IFOAM Animal Husbandry Alliance: Results of discussions at Pre-conference and workshop at 12. /15. October 2014 at IFOAM Organic World Congress (OWC) in Istanbul

Compiled by Barbara Früh and Otto Schmid, FiBL, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Frick, Switzerland

Introduction

IAHA organized during the 18th IFOAM Organic World Congress (OWC) in Istanbul, October 12-15, 2014 a pre-conference on organic animal husbandry and a workshop session. The focus was on drafting an International Action Plan for the development and strengthening of Organic Animal Husbandry from 2014-2017, based on an analysis of the development and research needs in different continents. We hereby summarise the outcomes of this IAHA pre-conference and workshop session at OWC from the different group-discussions.

Methodology: At the Pre-conference participants could score the 3 most important needs (having 3 credits to distribute over all themes). Whereas in the different discussion groups the aim was to define up to 3 most important needs (in the Pre-conference) and measures (in the final workshop).

The results of the different group discussions are summarized below, listing the developments and research needs as well as measures to be considered in an action plan.

Principles and system approach for organic animal husbandry/livestock

What are the development and research needs?

- The most important need identified was, that organic livestock should be developed **closer to organic principles** (e.g. closing nutrient cycles), this should be reflected in a vision. In particular livestock can be seen both as a "climate hot spot" as well as a plus for a livestock system development in accordance with organic principles on a larger scale.
- Another need was seen to **define and communicate multiple functions of organic livestock**. A particular issue is to address biodiversity, when choosing the animals (e.g. in genetics) as well as in addressing diversification of forms where livestock is part (diverse livestock production).

What measures should be considered in an action plan?

- Ensure system approach: **livestock should be truly integrated** in different ways:

- Certification: the whole system incl. livestock should be certified.
- Also potentials for value chain development.
- Pigs &poultry (Europe): particular need for emphasis on nutrient cycle integration.
- Need for definition / better common understanding of “integration” (rather than just mixed farms) and focus on practice development with nutrient as one of the main indicator.

- **Tools should be developed for better integration of livestock** in different contexts as well as on different levels.
- An integration of the different aspects and strategic choices (breeding, feeding, health & welfare, etc.) should become coherent + in accordance with organic principles.

Animal health and Welfare

What are the development and research needs?

- The most important need is to develop an **organic concept of welfare**: clear direction: beyond what is needed for biological fitness; hereby there is a need of consumers to value and pay the cost of this.
- Reliable **welfare outcome assessment tools** must be developed to supplement resource based standards.
- Investigation and **documentation of practical methods** of good husbandry.

What measures should be considered in an action plan?

- As by far the most important measure is to find suitable **indicators of animal welfare**.
- **Strengthen organic livestock standards** in intensive livestock for milk cows, pigs, and poultry: in particular access to pasture. Identify / make analysis of these areas where welfare can easily be improved by small changes in standards or farm practice.
- Implement **training programs for inspectors and producers on animal welfare**.

Other measures mentioned by participants:

- Clear guidance on grazing and access to pasture for all species.
- Provide what the animals “need”. Choice and opportunity.
- Guidance on housing systems to improve living conditions when outdoor access is not possible because of climate and weather.
- Identify and promote communication of best practice in animal husbandry as a means of ensuring progressive improvement in welfare.

Feeding

What are the development and research needs?

- As most important need was seen the **development of diversified feeding strategies** for organic production.
- More and better **knowledge collecting and transfer**.
- Further research is required to identify and **research novel feeds** and food sources, including better use of pasture and roughage as well as alternative and novel high quality protein sources such as insects.

Other needs mentioned by participants:

- Encourage farmers to collaborate – regional diversity.
- Animal feeding strategies (grassland ruminants, residues and food waste for non-ruminants), improvement of grassland management, reduce the use of concentrate feed.
- Search for natural sources of essential amino acids as methionine.
- Control the advance of GMO corn.
- Research for feeding additives connected to product quality.

What measures should be considered in an action plan?

