

# MOAN

## MEDITERRANEAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE NETWORK

6<sup>th</sup> Network Meeting, Skopje, 15-17 May 2012

### MEETING REPORT

#### The meeting location and topic

The sixth MOAN meeting was held in Skopje on May 15-17, 2012, mainly focusing on the theme "**Building trust in organic control systems for better trade relations: a Mediterranean perspective**".

As accustomed, it was a three-day gathering ([Annex 1](#)), including one-day international workshop, one-day dedicated to the organic sector of the hosting country and to the internal Network meeting, and one-day for a technical and touristic visit. This year however, recalling the 4<sup>th</sup> MOAN meeting topic on organic agriculture and local identities and the growing interest of both CIHEAM and IAMB towards this theme, a side event workshop "MOANPlus" was included in the second day programme, to explore the situation of the origin-based products and associated quality schemes in the Balkan area.

This meeting gathered thirty five (35) participants: sixteen (16) ministerial representatives from MOAN countries, together with the three (3) steering committee members, the four (4) members of the coordination committee, four (4) international speakers as well as three (3) CBs representatives and five (5) Geographical Indications (GI) experts from the Balkan countries ([Annex 2](#)).

In December 2011, Portugal joined officially MOAN though the appointed representative could not attend the meeting. This year also, new representatives were assigned from Albania, Lebanon and Turkey. Country representatives from Egypt and Spain sent delegates as they could not participate personally. Representatives from Algeria, Jordan, Morocco and Syria confirmed their participation but were not able to be present due to visa logistic problems.

The joint efforts of CIHEAM Paris and MAIB are continuing towards the participation of Cyprus and Greece.

#### The meeting major facts

The greetings addresses of *Maurizio Raeli* and Deputy-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of FYROM, *Zoran Konjanovski* opened the **first day** meeting.

#### The International workshop - Building trust in organic control systems for better trade relations: a Mediterranean perspective - Sessions 1, 2 and 3

After introducing **session 1** contents and the invited keynote speakers, chair *Mohamed BenKhédher*, gave the floor to *David Gould* who presented the props for boosting the market access of organic products, identifying these pillars as **equivalence, credibility, efficiency** and **impact**. He pointed out the role and contribution that governments could have to enhance market access for organic products and exposed in details the IFOAM Organic Guarantee System (OGS). Gould raised the challenging issue of **Mediterranean regional standards** for

organic agriculture underlining the complexity of the area conditions especially between the heterogeneous realities of this region. **Credibility is a key element in organic market expansion and is crucial for the acceptance of organic products. Mediterranean standards for organic agriculture would be more reasonable to be thought considering the non-EU countries where no other regional standards exist, as for EU and CPC. The real value of a Mediterranean regional standard is in using it for equivalence negotiations.**

*Robin Fransella* described in brief the roles and challenges for Competent Authorities (CAs) in organic controls for better trade relations based on the lessons learnt from EU experience on good practices in irregularities and infringements management and communication. He underlined that **CAs have key responsibilities and functions in circumscribing the irregularities and fraud when they occur by orchestrating the tasks of the other interested actors (CBs, EC and CJE).** Therefore, **cooperation and prompt communication between CAs and between CA and operators is fundamental to face and possibly avoid large irregularities. Full and open information between authorities is required in order to address cross border problems.**

*David Crucefix* conferred the viewpoint of an international accreditation body on building trust in organic control systems. He explained how IOAS performs equivalence assessments and the role of IOAS in cultivating integrity and trust across the organic community. **Operating with impartiality is a key for success and trust for an accreditation body all over the world. Equivalence assessment has to cover document review to check the correspondence between the requirements of the reference Law and the CB's standards and control measures. Codex Alimentarius and IROCB (International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies) are the bases for the equivalence criteria. Office and fields audits are essential to complete the evaluation and the final decision.**

