

MOAN

Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network

First Annual Meeting, November 23rd-24th 2006

MEETING REPORT

MOAN History and Reorganisation

In the last years, organic farming has continuously attracted great interest and consent, and by now it involves almost all the Mediterranean countries. In fact, there are about 115.000 operators with a total area covering 4,000,000 hectares.

Nevertheless, despite its progressive development and the rising interest by the major international markets, the evolution of the organic sector in the Mediterranean region is still constrained by some critical points:

- Heterogeneity and unreliability of data
- Difficulty in finding statistical information
- Lack of training and technical know-how
- Insufficient research and support policies
- Lack of regulations and problems of equivalence

In 1999, IAMB launched a Network of experts on Mediterranean Organic Agriculture (MOAN) with the objective of further developing organic agriculture in the Mediterranean countries through activities of promotion, training, research and data collection on the state-of-the-art of organic agriculture in the Mediterranean basin.

Following the recommendations of the Euro-Med conference of Venice - that identified high-quality agricultural products and organic agriculture as the main factors of economic development for the countries of this region and recommended organic agriculture to be regarded as a potential tool for strengthening the Euro-Mediterranean relationships - a new organization of MOAN was planned.

This new organization foresees the active participation of the Ministry of Agriculture of each member country, in particular the unit in charge of organic agriculture, and the enlargement of the network so as to involve all Mediterranean countries with the aim of promoting the organic sector in both the EU and non-member Mediterranean countries.

MOAN Specific Objectives

1. Creating working partnerships to share and solve common problems and work together on common strategies for the development of organic agriculture in the Mediterranean.

2. Encouraging exchange and cooperation among ministries and institutions concerned with organic agriculture in the Mediterranean as well as among national organic networks and communities.
3. Popularising the rationale of organic agriculture and its multifaceted impacts in the Mediterranean.

MOAN Activities

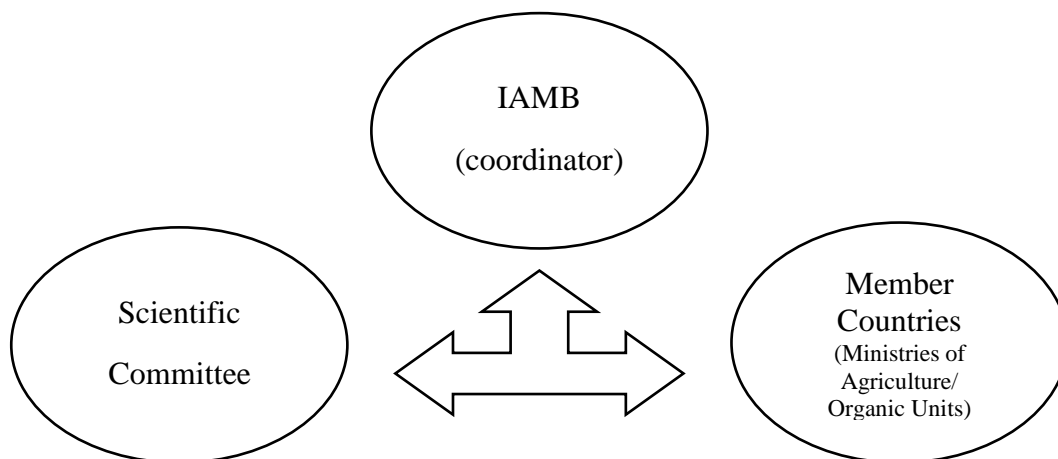
An important step to meet the above-listed challenges is the support to information and knowledge sharing among national and international organic communities through:

- Organisation of an annual meeting with all the network members; if necessary, separate meetings on different topics might be organized to discuss problems related to this sector and exchange and share common strategies;
- Organisation of country-specific workshops that could encourage the creation of national sub-networks, enhance the visibility of the host country and raise its profile in the Mediterranean organic context;
- Organisation of international conferences and publication of scientific works, periodical reports on the state-of-the-art of O.A. in the region, popular works etc. With the aim of bringing the Mediterranean organic perspective in the global debate;
- Creation and management of a website on Mediterranean O.A. with special sections on country profiles and events.

Organisation, Membership and Participation

In general terms, MOAN structure is composed of:

- The representatives of the Organic Units (where existing) of the Ministries of Agriculture of member countries
- A Scientific Committee composed of 3 professors/experts - U. Aksoy (Turkey), L. Kenny (Morocco), M. Ben Kheder (Tunisia) - who have actively contributed to the activities of the network since 1999
- A coordinating body, the IAMB



The First Annual Meeting Objectives and Rationale

The first MOAN meeting was held in Bari, Italy on November 23-25, 2006 and it gathered sixteen (16) representatives of Mediterranean countries out of twenty-four (24) that had been invited (see Table 1).

