

Information Letter for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe

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Avalon

Promoting sustainable rural
development in
vulnerable agricultural
areas

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Dear readers,

Welcome to our first Information letter in 2010. This new year is an important year in the battle for freedom of GMO since organic farming cannot co-exist with genetically engineered crops. As many readers have followed in the news last year, the genetically modified linseed variety "Triffid" accidentally got into bread and cereals in 36 different countries. This led to large-scale product recalls and rigour checks of Canadian linseed imports. Recently another alarming news was that the European Commission on 02 March 2010 approved the cultivation of the genetically modified Amflora potato owned by BASF. To ensure that the GM area in Europe remains small, we must keep up continued resistance and support of lobbying campaigns. One of the largest campaigns is organised by Avaaz – a global web movement. On their web page you can sign a petition for a ban on GM foods until all necessary research has been completed. Avaaz needs 1 Million signatures:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/eu_health_and_biodiversity/?cl=512821921&v=5655

A good news is that the Bulgarian Parliament has passed amendments to the GMO Act which mean that GM crops will not be allowed to be grown in the country. Though the GMO crops were not banned completely, the amendments made them impossible to be produced, as GM crops will not be allowed to be grown within 30 km of the protected areas, within 10 km of bee hives or within 7 km of organic farmland.

We are also happy to invite you to the International Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw, 6 - 7 May 2010, which is committed to bring together organic players from Central and Eastern Europe as well as from Western Europe and strengthen business relationships.

We hope you enjoy reading our articles.

Christoph Arndt, Katja Bykova & Linda Huisman

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EKOconnect
Organic Agriculture Moving East


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1. The Social Stores Success Story in Hungary: within one year from none to 100 stores!

Just as in other new EU member states, over the past years multinational hypermarkets have mushroomed in the Hungarian industrial estate areas and squeezed the local farmers out of the market. Independent from government and with the help of their national farmers association MAGOSZ they now implemented their own marketing system which builds on regionalism and fairness.



MAGOSZ invented a marketing system called "Social Stores" (szociális bolt) with the idea to offer exclusively Hungarian-made products in participating groceries. The wholesale market and commercial chains are bypassed, and the farmer (or the farmers' cooperative) supply directly to the store. This in return allows for a low sale price, which is an integrated part of the concept: Groceries who want to participate have to adhere to price ceilings which are generally 20-30% below supermarket rates.

This marketing concept has become very popular. Within a year after its first store was open in January 2009, there are more than 100 now spread all over the country. The key to success is regionalism combined with an idea of fairness. Hungarians can now purchase products from those regions they trust and they want to support. The idea is to connect farmers from nearby villages directly with the Social Stores in the corresponding urban centre. Since products do not travel far and the selling process does not involve unnecessary players, customers get fresh domestic food of high quality. At the same time rural areas develop and employment is brought to the people living in villages.

Not many products sold in the Social Stores have been certified organic so far; however, organic production should be able to achieve its full potential in this market segment. The Social Stores Success Story shows that many customers are eager to buy local or regional food, which has not travelled far and which area of origin is known to the people. And secondly, customers are more and more eager to purchase traditional domestic and locally processed food items.

Christoph Arndt, Katja Bykova, EkoConnect e.V.

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2. Ukraine: the sleeping organic giant?

In the Ukraine organic farming is an important factor to counteract the degradation of valuable chernozems. In recent years, the humus content of these soils was drastically depleted and soil life greatly reduced with the effect that yields are far below potential. Nearly one hundred and fifty farms in Ukraine carry out controlled organic farming today on as much as 240,000 ha of certified arable land. This is after all 60% of the organic arable land of Germany.



With regards to marketable crops 70% is cereals (wheat, barley, grain maize) and 25% oil seeds. Sunflowers make up almost two thirds of the organic oil crops. Organic rapeseed, soybean, flaxseed and pumpkin seeds have considerably expanded in recent years. The cultivation of pulses such as peas, vetches and lupines also observed high growth rates. Some large farms such as Galeks Agro (Zhytomyr oblast) have included almost 50% of pulses into their crop rotations.

