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Organic food labels: history and latest trends

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Abstract: Labelling of foods produced through organic agriculture is illustrated in this chapter. The meaning of organic agriculture is explained, with brief background information. Recent data are provided on the steady growth and diffusion of organic agriculture as an important sustainable agriculture practice and its relevance in the market place. Information is given on some of the main labelling standards, international and national, private and public, including Codex Alimentarius, IFOAM Basic Standards, EU Regulation, US National Organic Program (NOP) and Japanese JAS. The purpose and work of the FAO-IFOAM-UNCTAD International Task Force for organic regulations harmonization and equivalence is explained. Some of the main logos used in the labelling of organic products are shown.

Key words: organic agriculture, organic standard, labelling, control and certification, organic logo.

6.1 Introduction

Before describing the labelling of organic products, we should begin with an explanation of the meaning of organic agriculture, giving brief background information and recent data on its steady growth and diffusion as an important sustainable agriculture practice and its relevance in the market place. Following this brief history, some of the main labelling standards, international and national, private and public will be discussed. These include the Codex Alimentarius, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Basic

Standards, EU Regulation, US National Organic Program (NOP) and Japanese Organic Standard (JAS). The purpose and work of the FAO-IFOAM-UNCTAD promoted International Task Force (ITF) for organic regulations harmonization and equivalence is then briefly explained. Finally, some of the main logos for organic products are presented.

6.2 Organic agriculture definition

After a two year consultative process, the General Assembly of IFOAM adopted the Principle of Organic Agriculture in September 2005 in Adelaide, Australia. This identifies the fundamentals of organic agriculture: health, ecology, care and fairness. The General Assembly also passed a motion to establish a succinct Definition of Organic Agriculture. After almost three years of intensive work, a dedicated Task Force came up with a definition that was ratified at the General Assembly of IFOAM in June 2008 in Vignola, Italy:

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved. (IFOAM, 2008)

6.3 From alternative movement to international and national legislation

Organic agriculture had illustrious precursors such as the philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), who lived in Donji Kraljevec, Dornach, father of the biodynamic movement, and other agronomists and practitioners who opposed from the very beginning the coming of age of ‘industrialized chemical agriculture’. The biodynamic agriculture seal ‘Demeter’ appeared for the first time as early as 1927 with the first biodynamic coffee plantation at Finca Irlanda in Chiapas, Mexico. However, organic farming is a rather young phenomenon, starting in many countries in different time periods, but with very similar patterns. When agriculture became more dependent on synthetic chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides, and more evidence was disclosed on their precise dangers to human health and to the environment, some pioneers started practising and further developing organic farming. Many of them were young people, often coming out of the agriculture world. With education, they were able to recognize the danger of chemical agriculture, pursuing organic farming as a concrete alternative. They were soon stimulated by a growing number of consumers who were ready to buy organic products and to pay premium prices to organic producers.

This started to happen in Europe and North America more or less in the same

time, around the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1972, IFOAM was established by five organic and biodynamic associations from France, Sweden, South Africa, the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK). In other regions of the developed world, organic agriculture started to appear as awareness of farmers and consumers rose and they reacted to the impact of chemical industrialized agriculture. In some other regions, especially in Southern Europe, Oceania and in the developing world, another factor was, and still is, a powerful driving force: this is the northern countries' growing demand for organic foods, including the imported ones. At this stage, the labelling requirements for organic food was only a private sector issue, often with self declarations from the producers following private rules defined by a national or regional associations of organic farmers.

IFOAM in 1980 published the first Basic Standard for Organic Production and Processing, as a guiding tool for all its member organizations involved in standard setting and certification. Later on in the same decade, legislators in a few countries and regions started issuing specific norms on organic agriculture (California, France, Austria, some Italian regions). During the 1980s, organic products started to diffuse in the market place, especially in Germany, the UK and other northern European countries. The organic movement became more organized and was strengthened by a close relationship with consumers and the environmental movement. In these years the European Commission started working on a directive for organic farming (1987) that became in 1991 a Council Regulation (EC Reg. 2092/91) coming into force on 1 January 1993 (EEC, 1991). In July 1992, the Codex Alimentarius Commission decided that its Codex Committee on Food Labelling should discuss and develop the 'Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Marketing and Labelling of Organically Produced Foods' (Codex Alimentarius Commission, 1999). Soon after in Europe, organic agriculture boomed, affecting other regions as well, with a steadily growing demand for organic products in the market place. This was a result of the clear official regulatory framework, accompanied by a set of effective incentives for organic farming, through the European agro-environmental measures (EC Reg. 2078/92) (EC, 1992). In 1990 in the USA, a federal norm for organic agriculture started to develop, later becoming the United States Department of Agriculture National Organic Program (USDA, 2000). In 1999 in Japan, a specific norm was established, the JAS of Organic Agricultural Products (Japan MAFF, 2000). In the last decade many more countries followed these examples; in many cases, the main purpose was to assist their growing organic producers with obtaining access to the regulated organic markets of Europe, North America and Japan. Some large countries, such as India, China and Brazil, developed their organic norms at first for better accessing export markets, but they are now also engaged in regulating their growing organic internal markets.

