



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 16.07.2015
C(2015) 4904 final*

*Mr Josip LEKO
President of the Hrvatski sabor
Trg sv. Marka 6
HR – 10 000 ZAGREB*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Hrvatski Sabor for its Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on organic production and labelling of organic products, amending Regulation (EU) No XXX/XXX of the European Parliament and of the Council [Official controls Regulation] and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 {COM(2014)180 final}, and for the strong interest it takes in the proposal.

The proposal on organic production and labelling of organic products comes in a context where the challenges for the sustainable development of the organic sector are increasing. In the last decade the market for organic products in the EU has quadrupled; however the internal EU production only doubled. This shows that the increase of the market is based mostly on imports. More needs to be done in order to increase the EU organic production capacity.

Increasing production at a high pace risks putting pressure on the standards of organic production and consequently on the credibility of the system. Moreover, an extended public consultation with over 45 000 replies, which is one of the elements that supported this proposal, has clearly shown that citizens have high expectations as regards the standards and the integrity of the organic production. Currently there are many possibilities for derogations from the rules, which are applied differently across Member States and also for imported products. The resulting absence of a level playing field and of transparency spills over into the control system, which as the European Court of Auditors underlined in its 2012 report¹, needs serious improvement. In addition to simplification and clarification of the legal framework, these were the grounds at the basis of the Commission's legal proposal for the organic sector.

The Commission has taken note of the strong concern of the Hrvatski Sabor with regards to the introduction of sea salt in the scope of the proposed Regulation. As the Hrvatski Sabor has noted, indeed the Commission's proposal foresees this extension of the scope to include

¹ Special Report No 9 from 2012 of the European Court of Auditors on Audit of the Control System Governing the Production, Processing, Distribution and Imports of Organic Products.

sea salt. It is now for the European Parliament and the Council, in which your government is represented, to decide on the final structure of the scope of the Regulation.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concern raised by the Hrvatski Sabor and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Phil Hogan
Member of the Commission*