

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ROMANIA AND EUROPEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR ORGANIC MARKETS (EISFOM)

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The year of 1990 when in Germany was organized the first exhibition fair BIOFACH, - is considered to be a milestone in forming and developing a international market for ecological products, the year of 1991 registering the issue of the first legislation document in this field- the EU 2092 Regulation, concerning the principles of ecological production. The markets only validate the big expectations of the ecological agriculture. In order to assess the realities of the ecological agricultural markets is necessary that the information to be gathered transformed and disseminated through unitary methodologies. This work is trying to point out the most important existing aspects in European Union and to draw a conclusion through the existing proposals, to be also applied in Romania. Not existing to the European level a classification system and standardized normative to collect the data concerning the prices (the number of farmers, processors, traders and consumers), this process should be conceived in tightly relation with Eurostat, in order to establish some classification systems accepted by all European countries in order to deliver pertinent data/information. The importance of connecting Romania to the European Informational System of Ecological Agriculture, should assure the decisions' responsibility and consequences to be taken by producers, consumers, business and political environment. The quality of information should lead to correct decisions taking, and to the proper functioning of markets. Not accurate information cannot assure neither the development of small business for the ecological products and for the traders.

Keywords: *organic agriculture, Romania, Europe, information system.*

European markets for organic products are growing rapidly, but the market information available in most European countries is woefully inadequate. Often only very basic data such as certified organic holdings and land area are reported, and sometimes not even individual crop areas or livestock numbers. Important market data, such as the amount of production, consumption, international trade or producer and consumer prices, do not exist in most European countries. In some European countries there are only rough estimates of the levels of production and consumption.

There is no standardization and data are seldom comparable. Furthermore, detailed information on specific commodities is missing. Hence, investment decisions are taken under conditions of great uncertainty. Policy evaluation,

including periodic monitoring of the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming and RDP 2007-2013, will require many other data in addition to those regarding production structures and financial data that are already available, but obtaining this information would require a new EU-wide data collection and processing system (DCPS) to be put in place.

The European Information System for Organic Markets (EISfOM) project is an EU-funded Concerted Action which has analyzed and documented the current situation and proposed ways in which organic data collection and processing systems (DCPS) can be improved by means of:

- improvement in the current situation of data collecting and processing systems for the organic sector
- innovation in data collection and processing systems for the organic sector
- integration of conventional and organic data collection and processing systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are two different approaches that could be used to improve coordination and enhance current data availability and quality. The first option would be to establish a European Advisory Group consisting of Commission, Member State and external experts, including researchers and stakeholders, to advise DG Agri and Eurostat on data collection issues. This option would require fewer resources to set up, but will not itself provide the basis for implementing the necessary changes as the main harmonization and improvement of data availability would need to be carried out by staff within Eurostat and DG Agri, requiring additional resources within the Commission. The second possibility involves the establishment of a European organic data network or observatory to act as a coordinating center between Eurostat and the official statistical agencies on the one hand, and stakeholders and other data providers on the other.

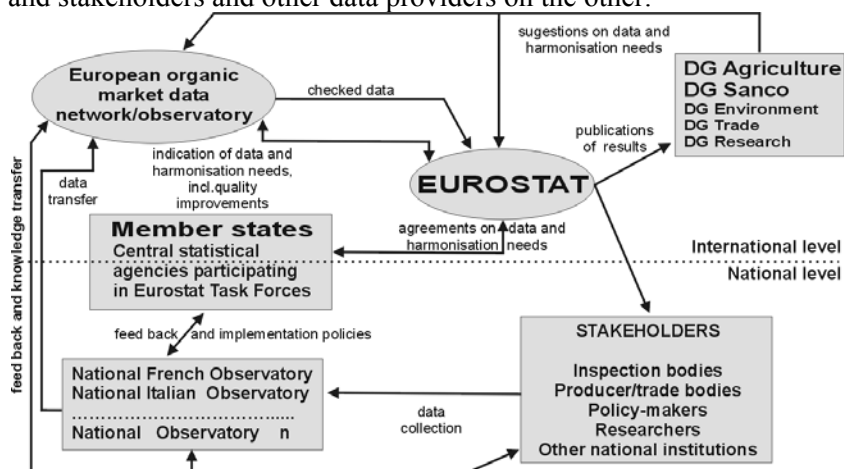


Figure 1. Suggested co-ordination structures and information flow for EU organic market data using a European network/observatory approach [1]

The basic model for this concept is provided by national observatories for organic agriculture that have been established in Italy, France (Agence Bio) and some other countries, the purpose of which is to create an up-to-date and comprehensive information tool for public institutions, producers and final consumers.

These observatories typically involve a coordinated effort between different official agencies, research institutes and stakeholders. As well as ensuring that the broad range of data collection needs is addressed, such networks or observatories also provide a valuable opportunity for the integration of effort and better use of resources.

At the European level, a network or observatory of this type would still need to be centered primarily on the European Commission, including DG Agri, DG Sanco as well as Eurostat and Member State official statistical agencies. But the network would also formally integrate the research institutes, universities, market research companies, independent experts/consultants, certification bodies and other stakeholders that currently either own, collect or process organic data.

This is seen as important given their combined experience and understanding of the specific needs and circumstances of the organic sector.

This European network/observatory would be responsible for:

1. agreeing data needs and data collecting and processing system
2. developing and implementing Eurostat-harmonised systems at the European level (with the emphasis on output harmonisation so that national systems can be appropriately developed and adapted)
3. investigating possibilities for improving data quality or implementing adapted reference systems in countries and areas where no data are available
4. working with Eurostat and data providers to collate data, monitor quality and facilitate dissemination.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to improve coordination and enhance current data availability and quality there is an urgent need to devise an institutional framework allowing:

- the consolidation of the network of relationships established during the EISFOM project among various stakeholders at both national and international level;
- the enlargement of this network in order to increase the quantity and quality of available statistics at national level as well as the national coverage;
- increase the links between the EU Member States officials responsible for agricultural statistics (including organic) and those responsible for food safety statistics.
- to formally integrate the research institutes, universities, market research companies, independent experts/consultants, certification bodies and other stakeholders that currently either own, collect or process organic data.

In order to do so, it was proposed to establish, at the EU level, a temporary European Organic Market Statistics Expert Group consisting of Commission, Member State and external experts, including researchers and stakeholders, to advise DG Agri and Eurostat in planning and devising the best organizational solution to implement the institutional network in the long term.

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