

Organic production and labelling of organic products

2014/0100(COD) - 19/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a legislative resolution by 496 votes to 124, with 50 abstentions a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on organic production and labelling of organic products, amending Regulation (EU) No XXX/XXX of the European Parliament and of the Council [Official controls Regulation] and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007.

The European Parliaments position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amended the Commission proposal as follows:

Objective: the Regulation shall establish the principles of organic production and lay down the rules governing organic production, the related certification and the use of indications referring to organic production in labelling and advertising, as well as the rules applicable to controls.

The amended text specifies that organic production shall (i) encourage short distribution channels and local production in the various areas of the Union; (ii) encourage the preservation of rare and native breeds in danger of extinction; (iii) foster the development of organic plant breeding activities in order to contribute to favourable economic perspectives of the organic sector.

General and specific principles: the amendments adopted specify that organic production shall be based, inter alia, on the following general principles:

- preserve natural landscape elements;
- produce a wide variety of high quality food products that meet consumer demand;
- ensure the integrity of organic production at all stages of production, processing and distribution of food and feed;
- restrict the use of external inputs;
- design biological processes using methods that are based on risk assessment and the use of precautionary and preventive measures;
- exclude animal cloning and ensure a high level of animal welfare.

In agricultural activities, organic production shall be based on specific principles such as:

- the use of seeds and animals with a high degree of genetic diversity, disease resistance and longevity;
- selecting plant varieties, taking into account the particularities of specific organic production systems, with emphasis on agronomic performance and disease resistance;
- choose animal breeds taking into account their genetic diversity, ability to adapt to local conditions, breeding value, longevity, vitality and resistance to disease or health problems;
- the practice of site-adapted and land-related livestock production.

Official controls: controls shall cover the verification of the application by operators of preventive and precautionary measures at each stage of production, preparation and distribution. They shall be carried out on the spot at least once a year or once every two years if no fraud has been found in the last three years.

Actions in case of non-compliance: if an inspection body suspects that an operator intends to place on the market a product which may not comply with the Regulation, when it has terms referring to organic production, it should conduct an official investigation and provisionally prohibit the placing on the market of the products concerned as organic pending the results of the investigation.

In the event of non-compliance due to the use of unauthorised products, substances or techniques or mixing with non-organic products, no reference to organic production may appear in the labelling and advertising of the final product concerned. In the event of serious, repeated or persistent non-compliance, the operator concerned may be prohibited from marketing products accompanied by a reference to organic production for a specified period or have his certificate withdrawn.

Organic production rules: after an appropriate conversion period, all agricultural holdings in the Union wishing to switch to organic production shall be fully managed in accordance with the requirements applicable to organic production.

However, the Regulation shall allow mixed farms producing both conventional and organic food would be allowed, on condition that the two farming activities are clearly and effectively separated.

When the entire holding or parts of the holding are intended to produce organic products, they should be subject to a conversion period during which they are managed under organic production rules, but cannot produce organic products. Products should only be allowed to be placed on the market as organic products once the conversion period has elapsed.

Small farmers: the Regulation introduces the concept of group of operators and provides for certification rules that take into account the needs and resource capacities of small farmers and operators.

Import of organic products: a product may only be imported from a third country for placing on the market in the EU as an organic product if certain conditions are met. In particular, the product shall comply with the equivalent production and control rules of the recognised third country and be imported accompanied by an inspection certificate confirming the conformity of the product issued by the competent authorities, control authorities or control bodies of that third country.

As regards products imported from third countries or from the outermost regions of the Union where specific local and climatic conditions exist, the Commission shall have the possibility to grant specific authorisations for the use of products and substances in organic production.

Temporary experiment: in a declaration annexed to the legislative resolution, the Commission recognises the need to define the conditions under which organic varieties suitable for organic production are developed.

For the purpose of establishing criteria for the description of the characteristics of organic varieties suitable for organic production, as well as

defining the conditions under which organic varieties suitable for organic production may be produced with a view to marketing, the Commission will organise at the latest 6 months after the date of application of the present Regulation a temporary experiment.