

MOAN- MEDITERRANEAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE NETWORK

3rd Annual Meeting, Damascus, Syria, 5-8 March 2008

MEETING REPORT

The meeting location & participants

The third MOAN meeting was held in Damascus, Syria on March 5-8, 2008 gathering eighteen (18) ministerial representatives from the Mediterranean countries, together with the four (4) steering committee members and three (3) representatives of the CIHEAM- IAMB-MOAN team (see Table 1).

Table 1: MOAN member countries and participants to the 3rd meeting

Maghreb	Middle East	Eastern countries	EU countries
Algeria N. Hadjeres	Jordan M. Natsheh Al-	Albania B. Stamo	France V. Vion
Libya S. Haroun	Lebanon G. Chemaly	Bosnia & Herzegovina Rep. Srpska D. Amulic	Italy G. Paesano
Morocco K. Arif	Syria S. Makhoul	Croatia D. Musulin	Slovenia T. Džuban
Tunisia S. Maamer Belkhiria	Turkey M. Engiz	Macedonia O. Bicikliski	Spain J.M.G. Otero
		Montenegro R. Damjanovic	
		Serbia L. Acimovic	
Steering Committee: U. Aksoy, M. Ben Kheder, L. Kenny, I. Tarelli			
IAM-B staff: L. Al Bitar, P. Pugliese, M.R. Bteich			

This year, and for the first time, Spain and Libya participated to the MOAN meeting. Moreover, new representatives were assigned from B&H (Rep. Srpska entity), Macedonia and Morocco. Unfortunately and for the second time consecutively, the representative from Palestine who had confirmed his participation, could not attend the meeting.

Contacts are still undergoing with Cyprus, Greece and Portugal to uphold their participation to the next meetings and future initiatives.

The theme and objectives of the meeting

Following the upshots and follow up activities defined during the second MOAN meeting held in Izmir, Turkey in June 2007 the third meeting focused on the following issues:

- 1. Issues and bottlenecks of the organic data collection, analysis and dissemination in the Mediterranean region**

2. The contribution of MOAN network to the 16th IFOAM Organic World Congress to be held in Modena in June 2008.

More precisely,

a) the identification of the contributions (in terms of overview paper and case studies) to be presented orally in the framework of the Conference on "Government support policies for organic agriculture" organised by IAMB in partnership with IFOAM-EU-Group and UNCTAD;

b) the contribution of country delegates to the publication on "Government support policies for OA in the Mediterranean" that IAMB would like to circulate during the Conference to enhance the visibility of MOAN (for further details, see annex)

3. Other issues like arrangements for the next MOAN meeting (host country, date, topic(s), etc.)

The programme of the meeting

The working agenda started in the late morning of the **first day** (Wednesday, 5 March) with a preliminary brainstorming of the coordination and the steering committees members in order to discuss the general objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting. The afternoon was dedicated to visit one of the widest organic olive groves/farm (250 ha) near Damascus.

The **second day** (Thursday, 6 March) included two sessions:

The morning session started with a brief welcome address of the organisers after which Al-Bitar (IAMB) recapitulated in a brief overview the MOAN activities, objectives and initiatives for the new country representatives, reminding as well the outcomes and decisions taken in previous meetings and concluded by introducing the present meeting programme and desired outcomes. The results and considerations from testing the Eurostat format for data collection within the MOAN countries were reported and commented by Bteich (IAMB), after which the participants commented the current situation of data collection in their countries leading the floor to an open dialogue about the applicability of the mentioned format in each of the MOAN member countries. The feedback and statements from the participants underlined the considerations previously reported and upraised some concerns, like the difficulty in gathering the data in some countries, to be taken into consideration.

The afternoon session started with a plenary session to discuss about the next meeting place, date and theme by proposing potential hosting countries and possible themes to be confirmed after a reflection and a feasibility study.

