



Press Release

Fourth Workshop of the EU Project OrganicDataNetwork in Montpellier

“We are just half way through, and we’re on schedule”, Raffaele Zanolì (Polytechnic University of Marche, Ancona, Italy), coordinator of the EU Project OrganicDataNetwork was pleased to report. 28 participants representing the 15 project partners gathered from 3 - 4 October 2013 in Montpellier for the fourth project meeting. The previous meetings were held in Ancona (Italy), Frick (Switzerland) and Newbury (England).

The main topics on the agenda were monitoring data quality by means of plausibility checks, the development of an organic database and the implementation of case studies to improve methodology. At the one-and-a-half-day event, participants in the project in various countries explained their approach and their proposals for developing a common strategy for collecting market data. The aim of the project is the publication in the autumn of 2014 of a handbook that will help to harmonize data collection across the whole of Europe.

As a practical example of the benefits of systematically executed data collection for a European country, Dorian Flechet from the project partner Agence Bio – the French Agency for Organic Agriculture – presented the results for France, where in 2012 organic turnover of €4.1bn was recorded. In recent years there has been an especially big increase in the land area cultivated by organic farmers, and now nearly 4% of agricultural land in France is farmed organically. The region Languedoc-Roussillon, with Montpellier as its capital, has 10 % of its land managed in compliance with organic standards, which is the second highest share in France. It is, moreover, the front runner in the production of organic wine.

However, before data of this kind can be made public each year, several months have to be spent on compiling the data, because the figures provided on many levels by the most diverse actors like inspection agencies, associations, organizations, wholesalers and importers and exporters have to be collated. Helga Willer from the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL and Diana Schaack from the German agricultural market information company Agrarmarkt Informations-Gesellschaft (AMI) reported on the progress made on the database of OrganicDataNetwork. This database has over 8,000 entries for 2011 alone. It contains the details of land area (hectares), production, retail sales and exports and imports (volume and value).

Corinna Feldmann from the University of Kassel and Diana Schaack from Agrarmarkt Informations-Gesellschaft dealt in detail with possible sources of error in collecting organic market data.

Using case studies, data from France, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Britain and several Mediterranean countries are currently being examined to test and compare the



feasibility and practicability of the processed data. Above all, those project partners who themselves collect market data find this process helpful. With status-quo reports from individual countries already available, the project partners collecting market data are now been in a position to become involved in direct discussion of their experiences, compare methods and thus learn from particularly well functioning examples. The annual process of establishing the size of the organic market in the working group "Arbeitskreis Biomarkt" in Germany under the direction of AMI was given as an example and sensible practice.

All participants in the event in Montpellier were extremely pleased with the discussions, the outcomes and the organization. At the conclusion of the meeting, Martin Cottingham, who compiles the annual organic market report for the UK for the Soil Association, said: "This was the most useful of these meetings so far, because we're getting into the deliverables of the project."

Pictures:

- Group picture OrganicDataNetwork, 3/4.10.2013 in Montpellier
- OrganicDataNetwork coordinator Raffaele Zanolì, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Ancona
- Susanne Padel, Organic Research Centre, Newbury

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Note

(1) The workshop was organized by the European funded project "Data network for better European organic market information" (OrganicDataNetwork). The project "Data network for better European organic market information" (OrganicDataNetwork) aims to increase the transparency of the European organic food market through better availability of market intelligence about the sector to meet the needs of policy makers and actors involved in organic markets. It is funded under the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union and runs from 2012 to 2014.