

ORGANIC FARMING IN GREECE INSPECTION & CERTIFICATION ORGANIZATION OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

38, Aristoteles str., 10433 Athens, Greece/ Tel.: 003210 8224839 & 8224384/

Fax: 003210 8218117/ web site: www.dionet.gr / e-mail: info@dionet.gr

Introduction To DIO

DIO is a short and poetic reference to Demeter, the ancient Greek goddess of agriculture (Dimitra, whereas the prefix "di-" means earth and "mitra" – womb – refers to "mitir", that is mother.

The Inspection and Certification of Organic Products Organization, DIO, is a non-profit public benefit company founded in January 1993 and headquartered in Athens.

Its objectives are:

- the inspection and certification of organic products,
- the promotion of organic farming practices in the Mediterranean on a large scale,
- the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity,
- the contribution to the protection of consumer health by the elimination of chemicals use in farming.

Legal Framework - Accreditation

DIO is approved by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture as an official organization of organic products' inspection and certification and is recognized by the EU. Since 2001 DIO has been accredited by the Hellenic Accreditation Council and functions in accordance with EN 45011 Standards (ISO/ IEC 65).

On an international level, since 2002, DIO has been recognized by the Conseil d' Accreditation du Quebec (Canada) and the US Ministry of Agriculture (USDA) for the Inspection and Certification of Organic Products according to the NOP Final Rule. DIO is also a full member of IFOAM – the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements.

Certification Standards

DIO has been able to offer organic operators a range of certifications that are held valid worldwide, thanks to accreditation granted by national and international certifying bodies and mutual recognition agreements made with international certifying bodies, such as:

- The European Union Regulation 2092/91 and its amendments.
- The National Standards of the USDA and Quebec.
- The DIO Standards which have been instituted by itself.
- The Organic Standards of Other countries as well as international organizations.
- The Inspection and Certification Activities carried out by more than 50 DIO agronomists, 200 technicians and local operative branches all over Greece.

Achievements

DIO is a certifying body with a strong national and international vocation aiming at the diffusion of the philosophy and practice of organic farming as well as its development, following the principles of sustainable development in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe.

DIO:

- contributes to raising public awareness about the adverse effects of chemical used in agriculture,
- undertakes numerous projects for informing farmers about organic agriculture and training of operators and agronomists,
- organizes congresses about organic farming on a national and international level,
- participates in training programmes aiming at upgrading and implementing an EU equivalent control system for organic farming in the Mediterranean countries,
- publishes specialized books on organic farming as well as a quarterly periodical on organic farming titled "DIO – Organic Farming Magazine".
- organizes annually the Greek Exhibition of Organic Products "Ecofestival"

Some of the events organized so far:

- the 4th Mediterranean IFOAM Congress for organic farming – Athens 1993
- the 1st National Congress Organic Olive Growing – Kalamata, Greece 1994
- the 2nd National Congress on Organic Viticulture – Tripoli, Greece 1996
- "Agenda 2000", the Mediterranean Congress for Organic Agriculture in European/ Mediterranean countries – Lesbos 2000s
- also, in cooperation with AIAB and CAAE (each an Italian and Spanish certifying body respectively) 3 congress for "Organic Agriculture in Europe and the Mediterranean countries" – Vignola, Grosseto and Cordoba in Italy and Spain.

DIO's publications:

- "National And European Regulations Concerning Organic Farming"
- "IFOAM's Basic Principles Concerning Organic Farming And Food Processing"
- "Organic Manuring And Crop Rotation"
- "Organic Viticulture"
- "Organic Products Catalog" (*1st and 2nd edition*)
- "Endogenous Factors And Organic Soil Fertility"
- "Greenhouse Organic Farming – Experience And Practices"
- "Organic Olive-Growing" (*out of print*)
- "The Incalculable Risk – Genetic Engineering And Farming" (*out of print*)

In Addition, DIO:

- launches campaigns aiming at the information of the public and increase of its awareness about the adverse effects of genetic engineering on farming and human nutrition, and therefore health,
- takes the initiative in coordinating communication between Greece and the European Network – of which DIO is an active member – dealing with the adverse effects of Genetic Engineering,
- represents Greece at IFOAM's European Office (EU Group) and also participates in IFOAM's Mediterranean

Group,

A Brief Look At The Development Of Organic Agriculture In Greece:

The Organic Farming Movement got off to a gentle start in the 70's, but it was not until 1985 that the first association for organic farming was founded. Organic Agriculture on a commercial, professional scale began in the late 80's with the production of currants in the area around Aeghio (Northern Peloponnese) and olive oil in the Mani region (Southern Peloponnese).

The end of 1993 saw the scene change dramatically with the implementation of Regulation (EEC) 2092/91. Between 1994 and 1995 the area of land cultivated by organic means rose by 102%. A second expansion of organic land by 94% took place

in 1996 after the implementation of Regulation (EEC) 2078/92. By the end of 2003 a total of 4065 practicing organic producers and operators had been registered with DIO. The cultivated land area inspected by DIO is currently 16.673 ha.

Crop Production

DIO controls the main percentage of the organic farming area in Greece. The main organic crop in Greece are olives. The total area of organic olive cultivation is 8.485 ha. Other major crops are grapes (table grapes, grapes for wine and currant production) with a total of 1.825 ha of organic vineyards, citrus with 8.791 ha of orchards and arable crops covering 4.232 ha. The southern and central areas of Greece were those where organic agriculture developed most rapidly. This is because they represent the main olive-growing regions. According to recent data 73% of organic land is concentrated in 5 regions: Peloponnese 26%, Western Greece 12%, Sterea Hellas 11%, Northern Aegean 10% and Crete 14%. The rest 27% is distributed in the rest of the country.

Livestock Production

An important step forward for organic agriculture in 2001 was the launch of certified organic livestock production according to the specifications of Reg. (EEC) 1804/99. Here DIO played a major role in doing the groundwork, which allowed livestock producers to obtain certification for products which, due to traditional extensive husbandry practices, could already be regarded as virtually organic.

Since 2001 the number of areas used as natural pastures in Greece, controlled by DIO, has been almost tripled (from 45.000 ha in 2001 rose up to 126.518 ha in 2003), whereas the regions showing a remarkable increase in livestock production are Peloponnese, Sterea Hellas and Thessaly. More specifically, livestock produced is goats and sheep (86385 heads), cows (1225 heads) and pigs (2332 heads), as well as poultry (121.979 heads) and beehives (3358 beehives).

The number of natural pastures together with the cultivated areas brings the total area of organic land controlled by DIO up to 143.191 ha approximately.

Processed Products

The processed organic products sector began to grow strongly in 1998 when the variety and quantity of available full organic raw materials had reached levels where processing on a commercial scale became viable.

By the end of 2003 many new organic processing units were registered with DIO and there is great potential for further development.

The main processed organic products are extra virgin olive oil, olive pate, wine, packaged products vegetables and fruits. DIO has made a significant contribution to the recognition and trade of these products, which carry the DIO logo, mainly inside Europe, but also further afield to the U.S. and Japan.

Shops and other retail outlets are also within the scope of DIO's activities and are certified according to the DIO standards.

DIO is in the process of widening its certification activities to other areas of organic production.

It is our firm belief that organic farming should and can be practiced on a large scale in Greece. Greece's ideal climatic and terrain features, its diversity of microclimates and local characteristics, its unspoiled natural environment and pure resources located in the mountainous and semi-mountainous interior, its traditional farming techniques which have not yet been abandoned and the still available native propagating material, constitute ideal conditions for organic agriculture. Greece is in the position to make the most of these advantages and DIO will continue to play vital role in meeting this challenge.