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Pressrelease

New IMO quality management programme ConCert strengthens the reliability of international organic products

Organic products are controlled nowadays very sharply: More detailed quality standards and more complex certification systems, as well the intensive monitoring by the media, consist a clear competition disadvantage for the organic sector. In spite of long lasting efforts from the side of trade partners, certification bodies and authorities the avoidance as well as the clarification of residue cases still cause to the involved parties enormous costs and lead very often to not clear results.

The Institute of Marketecology (IMO) has launched a new quality management service, which should strengthen international trade relations in the organic sector. „As a control body of sustainable products, it is really important to us that the competitiveness of organic products is improved through a quality management system in the area of import“, explains Dr. Peter Schaumberger, CEO of the Institute. „Together with our clients we have developed a new service ConCert - IMO Import Safety Services especially for importers. The programme facilitates compliance with residue limits, food safety guidelines and traceability requirements.“

IMO's approach is based on the conviction that an effective quality management system can only be created with the understanding, motivation and reliability of the involved trading partners. „All involved parties must understand the requirements of the international market and they should be willing to support the establishment of a common internal quality management system. The best possible product quality can only be reached through continuous self-monitoring and improvement“, comments Judith Hobmeier, head of the new IMO service.

ConCert – IMO Import Safety Services consists of different modules, which offer the tools and methods required to build up a comprehensive quality management system along the supply chain. Sampling by experienced inspectors, either in the field, before shipping, or in the country of import, allows the timely analysis and detection of possible residues. The competent evaluation of analysis reports according to different organic standards allows any further action required to be quickly initiated. A new traceability software, which can be used under the external supervision of IMO, ensures product flow transparency. The programme is specially designed for the needs of small and medium businesses in developing countries. „The offered modules can be customised to the individual needs of the client and can be used worldwide, even in cases in which the organic certification is not issued by IMO“, explains Mrs Katerina Koureta from IMO's Analysis Department.

Importers have also confirmed the necessity of this programme.

Matthias M. Werner, NCT Nord Trading GmbH, uses ConCert successfully in China. „With the help of the ConCert Programm from IMO we have succeeded in creating a regulatory framework for the purchasing of organic Goji products from China. With this framework we can achieve the highest possible product safety, while avoiding the possible perception of

mistrust in our suppliers. Due to well known problems with pesticide residues in Goji products from China, the authorities required us to submit a conclusive concept to ensure no contaminated products are imported. The controls included in IMO's ConCert Programme, in which the product is sampled and analysed in the port before shipping, it was possible to achieve all the special conditions imposed by the authorities and to import residue free organic Goji-Berries. The cooperation and flexibility of IMO was outstanding.“

Wolfgang Wilhelm, Kloth & Köhnken Teehandel GmbH (Bremen), is one of the leading importers of organic tea in Germany and together with IMO, designed the ConCert inspection procedure especially for China. He praised the joint development work: „We discussed sustainable ecological and social ideas and the shortcomings of the quality management in tea farms extensively and finally developed an effective programme for all partners involved. Experience has shown that the additional on site inspection in China considerably increases organic reliability. It is no longer enough, to simply meet the requirements of the EU regulation for organic agriculture. In order to strengthen the trade and reputation of organic products, the quality needs to be assured by a control body. The quality assurance system will need to meet the individual needs and contribute to the success of the company in order to ensure the future reliability of organic products. Extra consulting systems would be necessary to implement such a development. Cooperation between consultants, control bodies, producers and traders, should also bring about fundamental changes in the sense of fairer trade relationships and social developments, as for example in the new fairbiotea standard.”

The Institute for Marketecology (IMO), Switzerland is one of the first and most experienced international bodies for the inspection, certification and quality assurance of sustainably produced products. IMO has been active in the field of organic certification world-wide for more than 20 years. Today, IMO is also renowned in the sectors of food safety, fair trade & social accountability monitoring, natural textiles, timber & forestry, fisheries & aquaculture and wild collection. IMO is a department of the Bio-Foundation, Switzerland and is based at Weinfelden, Switzerland. This is the lead office of the IMOgroup AG that has 9 full fledged international companies and more than 20 smaller offices, mainly in the developing countries. The IMOgroup AG employs more than 400 experts worldwide for the certification of operations in more than 90 countries.

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