

## Organic Certification and Fair Trade

*Frank Eyhorn, International Cooperation Division, FiBL (Research Institute for Organic Agriculture), Switzerland. Web: [www.fibl.ch](http://www.fibl.ch)*

*Shelley Nebu, Quality Manager, INDOCERT (Indian Organic Certification Agency), India. Web: [www.indocert.org](http://www.indocert.org)*

### Organic Farming in the South

The growth of organic agriculture in poorer countries of the South and East is not only a result of an increasing market demand from the North for tropical organic products. In many countries organic agriculture has proven to be a more efficient and more sustainable option of natural resource management, allowing to maintain agricultural productivity and to gain a better income. Especially for smallholders cultivating marginal lands, organic farming practices can help to reduce production costs, while ecology and health benefit indirectly.

In India, organic agriculture is now gaining momentum. There are at least ten thousand certified organic farms, many of them organized by NGOs or traders. The Indian government has set up national organic standards and an accreditation system and is supporting the development of the organic agriculture sector. Besides the demand pull from export markets, there are more and more successful initiatives building up a domestic organic market for an increasingly health aware middle class.

### Organic Certification in India

In 2001, a group of Indian organisations and companies involved in organic agriculture decided to set up a local certification body named INDOCERT in order to bring down the costs of organic certification and to facilitate the development of a local market. The set up of INDOCERT is supported by the Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (seco) and is under the technical guidance of FiBL and bio.inspecta, the latter ensuring that the certificates are recognized on export markets until the local agency has gained international accreditation. INDOCERT is also active in providing information on organic agriculture, tries to create awareness among Indian consumers and acts as a platform for the Indian organic sector.

So far, the Fair Trade concept is not much known among Indian farmers, though the potential would be high in the Indian scenario. Nevertheless, INDOCERT is planning to offer fair trade inspection for organic smallholder organisations within the next two years in order to save time and costs for organic projects which are under a Fair Trade certification scheme.

### Combining Organic and Fair Trade Certification?

Organic Agriculture and Fair Trade are concepts with related aims: agricultural production shall ensure the well being and sustainable development of all parties involved. Some organic smallholder projects are under a Fair Trade certification scheme, and many Fair Trade products are also certified organic. Already now organic standards include social criteria, and fair trade standards include environmental concerns (see [www.ifoam.org/social](http://www.ifoam.org/social) and [www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net)). Most consumers presume and expect that fair trade products are (almost) organic, and that organic products are traded in a fair way. However, it is not that easy to combine Organic and Fair Trade standards, inspection and certification to a joint system: While in organic agriculture the individual farms are certified with all their production, Fair Trade certifies the trade relation between producers, producer organisations or companies, and buyers in the North. Fair Trade standards include a number of process requirements, which shall ensure that the parties work towards a sustainable and socially just development, while in organic agriculture almost all conditions need to be fulfilled prior to the certification.

Still, there are continuous efforts to use synergies between the two movements. IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, has introduced a voluntary Code of Conduct for Organic Trade, which encourages traders in organic products to self-monitor their performance concerning social criteria. Organic and Fair Trade organisations have jointly launched a research project on Social Accountability in Sustainable Agriculture (SASA), in which collaboration on the inspection level is explored ([www.isealalliance.org/sasa/](http://www.isealalliance.org/sasa/)).