As for conventional grain, the 2008/09 season saw Ukraine for the very first time among the top three grain exporters in the world. For the organic commodities, however, things look quite different. Experts estimate that currently only a good 10% of harvested organic raw material is exported as certified organic. This is partly due to the fact that farmers lack business relations and partly a consequence of the very high EU tariffs on wheat, barley and rye. Yet, durum wheat, quality wheat, grain maize, oilseeds and pulses are free from duties, and therefore their export share is much higher. The main target countries for Ukrainian organic commodities are the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Greece and Israel.

Surveys of EkoConnect prove that each year the Ukraine produces about 80,000 t of organic corn, 5,000 t of organic spelt and 6,000 t of organic buckwheat that are available for export. Because of its climate, the Ukraine could also produce good quality durum wheat. With regards to conventional sunflower, the Ukraine comes second place in world production after Russia. Annually 75,000 t of organic sunflower seeds have been available for export between 2007 and 2009. They are almost exclusively exported unprocessed as the Ukraine lacks eco-certified oil mills. Organic farms also cultivate rapeseed (30,000 t), soybeans (10,000 t) and linseed (2,500 t) as well as poppy seed, pumpkin seed, safflower and mustard. Some farms in the south of Ukraine have been specialising in the cultivation of organic aromatic crops, mainly lavender, sage and coriander. One of the very few eco-certified oil mills is KharkovNatureProduct which experienced a sharp growth in the production of linseed oil due to strong demand from the EU. The oil mill in Kharkov also produces pumpkin seed oil and walnut oil.

The Ukraine is also one of the countries in Europe with an exceptionally large area of certified organic wild collection. On about 200,000 ha mushrooms and berries are collected (blueberries, cranberries, elderberries), and on another 22,000 ha medicinal plants. Poland is the main buyer of Ukrainian wild collections. Processed products are sold on to Western Europe and the United States.

Are organic products from Ukraine safe? Consumers often think first of the Chernobyl accident, when it comes to food produced in Ukraine. However, the radioactive material spread out over a region mainly northeast of Chernobyl, and therefore most areas in the country, especially the intensively cultivated chernozem soils near the Black Sea, show values as low as those found in Northern Germany. On the contrary, the greater parts of Southern Germany, Austria and Slovenia have cesium-137 soil values which are up to fifty times higher. In Ukraine produce for sale is regularly tested for radioactivity while cesium-137 limits are much stricter than those applied in the EU. Twelve private control bodies ensure the compliance of Ukrainian organic farms with the requirements of the EU Organic Regulation. With the emergence of Organic Standard Ltd. there is now for the very first time a purely Ukrainian company among the control bodies. The good news is that many of these control bodies have their own inspection personnel in the country which ensures scrutiny and allows for unannounced inspections.

EkoConnect would be glad to advise interested organic processors of Western and Central Europe who wish to start business with the Ukrainian organic community.

Author: Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.

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3. Patterns of organic consumption

Organic market shares in Europe are on the rise. In general, the economic crisis had little effect on the organic turnover. However, while discount stores experienced some losses, specialised health food shops were to a large extent unaffected by the recession. This phenomenon demands analysis: Who are the resilient consumers of organic food and who is setting the trends for the future?



From the early 1990's until today the organic retail market has shown constant growth each year. In Europe six countries already have an organic market share of well above 3%: Sweden, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, and, in a leading position with over 6% Denmark. Market penetration took off when traditional food retail chains and discount shops started to offer organic food under their own brands. In Germany, between 2005 and 2008 the discount shops showed a growth in organic turnover of 20% annually and achieved a share in the entire organic market of 25% for organic milk and organic vegetables. However, in 2009 their turnover fell by 6%, whereas sales in specialised health food shops (which make up 22% of the turnover of all organic retail) remained stable. In Britain it was found that organic shoppers, due to the recession in 2008/2009, have been buying fewer prepared foods, but sales of organic home cooking ingredients increased by a remarkable 14%.