In 2007–8, other international organic rules were developed, as a result of a joint effort from local governments, United Nations agencies and the private sector, due to concern about the numerous national and private standards that could eventually become a technical barrier to trade within the regions, placing unneeded

restrictions on regional collaboration. Based on the international references of Codex and IFOAM organic norms, an extensive, inclusive and transparent consultation process was carried out and resulted in two regionally adapted organic norms: the East African Organic Product Standard (EAOPS) and the South Pacific Islands Countries, Pacific Organic Standard (POS) (SPC, 2008).

6.4 From niche to mainstream market

According to February 2009 data, based on FIBL (Research Institute for Organic Agriculture, Switzerland) and IFOAM research, 32.2 million hectares of agricultural land are managed organically in 141 countries (see Fig. 6.1), an increase of 1.5 million hectares compared to the previous year. In the ‘World of Organic Agriculture’ (Willer and Kilcher, 2009), there are over 1.2 million organic producers listed. Total turnover for organic products (food and beverages) in the world, according to a recent estimate, reached 46 billion US dollars in 2007; a three-fold increase in value from eight years before (*Organic Monitor* UK, February 2009). Most of the market share is concentrated in Europe, North America and Japan, while other regions such as Asia, Latin America, Oceania and Africa are relevant producers and exporters. However some signals of growing demand for organic products are coming from these regions too, especially in countries such as Brazil, India and China. A market niche of specialized retailers and committed customers has grown into a genuine mainstream one. Although the major retailers have larger shares of the organic market, the specialized organic stores have evolved into a dynamic and innovative sector, using franchising and marketing tools to provide a demanding public with organic food of the most diverse nature and provenance.

Another recent organic market development is the growing phenomenon of organic meals consumed outside the home. Some early experiences of organic

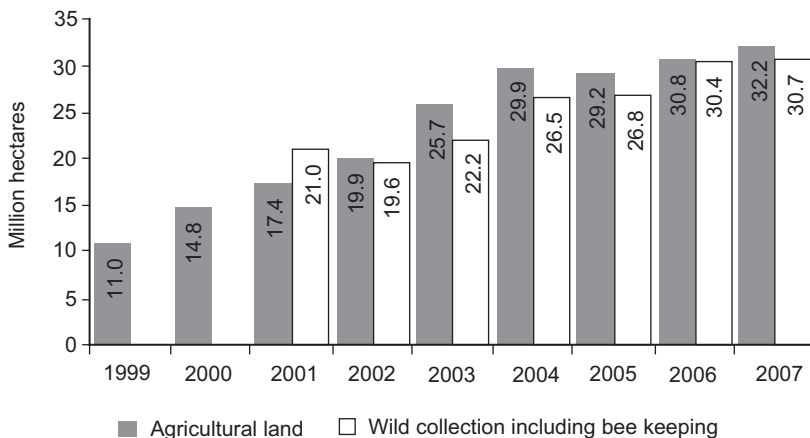


Fig. 6.1 Organic agricultural land and wild collection 1999–2007.

food in school meals had already started in Italy in the mid- and late 1980s; more recently, organic public catering is becoming increasingly relevant in many European countries in schools and hospitals, as well as private restaurants. In cases such as Italy and Spain, it is a national and/or regional law that mandates and/or supports local authorities in including organic ingredients in the menus of public schools and hospitals. Increasing and interesting developments can also be seen in the creation and consolidation of local markets for organic products all over the world, including many developing countries, especially in Latin America. Local organic farmers are becoming directly involved in large numbers of dedicated markets, special delivering schemes, and community supported agriculture experiences where citizens are actively involved together with local organic farmers. Some of these experiences are newfound ways of providing confidence and trust in the organic products trade, building concrete innovative verification schemes that are identified as ‘participatory guarantee systems’.

