



## **The EU Commission has released a “Green Paper on agricultural quality policy”**



**Have your say and reply to the European Commission's public consultation until 31 December 2008!**

The Commission believes that quality is one of the EU's strengths to compete on a global market and respond to consumer demand. That is why quality is a unique opportunity for farmers. The Commission wants to know if it has the right instruments to facilitate quality and to help farmers communicate on the quality of their products. For that reason, the Commission has decided to release a Green Paper asking open questions on the different issues related to quality.

This Green Paper is a good chance for all people concerned with rare livestock breeds and plants to lobby for improved structures for the marketing of products. Please make use of this occasion and give the Commission a reply!!

On the following URL you will find the Green Paper and an online-Questionnaire in 22 languages:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/index_en.htm)

Choose the Green Paper in your language, read it carefully and try to answer those of the 19 questions which are of interest to you. On the following pages of this eNews, you will find a short summary of the Green Paper, especially those things which may be relevant to the marketing of products from endangered breeds and varieties. You will also find the comment of the SAVE Network Partners. We would be happy if you would also join with us in our common concern.

==> Take action now – take part in the EU consultancy process !



## **Agriculture and Rural Development**

## Summary of the Green Paper

Through the Green Paper consultancy process, the commission wishes to analyse how an optimal political and regulatory framework can be created to protect and promote the quality of agricultural products, without creating additional costs and burdens. Are the instruments already in existence adequate or could they be improved upon? Are there new initiatives that need to be taken up?

### Quality means, fulfilling the expectations of the consumer

This maxim, which has long been true, tells modern farmers that they must relate their products to a range of quality factors. In order to survive the increasing globalisation of agriculture, the Commission suggest that it is exactly the quality of European products that gives them the competitive edge. Quality aspects are considered to be, amongst other things, product characteristics, production methods, place of production etc. Consumers increasingly take more notice of factors such as sustainability, climate change, food security and development, biodiversity, animal welfare and water scarcity. Consumers from a higher income bracket also pay attention to taste, tradition and authenticity as well as high standards of animal welfare.

It is a challenge for farmers to meet these expectations. However, such expectations should not be seen as a burden but as a challenge and a chance to create additional value for superior agricultural products. It is not the goal to create new regulations but rather to support farmers through more transparent and comparable consumer information. The farmers of the EU can only produce for the world market in future and benefit from added value through the existing, further developed quality standards.

## I. Production Requirements and Marketing Standards



### 1. EU Farming Requirements

Farmers in the EU adhere to a range of farming requirements. How can a better connection be made between products and the farming requirements that go above and beyond the baseline standards of hygiene and safety, which farmers have to follow. What would be pro and contra a new EU system with one or more graphic symbols or logos, which would draw consumer attention to EU standards over and above those of hygiene and safety?

### 2. Marketing Standards

These are defined as regulations which outline definitions of products and minimum product standards and also labelling requirements to inform consumers.

Should definitions for general reserved terms describing farming methods in particular sectors, such as 'mountain product', 'farmhouse' and 'low carbon', be laid down by the

EU? The simplification of EU regulations and a possible self-regulation of the market are foreseen. Alongside obligatory standards, optional reserved terms should also be possible. In this context it would be possible to draw attention to special plant varieties or livestock breeds.

## II. Specific EU Quality Schemes

### 3. Geographical Indicators

Should additional criteria be introduced to restrict applications for geographical indications? In particular, should the criteria for protected geographical indications, as distinct from protected designations of origin, be made stricter to emphasise the link between the product and the geographical area? As part of the protected designations it would be possible to include a registration of autochthonous cultivated plants or livestock. A cost-benefit analysis of this relatively complex certification process would be necessary.



### 4. Traditional Specialities Guaranteed

Given the low take-up of the TSG scheme, is there a better way of identifying and promoting traditional speciality products?

### 5. Organic Farming

How can the single EU market in organic products be made to work better?

### 6. Quality Products Policy for the Outermost Regions

### 7. Further EU Schemes

Pressing need for the development of new and separate labels can be seen in the case of products from areas with high-nature value, mountain regions, animal welfare, conservation of biodiversity, water use.

## III. Certification Schemes

Recent years have seen a significant growth in private and national food quality certification schemes. For retailers, these provide a means of reacting to changing consumer demand and of delivering to consumers products with specific qualities. However, this leaves room for concerns about the transparency of the criteria and creditability of the claims made.

The Commission is seeking views on the operation of these largely private schemes. With a certificate that draws attention to the rare pant variety or animal breed there must be traceability, transparency and some form of controlling.

The EU sees no need for further legislation to specifically address certification schemes but drawing up a set of guidelines could be considered. A central question addresses how private certification schemes can be used to support EU exports and promote European quality exports on the international market.

The Green Paper is the first step of the political decision making process. The comments received will be the basis for a draft paper from the Commission, which will be published in May 2009.

The success of the consultancy process for the Green Paper relies on the support of a wide range of participants, who will put forward their concerns, analysis and ideas.



## Statement of the European SAVE Network



SAVE Foundation and the European SAVE Network welcome the publication of the Green Paper by the EU Commission. We find that the consultancy process, which includes business, the general public and consumers, is a good and sensible way to take part in a complex process of developing regulations and guidelines.

