

change; it is a big challenge not to lose momentum and to re-establish the importance of the program. However, several experiences show that even with decreasing political support, if momentum has been created at the level of the individual kitchens, with kitchen staff and communities supporting the transition to organic, it can sustain itself and even continue developing with reduced high-level public support. For example, in Denmark, in 2011 the government established an ambitious target of 60% organic in all public kitchens, and it allocated around EUR 3.8 million annually to support the organic education of kitchen workers. After a change of government in 2015, the target was dropped and the level of financial support reduced to EUR 1.3 million annually. However, many cities and food service companies are still increasing their share of organic supplies. In 2015, there was still a 20% food service sales increase in organic, resulting in political pressure to maintain the program.

In the catering supply chain, like in the rest of the economy, concentration is occurring. In many advanced economies catering wholesalers are becoming fewer and larger. They are supplying a broader range of products (one stop shopping) with very competitive prices. The pressure from big catering companies towards central kitchens and towards cook & chill systems is very high, which is a factor to take into account when planning to go organic in canteens. In addition food markets are increasingly de-localized.

Although experiences with 80-90-100 % organic food in public canteens are impressive and inspiring, it is safer and more effective to adopt a progressive, incremental approach to the organic procurement process, which can help cities to calibrate demand and supply of organic products.

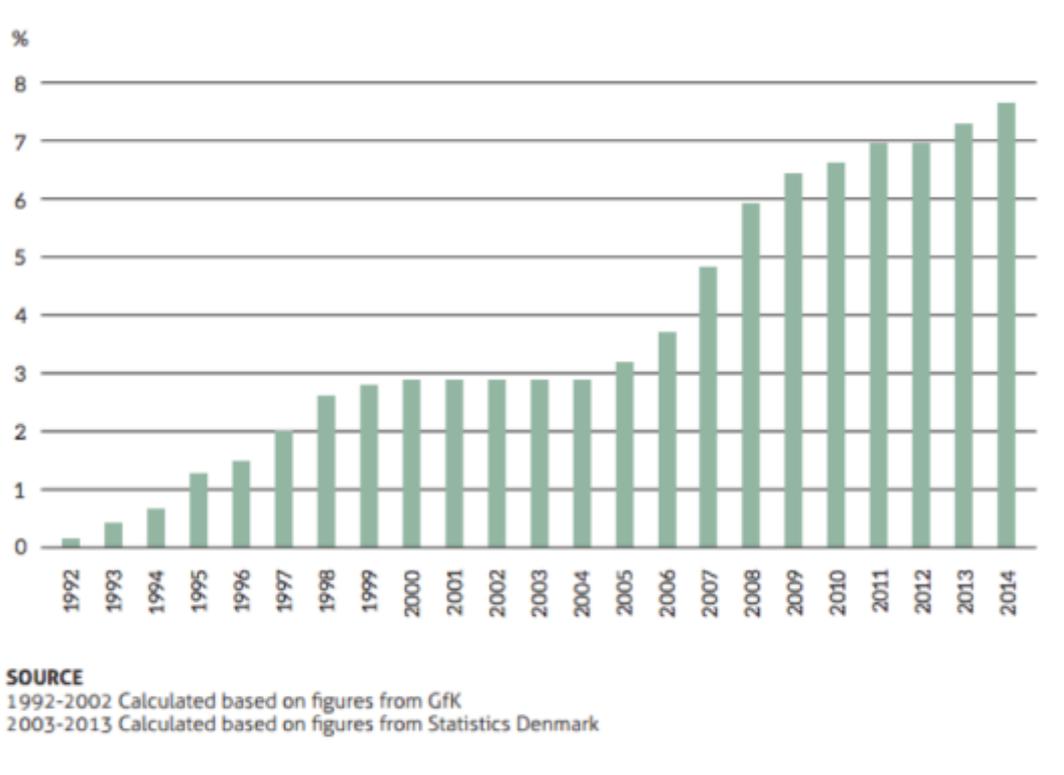
### **c. Support to domestic trade/ retail uptake**

#### *Political justification*

Availability of organic products in market channels that are frequently used by consumers (whether they be street markets or supermarkets) is a major precondition to consumers buying them. Offer creates demand, at the level of retail. Sometimes the best way to boost organic consumption is simply to increase the number of organic products placed on supermarket shelves. We have seen that the decision of one supermarket chain to offer (more) organic products can have a bigger impact on boosting demand than any consumer awareness campaign. This is particularly true when mainstream supermarkets or regular street markets begin offering organic products: they reach consumers who would not have otherwise gone the extra miles to buy products in a specialized organic shop. But even increasing the number of specialized organic shops, or farmers' markets is a very effective way to create demand: make organic products available to consumers in their neighborhood, where they normally shop.

