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EU Member States must not allow organic reform to fail

Organic farming

Next Monday will see a meeting of EU agriculture ministers to decide on whether the governments of the EU Member States return to the table of negotiations on the EU Organic Farming Regulation. Member States must reach a swift agreement, says **Martin Häusling**, rapporteur and negotiator for the Parliament:

“We urgently need a decision on whether we will continue with an outdated and flawed regulation or bring about a positive end to the negotiations on this important package. If the Council is able to agree internally on a number of improvements, the new regulation will provide greater legal certainty and meet the challenges faced by organic farming. We call on the Council to negotiate with the Commission and Parliament to make this happen.

"Considerable progress has been made on imports, pesticide residues and controls. The organisations in the sector should be aware that a great chance to overcome the weaknesses of the current regulation could be missed."

Green food safety spokesperson **Bart Staes** adds:

"We continue to believe that an agreement is within reach and is vital for the development of the sector. The European Parliament, Council and Commission should rapidly bring the negotiations to a satisfactory conclusion, preferably by the end of the Maltese Presidency or in the early stages of the Estonian Presidency. We expect more commitment from the Council’s side, particularly from those Members States that have until now blocked the agreement."

Background

Areas of improvement in the new regulation include:

- improved controls on imports of organic products via application of uniform standards. Until now, the fast-growing volumes of imports was known to be a gateway for fraud. After a transitional period allowing producers in third countries to adapt, our consumers can expect the same uniform standards to be enforced for products from third countries.
- On pesticide residues in organic products, precautionary measures to avoid contamination and

fraud can prevent contamination more efficiently and put responsibility on Member States and not only on organic producers. Instead of an automatic decertification of contaminated organic products as originally proposed by the Commission, the Commission must now analyse the cause of contamination before punishing honest famers.
- The process-based annual control of all organic farms still remains the general rule, with the possibility to have controls every two year for farms with a low-risk profile, but each farm has the right to demand a yearly control if they wish to do so. If the Regulation is not adopted, this disposition will be questioned.

A final trilogue was foreseen on May 31st, but on the 29th, the Member States failed to approve the mandate for the Maltese presidency to continue the negotiations. The reasons for this failure are not known.

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