*Susanne Padel* described how better data availability can support the development of the organic sector based on past and future research. She referred to two past researches at EU level, one on policy support for the organic sector: European Organic Farming Policy EU-CEE-OFP; and the other on organic certification – Certcost. The results of the first project showed that **public supports are the major driver for organic agriculture development in EU, chiefly the area support schemes and the Organic Action Plans with high interdependency between individual policy measures. Countries vary in the extent to which organic farming is considered within the strategy developed and showed to be stronger and more coherent when associated to wider policies and RDP used for a balanced support strategy. Results of Certcost proved that in terms of unconformity, past behaviour is a significant factor and farm size and bovine livestock were common to most countries, while there was no overall risk pattern for crop types. Control bodies do not collect personal data likely to be relevant, such as levels of debt.**

Based on the issues exposed by the four speeches, some clarification questions were addressed to speakers targeting mainly four issues:

- i) From the point of view of many Mediterranean countries **organic export is and remains a crucial objective for trade balance;** at the same time, even though the flooding of organic imports may negatively affect the development of local market (especially when it is very small), **imports can be seen also as an opportunity 1) to show local producers an opportunity for business; 2) to provide a wider range of organic**

**products to local consumers**, especially where processing capacities of organic raw materials are not yet in place.

- ii) It is in any case important to train producers to access markets. The competency between the "big" international and "small" often local CBs from small countries; **there is no prejudice for importing countries against small CBs coming from small countries. Certifiers can be good wherever they come from, but in a country where the sector is small organic competency maybe an issue.**
- iii) How does IOAS operate in countries where a legal framework of accreditation exists; **IOAS accreditation is voluntary, to date it did joint audits together with some national accreditation bodies; the model does not sit always comfortably with the bulk of national bodies. But solutions are always worked out in each case according to the local requirements.**
- iv) The high certification costs in developing countries; **employing local people to do the inspection could be advantageous and in any case the choice is possible between different CBs.**

**Session 2** enclosed two discussion rounds, both chaired by *Uygun Aksoy*.

**The first round** focused on the best practices and the lessons learnt in communication and irregularities and infringements management in MOAN member countries.

The debate mainly focused on the following issues with examples derived from Egypt, Italy, France, FYROM, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey.

Communication about irregularities, infringements and frauds among the different actors does not work very well, particularly between Competent Authorities and Control Bodies as well as among Control Bodies. Therefore, a significant potential for improvement exists.

Progress in communication scope and procedures need to be based on clear ideas about *what, when and to whom to communicate*. The spreading of information about irregularities, infringements and frauds is a highly sensitive issue and it is important to avoid undermining consumer trust while keeping the system transparent. Many governments have included explicit communication requirements in national organic regulations. Enforcement may be a problem. In any case it is recommended not to overburden the system and to try to keep it as light as possible.

No common understanding (and no clear codification) exists about the difference between *major* and *minor* irregularities; also very different approaches are adopted by Control Bodies in their sanction policies.

Good management of minor non compliances could be a very effective educational tool in training the concerned actors.

Against this framework a comparative analysis of existing communication procedures and sanction policies would be a useful step forward towards harmonisation which would bring positive impacts on the work of all actors along the organic chain including farmers. With specific reference to the harmonisation of CBs' sanction policies it may be worth noticing that an initiative in this direction is already in place in Tunisia.

The conclusions and recommendations of the EU-funded project CERTCOST may be an interesting reading.

The compilation of a list of contacts in MOAN countries to address for formal and/or informal communication between concerned institutions in case of irregularities, infringements and frauds would be a very useful tool.

It may be interesting to test also in the field of organic agriculture the use of existing mechanisms like the "Rapid Alert System".

In France a task force exists for the management of emergencies related to frauds in the organic sector. The task force includes, among others, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Agence Bio, the organic sector professionals.

**The second round** examined the best practices and lessons learnt in organic trade data management in MOAN member countries. The debate was built around the statement that better data will help to move forward but have to identify what type of data are we looking for and who are the actors involved and what their tasks are.

The most common problems of the organic trade data management in the Mediterranean region identified through the discussion were:

- **Confidentiality** is one of the most common difficulties that organic market data accessibility has to face worldwide.
- **Inconsistency** of data remains a major problem in the organic sector. Erroneous values could mislead the Governments and policy makers in their decisions and strategies orientation, as well as damaging for eventual investments in the sector.
- **Multiple data providers and holders**; CBs are considered the main data holders and providers, even if in most countries the Ministry of Agriculture has its own datasets. Moreover, customs should hold data about imports and exports but in most cases there is no obligation in filtering and communicating it to the competent authority.
- **No international custom code for organic products**; the only available trace of the organic imports and exports is limited to the certificates, mandatory for importing and exporting organic products in countries with a national or EU legislation for organic agriculture. Sometimes, as it occurs in Turkey, exporters do not always mention to the custom their organic cargo to avoid filling further documents.
- **Lack of or unreliable data on local sales and markets**; figures on surfaces and number of operators are available and somehow accurate in all EU Mediterranean countries and many non-EU ones. However, levels of productions are not always precise and are usually underestimated. Moreover, market data are lacking and the local sales are not included; therefore, when trying to match quantities of export and import of the same crop, values are incoherent.
- **In many countries, competent staff responsible of data handling is insufficient or lacking in the Ministries.**

**There is no perfect system but an adaptation to each country needs and sector conditions.** However, countries lacking of a well established system for data management should first **define their priorities and needs without copying necessarily the EU, US or any other outstanding data management system.**

**Tunisia has put in place an organic trade data management structure** that allows collecting trade data, of both raw and processed organic products, from CAs and CBs. **However, local organic market data are still limited in Tunisia** as the market is at its beginning and prices are considered confidential especially for individual operators. It is believed that the EU-Organic Data Network project could bring some light to that issue.

**Session 3** closed the workshop with the steering committee stating to the presents their conclusive overview on the conference and the two discussions rounds outcomes as follow.

The organic stakeholders are united in goals, objectives and principles but may achieve them through slightly different ways and approaches. The key is to establish **credibility**. Irregularities and frauds demotivate the consumers, undermine and shake their trust and confidence. So, communication, collaboration and cooperation should be strengthened between CBs and CAs. CAs should communicate between themselves and assume fully their responsibilities.

Equivalence between standards and regulations seems to be the most appropriate way to improve trade relationships. The International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies (IROCB) and the Common Objectives and Requirements for Organic Standards (COROS) may be used as a reference for equivalency assessments. A sound and reliable organic institutional system is highly recommended.

A national political will (organic action plan) is suggested for a long term vision for organic sector development in relation to production, processing, trade, research, extension, support, standards and regulations, control and certification etc.... A special emphasis was made on domestic market development and a good data collection methodology for a better planning of the organic sector development.

Available organic statistic data do not always reflect the real situation. Written procedures and detailed measures are important and highly required to improve and maybe control to certain extents, the organic trade data. These procedures should define the reasons for which data are collected and identify the data collectors and the databases holder(s) and manager(s). The EU-Organic Data Network project is an open invitation and an opportunity to draw some draft based on the foreseen case studies in the Mediterranean region.

The development of a regional Mediterranean standard might be a solution for some of the data management and other problems of the organic sector -but not likely all. Taking as well in consideration the common cultural issues in the region, including the Mediterranean diet, so maybe a common standard would help to focus the mind.

Standards, equivalence, harmonization, enforcement, effectiveness, efficiency, communication, collaboration, cooperation, responsibility, transparency, control were the key words of this first day.

The 1<sup>st</sup> day meeting was concluded with an official dinner in a typical Macedonian restaurant in presence of the vice Deputy-Minister of Agriculture, Zoran Konjanovski who handed out to all presents a hand made keepsake gift.

The **second day** embraced four miscellaneous sessions, each focusing on a different topic.

#### **The workshop on Organic Data Network project objectives and activities and MOAN contribution – Session 4**

*Susanne Padel* introduced the EU-Project "Organic Data Network" that aims mainly at overcoming the current fragmentation of data sources and increasing the transparency of the European market for organic food. It will also lay the foundations for a long-term collaboration on organic market data collection. MOAN is involved in two work packages of this project; in WP2 - Inventory of organic market data collector; and in WP6 - case studies for better market reports. The collaboration of MOAN representatives is highly appreciated particularly in collaborating to the elaboration of the case studies in the countries that show willingness/keenness in conducting them (Morocco, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey).

