

# MOAN MEDITERRANEAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE NETWORK

4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Madrid, Spain, 11-13 May 2009

## MEETING REPORT

### The meeting location & participants

The fourth MOAN meeting was held in Madrid, Spain on May 11-13, 2009, on the topic "*Organic agriculture and local identities: potential and challenges for policy and market development*". This meeting gathered fifteen (15) ministerial representatives from the Mediterranean countries, together with three (3) steering committee members and six (6) representatives of the CIHEAM and MAIB (see Table 1). Besides, Eleven invited specialists, from Italy, Spain and the USA participated to this meeting, bringing their experience and knowledge to it.

**Table 1: MOAN country representatives and participants to the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting**

<b>Country representatives</b>	<b>Albania</b>	B. Stamo
	<b>B&amp;H</b>	D. Pancic
	<b>Federation of BiH</b>	D. Amulic
	<b>Rep. Srpska</b>	D. Musulin
	<b>Croatia</b>	V. Vion
	<b>France</b>	T. De Matthaëis
	<b>Italy</b>	M. Al-Natshéh
	<b>Jordan</b>	G. Chemaly
	<b>Lebanon</b>	S. Haroun
	<b>Libya</b>	R. Damjanovic
	<b>Montenegro</b>	L. Acimovic
	<b>Serbia</b>	T. Džuban
	<b>Slovenia</b>	C.M. Tapia
	<b>Spain</b>	J.M. G. Otero
<b>Syria</b>	H. Abou Assaf	
<b>Tunisia</b>	S. Maamer Belkhiria	
<b>Steering Committee</b>	<b>Albania</b>	I. Tarelli (Ministry of Agriculture)
	<b>Morocco</b>	L. Kenny (IAV-Hassan II)
	<b>Turkey</b>	U. Aksoy (Ege University)
<b>Invited Speakers</b>	<b>Italy</b>	A. Manzo (MiPAAF) G. Bonati (INEA)
	<b>Spain</b>	E. O. Cáceres (CCIN-Alicante) V. Gonzalez (SEAE) M. Campos (INTERECO) F. C. Rodrigez (ACAAE) F. Robles (FEPECO) J. M. Benitez Castaño (COAG) J. M. D. Perez (UPA) P. Castejon (CCAÉ)
	<b>USA</b>	D. Giovannucci (CSA & UN-ICTGI)
<b>MAI -B</b>	C. Lacirignola, M. Raeli, L. Al Bitar, P. Pugliese, M.R. Bteich,	
<b>CIHEAM</b>	V. Fersino	

This year new representatives were assigned from B&H (Federation of BiH), Italy and Syria. The representatives from Morocco and Algeria as well as the steering committee member from Tunisia did not attend the meeting.

MAIB efforts to make possible the participation of all MOAN member countries persist, and contacts are still undergoing with Cyprus, Greece and Portugal who were formally invited to join this meeting. We seek the opportunity here to acknowledge the contribution that has been given from Spain and France, for establishing these contacts, and all future ones that will accelerate this process.

A special thank from all MOAN members to the hosting Spanish team for the preparation, management and the perfect organisation of this important event that was successful and very satisfying and enjoyable for all participants.

### **The theme and objectives of the meeting**

Based on the three core topic suggestions that were proposed during the third MOAN meeting held in Damascus, Syria in March 2008, that were (i) Organic trade in the Mediterranean; (ii) Promoting the Mediterranean Identity of organic products, and organic trade and (iii) Local market development strategy (for further details please refer to 2008 MOAN meeting report), the present meeting gathered the three ideas and focused on the **Organic Agriculture and Local Identities**, concentrating in particular on the following issues:

- Potential and challenges for policy and market development
- Experiences and best practices from the Mediterranean

As in every meeting, a session was devoted to the presentation of the Spanish organic sector (hosting country) and others to updates on national organic support policies and organic statistics.

### **The programme of the meeting**

The **first day** (Monday, 11 May) set off with the welcome addresses of P. Rocamora, State Secretary of Rural and Water Affairs in the Spanish Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (MARM) and of C. Lacirignola, Director of the CIHEAM-MAIB. Afterwards, L. Al-Bitar (MAIB) gave a brief presentation on MOAN experience and activities in connecting and developing institutions for organic agriculture in the Mediterranean and P. Pugliese (MAIB) presented the meeting programme, rationale and desired outcomes.

Working sessions 1 and 2 followed and were chaired by E. O. Cáceres (Chamber of Trade, Industry and Shipping of Alicante).

**Session 1** focusing on potential and challenges for policy and market development, started with G. Bonati's intervention (Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria-Italy) on local identities in EU rural development policies.

A global perspective on organic agriculture and local identities was given by D. Giovannucci (Committee on Sustainability Assessment and UN International Trade Centre's Geographical Indications guide).

A brief debate among participants and keynote speakers on the issues raised during their interventions concluded this session.

