

BiOrganicLifeStyle on BIOFACH with seminar ‘Challenge for organic growth: harmonisation of residue handling in EU’

As part of the BIOFACH Congress, Biols organises a seminar on Friday 14th February on harmonisation of residue handling in the EU. Harmonisation of residue handling is an important challenge to tackle for further growth of organic food and farming.

Challenge for organic growth: harmonisation of residue handling in EU

Despite all contributing factors to the growth of organic, there are some important challenges to tackle. One of them is the way residue cases are handled at the moment in the EU. As part of the BIOFACH Congress, BiOrganicLifeStyle.EU organises the **seminar ‘Challenge for organic growth: harmonisation of residue handling in EU’** on Friday 14th February from 10.00 – 11.30 (Hall St. Petersburg – NCC Ost). Representatives from trade, the ‘Anti-Fraud Initiative’ and labs will share latest project results and their knowledge with the audience.

A big threat for the fast-growing organic market is the disharmonized situation of residue handling by inspection bodies and authorities, varying from zero tolerance to a case by case approach and different approaches in between. Therefore the Organic Trade and Processing Organisation (OPTA) took in cooperation with Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL) the initiative to start a common project that evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches. Bernhard Speiser, project leader: “We will present the first outcomes of this project. Our aim is to present cornerstones for a harmonised approach, that is in the scope of the new regulation in 2024.”

International market players, represented by Karst Kooistra from Tradin Organic, experience a lot of uncertainty and growing risks in the market, when it comes to residue findings in organic. “What is considered as proper organic in one EU country can be decertified in another EU country, because of a different interpretation. This kind of uncertainty could be a real showstopper for organic developments. We have to solve this if we want to make sure that ambitions of the EU Commission with organic can be fulfilled.”

The techniques for residue analysis are constantly becoming more and more sensitive. Meanwhile, it is technically possible to detect residues of chemicals below the level of one part per billion. Eurofins will present the technical development of the labs. But do these developments help the organic sector? The organic regulation is originally set up as a process



based regulation. Farmers and processors are not allowed to use chemical-synthetic substances. But what does it mean when traces of substances are found? Is it contamination, caused by conventional production where it is allowed to use these substances? Or is it fraud? Jochen Neuendorff member of the Anti-Fraud Initiative has a clear message: "It could be, but there are many other and more effective ways to cheat."

Johanna Mirenda (Organic Trade Association) will contribute with perspectives from the US market. "We struggle with the same subject and even in the more harmonised approach we face many difficulties. For the perspective of the global growth of organic, harmonization between EU and US would make sense as well." Bavo van den Idsert (representing Bionext) concludes in name of the entire organic sector: "For organic farming, trade and processing it feels pretty unfair that they have to deal with the chemical pollution from conventional farming. The current focus on residues should become more balanced and better to handle. At the end organic shows that proper production without chemical-synthetic substances is possible and that is the ambition of the Commission for all agriculture in the EU."

BIOrganicLifeStyle.EU

Biols (BIOrganicLifeStyle.EU) is an international project in which the most representative and important organic agri-food trade organisations from Italy (European Organic Partners) and from the Netherlands (Bionext) cooperate. It's a campaign in Germany, France and Italy, financed with aid from the European Union. The main objective is to promote organic lifestyle and contribute to the awareness of the added value of organic agricultural production methods in the EU. The goal is to increase the perceived value of products proud to exhibit the European organic logo, ensuring an image of European excellence together with tradition and national cultural heritage. By following the green leaf (the European organic logo), people can enjoy organic food and live clean with European organic. Consumers are more concerned about their nutrition habits (e.g. where food comes from and how it has been processed) and they find a clear answer in organic foods and beverages. "Think organic" will be the new European consumers' lifestyle.



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