

Organic farming: organic production and labelling of the products (repeal. Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91)

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The committee adopted the report by Marie-Hélène AUBERT (Greens/EFA, FR) amending - under the consultation procedure - the proposed regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products. The key amendments were as follows:

- the wording of Article 4 ('Overall principles') was tightened up so as to specify that GMOs and products produced from or with GMOs shall not be used in organic production. The exception to this rule in the case of veterinary medicinal products, as proposed by the Commission, was deleted;
- the wording of Article 7 ('General farm production rules') was also tightened up to ensure that, where "farmers or any other providers of organic produce" use products purchased from third parties to produce organic food or feedstuffs, they must require the vendor to confirm that their products "have not been produced from or by GMOs and do not contain or consist of GMOs". Moreover, "in the case of an adventitious or technically unavoidable contamination with GMO", they must be able to "supply evidence that they have taken all necessary steps" to avoid such contamination;
- a number of amendments laid down stricter rules for the use of plant-health products and veterinary treatments as well as national derogations thereto;
- a new clause specified that meat and bone meal shall not be fed to food-producing animals;
- on labelling, MEPs in the committee said that, in the case of processed products, the terms for the labelling of organic products listed in the Annex to the regulation may only be used where at least 95% of the ingredients of agricultural origin are produced organically. Member States should take the necessary steps to prevent fraudulent use of these terms;
- the Community organic production logo should be compulsory on products covered by the regulation and should constitute the "main identifying symbol for organic products throughout the EU". However, national organic production logos (which may be better known to consumers) should be allowed as well. The use of the Community logo would not be permitted for processed products containing more than 5% by weight of conventional ingredients or for products from farms in the process of conversion to organic production. The labelling indication EU-ORGANIC, as proposed by the Commission, may be confusing for consumers, leading them to believe that the product originates in the EU (even though it may come from a third country which complies with EU standards), and should therefore be replaced by the term ORGANIC;
- national control bodies should be accredited in line with European standards. In addition, Member States must ensure that their inspection systems enable products to be traced "at every stage of production, preparation and distribution". An up-to-date list of operators subject to the control system must be made available to interested parties;
- operators from non-EU countries must be in a position to provide importers or national authorities with documentary evidence issued by a competent Community control body. Assessment reports issued by the accreditation body should be published on the Internet;

- the regulation should also cover the catering industry (take-aways, canteens, restaurants and similar service providers) as well as products such as wool, preserved fish, cosmetics, food supplements and essential oils. Moreover, apart from the production, processing, packaging and labelling of products, the new rules should also cover conditioning, preparation and storage;
- the separation requirements (in cases where not all of a farm is used for organic production) should be extended to cover aquaculture, and the Commission should present a legislative proposal on production rules, including rules on conversion, applicable to organic aquaculture;
- lastly, the legal basis for the proposal should be not only Article 37 of the EC Treaty (agriculture) but also Article 95 (internal market), since it covers the production and distribution of processed food and not just agricultural produce.