



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2015) 2487 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Action Plan for the Future of Organic Production in the European Union {COM(2014) 179 final} and 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}.

As a preliminary comment, the Commission wishes to recall that the concerned proposal is listed among the proposed withdrawals or modifications in the Commission Work Programme for 2015 {COM(2014) 910 final - Annex 2}. The Commission's intention is to withdraw the proposal and to replace it with a new initiative, if no agreement is reached in six months.

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

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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 variety of observations and questions from the Camera Deputaților in its Opinion, including on innovation and research, the possibility of creating a European database on the availability of organic seeds and on the publication of fees.

On the more general questions, raised in the Opinion, the Commission would like to make the following remarks.

The Camera Deputaților emphasises the obligation of Member States to provide a minimum expenditure of 30% of the total contribution allocated to each rural development programme of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to climate change mitigation and adaptation and environmental issues and warns against deceitful use of this funding for other objectives. The objective of 30% of the total EAFRD allocation was introduced by the Council and the European Parliament to ensure that the CAP contributes to providing environmental and climate-related public goods. Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013² enumerates the measures for which EAFRD contribution can be counted towards the 30% objective: payments for forestry, agri-environment-climate, organic farming, Natura 2000 payments, areas facing natural and specific constraints and climate and environment-related investment support. The objectives of the majority of these measures are entirely and clearly related to priorities 4 and 5 of the EAFRD which directly pursue objectives related to climate change and the environment. In the case of the investment support, only the support related to environment and climate, to be indicated by Member States in their programmes, can be counted towards the 30% objective.

In terms of consumers' awareness of the EU organic logo, the Camera Deputaților considers that before starting a campaign at European level, the Commission should consider inter-governmental cooperation and exchange of experience and good practice between Member States. At the moment, the EU organic logo is one of the most well-known European logos, being recognised by one in four citizens. The Commission's new action plan for organic production in Europe³, foresees the periodic monitoring of the evolution of awareness of the EU organic logo. Of course, the existing exchange of experience and of good practice, already taking place under the current legislation will be encouraged and remain possible under the new legal framework.

With regards to the types of seed used in organic farming and the introduction of wild varieties in identification and maintenance activities, the European Commission adopted in 2013 a Communication on genetic resources in the European Union, which points to the need to diversify genetic resources on the one

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.

² Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, O.J. L 347 of 20.12.2013, p. 487.

³ COM(2014) 179 final of 24.03.2014 – Action Plan for the future of Organic Production in the European Union.

hand and to increase their sustainable use in production, besides conservation. Moreover, the 2014-2020 financial framework provides various possibilities for funding research and innovation in this area, and the (re)introduction of traditional genetic resources the production chain including other connected research topics.

Concerning Article 21 of the proposal, prohibiting misleading advertising through labelling, the Camera Deputaților indicates that this specification does not sufficiently reduce the possibility of misleading labelling arguing that this remains possible as long as a product can be freely labelled as 'natural' or 'traditional'. The Camera Deputaților requests the Commission to conduct an analysis of the use of these terms in the context of ecological labelling. On this important issue, the Commission likes to note that the use of the terms 'traditional' and 'natural' is already addressed and regulated in the quality policy on agricultural products and foodstuffs⁴ and in the Regulation on the common organisation of the markets in agricultural products⁵.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours sincerely,

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First Vice-President*

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Member of the Commission*

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

⁵ Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 922/72, (EEC) No 234/79, (EC) No 1037/2001 and (EC) No 1234/2007.