


Subject:	D8 Public synthesis report on the scope of national action plans, their evaluation procedures and the operability and appropriateness of the developed evaluation concept at national level, as well as the impact of conflict/synergies and policy proposals for implementing the EU Action Plan in member states	
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## Executive summary

This final report comprises all official documents prepared within work package 3 (“National Action Plan analysis”) of the ORGAP project. It comprises different views on the topic *evaluation of organic action plans*.

The first official document “Documentation about national Action Plans for Organic Food and Farming” describes in form of a desk-top study the current status quo of national action plans in Europe. The main aim of this report is to provide a structured documentation about the objectives, development processes and measures of eight national and regional Action Plans for Organic Food and Farming (Czech Republic, Andalusia (Spain), England, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Slovenia and Italy). Furthermore this report tries to facilitate the access to detailed action plan information and to provide a condensed comparison of the action plans documented. The report can be seen as ORGAP’s *state-of-the-art* survey or as *analytical step* concerning organic action plans.

The second document “ORGAP WP3, task 3.2, final version” gives an insight into already conducted evaluation studies in the field of organic action plans in Europe via three meta-evaluations. The *task 3.2 report* contributes to a methodological learning process, helps to optimize the ORGAPET toolbox and provides information on the content level about the success and failure of Organic Action plans in general. This task can be seen as ORGAP’s *keen insight* into action plan evaluations or as its *Meta step*.

The report “Comparative Documentation and Synthesis of ORGAPET testing” registers all comments on the ORGAPET toolbox collected via a comprehensive testing process in all ORGAP member states. Most remarks and recommendations from the involved stakeholders and evaluation experts fed directly into the ORGAPET toolbox. The key purpose of this task is to get some feedback on ORGAPET under the different needs and circumstances in the different countries involved. The results served towards an improvement of ORGAPET and were an opportunity to involve stakeholders further in the development of the projects evaluation methodology. This task constitutes ORGAP’s *expert view* or *professional approach step* on organic action plans.

The last document “Implementing the European Organic Action Plan in EU member states - stakeholders’ perceptions of implementation problems and coping strategies” recapitulates the results of a series of national workshops undertaken in winter/spring 2007. Task 3.4 brings together very different views and perceptions on organic action plans and possible evaluation methodologies and can be seen as ORGAP’s *stakeholder oriented* or *public oriented step*.

The main intention and objective of all listed reports is to serve to the permanent and continuous updating and amelioration process of the ORGAPET evaluation toolbox. When comparing the shape of ORGAPET in autumn 2005 (start of WP3, first version of the ORGAPET toolbox) and in July 2007 (newest version of ORGAPET), it becomes obvious which impact WP3 has had on the look, structure and operability of ORGAPET. As a result of the ORGAPET testing process also a lot of recommendations concerning the usability of the toolbox could be integrated into its current version.

The ORGAP team members want to thank warmly all involved stakeholders and experts for supporting us, pushing forward our work and helping us to understand better the complex field of organic farming policy evaluation.

## List of contributors

Matthias Stolze and Hanna Stolz: Comparative Documentation of Action Plans of Organic Agriculture

Christian Eichert and Stephan Dabbert: ORGAP WP3, Task 3.2, final version

Stephan Dabbert and Christian Eichert: Comparative Documentation and Synthesis of ORGAPET testing

Ian Jeffreys and Christian Eichert: Documentation and Synthesis of ORGAPET testing - Summary

Johannes Michelsen and Anne-Marie Tyroll Beck: Implementing the European Organic Action Plan in EU member states. Stakeholders' perceptions of implementation problems and coping strategies

Johannes Michelsen, Christian Eichert and Otto Schmid: ORGAPET Section B3: Methods for evaluating the level and nature of stakeholder involvement.

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## Content

<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>List of contributors.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgement.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Synthesis of Comparative Documentation of Action Plans of OA.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Elaboration process of the action plans.....</i>	5
<i>Targets and objectives.....</i>	5
<i>Measures .....</i>	5
<i>Public expenditure.....</i>	6
<b>2 Synthesis of the Metaevaluation process .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Brief narrative description of the Dutch evaluation .....</i>	8
<i>Strengths and weaknesses of the Dutch study .....</i>	9
<i>Brief narrative description of the Danish evaluation.....</i>	9
<i>Strengths and weaknesses of the Danish study .....</i>	10
<i>Brief narrative description of the German evaluation .....</i>	10
<i>Strengths and weaknesses of the German study.....</i>	11
<b>3 Synthesis of the ORGAPET testing .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Assessment of the ORGAPET toolbox.....</i>	12
<i>Recommendations for ORGAPET .....</i>	12
<i>Conclusions .....</i>	13
<b>4 Synthesis of the second workshop series .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Implementation problems and coping strategies .....</i>	15
<i>Stakeholders' comprehension, willingness and capability .....</i>	22
<i>Conflict, synergy and ambiguity in evaluations of organic action plans.....</i>	24
<i>Assessing the focus group methodology.....</i>	25
<b>5 Lessons to be learnt for ORGAPET .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Basics and statistics on organic action plans in Europe .....</i>	27
<i>Meta-evaluation of organic action plans - implications for the project .....</i>	27
<i>Recommendations and remarks from experts' view.....</i>	27
<i>Recommendations and remarks from stakeholders' view .....</i>	28
<i>General remarks and findings on the role of stakeholder.....</i>	28

# 1 Synthesis of Comparative Documentation of Action Plans of OA

This part of WP 3 is not directly linked to the ORGAPET toolbox. It can be seen as first analytical step in the ORGAP project serving as survey on the current state of organic action plans in Europe.

## Elaboration process of the action plans

The elaboration process of action plans of organic food and farming in different countries and regions varies in the countries/regions studied. Denmark for example as a pioneer country in developing action plans for organic food and farming, already introduced the second action plan in 1998 on the basis of an evaluated first action plan. Countries like the Czech Republic (2004) and Slovenia (2004) on the other side started only recently with developing an organic action plan.

