

Organic production and labelling of organic products

2014/0100(COD) - 30/05/2018 - Final act

PURPOSE: to revise existing EU rules on organic production and labelling of organic products.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007.

CONTENT: the new Regulation establishes modernised and uniform rules applicable throughout the EU to encourage the sustainable development of organic production. It aims to (i) ensure fair competition for farmers and operators, (ii) prevent fraud and unfair practices and (iii) improve consumer confidence in organic products and the EU organic production logo. It shall repeal Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on 31 December 2020.

Scope: the scope of organic rules shall be enlarged to cover a wider list of products (e.g. salt, cork, beeswax, maté, vine leaves, palm hearts) and additional production rules for poultry, rabbits and bees.

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

- respect for nature's systems and cycles and the sustainment and enhancement of the state of the soil, the water and the air, of the health of plants and animals, and of the balance between them;
- 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;
- exclude the use of GMOs, products produced from GMOs, and products produced by GMOs, other than veterinary medicinal products;
- 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:

- maintain and enhance soil life and natural soil fertility, soil stability, soil water retention and soil biodiversity;
- 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.

Production rules: production rules will be simplified and further harmonised by phasing out a number of exceptions and derogations. Operators shall:

- take preventive measures at every stage of production, preparation and distribution, where appropriate, to ensure the preservation of biodiversity and soil quality, to prevent and control pests and diseases and to avoid negative effects on the environment, animal health and plant health;
- take proportionate precautionary measures which are under their control to avoid contamination with products or substances that are not authorised for use in organic production.

The Regulation introduces a more uniform approach to reduce the risk of accidental contamination from pesticides.

Conversion period: 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.

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.

Certification: the Regulation provides for the notification of operators' activities to the competent authorities and a certification system to identify operators who comply with the rules governing the production and labelling of organic products. Certification shall be easier for small farmers through a new group certification system that aims to reduce certification costs and administrative burdens.

Official controls: the control system will be strengthened through stricter precautionary measures and robust risk-based controls throughout the supply chain. They shall be carried out on the spot at least once a year or once every two years if no fraud has been discovered during the last three years.

Where an operator suspects that a product it has produced, prepared, imported or has received from another operator does not comply with this Regulation, that operator shall identify and separate the product concerned; check whether the suspicion can be substantiated; not place the product concerned on the market as an organic or in-conversion product and not use it in organic production, unless the suspicion can be eliminated.

In the event of non-compliance affecting the integrity of organic or in-conversion products throughout any of the stages of production, preparation and distribution, for example as result of the use of non-authorised products, substances or techniques, or commingling with non-organic products, competent authorities, and, where appropriate, control authorities and control bodies, shall ensure that no reference is made to organic production in the labelling and advertising of the entire lot or production run concerned.

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.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 17.6.2018.

TRANSPOSITION: from 1.1.2021.