

TACD

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ORGANIC FOODS

TACD welcomes expanded consumer access to organic food and calls on the US and the EU to support programs including strong Codex Alimentarius standards that will enhance their availability to consumers. Such programs should be based on the expectations and needs of the consumer with the aim of environmental and social sustainability, healthy, high-quality goods, and optimum animal welfare. Organic foods are produced without pesticides or chemical fertilizers, and without the use of antibiotics for livestock (except to treat disease). These provisions make organic foods good both for the environment and for the public. TACD also calls on the US and the EU to enact strict controls and labeling to safeguard consumer confidence in organic products, a vital factor in the continued growth of this sector.

Organic farming is defined as self-sufficient and sustainable agri-environmental system in equilibrium. The system is based as far as possible on local, renewable resources. Organic farming builds on an integrated ethos which encompasses the environmental, economic and social aspects in agricultural production both from a local and from a global perspective. Thus, organic farming perceives nature as an entity which has value in its own right; human beings have a moral responsibility to steer the course of agriculture so that the cultivated landscape makes a positive contribution to the countryside. The US and the EU should help promote these goals by maintaining high standards for organic producers, encouraging organic production by farms and companies of all sizes, and helping consumers distinguish organic foods by the use of clear labeling.

Organic standards should permit free trade of organic products. For organic foods produced in other countries outside the US and the EU, control bodies should be accredited by IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements. Small or recently established control bodies may be acceptable, especially in Third World countries, if the body undertakes to join IFOAM's accreditation program as soon as possible.

Governments should allow higher standards such as Demeter Certification, which are already active in over 20 countries world-wide.

Specifically, TACD supports the incorporation of certain principles in the regulation and certification of organic agriculture and food production:

- Organic standards should be established by government officials who have experience with and knowledge of traditional organic agricultural practices and in a close collaboration with organic farm organizations, like IFOAM. The USDA should incorporate the recommendations of the US National Organic Standards Board and not make it illegal to set standards higher than the USDA's.

- The US and EU should cooperate with the Codex Alimentarius Commission to rapidly adopt international standards that are acceptable under the TBT and SPS agreements of the World Trade Organization.
- Performance standards should be allowed to include considerations for Process and Production Methods, to allow countries to distinguish between products based on how they are made, even though the WTO agreement currently is ambiguous on this issue.
- All organic products should be clearly and conspicuously labeled to allow consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.
- The country of origin must be stated on all organic foods.
- Genetically modified organisms and irradiation must not be used in organic production.
- Governments and regulatory agencies should prohibit all use of hormones and all routine use of antibiotics for organic livestock. Humane treatment requires that sick animals be treated as appropriate, but these animals should then be removed from organic production until the drugs have fully cleared their systems.
- To protect consumers from the dangers associated with the use of animal manure, general standards must be developed for pathogen control and elimination.
- Livestock feed should be from organic sources and should never contain rendered animal protein.
- Environmentally-contaminated land should not be used for organic agriculture.