The process of the national/regional action plan development is varying in time. In Germany, for example, the action plan was developed and implemented within one year, while in Italy, in which the elaboration approximately started in the same year (in 2001), the action plan has not been approved until the end of 2005.

The level of stakeholder participation in the action plan development was relatively high in almost all case study countries/regions due to the fact that the action plan was developed by expert groups consisting of different stakeholders.

Another difference between the action plans studied is concerning the procedure of evaluation and monitoring, which is included in the action plans of Andalusia, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Slovenia, while it is not included in the action plans of the Czech Republic, England and Italy.

## Targets and objectives

Most of the case study action plans include quantitative strategic targets, except the action plans of Andalusia and Italy. The most common quantitative target is to increase the organic area. Besides quantitative targets, all action plans include qualitative targets, such as capacity building, consumer information and awareness and trust building as well as the expansion of supply and market development.

## Measures

The documentation includes an overview on measures related to following areas: Information, training and education, research, production, processing, market development, inspection and certification, administration and institutional development. The most relevant findings from can be summarized as follows: Generally, most common measures related to information are promotion and information campaigns about organic farming and sector specific information mainly aimed to improve the transparency of and within the organic sector.

With regard to the measures related to information of the specific action plans shows that the German Federal Organic Farming Scheme puts a high emphasis on information measures compared to other action plans studied. Contrarily, the English Action Plan does not provide any measures related to information. The most important measures for training and education are measures aimed at strengthening advisory services. The Slovenian Action Plan put a particular emphasis on training and education measures providing a large set of different measures while the Dutch Action Plan includes no training and education measures at all. All of the case study action plans include measures related to research, whereby the focus is laid particularly on production oriented research.

Further research areas are the elaboration and provision of basic organic sector information (statistics, prices etc.) and market research. Measures related to the support organic supply are included in almost all action plans studied, except in the Dutch Action Plan. The largest set of measures (or recommendations) targeted to increase organic supply is provided in the Danish and the Slovenian Action Plans. The most relevant measure here is financial support of organic farms (investment aids, grants). Other measures are related to improve co-operation, farm management, farm economics, initial support of special branches and support related to specific production methods.

Compared to other measure areas, the action plans put low emphasis on processing, considering that three action plans (the English, the Dutch and the Italian Action Plan) do not include any specific measure related to the processing of organic products. In contrast to this, organic market development is of high relevance in the action plans studied. The most relevant measures here are targeted to improve and expand the national market information systems to improve transparency of supply chains and the organic market. These measures however are not included in the Andalusian and German Action Plan. Further measures are related to the promotion and support of specific market channels and the institutional improvement and / or efficiency improvement of the supply chain and or the market. Particularly the Czech, Danish, Dutch and Slovenian action plans put a high emphasis on measures related to market development.

Almost all action plans include certification and inspection measures. In the Andalusian, Dutch and Slovenian Action Plans, particularly consider a large range of measures comprising the expansion of standards, institutional development, and improvement of the efficiency of the inspection process. Measures related to institutional development of the organic sector are included in all action plans studied targeted most commonly to institutional support, fund raising and strategy development support. Measures dealing with the administration and implementation refer to the evaluation and/or monitoring of the action plan (CZ, ENG, DE) on the one side and to the establishment of accompanying advisory and expert groups on the other (CZ, DK, NL).

## **Public expenditure**

Information about the scheduled public expenditure for the support of organic farming was only available for Andalusia, England and Germany. In Andalusia and England, the budget focuses mainly on measures supporting the organic production and supply. In Germany, however, the focus is laid on information support.

Analyzing the action plans shows that the weaknesses identified in the status quo analysis of the action plan elaboration have only partly been implemented in the action plans. In fact, targets such as capacity building, consumer information and awareness building, trust, expansion of supply and promotion of research and development are meeting the status quo analysis results in a very general way, whereas not in all cases the specific weaknesses



mentioned in the action plan documents are reflected in the target setting. Furthermore, the action plan targets are only partly reflected through measures.

The action plans vary considerably in their scope of measures. The Action Plan of AN, CZ, SL and DK address a very broad portfolio of areas and measures. In contrast to this, the Dutch, Italian and English Action Plan give high priority to measures targeted at market development and consumer information with the Dutch Action Plan representing a strong market driven approach. The German Federal Organic Farming Scheme has a clear focus is on measures related to public information.



## 2 Synthesis of the Meta-evaluation process

In this short summary not all results and details of the undertaken meta-evaluation work will be presented, but only some “*highlights*” of the findings. In doing this meta-evaluation, the question was whether the evaluations achieve their purpose at an acceptable qualitative level and if *general standards* are a helpful tool when evaluating organic action plans. In general, the meta-evaluation pursues the approach of programme theory. Accordingly, the methodology of the researched evaluation study (as a construction of second order) builds upon the programme theory for research on the meta-level.

As the meta-evaluation within the ORGAP project was planned as a desk study, the presented results could not be used as an overall picture of the researched evaluation work. Some of the valuations were not possible due to the limited data and document insights. Regrettably, several interesting points concerning, for instance, many questions on reliability, financing, treating and interim reports could not be evaluated.

In other areas, the meta-evaluation could help illuminate methods and details for improving evaluation methodology in the field of organic farming support schemes. One important improvement was the analysis of stakeholder integration in the planning, conducting and assessment of evaluations.

Each of the studies was analysed with respect to a chosen set of standards (DEGEVAL standards). These standards were divided into four main categories:

The **Utility Standards** are intended to ensure that the evaluation is guided by both the clarified purposes of the evaluation and the information needs of its intended users.

The **Feasibility Standards** are intended to ensure that the evaluation is planned and conducted in a realistic, thoughtful, diplomatic, and cost-effective manner.

