organic food and farming. MEPs welcomed the Commission's recognition of the important role of this type of farming in the context of achieving the objectives of the new CAP. They noted, however, that the Commission did not consider it necessary to provide human or financial resources from the EU budget. The report stressed that more needed to be done, given that organic farming makes a major contribution to the multipurpose role of European agriculture, as well as reducing pollution, protecting biodiversity and farmland and, not least, preserving or even creating jobs. These latter factors meant that the Commission should pay particular attention to the situation of organic farming in the new Member States.

MEPs insisted on the need to encourage state aid to organic farming and related industries, with quality systems being promoted. They regretted the Commission's failure to present concrete proposals on sectoral organisation, and called for support (especially financial) for the organisation of production and for processing and marketing. They also suggested that campaigns to promote organic food products should focus on public canteens, especially school canteens.

On the issue of standards and inspections, the report welcomed more advanced animal welfare standards but stressed that they should be accompanied by support for investment, as they often required costly conversions or the building of new structures. The committee was also concerned that the system of accreditation for inspection bodies should remain under the control of the Commission and the Member States. MEPs also asked the Commission what line it intended to take on coexistence between GMOs and organic crops and said that, in cases of contamination, the financial responsibility must lie entirely with those who market GMOs illegally, and certainly not with the farming industry as a whole. With regard to GMOs, they wanted the same rules to apply to Community products and imports. The report deplored the failure of the action plan to contain any specific measures to promote research, and proposed that the EU's framework programme for research should prioritise organic farming and the coexistence of organic crops with conventional crops and GMOs.

Lastly, the committee wanted the action plan to include a recommendation that development aid and fair trade should promote the production of and trade in organic products.

European action plan for organic food and farming

Parliament adopted own-initiative report by Marie-Hélène AUBERT (Greens/EFA, FR) on the European action plan for organic food and farming by 527 votes in favour, 8 against and 7 abstentions. (Please refer to the document dated 03/02/2005).

On the issue of research, Parliament suggests that in the European research framework programme, organic farming as a production method should be recognised as a priority, as should the coexistence of organic with conventional and genetically modified crops and assessment of the impact of the technologies that pose a threat to this production method, including environmentally directed research on selection, with regard to both crop species and farm animals.

Parliament stresses that the definition of organic farming must relate not only to the production method but also to a set of agricultural practices which guarantee respect for the environment and biodiversity, and enable the production of healthy, high-quality foodstuffs. Acceptance must be gained for this definition of organic farming in international fora in order to safeguard the specificity of the organic farming industry in the context of international trade.

Lastly, Parliament considers it regrettable that the Commission presents no concrete financial measures relating to the organisation of distribution channels, and calls for support, including financial support, to be given in the framework of the structuring of production, processing and marketing.