- Establish an international **working group for feeding strategies especially on ruminant feeding**.
- **Cultivation strategies for (protein) crop rotation linked with roughage optimization strategy**.
- Organic farming should be open for **innovative feed components** e.g. insect meal, fermentative amino acids.

Other measures mentioned by participants:

- Strengthen and clarify standards on pastures.
- Strengthen standards on maximum amounts of concentrates for ruminants:
  - Improve awareness of concentrate feeding of farmers/researchers/advisors;
  - Changing approach of feeding for young animals (fee. suckling calves instead of feeding calves).

Breeding

What are the development and research needs?

- **Appropriate (animal-type) breeds** GXE connected to the system – and knowledge transfer to farmers.
- Professional **research with knowledge transfer to farmers**

Other needs mentioned by participants:

- Discussion if local breeds are important in organic farming.
- Discussion about the use of breeding stock from conventional breeding, because with this we use indirectly reproduction methods like super ovulation and ET practices which are prohibited in OF but commonly used in conventional breeding.
- Connection with consumers and new markets.

What measures should be considered in an action plan?

Develop **definition of what is "organic livestock and organic breeding".**

Gather information on farmers and consumers preferences (animal, products, processing), production data, environment data, and system animal interaction.

Discussion on method: weighing positive and negative aspects of used **breeding techniques** (what are the aims of organic breeding), also including the indirect use by using conventional breeding

Alternative (complimentary) medicine/treatment

What are the development and research needs?

- As most important need was seen more **research on alternative treatment** – lobby for funding
- Change the **attitude about antibiotics**.
- **List of recognized alternative medicine**.

Other needs mentioned by participants:

- Animals adapted to local conditions – alternative treatment work better.
- Lobbying work in countries where it is not possible to use alternative treatments.
- Collect knowledge about local and traditional medicines.
- Develop decision trees to guide producers on the use of alternative medicines and antibiotics.

What measures should be considered in an action plan?

- **Include alternative medicine/treatment in all educations** (vets, agronomy).
- Lobby government to have a positive attitude towards non-antibiotic treatments and **especially lobby where complementary medicine is not allowed**.
- IAHA website: **lists of successful complementary medicine, research activities, and old knowledge**.

Other measures mentioned by participants:

- Strengthens standards on the use of antibiotics.
- Alternative medicine: share and collaborate international: research and farmers.
- Make old knowledge (from different countries) available.

Education, Advice and Training

What are the development and research needs?

- By far the most important was to establish **National Organic Education and Training Centres for farmers and advisor**s (e.g. in Scandinavian countries).
- Better **link existing knowledge**.

Other needs mentioned by participants:

- Demonstration on experimentation of organic farming.

- Educate consumers.
- Education in primary school about organic production for health and environment should be started.

What measures should be considered in an action plan?

- **Extension material, farmer stable school, demonstration and experimental farm**.
- **Organic farming department must be established in the university**.
- **National school food system with organic (animal) products** should be developed.

Other measures mentioned by participants:

- Update the training curricula for technicians together with the organic experts.
- Establish new mechanism: Organic Data Bank and EU Project.
- Improve education in alternative treatments.
- Update the training curricula of technicians.
- Public spot/media about production and consumption of organic products.

Policy for organic animal husbandry

What are the development and research needs?

Livestock should be part of organic programs/action plans – more funding for livestock.

Government should support the whole animal chain: Production - research, processing, distribution, consumption: education.

Other needs mentioned by participants:

- Organic food in public services should be mandatory.
- Data collection of organic livestock.
- Support of organic research including livestock.
- The cost-benefit-ratio giving due consideration to environmental quality under organic systems need to be worked.
- Socio-economics of organic livestock farming also needs better documentation.

What measures should be considered in an action plan?

- **Task force to develop strategies and lobby** to sensitize government and food industry as well as consumers.
- Create **guidelines on organic animal production on national level**.
- Support **local guidelines for organic animal production**

Other measures mentioned by participants:

- Spread positives results of research concerning animals.