Some striking examples where uptake of organic in conventional retail has had a major impact on sector growth are Denmark and Switzerland.

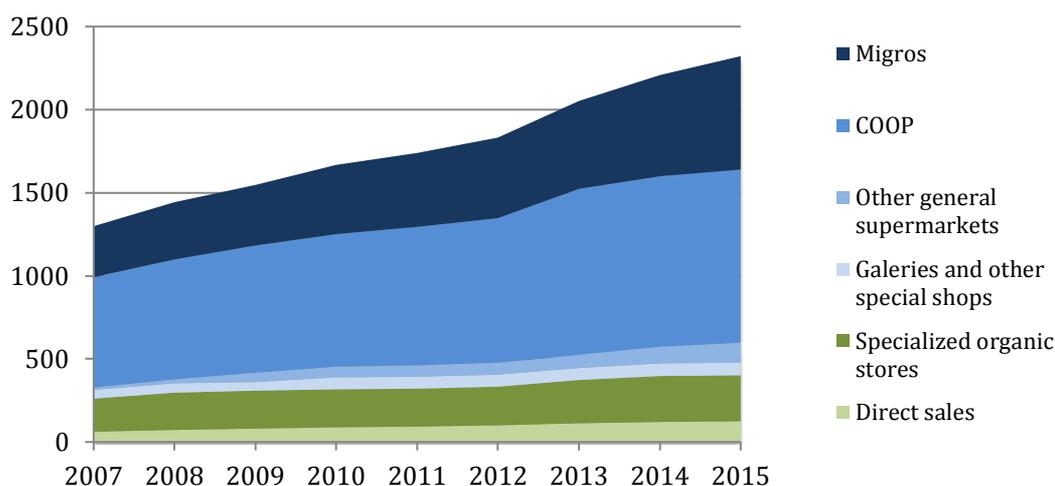
**Denmark** has the highest market share for organic products in the world (7.6% of the food market), and it has the particularity of not having a specialized organic retail sector (no organic shops or supermarkets). Instead 96.5 % of organic products are sold through mainstream market channels. Only 3.5 % of organic products are sold through alternative market channels including health food stores, markets and farm gates sales. The history of organic consumption growth in Denmark is basically the history of organic products uptake and marketing efforts in conventional supermarkets. It started in 1993 when the retail chain SuperBrugsen was the first to take significant action in favor of organic products (price reduction and marketing efforts), and was quickly followed by other chains. The growth of consumption then plateaued until in 2005 when Netto and other retail chains sharpened their organic profile by widening their selection of organic products. This trend has continued with all retail chains in Denmark increasing their selection of organic products in the last years. Combined with the increasing interest of consumers in quality food products, the extended range of organic products is believed to have contributed to the renewed growth in the sale of organic products.



**Fig. 8:** Development in the market share of organic products 1992 – 2014 (Source: Organic Denmark)

**Switzerland** is another example of the importance of retail chains decisions to take on organic products. The history of development of organic sales in Switzerland, the country with the highest organic per capita consumption spending in the world, is also an illustration of the importance of organic sales through mainstream market channels (in Switzerland, general supermarkets). The vast majority of organic products in Switzerland are sold through the two major conventional supermarkets: Coop and Migros. As the below graph shows, development of organic sales in the past 8 years has

been impressive nearly EUR 1 billion in organic sales. Nearly all that growth (86%) has happened in conventional retail market channels (in blue on the graph) whereas the specialized organic shops and direct sales (green) have remained nearly stagnant over the past 8 years.



**Fig 9:** Value of organic products sales in various market channels in Switzerland between 2007 and 2015 (in Million Swiss Francs). Source: Bio Suisse

Although this aspect touches very much private business interests and is therefore not often considered as a possible policy intervention, creating organic market channels and encouraging the uptake of organic through existing mainstream food market channels can be a very cost-effective high-impact way of boosting organic demand with long-lasting impact. It is also a strategic complement to other demand-creating policies such as consumer awareness raising campaigns: consumers may respond positively to the organic message, but if they do not find organic products in the shelves it will not translate into purchasing action.

