Membership Vote on Motion to the Draft Version of the IFOAM Standard*

*IFOAM Standard for Organic Production and Processing

Electronic Membership Vote
Voting Closes on June 19, 2012
Dear IFOAM Members,

In July 2010, you approved with 93% support the new IFOAM Organic Guarantee System (OGS), with several components, one of which was the IFOAM Standard. This new norm is based on the IFOAM Basic Standards (IBS), but intended to be an internationally applicable organic standard that can be used directly for certification. After approval by the membership, the IFOAM Standard will replace the IBS in the IFOAM Accreditation Program, and others wishing to use the IFOAM Standard as a basis for their certification program will be able to do so under contract with IFOAM.

Following the July 2010 vote, the IFOAM World Board established a new Standard Committee and mandated them to work on drafting the new IFOAM Standard, using the IBS as a basis, but ensuring direct usability of the standard, as well as ensuring that the IFOAM Standard could eventually obtain equivalence with the EU regulation which has opened such a unique recognition possibility for private standards in its import regulation. The second draft of the IFOAM Standard (Version 0.2), published last November, was a result of this work, having also integrated the outcome of a stakeholder consultation period conducted early 2011.

Members have been offered the possibility to make motions on this draft, and several members did. Our Standard Committee carried out a motion reconciliation process, resulting in most motions being resolved with the motion makers and either withdrawn, merged, or integrated as friendly amendments into the IFOAM Standard Draft Version. This brochure explains the content of the remaining motion and the voting procedure. The World Board invites you to participate in the electronic vote until June 19, 2012.

Andre Leu, President

Markus Arbenz, Executive Director
We are voting on ...

**Motion on the IFOAM Standard: Allowed plant-breeding methods**

The motion wants to change the principle that only explicitly allowed plant breeding methods are permitted (positive list) to introducing principles of organic plant breeding and a negative list of prohibited plant breeding methods.

This motion was submitted by FIBL Switzerland and ABDP and supported by Demeter Germany, Bio Suisse, Bio Austria and FIBL Germany. The World Board recommends voting *Yes* to this motion.
Motion on the IFOAM Standard: Allowed Plant-Breeding Methods

**Voting Question:** Do you approve the FIBL/ABDP motion to change the principles of allowing plant-breeding methods? Yes or No?

The World Board recommends unanimously voting 'Yes'.

**Background**

The proposed IFOAM Standard foresees that only plant breeding methods are allowed, which are mentioned in the standard. Hence it prohibits every plant breeding method that is not known and not approved yet. The motioners want to remove the positive list and introduce instead principles of plant breeding and a list of prohibited plant breeding methods. That means that upcoming new methods may be used without revision of the standard.

**Rationale of the Motioners**

The current approach in the standard is to prohibit every method that is not known and approved yet. There are several problems with this approach:

- the current list is incomplete and has not been updated for the last 10 years. It refers only to some classical conventional breeding methods, which are by far not exhaustive. For instance, typical methods like selfing, population breeding, poly cross, etc, are not included. There is also research showing that special sounds and tones as well as eurhythmy – fully in line with organic principles - can cause an induction of variation. If breeding methods were restricted to a limited list in the standard, those applications would not be allowed.

- the future updating of the list is a too slow process compared to the speed of innovations in plant breeding methods. To start a motion and call a member vote for every method is too time consuming for breeders, IFOAM and the members. As a consequence, plant breeders work outside the organic standards and keep the method secret and come into organic production as a conventional variety. Creativity would be sold out to conventional breeding.

We would like to allow all plant breeding methods except a few, based on clear principles, and force organic plant breeders to disclose the methods used. This transparency could be more effective than for instance putting hybrids on the list of accepted methods, knowing well that hybrids cannot be maintained and therefore are unorganic varieties in itself.

Instead of working with incomplete lists it is better to define the principles of organic plant breeding, exclude undesired methods e.g. genetic engineering and ionising irradiation and make the plant breeding methods transparent.

