

## **Organic Food: New Regulation to foster the further development of Europe's organic food sector**

***European Union agriculture ministers today reached political agreement on a new regulation on organic production and labelling, which will be simpler for both farmers and consumers. The new rules set out a complete set of objectives, principles and basic rules for organic production, and include a new permanent import regime and a more consistent control regime. The use of the EU organic logo will be mandatory, but it can be accompanied by national or private logos. The place where the products were farmed has to be indicated to inform consumers. Food will only be able to carry an organic logo if at least 95 percent of the ingredients are organic. But non-organic products will be entitled to indicate organic ingredients on the ingredients list only. The use of genetically modified organisms will remain prohibited. It will now be made explicit that the general limit of 0.9 percent for the accidental presence of authorised GMOs will also apply to organic products . There will be no changes in the list of authorised substances for organic farming. The new rules also create the basis for adding rules on organic aquaculture, wine, seaweed and yeasts. In the second part of this revision exercise, and building on this new regulation, the existing strict detailed rules will be transferred from the old to the new Regulation.***

Mariann Fischer Boel, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, said: "This is an excellent agreement which will help consumers to recognize organic products throughout the EU more easily and give them assurances of precisely what they are buying. Organic food is a successful and growing market and I hope that this new set of rules will provide the framework to allow this growth to continue – through a combination of market demand and the entrepreneurship of European farmers."

The new regulation will:

- lay down more explicitly the objectives, principles and production rules for organic farming while providing flexibility to account for local conditions and stages of development,
- assure that the objectives and principles apply equally to all stages of organic livestock, aquaculture, plant and feed production as well as the production of organic foods,
- clarify the GMO rules, notably that GMO products continue to be strictly banned for use in organic production and that the general threshold of 0.9 percent accidental presence of approved GMOs applies also to organic food, ,
- close the loophole under which the unintended presence of GMOs above the 0.9 percent threshold does not currently preclude the sale of products as organic,
- render compulsory the EU logo for domestic organic products, but allow it to be accompanied by national or private logos in order to promote the "common concept" of organic production,

- not prohibit stricter private standards,
- ensure that only foods containing at least 95 percent organic ingredients can be labelled as organic,
- allow non-organic products to indicate organic ingredients on the ingredients list only,
- not include the restaurant and canteen sector, but allow Member States to regulate this sector if they wish, pending a review at EU level in 2011,
- reinforce the risk-based control approach and improve the control system by aligning it to the official EU food and feed control system applying to all foods and feeds, but maintaining specific controls used in organic production,
- set out a new, permanent import regime, allowing third countries to export to the EU market under the same or equivalent conditions as EU producers,
- require the indication of where the products were farmed, including for imported products carrying the EU-logo,
- create the basis for adding rules on organic aquaculture, wine, seaweed and yeasts,
- make no changes to the list of permitted substances in organic production, and require publication of demands for authorisation of new substances and a centralised system for deciding on exceptions,
- be the basis for the detailed rules to be transferred from the old to the new Regulation, containing among others the lists of substances, control rules and other detailed rules.

In 2005, in the European Union of 25 Member States, around 6 million hectares were either farmed organically or were being converted to organic production. This marks an increase of more than 2 per cent compared with 2004. Over the same period, the number of organic operators grew by more than 6 percent.