Supermarkets have become the most important sales channels for organic foods in developed countries, such as in Europe and North America<sup>116</sup>, and they can have a big impact on demand growth as shown in the Swiss and Danish examples above.

In emerging organic markets, the creation of specialized organic shops is often the first step to encourage the creation of a regular organic consumer base. Such pioneer shops are often created by NGOs, but can also be supported by public authorities as part of the measures to support the development of the domestic organic market.

Despite the importance of supporting the uptake of organic products in supermarket chains and other types of stores, one should not underestimate the value of setting up and maintaining more direct sales systems, and in particular organic farmers' markets. These types of market channels are very compatible with the ideals of the organic movement in terms of food miles reduction, shortening of the supply chain, and sustaining small and diversified farms. Also, farmers markets serve a great educational

<sup>116</sup> The World of Organic Agriculture 2016.

role in terms of educating consumers about organic farming. When consumers learn about the benefits of certain kinds of farming from the farmers themselves rather than from communication materials, they are more likely to seek out these products<sup>117</sup>. There are many good political reasons for local governments to support farmers' markets, and even more so to support organic farmers' markets. A 1995 survey of Rural Economic Development in New York State found that for every euro invested in a marketing program for farmers' markets, EUR 43 was returned to the local agricultural economy and EUR 9 was generated in net farm income for local growers<sup>118</sup>. Hence farmers' markets are an important component of a comprehensive local economic development strategy.

### Suitable contexts

Support to organic trade and retail uptake, such as the creation of organic farmers' markets and organic shops, and the uptake of organic agriculture in general retail chains, can be implemented at all stages of development of the organic sector, of course, at very different scales and with different targets. It will be easier if the country has an officially referenced organic guarantee system or an organic regulation that provides a clear-cut definition of what can be sold as organic, and for large-scale supermarket penetration this is likely a must.

This type of support is less likely to be adopted in contexts with a culture of low interventionism in the agricultural sector, although some measures at the local (municipal) level may still be well suited.

This type of measure is focused on creating domestic demand and is therefore not relevant to the policy objectives of earning foreign currency through the organic sector or of increasing self-sufficiency in organic. For other policy objectives such as the encouraging societal benefits and increasing access to healthy food, this measure is a very relevant pull measure.

### Possible modalities of implementation

Facilitating the uptake of organic products in the various domestic market channels can be done in as many ways as there are differing market channels.

Government, local governments or municipalities can support weekly organic farmers markets. This is typically done through the provision of a free location and sometimes infrastructure such as stands, electricity and water for the market. Additionally, the government or municipality can host the market management within its offices, and even pay the salaries of the staff that organize and coordinate the market. Apart from

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<sup>117</sup> This effect was demonstrated for IPM practices by Anderson, Hollingsworth, Van Zee, Coli, & Rhodes, 1996.

<sup>118</sup> Pirog, R and Tindall, J, 1999. Comparing apples to apples. Iowa State University.

providing the location, public support is particularly relevant for farmers' markets when it comes to dealing with start-up costs, publicity, promotion, information exchange, market charter issues and, in case there are several markets in the same locality, coordination of dates. Moreover, farmers' markets may face a number of hurdles with general regulations such as health and safety or licensing. Hence, it can be useful to designate a person in charge of supporting farmers' markets to overcome these hurdles.

Although the majority of support is at municipality level, national approaches to supporting organic farmers' markets are also possible. The national government may also set aside a budget to which organic farmers market may apply for grants to support their expansion, communication, training of market managers, and other general activities. Support can also be provided for national/regional networks of farmers' markets. National/regional networks can play an important role in ensuring the authenticity of markets, promoting markets to the public and coordinating days of operation within the network. For example, in the US, about half of the states have a constituted state farmers' market association (even though those are not specific for organic). At the national level, there can also be a review of legislative and regulatory barriers to farmers' markets.

Another version is the support of an annual organic fair, which may have less impact in terms of volumes consumed, but is interesting to raise the profile of organic and for consumers to try new organic products. Again, government can administer or finance the organization of the fair and provide the space (or even the complete booth) free of charge, or subsidized for producers to display their products.

