



ESTABLISHING GAME RULES, TRADE RULES AND COMPLIANCE RULES

The rapid growth of organic agriculture production and trade has been accompanied by an increase in governmental regulations. **Regulations establish rules for organic farmers and processors through standards, give credibility to certification bodies through approval and supervision, protect consumers against mislabelling and fraud through conformity and surveillance**, and eventually can facilitate trade through equivalence agreements with export countries. Regulations usually include provisions that further promote organic agriculture such as support to research, production and marketing.

competition among organic producers and to gain credibility among consumers. EU Member Nations support the Regulation with domestic legislation, creating their own inspection and certification schemes. Member Nations are required to meet the Regulation's minimum requirements, but they may enact stricter legislation.

In the last decade, many developing countries and countries in transition used Regulation 2092/91 as a model for designing their own national legislation, to assure they will meet EU import requirements and thus enhance their export opportunities.

Along with the European Union, Japan and the United States of America are the main organic markets. Japan began implementing its organic agriculture regulations in 2001, the United States of America in 2002. While similar in many respects, there are also several dissimilarities, both in coverage and substance. This means that exporting countries must be aware of the variations in specific requirements in order to access the different markets. Of course, this need to comply with several regulatory systems increases costs at the production, certification and accreditation levels.



Sampling soil of organic olive grove to test fertility

At the regional level, the European Union (EU) legislation on organic production, Regulation 2092/91, was adopted in 1991 and is amended yearly. The Regulation sets mandatory standards for organic agriculture with rules on production, labelling and inspection. The aim is to ensure fair



Control of conformity authorizations by organic certifier



Organic certifier sampling pears for pesticide residue analysis

According to a survey conducted by IFOAM in 2002, about 40 nations have completed the process of enacting their organic legislation, including detailed standards and institutional arrangements. Another 15 or so nations are in the process of developing organic legislation. Government regulations have grown steadily, but often in an uncoordinated manner. **The resulting variation in production, inspection and certification systems hinders farmers' access to regulated organic markets and the proliferation of organic labels can be confusing to consumers.**



Compliance with foreign organic standards is not always suitable to agro-ecological conditions of exporting countries. Inspection and certification costs may be out of reach for small producers. Alternative systems, more relevant to small farms and local marketing, are being developed by the private sector. Many countries have developed Internal Control Systems and in the United States of America, a Certified Naturally Grown labelling programme has been created.



Standards, inspection, certification and accreditation (or the organic guarantee system) ensure credibility. There is need for a more harmonized approach to regulate the sector, to ensure that organic rules and standards are designed and applied consistently and fairly, taking into account all stakeholders' interests. **Flexible requirements to establish equivalency among regulatory systems is the main challenge ahead for the organic agriculture community.**

FAO, together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and IFOAM are looking into ways to harmonize the organic guarantee system. FAOLEX, FAO's database on food and agriculture legislation, contains regulations and standards dealing with organic agriculture in some 30 countries and the EU, which are accessible online through the organic agriculture website.



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info: www.fao.org/organicag

FAO INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE