

MOAN MEDITERRANEAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE NETWORK

5th Annual Meeting, Tunis-Hammamet, Tunisia, 07-09 June 2010

MEETING REPORT

The meeting location & participants

The fifth MOAN meeting was held in Tunisia on June 07-09, 2010, with one day in the capital, Tunis and two days in the city of Hammamet. This meeting mainly focused on the theme "*The new EU import rules: opportunities and challenges for Mediterranean organic agriculture*" and gathered eighteen (18) ministerial representatives from the Mediterranean countries, together with two (2) steering committee members, four (4) representatives of MAIB and two invited speakers who shared their knowledge and experience with the participants (Table 1).

Table 1: MOAN country representatives and participants to the 5th meeting

Country representatives	Algeria	H. Abdellaoui
	B&H: Rep. Srpska	D. Amulic
	Croatia	D. Musulin
	Egypt	A. Abdel Aziz
	France	V. Vion
	Italy	G. Paesano
	Jordan	M. Al-Natsheh
	Lebanon	F. Beydoun
	Libya	S. Haroun
	Macedonia	O. Bickliski
	Malta	D. Sciberras
	Montenegro	J. Nikolić
	Morocco	A. Chibane
	Serbia	J. Milić
	Slovenia	T. Džuban
	Spain	M. B. Suarez Colomo
Tunisia	S. Maamer Belkhiria	
Turkey	A. Bayaner	
Steering Committee	Morocco	L. Kenny (IAV-Hassan II)
	Tunisia	M. Benkheder (CTAB)
Invited Speakers	Morocco	H. El-Maloui
	Denmark (IFOAM-EU)	C. Mikkelsen
MAIB	L. Al Bitar, P. Pugliese, M.R. Bteich and L. Guarrera	

This year new representatives were appointed from Algeria, Egypt, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Serbia and Turkey. Country representatives from Egypt, Lebanon, Montenegro and Spain sent delegates as they could not attend the meeting. Representatives from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Syria confirmed their participation but were not able to be present at the meeting. While the steering committee members from Turkey and Albania and the representative from Palestine could not attend the meeting.

The joint efforts of CIHEAM Paris and MAIB to make possible the participation of all MOAN member countries, led to positive concrete results with Greece and Portugal

that were about to participate to this year meeting, while negotiations and contacts are still progressing with Cyprus.

Background and topic of the meeting

The new Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 that entered into force in 2009, and particularly the new Commission regulation 1235/2008 on imports, have drawn the attention of organic actors in both EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries. The export-oriented markets and the predominantly similar categories of organic products in most EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries, could be driving elements for decision makers in this region to gather and exchange ideas and experiences, to assess the current and future likely consequences of the new EU import regime on the Mediterranean organic agriculture and its markets.

Taking in consideration the new import/export situation generated by the application of the new Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, and based on the topic proposal discussed in a preliminary meeting between MAIB Coordination Committee and MOAN Steering Committee on June 22-23, 2009 in Bari-Italy, the fifth MOAN meeting focused on the **New EU Import Rules: *Opportunities and Challenges for Mediterranean Organic Agriculture***.

The meeting concentrated specifically on the following issues:

- the new EU import rules (Commission regulation 1235/2008 on imports) and practical facts from the Mediterranean countries
- the choice of the alternatives for exporting to EU, the list of equivalent Third Countries and the List of CBs/CAs for equivalence, and their implications for S/E Med countries

As it is the custom of every annual meeting, this year made no exception, a day was dedicated to the hosting country experience in organic agriculture. This fifth MOAN meeting coincided with the closing ceremony of the technical Tuniso-Italian cooperation project APFL (*Actions d'appui à la Production des Fruits et Légumes en Tunisie*) on support action on production of legumes and fruits, including also a part on organic agriculture in Tunisia, financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented and carried out by CIHEAM-MAIB. Therefore, the presentation session relative to the Tunisian organic sector was organised jointly with this event.

Programme of the meeting

The **first day** (Monday, 07 June) started out with the welcome addresses of HE A. Mansour, the Tunisian Minister of agriculture, followed by HE P. Benasi, the Italian ambassador in Tunisia and of C. Lacirignola, Director of the CIHEAM-MAIB.

L. Al-Bitar (MAIB) opened the working **session 1** by giving a brief presentation on MOAN objectives, activities and achievements for the organic agriculture development in the Mediterranean. Session 1 was chaired by T. De Matthaëis, director of the organic agriculture office at the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Policies (MIPAAF) and S. Maamer Belkhiria, director of the Tunisian National Bureau of Organic Agriculture at the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, and MOAN representative from Tunisia.

