



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR CONSUMER EDUCATION AND PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

OVERVIEW

This policy summary provides recommendations on why and how to provide support for consumer education and promotion campaigns of organic food and agriculture. It outlines options for providing this support, followed by examples from various countries.

RATIONALE

Lack of consumer awareness is one of the main bottlenecks to expansion of organic markets and, thus, organic production. Consumer education campaigns are an important mechanism to solve this problem. Especially in emerging sectors, the organic industry itself does not have sufficient resources (and is often not sufficiently federated) to fund mass public education campaigns, which can be very costly. Also, since this is a matter of education and public health, as well as environmental public goods, there is political rationale for the government to put public funds into such campaign. This support, if focused on domestically produced organic products, can also contribute to policy goals to support domestic producers. In cases where there is a national organic logo, recognition for the logo can be built through special

SUMMARY OF POLICY OPTIONS

Options for governments to effect consumer education and promotion campaigns on organic food and agriculture are multidimensional, taking into account the type of government engagement with other parties, and the structure and timeline for the activities.

Regarding engagement, governments can:

- Limit their role to funding other parties to plan and implement consumer education and promotion;
- Fund projects, and collaborate with other parties e.g. organic sector organizations, development agencies, in the planning and implementation of activities;
- Fund, plan and implement these activities on their own.

This measure can be structured as:

- Ongoing programs wherein activities are continuously budgeted and implemented, e.g. a standard budget item and related activities that are regularly implemented.
- Time-limited projects



campaigns.

SCOPE

The optimal context for consumer education and promotion campaigns is where there is a national organic logo (usually in connection with an organic regulation), which is associated with the education and campaign materials and messaging. However, effective campaigns can be implemented at all stages of organic sector development (provided they pay attention to product availability) and regardless of the existence of an organic regulation. The measure is justifiable where policy goals include health of the citizens, environmental protection through increasing organic agriculture, and affording farmers new and/or more profitable markets.

POLICY OPTIONS

The structure of policy approaches may vary, and so may the actors.

Structural Options

Where national organic plans are developed, consumer education and promotion is often included as an ongoing measure with an assigned budget. Activities in the measure may be fixed and/or implemented as periodic events, such as an annual “Organic Week” campaign.

Special campaigns, designed and managed as projects, are another option. These may be fully government funded or co-funded by the public

and private sector. In developing countries, the mix of funding sources may also include development cooperation organizations.

Engagement Options

Whether structured as a project or ongoing program, this measure is almost always undertaken by or in collaboration with organic associations or other key representatives of the country’s organic stakeholders, which often plan and implement the activities. The main role of governments is usually as a source of funds. However, governments often participate at some stage and level in campaign planning and implementation. They may directly implement some supportive activities such as website information and public service announcements.

Activities

Activities, either in ongoing programs or campaigns include:

- social media blitzes
- broadcast public service announcements
- press releases/ media relations
- billboard messages
- organic fairs and promotions in retail stores and public buildings such as schools and hospitals
- organic farm tours and other on-farm events for the general public

Many Agriculture Departments and Ministries that regulate organic



agriculture feature positive, consumer-oriented information on organic food and agriculture on their websites and they build organic agriculture and food into the topics about which they communicate in speeches, press releases, etc. These activities can also be taken up by non-regulating governments.

Regardless of the structure of promotion and level of government engagement, it is important that

the scope, size and nature of the promotion is attuned to the pattern of availability of organic products. This is especially important when there is an emerging organic sector. For campaigns, special actions can ensure product availability in stores and farmers markets to which consumers can be directed.

COUNTRY EXAMPLES

Austria: Since 2004, the Ministry of Environment, in partnership with other ministries, retailers and NGOs, sponsors the annual Sustainability Weeks event to promote organic, locally-produced and fair trade goods. The event involves thousands of retailers throughout the country who promote and have special offers on organic, fair trade, and locally made products.

Denmark: The government has been regularly investing funds in organic consumer campaigns over the past decade. For 2015-2018 the government allocated more than EUR 3.3 million for sales promotion on the domestic market. Most of the implementation is done by

the organic association, Organic Denmark, which runs activities including harvest events, messaging in traditional and social media, point-of-sale materials, events, and special campaigns. In 2015, Organic Denmark implemented a campaign celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Danish organic label in collaboration with all major retail chains, aiming to increase retail organic sales by 10%, and achieving a 12% increase in sales. Organic Denmark has two annual high-profile consumer-oriented events. The Organic Harvest markets in September are attended by 75,000 people. Organic Day (Øko-day) invites consumers to organic farms in springtime to see the cows stampede



out of barns onto fresh grass after a winter inside. In 2016, more than 250,000 people (almost 5% of the Danish population) visited more than 80 participating organic farms.

Czech Republic: The Ministry of Agriculture co-funds the annual “Organic Food Month” campaigns whose goals are to encourage more consumers to discover organic products through tasting, farm visits, etc. The previous Czech Organic Action Plan (2004-2010) included some innovative awareness events for the public, such as a competition for the ‘Best organic farmer of the year’ and ‘Best organic food of the year’. The later plans (2011-2015 and 2016-2020) also include promotional and educational activities for the public on the advantages of organic food and farming.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia depends on imports to meet 70% of its food requirements, and its organic production sector is at an early stage of development. For nearly a decade, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture has been working with the technical assistance of GIZ International Services and in cooperation with the Saudi Organic Farming Association (SOFA) to support the development of the country’s organic agriculture sector. Two promotion campaigns, structured as projects, have been implemented. The first campaign first surveyed consumers and then developed consistent messaging and imagery which was disseminated

via traditional channels. The second campaign strongly used social media for messaging. It also included a press conference featuring the Agriculture Minister and prominent agriculture and food business leaders. The campaign also staged organic food festivals in about 20 stores of two major supermarket chains. As a result, supermarket sales of organic products has dramatically increased and the stores feature an ever more diverse range of organic products.

Tunisia: The government decided in 2010 to create and directly manage an annual Organic Tunisian Product Week. It includes various conferences and events for the sector but also reaches out to consumers and pupils in the various districts, including via radio programs.

Brazil: The Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with other ministries and with NGOs, has been financing and organizing Organic Food Week campaigns every year since 2005, which involves promotion activities in nearly every state of the country. Funds are made available to regional governments to implement activities.

Republic of Korea: The Chungcheongbuk-do provincial government and Goesan County hosted, in 2015, the Goesan Organic Exposition. This was the largest organic exhibition ever organized for the public in the world. It presented scientific materials and interactive displays on the benefits



of organic agriculture at 10 themed pavilions. The event attracted 1,1 million Korean visitors and sent a strong message that the government endorses the benefits of organic food.

Canada: Organic consumer awareness activities are implemented mostly by the industry, but the government funded the development of a branding concept and program

for Canada Organic, which resulted in the bold “Think Before You Eat – Think Canada Organic” sector brand campaign, successfully launched in 2013. The government is also hosting the Think Canada Organic website and participates in the Organic Week, a promotion campaign implemented annually across Canada.

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