The **Propriety Standards** are intended to ensure that in the course of the evaluation all stakeholders are treated with respect and fairness.

The **Accuracy Standards** are intended to ensure that the evaluation produces and discloses valid and useful information and findings pertaining to the evaluation questions.

### Brief narrative description of the Dutch evaluation

After a midterm evaluation in 2002, the study constitutes the final evaluation of the policy document Organic Agriculture 2001-2004. The study was finalised in July 2004. The evaluation study started with a clearly structured plan. The main topic (documenting policy on organic farming) is structured in comprehensible subchapters, which are assessed separately.

The Dutch study very strictly follows the prescribed plan and the formal requirements. It provides supporting documents and sources in an accurate manner. The statements made are neutral, well founded and justified, the evaluation team appears clearly distanced from the evaluation topic and accordingly can be seen as neutral and fair in their judgements. External factors (e.g. the development of the organic market in other EU countries) and unwanted side effects of the researched support schemes were observed and assessed. In the annex, the evaluation team presents a detailed overview on the evaluation questions.

Of notable value in the study is the detailed analysis of stakeholder integration in the political process; the Dutch study provides a very detailed assessment of how stakeholders



were integrated via the existing or newly established different bodies or boards<sup>1</sup> (e.g. the new established “Task force” building a network and institutionalizing the dialogue between policy, market actors and other interested stakeholders).

*“Changing the focus of the supply oriented policy to a demand oriented policy has shown to be a good choice. The policy instrument used, being a covenant, based on **consensus with relevant stakeholders**, supported by a Task Force with financial means for stimulation of activities, has shown to be both innovative and effective, even though the final objectives have not been met.”*

*“A very important role of the Task Force, according to people involved, was improving the **cooperation between the different stakeholders**. The image formation about each other has changed creating more understanding for each others opinions and instead of the original ‘everybody for his own interest creating more common interest.’”  
(Abstracts out of the Dutch evaluation study)*

The Dutch evaluation report is available as an internet document to all interested parties and subsequently, guarantees the use of its results. The report is written in an open and impartial way which allows and encourages all interested stakeholders to draw their own conclusions. Concerning the aspect of stakeholder integration, one can judge the report as valuable.

One can say that the study follows the intended evaluation cycle in a systematic manner, starting with a status quo analysis, followed by the fixing of targets, fixing of measures and criteria for the assessment, a mid term evaluation (not included in this document, but existing), a final census and recommendations how to design future policies.

## Strengths and weaknesses of the Dutch study

The apparent strengths of the study are the feedback process with the steering committee scheduled in the evaluation design, as well as the substantiated data collection (where relevant and essential). Also, there is a clear differentiation between depiction of facts and the parts of the study allowing interpretation, such as those interpreted by one of the stakeholders. The evaluation team has chosen a competent and realistic approach in preparing the plan and time schedule of the evaluation study.

An apparent weakness of the study is the fact that too few data and statistical sources are named or consulted in interpreting the different programme parts.

## Brief narrative description of the Danish evaluation

The evaluation study starts with a sound status-quo analysis of the Danish organic farming sector. To this end, the evaluation team has collected an abundance of information via **phone interviews** with farmers receiving conversion support, project leaders (participation in the development programme) and conventional farmers. The overall coverage of these interviews can be considered to be very representative (for farmers receiving conversion support 17% coverage of the total number, for project leaders 91% coverage of the total number). The **face-to-face interviews** were conducted with members of the Council for Organic Farming, representatives from the Directorate for Farming, representatives from the Directorate for Plants and the Veterinary Directorate, representatives from organisations and

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<sup>1</sup> *“Changing the focus of the supply oriented policy to a demand oriented policy has shown to be a good choice. The policy instrument used, being a covenant, based on consensus with relevant stakeholders, supported by a Task Force with financial means for stimulation of activities, has shown to be both innovative and effective, even though the final objectives have not been met.”* (Out of the Dutch Evaluation Study, page 24)

associations with interest in organic farming, and researchers. In addition a **document analysis** (e.g. summaries from meetings of the Council for Organic Farming) was done.

The received basic data on the Organic Farming Act was further analysed relating to three different aspects:

1. Management of the Organic Farming Act (assessment of the efficiency of the involved actors and institutions)
2. Quantitative effects of the Organic Farming Act (assessment via turnover, export, investments, and employment)
3. Qualitative effects of the Organic Farming Act (assessment of the influence on the professionalization, organisational development, information and counselling, research, labelling and monitoring, reduction of barriers)

As a result, the overall strategic perspective of the Organic Farming Act on production and market perspective is described. The assessment of each subchapter is made in a neutral and logical manner. The final recommendations are listed in a separate (overview) chapter for ease in understanding.

The study was conducted systematically along a prescribed path and well describes the status quo of the topic, the intended targets, the applied measures and criteria, as well as gives a number of recommendations for the future design of the researched policy field.

## **Strengths and weaknesses of the Danish study**

The apparent strengths of the study are a well-founded analysis of the Danish organic sector, a detailed analysis of the current market situation and an assessment of future opportunities for the Danish sector to expand (e.g. potential for Danish exports). A multitude of interviews with high coverage and accordingly good statistical value (eased by small size of the researched sector) have been provided. The recommendations concerning the improvement of the administration and monitoring function is a worthwhile aspect not seen in comparable studies. When further analysed, these recommendations can be exemplarily useful for ORGAPET with regard to complex competency in the organic sector at the European level.

The quantitative data are, at least in part, not well presented and analysed in the final document. In the explanation of the data, it would be desirable that the validity, reliability and consequently informational value of the study, be clearly demonstrated.

## **Brief narrative description of the German evaluation**

The method and goal of the German evaluation study was to get an insight into the functioning of the process management of a new established programme. Accordingly the study can be seen as an on-going evaluation. As a consequence a final résumé on the quality and achievement of objectives of every single measure is not the intention and not possible with the chosen evaluation design.

