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STOAS – Sustainability Training for Organic Advisers

Eight organic associations in Europe are developing two courses in sustainability designed for two different groups of organic advisers:

- Course 1:**
Leaders and managers of advisory organisations, of NGO and public institutions involved in organic and sustainable agriculture
- Course 2:**
Advisers for organic farms, with a focus on sustainability in their work

The courses will help the participants to improve their advisory work and make sustainability a guiding principle of their services. Participants will learn how to document the sustainability performance of a farm and how to communicate it to the wider public, consumers, food companies and politicians.

In the first course the focus is on sharing experiences and develops a common understanding of sustainability. The focus of the second course is the work with three advisory tools: RISE, the Public Good Assessment Tool and the Bioland Assessment Tool (please see attached draft training curriculum).

Both courses are divided into two workshops and the first workshop is a precondition for the second workshop.

For participants in a course it is obligatory to participate in both workshops.

Purpose of the project

Organic farming is generally considered to be synonymous with sustainable farming and it has led the field in the development of farming systems and practices based on broad principles of financial, social and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, the organic sector faces multiple sustainability challenges in the future; consumers are becoming more aware of the issues and food companies are accordingly more demanding, Government is requiring evidence to justify policy and grant support for organic farming and there is an urgent need for organic farming to deliver multiple objectives more effectively than it has done in the past. To merely fulfil the requirements of the organic regulation is not sufficient anymore. Organic producers are asked to deliver in-depth evidence of the sustainability of their farms.

This evolution challenges not only the farmers, but also their advisers and certification bodies. In the past, advisory services focused in the first place on optimising production and profitability while improving the ecological and social status of the farms received much less attention. New societal demands now urge organic



advisers to develop new tools to assess and improve the sustainability of organic farms across all fronts. Funded by the EU's Leonardo da Vinci's programme, the STOAS project aims to make organic advisers, organic organisation managers and inspectors familiar with some of the recently developed tools and to provide practical training on sustainability to those working with farmers.

Project partners:

- Videncentret for Landbrug - Knowledge Centre for Agriculture (Denmark)
- Bioland Beratung GmbH (Germany)
- FiBL – Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (Switzerland)
- ORC - The Organic Research Centre (United Kingdom)
- IFOAM EU (Belgium)
- Louis Bolk Institute (Netherlands)
- Bio Austria (Austria)
- PRO-Bio (Czech)

Course 1 will take place in Germany 29 and 30 November 2012 (two days) and Denmark 27 and 28 May 2013 (two days).

Course 2 will take place in Switzerland 11 and 12 December 2012 and United Kingdom 3 and 4 June 2013 (one day).

Each of the above organisations except IFOAM EU will invite two participants to each of the two courses.

The project is co-funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme and the participation in the courses is free of charge. The programme covers 75% of travel costs, food and accommodation for the participants.

Guidelines for reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs will be sent to the participants after registration.

A course certificate will be issued upon completion.

Please register to:

Knowledge Centre for Agriculture, Organic Farming
Tove Andersen
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Please note that registration for a course is for two workshops.

Deadlines for registration for Courses:

Course 1 is 14 November 2012
Course 2 is 21 November 2012

