

The Question of Standardization of the 'Organic' food label

In the past few years, healthy, particularly organic food has become the focus for large populations. However a dilemma has arisen that different countries have different standards as to what they considered to be 'organic'. Organic agriculture occurred for centuries until pesticides were developed to increase productivities of arable land. However over time, questions have been raised about the possible adverse effects that pesticides may have on human health. Organic food has become a very profitable industry in the developed world. In 1972, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) was founded by groups in Great Britain, France, Sweden, South Africa and the United States. IFOAM based their definition of 'organic' on farming practices involving natural methods of enhancing the soil and resisting diseases while rejecting the practices of using synthetic pesticides and other chemicals in attempts to enhance crop production. IFOAM is an organization made up of groups, however, not nations. European governments in the 1980s established their own regulations for organic labeling and certifications. Shortly thereafter, the European Union followed suite, with setting an criteria for labeling livestock and crops organic. Japan, Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia have also put in place standards for certifying products as organic. The problem becomes that different nations have different standards for 'organic' labels which can create disputes for companies who attempt to ship organic products between nations. By having the United Nations create an international standard for what is to be considered 'organic', developing nations would be able to produce more organic products without having to attempt to purchase expensive farming methods. In 1999 the United Nation's Codex Alimentarius Commission reasserted the standards of monitoring and certification in the governing of the organic food network. The Codex requires that the 160 member nations accept produce that it deems to be 'organic' under said label, regardless of the nation's own standards. The dilemma for organic food producers in developing nations, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Asia, is that their produce loses its value if it is imported to a nation where it does not meet the organic standards. With nations having different standards, it makes it very difficult, if not impossible for the producers to adhere to every nation's demands.

With the setting of a standard label then producers in developing nations will be able to perfect their method of growing their produce without having to be concerned with meeting the criteria for every single nation. Some of the practices that would have to be decided upon would be the use of natural pesticides, irrigation, use of machinery and other methods. The methods of transport for organic food can also be questioned as environmental concern. Shipping organically grown food thousands of miles may cause more damage than locally growing foods using synthetic pesticides.

Many nations are affected by the organic food industry with production being mainly located in developing nations such as the majority of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Consumption is mainly located in the more developed areas of Europe, the United States, Japan and the Commonwealth. The concern for the different areas is making sure that their methods of production are acceptable to producers and that the food being produced is indeed organic. For the producers, there is also the question of the economic impact on the producer if their products do not meet the organic standard of a nation as the products price and value severely decreases.

Valid sources for this topic include your nation's government website, the United Nation's website, IFOAM's website and the websites of organic associations of different nations. It is suggested that delegates are aware of their nation's stance on organic food and know that if they have a list of requirements that a product has to meet to be considered organic.

Links:

UNEP Website: <http://www.unep.org/>

CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

<http://www.unep.ch/etb/publications/Organic%20Agriculture/OA%20Synthesis%20v2.pdf>

FAO: <http://www.fao.org/organicag/en/>

IFOAM: <http://www.ifoam.org/>

http://www.organic-world.net/news-organic-world.html?&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=54&cHash=dbf5439c203d3909ffc3258ed71d3f43