Table 1: MOAN member countries and participants in the first meeting

Maghreb		Middle East		Eastern countries		EU countries	
Algeria	N. Hadjeres	Egypt	T. Hafez	Albania	I. Tarelli, B. Stamo	France	V. Vion
Morocco	K. Bendriss	Jordan	D. Masadeh	B&H	I. Jerkic	Italy	F. Zecca
Tunisia	S.M. Belkhiria M.Ben Kheder	Lebanon	F. Beydoun	Croatia	D. Musulin		
		Syria	S. Makhoul	Macedonia	P. Nikolov		
		Turkey	M. Engiz U. Aksoy	Montenegro	R. Damjanovic		
				Serbia	D. Stefanovic		

IAM-B staff: M. Raeli, L. Al Bitar, P. Pugliese, V. Verrastro, C. Bogliotti, C. Ciannamea, N. Driouech

Two countries (Malta and Portugal) expressed their general interest in MOAN initiative but could not participate in the first meeting. Contacts are in progress with Cyprus, Greece, Libya, Palestine, Rep. Srpska (Bosnia), Slovenia, and Spain. Actions will be taken to encourage broader participation in the next meeting and future initiatives.

Objectives and Rationale

A number of specific objectives were fixed for this first meeting:

- Creating a common and shared knowledge of the state-of-the-art of organic agriculture
- Exchanging best practice experiences
- Encouraging the emergence of a Mediterranean organic identity through sharing common problems and needs
- Generating ideas on future collective initiatives in the framework of MOAN
- Prioritising MOAN specific objectives and future thematic focuses.

The meeting programme, designed to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, included: a first introductory session with presentations by IAMB staff and key-note speakers; two sessions of country report presentations and a final session devoted to group discussion (3 groups were formed), priority setting exercise and plenary discussion about future organisational arrangements.

Meeting Major Outcomes

Results of the priority setting exercise

The participants agreed through group discussion on the following list of priorities:

1. International lobbying for Mediterranean organic products
2. Data collection (including market info) – Methodology/Analysis/Circulation
3. Need-oriented training
4. Support to set up national strategies
5. Communication (website, advertising, observatory)
6. Organisation and visibility of MOAN
7. Exchange of research results
8. Legislation and policy analysis
9. Anti-GMO lobbying
10. Local specialised processing industries for added value products

Based on the results of the priority setting exercise it appears that there is scope for MOAN to play an important role in representing and promoting, on the international arena, Mediterranean *identity* and *specificities* in organic agriculture.

In relation to that, reliable and detailed information about the sector, its strengths and weaknesses as well as an objective assessment of organic agriculture multifaceted potential and impacts on Mediterranean farming systems and rural communities is quintessential.

Therefore, data collection, elaboration, analysis and dissemination and impact evaluation represent key activities for MOAN in the near future.

At the same time, participants also emphasised the need for comparative research and institutional cooperation work aimed at building up shared knowledge of organic regulatory and policy issues across the Mediterranean, designing and implementing capacity building and institutional strengthening initiatives on these issues.

Next meeting and final organisational arrangements

Next MOAN meeting will be held in April/May in **Turkey** and it might be associated to an important Turkish national event on organic agriculture.

It will **focus on the following theme**: “*Methodological issues in data collection (including market data) on organic agriculture in the Mediterranean*”.

Other proposals for the next meeting theme include:

1. Organic market aspects in the Mediterranean.
2. Capacity building and institutional support for the drafting of national action plans for organic food and farming.

It was agreed that each year, a Steering Committee will be charged with the organisation of the annual meeting. The Committee will be composed of :

- IAMB staff
- 1 representative of the Scientific Committee (for the **second meeting**, U. Aksoy)
- 1 ministerial representative of MOAN member countries (**Egyptian** representative)
- the ministerial representative of the country that will be hosting the next MOAN meeting (**Turkish** representative)

Syria had equally proposed its candidature for the organisation of 2007 meeting but, after discussion, it was agreed that Syria will be the hosting country of 2008 meeting.

Evaluation and Feedback

Participants expressed their appreciation for the organisation and the outcomes of the first MOAN meeting. For a more pointed feedback, however, all participants are kindly requested to fill in an evaluation questionnaire available on MOAN website (<http://moan.iamb.it>) for the collection of comments and suggestions for improvement.

Annexes

- reports of the chairpersons
- list of participants