

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

IFOAM
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

UNCTAD
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

INTERNATIONAL TASK FORCE ON HARMONIZATION AND EQUIVALENCY IN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE (ITF)


What is the ITF?

- A government/intergovernmental/private consortium
- Seeking to reduce obstacles to organic trade.



What is the ITF?

- Members from:
 - 25 governments (who have organic regulations)
 - 6 intergovernmental bodies (FAO, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNECE, WTO, OECED)
 - 15 private sector actors (CBs, Traders, NGOs)
- Organized by UNCTAD, FAO, IFOAM




ITF Funded by:

- Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency)
- Government of Switzerland



Why the ITF? – Problems/Obstacles for organic trade

- Both government and private sectors governing organic production and labeling and certification
- Many private and government organic standards, technical regulations and certification requirements worldwide
- Proliferation of certification bodies (now over 400), both private and government
- Rapid expansion of organic trade



Why the ITF? – Problems/Obstacles for organic trade

- Growth of organic agriculture in developing countries
- Producers and Traders: need multiple certifications to access different world markets
- Certifiers: need multiple accreditations (in service of producers and traders) to access different world markets
- Lack of harmonization of standards, technical regulations, and certification requirements
- Few equivalence agreements



ITF Approach

- Review and analyze the current situation
- Formulate proposals for solutions to be considered by
 - governments,
 - intergovernmental agencies
 - IFOAM
 - relevant private sector bodies
- Seek agreements from the respective actors on their commitment to the proposals



ITF History – Harmonization Conference

- Convened by IFOAM, FAO and UNCTAD in 2002
- 210 Participants, 52 Countries, incl. 42 Government Representatives
- Conclusions:
 - Agreement on problems
 - Continue private-public partnership to search for a path towards harmonization
 - Form International Task Force (ITF) with IFOAM, FAO, UNCTAD as ITF Steering Committee



ITF History – First Phase: Analyzing Current Situation

- Two ITF Meetings:
 - February 2003, Nuremberg
 - Organize ITF
 - Establish a work plan - identify papers to be developed
 - October 2003, Geneva,
 - Presentation and discussion of papers
- Four discussion papers finalized
 - Overview of government regulations
 - Current mechanisms that enable organic trade
 - Impacts of harmonization on producers, traders, consumers
 - Models and mechanisms for harmonization



ITF History – Second Phase: Proposals for Solutions

- Three Meetings:
 - November 2004, Rome
 - February 2005, Nuremberg (interim meeting)
 - December 2005, Hammamet, Tunisia
- Agreement upon long term and short term strategy (Rome meeting)
- Identification of tools for solutions (Tunisia meeting)



ITF History – Second Phase: Proposals for Solutions

- Long term strategy
 - One international reference standard
 - One international set of certification requirements for reference in international trade
 - Mechanisms that allow assessment of equivalence



ITF History – Second Phase: Proposal for Solutions

- Short term strategy
 - Actions that can be taken to advance towards long term goals and to improve situation immediately e.g. bilateral cooperations



ITF History – Second Phase: Proposal for Solutions

- New studies in 2005
 - Comparison and analysis of certification requirements
 - Analysis of equivalence and other cooperation in the government and accreditation sectors
 - Review of common regulatory objectives as possible mechanism for equivalence
 - Analysis of successes and failures of cooperations among conformity assessment bodies



ITF History – Second Phase: Proposal for Solutions

- New work in 2006
 - Develop guidance document for judging equivalency of standards
 - Develop one set of essential international certification requirements for the organic sector.
 - Pursue ideas for how to establish an "organic" MLA among accreditation bodies



ITF History – Second Phase: Proposal for Solutions

- Meetings in 2006 (proposed)
 - Workshop on Certification Requirements 7-8 September, Stockholm, Sweden
 - 6th ITF Meeting, 10-13 October, Washington D.C., sponsored by USDA



ITF Future – Third Phase: Support for Solutions

- ITF members seek agreement on implementing proposed actions from
 - Governments
 - Intergovernmental organizations
 - Private sector stakeholders
- Consultative meetings with government representatives



WEBSITE

www.unctad.org/trade_env/itf-organic