6.5 Main normative frame

6.5.1 Common principles and general requirements

All regulations prescribe that any production and placement of labelled organic products on the market must comply with a certification process. Conventional farmers must first undergo a conversion period, with minimums ranging from one to three years before they can begin producing agricultural goods that can be marketed as organic. This period depends on the crops: if they are annuals, the period is shorter; if perennials, the period is longer. If they wish to produce both conventional and organic produce, they must clearly separate these two operations throughout every stage of production. Both farmers and processors must at all times respect the relevant rules contained in the regulations. They are subject to inspections by approved certification bodies or authorities to ensure their compliance with organic legislation. After the conversion period, successful operators are granted organic certification and their goods can be labelled as organic.

6.5.2 Overview of content for EU regulation, US rule and Japanese Agricultural Standard

The EU Council Regulation 2092/91 (from January 2009 substituted by Reg. 834/2007), the USDA NOP and the JAS of Organic Agricultural Products all cover crop production, livestock and processing and handling of organic products. All three regulations include provisions regarding wild harvesting. The EU covers mushrooms and beekeeping, while Japan and the USA do not. The Japanese standard does not cover alcoholic beverages such as wines, while the USA does and the EU is committed to setting specific rules. The USA exempts producers and handlers with less than \$5000/year total organic sales from certification requirements, although they must comply with the regulation. The EU and Japan do not

allow such an exemption. The EU regulates not only the term 'organic' (or equivalent in other EU languages) but also any other terms that suggest that the product has been produced organically. The US and Japan regulate only the term 'organic' or Japanese equivalents. The format of the EU and Japanese regulations are somewhat similar, resembling the Codex guidelines. This is partly a result of the Japanese basing their regulation on Codex and Codex being heavily influenced by the EU Regulation. The USA regulation follows a different format. All three regulations contain provisions for approval of private certification bodies in implementing the law and provisions for enabling imports from other countries.

6.6 Codex Alimentarius organic norm

The Codex Alimentarius Commission at its 23rd Session in 1999 adopted the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods, with the exception of the provisions for livestock and livestock products (Codex Alimentarius, 1999). The Codex Alimentarius Commission at its 24th Session in 2001 adopted the sections concerning livestock and livestock products and beekeeping and bee products for inclusion in the Guidelines (Codex Alimentarius Commission, 2001). The main sections of the Guidelines establish the framework within which the more detailed standards in the annexes apply. These sections include, *inter alia*, the specific labelling requirements; the general rules of production and preparation; requirements for inclusion of input materials in the annexes; and criteria for the development of lists of inputs by countries. Several annexes set down the detailed requirements for production, processing and handling of organic products. These include the rules for the management systems for organic crop production, livestock husbandry and processing (Annex 1) and the permitted agricultural and processing inputs (Annex 2). In addition to the standards for production and processing, the Guidelines contain some provisions regarding inspection and certification systems and import control. Codex standards, codes and related texts have received wider Recognition following the conclusion of the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), as Codex was specifically mentioned under SPS and the reference to international standards in the framework of TBT applies to Codex (see Chapter 2). However, the foreword to the guidelines places certain limitations on its role within the arena of international trade:

These guidelines are at this stage a first step into official international harmonization of the requirements for organic products in terms of production and marketing standards, inspection arrangements and labelling requirements. In this area the experience with the development of such requirements and their implementation is still very limited. Moreover, consumer perception on the organic production method may, in certain detailed but important provisions differ from region to region in

the world. Therefore, the following is recognized at this stage... the guidelines do not prejudice the implementation of more restrictive arrangements and more detailed rules by member countries in order to maintain consumer credibility and prevent fraudulent practices, and to apply such rules to products from other countries on the basis of equivalency to such more restrictive provisions. (Codex Alimentarius Commission, 1999)

Codex revision procedures are set down in section 8 of the document. A review of the guidelines is expected to be conducted once every four years. The lists of permitted inputs for production and for processing contained in Annex 2 are subject to review every two years. Both governments and recognized international organizations are invited to make proposals on an ongoing basis. The four years revision has not been undertaken as such since 1999, as only the list of permitted inputs and criteria for substances have benefited from further work.