**Session 2** was dedicated to the experiences and best practices from the Mediterranean related to the meeting theme. It started with L. Kenny (Institut

Agronomique et Vétérinaire - Hassan II) who exposed how organic agriculture can be a tool to strengthen and valorise Mediterranean rural identities.

Different case studies from EU and non-EU Med countries were subsequently presented in the following order:

- France: presented by V. Vion (Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche) ;
- Italy: A. Manzo (Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari e Forestali);
- Syria: H. Abou Assaf (Ministry of Agriculture);
- Tunisia: S. Maamer Belkhiria (Ministry of Agriculture); and to conclude
- Turkey: M. Engiz (Ministry of Agriculture).

**Session 3**, devoted to updates on national organic support policies, was postponed to the following day as the debate on the raised issues involved the attendants longer than the schedule.

The chairman concluded the conference day by briefly recapping the main arguments discussed within the 2 sessions.

The **second day** (Tuesday, 12 May) included three sessions:

**Session 4**, chaired by C. M. Tapia (MARM) was devoted to the presentation of the Spanish organic sector. The floor was given to different speakers that made their interventions as follows:

- V. Gonzalez (Spanish Society of Organic Agriculture) exposed the AEFER Project that perceives the organic agriculture as a source for rural employment.
- M. Campos, (Agroecological Certification and Promotion of the Association of Committees for organic agriculture) introduced the Spanish Association of Control Authorities, its role, goals and activities as well as an overview on the functioning of the Spanish Competent Authorities System and Public Control Bodies.
- F.C. Rodriguez (Association of Andalusian Committee of Organic Agriculture) elucidated the Spanish model for Private Control Bodies giving as example the Andalusian organic sector.
- After the coffee break, F. Robles (Spanish Federation of Organic Products Enterprises) briefly described the model of relationship between the MARM and the Spanish organic sector.
- J. M. Benitez Castaño (Farmers and Ranchers Organizations) elucidated the COAG's contribution to the Spanish organic sector.
- P. Castejon (Confederation of Spanish Agricultural Cooperatives) concluded the presentations by exposing a specific study conducted on the interaction between the Spanish cooperatives and the organic sector.

The afternoon started with **session 5** chaired by U. Aksoy and concerned the updates on national organic statistics and national organic support policies. This session started with a round table discussion to which all country representatives actively participated by giving brief updates on national organic statistics and organic support policies. During this session, MOAN visibility was raised and some suggestions were given.

The closing **session 6** chaired by D. Giovanucci, mainly concentrated on the final theme conclusions related to the interaction between organic and local identities. The conclusions conveyed to the assembly by I. Tarelli were retrieved and summarised from a questionnaire (see annex) on national organic and local identities distributed to all MOAN representatives in the morning of the same day.

To close up the meeting, L. Al-Bitar and P. Pugliese launched discussion on proposals and candidatures for the next meeting hosting place and date. They concluded by underlining the importance of country representatives' commitment and obligations towards MOAN for the success of the network activities.

The **third day** (Wednesday, 13 May) was dedicated to technical trips that included a visit to a dairy farm in Rivas, Madrid neighbourhood and to an olive orchard and an olive mill in Mora within Toledo province.

After lunch, a guided touristic tour to Toledo city was organised. In the late afternoon the group returned to Madrid where a social closing cocktail was held in the hotel garden.

## **The meeting major outcomes and recommendations**

### **1. Conclusions of the working sessions 1 & 2: "Interaction Between Organic and Local Identities"**

The conclusions of this session were drawn up from the responses given by the countries representatives on a series of questions related to the theme (see annex).

**Q1:** For the question on the general level of interest for local food in each country, at policy and retail level (very high; high; moderate; low), there was not a consensus in the representatives answers. However, in terms of interest there was a distinction between market and public good.

Where there is not a significant "policy interest" (understood as public good interest) the role of MOAN could be to intervene in: (i) Research / Knowledge (how does it benefit people?); (ii) Investment (?).

If the market level is not high, what could be done at the business level or market level is to stimulate interest via: (i) Events; (ii) Communication / Media; and (iii) Partnering with local institutions (Slow Food, key famous restaurants, organic agriculture organizations, stakeholders, ...).

**Q2:** As a response to the synergy seen in each country between Organic Agriculture and Local Foods (like for example GIs), responses given indicated that it is a new field and therefore many people are not aware of the potential of synergies. But once they are aware that synergies could exist, they concur then that there are enormous possibilities such as: specific/obvious cases that might be a good strategy to enable the synergy to work (low-hanging fruit) and synergies with institutions like Slow Food, Fair Trade, ...