In emerging markets another format is supporting the creation of small organic shops. Especially in a country/region where no organic shop exists, this can be a way to kick-start a domestic market by offering a regular place where consumers can find basic organic products. Especially at the beginning, the organic shop will likely be a fragile business and can therefore benefit from public support in the form of free space, or even government-run shops (as in the case of the Organic Trading Posts in The Philippines). Sooner or later however, organic retail will (and should) develop as a profit-oriented business and it will no longer be necessary for government and public institutions to get involved in running or supporting organic shops.

In more modern economies or more advanced organic sector development stages, can target supermarkets by setting up project structures and negotiation forums wherein supermarket owners can be encouraged to increase their organic product range. They can be incentivized, as in the case of Saudi Arabia or The Netherlands, by win-win arrangements whereby the government sponsors organic publicity campaigns that feature the name of the supermarket and directs potential organic consumers to that supermarket to find the products. An atypical way, like the Campania region of Italy, can be to prioritize or require organic uptake in supermarkets at the level of the regulation and approval of the construction projects.

The government may also support uptake of organic products in hotels and restaurants, like in Tunisia and Costa Rica.

In keeping with the trend of online marketing, governments may finance online organic market platforms, as in the case of Taiwan, or phone apps, as in the case of Costa Rica and France.

### *Country examples*

In **Saudi Arabia**, in 2013-2014, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, through its Organic Farming Project, implemented an Organic Marketing Program in conjunction with its consumer campaign activities. Due to this program two of Saudi Arabia's major supermarket chains were convinced to massively promote organic products in their stores in a concerted manner. See Best Practice text-box below for more details.

In **The Netherlands**, support for supermarket uptake of organic food was provided under the national government-funded covenant 2005-2007. The covenant was an agreement between the Ministry of Agriculture and practitioners of the agri-food sector who commit to stimulate the demand for organic products. One important activity of the covenant was food chain management, whereby experts were hired as food chain managers to support members of the covenant to start new activities in one of the organic sector segment. These experts would look for gaps in the production chain and work to encourage the production of products in the right quantity and quality for the supermarkets to solve these gaps. This activity received a funding of EUR 4.3 million from the Ministry between 2005 and 2007. The umbrella organization of supermarket chains was involved in the covenant and made a pledge to stimulate organic production and consumption. The government provided financing to support advertising campaigns by supermarkets to promote organic. The intervention seems to have had an important impact, as the growth rate for sales of organic foods in the Netherlands increased from close to 0% rate in 2005 to around 13% growth rate in the year 2007.

In **Italy**, the Campania Region's regional law 01/2014, dealing with regulation of the commercial distribution system, declares that a preference for the authorization to set up a supermarket is granted to companies that commit to sell at least 5% organic products from the total of food products they sell.

In **France**, the public institution Agence Bio has developed a smartphone App "La Bio en Poche" which is directly connected to the directory database and allows users to immediately locate a nearby organic point of sale, including producers who do direct on-farm sales.

In **Croatia**, the city of Split supports the annual two-day organic fair and other activities by providing space for events, free of charge.

In **Moldova** the Ministry of Agriculture provides free space on its grounds for an

organic farmers' market.

The Council of Agriculture of Taiwan, in **China**, provided subsidies to the farmer association for setting up and participation in farmers markets.

**The Philippines'** government has been supporting the establishment of 49 "Organic Trading posts" across the country. These trading posts fulfill the double role of input shops (selling exclusively input for organic farming) and organic shops (selling organic products to consumers or intermediary buyers. The concept was decided by the Department of Agriculture in 2012, and applications were submitted by local government units in 2013. For more details, see the best practice text box below.

In **Nepal**, the government's Agribusiness Promotion and Marketing Development Directorate organizes an annual national organic fair. The fair, which shifts locations, is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> year and gathers around 200 farmers. The government's investments in the fair have incrementally increased and were around EUR 17,000 in 2015.

In **Tunisia**, the organic development plan maps out action points to create local organic marketing channels in supermarkets, hotels and tourist routes. The Technical Center for Organic Agriculture financed by the government organized an initiative to collect organic fruits and vegetables from producers, package them, and deliver them to some supermarkets in Sousse and Tunis. The Ministry of Agriculture then expanded it to other supermarkets in Tunis and to luxury hotels, with a focus on olive oil. The goal is to encourage the structuring of a domestic supply chain, as currently, French supermarket chains dominate the domestic organic market in the country, but mostly with imported products. The government also organizes regular organic markets and fairs in the country.