Then, Pugliese (IAMB) introduced the conference on "*Government Support Policies on Organic agriculture: experiences and lessons from around the world*" to be held in Modena in June 2008 in the framework of IFOAM 16th Organic World Congress. An open discussion about MOAN's possible contributions to the event was launched and proposals were made and discussed.

Subsequently, country presentations on the topic were delivered by the representatives of Eastern European, North African and Eastern Mediterranean countries.

The **third day** (Friday, 7 March) was initially devoted in the morning to the remaining country presentations from EU countries. A follow up debate about MOAN's contribution to the Modena event concluded the working session.

At noon the group left Damascus heading toward Tartus.

The **fourth day** (Saturday, 8 March) was dedicated to visit the organic research centre in Tartus including a descriptive visit to the laboratory of natural enemies multiplication and rearing as well as an illustrative tour to the open field and organic trials.

The meeting major outcomes and recommendations

1. Conclusions of the working session on: "Organic data collection and reporting" working session

In order to develop a joint format for the collection, processing and dissemination of reliable and relevant data on the organic sector within the Mediterranean, the Eurostat questionnaire for data collection was tested in the non-EU MOAN countries. The discussion session on data collection problems and bottlenecks faced during the compilation of the latter format confirmed the highly diversified situation across the Mediterranean identified as well in last year meeting. The most highlighted bottleneck was the incoherency of data from different sources within the same country. However an outstanding progress in countries which are still testing their system and a better consideration of the country's organic sector conditions and problems identification in addition to a perceived effort toward the establishment of legal basis for organic data collection and reporting have been done.

Consequently three levels of data collection were identified: *level 1*) EU countries with a well developed and well organised system for data collection and reporting; *level 2*) countries that have started their national data collection and trying to identify the difficulties; *level 3*) the beginners, which are the countries that still do not have any basis or scheme for data collection.

A twinning scheme was proposed to further develop data collection system in MOAN countries. This twinning should include one country belonging to level 1 and one or more countries belonging to level 2 and 3. Country representatives were invited to check among the group for possible synergies and potential partnership.

All participants agreed on the applicability of the Eurostat questionnaire for data collection in their countries and approved it to be the official format for the MOAN statistical data collection.

1.1 Commitments

IAMB will:

- a) Develop a guideline for filling the Eurostat data collection questionnaire and sending it to all MOAN members by April 30, 2008.

MOAN members will:

- b) Communicate complete statistical data to IAM-B by July 31 of each year starting 2008.
- c) Continue to make progress in the establishment of the legislative basis for organic data collection and reporting as well as keep on developing partnerships and cooperations with data providers (operators or inspection and certification bodies).
- d) Support IAMB in identifying the twinning scheme, by communicating potential synergies by mid-May.

2. Conclusions of the working session about “MOAN contribution to IFOAM 16th Organic World Congress”

The IFOAM 16th Organic World Congress (OWC) was considered by participants a good opportunity to enhance the visibility of MOAN within the international organic community and the Steering Committee and the country representatives committed themselves to contribute to the success of the MOAN initiatives organised in the framework of the OWC.

In particular, for the **Conference** on “*Government Support Policies on Organic Agriculture: experiences and lessons from around the world*” to be held on Thursday 19th June, it was agreed the following:

IAMB will:

- a) prepare an overview paper to be presented orally at the Conference, analysing the governments’ support policies for organic agriculture in the Mediterranean. The paper will be drafted on the basis of existing knowledge on the topic complemented with additional information to be gathered through a questionnaire that will be administered to MOAN country representatives in the following weeks. Country representatives accepted to provide the requested information.

Country representatives of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia together with Prof. Lahcen Kenny (Steering Committee) will:

- b) prepare a comparative case study on support policies for organic agriculture in the Maghreb area. Prof. Kenny will be charged to produce the paper on the basis of the information that need to be rapidly and extensively provided by the three country representatives. In relation to that a draft outline of the paper was already prepared by Prof. Kenny, discussed among involved participants and agreed in Syria.