6.7 International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) organic norms

The IFOAM Basic Standards for Organic Production and Processing (IBS) were first published in 1980. Since then they have been subject to biennial review and republication. Democratically and internationally adopted, they became a keystone of the organic movement. The most recent edition of the IFOAM Basic Standards was published together with the IFOAM Criteria for Certification Bodies in the 'IFOAM Norms for Organic Production and Processing' (IFOAM, 2005a). These documents are registered with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) as international standards in the field of organic agriculture. The introduction to the IFOAM Basic Standards states that these standards 'provide a framework for certification bodies and standard setting organizations worldwide to develop their own certification standards and cannot be used for certification on their own. Certification standards should take into account specific local conditions and provide more specific requirements than the IFOAM Basic Standards' (IFOAM, 2005). The IFOAM norms should therefore be considered as standards for standards in the field of organic agriculture and processing. The introduction also makes it clear that the standards are a reflection of the current state of organic production and processing methods. As such, they should be viewed as a work in progress rather than a final statement. The standards in the IBS are derived from the 'Principal Aims of Organic Production and Processing', which are laid out at the beginning of the document. These principles not only form the basis of the IBS but have also been the guiding principles for national regulations and for international norms such as the Codex Alimentarius Guidelines for organically produced foods. The main sections of the IBS deal with standards for crop production, animal husbandry and processing and handling of organic products. The livestock section establishes generic standards for all livestock. The

Box 6.1 Extract from Codex Alimentarius Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods

SECTION 3: LABELLING AND CLAIMS GENERAL PROVISIONS

3.1 Organic products should be labelled in accordance with the Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods.

3.2 The labelling and claims of a product specified in Section 1.1(a) may refer to organic production methods only where:

- a) such indications show clearly that they relate to a method of agricultural production;
- b) the product was produced in accordance with the requirements of Section 4 or imported under the requirements laid down in Section 7;
- c) the product was produced or imported by an operator who is subject to the inspection measures laid down in Section 6, and
- d) the labelling refers to the name and/or code number of the officially recognized inspection or certification body to which the operator who has carried out the production or the most recent processing operation is subject.

3.3 The labelling and claims of a product specified in paragraph 1.1(b) may refer to organic production methods only where:

- a) such indication show clearly that they relate to a method of agricultural production and are linked with the name of the agricultural product in question, unless such indication is clearly given in the list of ingredients;
- b) all the ingredients of agricultural origin of the product are, or are derived from, products obtained in accordance with the requirements of Section 4, or imported under the arrangements laid down in Section 7;
- c) the product should not contain any ingredient of non-agricultural origin not listed in Annex 2, Table 3;
- d) the same ingredients shall not be derived from an organic and nonorganic origin;
- e) the product or its ingredients have not been subjected during preparation to treatments involving the use of ionizing radiation or substances not listed in Annex 2, Table 4;
- f) the product was prepared or imported by an operator subject to the regular inspection system as set out in Section 6 of these guidelines; and
- g) the labelling refers to the name and/or the code number of the official or officially recognized certification body or authority to which the operator who has carried out the most recent preparation operation is subject.

3.4 By way of derogation from paragraph 3.3(b),

- certain ingredients of agricultural origin not satisfying the requirement in that paragraph may be used, within the limit of maximum level of 5% m/m of the total ingredients excluding salt and water in the final product, in the preparation of products as referred to in paragraph 1.1(b);
- where such ingredients of agricultural origin are not available, or in sufficient quantity, in accordance with the requirements of Section 4 of these guidelines;

Box 6.1 (continued)

3.5 Pending further review of the guidelines in accordance with Section 8, Member Countries can consider the following with regard to products referred to in paragraph 1.1(b) marketed in their territory:

- the development of specific labelling provisions for products containing less than 95% ingredients of agricultural ingredients;
- the calculation of the percentages in 3.4 (5%) and in 3.5 (95%) on the basis of the ingredients of agricultural origin (instead of all ingredients excluding only salt and water);
- the marketing of product with in transition/conversion labelling containing more than one ingredient of agricultural origin.