In **Argentina**, the city of Buenos Aires sponsored the national organic association for the organization of the Ferias Orgánicas Barriales (neighborhood organic fairs). This was one of the most significant public actions in support of domestic organic development in the country.

The federal government of **Mexico** supports the organization of the annual national organic trade fair, EXPORGÁNICOS, in Mexico City. In 2016, 100 producer groups were supported to participate and have been offered a booth free of charge to display their products to potential buyers.

In many regions of **Peru**, the local authorities support organic markets, for example, making available a public space for the markets, as well as by appointing a market coordinator and supplying electricity connections, security and publicity. In the district of La Molina in Lima the organic market installed a permanent roof, paid by the producers, but for which the municipality waived the fees normally charged for such construction.

In **Bolivia**, support was given to local organic markets in the context of a government - UN cooperation program from 2009 to 2013 aiming to integrate indigenous Andean

producers into new national and international value chains. Support was given to local marketing spaces such as farmers' markets, including the Raymi organic farmer's market in Sipe Sipe municipality (Cochabamba), Bio Tarija and Bio Achocalla.

In **Costa Rica**, the National Program on Organic Agriculture, run by the Ministry of Agriculture, established in 2005 a Saturday market on the premises of the National Center for Supply and Distribution of Food. Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture cooperates with the organic producer associations to develop a phone app aiming to facilitate the connections between the sellers and buyers of organic products on the domestic market.

In the **USA**, the USDA has a Farmers' Market Promotion Program, which is a competitive grant program financing projects that establish, expand, and promote farmers' markets, for a total of around EUR 12.1 million per year. Although it does not specifically target organic, it benefits the many small organic farmers who sell on farmers' markets throughout the country.

In **Laos**, the Ministry of Agriculture provides support to an organic market in the capital city, Vientiane. The market has seen significant growth since its creation in 2006, going from a monthly market to a daily market. District and provincial offices of the Ministry of Agriculture also organize several organic markets across the country, in cooperation with NGOs. For example, the Xieng Khouang organic market is organized by the Peak District Agriculture and Forestry Office with financial support and technical support from a local NGO, while the weekend organic market in Luang Prabang is managed by the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service and the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry with financial support from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC).

In **India**, the Ministry of Agriculture opened, in 2016, a government-run organic shop selling only PGS-certified products from the country, in its office in New Delhi. Also more and more state governments are opening organic shops to promote their organic products, or allotting a specific shelf area in general stores for organic products. For example, the Sikkim government has opened the Sikkim Organics store in Delhi and a few organic stores across Sikkim.

In **Taiwan**, the Organic Center at the I-Lan University developed the Taiwan Organic Information Portal, with funding from the Council of Agriculture. It contains an organic e-commerce system. The portal contains tools for consumers to find organic farms in their neighborhood or to buy organic products online. Organic farmers can create their own e-shop under this portal, but there is also a general e-market for those who do not want to create their own e-shop. The system is linked to QR codes, which allows consumers to track organic products through their smart phone. The government subsidizes each farm with EUR 93 to encourage farmers to put the QR code on their products.

In **Turkey**, the first organic farmers market in Izmir was established through a project funded by the İzmir Development Agency Financial Support Program for Social Development between 2009 and 2010.

*Best practice example(s)*

**Best Practice example 1: Incentivizing the uptake of organic products in Saudi Arabia's supermarkets<sup>119</sup>**

**Background**

For nearly a decade, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) has been working with the technical assistance of GIZ International Services (an independent operational department of the federally owned Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and in cooperation with the Saudi Organic Farming Association (SOFA) to support the development of organic agriculture in Saudi Arabia. This was done under the framework of the Organic Farming Project financed by the Ministry and implemented together with GIZ International Services. In 2008, the Department of Organic Agriculture (DOA) was established in the MEWA, which was then called Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). In 2009, the first version of an organic regulation was adopted. Since 2011, the Ministry has been promoting organic agriculture to consumers through the Organic Farming Project.