#### **Organic agriculture in FYROM: history, main actors, current trends and prospects – Session 5**

*Olivera Bicikliski* from the **Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy**, started off the session giving a brief outline on the Macedonian organic agriculture sector. Since 2009, FYROM has a national legislation for organic agriculture in line with the (EC) 889/2008. Financial supports to the sector reached more than 2 million euro in 2012 registering a continuous growth in terms of arable land surfaces, (266 ha in 2005 to 6581 ha in 2011), number of operators (50 in 2005 to 780 in 2011) and livestock production, particularly sheep. The Ministry of Agriculture, forestry and Water Economy works in close collaboration with the national Institute for accreditation, the National Extension Agency, the Agency for Financial Support of the Agriculture and the Rural Development, the federation of organic producers, the agricultural faculties and institutes and the CBs operating in the country.

*Valentina Jovanovska* presented **Balkan Biocert**, the agency for control and certification of organic production, processing and trade in FYROM. Balkan Biocert was established in 2005 as an upshot of an international partnership between SECO - the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, FiBL – the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture and IMO- the Institute for Marketology. It was the first inspection and certification body in the country. Balkan Biocert requested in 2001 the recognition to the EU list of equivalence and is accredited by IOAS since March 2012.

**ProCert** another accredited Macedonian CB was introduced by *Goran Kolev*. ProCert is a partner of the CERES GmbH group, ISACert and INTERTEK. Besides certifying organic it certifies also Global G.A.P., ISO 22000:2005, FCCS 22000, BRC, IFS. In 2001, ProCert issued 519 certificates, of which 87% are for organic production.

*Natasa Nestorovska Spasovska* presented the **Institute for Accreditation** of FYROM (IARM). The Law on Accreditation (OJ No.120/09) is harmonized with the EC Regulation No.765/2008 of 02.10.2009. IARM became an EA-MLA (European co-operation for Accreditation – Multilateral Agreement) in April 2012 for testing and calibration of laboratories, products certification and inspection. This agreement is a passport to trade of the Macedonian produces as well as recognition of the Macedonian certification bodies, inspection bodies and laboratories across Europe and beyond. Both Balkan Biocert and ProCert are accredited by IARM.

*Andreja Tolevski* introduced the **Macedonian Organic Producers Federation** – MOPF, the recognised national umbrella organization formed by the Regional Organic Producers Associations in FYROM. Since 2008 it stands for the organic producers' interests toward policymakers, the media and the community and represents the organic producers and organic movement in international liaisons. MOPF cooperates with international development organizations (SIPPO, giz, USAID, SNV, GEF and SWG-RRD) and participates to international cooperation for cross border projects. It is one of the initiators and founders of the Balkan Organic Network (BON).

The Scientific work on research in organic farming was presented by *Vasko Slatkovsky* from the **University of Goce Delčev** the first state university in eastern part of the country. Organic agriculture is integrated as a master degree module within the department of plant production and is included in the priority research themes. The facilities of the universities such as laboratories and certified organic fields are of support to the research development.

*Ljubo Peno* introduced the **Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG)** in South Eastern Europe (SEE), an International Intergovernmental Organization based in Skopje with the main objective to facilitate co-operation between the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support EU integration in SE. The member institutions are from Albania, BiH (Federation of BiH and Republica Srpska), Bulgaria, Croatia, FYROM, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia and observers from Austria, Germany, Serbia and Slovenia. The FAO, EC-TAIEX, giz, the regional cooperation Council and PREPARE - Partnership for Rural Europe. SWG's chief achievements are in policy dialogue, capacity building and education, networking, support to agribusiness and trade, area-based development approach and communication.

### **MOAN internal meeting – Session 6**

As it is the tradition in each MOAN meeting, the internal reunion consisted of a round table dialogue in which the future arrangements for the next meeting hosting country candidature and topic proposals were raised and discussed, as well as the news and coming events related to the network activities are communicated.