**Q3:** When representatives were asked to suppose that they were given the task to foster a synergy in their country and to determine the first steps they would take, who they would contact first and to whom they would address to for support, their responses were as follow:

1. Producers' groups (Associations / Cooperatives ...)
2. Ministry of Agriculture and allied Ministries (Culture, Commerce, Tourism, ...)
3. Local governments

4. Market research organisations (Impact Assessment, Universities,...)
5. Civil Society (Consumer associations, NGOs,...)
6. International donors

**Q4:** According to representatives both national and local level of action have an important role but the start should be with the one that can have a greater impact. Maybe local would be generally considered the first to address. Then later they will need to work in cooperation with national partners and have national support.

**Q5:** Concerning how the synergy is affected by the size and stage of development of the “organic” and the “local food” sub-sectors, it was accorded that: *(i)* the system is more sustainable if we begin with domestic market development; *(ii)* integrated development between organic and local food should be a policy priority to allow for the most synergy and *(iii)* being at a primary step/having a nascent sector can also mean an ideal opportunity to allow synergy between organic and GIs.

**Q6:** As a response if a strong export orientation in the organic sector can negatively affect the building up of the synergy between “organic” and “local”, respondents rejoined that export orientation is not necessarily a problem but there should be a domestic orientation first, because if there is no local value it is very difficult to make it sustainable.

**Q7:** When asked if there are some product categories for which the synergy between “organic” and “local” is, or can be, easier to explore and develop, many individual products were suggested and most were raw materials. Many affirmed that there are opportunities in both processed and non processed products. Whatever is perceived as having local value or cultural tradition can allow for a synergy with organic.

#### **Next steps for MOAN on the theme “Organic and Local Identities”**

- (i)* Approach the GIs world in order to understand how they work through interactions with relevant organizations such as oriGIn, ITC, WIPO etc. (contribution to publications, organization of events etc.).
- (ii)* Promote the presentation of synergistic projects of GI – organic products (selected within MOAN small pilot project/s) and seek for partners to develop them (Slow Food, CIHEAM, donors, other ministries etc.).

## **2. Conclusions of the working sessions 3 & 5: “Updates on National Organic Statistics and Organic Support Policies” and on the other issues**

The updates on national organic statistics and organic support policies (country reports reported as annexes) previously prepared by all representatives constituted the base reference to these sessions debate. Discussion also upraised the issue of continuity and regularity in information updating and sharing as well as knowledge communication about the organic sector evolvement and progress between the MOAN member countries. In addition, the necessity to and the question of how to upraise MOAN recognition at an EU and worldwide level was also conferred. Some solutions were proposed to meet these issues needs, that are strategic and practical actions, both standing on a commitment base.

Therefore it was agreed that the practical actions are:

- publication of country profile reports about organic agriculture on FAO’s Agricultural Information Management Standards (AIMS) website;

- collection and communication of statistic data about the organic sector should be holistic and regular;
- the MOAN website should become the portal of the network and the platform of communication among members and any other interested parties;
- countries with a more developed organic sector and more experience and know-how (like EU countries, Tunisia, Turkey) to assist the beginners (such as Libya, Jordan, Syria);
- MOAN should work to embrace a role of Mediterranean representativeness in the organic sector.

While the strategic action is mainly to:

- introduce and involve more closely the Ministers or decision makers in MOAN activities.

Therefore, commitments from both the MAIB and the country representatives' sides were taken as follow:

**MAIB will:**

- a) extend and improve the MOAN website by inserting useful links (governmental and non-governmental, key organic institutions, studies, research results, activities, events, ...), creating representatives area (intranet for MOAN members) upload news and reports that may be of interest;
- b) develop a format designed to collect the periodical updates of the organic sector (policies, events, law and law modifications, or any other actions taken in the sector) from the members;
- c) draft the country profile report to be published on the FAO Organic-Aims site and coordinates its content with the country representatives;
- d) finalise the text of the above mentioned country profile and upload it on the FAO Organic-Aims website;

**MOAN members will:**

- e) share the new studies and research outputs or other interesting links with MAIB to be uploaded on the MOAN website;
- f) communicate to MAIB a 6-month updated report on the evolution of the organic sector in the country, based on a pre-designed format scheme provided by MAIB;
- g) send to MAIB yearly by end of July, the agreed Eurostat format with complete updated organic statistics;
- h) report to their chief/director within their ministry about MOAN meetings outputs and issues discussed.

**Next MOAN meeting**

**Place**

It was agreed that date should be determined by end of July 2009 after checking the feasibility in each of the proposed potential hosting countries which are:

1. Tunisia

2. Serbia
3. Croatia
4. Lebanon

Up to date, informal agreement was taken with Tunisia, to be finalised by October 2009.

### **Date**

The next meeting should take place in the period between March-June 2010 and will be determined by the hosting country and MAIB.

### **Topic proposal**

The topic proposal was discussed in a preliminary meeting between MAIB coordination committee and MOAN steering committee on June 22-23 in Bari-Italy. Once official confirmation will be received from Tunisia, a more detailed programme will be then shared and discussed with the government representative as well as all details related to the organization, lodging and country contribution to the MOAN meeting.