

Declaration of Italian Organic Farming

It is the firm belief of the participants in the 'Organic Estates General 2009' that the organic production system can play a vital role in the sustainable development of rural areas and critical consumption practices in the prospect of an ecological and economic reconversion of the primary sector.

The Organic Estates General 2009 invite national and local governments to sustain the Italian organic farming system and to actively commit to its development by taking into consideration the following proposals and recommendations.

1. Development of differentiated organic farming and working toward a real agroecological approach

The organic production system must continue to distinguish itself clearly from other systems in its greater sustainability. We must orient ourselves gradually towards farm management based increasingly on a real systemic and agroecological approach.

2. Support to the sector correlated with social benefits and oriented toward development

The organic farming system must be sustained along the entire supply chain because of the environmental and social benefits it produces. Such support must guarantee an enduring development of the sector by facilitating investments that improve environmental, economic and social sustainability.

3. Lean, coordinated but stringent controls to maintain the trust of consumers

Organic certification must ensure overall process and product quality; moreover for imported products there is a need of reinforcing the quality assurance system. It is indispensable to minimize the bureaucratic burden on operators who should be facilitated in their endeavors by means of lean and coordinated control instruments.

4. Differentiated marketing and distribution channels for the sake of flexibility

The balanced coexistence of various marketing and distribution models adapts well to the multi-form organic production system. Public catering, short-chain forms and logistic platforms are the distribution channels that, when reinforced, should be on offer alongside the conventional and specialized ones.

5. Fair prices, 'the right to organic' and sustainability as the basis of organic value

Organic farmers should be given an adequate compensation for the supply of public goods to society, especially when sustainability is respected along the entire supply chain. At the same time

consumers should be guaranteed access to organic products in terms of fair prices and efficient distribution.

6. Strengthening research in the sector

The financial and human resources to be employed for the study of organic farming systems should be adapted in terms of quantity and quality to the training needs of the operators, especially in the area of agroecological approach and measuring of environmental benefits.

7. Multidisciplinarity and participation in the research on organic production

Actions must be planned according to a holistic approach that takes into account territorial differences and identifies innovative technical solutions that are suitable for the operators. The finances and timelines of the projects must be adapted to the needs thereof while the research models must have a participatory nature, with the inclusion of experimental and demonstration farms.

8. Reinforcement and coordination of genetic improvement in the sector

The development of ad hoc varieties and breeds for organic farming is essential to enhance the performance and especially the quality of the productions. The network of institutions for the management and enhancing of traditional genetic material must rely on the identification of authoritative scientific coordination centers having resources that are adequate for our goals.

9. Environmental and economic sustainability as a basis for consultation and training

The ongoing training of entrepreneurs and service technicians is essential for guaranteeing the planning and management of farming systems based on environmental sustainability as well as valid models of economic convenience. Therefore we need to promote the spread of best practices and an organized liaison with the world of research.

10. Proper communication to consumers on nutritional and social quality

The strengthening of communication for the benefit of consumers must involve exhaustive actions based on scientific evidence to foster the growth of consumer loyalty. Certification, contributions to the preservation of nature, climate change mitigation and the maintenance of social fairness are all aspects that should be enhanced.

11. The cultural challenge of a new education about food and environment

The principles of sustainability for organic farming must become a means for the cultural growth of informed citizens. Education, firstly in the school system, must allow citizens to make responsible choices to guarantee a sustainable future to the new generations.

Over 300 people collaborated in the Organic Estates General 2009 representing, among others: associations of producers, distributors and consumers, local authorities, control bodies, universities and public research institutions.