It was settled that both MAIB and country representatives will engage to achieve their part as follow:

**MAIB** will update the MOAN website with the new outcomes of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting and keep on enhancing it;

**MOAN members** will as each year send to MAIB no later than end-September (earlier if possible), the agreed Eurostat format with complete updated organic statistics upon a reminder sent by MAIB;

### **Place**

Four countries proposed to host the 7<sup>th</sup> MOAN meeting in 2013 and are:

1. France
2. Morocco (to be connected to a national event on GI products)
3. Lebanon
4. Albania

An informal agreement was taken with France to host the 7<sup>th</sup> MOAN meeting in Mid-June 2013 in Paris. Details will be finalised and communicated to all representatives as soon as the proposed hosting country gives its final confirmation.

## Date

The next meeting should take place by half of June 2013 and the exact date will be jointly determined by the hosting country and the coordination committee.

## Topic proposal

The topics that appraised from the roundtable were:

1. Link the core topic of the meeting to the EU project Organic Data Network and involving Agence Bio who is a partner and has a well-established and well functioning database on organic market data in France, proposed by P. Pugliese.
2. Jointly work on developing Mediterranean regional standards for organic to enhance the market development and opportunities, by Mohamed BenKhédher.
3. Explore the producers' associations roles and importance within the organic sector, proposed by Samia Maamer Belkhiria.
4. Policies for agriculture quality products: Organic and GIs. Since almost all Non-EU Med. countries have no policy regarding the quality products, proposed by Lahcen Kenny and Uygun Aksoy.
5. Traceability of organic products in MOAN countries: information from CBs and competent authorities on local and export market, proposed by Giuseppe Paesano.

The five suggested themes were argued and the assembly convened that the MOAN meeting could, as this year, enclose a side event on a topic(s) of common interest and relevance for the organic in the Mediterranean. Certainly, the final decision on the topic and programme will be taken in arrangement with the hosting country to investigate also further proposals that the latter may consider and ascertain in the meantime the new events that might arise and affect the sector.

Uygun Aksoy, suggested MOAN to take part through scientific contribution(s) in the next IFOAM Organic World Congress that will take place in October 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey. The topics and subjects of this contribution may be defined and accorded with all representatives in the coming months.

## Workshop on quality and origin-based products in the Balkan area: synergies with organic and prospects for development – Session 7

This workshop explored the situation of the origin-based products and associated quality schemes and investigated the possible synergies between organic and origin based products in the Balkan area.

*Julinda Bare* explained that in Albania, typical products definitions, conditions of production and protection as well as the procedure for registration and execution of the rights are **defined by the Law**. Up to date, **seven typical local products** are identified and certified, some of them also certified organic, and the involved responsible institutions and stakeholders are still working on completing the inventory of all the products of all regions. The development of GIs can potentially contribute to create **job opportunities** in rural areas **improving incomes** and therefore **motivating young people to stay** and work there. GIs development will undoubtedly allocate **products specialization** by region and promote **agritourism**. Improve **awareness**, support **local initiatives**, enhance **community engagement**, access to **information** and local **discussion forums** are the key recommendations to develop the GIs sector in Albania.



*Boris Golob* elucidated the GIs (PDO, PGI and TSG) state of the art in Croatia. **The Act of Designations of origin for GIs and TSG** for agricultural products and foodstuffs, **harmonised** with the relative **EC regulations**, was adopted in 2012. The **registered autochthonous products are seven and four are under evaluation**. GIs certifications contribute in creating protection to the rural populations from an economic, legal, cultural, social and market point of view. Little integration with other quality signs exists as consumer is often lost and not well informed about the logos differences. Typical products may concretely contribute to the development of the local population by giving access to **premium price**, better redistributing the added value of the product, conveying **value to the land** of origin, encouraging and **diversifying local production**, thus preserving **biodiversity, local know-how** and natural resources; have a positive impact on **tourism**. To better develop the GIs sector, the Ministry of Agriculture, local authorities and producers have to fasten **communication** and **cooperation**, chiefly by organising **specialised fairs and exhibitions**, encouraging **exports** and helping creating **market contacts**.