Session 1 included multiple interventions from different institutions of the Ministry of agriculture and from organic associations and stakeholders that were presented as follow:

- S. Maamer Belkhiria, elucidated the state of the art and perspectives of organic agriculture in Tunisia, on behalf of the General Directorate of Agriculture Production of the Ministry of Agriculture Water Resources and Fisheries. Subsequently, she exposed the results and outputs of the APFL project relative to the organic part.
- N. Tarchoun, director of the Regional Research Centre in Horticulture and Organic Agriculture (CRRHAB), briefly described the Tunisian national agricultural research system and, particularly, the measures undertaken for the research in organic agriculture.
- F. Ksouri Mansouri, introduced the Technical Centre for Organic Agriculture (Centre Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique, CTAB), starting from its establishment and status to its specific missions, objectives and activities.
- S. Ben Hassine, in charge of international affairs and cooperation of the Tunisian Union for Agriculture and Fisheries (Union Tunisienne de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche, UTAP) described the role and objectives of this organisation as well as its contribution to the development of the national organic agriculture sector in Tunisia.

To conclude this session, some questions were addressed to speakers on the issues raised during their interventions and a concise conclusion of the interventions were addressed by the chairpersons.

After lunch the group left to Hammamet and on the way, a technical visit was done to a successful artisanal family processing business in the Governorate of Manouba.

The **second day** (Tuesday, 08 June) included four sessions, utterly focused on the main theme of the meeting: The new EU import rules: Opportunities and Challenges for Mediterranean Organic Agriculture.

Session 2, chaired by L. Kenny, from IAV Hassan II Morocco, consisted of a plenary session. The floor was given to the invited keynote speakers to introduce and give details about the meeting topic.

C. Mikkelsen, a regulation coordinator at IFOAM EU group, set off the session 2 by presenting a broad outline on the new organic regulation applied since January 1, 2009 particularly clearing up the issues related to EU Regulation 1235/2008 on imports and its guidelines.

H. El Maloui, an international expert on certification and accreditation of organic products, gave his point of view on the provision undertaken by the Southern Mediterranean Countries to meet the new EU import regime basing his argumentation on practical facts from three southern Mediterranean countries, Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey, and comparing their different models of managing the organic sector.

A brief debate among participants and keynote speakers on the issues treated during their intervention closed this session.

Session 3, consisted of the workshop first part devoted to countries' presentations and was chaired by M. Benkheder, director of CTAB. Each representative gave a brief presentation of the measures and actions taken at both legislative and CB levels in his/her country, to meet the new import/export conditions to EU and briefly itemised and identified the destination(s) of the exported locally produced organic products. To conclude, each spokesperson supplied with the outlook and challenges of whether to look towards the list of equivalent third country or the list of CBs/CAs for equivalence in his/her country.

To close this session, I. Kacem from IMC Tunisia, gave an overview of the “adapted to the case” different processes followed by his certification body in each country to fulfil the requisites of the exporting country and those of the EU and respecting both sides rules.

The afternoon set off with the workshop second part **session 4** that involved a debate and discussion based on the morning inputs and interventions. The facilitator of this session was H. El Maloui and the rapporteur C. Mikkelsen. El Maloui raised some questions to start up the discussion. All participants actively participated mainly basing their argumentation on their country/personal experience.

The closing **session 5** consisted of reporting and presenting the workshops and group discussion outcomes, wherein the facilitator and rapporteur conveyed their conclusive notes to the assembly.

The **third day** (Wednesday, 09 June) was dedicated to touristic/cultural and technical trips in the morning and to two working sessions in the afternoon.

The cultural/touristic trip included a visit to “Le Temple Des Eaux” in Zaghouan, in Zaghouan Governorate at 53 Km distance from Hammamet, whilst the technical trip consisted of a visit to “Ksar Ezzit” estate, one of the largest organic olive and olive oil farms with multiple organic agri-touristic structures.

After lunch, **session 6** was embraced in a round table discussion on the updates on the Mediterranean organic sector mainly focusing on the ongoing studies and events conducted by MAIB related to this issue. The participation of MOAN to the IFOAM-EU congress in Rome was upraised and detailed. Afterwards, the discussion chiefly treated the indispensable and required participation of all countries to the activities currently carried out by MIAB and that are directly related to MOAN visibility and activities; they regarded mainly the contribution to the ongoing surveys on organic Research within the Mediterranean and the updates on the organic sector in each country of the MOAN.

The conclusive **session 7**, treated the meeting general outcomes and future arrangements. As it is the tradition in the closing session of each annual MOAN meeting, a discussion on proposals and candidatures for the next meeting hosting place and date was undertaken.

The meeting major outcomes and recommendations

1. Conclusions of working day 2 including sessions 2, 3, 4 and 5: the plenary session on new EU import Rules and their application in the Mediterranean countries, the two workshop sessions on: “Countries’ presentations” and “discussion on National regulation equivalency and CBs equivalency” and the conclusive session

(see annex 1)

2. Conclusions of session 6 on the updates on the Mediterranean organic sector

The round table discussions embraced during session 6 covered a wide range of issues associated to MOAN activities to be undertaken and completed within 2010, as well as issues related to future organisational arrangements.

