

**Key messages, conclusions and future
action on organic livestock production
with focus on animal health, animal
welfare and food safety**

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Sustaining Animal Health and Food Safety in Organic Farming

A European Commission funded Concerted Action Project

During the next 30 minutes ...

- Outcome of SAFO
- Workshop presentations: What have we learned about European organic livestock farming and food safety?
- Results of 3 SAFO participant consultations
- Challenges identified at roadshows
- Recommendations for the future



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Physical outcomes: 4 workshops

WS1: Socio-economic aspects of **animal health** and food safety in organic farming systems (9/03, IT)

WS2: Organic livestock farming: potential and limitations of **husbandry practice** to secure animal health and welfare and food quality (3/04, DE)

WS3: Enhancing **animal health security** and **food safety** in organic livestock production (9/04, PL)

WS4: Systems development: **quality and safety** of organic livestock products (3/05, CH)

Physical outcomes at 4 workshops: 81 oral + 39 posters presentations

- Highest number of oral presentations: Central + North Western European countries
 - Organic livestock production + market very different
- Most presentations: research results (CEE countries national report specially at WS 3 in PL)
- Stakeholders + farmers: national communication, translated summaries + dialogue in WS host countries
- Increasing number of contributions from new member countries + knowledge & exchange gradually exchanged e.g. via roadshows
- Host country treated as “case study” in different ways
- Animal health + welfare ↔ food quality ↔ food safety bridged gradually

Challenges 'from outside' => pressure on organic livestock farms

- As tariff based barriers to trade disappear, disease status may become more important
- Consumer expectations:
 - Healthier food, expectations to animal welfare
- Current threats: AI, FMD, vector borne diseases
- Taxpayers will not pay for animal health 'disasters'
- Climatic change brings new challenges
- Market for livestock products less well developed throughout Europe compared with crops – in some areas almost no home market

General and repeated conclusions

- **Diversity clearly demonstrated**
 - Limits possibilities to transfer technology between countries/regions
 - Difficult to create a harmonised regulation covering all regions
- **Gap between principles + standards and practice of organic farming**
 - Countries with long history not always well implemented (e.g. Germany)
 - New EU member countries: difficult
 - Could be helped through farm individual health planning in combination with follow-up

Workshop 1: Socio-economic aspects of animal health and food safety in organic farming systems (9/03, IT)

- Financial & economic aspects: farm + food chain levels
- Attitudes and expectations of various stakeholders and discrepancies to production reality
- Case: Italy – one of the fastest growing organic production and markets
- Workgroup report:
 - Standards: ensure that organic products are best and different from conventional products
 - Research needs identified
 - Homoeopathy, phytotherapy, breeding, preventive measures, nutrition ... etc. etc.
 - Standards of organic food processing needed
 - Many results exist on animal health & welfare incl. welfare assessment; a question of exchange

Workshop 2: Organic livestock farming: potential and limitations of husbandry practice to secure animal health and welfare and food quality (3/04, DE)

- **Farm practices: impact on animal health & food quality**
- **Wealth of information on husbandry, breeding, feeding**
- **Animal health status does not live up to expectations**
- **Current inspection and certification systems inadequate**
- **Workgroup reports e.g.**
 - **Idea of health planning on farm level relevant**
 - **System approach & interdisciplinary research necessary in order to improve animal health and welfare**

Workshop 3: Enhancing animal health security and food safety in organic livestock production (9/04, PL)

- **Potential risk for zoonoses; few reports of experienced**
 - Outdoor, groups, not-closed farms, mother-offspring
 - Identify critical control points => minimising risk
 - Bio-security (closed herds)
- **Heavy metals & contaminants**
- **Development of organic farming in new and emerging EU countries**
- **Workgroup reports e.g.:**
 - Minimising risk for zoonotic diseases
 - Education (consumers, farmers (e.g. hygiene))
 - Hygiene and manure management; biosecurity

Workshop 4: Systems development: quality and safety of organic livestock products (3/05, CH)