The Green Paper is especially directed towards a judgement upon the current regulations for the production and marketing of quality food products. What is missing in this paper is a vision. Although there is much in it about the trend for “regional production”, “extensive production”, “animal welfare”, “cultural heritage” or “biodiversity” there would not appear to be many new guidelines in development or in view. A shortened production and supply chain should also be strived for in the interest of product traceability, environmental protection and reducing distribution costs. Locally adapted, traditional livestock breeds and cultivated plants, from extensive, local production can often fulfil all these criteria. The products made from these breeds and plants are, mostly, “quality products”. These are, however, often only seasonally available and in small quantities, which makes marketing difficult. These products need a protected marketing structure.

In general, agriculture in Europe is tending towards a growing gap between small-scale and industrial production. Even in organic agriculture, which started as local and small-scale, small farmers are competing with industrially produced organic products from a few high yield breeds and crops.

The SAVE Network answers the questions in the Green Paper from the perspective of the above outlined concerns:

**The questions that are, therefore, relevant to us:**

Question 2: Products of old, traditional cultivated plants and livestock breeds do not always conform to modern concepts of “attractive” (e.g. small apples). The compulsory quality and size classifications should, therefore, be in form of “optional reserved terms”.

Question 3: Optional reserved terms should be also made possible for products of traditional livestock breeds and cultivated plants.

Question 5: In the context of geographical indication, a trademark or graphic symbol for locally adapted (autochthone) livestock breeds and cultivated plants should be created, possibly as a precursor to a label.

Question 6: The criteria for protected geographical indications should be tightened and also include the raw materials for the products.

Question 10: The three EU systems should be harmonised.

Question 14: The question does not really address the problem. Further regulation is necessary, as we put forward in our answer to question 19.

Question 15: An active involvement of producers' organisations should be strived towards.

Question 16 and 17: Through the establishment of suitable guidelines, the structures can be slimmed down and the costs and burdens reduced.

Question 19: Small-scale farming is of great importance, especially in the case of quality food products. Therefore, a secure and viable production arena needs to be in place. This can be achieved through suitable labelling of the products. Thus, we suggest the creation of a label that includes the following criteria:

- Small-scale production
- With locally adapted, traditional livestock breeds and cultivated plants
- From local, extensive production
- With traditional production methods
- Where possible, ingredients and materials also from local sources
- Respecting high standards of animal welfare
- Products with typical and characteristic size and weight, not fulfilling the modern norms of marketing.

With a label like this, many needs can be met – not only the urgently needed conservation of local genetic resources (agrobiodiversity) but also other factors such as the “Ark of Taste” (Slow Food), the difficult production in mountain regions and the sustainable production in the traditional agro-eco-systems. Additionally, the ever widening gulf between small-scale and industrial production in organic farming can be addressed.

A label such as this or a supplementary label (in the short term, a trademark) would provide production under difficult conditions with an extra marketing tool and aid consumer choice. The SAVE Network is prepared to help and support the establishment of a label as outlined above.

## Rights to Animal Genetic Resources

On 27<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> November the World Trade Institute in Bern, in collaboration with the FAO held a workshop to discuss the international legal aspects concerning animal genetic resources.

Up to now the trade and innovation related to intellectual property rights and animal genetic resources, in contrast to plant genetic resources, have taken place in a relatively unregulated form. Recent developments in bioengineering and gene patents have made it necessary to consider the rights of livestock breeders and farmers. At this workshop an international discussion was initiated, such as already took place in the context of plant genetic resources more than ten years ago. The presentations from the workshop will soon be available <http://www.nccr-trade.ch>.

SAVE foundation intends to take part in this discussion, together with the network partners, in order to issue a statement from the NGO perspective. We will keep informed of this process.

## Important dates (extract)

### 2009:

28-30 January: 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO, Rome. Contact: [beate.scherf@fao.org](mailto:beate.scherf@fao.org)

23-24 March: "Heritage Care through Active Citizenship", European Conference on Civil Society Organisations active in the Field of Heritage. At Mechelen, Belgium. Web: <http://www.heritageorganisations.eu>

14-16 May: Conference "Challenges of the Balkan Animal Industry and the Role of Science and Co-operation" at Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. Contact: [af@uni-sz.bg](mailto:af@uni-sz.bg)

12-16 July : IALE Conference 2009: "European Landscapes in Transformation: Challenges for Landscape Ecology and Management", Salzburg. Austria.  
Contact: [secretariat@iale2009.eu](mailto:secretariat@iale2009.eu); Web: <http://www.iale2009.eu/>

20-23 August: Annual Meeting of SAVE Foundation and the SAVE Network at Gent, Belgium. Visit of the EU institutions in Brussels and the Living Heritage Expo of the Belgian partner organisation SLE (see next line).  
Contact: [info@monitoring.eu.com](mailto:info@monitoring.eu.com)



23 August: 12<sup>th</sup> Rare Breeds Expo in the "Living Heritage Park" in the Provincial Domain Puyenbroeck in Wachtebeke, near Gent, Belgium. All Belgian rare breeds will be present.  
Contact: [staf.vandenbergh@skynet.be](mailto:staf.vandenbergh@skynet.be), Web: <http://www.sle.be>