Country representative of Turkey and Prof. Uygun Aksoy (Steering Committee) will:

- c) prepare a case study on government support policies for organic agriculture in Turkey particularly focusing on the recent experience of the National Action Plan.

Papers should not exceed 2500 words and should include an abstract of max 500 words. Additionally, when describing the support measures/programmes for organic agriculture in their countries authors are recommended to take into account the following indications (suggested by the organising committee of the Conference):

- brief overview of the support measure(s)/programme(s)
- reasons for its/their introduction
- special considerations for the region/area and how these were addressed
- evaluation and analysis (success/failures of the measure/programme, unintended consequences, lessons for next time)

Papers should be submitted to IAMB by end of March for a preliminary internal discussion, to be then finalised by April 7th. Only papers submitted by this date will be included in the Congress CD of Proceedings (and the abstract will be included in

the Congress Book of Abstracts). April 7th is the latest possible date fixed by IFOAM organising committee to carry out the English check and proofreading on all submitted papers.

Of course, the overview paper on support policies for organic agriculture in the Mediterranean and the two case studies (on Maghreb and Turkey) will be also included in MOAN publication on "Government support policies for organic agriculture in the Mediterranean".

In relation to the latter,

MOAN members will:

- a) Prepare a one-two page contribution on government support policies for organic agriculture in their countries. Good practices as well as bad practices are of high interest.

Authors are highly recommended to take into account the following indications (suggested by the organising committee of the Conference):

- brief overview of the support measure(s)/programme(s)
- reasons for its/their introduction
- special considerations for the region/area and how these were addressed
- evaluation and analysis (success/failures of the measure/programme, unintended consequences, lessons for next time)

The first draft should be submitted by the first week of April to be finalised in the following weeks after some feedback by and discussion with IAMB staff.

Members' contributions will be used to prepare the MOAN publication.

IAMB will:

- b) support MOAN members in the drafting of their contribution for the publication
- c) finalise the text of the publication, publish it and distribute it at the Conference in June

Upon positive evaluation of the submitted contributions, IAMB will support participation of contributing authors by covering the following:

- round trip (APEX tariff. For EU countries upon explicit request)
- per diem (3 days)

As for funding sources to support participation to Modena Congress, synergies with existing projects and initiatives is, of course, highly encouraged. Special reduced fees are available for MOAN members (page 38 of the Congress brochure, distributed in Syria). All members interested to participate are requested to send Marie Reine an expression of interest by the first week of April in order to take advantage of the reduced fees available for registration before 15th April 2008.

Next MOAN meeting

Place:

To be determined by end of May 2008 after checking the feasibility in each of the proposed potential hosting countries which are:

1. Spain and France as a first option but have to check the feasibility with their Ministry.
2. Algeria and Albania as a second option.
3. Tunisia offered to host the 2009 meeting in case of failure of the 2 aforementioned proposals.

Date:

The next meeting should take place in the period between end January-March 2009 and will be determined by the hosting country.

Topic proposals:

An open discussion between the representatives ended up by three core topic suggestions that are to be evaluated:

1. Organic trade in the Mediterranean, proposed by Prof. Aksoy.
2. Promote the Mediterranean Identity of organic products, including also the organic trade (could be extended to 2-3 years to cover it in depth), proposed by Prof. Kenny.
3. Local market development strategy, proposing a joint Mediterranean logo for all organic products, as well as introducing the ecological print of the products in trade, proposed by Mr. Chemaly and Mr. Otero.

IAMB will:

- a) Communicate to the potential hosting countries all details relative to the organization, lodging and the contribution of the hosting country to the MOAN meetings.

People who have suggested topics will:

- b) prepare a brief written proposal deepening and explaining their topic idea and communicate it to all MOAN representatives and IAMB team in order to exchange views and take all the proposals into consideration when the place and date are fixed.