

NOTIFICATION

Ad Hoc Expert Meeting on Facilitating Access of Small Organic Farmers in Developing Countries to Supermarket Shelves

**Room VII, Palais des Nations
Geneva, 10-11 December 2009**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is convening an Ad Hoc Expert Meeting on Facilitating Access of Small Organic Farmers in Developing Countries to Supermarket Shelves. The meeting will be held on 10-11 December 2009 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Room VII. It will begin at 9:30 a.m. on 10 December and conclude by 4 p.m. on 11 December.

Background and purpose of the meeting

Organic agriculture¹ offers an impressive array of economic, food security, environmental, social and health benefits for developing countries. While domestic markets for organic products in developing countries are growing, the vast majority of certified organic products are exported to developed countries, particularly in Europe and North America.

Demand for organically grown produce in supermarket shelves as well as in the food processing and catering industry has been rapidly expanding in recent past. In fact, this is currently the most dynamic growth segment of total global demand for organic produce.

As many of the buyers in these markets are either members of GLOBALGAP or apply the GLOBALGAP requirements, there is increasing interest to demand that organic producers also meet the requirements of GLOBALGAP (aimed at ensuring consistent application of Good Agricultural Practices with a particular focus on health and safety of fresh produce). This results in double inspection and certification requirements and potential loss of market for many organic farmers, particularly small-scale farmers. For traders and retailers and other buyers of organic produce, the costs and difficulties of sourcing doubly certified products leads to higher costs, reduced range of products and increased risk of supply interruptions.

There is some common ground between GLOBALGAP and organic agriculture objectives and requirements. Building on that common ground to reduce certification costs would help all parties concerned.

With this in mind, the UNCTAD secretariat commissioned a study that compares the EU organic agriculture requirements (as a representative organic guarantee system) with those of GLOBALGAP for fruit and vegetables.

¹ The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) defines organic agriculture as "a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved."

The study provides a sound springboard for discussions at the Ad-hoc Expert Meeting on Facilitating Access of Small Organic Farmers in Developing Countries to Supermarket Shelves, organized by UNCTAD in collaboration with the secretariats of GLOBALGAP (Food Plus GmbH) and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM).

The meeting will bring together representatives of all key stakeholder groups, including producers from around the world, traders, retailers, standard setters and certification bodies to discuss:

- practical experiences in production and sales of doubly certified products
- the findings of the comparative study;
- practical options for achieving partial equivalence between GLOBALGAP and organic certification systems or other arrangements to streamline the certification process at the scheme level for dual certifications;
- a roadmap of activities for further development and implementation of such a scheme (e.g. further analysis, field testing and operationalization of equivalence approaches).

Logistics

The meeting will take place at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Palais des Nations. Upon arrival and before entering the Palais des Nations, participants are requested to collect their badge at the United Nations Security Service at Pregny Gate. The Security Service is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (non-stop). Because of the security measures in force, participants are strongly advised to arrive well before 9 a.m. in order to complete the procedures and reach the meeting in good time. Participants are requested to bring a passport or similar national identity card with them. Taxis are not allowed to enter the grounds of the Palais des Nations, and visitors will therefore be dropped off at the requested entrance gate. Furthermore, luggage may not be brought into the buildings unless the Security Service gives special clearance.

Participation

The meeting is open to all member States of UNCTAD. The meeting may be of particular interest to government officials, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups, and representatives of the private sector involved with issues related to facilitating market access for organic agricultural products from developing countries. In addition, selected representatives of all key stakeholder groups, including producers, traders, retailers, standard setters and certification bodies have been invited. Member states, specialized agencies and intergovernmental bodies wishing to participate in the meeting, as well as non-governmental organizations in the General Category and those in the Special Category wishing to participate as observers, are requested to inform the UNCTAD secretariat of the names of their representatives by **1 December 2009**.

Documentation

The draft agenda for the meeting as well as the discussion paper, *Comparative study on the GlobalGAP Fruit and Vegetables Standard and the EU Organic Regulation*, and its technical annex (*Side by side comparison of the*

GlobalGAP standard and the EU organic regulation) are available on the meeting website at www.unctad.org/trade_env.

All experts are encouraged to prepare and submit brief papers related to the meeting's topic, including practical experiences in production, trade and sourcing of doubly (GlobalGAP and organic) certified products and ideas on options to facilitate market entry of these product in the future. These papers will be made available at the meeting in the form and language in which they are received.

Further information and contact details

Nominations and related communications concerning representation at the meeting should be sent to the UNCTAD secretariat, Intergovernmental Support Service, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10; fax: 41 22 917 0214; e-mail: meetings@unctad.org.

Enquiries concerning substantive issues should be addressed to Ulrich Hoffmann, Head, Trade and Sustainable Development Section, Division on International Trade (DITC), Ulrich.hoffmann@unctad.org tel. +41 22 917 5580, fax +41 22 917 0247; or Sophia Twarog, Sophia.twarog@unctad.org, tel. +41 22 917 5082.

For further information, please see the meeting website at www.unctad.org/trade_env.

(signed)

Supachai Panitchpakdi
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

25 June 2009