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**NOTE**

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from: Hungarian delegation  
to: Council

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Subject: NGO conference "Organic farming as opportunity for European agriculture  
(Gödöllő, 31 May – 1. June 2011)  
- Information from the Hungarian delegation

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Delegations will find attached an information note submitted by the Hungarian delegation, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 28 June 2011.

European Organic Congress: “Organic Farming as Opportunity for European Agriculture”  
Gödöllő, (Hungary) 31st May and 1st June 2011

The Congress took place on 31st May and 1st June in Gödöllő, Hungary delivered many opportunities for debates about the future of food and farming within the European Union, organic action plans and the development of organic markets in new member states. The congress was organised by the EU Hungarian Council Presidency in cooperation with the IFOAM EU Group and Hungarian organic sector organisations. The conference that has attracted over 300 participants, including a political panel discussion of Hungarian Minister for Rural Development, Sándor Fazekas, Paolo de Castro, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament, Dacian Cioloş, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Marek Sawicki, Polish Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development joining the conference directly after the informal Council meeting in Debrecen. The conference concluded the great benefit organic food and farming can bring to European Agriculture and that it has to play a central role within the new CAP.

On the event, the Hungarian Minister for Rural Development, **Sándor Fazekas**, host of the event and currently chairman of the Council of EU farm ministers, stated on the policy leaders panel that organic production is an environmentally sound farming system which provides opportunities for rural development and delivers income for rural inhabitants in a way that takes the diversity of the European farming landscape into account. Policy has to set clear legal frameworks and support schemes to encourage the development of this top-level sustainable sector. The rural development pillar of the CAP may play a major role in the growth of organic farming. During the conference we could hear of several encouraging measures: member states have created comprehensive national organic action plans, promoted organic food in public canteens, launched information campaigns, training programmes and have considered organic farming in school and university curriculums. Such measures are effective tools to push for sustainable food production and consumption.”

**Paolo de Castro**, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament, emphasised in his speech the rapid development of the organic sector over the past 20 years. In Europe, currently more than nine million hectares are managed organically by more than 260'000 producers, being pioneers in food quality and sustainability. He also stressed the need for the CAP as well as for European Quality and research policies to create spaces for the further development of organic farming.

**Dacian Cioloș**, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, acknowledged that organic farmers are dedicated to work in respect of natural resources' capacity to regenerate. He moreover stressed that organic farmers are on average younger (only 36% of organic farmers are over 55, compared to 56% for conventional farmers) and have built a relationship based on trust with Europeans. For the CAP reform, he said that measures to support the uptake and maintenance of organic farming under the second pillar will be maintained, possibly reinforced, to recognise the sustainable character of this farming method. He underlined that the Commission will provide the necessary tools to support organic farming, but that the political decision making has still a way to go on both EU and national level; he encouraged participants to be active in this political process. He further outlined the concept of "innovation partnerships" that would be also a possibility for organic production.

**Marek Sawicki**, Polish Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, gave an outlook on the Polish Presidency and the upcoming CAP 2014-2020 decision making process. Mentioning that his son was about to convert the family farm to organic, he underlined that the new CAP should be based on fairness and solidarity, the historical reference for payments needs to end and support must be targeted to active farmers mainly.

The President of the IFOAM EU Group, **Christopher Stopes**, concluded: "To face the future challenges, we clearly need to raise awareness that change of consumption patterns matter. But, we urgently need clear commitments from policy makers to encourage the growth and further development of truly sustainable food systems, with organic food and farming as a leading model. The CAP reform is an acid test for policy makers on how far they will commit to making significant steps towards a farm policy that meets the climate, biodiversity and resource scarcity challenges. With a view to the encouraging discussions at this congress, I believe that a broad civil society movement will keep a sharp eye on the ongoing CAP negotiations, demanding that taxpayers' money will be spent for societal and environmental benefits."

**Olivier de Schutter**, UN special rapporteur on the right for food, underlined in his video-message for the congress that agro-ecological farm systems play an important role for future food security on global level, therefore investments in these systems, especially regarding training and knowledge exchange, are necessary. The EU's role is not to "feed the world", but to cease the CAP's negative impact on food markets in developing countries.

