

Sideevent on “Organic Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment”. Iran Room, FAO. 22 April 2009, 12 – 14 hrs.

Welcome by Søren Skafte, Deputy Permanent Representative of Denmark to FAO.

Good morning to everybody. On behalf of the Danish Government I am happy to welcome you to this presentation of “Organic Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment”.

We are indeed happy to see that so many delegates to the 21st Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) have chosen to spend some time with us to discuss the possible contributions of organic agriculture to answer to the challenges for the agricultural sector in different countries. I am especially happy to welcome ADG Alexander Müller and Nadia Schialabra who is really a driving force on organic agriculture in this organization.

The event is organized by the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries in close collaboration with the Danish International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS), with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and with FAO.

We think it is timely to discuss the important value Organic Agriculture may play in answering to the social and environmental challenges that our food systems are facing and the need to cope with growing food demands in times of climate change.

We think that the interdependencies and relationship between agriculture, environment and climate change will have to be taken into consideration for the choices we make to secure a sustainable production of food and fibre.

Denmark has recently been named “Organic Country of the Year 2009” and will be hosting the so called COP15 in Copenhagen in December 2009 – the meeting of all the parties involved in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and aiming at deciding on the way forward post Kyoto from 2012-

Organic agriculture and agro-ecological methods improves and depends on biodiversity, soil fertility and other ecological support functions. Research results indicates that agro-ecological methods, as used in Organic Agriculture, potentially have positive effects related to climate adaptation as well as climate mitigation which can be of high value for future sustainable development - in particular the possibilities of smallholder farmers to improve their agricultural production while adapting to climate change.

Organic agriculture is not necessary the easy solution for all and should not be seen as a short cut as organic agriculture is knowledge intensive and should be adapted to local conditions and the farmers’ situation. There is certainly a need for further development in line with the principles of organic agriculture and there is a need for improved knowledge transfer systems which acknowledges traditional as well as scientific knowledge.

We hope that we today can present a range of important issues - from a general perspective by representatives from FAO, IFOAM and ICROFS - and from an African and Asian perspective by representatives from Ethiopia and Thailand.

With these remarks I will give the floor to Christine Grandi from IFOAM who has been the organizer of the Organic Buffet Lunch which should be ready outside the Iran Room at 1.30 hrs.

Christine Grandi, please take the floor.