P. Pugliese started up the deliberation by introducing the 4th IFOAM-EU Organic Congress, organised by IFOAM-EU in cooperation with MAIB, co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies under the INTERBIO project, to be held in Rome on June 21-22, 2010 and underlined that this event topic coincided with this year (current) MOAN theme of discussion. Indeed this IFOAM-EU Organic Congress intended to evaluate and discuss the European legislative framework for organic farming, providing the first opportunity for the organic movement to evaluate and discuss the new and revised organic EU regulation since it came into force on 1st January 2009. Pugliese stated the participation of MOAN at the event programme in *session 1a: The new EU Import regime and implications for third countries and the Mediterranean Area*, through the presentation of the discussion outcomes undertaken in the current meeting, emphasising the importance of this participation for the visibility of the network at a European level. It was intended that all participants will send their feedback on the contents of the outcome report, that will be prepared by MAIB and soon forwarded to them, before presenting it in the Congress.

L. Al-Bitar reminded the attendants of the official commitment taken by all representatives during last year meeting for continuative communication of updated information and data on the organic sector and highlighted the importance of the **collective and active participation** to reach the sought after visibility and recognition of MOAN, at EU and worldwide level. Within the frame of **MOAN visibility**, she mentioned:

- i) the actions taken by MAIB in terms of agreements with both **TPorganics** (<http://www.tporganics.eu/>) and FAO, Organic Research Centres Alliance (**ORCA**) portal (<http://www.fao.org/organicag/oa-portal/en/>), through the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (**FiBL**) (www.fibl.org), for the dissemination of the reports and outputs of the "*Survey on Organic Agriculture Research in The Mediterranean Countries*" conducted in the framework of the INTERBIO project;
- ii) the negotiations of CIHEAM with CORE II to be accepted as observer in the CORE Governing Board (www.coreorganic.org) and bring a Mediterranean perspective in the discussions on organic farming research;
- iii) the developing of the new and improved MOAN website, that is still under continuous upgrading. It was planned to show the website and comment it together with all the present members in order to have directly their opinion and suggestions, but in absence of any internet connection, comments and suggestions were asked to be forwarded to MAIB by mail.

The confirmation of country representativeness was requested, since this year many country representatives delegated their participation to others.

The situation and progress of the "*Survey on Organic Agriculture Research in The Mediterranean Countries*" were elucidate by M.R. Bteich explaining the structure of the final document to be produced from this survey outputs and of the final reports dissemination through the INTERBIO project deliveries publications and on FAO-ORCA portal through the channel of FiBL. She also updated the assembly on the state of the art and progress of the survey on "*the state of the art of the national organic sector*" from with country reports will be elaborated and subsequently published on both the network (<http://moan.iamb.it/>) and FAO-AIMS (Agricultural Information Management Standards), organic section (<http://aims.fao.org/>) websites.

Therefore, it was agreed that both MAIB and country representatives shall fulfil the following tasks :

MAIB will:

- a) send the questionnaire related to organic research in the Mediterranean to all new country representatives and a reminder to all those who did not respond yet precising the new deadline;
- b) complete the report on research in the Mediterranean and:
 - publish it within the INTERBIO project in both English and Italian versions;
 - upload it on the MOAN website;
 - circulate it to FiBL for further dissemination;
- c) send a reminder to those who did not respond yet to the update questionnaire on the state of the art of the national organic sector;
- d) draft the country profile report and coordinate its content with the country representatives before uploading it on the FAO Organic-Aims and the network websites;
- e) continue updating and improving the MOAN website;

MOAN members will:

- f) distribute and share the questionnaire on organic research in the Mediterranean with all institutions that deal with organic agriculture research in their countries and send their responses to MAIB within the fixed deadline (July 19, 2010);
- g) fill-in and communicate to MAIB the "*Update Report on: the state of the art of the national organic sector*" in their country by end-October 2010;
- h) send to MAIB yearly by end-September, the agreed Eurostat format with complete updated organic statistics upon a reminder sent by MAIB;

3. Conclusions of session 7 on future arrangements for the next MOAN meeting

Place

Three countries proposed to host the 6th MOAN meeting in 2011 and are:

1. Macedonia
2. France
3. Morocco

After checking the possibility in each of the proposed potential hosting countries, an informal agreement was taken with Macedonia, to be finalised and then communicated to all representatives.

Date

The next meeting should take place within June 2011 and the exact date will be determined jointly by the hosting country and MAIB.

Topic proposal

A collective exchange of ideas between the representatives upshot in three core topic suggestions:

1. Organic trade in the Mediterranean, proposed by P. Pugliese.
2. Mediterranean organic wild collection related issues (specific definition and regulation, certification, auditing and inspection and market issues), proposed by L. Kenny.
3. Strategies to set an easy access of Mediterranean organic products to the EU markets, proposed by M. Benkheder.

These suggestions were further argued and discussed and the assembly convened that the final decision will be taken after the discussion and agreement with the hosting country in order to explore further proposals of this latter and to explore possibly new ideas depending basically on the sector evolution and events that may occur with the coming months.

Once official confirmation will be received from Macedonia, a more detailed programme will be then shared and discussed with the Macedonian representative as well as all details related to the organization, lodging and host country contribution to the next MOAN meeting.