The evaluation is divided into two sub-studies: The topic “consumer information” was evaluated separately by another company. All results are included and presented in a final study (which is the main base of this study).

The used methods are mainly standardised surveys of indicators in the direct sphere of influence of the researched measures, partly supplemented by some further qualitative data. Accordingly the resulting statements move directly into the assessment of the short-term programme effects.

Relating to the circumstances of the evaluation (e.g. time pressure, facts of a new established programme with accordingly new involved programme officers) the study was done in a courageous manner. The evaluation team surveyed a plenty of (relevant) information and data on the topic and interpreted them very well. The evaluation design is build-up precise and adequate according to the underlying topic. One can say that the most of the achieved statements attend to be valid and comprehensible.

As a final result one can attest the evaluation team a good job and the consistent tracing of their well-build evaluation design.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of the German study**

One of the strengths of the German study is the fact, that the whole evaluation process was guided by a steering committee. The first results were discussed with that board and with the concerned stakeholders during a meeting (“Reflexions workshop”) in order to ensure a feedback process and to avoid a misinterpreting of the drawn conclusions.

The used methods are relevant and all data well interpreted. The evaluation team traced systematically a consistent and well-build evaluation design.

### 3 Synthesis of the ORGAPET testing

This chapter presents some of the assessments and recommendations produced in course of the ORGAPET evaluation during winter time 2006/2007 in all ORGAP member countries.

#### Assessment of the ORGAPET toolbox

There were many positive remarks on the comprehensive and well-researched texts, the user friendly checklists and suggestions of indicators, as well as the fact that important issues to evaluators are covered, and accordingly most sections meet their needs. Most experts assessed the toolbox as systematic, with a holistic approach along the entire value added chain. The indicators were assessed as "having a very broad scope and reliable sources – they are a good support for all target groups". One compliment for our consortium was: "...as evaluator the author would have appreciated having ORGAPET and would have applied mainly section C and if available documents of section D" (*see* ORGAPET).

It is mentioned that data availability is still a big problem, especially data on markets and data for newly entered countries to the EU.

It was also noted that the comprehensive description on stakeholder involvement and the resulting benefits is very informative, but that in reality the possibilities to integrate them are limited by practical availability of adequate stakeholders.

Some general remarks deal with section C and D (*see* ORGAPET): "The allocation of a certain toolbox does not keep evaluators from intensely reviewing their particular evaluation task. Also, ORGAPET should not be considered a replacement for a sector expert or sector specific knowledge in the evaluation team".

Obstacles of applying ORGAPET in practice could not be identified.

#### Recommendations for ORGAPET

One suggestion for improvement is the establishment of a user interface that allows differentiation between different user types (e.g. separate "entrance" for evaluators, non-experts, etc.), so that the information relevant to that group can be found more easily. Another recommendation addresses the restructuring of the text in order to make it more compact, giving clear outlines/overviews of all important steps and links to the more detailed information to avoid confusion and enables all users to "work" with the toolbox. Concrete, practical examples should be designated throughout the text, for example from experiences in existing evaluations.

The interviewed experts recommended comprehensive editing of all ORGAPET documents in order to achieve a uniform structure of the text and avoid repetitions (particularly in the sections of the checklists).

A more application-oriented comment dealt with the topic of indicators and the role of stakeholder integration in the evaluation process: "Applying this information (the ORGAPET toolbox) would have had a considerable added value for evaluators by having information about objectives of action plans for the organic sector, lists of indicators and mainly the checklists (Section C) available", "additional added value would have been given by the verification of these issues by stakeholders being involved in their elaboration".

The experts also mentioned the value of the practical examples in section D: "What would be interesting for future evaluators is a more in-depth analysis of implemented evaluations in the sector".

Some negative remarks addressed the number of indicators: "Perhaps fewer indicators should be planned to ensure that sufficient resources available for those which are most important". It was stressed that the evaluators have to adapt the provided set of indicators to their specific situation; there is the danger that non-experts or administration staff may rely too much on the ORGAPET indicator set and refrain from forming specific indicators, relevant to their specific situation, when evaluating an action plan.

## Conclusions

Overall, the conclusion from the extensive review and testing process of an intermediate version of ORGAPET is: Stakeholders and experts view ORGAPET in principle as a useful tool. There are a few suggestions for structural and general changes. It should be discussed which of these should be implemented in ORGAPET. This discussion should consider both the potential improvement of ORGAPET gained if the suggestions are implemented and the resources needed. The numerous suggestions on changes in detail should be considered by the project team responsible for further developing ORGAPET.

## 4 Synthesis of the second workshop series

The general objective of the workshop series was to make some judgments on how the recent European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming is expected to be implemented in the member states. The intention was to identify how national stakeholders perceived the European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming (EUOAP) and its interplay with national policies in terms of conflict and synergy, and which strategies they would suggest in coping with implementation problems.

The realisation of the EUOAP is still in the making, and all member states of the EU are free to refrain from implementing the recommendations of the EUOAP. This implies that implementation is still a rather hypothetical issue and that it may vary much between member states. The methodology chosen was focus groups in eight member states with an organic action plan and presumably by a positive attitude towards implementation of the EUOAP. The focus groups were held in the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, England, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Slovenia. The selection of member states implies that focus groups knew of problems associated with implementing policies in support of organic food and farming, but the findings will clearly be more positive to implementation of the EUOAP, since information on implementation problems in member states without an organic food and farming policy should be expected to be much larger. The use of the focus group methodology implies that data include broad information on central stakeholders' perception of implementation problems and coping strategies.