- **Quality concept in focus**
- **Complexity; zoonotic agents and composition of milk and meat**
- **Use of veterinary medicine and risk for residues**
- **Workgroup reports, e.g.**
 - **Animal based outcomes as indicator of process quality; research needed to identify parameters**
 - **Minimal processing of food products**
 - **Agreement on definitions of 'food quality' needed**
 - **Inputs to IFOAM's work on organic principles**

Field trips at all 4 workshops

- Farms + processing ;
sometimes in
combination
- Understanding of local
and national conditions,
debates and challenges
in organic livestock
production
- Important
demonstration of
diversity

Results from SAFO participant consultation 1:

Three main areas of expectations from partners to the SAFO Network

- Development of organic farming under diverse conditions
- Create a link between animal health and food safety issues in organic farming
- Focus on standard development and bridge between research and stakeholders
- Consciousness: Participants & participating countries have very different levels of and experience with organic farming and different focus areas => high demands to network



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Results from SAFO participant consultation 2:

Implementation of standards in participating countries => standard development

(2nd presentation; Albert Sundrum)

- **The existence of standards alone is no guarantee for good animal health / safe livestock food products:**
 - Standards not always well implemented everywhere
 - Individual farm management still crucial for success
- **Three main areas of challenges with regard to implementation identified:**
 - Current farm practice
 - Diverse conditions (e.g. climate)
 - Formulation of EU regulation

Results from SAFO participant consultation 3:

Key messages

- **Networking is valuable**
- **Diversity needs to be respected**
- **Knowledge and training networks among farmers important**
- **Innovative approach important**
- **Agreed definition of food quality and safety needed**
- **Suggestions to future research**

Summary from SAFO roadshows

(1st presentation today; David Younie)

- **Small or no home market**
- **Poor national marketing infrastructure**
- **Diverse traditional systems need to be changed**
 - Housing systems
- **Lack of organic conversion subsidy in some countries**
- **Need for education!**
 - Farmers
 - Advisors, and in particular: veterinarians!
- **Poor availability of organic replacement livestock (pigs & poultry) and feed (protein)**
- **Concern over the increasing GMO risk**

From the intermediate objectives in the Technical Annex to the conclusion:

- **‘To identify important food quality characteristics linked to organic livestock products, improve food quality, including food safety with regard to zoonoses, drug residues and development of anti-microbial resistance...’**
- **Process quality: Lives of the animals & producing the food**
 - The history, local values, processing, environment, animal welfare
- **Product quality: the food ‘alone’:**
 - Characteristics (e.g. taste), safe food.
- **Review of research evidence on food safety**

From intermediate objectives in the Technical Annex to the conclusion:

- **‘... This objective also includes aspects of food process quality with regard to animal health and welfare in organic livestock production systems...’**
- **Standards not always followed and when followed: still diverse conditions & individual farm management still crucial**
 - => national and regional adjustments within the framework of EU standards
 - => animal health and welfare plan to ensure farm level implementation
 - => As a part of standards: control mechanism that standards are followed and national and farm practices are implemented
- **Review of possibilities for improvement**

How should an organic farmer live up to the 'organic qualities' on farm level?

- **Consciousness and harmony: goals of farm combined with organic goals + Strong ownership of organic values and characteristics locally on the farm => education & organisation of farmers and advisors**
- **Certification and control measures => improve EU legislation and local certification / control**
- **Continuous on-farm improvement: advisors and veterinarians involved if/when relevant => education**

Thoughts based on SAFO participant consultation 2:

Implementation of standards in participating countries => standard development

- Three main areas of problems with regard to implementation identified:
 - Current farm practice => animal health plan, better recording system of e.g. disease treatments part of standards, education of farmers and advisors
 - Diverse conditions (e.g. climate) => (room for) regional and national adjustments included in EU standards
 - Formulation of EU regulation => definitions and details on specific areas needed

Thoughts based on SAFO participant consultation 3:

Key messages

- **Networking is valuable => effort to build up and continue networks**
- **Diversity needs to be respected => national, regional and local follow-up of legislation**
- **Knowledge and training networks among farmers important => education**
- **Innovative approach important => network and data bases of experience**
- **Common definition of food quality and safety needed => further research as background**
- **Suggestions to future research**

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funding the project !**

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various workshops and working
groups!**

Thank you for your attention!