

“Organocrats” deliver another false dawn

(BULLETIN Front Page)

After several false dawns the new EU Regulation, governing the production and sale of organic products has arrived – well nearly. The implementing articles governing the criteria for inspection, certification, audits, record - keeping, etc. have not yet been written. They are promised for this autumn.

As befits something that has been launched when it is incomplete (half – baked) this new dawn was not greeted here by a stirring chorus but by a rather muted mumble.

Unsurprising as in the UK, unlike in countries such as Sweden, the relevant authorities have not directly communicated across the range of the organic sector but have limited themselves to certification bodies and a curious mix of self-appointed, so-called stakeholders (e.g. NFU, British Poultry Council, feed manufacturers) under the delusion that this is the path to the organic grassroots.

Without the implementing rules to hand, it is hard to tell definitively just how better or worse the new regulation is. The overall structure is *probably* better, but that is not saying much. It seems just as good, just as bad, just as patchy, just as coherent, just as incoherent as the old one, but in different ways and in different places.

In truth, regulations are meant to be whole order better than this. An EU Regulation is supposed to be a clear, concise document - one size fits all and all conditions from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. It is an obviously impossible dream for an agriculture that is based on diversity, local ecosystems, traditions and culture.

The delusion that it is all possible is the driver for the creeping dodgy loopholes, the grey areas, differing interpretations, disingenuity and plain dishonesty which is undermining the very integrity of the organic marketplace.

The European Commission, EU member states, certification bodies, “organocrats” and marketeers pretend that we have a comprehensive and robust regulation governing the organic market when we do not.

What is needed is a clear and concise Framework Directive built on the agreed organic principles within which different member states transparently apply their own ecologically, culturally and structurally adapted standards and certification. Transparent and principled adaptation is the key with no country or marketplace being forced through regulation to accept a fake concept of equivalence.

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