It was not possible to discuss all aspects of the EUOAP in the focus groups. Therefore, all focus groups discussed implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the EU Commission's proposal for a new regulation on organic production, which is a direct outcome of the EUOAP and which is expected to be implemented by all member states by 2009. Two focus groups discussed implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the recommendations on using the Rural Development Plans as basis for financing the national implementation of the EUOAP. This is also a rather concrete discussion topic since all member states had to specify the distribution of subsidies for Rural Development Plans for 2007 and following years about the time when the focus groups were held. The second discussion topic in six focus groups was the recommendations on a more transparent market development included in the EUOAP, which partly overlapped the new regulation and partly included many rather specific EUOAP recommendations on ways to obtain market transparency. Together the three topics for discussion covered three areas central to EU's policy on organic food and farming: the definition of organic food and farming, the market oriented approach to organic food and farming policy, and the approach to funding organic food and farming policy through rural development plans i.e. as part of the general agricultural policy. Against this background it is no wonder that the findings of the three topics discussed are complementary in such a way that they seem representative for discussions of the full EUOAP and of national organic action plans.

The main results are presented in terms of a catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies based on stakeholder comprehension. Three aspects of the context of findings are discussed. One aspect is the interconnection between comprehension – as reported in the catalogue – and stakeholders' willingness to implement the EUOAP and their capabilities to do it. The second aspect is the contribution made to understanding conflict, synergy and ambiguity, as mentioned within implementation research, within the field of policies on organic food and farming. The third aspect is about the possible



influence from methodological issues on the results and what might be done to deal with them in relation to the future use of the tool box for evaluating organic action plans - ORGAPET.

## Implementation problems and coping strategies

The focus group discussions have been transformed into a catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies through a systematic condensation of the stakeholder comprehension mentioned throughout each discussion. In Chapter three, the various types of statements made within the specific context of a national focus group were condensed into subtopics on implementation problems and coping strategies specific for each focus group. Only few and unsystematic conflicts appeared within the focus groups and it was therefore reasonable to treat each focus group rather than each participant as the unit of analysis. The subtopics were decontextualised in Chapter four in two ways. First, the subtopics mentioned in all focus groups were compared. The comparison showed that only few and rather specific subtopics were covered in all focus groups, and that only little clear opposition between focus groups appeared. Variation between focus groups was rather a matter of different national perspectives. These findings paved the way for establishing a combined list of implementation problems and coping strategies in two steps. The first step was to cluster all subtopics mentioned under each main topic according to theme and irrespective of focus group. The second step was to rearrange the thematic clusters of subtopics in accordance with winter's model that integrates and summarises implementation research. From the second step it appeared that all four main aspects of the implementation model was covered and this suggests that the combined findings serve the purpose of covering all main aspects of implementation problems – i.e. of barriers to successful implementation.

It is against this background that the catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies specified in Tables 4.1 through 4.5 is to be understood as a basic catalogue of barriers to successful implementation. The catalogue is derived from discussions in eight highly different national contexts and it therefore reflects a broad variety of problems and strategies. It is clear, on the other hand, that far from all implementation problems will appear in each member state, and likewise that the exact coping strategies mentioned need not be found in all member states where implementation problems appear. The main purpose of the catalogue is thus to typify all main problems and coping strategies that may be expected in EU member states implementing the EUOAP or other organic action plans. Evaluations of the EUOAP or other organic action plans should therefore be prepared to deal with all these types of problems.

The background for including coping strategies in a catalogue of implementation problems is that implementation problems are measured on the basis of stakeholders' comprehension of implementation. This had two consequences. One was that a full picture of comprehension should not only cover problems but even suggestions for coping with them as an indicator of how serious the problems appeared and the extent to which the sector should be involved in solving them. This even represented a methodological advantage since it helped focus group participants to think about the rather hypothetical implementation of a European action plan – i.e. an issue to which none of the stakeholders invited for the focus groups gave much attention beforehand. Asking for coping strategies thus helped increasing participants' attention and the reliability of their statements. In practice, it appeared during the focus group discussions that an implementation problem emerged from a discussion of a coping strategy. Moreover, some of the coping strategies



may in the perspective of certain stakeholders represent an implementation problem – as exemplified by the strategies in defiance with the main ideas of the EUOAP or the Single Market. Since these dynamics of data collection is even of interest to future evaluations of organic action plans, the full empirical basis for the catalogue is included.

Each main aspect of winter's integrated implementation model is represented by a table including the relevant clusters of subtopics. To the empirical findings are added suggestions in normal types that cover issues left unmentioned in the focus groups. These pragmatic suggestions fill holes regarding implementation problems and coping strategies, but to them are added a few headings for clusters and subtopics that appear relevant from the standpoint of implementation research. The additional suggestions are meant to signify that evaluations of organic action plans should not leave these problems or coping strategies unanalysed.

Table 4.1 includes implementation problems and coping strategies associated with the socio-economic context. It is in line with implementation research that successful implementation of any policy in support of organic food and farming presupposes a socio-economic context characterised by at least some kind of perception of organic food and farming that accepts or even favours the ideas of organic food and farming inasmuch as it is a small and emerging sector. It was mentioned as an issue of Rural Development Plans which is to serve as financial basis for the realisation of the EUOAP, but it is even an important precondition for the successful implementation of any policy in support of organic food and farming. The need for a positive socio-economic context is even emphasised by the fact that it is mentioned in member states with organic action plans – hence this issue may be even more important in member states without organic action plans.

In a similar way is the context of market development not only relevant to the topic on market transparency. Since the EUOAP to a major extent builds on the idea of market transparency, which corresponds with the main ideas of the EU Single Market, it is an issue of general importance to the implementation of the EUOAP and any action plan building on it. The main suggestion is to see if institutional preconditions for acting under liberalised (or other prevailing) market conditions are present. The third cluster directs attention to specific contextual problems in member states and to the issue of the organic action plans' (and not only the new regulation's) positive or negative interaction with other types of policies and rules – at EU or national level.