*Biljana Taleska* illustrated that in FYROM, the GIs were regulated by the Law on Industrial Property under the competence of the State Office for Industrial Property, Ministry of Economy until February 2011. Now, **the Law on Quality of Agricultural products** (PDO, PGI and TSG) is put into force by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, that regulates the quality schemes and quality **national logos** for PDO, PGI and TSG. **Nine products** are listed in the GIs Register. A **national awareness campaign** on quality products is foreseen for 2012. The development of the GIs sector could contribute to **increase production** thus **income**, create **job opportunities** and boost **tourism** in the rural areas. MAFWE has a programme of financial supports for the GIs producers and foresees awareness campaigns for producers and consumers as well as twining and cooperation projects for the expansion of the quality products.

In Serbia there is no national law that regulates and identify the GIs yet, even if the potentialities and interest is growing toward quality products. *Nadezda Pesic Mlinko* explained that in order to develop the GIs sector much still have to be done, starting with the organisation of **theoretical and practical training** for interested parties and **awareness campaigns** for producers and consumers, allocate **financial supports** to producers and **connect stakeholders** within the country and the region.

*Mira Kos Skubic* exposed the Slovenian typical local products sector that officially started off with the **agricultural act on GIs in 2000**. Between 2001 and 2004 Slovenia carried out projects with France and the Netherlands aiming at the development of the GIs rules (registration, certification) and better understanding the **consumer behaviour** towards these products. In fact in Slovenia the GIs sector is **well structured** and **well delineated**, producers are organised in **associations** and the **consumer behaviour** is pretty **well defined**. However, the market is still **local** and very **limited** with relatively **low prices**. The GIs products are not broadly known and **no marketing strategy** tailored to all producers has been made available so far. **Six** different types of **protection** and **quality labels** are available on the Slovenian market: PDO, PGI, TSG, Organic, Higher quality, integrated production. Certified Typical local products guarantee an **advantage of protection** for both consumers and producers. To date, three certification bodies are accredited by the Ministry to certify **seven PDO, ten PGI** and **three TSG** Slovenian products.

In brief, a SWOT was elaborated based on the most frequently encountered features in the four countries where GIs are regulated and regrouped in the following table:

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <p>Local market demand;  Diversity of products;  Strong link to geographical area and local/national gastronomy;  Favourable natural and climatic conditions;  Richness of culture and tradition;  Quality of local food.</p>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <p>Long registration process;  High costs of control and registration;  Lack of product uniformity;  Weak farmer's organization  From consumer's perspective: The price of GI products is still high;  Low level of public awareness about the role and importance of local products and traditional specialties;  Dominance of smallholders and individual initiatives</p>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <p>Raise in consumer's demand in EU and Balkan countries;  Prospect for export to EU;  New commercial channels at national level;  GI signs are seen as good (new) marketing tools;  Attract of new funds and (international) aids for smallholders;  Possibility for connecting with producers of the same interest in the Balkan and beyond;  High expectation to integrate local foods to tourism activity (spin off possibilities);  Possibility to access health shops and markets with some products;  Positive international images of the Balkan territories.</p>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <p>Conflict of interest with other quality products  The building process of GI reputation take several years;  Low volumes and irregular flux of products;  Financial worldwide crisis;  Competition when similar products exist in several countries (many similarities among the countries of the Balkan area)</p>

The most recurrent reasons behind choosing GI tools for rural sustainable development in the Balkan area can be divided in five different aspects:

- 1. Economic:** premium prices, opportunity for export and promotion of tourism and rural development in remote areas.
- 2. Legal:** protection against misuse, imitation or evocation of the original product and recognition of products and regions.
- 3. Consumer:** increasing demand for local products of special quality and GI sign helps distinguishing local products from the rest.
- 4. Cultural:** Development and promotion of regional traditions and identities.
- 5. Social:** Job creation in remote agricultural areas and improvement of small farmers' income.