3.6 In developing labelling provisions from products containing less than 95% of organic ingredients in accordance with the paragraph above, member countries may consider the following elements in particular for products containing 95% and 70% of organic ingredients:

- a) the product satisfies the requirements of paragraphs 3.3(c), (d) (e), (f) and (g);
- b) the indications referring to organic production methods should only appear on the front panel as a reference to the approximate percentage of the total ingredients including additives but excluding salt and water;
- c) the ingredients, appear in descending order (mass/mass) in the list of ingredients;
- d) indications in the list of ingredients appear in the same colour and with an identical style and size of lettering as other indications in the list of ingredient.

LABELLING OF PRODUCTS IN TRANSITION/CONVERSION TO ORGANIC

3.7 Products of farms in transition to organic production methods may only be labelled as 'transition to organic' after 12 months of production using organic methods providing that:

- a) the requirements referred to in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 are fully satisfied;
- b) the indications referring to transition/conversion do not mislead the purchaser of the product regarding its difference from products obtained from farms and/or farm units which have fully completed the conversion period;
- c) such indication take the form of words, such as 'product under conversion to organic farming', or similar words or phrase accepted by the competent authority of the country where the product is marketed, and must appear in a colour, size and style of lettering which is not more prominent than the sales description of the product;
- d) foods composed of a single ingredient may be labelled as 'transition to organic' on the principal display panel;
- e) the labelling refers to the name and/or the code number of the official or officially approved certification body or authority to which the operator who has carried out the most recent preparation is subject.

Box 6.2 Extract from IFOAM Basic Standard

7 Labelling

7.1 General

General Principle

Organic products are clearly and accurately labelled as organic.

Recommendations

When the full standards requirements have been fulfilled, products should be labelled as 'produce of organic agriculture' or a similar description.

The name and address of the person or company legally responsible for the production or processing of the product should be on the label.

Product labels should identify all ingredients, processing methods, and all additives and processing aids.

Labels should contain advice on how to obtain all additional product information.

All components of additives and processing aids should be declared.

Wild ingredients or products should be declared as such, as well as organic.

Standards shall require that:

7.1.1 The person or company legally responsible for the production or processing of the product and the certification body shall be identifiable.

7.1.2 To be labelled as 'produce of organic agriculture' or equivalent protected terms, a product shall comply with at least these standards.

7.1.3 Mixed products where not all ingredients, including additives, are of organic origin and products that are entirely in compliance with these standards, shall be labelled in the following way (percentages in this section refer to raw material weight):

- a. where a minimum of 95% of the ingredients are of certified organic origin, products may be labelled 'certified organic' or equivalent and should carry the certification mark of the certification body;
- b. where less than 95% but not less than 70% of the ingredients are of certified organic origin, products may not be called 'organic'. The word 'organic' may be used on the principal display in statements like 'made with organic ingredients' provided there is a clear statement of the proportion of the organic ingredients. An indication that the product is covered by the certification body may be used, close to the indication of proportion of organic ingredients;
- c. where less than 70% of the ingredients are of certified organic origin, the indication that an ingredient is organic may appear in the ingredient list. Such product may not be called 'organic.'

7.1.4 All ingredients of a multi-ingredient product shall be listed on the product label in order of their weight percentage. It shall be apparent which ingredients are of organic certified origin and which are not. All additives shall be listed with their full name.

If herbs and/or spices constitute less than 2% of the total weight of the product, they may be listed as 'spices' or 'herbs' without stating the percentage.

Box 6.2 (continued)

7.1.5 Added water and salt shall not be included in the percentage calculations of organic ingredients.

7.1.6 The label for conversion products shall be clearly distinguishable from the label for organic products.

7.1.7 Organic products shall not be labelled as GMO-free in the context of these standards. Any reference to genetic engineering on product labels shall be limited to the production and processing methods themselves having not used GMOs.

exception is beekeeping which is dealt with in a separate section. Additional sections of the standards set out the requirements for ecosystems, labelling and social justice. Each section of the IBS is presented as General Principles, Recommendations and Standards. The General Principles are the goals that organic production and processing work towards. The Recommendations provide standards that IFOAM promotes but does not require. The Standards are the minimum requirements that must be fully incorporated into certification standards.

6.8 Private standards

The Soil Association in the UK published the first private organic standards in 1967 followed by Nature et Progrès, France 1972. These were more a set of guiding principles rather than the detailed production and processing standards prevalent today. It is important to realize that this initiative, and other private standards that were developed in Europe, the USA and elsewhere shortly thereafter, was driven by the need of organic farmers in the region to have a common definition of organic. This was both to provide assurance to the growing consumer



Fig. 6.2 Private organic logo. Soil Association, UK. Reproduced with permission of the Soil Association Organisation.