Table 4.1 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding the socio-economic context of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans

<b>Socio-economic context</b>		
<i>Implementation problems</i>		<i>Coping strategies</i>
<b>Perception of organic farming (RDP)</b>		
[Perception of organic farming]		Change of attitude in conventional sector
[Policy issues] RDP focus		Include organic agriculture in RDP focus
[Stakeholder integration]		Stakeholder integration
<b>Context of market development (Market transparency)</b>		
[Institutions]		[Institutions] Marketing board
[Capacity building]		[Capacity building]
Capacity building		[Cooperation] Support more cooperation within the sector
[Education]		[Education]
Lack of knowledge		[Research]
[Logos]		Coordinate the use of various logos
[Quality standards]		Harmonise the various quality standards
[The organic sector is threatened]		[The organic sector is threatened]
<b>Contextual issues (New regulation)</b>		
Interaction with other rules		[Interaction with other rules]
[(ES) Political context]		Change of EUOAP
Problems not coped with in the EUOAP		[Need for improved national AP
[(SI) Organic farming is threatened]		[Transition period]

Source: Chapter 4.

Table 4.2 is about the problems and coping strategies relating to policy formulation and policy design. In the focus groups, this aspect was only mentioned in relation to the new regulation and market transparency because these were ongoing political decision making processes while the Rural Development Plans had been decided upon. A main idea in implementation theory is that policy formulation and policy design condition implementation - hence policy formulation and policy design is an issue of general importance to implementation of organic action plans. Procedural issues are mentioned in discussions on the new regulation, but the identification of lacking stakeholder involvement and the claim for more stakeholder integration in policy making – as in other stages of the policy process – seem worth assessing in all policy processes regarding organic food and farming.

Table 4.2 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding policy formulation and policy desing when implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans

<b>Policy formulation and policy design</b>	
<i>Implementation problems</i>	<i>Coping strategies</i>
<b>Procedural issues (New regulation)</b>	
[Stakeholder integration]	[Stakeholder integration]
[Lobbying]	[Lobbying]
[Expert panel ]	[Expert panel ]
[Bureaucracy]	[(Boards managing) Transposition of the revised regulation]
[Interpretation of the regulation]	[Interpretation of the regulation]
Varying interpretations	[Stakeholder integration] Demand for an interpretation committee
[Regulation specificity]	[Board]
Heterogeneous recommendations	[Board] (technical)
<b>General view on market institutionalisation (Market transparency)</b>	
[The organic sector is threatened]	[The organic sector is threatened]
[Transparency is faulty]	Allow less harmonisation
[Stakeholder integration]	[Stakeholder integration]
[Trade]	[Trade]
Lack of public involvement	[Public, regional obligations]
<b>Issues of political aims and scope of regulation (New regulation)</b>	
[Scope of regulation]	[Scope of regulation]
[Regulation specificity]	[Board]
[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation	[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation
[Maximum or minimum standards]	[Maximum or minimum standards]
[Basic principles]	[Basic principles]
Political profile	[Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements]
[GMO thresholds]	[GMO thresholds]
[EU logo]	EU logo
Too many logos	[Logos]
[Unfair and biased competition (3rd countries)]	[Unfair and biased competition (3rd countries)]
[National derogations]	[National derogations]
FUNDING	FUNDING
<b>The content of the European Organic Action Plan (Market transparency)</b>	
[EUOAP]	[Actualising the EUOAP]
[EU logo]	[EU Logo]
[Promotion campaigns]	[Promotion campaigns]
[Statistical data]	[Statistical data]
[Internet database]	[Internet database]
[Quality standards]	Uniform standards
Market development	[Market development]

Source: Chapter 4.

The three remaining clusters concern various aspects of the content of policy formulation and policy design. The most general view held is the rather critical attitude included in the general view on market institutionalisation. This is not an issue of (lacking) institutions as in the case of the socio-economic context, but a criticism of the main political ideas behind the EUOAP and the Single Market, although even some acceptance of the internationalisation of trade with organic food is expressed. According to implementation theory a negative

comprehension of the main ideas behind a policy is a barrier to successful implementation. It is hence worth giving attention to negative comprehensions when evaluating the implementation of any type of policy in support of organic food and farming. The cluster of subtopics on issues of political aims and scope of regulation includes some subtopics of a general type such as scope, specificity and decision form of the policy which may be of strategic relevance to the development of organic food and farming. The remaining subtopics and the issue of the content of the EUOAP have a clear reference to the content of the EUOAP and to the specific proposal for a new regulation. When applied on other aspects of organic action plans, these subtopics signify the lot of concrete questions to be dealt with in policy formulation as in implementation. The issue of funding was not dealt with in terms of policy formulation and policy design, but it is added to the table, since the absence of the funding issue seems caused by the fact that funding was not an explicit part of the decision on EUOAP but was left to Rural Development Plans – where it only appeared as practical subtopics perhaps by implication. The inclusion of funding is thus an attempt to curb a negative consequence of the selection of topics for the focus group discussions.

Table 4.3 includes the clusters of subtopics on organisational and interorganisational behaviour within the implementation process. According to implementation theory, structural issues are important to any aspect of organisational and interorganisational behaviour since organisational behaviour to a major extent is determined by structural design. Hence the structural issues mentioned under the discussions of RDP have general relevance. Integration with other policies and regional institutional variation are important aspects within implementation research in general while the remaining subtopics relate to the specific conditions for organic food and farming. The preferred coping strategy is stakeholder integration. The general administrative issues mentioned under the discussions of the new regulation share some similarities with the structural issues mentioned under RDP discussions, but the scope of coping strategies is broader and the suggestions more specific.

