



Organic Food Quality & Health

Organic Food Quality & Health Newsletter July 2006

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About this Newsletter

This newsletter, edited by the Organic Food Quality and Health Association (FQH), is provided to keep researchers, the industry and other interested parties abreast of the latest news of organic food quality, research, health and diet.

Comments and contributions on the following are very welcome:

- Brief reports about new research results and reports about relevant events (max 2 pages)
- Reviews of relevant books / articles
- Information about events, relevant news, websites, books and papers.

Any contributions should be sent to fqh@uni-kassel.de.

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FQH Workshop in Odense, 29th of May 2006

On the 29th of May 2006 a FQH workshop took place in Odense, Denmark - a day before the Joint Organic Congress at which the results of current European Research were presented¹.

The FQH workshop had the title "Where do we come from and where should we go?" At the workshop food quality concepts and food quality parameters related to future research relevant to organic food quality and health were discussed. A detailed report on the workshop is available at the FQH homepage².

Chairperson Angelika Ploeger welcomed the 30 participants from ten different countries. In her introduction she said that the aim of this workshop was to take up topics of the discussion raised at the first FQH-Conference which took place in November 2005³. The discussion was based on the experience of Manon Haccius of Alnatura (Germany) that consumers expect an absence of undesirable compounds in organic food but not necessarily a direct, proven positive effect because of more desirable nutrients. It is clear, however, that evidence of positive health effects related to the consumption of organic food would have a positive influence on the organic market. The problem for researchers, however, is that they do not have adequate experimental designs to link the quality of organic food to human health.

The discussion paper⁴ which was sent to all participants to create an equal background for the workshop summarized the following questions concerning food quality:

- 1) What do consumers really expect and how important is organic quality to them ?
- 2) How well defined and controlled is the quality of organic food?
- 3) What are the additional and specific aspects of organic food quality?
- 4) Is there an impact of organic food on human and animal health?

At this workshop the third question - What are the additional and specific aspects of organic food quality? - was the main topic. As an introduction to the theme a historical review of innovative concepts from scientists of the nineteenth and twentieth century was given. Urs Niggli and Angelika Ploeger presented the agricultural concepts of Steiner and Rusch as well as the nutritional concept of Kollath and of the whole food nutrition movement. Regarding health the inner quality concept developed at the Louis Bolk Institute was presented by Machteld Huber. The papers are available at the FQH Homepage⁵.

After the tea break three crops - wheat, potatoes and carrots - were presented in order to describe "quality gates" where farmers could influence food quality in their agricultural management.

¹ Joint Organic Congress 2006: Conference Homepage <http://www.organic-congress.org/>; papers at Organic Eprints http://orgprints.org/view/projects/int_conf_joint2006.html

² Summary of the FQH Workshop in Odense 29th of May 2006: <http://www.organicfqrsearch.org/news/060622-odense.html>

³ International Food Quality and Health Association, FQH (Ed.) (2005) What we achieved - where we will go. Proceedings of the 1st scientific FQH Conference, CH-Frick, 28.11.2005 - 29.11.2005. International Research Association for Organic Food Quality and Health, Witzenhausen, Germany. <http://orgprints.org/6963/>; further info at <http://www.organicfqrsearch.org/>

⁴ The discussion paper "Open questions for the second FQH workshop in Odense, 29 May 2006" is available at http://www.organicfqrsearch.org/news/pdf/060622-odense/FQH_Discussion-Paper.pdf

⁵ Summary of the FQH Workshop in Odense 29th of May 2006 <http://www.organicfqrsearch.org/news/060622-odense.html>

The organizers of the Joint Organic Congress prepared a delicious lunch for FQH, and the participants enjoyed having a break.

Invigorated and relaxed the participants were asked to split up in five working-groups. Each group had a question to discuss. The FQH Coordinator and the Chairperson took notes. Following report presents results only and not the complete discussion.

- 1) Do we want a quality definition which discriminates organic from conventional food or good from bad?

Conclusion: An easy definition of discrimination is not possible, but there might be a matrix of parameters. "Naturalness" of the production-system is most important. The group concluded to discriminate good from bad products and hope this is also discrimination from organic and conventional.

- 2) Do the existing organic standards ensure the quality of food? If not, how should they be adapted?

Conclusion: Support the best practice.

- 3) Can the historical concepts for quality be transferred into modern science?

Conclusion: Bringing the organ back into the organism by developing and educating our thinking as necessarily integrative part of research.

- 4) Which parameters have something to do with good quality?

Conclusion: The criteria chosen by the group are quite conventional but have high potential to fulfill those criteria by organic products.

- 5) Do we have valid concepts linking food quality to health?

Conclusion: Organic food contains "information" of higher order and it is up to the "intelligence of the gut system" to perceive that. Promising modern methods like genomics and biophotons/biocrystallisations combined with bio-informatics could be a way to examine these parameters.

Further details of the working groups are available at the Organic FQH website.

As a next step in the scientific work of FQH the participants agreed to have another workshop, scheduled for March 20th, 2007 in Stuttgart-Hohenheim, Germany. An equal share of the participants would like to focus on the health aspects and on food quality. For the topic "health" medical doctors and scientists from sociology or psychology should attend. They should be concerned about the link between health, nutrition and food quality and be open both to conventional science and to organic science. FQH members are invited to point out persons with expertise to the FQH coordinator.

Angelika Ploeger thanked everybody for participating and Sophie v. Lilienfeld-Toal for organizing the workshop in an excellent way.

Events

- August 11-13, 2006

The Wholesome Food Conference in Staunton, UK

Info at <http://www.wholesome-food.org.uk/Flyer.pdf>

- September 14–15, 2006

2nd European Conference: New approaches in food quality analysis in Karlsruhe, Germany

Topics

- Product quality analysis for process control

- Comparison of product quality from different farming systems
 - Validation of analytical and holistic methods
- Info at <http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb11cms/nue/?c=152>

- October 5-6, 2006

Ernährungskompetenz durch Bildung. 28. Wissenschaftliche AGEV-Jahrestagung in Karlsruhe, Germany

Info at <http://www.agev-rosenheim.de/tagung2006/index.htm>

- November 7-9, 2006

EFFoST Conference 2006 “ Sustainability of the Agri-Food Chain” in The Hague, Netherlands

This conference is organized by the European Federation of Food Science and Technology (EFFoST) and aims to review the latest developments for the sustainability of the agri-food chain. Info at www.effost-conference.elsevier.com

- March 20, 2007

FQH Workshop in Hohenheim, Germany

Info at <http://www.organicfqhresearch.org/news/060622-odense.html>

Publication

New brochure about organic food quality and safety

The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL has recently published a brochure on the food quality of organic products in cooperation with Organic FQH. It is available in English and German and summarizes the main results of organic food quality research and has many attractive pictures and graphs. The dossier „Quality and Safety of Organic Products” can be ordered at FiBL. It will be sent to all FQH members in the coming weeks.

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Imprint

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Manuscripts and contributions should be submitted in electronic format to the International Research Association for Organic Food Quality and Health FQH (address see above). Half a page and recommended papers will be reimbursed by 50,- €; one and more pages

by 100,- €. Authors are kindly asked to send their international bank data to the FQH-coordinator. The following types of contributions are considered:

- Brief reports about new research results (max 2 pages) and reports about relevant events /conferences. For articles of this type: Please include the authors' full addresses, key words as well as well as a literature list
- Reviews of relevant books / articles
- Information on events, relevant news, websites, books and papers.

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