**Action to promote the uptake of organic products in supermarkets**

As part of the Organic Farming Project, "organic food festivals" were organized in partnership with two of the biggest supermarket chains in the country. In 2013 the project started to work on a "Marketing Development Program". One part of this program was the implementation of so-called "Regional Marketing Working Groups". These groups gathered private stakeholders who were active in the organic sector in different regions of the country, with the aim to explore marketing possibilities for organic products. The work of the Jeddah based group resulted in a lively exchange of marketing ideas with the CEO of Danube (one of the largest Saudi supermarket chains). In 2014 a meeting was held between the Organic Farming Project and the CEO, presenting potential cooperation ideas between Danube and the project and this process was successful. A partnership was implemented as a win-win agreement whereby the supermarket was associated to the public awareness campaign in the general media, which was fully financed by the Ministry and the supermarket agreed to extend its existing range of organic products during the four weeks of the campaign, displaying the organic products prominently and even suspending the entry- and shelf-fees for the domestic organic producers. This enabled small-scale farmers to present their organic products for the period of the campaign to a large number of customers. In this way the supermarket also contributed financially, indirectly, to the campaign (by forgoing the fees). In the course of the preparation of the campaign, a second major Saudi supermarket chain, Tamimi Markets, became the second key-partner of this public awareness campaign. In total, 20 stores (belonging to these two chains) across the country participated in this action.

This action managed to increase the range of organic products offered in Saudi supermarkets. The two supermarkets involved continued to offer organic products after the end of the four-week campaign and increased their product range, especially the choice of imported processed

<sup>119</sup> Information provided by the Department of Organic Agriculture (DOA) / Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture and Organic Farming Project, Saudi Arabia / GIZ International Services.

products. Moreover, two other major supermarket chains have joined the trend of offering organic products, which means that the availability of organic products in the country has increased considerably in the past two years.

## Best Practice example 2: Setting-up organic trading posts in every province in the Philippines

### Policy Background

In 2010, the Philippines passed a law on Promoting and Developing Organic Agriculture: the Republic Act 10068. Section 19 of this Act mandates the Local Chief Executives to establish at least one trading post for organic inputs (in the 2010 law, the centers were envisioned only as input trading centers) for every Local Government Unit in their area of jurisdiction; The rule accompanying this article specifies that “*the Local Government Units (LGUs), on their own, shall establish such trading post*”.

In parallel, Section 5 of the same act establishes a National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP) and mandates the Departments of Agriculture and Trade and Industry to develop and institutionalize the promotion of local and international trade fairs, market promotion and matching activities with the active participation of Local Government Units, NGOs, and other organic stakeholder networks to push organic consumption (also on a domestic level). Rule 18.4 of the same Act also mandates that “*The Local Government Units shall establish dedicated stalls in the public markets and organize a special market day for organic products*”.

In 2012, the Department of Agriculture issued a memorandum circular on the guidelines for the establishment of organic trading posts, in which the concept was explained as serving the two purposes of a market place for organic inputs and for organic products. The circular explained that the objectives of the Organic Trading Posts was to:

- Ensure availability and accessibility of certified or registered organic inputs and organic food for farmers, producers, manufacturers and stakeholders interested in adopting organic agricultural practices;
- Promote and showcase farmers organic produce such as organic inputs and products in strategic areas;
- Provide an outlet for selling organic food and products.

The eligibility criteria for the approval of such Organic Trading Posts included targeted location (i.e. strategic sites where organic farming is more advanced and where demonstration farms have been established), local government’s willingness to provide counterparts for the project, the pre-existence of Local Technical Committees on Organic Agriculture and of a local ordinance in support of the Organic Agriculture

Program. The circular also specified the types of products allowed to be traded in these trading posts, but the approach was very inclusive: they allowed third party certified organic products, but also first party and second party verified and/or PGS products. Nearly all Local Government Units complied with this instruction and submitted proposals to the Department of Agriculture. In 2013, proposals from 75 Local Governments Units (LGU) for setting up organic trading posts were approved by the DA with counterparts from the LGU.

### Implementation

The Department of Agriculture allocated around EUR 30,000 per Trading Post for the building, equipment and working capital and local governments were required to provide land as counterpart and expenses for operations and maintenance. The DA got the Organic Producers Trade Association (OPTA Philippines) to provide training to the Management Team on Good Organic Retailing Practices, Organic Enterprise Management, Guarantee System, Finance &

Marketing. The local governments constructed the building, purchased equipment, hired personnel and operated the organic trading posts.

By mid 2016, a total of 40 Organic Trading Posts were completed and 32 were still under development. Three approved trading posts were non-operational or had stopped operations (failed projects). Most stores are open daily and some stores open a farmers' market day once a week. Producers supply the products but also participate to some extent in the management of the Organic Trading Posts. In addition to organic inputs, the organic food products sold in these trading centers are rice, vegetables, some coffee, some herbs & spices, and some livestock and poultry. They are mostly non-certified organic products and are mostly sold at average prices, but some products are sold at a premium. The sales turnover of the trading posts varies greatly depending on the region but is usually below EUR 30,000 annual sales. Consumers buying from the trading posts are mostly employees from local governments, schools and businesses, hospitals and subdivisions.

