

ABI(12)7789:1

**MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ORGANIC  
FARMING ON 12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2012**

PRESENT: Nebel, Holdensen, Martin, Lepeule, Pior, Rousseau, Presto, Basto, Markkanen, Benitez Castaño, Szemerey, Dienel, Thurner, van Zelderren, Vierbauch  
SECRETARIAT: Benites

**1. Approval of the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting**

Both were adopted. Due to the Chair being absent in the morning, Mr Rousseau chaired the meeting in the morning and Mr Nebel chaired in the afternoon.

**2. Follow-up on the meeting with Mr Onofre, Head of Unit H3 at the Commission**

Mr Rousseau and Mr Moskal informed members that they had passed on the Working Party's priorities contained in the strategic agenda to the new Head of Unit.

**3. Impact assessment procedure in preparation for a possible legislative proposal amending Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2013:**

**3.1/3.2/3.3:** the Secretariat informed members about the Commission's timetable (impact assessment, public consultation and legislative proposals) and about the state of play on the external evaluation of European organic farming legislation.

**3.4/3.5/3.6:** a debate was held on the key messages from the three scheduled hearings:

For the 1<sup>st</sup> hearing on the Commission's impact assessment about "the EU organic market: internal market and standards", delegates had sent in contributions detailing their positions and a debate was held. A written consultation on the conclusions of the debate was launched after the meeting and said conclusions can be found in document ABI(12)7327.

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> hearing: "controls and enforcement (in the EU and in third countries)", the CIA and Coop de France delegates expressed their support for the conclusions from the Court of Auditors on this topic. The Italian delegate stated that it was necessary to strengthen Member State and Commission controls and it was also essential to improve information exchange. The Coop de France delegate underpinned the necessity to have a customs code for greater traceability. The APCA delegate highlighted how vital it was to guarantee the same level of certification and controls for producers within the EU and in countries recognised as equivalent, particularly due to the costs incurred. A written consultation on the conclusions of the debate was launched after the meeting and said conclusions can be found in document ABI(12)7984.

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> hearing: "external trade in organic products and global issues", delegates raised the vital role of promoting European organic farming at EU and global level. According to the DBV delegate, the sector should be able to further benefit from new equivalency agreements with countries such as the United States. The APCA delegate said that European products were not competitive enough in terms of prices.

#### **4. Discussion on the consultation on organic glasshouse production**

The Danish and Polish delegates presented their contributions that had been sent to the Secretariat on the subjects mentioned in the EGTOP draft mandate. A round table discussion was then held on each topic raised. The Danish and Polish delegates agreed on the definition of glasshouse production and protected crops, but differed on defining temporary structures that remained in place for more than 4-6 years. The APCA delegate asked that the group focus more on other questions, such as growing media/substrates or the use of CO<sub>2</sub>, as opposed to the period of time that a glasshouse is used. The Danish delegate stated that it was an important point when it came to implementing the Nitrates Directive, where they hoped to propose a derogation. On growing media, the Polish delegate said that only organic soils were used in glasshouses and they were changed every 2/3 years. According to the Danish delegate, glasshouse production should be possible in soil and in substrates, the composition of which would be regulated. The Dutch delegate mentioned that a debate had already been held on this question in the Netherlands and consumers thought that organic farming should be practised using soil. The APCA delegate revealed that in France, it was thought that the soil ought to feed the plant and the use of stone meal and coconut fibre was also questioned. The Danish delegate stressed that it was difficult to obtain sufficient inputs from the soil to grow crops such as tomatoes. The NFU delegate said that everything was grown in soil in the UK and the Coop de France delegate supported this comment. The Austrian delegate asked the group what could justify differentiating between producing organic aromatic pot plants and producing organic tomatoes in substrate. The CIA delegate thought that substrates should be banned in organic farming. The delegate from COAG, Spain, explained the existence of a consumer movement that refused to eat products grown in glasshouses and therefore allowing this procedure in organic farming could discourage consumers from this type of production. The LRF and MTK delegates said that it was vital for Nordic countries to continue growing in substrate due to their weather conditions. The APCA delegate acknowledged that there were extreme weather conditions in Nordic countries, however competition with other countries could not be distorted. Regarding the use of CO<sub>2</sub>, it was not permitted to use CO<sub>2</sub> to stimulate growth in France and Spain. In the UK there was a ban on using fossil fuels. The Italian delegate highlighted the possibility of using renewable energy sources and the Polish delegate informed members that it was recommended to use rain water stored in reservoirs in Poland.

#### **5. Debate on the request to authorise the use of 3 processing aids in animal feed**

The Coop de France delegate presented the item, which had been the subject of a written consultation ABI(12)6103. Members requested more detailed information, which would be passed on by the Secretariat and discussed at the next meeting.

#### **6. Discussion on poultrymeat production**

The Secretariat informed members that the EGTOP report was not yet available, even though the group had already approved it.

On the item about broiler and pullet production: the Danish delegation presented their contribution. Regarding the definition of "slow-growing strains", the NFU delegate stated that a list provided by the Commission would be a good solution. The LRF delegate believed it would be good to use both options. The LTÖ delegate said that drawing up a list would be advantageous. On the size of flocks, the Danish delegate thought that Regulation should stay the same and there should not be a limit to the number of flocks per farm. The APCA delegate mentioned that the useful part of the Regulation was the ability for a farm to feed all or some of its livestock and to manage effluents. The limit for one farm should correspond to the farms surface area. Otherwise, it would be necessary to draw up contracts with other organic farms. The CIA delegate believed there must be a link with the farms surface area. The NFU delegate thought it unnecessary to have flock limits per farm. The Danish delegate proposed a stocking density that was the same for fixed and mobile buildings. Members discussed the proposed stocking density that differentiated animals based on their age (+/- 4 weeks) and debated whether it was justified to have different densities for mobile and fixed buildings. The debate on stocking densities for external surface areas continued and there were requests ranging from 1

m<sup>2</sup>/broiler to 4 m<sup>2</sup>/broiler. For pullets, delegates expressed different opinions on the desired flock size and on the possibility of accessing an outside area.

#### **7. AOB**

According to the Swedish delegate, during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming (SCOF) the Commission had confirmed that genetic sexing was not allowed. This was an essential question for Sweden. The Italian delegate questioned this practice. The Commission would have to be consulted again on this topic.