

## Successful conclusion to 5. Organic Marketing Forum in Warsaw

Author: Sonika Aminforoughi / Kai Kreuzer

The fifth international conference on processing and marketing organic products and raw materials (OMF), that was held in Warsaw in Poland and came to an end on 7 May 2010, proved to be a great success. Together with an exhibition and an excursion, the conference provided around 380 participants from 29 countries with an excellent opportunity to do business and to take the initial steps towards setting up business ventures, and also to undertake all manner of knowledge transfer. On offer were 26 contributions and three workshops in three sessions running in parallel. Interpreters translated most of the talks into Polish, Russian, German and English. The first OMF took place in 2006, and its aim was “to support the closer union in the enlarged EU and the creation of domestic organic markets in Central and Eastern Europe through a professional meeting of entrepreneurs”. (Picture: Three aisles with about 60 stands in Warsaw)



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In the meantime, the OMF has become a European conference and exhibition event with **participants coming from 29 countries**. The organiser of the Organic Marketing Forum is **EkoConnect**, an **international centre for organic agriculture in Central and Eastern Europe** that has its headquarters in Dresden. The slogan of this year's event was “Fair and responsible action – ecological activity – winning the future”. After the welcome by the patrons and partners at the official opening, the Polish Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Artur Lawniczak, spoke about the current situation of organic farming

in Poland. The head of EkoConnect, Bernhard Jansen, emphasised at the beginning of the conference, with reference to Eastern Europe: “We are anxious to see all countries creating **regional organic markets**, so that people can buy organic food and the processing of raw materials can follow. Despite the crisis, there's great potential for us in organic agriculture, provided we don't forfeit the trust of our consumers”.

The deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, Jiri Urban, pointed out that the **demand for organics in the accession countries** had to be increased urgently. “In the Czech Republic 10 % of agricultural land has been converted, but organic consumption accounts for less than 1 % of total consumption. Processing and marketing are still woefully underdeveloped.” A spokesman for the association Ecoland, that represents Polish organic farmers, drew attention to the aggressive campaign being conducted currently by the gene technology industry in Poland to influence legislation and thus make it permissible to use manipulated seed. He said that more action to combat GMO was necessary. Marco Schlüter from the **IFOAM EU Group** also finds himself in a new power constellation in Brussels, because in Boroso's second legislative period the Commission has adopted a clear stance in favour of gene technology. (Picture: Martin Ott from FiBL in Switzerland detailing in a very lively lecture sustainable approaches to economic activity)



Dr. Urszula Soltysiak, the managing director of the Polish organic certification organisation **AGRO BIO TEST**, reported on the introduction of the **new EU organic logo** and on the current problems of organic labelling in Poland. She said that organic products were often not labelled at all, because they were marketed via the conventional trade and without any mark-up. Other speakers too addressed the **issue of labelling**. “The new



logo is still not clear enough for consumers in Poland,” said Dr Dorota Metera from the organic inspection organisation Bioekspert. She said they still needed a good translation of the texts of the new EU Organic Regulations that gave them more than just a few key words. Agnieska Bodera, who works at the EU Commission in the department DG Agri, reported on third country imports, but she also dealt with the new EU organic logo. She said that no explanatory writing was planned to supplement the light green organic leaf, although it was certainly possible to add one’s own text, such as “from organic agriculture”, or to add an indication of region. *(Picture: Klaus Lorenzen, from the producer-consumer cooperative Landwege/Lübeck, talking about their regional marketing)*

Jacek Kowalski and Katarzyna Dulko, from the **LOHAS Foundation** (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) in Poland, reported on **current research** in Poland that evaluated the Poles’ environmental awareness. According to this research project, Polish consumers needed more detailed information on the packaging, more transparency in management and responsible advertising. It stated that Poles were certainly interested in enjoying material goods without doing damage to the environment. The Lohas Foundation was founded in 2007.



**Aquaculture** was an interesting topic that was discussed intently on the first day of the conference. Udo Censkowsky, the co-owner and director of the department “Market research, biodiversity products, sustainable seafood” at **Organic Services**, Germany, reported on the increasing importance of aquaculture not only in Germany but worldwide. Production from organic aquaculture worldwide amounted to over 40,000 tons in 2008, and estimates put production in 2010 at around 100,000 tons. Salmon and prawns are the most important products of aquaculture. *(Picture: Elke Röder spoke about values in the specialist wholefood trade and the code of practice campaign)*



Dr. Nune Darbinyan *(picture on left)*, the director general of **Ecoglobe** in Armenia, reported on the multiple possibilities for producing organics in **Armenia**. She said that small-scale, low-input agriculture was ideal for organic cultivation. Manufacturers and exporters were showing more and more interest in organic products. “However, Armenia still needs support to expand organic agriculture.” Ecoglobe Ltd, that was founded in 2002, is the first Armenian organic certification organisation.

