

EU imports of organic products from Norway and Iceland to resume

Organic products from Norway and Iceland can again be imported to the European Union and duly marketed as abiding by the EU's organic rules following the incorporation of the relevant regulations into the agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA).

The long-awaited decision taken by the EEA Joint Committee puts an end to an 8-year delay during which organic producers from Norway and Iceland (the EEA countries concerned) were complying with outdated rules no longer applied within the EU. As a result of the adoption of this decision, imports of organic salmon produced and certified in accordance with the EU Regulations from the EEA countries will be able to resume as of 18 March 2017.

Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner Phil Hogan welcomed today's decision: "I am happy to see that our EEA partners realised the importance of common standards, and the benefits they bring to producers and consumers on both sides. The rules guarantee a level playing field between EU and EEA organic producers, for their mutual benefit. The Commission will never accept any watering down of our high standards for products being produced, imported and marketed as organic. It is our role to ensure consumer confidence and guarantee the credibility of the EU organic logo."

The EU first adopted rules on organic production and labelling in 1991, but updated them in 2007, in many cases with stricter rules. Additional production rules were introduced later, notably organic aquaculture production rules, in 2009. All these rules became compulsory to EU producers in January 2015, and the delay in the incorporation of the new regulations into the EEA agreement created a situation of unfair treatment of producers and operators.

In particular, as regards the EU aquaculture rules applicable to the production and certification of organic salmon, the delay meant that aquaculture products from these countries could not be imported and sold as organic in the EU, with implications for EEA countries' producers and EU importers and processors.

The EEA authorities had delayed incorporating the new Regulations because of outstanding requests for derogations on certain technical points, notably on the use of fishmeal to feed ruminants and a degree of flexibility on labelling. These requests have now been withdrawn.

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