This phenomenon was analysed by the Dutch company Eosta, a leading international distributor of organic fresh fruits and vegetables. The company found that 7% of organic buyers (heavy users) account for 68% of organic turnover, while the next 18% account for 21% turnover (medium users) and 75% bring about only 11% of turnover (light users). In order to understand the group of heavy users better, their typical representative got a name: Connie Concerned. Marketing research found that

Connie Concerned is predominantly female, highly educated and lives an urban lifestyle. Opposed to what many think, she does not belong to a high income group. She has medium earnings, but her household is considered to be crisis-resistant. According to a study of Prof. Spiller from Göttingen University in 2008, the group of Connie Concerned is 70% female with an average age of 49. The consumer groups spending less money on organic food are less predominantly female: Medium users are 56% female and 45 years old; light users 50% female and 44 years old and non-users 39% female and as old as 52 on average. Connie Concerned is a trend setter and opinion leader. She is engaged in civil society and concerned about health and sustainability. As a consumer she prefers fresh, healthy, tasty and authentic products and deliberately chooses those brands which stand for these qualities. In addition, she expects organic food to contribute to sustainability and wants to be informed about its environmental and social footprint.

Recent research confirms that organic market growth is still mainly carried by a small group of heavy users. Prof. Hamm from Kassel University published a study on consumer behaviour in 2009, in which he shows that heavy users in Germany comprise about 20% of all organic customers, but are responsible for about 65% of the total organic market share, and, what is more, this group shows the most stable behaviour over time. The development of the organic budget share of this group leads to the assumption that further growth can still be expected.

Author: Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.

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4. Romania – How long still the leading force for GMO in Europe?

The Genetically Modified Organisms Information Centre in Romania – InfOMG – has launched a new website for the information of the Romanian and European public regarding the situation of genetically modified organisms (GMO). The website can be found at www.infomg.ro in Romanian and English language.



The website provides news from Romania and Europe on GMO related legislation and gives access to complex resources such as: scientific studies, reports, official documents, documentaries, books, etc. The website also invites the visitors to get involved in GMO issues, for example by sending petitions to the responsible authorities. Moreover, the InfOMG team prepared special sections within the Romanian version which allow the Romanian public to send requests for access to information and to transmit complaints about GMO irregularities.

Romania has a relatively long history in the cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Soy production started in communist times. Already in 1989 soy plantations constituted about 500.000 ha. After a drop in the early 1990s, soy cultivation reached 190.000 ha in 2006. The first GMO crops in Romania were introduced in 1998, about 14 varieties of genetically modified Roundup Ready soy. In 2006 70% of cultivated soy crops were genetically modified, i.e. 137.000 ha of GM soy according to the official figures.

When Romania became a EU member in 2007, the cultivation of GM soy on the Romanian territory was officially banned due to European regulations. Greenpeace reports that despite the ban GM soy was continued to be cultivated on a grand scale, mainly in the Danube delta. This and the fact that GM soy residues still remain in storage and processing facilities caused the Suisse organic association Bio-Suisse to declare Romania a high-risk country with respect to organic food safety.

In April 2007, a GM Bt-maize named MON810 (belonging to Monsanto) was tacitly approved for cultivation in Romania. This was the only GM crop authorised inside the EU and Romania automatically approved it. No assessment studies have been conducted regarding the environmental effects of GM maize in Romania. In 2008 6130 ha of MON810 maize were reported and in 2009 3093 ha according to official figures. Other sources, however, estimate MON810 in 2009 to be grown on more than 10.000 ha. In addition to that, Monsanto, Pioneer und Syngenta carried out further trials to test other GM maize varieties. Although the labelling of GM products is compulsory in Romania since 2006, to date this provision remains only on paper. This means there is no control in the GMO production chain.

