

Terms of Reference for the International Task Force on Harmonisation and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture

The International Task Force on Harmonisation and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture, convened by FAO, IFOAM and UNCTAD, will serve as an open-ended platform for dialogue between public and private institutions (intergovernmental, governmental and civil society) involved in trade and regulatory activities in the organic agriculture sector. The objective is to facilitate international trade and access of developing countries to international markets.

More specifically, the Task Force will:

1. Review the existing organic agriculture standards, regulations and conformity assessment systems including:

- Their impact on international trade in organic agriculture products;
- Models and mechanisms of equivalency and mutual recognition;
- Extent of international harmonisation.

2. Build on the recommendations of the IFOAM/FAO/UNCTAD Conference on International Harmonisation and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture (2002), and on the reviews mentioned above, to formulate proposals for the consideration of governments, Codex Alimentarius Commission, relevant bodies of FAO, UNCTAD and IFOAM and other appropriate organisations on:

- Opportunities for harmonisation of standards, regulations and conformity assessment systems;
- Mechanisms for the establishment of equivalence of standards, regulations and conformity assessment systems;
- Mechanisms for achieving mutual recognition among and between public and private systems;
- Measures to facilitate access to organic markets, in particular by developing countries and smallholders.

These proposals will take into account their impact on production systems, their relevance to consumers and the need for transparency.

3. Advise stakeholders and provide information on developments following discussions of the above proposals.