The integration and synergy of the different GIs with other quality signs, such as organic label, have a high risk of creating confusion for consumers as well as for producers. Therefore, before considering or undertaking any initiative of quality signs integration, it would be wise to organise communication and awareness campaigns, introducing and elucidating the concept

Some questions were addressed to the GIs experts on the statements and positions taken during their intervention and a brief debate was raised among participants concerning mainly the **integration of the organic label with the GIs**. Some see it as an **added value** while others see it as an **additional costs** and additional **bureaucracy** with nor real market impact.

The **third day** was planned to have both a touristic/cultural trip as well as a technical visit to an organic farm, but, as the weather conditions were not favourable for a field visit, the day was fully dedicated to the cultural/touristic trip to Ohrid Lake that straddles the mountainous border between the south-western Macedonia and eastern Albania. It is one of Europe's deepest and oldest lakes, preserving a unique aquatic ecosystem with more than 200 endemic species that is of worldwide importance. The importance of the lake was further emphasized when it was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1979 and when, in 2010, NASA decided to name one of Titan's lakes after Lake Ohrid.

### **Conclusions and recommendations for future actions**

1. The MOAN 2012 meeting was hosted by the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) where, in the past years, the organic sector has progressively structured itself and grown thanks to the support of national institutions and international cooperation as well as the commitment of private actors. Various initiatives were presented revealing some of the domestic and cross-border dynamics currently at work in the organic sector in the country as well as in the whole Balkan region and suggesting that there is **scope and good potential for development of organic agriculture in South-East Europe** in the near future.
2. The topic of the year "Building trust in organic control systems to improve trade relations" revealed to be quite timely and grabbed the attention of participants for its specific implications for the future developments of Mediterranean organic agriculture.  
Time is mature to consider and jointly work for the **development of Mediterranean regional standards** which could adequately take into account the agro-climatic and specificities of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. Lessons could be learnt from other regional initiatives around the world. This course of action could build up on the experience of those Mediterranean countries that have already drafted and issued national legislations and would have interesting positive implications for the equivalence negotiations with EU and as well as for organic trade development. Of course, collaborative preparatory work and fund raising are needed to launch the process.
3. Clear, timely and effective **communication about irregularities, infringements and frauds** is a crucial issue for the credibility of national organic control systems. All actors have a role to play: governments and competent authorities could enforce improved communication mechanisms but they should pay attention not to overburden the system and to unnecessarily undermine consumer trust; at the same time, responsibility for improved communication is fundamentally cast on all actors along the organic chain. Communication systems are diversified in scope and procedures, therefore, a comparative analysis of existing formal and informal procedures would be an important step toward harmonisation. Equally important would be to support the

harmonisation of sanction policies adopted by CBs. In the meanwhile, the compilation and sharing of an updated list of contacts to address in the MOAN countries, when needed, would represent a first useful step in the right direction.

4. The availability of, and access to, **accurate and updated data** about organic production and trade is another fundamental component of solid national organic settings. Data gaps and inconsistency are a longstanding issue. In many countries of the Network, though, remarkable progress has been made thanks to significant institutional efforts. The creation of a clear and well established framework for the use and the management of data represents an essential step for any further advancement. A window of opportunity for further improvements could be provided in the next three years also by the activities of an EU-funded project – Organic Data Network – which includes MOAN, represented by CIHEAM-IAMB, in its prestigious partnership.
  
5. Broadening the horizons in food quality work and looking beyond organic could help to better contextualize the role that organic agriculture could play in development of Mediterranean agro-food systems. In line with this approach and thanks to the support of CIHEAM General Secretary, MOAN has recently included in its activities the investigation of **existing relations and potential synergies between organic agriculture and origin-based products**. This represents an interesting, yet contested domain of discussion: the potential for promising complementarities is relatively easily and widely recognised but the rather different institutional settings in which the two segments operate as well as their often parallel development paths appear to have so far prevented closer cooperation which would need a well-thought framework and effective collaborative mechanisms to produce the envisaged mutual benefits. The meeting session devoted to the topic confirmed such an analysis.