

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC LIVESTOCK AND MEAT

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Introduction

As organic foods become more prevalent in world trade so do organic livestock and their products find wider markets globally. It therefore becomes more important that organic standards for all nations be uniform and acceptable to each country that is involved in exporting as well as importing organic foods. In that organic livestock and animal products are more recently offered on the market than are organic plant products, it becomes increasingly more challenging to certify organic meat, dairy and poultry products for international trade. Simultaneously, national laws differing to some degree in various countries add to the difficulty of developing uniform regulations that will be acceptable to all nations. In general, organic livestock growers in all nations agree that "synthetics" should not be used in the production system either for crops or livestock or in the processing of their products. However, in certain circumstances, some believe that "approved synthetics" may be necessary for the success of their program. Therein lies the greatest deterrent to international approval of those animal products utilizing those debatable items. Nonetheless, such disagreement is being mediated by the international Codex Alimentarius representatives meeting periodically to address such issues on a world-wide basis and to standardize organic food systems in order to:

- protect consumers against deception and fraud in the market place and unsubstantiated product claims;
- protect producers of organic produce against misrepresentation of other agricultural produce as being organic;
- ensure that all stages of production, processing and marketing are subject to inspection and comply with these guidelines;
- harmonize provisions for the production, certification, identification and labelling of organically grown produce;
- provide international guidelines for organic food control systems in order to facilitate recognition of national systems as equivalent for the purpose of imports; and
- maintain and enhance organic agricultural systems in each country so as to contribute to the local and global preservation.

Additionally, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and the European Community Dairy Trade Association (ASSILEC) have been very effective in coordinating uniform requirements and certification for organic production in all participating countries. The combination of efforts by these organizations will ultimately develop acceptable global standards for organic animal products.

International Regulations

The most recent Codex meetings involved Argentina, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Lithuania, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. They agreed that where livestock are maintained they should be an integral part of the organic farm unit and should be raised according to the guidelines established as organic. Generally the following recommendations were proposed although there was not accord on all points:

- Animal products must not be sold as organic unless the animal has been raised according to these guidelines for a period of at least one year.
- Up to 10% of adult animals of a herd or flock may be brought-in annually from nonorganic sources for expansion or replacement purposes.
- All brought-in animals from non-organic sources must be produced according to these guidelines for a period of a minimum of one year before their products may be sold under an organic label. Exceptions may be allowed for:
  - (a) calves up to 14 (or 7?) days which have received colostrum and do not come from livestock markets;
  - (b) dairy animals provided that milk is kept separate for a period of 12 (or 4?) weeks;
  - (c) day old poultry; and
  - (d) laying hens, provided that eggs are kept separate for a period of 30 days.
- All livestock systems should be planned to provide the optimum level of 100% of the diet of feedstuffs produced to the requirements of these guidelines;
- however, by way of derogation, at least [ 80% / 85% ] of fodder inputs, calculated on a dry matter basis, should be from organic sources produced in compliance with these guidelines. Exceptions may be granted in cases of extreme climatic or other extenuating circumstances.
- Stocking rates for livestock should be appropriate for the region in question and as regulated by the inspection body for the region.
- Maintenance of livestock should be guided by an attitude of care, responsibility and respect for living creatures. Pain inflicted by treatments such as castrating, marking and mulesing should be kept to a minimum. Stress should be minimized. Living conditions should consider the natural needs of the animal for free movement, food, water, shelter and shade. Consideration should be given to their specific natural behavioral patterns.
- Breeding methods should be in compliance with the principles of organic farming taking into account breeds and strains suitable for raising under local conditions and under an organic system. Own sires should be held. Artificial insemination is not recommended. Embryo transfer techniques are not permitted in the organic farming system.
- Vaccination of livestock is permitted in cases where a known problem exists or is required by national regulations.

- Vitamins ( synthetic ), in the absence of natural source vitamins, pure amino acids and trace element supplements are permitted in cases where the need can be demonstrated.
- The use of veterinary drugs on livestock in the absence of illness is prohibited. Therapeutic use of veterinary drugs is permitted provided the withholding period is [ equal to / double / triple ] that required by national legislation for the veterinary drug concerned.
- Growth promotants are prohibited.

#### Processing, Storage and Transport

- The processing of organic food product should meet the requirements of Codex standards and codes of hygienic practice for food production.
- Organic produce may neither be mixed nor substituted with conventional produce.
- Where only part of the unit is certified, other product not covered by these guidelines should be stored and handled separately and both types of products should be clearly identified.
- Products derived from conventional and organic methods should not be stored together, except when packed and handled.
- Bulk stores for organic product should be set aside and clearly labelled to that effect.
- Contamination from any possible non-approved pesticide treatments before using the storage areas shall be excluded.
- Storage areas shall be thoroughly cleaned with methods appropriate to the product.
- Permitted specific storage conditions may include controlled atmosphere ( only CO<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub> )
- Pests should be avoided by GMP. Pest control treatment within storage areas may include physical barriers, sound, ultra-sound, light and UV-light; permitted treatments may include:
  - traps ( including pheromone traps and static bait traps );
  - temperature control;
  - controlled atmosphere;
  - diatomaceous earth.
- All materials used for packaging must conform to food grade packaging materials as established by national regulations.
- In addition, packaging material used for organic products should not contain fungicides, preservatives, or other chemical additives.
- Any food grade packaging material which has previously been in contact with any substance that could compromise the organic quality of the product should not be used.
- Information on non-retail containers of a product should be given either on the container or in accompanying documents, except that the name of the product, lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer or packer should appear on the container. Lot identification, and the name and address of the manufacturer or packer may be replaced by an identification mark provided that such a mark is clearly identifiable with the accompanying documents.

#### General Requirements

Even though the animal products are derived from livestock raised organically the consumer needs to be assured that these animal products are all that they are claimed to be-organic. Therefore, it is critical that these products have been processed in accordance with Codex standards and labelled and advertised as stipulated under this same authority. Furthermore, an approved inspection and certification system must be effective at all levels to verify the authenticity of the organic product throughout the entire system and to ensure consumer confidence.

A competent authority, in turn, will supervise the total program. Appropriate certificates will accompany all organic products at all critical points in the system. The authorizing agency will conduct a periodic review of the guidelines for the production, processing, labeling and marketing of organically produced foods in order to monitor and institute the latest developments in these areas.

Foreign products may enter the United States if they bear the official shield, seal or mark of a certification program or agent, provided that the Secretary has determined that the certification program or agent ensures observance of standards that are at least equivalent to those set forth in the United States organic certification program.

#### References

- FAO/WHO Joint Food Standards program ( 1994 )
- Codex Alimentarius Commission, 23rd session of the Committee on Food Labeling, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 23 - 28 October 1994.
- International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements ( IFOAM ) ( 1995 )
- Report from international meetings held in Köln, Germany, 13 -17 March 1995.
- USDA, National Organic Standards Board ( NOSB ) ( 1994 )
- Final recommendations adopted
- Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, 1 - 4 June 1994.

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