Fig. 6.3 Private organic logo. KRAV private logo Sweden. Reproduced with the permission of KRAV Ekonomisk förening (Sweden).

sector and to prevent fraudulent claims and unfair competition. Farmers' associations published all of the earliest organic standards. Along with publishing standards, the association then set about verifying compliance with those standards. The result was that certification bodies that were established during the 1970s and 1980s also published their own standards. These standards provided an identity to the farmers' association and helped to ensure the loyalty of the farmer. The result of this heritage is that there are a great many private organic standards for production and certification around the globe. This plethora of standards has created some difficulties with respect to mutual recognition and trade; there have also been some advantages. As the standards are being set in the specific region in which the certification body operates, they tend to be more appropriate to the local ecosystems and local culture than standards set distantly. It is noteworthy that private organic standards have been developed for activities generally not covered in regulations. These included animal husbandry before the regulations were adopted, textile processing, aquaculture, forestry and others. The private standards determined the content of the IFOAM Basic Standards which, in turn, have had a major influence on the EU Regulation 2092/91, which itself has influenced the content of most other organic regulations and the Codex Alimentarius Guidelines.

6.8.1 Labelling and certification as a marketing tool

From the early stages in the development of organic certification the private certification bodies have marketed their certification symbols to the consumer as a guarantee of quality. The degree to which they have been successful differs from country to country. In some countries such as Sweden, Switzerland and the UK there is strong consumer identification with the certification body's symbol, whereas in other countries such as the USA there is little consumer recognition of the symbols. The certification bodies' symbols are generally officially registered as trademarks. IFOAM, the EU, the USA and Japan all allow use of their approvals on packaging.

6.9 European Union organic regulation

In 1991, the European Council of Agricultural Ministers adopted Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 on organic farming and the corresponding labelling of agricultural products and foods. The introduction of this Regulation was part of the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and represented the conclusion of a process through which organic agriculture received the official recognition of the 15 states which were EU members at the time. At the beginning, the organic Regulation only regulated plant products. In 1999 additional provisions for animal products were introduced (EEC, 1999). These rules included animal feed, prevention of illness, veterinary treatment, animal protection, livestock breeding in general and the use of livestock manure. In the same regulation (EC 1804/99) the use of genetically modified organisms and products produced from them was expressly excluded from organic production. At the same time, the import of organic products was approved from third countries whose production criteria and systems of control could be recognized as equivalent to those of the EU. As a result of this ongoing process of supplementation and amendment, the provisions contained in Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 became very complex and extensive. The level of importance that the original EU organic Regulation enjoyed lay in the fact that it created common minimum standards for the entire EU. In this process, the confidence of consumers, who could purchase organic products from other member states with the certainty that these products fulfilled the same minimum requirements, was strengthened. It was left up to the member states and private organizations to enact their own additional stricter standards.

6.9.1 The new EU Regulation

In June 2007, the European Council of Agricultural Ministers agreed to a new Council Regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products (Reg. 834/07). This new Council Regulation contains clearly defined goals, principles and general rules for organic production. On 1 January 2009, new EU regulations went into effect for the production, control and labelling of organic products. However, some of the new provisions on labelling do not take effect until 1 July 2010. Since the EU now includes 27 member states, and extends from the far north to southern and eastern Europe, local climatic, cultural or structural differences can be compensated through foreseen flexibility rules. Foods may only be marked as 'organic' if at least 95% of their agricultural ingredients are organic. The '70–95%' organic ingredients category of the previous Regulation disappeared. Organic ingredients in non-organic food may be considered as organic in the list of ingredients, as long as this food has been produced in accordance with the organic legislation. In order to ensure better transparency, the code number of the control body must be indicated. The use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) and of products manufactured from GMOs is still prohibited in organic production. Products containing GMOs may not be labelled as organic unless the ingredients containing GMOs entered the products unintentionally and the GMO proportion in the ingredient is less than 0.9% (see Chapter 10).

The community logo

The EU organic logo and those of EU Member States are used to supplement the labelling and increase the visibility of organic food and beverages for consumers.

