

# Press Release

## Organic Agriculture in Europe: Continued Growth

### FiBL presents current facts & trends at Biofach 2005

**(Frick, 22.2.2005) In Europe the area farmed organically is continuing to expand. Growth of land and of the number of organic farms is accompanied by better policy support, a growing market and increasing research activities. The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) will present current trends at the Biofach Congress 2005, February 24.**

FiBL Frick

Ackerstrasse  
CH-5070 Frick

Tel. +41 (0)62 865 72 72  
Fax +41 (0)62 865 72 73

E-Mail [info.suisse@fibl.org](mailto:info.suisse@fibl.org)

According to FiBL and the Welsh Institute of Rural Sciences, by December 31, 2003 more than 5.8 million hectares were managed organically by some 151,000 farms in European Union (EU) and EFTA countries. This constituted 3.4% of the total agricultural area.

FiBL expects the organic area to continue to grow over the next years. This will happen particularly in the new EU member states, where accession has triggered major growth. The European action plan for organic food and farming as well as other policy support measures can be expected to boost organic farming in all 25 European countries in the future.

FiBL Deutschland e.V.

Galvanistraße 28  
D-60486 Frankfurt a.M.

Tel. +49 69 7137699-0  
Fax +49 69 7137699-9

E-Mail [info.deutschland@fibl.org](mailto:info.deutschland@fibl.org)

The new European Action Plan for Organic Farming is a milestone for the organic sector in Europe. Matthias Stolze of FiBL criticises, however, that the European Commission did not set clear targets for the development of organic farming in the EU and did not allocate financial resources for its implementation. Nonetheless, with the action plan the Commission has underlined the importance of organic farming as a component of EU agricultural policy.

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European sales of organic products are estimated to have expanded by about 5 percent in 2003 to reach approximately 10.5 to 11.0 billion Euro. Germany remains the biggest national market in Europe (3.1 billion Euro organic sales in 2003). Toralf Richter of FiBL notes that Switzerland can be considered the clear organic market leader in Europe, or even the world, with an expenditure of more than 100 Euro per capita and year for organic food.

Research into organic farming is another major driver for the future development of the sector. In Europe organic farming research has

definitively stepped out of the niche; currently up to 80 million Euro per year are spent for research into organic farming. Germany is – thanks to its federal scheme for organic farming, the BÖL - the heavyweight in organic farming research, spending about seven million Euro on organic farming research annually, topped up by another approximately twelve million Euro funded by other federal or regional sources. Organic farming can answer many ecological and ethical problems of modern societies as it can counter problems of food quality, malnutrition, obesity and public health costs, says FiBL director Urs Niggli. There is a continuing need for research to explore these interactions.

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**Contact**

- Dr Urs Niggli, Director FiBL, CH-5070 Frick
- Dr Toralf Richter, Department of Socio-Economics, FiBL, CH-5070 Frick
- Dr Matthias Stolze, Department of Socio-Economics, FiBL, CH-5070 Frick
- Dr Helga Willer, Communication Department, FiBL, CH-5070 Frick

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**Contact during Biofach**

- Helga Willer, Phone +41 79 218 0626

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**Download of this press release and extensive background material including figures**

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**Programme of the Event “Organic Farming in Europe 2005: Market, Production, Policy & Research”, February 24, 2005, 12 to 1.30 p.m., Biofach Congress 2005, Nuremburg, Room Munich**

- Continued growth in Europe: Current trends in organic production

Helga Willer, FiBL

- The European organic market between strong growth and consolidation - current state and prospects

Toralf Richter, FiBL

- The current agripolicy context: The European Action Plan for Organic Farming and the current CAP Reform

Matthias Stolze, FiBL

- Research as a Driver for the Future Development of the Organic Sector

Urs Niggli, FiBL

- The European Logo for Organic Products: The Danish Example

Amanda H. Justesen, Dänisches Ministerium für Landwirtschaft