The Czech marketing expert Tom Vaclavik explored the **current problems in market development** in Central and Eastern Europe. He said that they had to increase their efforts to create regional systems that produced fresh products locally and sold them in the towns. Producers, retailers and consumers should establish regional value-added chains instead of relying on expensive imports. In any case, the vast majority of the people couldn’t afford them: too high prices were currently the limiting factor for market development.



This is only a small selection from the more than **20 well prepared and interesting talks**, that Organic-Market. Info can’t reproduce here for reasons of space. *(Picture on right: Greece’s stand. Discussion with a representative of the Ukrainian organic association Biolan)*



The strawberry-banana smoothie produced by the Polish company **Biofood** was chosen by the visitors to OMF as the **best organic product of the year**. Biofood, that is located in north-west Poland, produces canned vegetables and vegetable juices plus an attractive range of fruit juices. In second and third place were chocolate by **Vivani** and a shea butter cream by **Styx**.



They were selected by the visitors, who took the opportunity to taste and evaluate products at 19 of the roughly 60 stands. The majority of the exhibitors were pleased and praised the friendly atmosphere and the abundant opportunities to make new

contacts. It would have been nice, however, to see more specialist visitors. "The entry charge was probably too high for the Poles, and their response was not great for this reason," was the opinion of one Byodo employee. For example, a specialist Warsaw retailer or a shop employee visiting the event would pay the equivalent of 23 euros for the exhibition and 94 euros for the whole event. With much lower wages in Poland, this is a considerable sum. *(Picture from left to right: Marco Schlüter, IFOAM EU Group, the three winners of "Best of Organic" and Bernhard Jansen, the head of EkoConnect)*

This successful event was rounded off by an **afternoon excursion** to the wholefood wholesaler Bio-Planet near Warsaw. *(Picture on right: Advertising a book on products from the region, picture on left: Interpreters each translating into three different languages)*



Tip:

[www.organic-marketing-forum.org](http://www.organic-marketing-forum.org)

[www.ekoconnect.org](http://www.ekoconnect.org)

Another organic fair will be held in Lodz from 15 – 17. 10. 2010: [www.naturafood.pl](http://www.naturafood.pl)

### Interview with Jiri Urban, the deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic

**Mr Urban, you have been in the government as a green minister for two years. Would you tell us about your experiences during this time.**

I thought at first that I would only be concerned with organic agriculture, but my brief turned out to be much wider. During these two years I've spent a lot of time on cross-compliance. I've always been keen to see that financial support for agriculture is spread less widely and targeted at concrete projects related in particular to the environment in the second pillar of EU agricultural policy.

**Can you give concrete examples of what has been achieved during your time as Deputy Minister of Agriculture?**



We have promoted an organic agriculture programme with 30 million crowns (1.2 million euros). It has three subdivisions: it finances marketing, training and founding producer associations; a study and concrete measures to introduce organic midday meals in 60 schools have been launched; and, via Epos in Brno, it supports the scheme to advise conventional dairy farms on conversion to organic, so that the demand by the trade for organic milk can be met. Over and above that, we founded in 2009 a technology platform Organic Agriculture that receives institutional funding of over 30,000 euros a year. The aim is improved coordination and collaboration on the part of the scientists who deal with organic agriculture and issues of organic marketing.

*(Picture on left: Jiri Urban at the Organic Conference in Warsaw at a stand of Sonnentor, a company with a large production of herbs in the Czech Republic)*

**How did you like the Organic Marketing Forum?**

What impressed me was the number of exhibitors who presented their products and how marketing-oriented the organic conference was. I like the concept a lot, and the event has already become a small-scale trade fair.

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<b>Company:</b>	Organic-Market.Info	<b>Phone:</b>	+49 (0) 66 41 / 51 98
<b>Managing Director:</b>	Mister Kai Kreuzer	<b>Fax:</b>	+49 (0) 66 41 / 51 89
<b>Street:</b>	Liebigstraße 12	<b>E-Mail:</b>	mail@organic-market.info
<b>Zip/City:</b>	D-36341 Lauterbach	<b>Internet:</b>	www.organic-market.info