Membership Vote on Motions to the IFOAM Norms*

Including:

*the IFOAM Standard for Organic Production and Processing, Version 1.2 &
*the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements, Version 2.0

Electronic Membership Vote
Voting Closes on 21.05.2014
Dear IFOAM Members,

In November 2013, the World Board presented you for motions the proposed next versions of 2 of the IFOAM Norms: the IFOAM Standard for Organic Production and Processing, and the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements for Bodies Certifying Organic Production and Processing.

We have received 3 motions: 2 on the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements, and 1 on the IFOAM Standard. Out of those, 1 has been resolved as friendly amendment and integrated directly into the draft Accreditation Requirements (see the changes resulting from this friendly amendment here), and 2 motions will require your vote to determine whether or not they should amend the existing draft.

This document explains you the content of the two motions, the rationale of the motion makers, the World Board recommendations for vote, and the voting procedure. The World Board invites you to participate in the electronic vote until 21.05.2014.
We are voting on...

Motion to the IFOAM Standard: Integration of a requirement on minimum wages

The motion wants to add a requirement into the section on Social Justice, that operators should pay their employees wages that meet the legal minimum requirements, or, in their absence, sectorial benchmarks.

*This motion was submitted by Krav (Sweden) and seconded by the Swedish Organic Farmers Association (Sweden). It has been amended by the IFOAM Standard Committee, in agreement with the motion makers. The World Board recommends voting “Yes” to this motion.*

Motion to the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements: Requiring that certification bodies must have their main focus on organic certification

The motion wants to add a requirement that certification bodies accredited under an IFOAM Accreditation Program must generate more than half of their turnover through organic certification activities (as opposed to certification activities related to other schemes, such as Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ, etc.).

*This motion was submitted by Sano y Salvo (Nicaragua) and seconded by Fundación La Esperanzita (Nicaragua). The World Board recommends voting “No” to this motion.*
VOTING QUESTION: Do you approve the motion to the IFOAM Standard on minimum wages? Yes or No?
The World Board recommends voting “Yes”

BACKGROUND: The current IFOAM Standard contains extensive social justice requirements, but does not contain any requirement related to the level of wages. The motion makers want the addition of a requirement ensuring that workers and employees on organic operations at least get the legal minimum wage, or, in its absence, the sectorial benchmark in practice in that country or area.

Motion: In the IFOAM Standard, in the section on Social Justice, add the following requirement (and adjust all the subsequent numbering accordingly):

9.10 Operators shall pay employees wages and benefits that meet legal minimum requirements of the operation’s jurisdiction or, in the absence of this minimum, the sectorial benchmark.

RATIONALE OF THE MOTIONERS:
The wage level should be included in the standard. In several parts of the social justice section, wage is referred to, but the wage level is not included in the standard. KRAV’s motion formulates that at least the national minimum wage should be paid.

POSITION OF THE WORLD BOARD: The World Board recommends voting “Yes” to this motion. The World Board considers that social justice is an important aspect to cover the fairness principle of organic agriculture. At the 2011 General Assembly, IFOAM members made a recommendation to advance the work on social justice. Following this concern, the IFOAM Standard Committee was mandated to further develop the social justice section in the IFOAM Standard, and it did so quite extensively. This motion supports this evolution. The issue of wages (like the issue of fair prices to farmers) had so far been a controversial one to regulate through standards because it relates to the dynamics of a supply and demand market. We recognize that fair pricing to farmers should accompany fair wages to their workers, and that ideally fair wages should go beyond the legal minimum. These aspects are currently addressed under the Best Practice Reference. However, the situation of farm workers being paid below legal minimum wages or, in the absence of a legal minimum, below existing sectorial benchmarks (for the agricultural sector in the particular region they work in) should not be tolerated in organic agriculture. In the past years, more and more social-environmental certification schemes (non-organic) have come to the similar conclusion and are now requiring that workers be paid at least the legal minimum wage. It is important that organic, which aims to embrace the various aspects of sustainability, be also a leader in the area of social justice, including the payment of minimum wages to employees in accordance with the local legislation. By including it in the IFOAM Standard, we shall ensure that certifiers certifying to this standard shall verify the legal compliance of organic operators on this aspect.

Find the IFOAM Standard with the proposed motion in track changes here.
Motion 2 on the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements: Requiring that Certification Bodies Must Have their Main Focus on Organic Certification

Voting Question: Do you approve the motion to the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements on the focus on organic certification? Yes or No?