Final conclusions after the IAHA Preconference by Gerold Rahmann,
Thünen Institute, Germany and new IFOAM World Board member

The discussion at this IAHA Pre-Conference needs to be added by three points:

1. Productivity and efficiency and sustainability (has to include livestock).

The farmer needs money.

Organic farming should produce good feed for healthy and well productive animals to produce good milk and meat with a high quality for a happy consumer.

2. There is a need for a better communication between farmers, scientist, and advisors.

3. We need to understand the consumers and the society (added to the market –this is not enough).

For the organic movement it is necessary to stress the question of the function of livestock in the organic system. Why do we keep livestock?

Livestock can have positive and negative impacts:

- positive impact: earn money, produce good food;
- Negative impacts: Climate impact; utilisation, negative compounds: smell/noise.

The impacts of livestock must combine with the expectation of the society. Indirect non-food function have to be considered: preserving biotopes, farm internal function (producing manure), attraction and promotion.

Animal-Environment-Human interacting system: we have a whole chain to consider, not only the animal.

If we want to convince consumers, decision keepers, politicians, we need to have good arguments to keep animals as well as a strategy how to reach systems changes.

This alliance should have a clear strategy of defining goals under this framework about animals in the system of food chain and non-food functions:

1. How many animals can/shall we have with the available resources and the needs of the society?
2. We have to define the path for a sustainable and adapted animal husbandry.
3. We have to find out the resources (money, supporters) and we have and spend/use them efficiently; e.g. more knowledge transfer, because we know already a lot, but not enough is going into farm reality.
4. We need more skills on farms or in the chain for extension services, training centres.
5. The results must be on a level of benchmark: we cannot isolate organic animal husbandry out of the total animal husbandry system: this is necessary to show, how the sustainability, the

productivity is. To proof and show that we are the better ones. This benchmarking system must be developed by the scientists. With this the farmer can find out how good he is.

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Focus area	Development and research **needs**	credits	**Measures** to be considered in an Action Plan of IFOAM	credits
Principles and system approach	Organic livestock closer to organic principles (e.g. nutrient cycles)		Vision for organic livestock	
	Define and communicate multiple functions of organic livestock		System approach: livestock truly integrated in different ways: - Need for definition / better common understanding of "integration" rather than just mixed and focus on practice development with nutrient as one of the main indicator - Certification: the whole system incl. livestock should be certified. Also potentials for value chains - Pigs &poultry (Europe): particular need for emphasis on nutrient cycle integration	
	Address livestock as a "climate hot spot" and plus for a livestock system development in accordance with organic principles on a larger scale		Tools for integration - In different contexts - On different levels	
	Addressing biodiversity in animals (e.g. in genetic) + addressing diversification of forms where livestock is part (diverse production)		Integration of the different aspects and strategy choices (breeding, feeding, health & welfare) to become coherent + in accordance with organic principles	

Focus area	Development and research **needs**	credits	**Measures** to be considered in an Action Plan of IFOAM	credits
Animal health and welfare	Organic concept of welfare: clear direction: beyond what is needed for biological fitness, there is a need of consumers to value and pay the cost of this	1	Indicators of animal welfare	10
	Investigation and documentation of practical methods of good husbandry		Implement training programs for inspectors and producers on animal welfare	2
	Reliable welfare outcome assessment tools must be developed to supplement resource based standards.		Provide what the animals “need”. Choice and opportunity	
			Strengthen organic livestock standards in intensive livestock: milk, pigs, and poultry: in particular access to pasture. Identify / make analysis of these areas where welfare can easily be improved by small changes in standards or farm practice.	5
			Clear guidance on grazing and access to pasture for all species	
			Guidance on housing systems to improve living conditions when outdoor access is not possible because of climate and weather	
			Identify and promote communication of best practice in animal husbandry as a means of ensuring progressive improvement in welfare	