Since 2007, Romania has shown a strong pro-GMO attitude within European debates: on the allowed levels of contamination of organic and conventional crops with GMO; on the issue if EU countries that

banned MON810 should be permitted keep up this ban; etc. Romania's votes in these discussions were either in favour of GMO or neutral. This shows the lack of interest of the authorities to apply precautionary principles and to assess the risks of GMO on the environment and health.

In 2009 the Ministry of Agriculture issued Decrees 185 and 186 in order to allow seed contamination with GMO, including GMO that are not authorised for cultivation or consumption in the EU. These Decrees do not respect EU Directive 2001/18/EC and the explicit recommendations of the European Commission which state that all member states have to wait for a consensus in this matter, before issuing national laws. "At the moment, a zero tolerance principle for any kind of contamination that might occur from non-authorised GMO is applied in the EU. Romanian agricultural products might be prohibited from being sold to other EU countries if the decrees are not immediately annuled" declared Dan Craioveanu, a Romanian activist.

However, there is hope for change since the Romanian Dacian Ciolos was nominated new EU Commissioner for Agriculture. He is well known for his support to smallholder agriculture. Ciolos has now the chance to reform European Agriculture and put it on a stable direction. Hopefully this direction is free of genetically modified organisms.

Authors: Christoph Arndt, Katja Bykova, EkoConnect e.V.

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5. 2010: The International Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. Throughout the year countless initiatives will be organised to promote the protection of biodiversity and encourage organisations, institutions, companies as well as individuals to take direct action to reduce the constant loss of biological diversity worldwide.

Within a short period of time biodiversity has become a top priority in the international arena for sustainability issues. Simultaneously there is increased recognition for the role businesses could play in this field. However, biodiversity is still a relatively unknown and unclear concept to many companies, as is the relevance of biodiversity to business operations and market opportunities.

In January 2010 Avalon and Crem published a free guide on pro-biodiversity business called: Let's get it going! Avalon and Crem, both based in the Netherlands, have joined forces in order to emphasize and clarify the importance of biodiversity. The main goal is to inform and generate interest about the possibilities biodiversity provides for small farmers and organisations.



The focus of the guide is on business opportunities for small farmers in vulnerable agricultural areas in South East Europe and beyond, including the possibilities to export pro-biodiversity products to Western Europe. This guide aims to develop pro-biodiversity businesses, provides insight into the opportunities in this area and the dilemmas a company could face. The ultimate objective is to give information on how to start a pro-biodiversity business, how to add value to pro-biodiversity products and to how promote this concept as a promising way of conserving biodiversity, not only to businesses in South East Europe, but also to consumers in Western Europe.

Biodiversity enables ecosystems to function. Ecosystems, in turn, provide 'ecosystem services' that society relies on, such as: fresh water, healthy fertile soil, pollinators for agricultural crops, climate regulation, recreational services and natural resources. Together, these services form the Earth's life support system. Unsustainable use of biodiversity may lead to a loss of biodiversity resulting in loss of services. This already constitutes a major threat to society and economic development.

All businesses depend on 'ecosystem services' in one way or another. Either directly by the use of natural resources (e.g. an agricultural company or a company using ground water) or indirectly through the use of raw materials provided by suppliers. In 2008 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature provided the following definition for pro-biodiversity business: "Pro-Biodiversity business gener-

ates profits through production processes that conserve biodiversity, use biological resources sustainably and share the benefits arising out of this use equitably.”

There are three main benefits from pro-biodiversity business: Firstly through conservation of biodiversity and long-term sustainable use of biological resources, secondly positive commercial returns on investments, and thirdly through cohesion benefits. Basically, a pro-biodiversity business strives to generate positive financial, biodiversity and social returns. There are many examples of pro-biodiversity business: organic farming and extensification of existing intensive practices, ecotourism, forestry and food processing, seed collection as well as breeding traditional or rare breeds of livestock.

