



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS



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) 2003-2008

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Why an ITF?

- Rapid expansion of the organic trade (15-20% per year) in the last decade, worldwide
- Over 100 countries exporting certified organic products
- Presence of many governmental and private standards and technical regulations governing organic production and certification. Two international standards (*Codex Organic Guidelines and IFOAM Basic Standards*).
- Proliferation of certification bodies (over 400 in 2007), both private and public



Why an ITF? (continued)

- Lack of harmonization of standards, technical regulations and certification requirements
- Few equivalence agreements
- Burden on producers and traders that need multiple certifications to access different markets
- Burden on certification bodies that need multiple accreditations (in service of producers and traders) to access different markets
- Trade barriers, especially to smallholders



What is the ITF?

- An open-ended forum for dialogue between governmental and private sector institutions, seeking to reduce obstacles to organic trade
- Since 2003, ITF members, acting in their personal capacity, have come from:
 - **25 governments** (ministries of agriculture and commerce dealing with organic agriculture)
 - **7 intergovernmental bodies** (FAO, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNECE, WTO, OECD, EC)
 - **15+ private sector actors** (certification and accreditation bodies, traders, NGOs)


ITF sponsors

- Convened jointly by FAO, IFOAM and UNCTAD
- Secretariat provided by IFOAM
- Funded by
 - the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida (2003-2008)
 - the Government of Switzerland (2005)
 - The Norwegian International Development Cooperation Agency, Norad (2007-08)

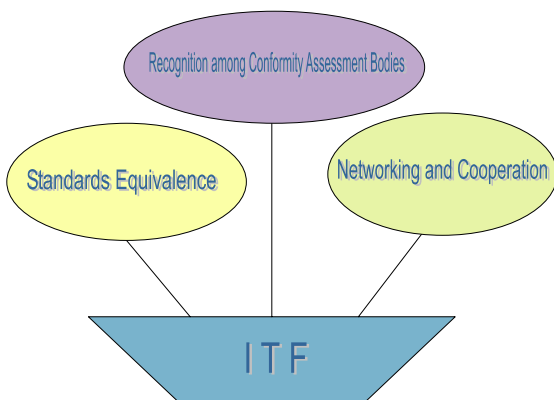
The ITF mandate

- Review organic standards, regulations and conformity assessment systems
- Formulate proposals for harmonization opportunities and mechanisms for establishing equivalence and mutual recognition, for consideration by:
 - Governments
 - Codex Alimentarius Commission
 - Relevant bodies of FAO, UNCTAD and IFOAM
 - Other relevant institutions
- Advise stakeholders and provide information



The ITF Long-term Strategy

- Without creating new institutional structures, move organic guarantee systems towards:
 - One international organic standard for reference
[although it was finally agreed to support both Codex Guidelines (governments) and IFOAM Basic Standards (private sector)]
 - A mechanism for the judgment of equivalence to the reference standard
 - One set of international requirements for organic certification bodies (reference for equivalency and recognition)
 - Cooperation within and among government and private sectors to streamline trade



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The ITF work phases

- 2003-05: Review and Analysis
- 2005-08: Formulation of Proposals and Tools for Solutions



ITF outputs

- 8 ITF meetings (2003-08)
- 4 Volumes of ITF studies (2 more to come)
- Recommendations
- 2 ITF Tools: Equitool and IROCB
- Information Kit



Key Recommendations of the ITF

Standards and Equivalency

- Governments commit to using the two international standards (*Codex and IFOAM*) as the reference point for import approvals.
- Use Equitool to assess equivalency of organic standards.



Key Recommendations of the ITF

Conformity assessment / Certification

Use International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies (IROCB) as

- A benchmark for equivalence
- A catalyst for convergence of requirements
- Direct accreditation as possible



Last ITF meeting

6-7 October, Geneva

Room XXV

- Launch 2 ITF Tools
 - International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies (IROCB)
 - Equitool
- Review the work of ITF and close the Task Force
- High-Level Public Session, 7 October 3.30-5.30 followed by organic reception. All are invited!



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ITF website

www.unctad.org/trade_env/itf-organic