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European Union

Organic Products

European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming 2003

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Report Highlights:

On February 6, 2003, the European Commission invited the public to take part in an Internet consultation about the future of organic farming. Based on a working document entitled "Analysis of the possibility of a European Action plan for organic food and farming", the public and stakeholder organizations can submit reactions on all elements relating to the development of organic farming.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Brussels USEU [BE2], E2

European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming

On-line survey

On February 6, 2003, the European Commission invited the public to take part in an Internet consultation about the future of organic farming. Based on a working document entitled "Analysis of the possibility of a European Action plan for organic food and farming", the public and stakeholder organizations can submit reactions on all elements relating to the development of organic farming including marketing, CAP support, traceability, the use of the EU organic logo, imports from third countries, compilation of statistical data and research. The on-line survey will be open until March 16, 2003, and replies will be analyzed and used in the development of the Action plan. The Action plan will focus on general issues and analyze where policy initiatives are needed but will not make specific proposals about organic standards as this is already part of the Commission's routine legal work. The final Action plan will probably be published by the end of 2003.

Working Document

The working document analyzes the problems relating to production, processing and marketing of organically produced goods in Europe. It identifies the following issues that should be covered in the Action plan:

- developing and facilitating various systems for organic produce sales
- targeting organic farming to environmentally sensitive areas
- the exchange of technical information between farmers
- ensuring sufficient CAP funding
- traceability and authenticity
- the use of the EU organic logo
- providing access to information on additional inspection requirements where they exist
- harmonizing testing methods, control procedures, supervision and accreditation and co-operation between all actors involved in the inspection system, including Community inspections
- imports of organic products
- the establishment of an advisory body
- the collection and communication of official statistical data on production, consumption and trade
- research

Imports

The working document also covers the difficulties that third countries have getting their organic product into the EU. In addition to the complications in obtaining the right to use the different national and private logos, exporters must go through the EU's complicated process of obtaining approval from the Commission or a member state to access the EU market.

There are currently two systems in place to import organic products into the EU:

- 1) the EU accepts the requirements in the exporting country as equivalent to the EU's

2) member states can until December 31, 2005, authorize imports on a case-by-case basis (applicable to imports from the U.S.)

So far, the EU has only approved seven countries under the first system (Argentina, Australia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel, New Zealand, Switzerland). This means that imports from more than 90 different countries have to be authorized on a case-by-case basis. The working document identifies the need to replace this costly and burdensome system with a permanent and more standardized system.

The working document can be downloaded from the Commission's website at http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/consultations/organic/index_en.htm.

Visit our website: more information on importing organic products into the EU can be found on www.useu.be/agri/organic.html. Our website www.useu.be/agri/usda.html also provides a broad range of useful information on EU import rules and food laws and allows easy access to USEU reports, trade information and other practical information.

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