Products bearing the EU logo have to fulfil the following conditions:

- at least 95% of the product's ingredients of agricultural origin have been organically produced;
- the product complies with the rules of the official inspection scheme;
- the product has come directly from the producer or preparer in a sealed package;
- the product bears the name of the producer, the preparer or vendor and the name or code of the inspection body.

The placement of the EU logo is currently voluntary, but will become mandatory as of 1 July 2010 for pre-packaged food. It will continue to be voluntary for imported products after this date. From 1 July 2010, where the Community logo is used, an indication of the place where the agricultural raw materials were farmed should accompany it. It should be indicated that the raw materials originate from 'EU Agriculture', 'non-EU Agriculture' or 'EU/non-EU Agriculture'. If all raw materials have been farmed in one country, the name of this specific country, inside or outside the EU, can be indicated instead. If operators wish to sell their products in an EU Member State other than their own, they may place an additional national or private logo that will be recognized by the consumers of this particular country (EC, 2008).

Organic import

The distribution of organic products from third countries is only permitted in the common market, when they are produced and controlled under the same or equivalent conditions. The import regime has been expanded with the new legislation. The procedure for import licences will in the future be replaced by a new import regime. Control bodies working in third countries will then be directly authorized and monitored by the European Commission and the Member States. This new procedure allows the EU Commission to supervise and monitor the import of organic products and the control of the organic guarantees.

New fields of application

A basis for the acceptance of EU rules on organic aquaculture and seaweeds was established in the new legislation.

Indications

The Regulation contains clear and strict rules about labelling and logo use, to minimize any confusion among consumers, or potential misuse: 'Any terms such as organic, bio, eco, etc., including terms used in trademarks, or practices used in labelling or advertising liable to mislead the consumer or user by suggesting that a product or its ingredients satisfy the requirements set out under this Regulation shall not be used for non-organic products' (EC, 2007). In addition, the organic label cannot be used for a product that contains GMOs. To provide further confidence, by law all products labelled as organic must bear the name of the last

operator who has handled the product, e.g. the producer, the processor or the distributor and the name or code number of their inspection body.

Specific labelling requirements

The Commission is committed to establish specific labelling and composition requirements applicable to:

- organic feed;
- in conversion products of plant origin;
- vegetative propagating material and seeds for cultivation.

6.10 United States organic rules (National Organic Program)

The Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and NOP as implemented in 2002 offer assurance that all food products labelled as organic in the USA are governed by consistent standards. The labelling requirements of the NOP apply to raw, fresh products and processed products that contain organic agricultural ingredients. Agricultural products that are sold, labelled or represented as organic must be produced and processed in accordance with the NOP standards. Except for operations whose gross income from organic sales totals \$5000 or less, farm and processing operations that grow and process organic agricultural products must be certified by USDA accredited certifying agents.

6.10.1 NOP labelling

Labelling requirements are based on the percentage of organic ingredients in a product, allowing four different labelling options based on the percentage of organic ingredients in a product. These include three distinct categories, and a fourth option for products that contain organic ingredients but not at a high enough level to meet one of the three labelling categories:

- *100 percent organic*: Only products that have been exclusively produced using organic methods and that contain only organic ingredients (excluding water and salt) are allowed to carry a label declaring ‘100 percent organic.’
- *Organic*: This signifies that at least 95 percent of the ingredients (by weight, excluding water and salt) in a processed product have been organically produced. The remaining contents can only be natural or synthetic ingredients not available in an organic form that are recommended by the National Organic Standards Board and allowed on the National List. The product cannot use both organic and non-organic versions of any ingredient that is listed as organic. For instance, if a loaf of bread is made with organic wheat, all of the wheat in the bread must be organic.
- *Made with organic*: Products with 70–95 percent organic ingredients may display ‘Made with organic [with up to three specific organic ingredients or food groups listed]’ on the front panel.

