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European Union

Organic Products

Council Conclusions on the EU Organic Action Plan 2003

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Report Highlights:

On December 17, 2003, the EU Agriculture Council adopted conclusions on an EU Organic Action Plan. In the conclusions, the Council calls on the EU Commission to incorporate organic agriculture as part of the EU's overall agriculture policy, address concerns about coexistence of organics and agricultural biotechnology and address international recognition of organic products.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
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The European Commission is currently preparing a European Action Plan for organic food and farming that will contain proposals for future initiatives aimed to enhance the further development of the organic farming sector in the EU. In February 2003, a working document and a questionnaire with 12 key points were put on the Commission's web site. The public was invited to react to the questions and to give additional comments on the working paper by 16 March 2003. See GAIN reports E23030 and E23174 for more details on the working document and the results of the internet consultation.

On December 17, 2003, the Agriculture Council discussed the progress of the Action Plan and provided input to the Commission's work in the form of Council Conclusions. The main conclusions were as follows:

-The Council calls upon the Commission to update the Action plan to take account of the strategic role organic agriculture can play in meeting EU goals related to the environment and CAP reform.

-Given developments in EU legislation related to commercialization and labeling of products of biotechnology, as well as guidelines on coexistence, the Council calls upon the Commission to include in the strategic objectives of the Plan appropriate measures for preventing accidental presence of biotech in organic products.

-The Commission is also called upon to promote a definition of "organic agriculture" and "product obtained by organic methods" at the EU and international level. This includes evaluating the costs and benefits of using the EU organic logo for all organic products, irrespective of their origin, while not excluding the use of other logos. In addition, actions could be taken to promote trade with third countries and improve free circulation of organic products within the EU.

-The Council also invites the Commission to include among the Plan's strategic objectives possibilities for member states to encourage voluntary initiatives to create rural zones for promoting high value-added products, including organic. The goal is to augment the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and to improve the organization of the organic production chain.

-The Council also asks the Commission to consider whether or not it is necessary to set up an independent committee to provide technical and scientific advice and to direct research and innovation in organic agriculture at the European level. In addition, the Commission should consider gathering economic data in order to analyze the evolution of supply and demand for organic products.

-The Commission is also called upon to continue adapting current regulations related to controls in order to ensure that controls take a risk-based approach and to improve product traceability and simplify administrative procedures. Imported organic products should also be considered in this context.

-The Council asks the Commission to provide a progress report by the end of February 2004, with a view to presenting the final Action Plan by the end of May 2004.

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Related reports from USEU Brussels:

Report Number	Title	Date Released
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E23020	EU Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming	2/14/2003