The challenges are the classical challenges of starting an organic shop in an emerging organic sector: they include the low volumes of products currently available in the stores (not enough organic produce suppliers), the seasonality of the products and the lack of variety to encourage consumers to visit the stores, the difficulty to make consumers aware of the existence of the trading posts in their area, and the benefits of consuming organic products (that may be perceived as lower quality). Product packaging also would need to be improved

Additionally there are challenges specific to the government-operated nature of these trading posts, such as problems on fund liquidation of LGUs, resulting in the delay of the completion of the trading centers. As these centers are operated by LGUs, the purchase of goods also needs to undergo a government procurement procedure or other accounting rules, which is cumbersome. Generally speaking, there are still improvements needed to manage the trading posts as successful organic enterprises.

### *Pitfalls and challenges*

The challenges in promoting the uptake of organic products in markets, shops and supermarkets are commonly associated with the difficulty of ensuring a reliable supply chain in the context of a niche sector. Organic products are often available in small volumes, with high seasonality of the products, limited number of suppliers, and often sub-standard packaging or visual appearance of the products, as compared to mainstream conventional products. Shops, markets and supermarkets alike have to deal with those issues, and it is best if the public support is designed to provide solutions to those problems. Adding to that is the fact that when markets or shops are run by government or municipality staff, these people might lack business sense and this results in a poorly run shop or market that will continuously depend on public financing to break even. In this respect, it may be better for the government to partner with the private sector in the management of the organic markets/shops.

Experience also shows that promoting the uptake of organic products directly into supermarkets can be a tempting short cut to give a big push to an emerging organic sector but can be a complete failure if domestic organic production capacity is not ensured first. This was the case for example in South Africa where, a few years ago, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) launched a retail incentive in the form of a

matching grant - giving every participating retail chain about EUR 80,000 to do a special promotion for organic selected stores. Although this sounded like a good “pull” measure, it ended in a failure because the farmers could not supply good quality certified organic products in sufficient quantities to satisfy the retailers’ supply chain requirements. This action was taken against the advice of the local organic sector, which pleaded to put more emphasis on supporting producers in conversion and certification, and, overall, did more bad than good. After this failure, retailers became more negative about organic products than before. Planning, time and various efforts are needed to convert the number of organic producers needed to afford a consistent supply to supermarkets. Unless there is an over-supply situation, or imports can easily be obtained (that was the case in Saudi Arabia, for example, as their import rules for organic products are more enabling), the best strategy is to combine this measure with push (production support) measures in a well-integrated and reasonable step-by-step approach. An example of such dual effort (at the private level) was when the Coop supermarket in Switzerland decided, in the end of the 90s, to increase its range of organic products, it accompanied this decision with a massive investment in campaigns addressed to farmers for promoting conversion to organic agriculture.

#### **d. National/common logo for organic products**

##### *Political justification*

Having a common logo for organic products sold in a particular market has proven to be a decisive element in fostering consumer recognition of and trust in organic products and is therefore a very efficient tool for promotion and market development. In a market where multiple organic logos (including those of certifiers and organic brands) are used alternatively on various products, consumers can easily get confused and not know which logo to trust. Although private logos should still be allowed (and can convey different messages), ideally there should be one common organic logo that is prominently placed on ALL the products sold as organic in a country: this is a demonstrated decisive factor to build consumer recognition.

Depending on the structure of the market and the organic guarantee system, which may be organized at the national or supra-national level, the common organic logo may be a national organic logo (e.g. Brazil, China, USA...) or a regional community logo (e.g. East Africa, Pacific Community, EU...).

Normally the logo is primarily aimed at fostering domestic market development. However, in some cases governments have used it also as a brand, in an attempt to promote a country’s organic exports (e.g. BioTunisia, BioBhutan). In any case, since the development and promotion of the logo are serving the collective interest of organic operators (and consumers), it is important that they are not controlled by restricted private interests. A common organic logo is, in this sense, a “public good”. This is why it makes sense for the public sector (government or community of countries) to provide support to its development and continued promotion.