

Citizens' summary

Organic food and farming: a new EU proposal



WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Over the last 10 years, the EU organic market has quadrupled in size. Organic products marketed in the EU are increasingly diverse, including processed products and imports from non-EU countries. There need to be changes in EU policy to

- **maintain consumer confidence** by
 - strengthening rules on production in line with consumer concerns
 - reinforcing and improving the control system.

As the organic market relies on consumer confidence, fraud can have a very detrimental effect.
- **maintain producers' confidence in the system** by applying the same production rules throughout the EU, thereby guaranteeing
 - fair competition for organic producers
 - uniformly high standards.
- **remove obstacles** to developing organic farming in the EU, including:
 - complex, unclear legislation
 - technical and structural obstacles to switching to organic production or maintaining organic methods
 - high certification costs
 - administrative burden.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **European consumers** will have better guarantees as regards organic products made and/or sold in the EU.
- **European farmers, producers and retailers** will have access to a larger market, both within and outside the EU. It will be easier to join the EU's organic scheme.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- The Commission has approved:
 - a proposal for new legislation strengthening rules on production and checks on organic products marketed in the EU.
 - an Action Plan on the future of Organic Production in Europe to help organic farmers, producers and retailers adjust to the new policy and meet future challenges.
- It's simpler to have a single EU set of rules on production, monitoring and checks. EU producers can market produce bearing the EU organic logo anywhere in the European Union.
- Identical rules will apply to imported organic products.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

- The **production rules** will be made clearer, by
 - eliminating several exemptions and exceptions
 - banning farms from engaging in both organic and non-organic farming on the same site.

Most inputs used in organic production and processing will be organic.

- **Best environmental practices** will also be applied by organic producers other than farmers and by organic traders and retailers.
- **The control system will be improved by:**
 - using resources more efficiently so as to target the activities most at risk.
 - requiring checks on retailers.
 - introducing measures to be taken when a non-authorized substance is found in organic products.
- **A system of group certification will be set up** to help small farmers in the EU join the organic system.
- **Exports** of EU organic products will be expanded and links with non-EU countries consolidated.
- **Better information** will be provided on rural development and EU farm policy initiatives to encourage organic farming, **links** between EU research and innovation projects and organic production will be strengthened, and **the use of organic food** will be encouraged, e.g. in schools or in contexts involving government contracts.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- 2017. Organic producers, traders and retailers will be given enough time to adjust to the new rules.