**Position of the World Board**

Although the World Board supports the motion, it did not want to integrate it into the draft IFOAM Standard without a clear membership decision on this issue, considering that it is a highly political issue, that has held up the approval of the draft plant breeding standards in the IFOAM Basic Standards for many years. Some members prefer the approach of the positive list of plant breeding methods believing in the precautionary principle (allow methods only once they have been reviewed and approved, prohibit everything else) while others believe in enabling innovation (prohibit methods only once they have been reviewed and found incompatible with the organic principles, allow everything else). The IFOAM World Board is in favor of the approach that will enable organic plant breeders to innovate and propose an increasing offer of varieties purposely developed to suit the needs of the organic sector. The World Board also believes that, from a pragmatic perspective, it is more realistic to use IFOAM’s limited resources to review only those methods which may contradict the organic principles, as opposed to reviewing and approving the vast majority of plant breeding methods which do not pose any threat to the organic principles.
Motion on the IFOAM Standard: Allowed Plant-Breeding Methods

Text in the IFOAM Standard relevant for the motion (motion in red)

4.7 Breeding of organic varieties

Explanatory Note: This section refers to breeding of organic varieties, not simply use or production of organic seeds from regular (conventional) varieties.

General Principles

Organic plant breeding and variety development is sustainable, enhances genetic diversity and relies on natural reproductive ability. Organic breeding is always creative, cooperative and open for science, intuition, and new findings. Organic plant breeding is a holistic approach that respects natural crossing barriers and: Organic plant breeding is based on fertile plants that can establish a viable relationship with the living soil. Organic varieties are obtained by an organic plant breeding program.

Requirements:

4.7.1 To produce organic varieties, plant breeders shall select their varieties under organic conditions that comply with the requirements of this standard. All multiplication practices except meristem culture shall be under certified organic management.

4.7.2 Organic plant breeders shall develop organic varieties only on the basis of genetic material that has not been contaminated by products of genetic engineering.

4.7.3 Organic plant breeders shall disclose the applied breeding techniques. To produce an organic variety, genetic engineering and irradiation is prohibited and only the following methods of breeding shall be used: Organic plant breeders shall make the information about the methods, which were used to develop an organic variety, available for the public latest from the beginning of marketing of the seeds.

Suitable and permitted for organic plant breeding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variation Induction Techniques</th>
<th>Selection Techniques</th>
<th>Maintenance and Multiplication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination breeding</td>
<td>Mass selection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crossing varieties</td>
<td>Pedigree selection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridge crossing</td>
<td>Site determined selection</td>
<td>partitioned tubers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Backcrossing</td>
<td>Change in surroundings</td>
<td>scales, husks,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrids with fertile F1</td>
<td>Change in sowing time</td>
<td>partitioned bulbs, brood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temperature treating</td>
<td>Ear bed method</td>
<td>bulbs, bulbils, offset bulbs etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafting style</td>
<td>Test crossing</td>
<td>layer, cut and graft shoots</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cutting style</td>
<td>Indirect selections</td>
<td>rhizomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untreated mentor pollen</td>
<td>DNA diagnostic methods</td>
<td>Meristem culture</td>
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4.7.4 The genome is respected as an impartible entity. Technical interventions into the genome of plants are not allowed (e.g. ionizing radiation; transfer of isolated DNA, RNA, or proteins).

4.7.5 The cell is respected as an impartible entity. Technical interventions into an isolated cell on an artificial medium are not allowed (e.g. genetic engineering techniques; destruction of cell walls and disintegration of cell nuclei through cytoplast fusion).

4.7.6 The natural reproductive ability of a plant variety is respected and maintained. This excludes techniques that reduce or inhibit the germination capacities (e.g. terminator technologies).

4.7.7 Organic plant breeders may obtain plant variety protection, but organic varieties shall not be patented.
Additional Information and Discussion

- Go to the IFOAM website for additional information: http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/norms.html
- A discussion forum is open to all IFOAM members wishing to debate their positions to the above motion. It is accessible through: http://ifoamogs.wordpress.com/

Submitting your Vote

Voting is open to IFOAM Members starting May 4, 2012 and ending June, 19 2011. The registration number required at log-in is your Membership ID, included in the e-mail you received with this document.

Votes cast by fax, e-mail, regular mail or in person are also valid. Name, Membership ID and a clear indication of your decision on the motion must be included. Please send your fax to +49 228 926 5099. Members can log in at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ifoamstandardmotionvote2012 to vote on the following question:

Assistance

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

For any question on the submission of your vote, please contact Martin Pairet at m.pairet@ifoam.org.

WITH REGARDS TO THE MOTION QUESTION ON SECTION 4.7 (BREEDING OF ORGANIC VARIETIES): "Do you approve the FIBL/ABDP motion to change the principles of allowing plant-breeding methods?"

I vote 'YES' I vote 'NO'