A clear sign of the importance EU citizens attach to biodiversity is the Natura 2000 network, the largest coherent network of protected areas in the world. Over the last 25 years, 26,000 protected areas have been created in all member states of the European Union, corresponding to a total area of around 850.000 km² and representing more than 20% of total EU territory. Natura 2000 also is the centerpiece of the EU nature and biodiversity policy. It aims to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. It is not a system of strict nature reserves where all human activities are excluded. Most of the land is privately owned and the emphasis is on ensuring that future management is sustainable, both ecologically and economically.

The publication can be downloaded from www.avalon.nl, under the 'News' section.

Author: Katja Bykova, EkoConnect e.V.

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6. Organic.Edunet – A new information database related to Organic Agriculture

Organic.Edunet is a Web Portal that facilitates access, usage and exploitation of digital information related to Organic Agriculture and Agroecology (OA & AE). Summaries of all types of information resources are stored in an online network of learning repositories. Resources can be as manifold as broadcasts, videos, web pages, articles, data, presentations and others. All resources are consistent to the Organic.Edunet Quality Strategy.



Access to these resources is facilitated through the Organic.Edunet Federation Web Portal (<http://portal.organic-edunet.eu>) that offers multiple search mechanisms allowing for different ways of searching through the content. Organic.Edunet, which is designed mainly for educational purposes within Europe, is available in eight European languages. It uses state-of-the-art software.

Another tool linked to the Web Portal is Confolio, which is a repository and allows participating organisations to Upload their Resources. Access to the Confolio Tool (as a guest) is available at: <http://oe.confolio.org>

Individuals and organizations are welcome to contribute digital resources related to OA & AE to the Organic.Edunet Federation Web Portal. Individuals can join one of the existing User Communities to contribute resources, whereas organizations and initiatives should connect their institutional collections with the Organic.Edunet Network. For more details, please visit: <http://project.organic-edunet.eu>

Organic.Edunet is supported by the EU through its programme eContentPlus.

Author: Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.

7. Avalon Network Programme 2010 granted by EU

We are pleased to inform you that DG Environment (European Union) will support this years programme to improve networking connections in CEE countries (including new EU member states in this region), Caucasus countries, Turkey and Central Asian countries.

This Network Programme is an important instrument for achieving Avalon's goals; bringing together farmers, government institutions, NGOs, research institutes and businesses in the field of organic agriculture, biodiversity, agri-environment and sustainable rural development.

This years programme consist of three main topics:

1. Meetings & study visits for Network Members;
2. Open seminars, conferences & trainings on biodiversity, climate change etc.;
3. Communication & exchange of information between partners and other stakeholders.

More information about this programme can be found on www.avalon.nl, see 'News' section.

Some information and events organised in this programme are only open to Network Members. Do you want to become a Network Member? Please apply for membership on www.avalon.nl (go to 'Network' and choose 'Membership').

Author: Linda Huisman, Avalon

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8. 5th Organic Marketing Forum (Warsaw, 6-7 May 2010) approaches

“Fair & Responsible – Organic & Ecological – Winning the Future”

The 5th Organic Marketing Forum 2010 (OMF) will open soon. This event has been designed for the organic business community of Central and Eastern Europe seeking partners inside and outside the region. A mixture of outstanding speeches, an accompanying trade show, an excursion to organic businesses in and around Warsaw, an evening “Get Together”, a very special atmosphere and high-ranking participants at the OMF build the platform for networking and business. The OMF allows for optimum communication with customers and fosters partnerships. It is our contribution to obtaining a united Europe – organic, fair, sustainable and ecological.



The importance of Central and Eastern Europe is still growing, both in terms of demand for organic food as well as supply of organic raw materials and high quality delicacies. This is especially true now that the economy started to recover.

The OMF is under the patronage of the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the IFOAM EU Group. It is organised EkoConnect – International Centre for Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe – in partnership with CDR, ORA, Ekoland and Polska Ekologia.

Martin Ott, the President of FiBL, Switzerland, will be the opening speaker. Topics to be covered during the two-day conference are: customer communication, sustainable product innovation looking closer at organic cosmetics, organic aquaculture and livestock products supporting endangered breeds, organic distribution channels and organic school catering as well as the implication of EU regulations. All speakers are experienced “organics”. The closing speech will explain how to use “uniqueness” in the communication with customers in order to boost the profile of organic food in Central and Eastern Europe.

