

Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change (*Draft, 10. 12. 09*)

Considering that

- (a) Climate change is one of the most serious challenges facing nations, governments, business and citizens over future decades;
- (b) Climate change directly influence food production and will act as a multiplier of existing threats to food security and mal nutrition;
- (c) Small holders in rural areas will be most vulnerable to this change;
- (d) Agriculture is estimated to account for 10-12%¹ of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and is responsible for 47% and 58% of total anthropogenic emissions of CH₄ and N₂O, respectively²;
- (e) The recent "Health Check of the CAP³" of the EU has identified climate change as one of the new challenges for agriculture;
- (f) Organic agriculture has a huge potential to mitigate climate change through soil carbon sequestration, reduced GHG emissions and sustainable use of natural resources⁴;
- (g) Climate change should influence consumer behaviour and climate-friendly practices must be adopted not only by farmers but also by food processors and retailers;
- (h) There are still significant uncertainties around evaluation of GHG emissions and carbon sequestration related to natural processes.
- (i) ➔ *Suggestion KRAV: There is a potential for improvement within organic production and processing.*

¹ Smith et al. (2007): Agriculture. In Climate Change (2007): Mitigation. Contribution of the Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

² Ibidem.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/index_en.htm

⁴ use of organic and avoidance of chemical fertilizers; targeted fertilization; avoidance of bare fallows (cover crops, catch crops, green manure); use of composted organic matter; recycling of crop residues (mulching, including reduced tillage and avoidance of burning); crop rotations; use of trees and perennials; integrated animal and crop farms and reduced livestock numbers; improved grassland management and fodder supply; improved manure management; increased longevity of dairy animals;



THE PROPONENT ORGANISATIONS HAVE AGREED ON

the establishment of a Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change

The Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change (RTOACC) has as its aims to:

- Promote the potential of organic farming to mitigate climate change;
- Promote the potential of organic farming as a climate change adaptation strategy;
- Initiate, support and facilitate the research on organic agriculture and climate change;
- Identify viable ways of adaptation to the impacts of climate change;
- Develop and implement services that support smallholders;
- Advise the international community on organic agriculture and climate change issues, with a view to wider adoption and support of organic agriculture;
- Support IFOAM in develop and fully implement its policy on climate change
- Advise in the development of climate-related provisions in international standards;
- Initiate and support the development of a methodology to enable a reliable quantification and certification of GHG emissions and carbon sequestration at the various stages of the production process, and the identification of potential mitigation measures.
- *→Suggestion KRAV - Support standards development issues that look at improving organic standards from a climate point of view.*

The Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change is a multi stakeholder initiative

The RTOACC implements transparent, fair and participatory governance. New members agree to support organic agriculture, the organic movement and its potential to mitigate climate change, in line with what is mentioned in the considerations and aims above. Members promote and communicate this commitment throughout



their own organisation. The RTOACC defines the process for admission and is open for new members from the following sectors

- Associations promoting organic food and agriculture, standard-setting organisations and certification bodies operating in organic agriculture;
- Environmental organisations;
- Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs);
- Organisation involved in the management of the voluntary offset mechanisms and the CDM;
- Research organisations.

IN PARTICULAR, THE ROUND TABLE ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE SHALL

Art. 1 – Initiate and facilitate Research on organic agriculture and climate change

Therefore, the RTOACC will support

- basic and applied research on assessment and dissemination of state of the art knowledge on the mitigation and adaptation potential of Organic Agriculture;
- compilation of consistent data for organic agriculture as a basis for the assessment of the climate change impact of organic agriculture;
- identification of the research gaps in this context, supporting and commissioning research to fill those.

The RTOACC gives special attention on reduced tillage systems in OA and better exploitation of leguminous plants in improved crop sequences as well as crop and life stock breeding focusing on the resilience towards the adverse effects of climate change⁵, and the adaptability in organic livestock production for small holders

⁵ i.e. focusing on the adaptability of plants and farming systems to low-input situations in soils, on water scarcity, on weed competition, and on pest and disease tolerance. For this, research on improved plant protection techniques and compounds from natural sources is of particular importance.

Art. 2 – Develop and disseminate a methodological framework for measuring GHG mitigation and carbon sequestration in organic agriculture

The RTOACC discusses and develops a methodological framework for measuring and certifying the GHG mitigation and carbon sequestration in organic agriculture worldwide by

➔ *Suggestion KRAV: Paragraph to be discussed and clarified*

- defining system boundaries
- guarantee, that the methodology is developed taking into account the different models already available and the calculation on the energetic and environmental coefficient derived from the Harmonisation of Environmental Life Cycle Assessment for Agriculture (Final Report Concerted Action AIR3-CT94-2028, European Commission DG VI Agriculture, Pp 103);
- supporting, that these methodologies are designed in a way that enables to properly assess the potential of organic agriculture to tackle Climate Change in terms of reducing GHG emissions; improving carbon sequestration; saving of energy and water; enabling ecosystems to better adjust to the effects of climate change;
- guarantee, that the methodology considers the soil and crop management technologies and practises that improve the organic agriculture mitigation potential, such as crop rotations (including agro forestry), nutrient management based on organic manures, reduced tillage farming and cover cropping;., sustainable live stock management.

The positive effects of organic agriculture on climate change, once calculated through the adoption of proper tools, should be valorised within the existing offset voluntary initiatives. To do so, the Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change will identify the best partners to co-operate with.



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Art. 3 – Provide Tools and services for improving awareness and technical knowledge on climate change among farmers

The RTOACC intends to develop information tools on climate change to be addressed to farmers, food manufacturers and food retailers.

The aim is to increase their understanding of the potential implications of climate change and of the available opportunities for adopting measures and best practices to address the double challenge of reducing GHG emissions while at the same time adapting to projected impacts of climate change.

→ *Suggestion KRAV*

Art 4 – explore possibilities to develop organic standards to a higher level of climate performance.

The RTOACC intends to bring results from its own, and partner's, work to the attention of concerned standard setters. The aim is to allow for organic standards to develop in a direction of better climate performance, with the least possible impact on trade.

THE PROPONENT ORGANISATIONS

FAO	Intergovernmental Organisations
FIBL	Research organisations
ICROFS	
Rodale Institute	
ICEA	
IFOAM	
KRAV	
Soil Association	