The cluster of general administrative issues thus extends the scope of the analysis to include stakeholder cooperation and stakeholder adaptation to administrative structures. The specific issues on content of the new regulation clearly illustrate some of the main views promoted in the focus groups that even may be relevant to the implementation of organic agriculture policies in general. This even holds for funding issues, which were considered practical problems within the Rural Development Plans but has general application to any policy in support of organic food and farming as indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.3 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding organisational and interorganisational behaviour in the process of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans

<b>Implementation process - a) organisational and interorganisational behaviour</b>		
<i>Implementation problems</i>		<i>Coping strategies</i>
<b>Structural issues (RDP)</b>		
[Integration with other policies]		[Integration with other policies]
[Institutions] Regional variation		[Institutions] Regional development
[Structures]		[Structures]
[Knowledge transfer]		[Capacity Building] research
[Supply chains]		[Supply chains] Funds
[Stakeholder integration]		[Stakeholder integration]
[Lobbying]		[Lobbying]
[Expert panel ]		[Expert panel ]
[Bureaucracy]		[(Boards managing) Transposition of the revised regulation]
[Interpretation of the regulation]		[Interpretation of the regulation]
		[Stakeholder integration] Demand for an interpretation committee
[Regulation specificity]		[Board]
Heterogeneous recommendations		[Board] (technical)
<b>General administrative issues (New regulation)</b>		
[Institutions] public administrative level		[Institutions] ] public administrative level
[Capacity building problems]		Capacity building
[Interpretation of the regulation]		[Interpretation of the regulation]
Lack of knowledge on regulation		[Consultancy] Prepare and support farmers to adapt to the new regulation
[National derogations]		[National derogations]
[Inspection/regulatory burden]		[Inspection/regulatory burden]
[Costs/resources required for implementation]		[Costs/resources required for implementation]
[Logos] Practical problems with labelling		Agreements on labelling
[Local level trade]		[Local level trade]
[Interaction with other rules]		[Interaction with other rules]
<b>Specific issues on content (New regulation)</b>		
[GMO thresholds]		[GMO thresholds]
[EU logo]		[EU logo]
[Scope of regulation]		Make a clear decision
Basic principles		[Basic principles]
[Quality standards] Loss of consumer confidence		[Reinforcing publicity on quality standards]
<b>Funding issues (RDP)</b>		
[Lack of economic support]		[Economic incentives]
[Funding] Level and inconsistency		[Funding]

Source: Chapter 4.

The findings regarding the part of the implementation process that involves interaction with the target group are reported in Table 4.4. Only two and rather small clusters of subtopics - both originating in the discussions on market transparency - are included in spite of the general interest in stakeholder involvement. Stakeholders to be involved thus seem to be various governmental and non-governmental organisations rather than the directly involved groups targeted by the organic action plans such as farmers and consumers, and firms manufacturing, distributing and retailing organic food. Since this needs not be the case, we

have suggested a third cluster of subtopics on interaction with agri-business, food businesses and consumers. It cannot be substantiated on the basis of the focus group discussions, however.

The cluster on market development includes subtopics on the dynamics of the organic food market in structural terms. They are relevant to a broad variety of policies in support of organic food and farming. However, they are only subject to limited influence from either public policy or the organic food sector itself – not least in situations where organics only cover a small and marginal part of the food market. The European Organic Action Plan is one attempt to influence market developments, but the few subtopics mentioned only illustrate the most basic steps in the attempt to influence the market development. The list may be continued with other proposals of the EUOAP insofar they appear relevant to the situation in which evaluations are performed.

Table 4.4 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding the interaction with target group in the process of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans

<b>Implementation process - b) interaction with target group</b>		
<i>Implementation problems</i>		<i>Coping strategies</i>
<b>Market development (Market transparency)</b>		
[Market development]		[Market development]
[Market stagnation and differentiation]		[Market stagnation and differentiation]
[Price stagnation]		
[Imports and security]		[Imports and security]
<b>Content of European Organic Action Plan (Market transparency)</b>		
[Statistical data]		[Statistical data]
[EU logo]		[EU logo]
[Promotion campaigns]		[Promotion campaigns]
[Information]		[Information]
<b>INTERACTION WITH AGRI-BUSINESS, FOOD BUSINESSES AND WITH CONSUMERS</b>		

Source: Chapter 4.

Finally, Table 4.5 includes the cluster of subtopics relating to implementation results. The cluster of impact issues only includes unintended impacts and this may be a consequence of the focus on implementation problems in the focus groups. Participants were more interested in discussing problems of the implementation process while implementation results might seem to follow intentions if the implementation process is done properly. The list of Table 4.5 should therefore be considered far from complete as it only includes some preliminary suggestions regarding unintended impacts. Table 4.5 thus also includes a general suggestion on including implementation problems and coping strategies relating to obtaining the intended implementation results whether in terms of the performance the agencies and organisations involved in implementation or in terms of outcome i.e. impact on organic food and farming.

Table 4.5 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding the results of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans

<b>Implementation results</b>	
<i>Implementation problems</i>	<i>Coping strategies</i>
<b>Impact issues (New regulation)</b>	
[Imports and security]	[Market surveillance]
[Unfair and biased competition (3rd countries)]	
[(DE) The organic sector is threatened]	Make conversion more attractive
[(DK) Conventional connection]	Improve conventional connection
<b>INTENDED IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS</b>	
Performance	Performance
Outcome	Outcome

Source: Chapter 4.

The presentation of the catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies included in Tables 4.1 through 4.5 imply that it is expected to be relevant for analyses of organic action plans in general and perhaps even for organic policies in general. When analysing the focus group discussions it was impossible to make clear distinctions between the various levels involved in implementation: the EU, the member state and the regional or even sub-regional level. The main reason is that the administrative structure varies much between the member states in which focus groups took place. The attempt to generalise findings implies that the lack of clarity is turned from a weakness into a strength since elements from all decision making levels are included in the empirical basis.

### **Stakeholders' comprehension, willingness and capability**

The catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies is based on stakeholders' comprehension as indicated by their statements in focus group discussions. However, stakeholder comprehension is developed within a specific framework of stakeholder willingness and capability relevant for implementation within each focus group. Findings regarding willingness and capability were reported in Chapter two.