In addition to these presentations three workshops will be held. Topics are "Meat", "International trade" and "GMO". These are platforms for collaboration and experience exchange between participants with common interests.

The accompanying trade show has increasingly attracted the interest of organic food companies. The exhibition is a gallery window for the company and the entire organic sector of Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, it constitutes an excellent platform to find new business partners. The exhibition hall of the EXPO XXI provides an appropriate atmosphere for this trade show.

The OMF is an international forum and expects participants from about 30 countries. Four official languages will be offered during the conference: Polish, English, Russian and German. "Flying interpreters" are available free of charge throughout the event and will assist in discussions and establishing contacts.

To register please visit: www.organic-marketing-forum.org.

Or contact Monika Swigon by mail: monika.swigon@ekoconnect.org or phone : +49 (0) 3514568039.

Author: Hans-Josef Brzukalla, Christoph Arndt, EkoConnect e.V.

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9. Classified / contact requests:

- Our Info Letters reach about 7000 readers only due to the help of diligent volunteers of translators. To enforce our team we are looking for more voluntary translators from German/English into Czech, Hungarian, Slovenian and Lithuanian languages. Please contact redaktion@ekoconnect.org
- German company is looking for a long lasting cooperation with a provider of organic apples from organic traditional orchard meadows or organic apple plantation for juice production. Please contact redaktion@ekoconnect.org
- German-speaking bakery in Transylvania, Romania, is looking for an organic baker. Please contact redaktion@ekoconnect.org
- Ukrainischer Bio-Betrieb in Umstellung (150 km von Kiew) sucht Partner als Teilhaber. Bei Interesse bitte an redaktion@ekoconnect.org
- Ukrainian organic farm in conversion (150 km from Kiev) is looking for a partner as shareholder. Please contact redaktion@ekoconnect.org

10. Upcoming Events 2010

Date	Event	Place	Topic	Link/Contact
06.05.-07.05.	5th Organic Marketing Forum	Warsaw, Poland	International conference for European organic trade in food, natural raw materials and merchandise	www.organic-marketingforum.org
26.05.-28.05.	Health Life	Moscow, Russia	Health Life is the event for companies working in the field of manufacture and promotion of Natural and ECO-production.	www.life-expo.ru/eng
27.05.	European Organic Congress 2010 (Part I)	Madrid, Spain	New Green Deal for Sustainable Food Chains - Save Climate and Biodiversity – careful use of resources and creation of green organic jobs in the food sector	www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org
30.05.-01.06.	Bioneers Global	Zeist, the Netherlands	Nature as Model for Business, Technology & Economy	http://www.bioneers.org/documents/Bioneers_Global.pdf
10.06.-11.06.	Sustainable Foods Summit	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	The aim of the Sustainable Foods Summit is to address the major issues the food industry faces concerning sustainability and eco-labels such as organic, fair trade, etc.	www.sustainablefoodssummit.com
21.06.-22.06.	European Organic Congress 2010 (Part II)	Rome, Italy	This congress will provide a platform to evaluate the first year's performance of the EU Regulation for Organic Food and Farming (EC 834/2007),	www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org
30.06.-02.07.	10th Bioacademy 2010	Lednice, Czech Republic	Agriculture policy and organic farming in EU after 2013. Credibility and Fraud in Organic Farming.	http://bio.bespin.cz/en:start
07.07.-10.07.	Seminar: Organic potatoes – opportunity for Eastern Europe	Latvia	Seminar in Russian for large farms considering converting into organic potato production: market situation, production technology, packaging	www.ekoconnect.org
17.07.-18.07.	Oekologika	Blaubeuren, Germany	Trade and Consumer Fair for Organic, Health, Nutrition, Environmental Protection , Clean Energy and Future	www.oekologika.com
03.09.-05.09.	4th European Seminar on Agro-Biodiversity	Castle Criesen, Berlin, Germany	"AgroBiodiversity – a crucial part of Biodiversity"	www.wildpferdgehege-liebenthal.de
September	3rd International Conference	Kazakhstan	Organic sector development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries	www.conference.organiccenter.kz

26.10.-30.10.	Avalon Events Romania 2010	Romania	Network meeting and conference on climate change, biodiversity and environmental protection. Including a seminar on multifunctional farming.	www.avalon.nl
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Did you enjoy this information letter?