Focus area	Development and research **needs**	credits	**Measures** to be considered in an Action Plan of IFOAM	credits
Feeding	Knowledge collecting and transfer	1	Establish a working group for feeding strategies especially on ruminant feeding	
	Developing diversified feeding strategies for organic production	5	Strengthen and clarify standards on pastures Strengthen standards on maximum amounts of concentrates for ruminants - Improve awareness of concentrate feeding of farmers/researchers/advisors - Changing approach of feeding for young animals (e.g. suckling calves instead of feeding calves)	
	Encourage farmers to collaborate – regional diversity		Cultivation strategies for (protein) crop rotation linked with roughage optimization strategy	
	Animal feeding strategies (grassland ruminants, residues and food waste for non-ruminants), improvement of grassland management, reduce the use of concentrate feed		Organic farming should be open for innovative feed components e.g. insect meal, fermentative amino acids	
	Search for natural sources of essential amino acids as methionine Control the advance of GMO corn			
	Research for feeding additives connected to product quality	1		
	Further research is required to identify and research novel feeds and food sources, including better use of pasture and roughage as well as alternative and novel high quality protein sources such as insects.	1		

Focus area	Development and research **needs**	credits	**Measures** to be considered in an Action Plan of IFOAM	credits
Breeding	Appropriate (animal-type) breeds GXE connected to the system – and knowledge transfer to farmers	1	Selection tool/methods – breeding traits and values of traits	
	Connection with consumers and (new) markets		Gather information on: farmers and consumers preferences (animal, products, processing), production data, environment data, system animal interaction, and preferred selection and reproduction methods.	
	Professional research with knowledge transfer to farmers	1	Discussion on method: weighing positive and negative aspects of used breeding techniques, also in conventional breeding programs that we use for organic (what are the aims of organic breeding)	
	Discussion if local breeds are important in organic farming		Develop definition of what is “organic livestock and organic breeding”	

Focus area	Development and research **needs**	credits	**Measures** to be considered in an Action Plan of IFOAM	credits
Alternative medicine	Change the attitude about antibiotics	2	Strengthens standards on the use of antibiotics	
	List of recognized alternative medicine		Alternative medicine: share and collaborate international: research and farmers	1
	Lobbying work in countries where it is not possible to use alternative treatments		Include alternative medicine/treatment in all educations (vets, agronomy)	
	Research on alternative treatment – lobby for funding	5	Lobby government to have a positive attitude towards non-antibiotic treatments and especially lobby where complementary medicine is not allowed	
	Collect knowledge about local and traditional medicines		Make old knowledge (from different countries) available	1
	Develop decision trees to guide producers on the use of alternative medicines and antibiotics		IAHA website: lists of successful complementary medicine, research activities, old knowledge	
	Animals adapted to local conditions – alternative treatment work better	1		

Focus area	Development and research **needs**	credits	**Measures** to be considered in an Action Plan of IFOAM	credits
Education, Advice and Training	National Organic Education and Training Centres for farmers and advisors (e.g. Sweden)	8	Organic farming department must be established in the University	
	Demonstration on experimentation of organic farming		Update the training curricula for technicians together with the organic experts	
	Educate consumers		Establish new mechanism: Organic Data Bank and EU Project	1
	Link existing knowledge	2	Improve education in alternative treatments	
	Education in primary school about organic production for health and environment should be started		Update the training curricula of technicians	
			Extension material, farmer stable school, demonstration and experimental farm	
			Public spot/media about production and consumption of organic products	
			National school food system with organic (animal) products should be developed	

Focus area	Development and research **needs**	credits	**Measures** to be considered in an Action Plan of IFOAM	credits
Policy	Livestock should be part of organic programs/action plans – more funding for livestock	3	Task force to develop strategies and lobby to sensitize government and food industry and consumers.	
	Organic food in public services should be mandatory	1	Create guidelines on organic animal production	
	Data collection of organic livestock	1	Support organic local guidelines	
	Government should support the whole animal chain: Production - research, processing, distribution, consumption: education	2		
	Support of organic research including livestock		Spread positives results of research concerning animals	
	The cost-benefit-ratio giving due consideration to environmental quality under organic systems need to be worked. Socio-economics of organic livestock farming also needs better documentation			