All three categories prohibit the inclusion of any ingredients produced using

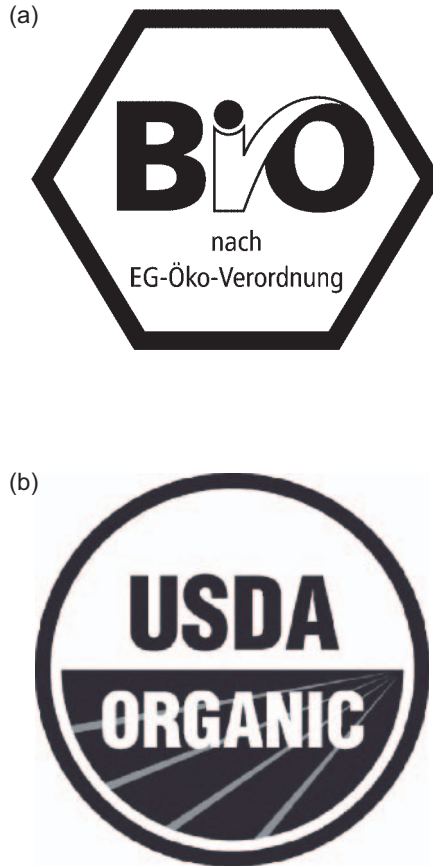


Fig. 6.4 Public organic logos. (a) BIO label from Germany. Reproduced with the permission of Bio-Siegel, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Germany. (b) US organic seal. Reproduced by permission of the National Organic Program, United States Department of Agriculture.

genetic engineering, irradiation, or sewage sludge. Products with less than 70 percent organic ingredients can list the organic items only in the ingredient panel. There can be no mention of organic on the main panel.

US Department of Agriculture organic logo

To assist consumers, USDA has designed a seal that may be used only on products labelled as '100 percent organic' or 'organic.' Use of the seal is voluntary, but is seen as a useful tool. Grocery stores are increasingly using the 'USDA Organic' seal on shelf talkers and other point of purchase materials to help identify organic sections in the store. Non-food products that meet the requirements for using the 'USDA Organic' seal can also use the seal.

6.11 Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) of Organic Agricultural Products

6.11.1 JAS standards

‘JAS’ is the abbreviation for ‘Japanese Agricultural Standard,’ and is currently used as a term that represents the overall system. The Japanese Agricultural Standards applied to individual commodities are referred to as ‘JAS Standards.’ The JAS System was introduced in 1950 as the Agricultural and Forestry Standard Law, and assumed its current status in 1970 with the addition of a quality labelling standard system. At present, the JAS System consists of the combination of the ‘JAS Standards System’ and the ‘Quality Labelling Standards System.’ JAS Standards are established for types of agricultural and forestry products designated by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Establishment and other procedures must follow resolutions by the ‘Council for Agricultural and Forestry Standard’ (JAS Council), a body comprising consumers, producers, commercial users, academic experts and others.

6.11.2 JAS organic standards

The JAS Standards for organic plants and organic processed foods of plant origin were established in 2000 on the basis of the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods which were adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The organic JAS system has been further developed with the addition of the JAS Standards for organic livestock products, organic processed foods of animal origin and organic feeds which took effect in November 2005. Operators certified by registered Japanese or overseas certifying bodies are able to attach the organic JAS logo to products that were produced or manufactured in accordance with relevant organic JAS Standards.

6.12 International Task Force for organic regulations harmonization and equivalence

To face the growing complexities and challenges derived from a non-harmonized regulatory system on organic agriculture, a number of individuals working in government agencies, inter-governmental agencies and civil society and other private sector organizations involved in organic agriculture regulation, standardization, accreditation, certification and trade joined together from 2003 to 2008 in a platform for dialogue among public and private stakeholders: International Task Force for organic regulations harmonization and equivalence (ITF). The goal of the ITF was to address and seek solutions to trade barriers arising from the many different standards, technical regulations and certification requirements that function in the organic sector, and enable developing countries to have more access to organic trade. Jointly led by FAO, IFOAM and UNCTAD, the ITF focused on opportunities for harmonization, equivalence, recognition and other forms of

cooperation within and between government and private organic guarantee systems. Its formal results include technical studies and briefing papers, recommendations and tools for solutions. ITF produced two practical tools for harmonization and equivalence:

- The International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies (IROCB), a reference norm that can be used by governments and private accreditation and certification bodies as a means of accepting certification of organic products outside of their own system (ITF, 2008a).
- The Guide for Assessing Equivalence of Organic Standards and Technical Regulations (EquiTool), a set of procedures and criteria for deciding when a standard applicable in one region of the world is equivalent to a standard applicable in another region (ITF, 2008b).

The ITF agreed to support the two international standards for organic production and processing (IFOAM standards in the private sector and Codex Alimentarius Commission standards in the government sector), and encourage harmonization and equivalence based on these standards.

6.13 References

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