The World Board recommends voting “No”

Background: The current IFOAM Accreditation Requirements apply to certification bodies that have an IFOAM Accreditation by the IOAS. Currently, any certification body can obtain this accreditation, provided they meet the details of the accreditation requirements for their organic programs. Certification bodies often offer various certification services to their clients, some organic, some non-organic. The motion makers believe that parallel provision of organic and non-organic certification services jeopardizes the reliability of organic certification. They would like to see that certification bodies involved in certifying organic operators be focused on organic services to avoid that organic certification be conducted by businesses whose primarily interest is not the organic mission.

Motion: We want IFOAM to decide and approve the addition of the following article in the IFOAM accreditation requirements for certifying bodies, under the section Impartiality and Objectivity:
1.3.14. The certifying body must generate more than 50% of its turnover through organic certification activities.

Rationale of the Motioners: We believe that the parallel provision of organic and non-organic (e.g. Rainforest Alliance, UTZ, Bird-Friendly, etc.) certification services jeopardizes the impartiality and objectivity of organic certification. Ideally, organic certification bodies should not provide any non-organic services. Understanding that this would be a drastic change to the current situation, we propose that the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements at least limit the provision of non-organic services to 50%. This will avoid that organic certification be conducted by businesses whose primarily interest is not the organic mission.

Many if not all certifiers are today certifying a lot of standards, which are not organic, like agro-chemical agriculture and IPM as foreseen in the norms of e.g. the Rainforest Alliance, UTZ and others. This is done in the first place to earn more money and is frequently justified by the certifiers as "better than nothing", if a certain way of agriculture calls itself "sustainable" or "nature friendly" etc.

Moreover we observe that the mentioned and other non-organic standards are increasingly disturbing organic agriculture. Farmers in transition, farmers not yet completely convinced of their ecological approach of working the soil, farmers "suffering" from the obligations, which organic agriculture necessarily demands, are easily mislead, if there are offers to get certifications and "guaranteed market share" a lot more easily and without the strict rules of an organic standards programme. The organic movement gets weakened by those certifications and it is not "better than nothing", because it opens again the backdoor for the chemical industry and other conventional approaches, and it damages nature, environment, biodiversity and the future of agriculture...Read the complete rationale here.
**Motion 2 on the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements: requiring that certification bodies must have their main focus on organic certification (continued)**

**Position of the World Board:** The World Board recommends voting “NO” to this motion. Although we understand some of the concerns expressed by the motion maker, we believe that the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements are not the right place to regulate the business model of certification bodies providing organic certification services. Certification bodies should be free to engage in the various certification schemes required to sustain their business. Nowadays, organic operators often need multiple certifications (e.g. organic + Global Gap + Rainforest Alliance + Fair Trade) and it is only rational that they can access all those from one single certification body. Hence, limiting the organic certifier in providing also certification to other required schemes could increase the cost and burden of organic certification for organic operators. IFOAM also does not want to take an official position against the addition of other schemes (such as Fair Trade) to the organic certification. Moreover, we do not believe that the quality of a CB’s work can be directly correlated to the percentage of their organic activity. Finally, having such a requirement for 50% organic activity would make it impossible for CBs who want to start an organic activity to become IFOAM/IGOSA Accredited, which we believe would be counter-productive in terms of increasing access to credible organic certification.

**Additional Information and Discussion**

- For additional information, visit the IFOAM website.
- A discussion forum has been set-up in LinkedIn and is open to all wishing to debate their positions to the above motions. It is accessible through: link.
- Voting is open till 21.05.2014. Members have received by email a personalized link to SurveyMonkey which allows them to cast their votes. Votes cast by fax, e-mail, regular mail or in person are also valid. In that case, name, Membership ID and a clear indication of your decision on each motion must be included. Please send your fax to +49 228 926 5099.

**Assistance**

Questions (both technical or procedural) regarding the IFOAM Standard, the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements, and the motions can be submitted to Joelle Katto-Andrighetto at ogs@ifoam.org.

For any question on the submission of your vote, please contact Thomas Cierpka at t.cierpka@ifoam.org.
Members of the Accreditation Requirements Committee

- Arjon Kalter
- Amaia Aldana Gondra
- Carlos Escobar
- Dilip Dhaker
- Mildred Steidle
- Raymond Yang
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Members of the Standards Committee

- Andrew Monk
- Brian Baker
- Chayaporn Wattanasiri
- Daniel Neuhoff
- Jan Deane
- Sarah Hathway
- Stephen Barrow
- Tali Berner