If yes, please be sure to recommend it to your friends and colleagues. But if you have any comments, critics or other ideas for improvement please send an email to: Linda.huisman@avalon.nl

This information letter is a joint project of EkoConnect and Avalon and this year it replaces the "EkoConnect – Information letter on Organic Agriculture of Central and Eastern Europe" and the "Avalon Network Newsletter". If this information letter was forwarded to you and you would like to receive it directly, please send a short e-mail with the subject 'Subscribe Information Letter' to redaktion@ekoconnect.org

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter any longer, please send us an e-mail with 'Unsubscribe EkoConnect Information Letter' as a subject.

Best regards,

Your Editorial Team

Avalon is an international, non-profit organisation, based in the Netherlands and active in promoting organic agriculture. Avalon supports rural communities in the Central and Eastern European region and beyond in building sustainable rural societies. In this way we support nature and environment, social conditions and local economy, always in close cooperation with local organisations such as communities, farmers, governments, etc.

Avalon Network

One of our main goals is to **connect organisations, governments, universities, and associated experts by informing and discussing about organic agriculture and nature conservation**. Knowledge and capacity building as well as market and chain development play an important role in agro-environmental policy programmes. Activities include seminars, training of trainers, demonstration farms, institution development and capacity building projects.

Bringing together all stakeholders results in a vast network of more than 150 actors in the field of organic agriculture, nature conservation, biodiversity and sustainable rural development. This network links people who are active in Avalon projects with each other and with professionals on EU and international level. Avalon facilitates this network by providing communication and capacity building tools.

Membership registration

Do you want to become a **network member**? Please fill out the application form on our website (www.avalon.nl/network). Already a member? Then please invite co-workers, friends or other stakeholders to become a network member.

EkoConnect is a not-for-profit organisation based in Germany which enforces and supports the exchange of information, knowledge and experience in the field of organic agriculture. The organisation serves as a network for people and organisations involved in the organic sector in Western and Eastern Europe in order to meet and interact with each other.

Our primary focus is to **support activities and actors involved with sustainable development and organic agriculture within the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries**. EkoConnect also promotes rural development and the availability of organic products and foods in those markets. Activities include: being a centralized source of information, knowledge transfer between actors and organizations, networking opportunities and continuing education opportunities such as seminars and field trips and supporting private and public facilities implementing structures for the organic agriculture. EkoConnect and its activities are overseen by an Advisory Board that guides the organization in terms of technical and strategic issues.

Membership registration

EkoConnect members include experts and organisations from all over Europe with years of experience in implementing organic agricultural structures, but also non-experts who are interested in learning or supporting the organic idea. You can help support our work by becoming a "**supporting member**" or as an "**ordinary member**". Please fill out the application form on our website (<http://www.ekoconnect.org/membership.html>). Already a member? Then please invite co-workers, friends or other stakeholders to become a EkoConnect member



In Partnership with Avalon under the Network programme 2010 financed by DG Environment Life +

Pictures:

1. http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/toolbox/photos_de&imageid=6CEC778B-DAF7-D406-10FC57034040D37A&catid=7EE4332B-19B9-E543-C878E777663E46BF
2. http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/toolbox/photos_de&imageid=0F01490D-19B9-E543-C8F1DC1AE5DDEEA8&catid=54A79A07-19B9-E543-C8562655870B3F51
3. <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/683952>
4. <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/772047>
5. <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/1196242>
6. <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/1273994>
7. <http://www.avalon.nl/>
8. <http://ekoconnect.org/>