The participants discussed and concluded during the conference the following issues:

***Organic farming as engine for rural economies in new member states***

One problem in new member states is often the disconnection of the organic production and the domestic market. Organic farming must be made an important policy issue on national level, seeking cooperation with other civil society organisations. Tax systems and subsidies must clearly support farms that avoid causing external environmental costs. The diversity of farms suitable for organic farming was underlined, as well as the need to invest in social and educational projects related to organic farming and organic food in mass catering. Also non-certified organic farms should be involved in knowledge exchange about best practices, access to organic knowledge and certification should be facilitated. “Debt traps” for farmers must be addressed, to find solutions for building up ecologically and economically sustainable farms.

***The future CAP – Organic farming as an instrument for quality and sustainability’***

The future CAP should clearly leads to re-directing farming to sustainability. More concrete references throughout the whole CAP should be made on organic farming as sustainable system approach. The Greening of the 1st pillar is supported but it must be made clear that this does not lead to loosing value and the significance of support for environmental measures under the 2nd pillar. Higher rates of co-financing for some agro-environmental schemes providing for a high level of public goods and services as well as mandatory schemes for system approaches such as organic farming should guarantee that organic farming is supported in all member states, whereas all CAP measures should support sustainability – in order to avoid investment support in unsustainable systems. Food quality must be another focal point in the CAP, whereas clear certification schemes and the consideration of sustainability should also part of these schemes. It was underlined that a broad societal consensus is necessary to make this CAP reform a significant step towards sustainable food systems – and that we must involve a broad range of civil society by making our demands easily understandable.

***A consistent policy framework for organic food and farming on national and EU level’***

The need for consistent policies on all levels to support the development of organic farming was addressed. The Commission works on an evaluation of the application of regulation 834/2007 on organic food and farming and reviews the success of the European Organic Action plan. The potential of national organic actions plans were discussed at the example of Scotland and Czech Republic, highlighting the need for involvement of different stakeholders and continuous evaluation followed by policy adjustment. The potential of EU food promotion programme to support the development of the organic food market was described, whereas a need to facilitate access to this programme for organic farmers associations especially for small structures and new member states has been brought up. The CAP will continue to play an important role in the development of organic farming, and the need to integrate support schemes and different other policies was emphasised. The CAP will be a key policy for the future development of farming in the EU and a significant shift of CAP funding towards the delivery of public goods was suggested. Organic farming should be part of agro-environment policy and because of the multitude of environmental services delivered in only one measure.

## **Future of food and farming**

Participants discussed future of food and farming.

- local supply chains can have benefits for both the farmer's income and the consumer's budget. Whereas the percentage of organic farms involved in local marketing is significantly higher compared to the overall percentage of organic farms compared to conventional ones.
- Whereas broad agreement could be found on the future challenges to food systems outlined by professor Olesen, the consequences in terms of future sources to replace fossil energy remained in a "constructive dissent". However, it was clearly stated that the organic sector as a progressive movement is ready to face future challenges, finding responses to upcoming consumer demands such as farming without fossil fuels and fair working conditions. Organic farming as a knowledge based approach, integrating innovation and traditional methods, must play a key role in the future of food systems.
- The importance of organic farming as low input, sustainable farm system was underlined and that organic and conventional (GMO-free) farmers must be protected against any contamination with GMOs in order to be economically viable and explained that Hungary has decided to prohibit GMO cultivation.

Christopher Stopes, President of the IFOAM EU Group, thanked participants and all those involved in the organisation of the event. Moreover he encouraged to get involved in politics on EU, national and regional level to support the development of policy frameworks that promote organic farming. Involvement in broader civil society networks to reach more citizens and to increase political pressure is crucial. Therefore he mentioned the involvement of the IFOAM EU Group in the ARC 2020 platform that will hold a conference on the future CAP on 13 July in Brussels.

### **For further information, please see:**

Congress Team, IFOAM EU Group: [http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/5th\\_Congress\\_Hungary.aspx](http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/5th_Congress_Hungary.aspx)