

Organic Monitor

PRESS RELEASE

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Sustainable Foods Summit Receives Positive Reception

London – The first Sustainable Foods Summit (www.sustainablefoodssummit.com) drew to a successful close at the end of June in Amsterdam, with the organisers and delegates satisfied with the inaugural event.

In spite of the economic recession, the summit brought together about 100 key executives involved in sustainability in the food industry. A post-summit survey shows that 86% of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the summit, and that 79% found it informative. Dr. Rainer Bachi, Director of IMO, echoed the positive sentiment, ‘thank you for the excellent organisation of the conference...we received many new ideas and useful information’.

The summit kicked off by an opening address by Dr. Nadia El-Hage Scialabba from the Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. Titled ‘Inconvenient Truths for the Food Industry’, the address set the tone of the summit by stressing the importance of sustainability in agriculture and food production: Climate change, water scarcity, oil dependence and urbanisation are putting a strain on the planet’s capacity to feed itself.

The first session of the summit looked at the various eco-labelling schemes for sustainable food products. Amarjit Sahota, Director of Organic Monitor, showed that the global market for eco-labelled foods was valued in the region of US \$70 billion; the bulk of sales generated from organic foods. The proceeding papers were from leading eco-labelling organisations that included Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO), Rainforest Alliance, UTZ certified and the Carbon Trust. The panel discussion looked at how convergence was occurring between some of these standards. For instance, a growing number of organic standards are incorporating social and biodiversity principles.

Investing in Sustainability was the focus of the second session, with presentations given by financiers and recipients of ethical investments. Koert Jansen from Triodos Bank highlighted the importance of sustainable investment, especially in today’s capital markets. Wim Nienhuis, Managing Director of AgroFair, showed how investment in fair trade projects in Latin America and Africa has created professional enterprises. Canaan Fair Trade shared its experiences on how ethical investment has had a major impact on the lives and welfare of Palestinian people.

Pascal Grévarath, Chairman of the CIAA Environment Committee, opened the second day of the summit with his opening remarks on ‘Sustainability from Farm to Fork’. He

expressed the need for Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of food products, setting the scene for the session on Sustainable Supply Chains. Sustainable initiatives at various levels of the food supply chain were then highlighted in the proceeding presentations by Earthoil Plantations, Alpro, Nature & More, and TetraPak. A paper on ethical consumerism by Boston Consulting Group showed that awareness and perceived choice – and not price - were the major barriers for consumers to buy more green products. Volkert Engelsmann from EOSTA showed how organic food companies are meeting rising consumer expectations by becoming carbon neutral and implementing traceability schemes.

The Marketing & Industry Issues session rounded off the two-day summit. The session started with Innocent Drinks, which shared its sustainable initiatives that involve offsetting carbon emissions, ethical sourcing and reducing packaging. Hans van Bochove revealed that Starbucks has become the world's largest buyer of fair trade coffee and how it aims to double its fair trade coffee sales. The final presentations looked at retailer sustainability initiatives, with Royal Ahold Group giving details of its recently launched private label for sustainable food products, Pure & Honest.

The summit brought together various stake-holders in the food industry; these included food and ingredient companies like Royal Wessanen, Café Direct, Unilever, Tradin Organics, ADM, Givaudan, Natudis; retailers like Metro, Sainsbury's and Albert Heijn; and various NGOs and inter-governmental organisations. Conference proceedings are available for a small fee. The 2nd Sustainable Foods Summit will take place again in Amsterdam, June 2010.

Further Information

More information is available from www.sustainablefoodssummit.com

The summit in pictures <http://www.sustainablefoodssummit.com/summitpics.htm>

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About Organic Monitor

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