Regarding willingness, the focus groups formed a scale ranging from positive to negative in terms of expectations to the EUOAP and importance associated with it. The CZ and SI focus groups were positive in both respects while the DK group had positive expectation but found the EUOAP insignificant, the DE, EN and IT focus groups were neutral in expectations but found the EUOAP insufficient, and the ES focus group was negative regarding expectation and found the EUOAP insufficient. Across the eight member states with highest ambitions regarding organic action plans, there was thus only half hearted back up of the European Organic Action Plan.

Regarding capability, the focus groups ranged from being predominantly policy oriented (EN and NL) to being predominantly target group oriented (IT and SI) although the main group of participants across the eight focus groups belonged to the stakeholder type that combined interests in political and practical issues. It was common to all focus groups that no participant had a purely non-organic background and only few participants representing stakeholder giving preference to non-organic activities. This composition of focus groups implies that findings reflect the organic sector more than its interaction with the general and predominantly non-organic food and farming sector.



The analysis of comprehension may be summarised on the basis of the comparative analysis and the theoretical analysis done (summarised in Tables 4.1 through 4.5.). The main impression from the comparative analysis is the lack of a common understanding across focus groups since subtopics varied much and the views expressed were very specific to the national context. Only few subtopics were common to more than a few focus groups, and even the views on these subtopics varied much between focus groups – except regarding the rather precise subtopics on a very low GMO threshold in the new regulation and the lack of relevant statistical data as basis for market transparency. The clustering of subtopics revealed that beyond the scattered subtopics of relatively simple problems found in all implementation studies, it was possible to identify several expressions of a rather sceptical approach to the ideas behind the EUOAP. A few but rather fundamental implementation problems appeared from this analysis concerning a socio-economic context negative to organic food and farming, a negative comprehension of the idea of market transparency, and a focus on unintended implementation results with potentially major negative impacts on organic food and farming rather than a focus on problems related to reaching intended implementation results. Although the focus groups were to discuss implementation problems these subtopics seem to reflect comprehension problems of a rather fundamental type.

There are no direct links between comprehension and willingness in the sense that the comprehension of the most willing focus groups is not systematically different from comprehension in the most unwilling focus groups (compare CZ and SI vs. ES); neither are there direct links between comprehension and capability since the IT and EN focus groups expressed rather similar views on Rural Development Plans in spite of opposite positions on the capability scale. Hence, data on willingness, capability, and comprehension appear independent, and each of the three variables may make their specific contribution to implementation.

To sum up the contributions to successful implementation of the EUOAP from willingness, capability and comprehension, they all seem to be rather ambiguous. The focus groups' expressed willingness to implement the EUOAP is ambiguous even in the member states with existing organic action plans and thus characterised by an attitudinal match. Capability is also ambiguous as measured in the way done here. The focus groups are composed of the main stakeholders of the organic food and farming sector representing a broad coverage of the policy, intermediate and target levels of the implementation process, and thereby those most capable of implementing policies in support of organic food and farming. A negative account on capability is the non-participation of representatives of non-organic actors of the food and farming sector and the very low participation of actors representing predominantly non-organic activities. This is important since growth of organic food and farming is taking place within the framework of a predominantly non-organic food market. An example on how the ambiguity regarding capability is expressed in the comprehension of focus groups is that lack of stakeholder involvement in policy formulation and implementation is seen as one of the main implementation problems. This indicates a low implementation capability and this is emphasised when realising the rather basic nature of the stakeholder involvement mentioned under coping strategies.

Finally, even comprehension is ambiguous. On the one hand the focus groups comprehend the implementation problems and coping strategies in relatively pragmatic terms about solving specific problems regarding the three main topics discussed. On the other hand did the analysis reveal the presence of deep scepticism about the main ideas behind the EUOAP, especially its market orientated basis. The main conclusion from the analysis done here is

thus that successful implementation in any member state is a matter of the balance between positive and negative aspects of all three main dimensions of implementation: willingness, capability and comprehension. These balances are unique to each member state and within each dimension. The main expectation is that more weight to positive aspects on all three dimensions will lead to more successful implementation, but there is no clear expectations with regard to the interplay between the balances of the three dimensions. The suggested use of focus group discussions for the measurement of willingness, capability and comprehension will be qualified below.

## **Conflict, synergy and ambiguity in evaluations of organic action plans**

The theoretical background for the study was implementation research and its focus on conflicts between various actors as the main explanation for implementation success or failure. Conflicts were expected in both policy formulation and implementation processes involving actors on policy, intermediate and target group levels. One of the main conflicts with regard to organic food and farming is the conflict between the organic sector and the non-organic sector. Successful implementation is then measured in terms of the absence of conflict for instance through coalition building. One type of conflict is conflict over policy goals, which is a main part of political dynamics. Hence, clear and unambiguous goals are seldom in politics, and this is certainly the case of the European Organic Action Plan with its two overarching drivers of concern for the consumers/the market and for public goods such as the environment. The theoretical position towards ambiguity is that it might be the reason for implementation failure, but it might as well help to solve known conflicts and promote successful implementation. Finally, synergy was theorized in terms of the organic action plans' interaction with contextual factors in general and more specifically with other policy programs such as the Common Agricultural Policy as a whole or separate parts of it – for instance Rural Development Plans.

The study reported here is characterised by an astonishing lack of conflict within each focus group. In Chapter three it appeared that only few statements were opposed and that a broad consensus appeared in spite of all attempts to allow expressions of conflict through focus group facilitation. In Chapter four it even appeared that although focus groups varied from positive to negative on the willingness scale only few disagreements – not to say conflicts – over the comprehension of the EUOAP appeared when comparing the outcomes of their discussions. Conflict was thus not an issue in the analysis. However, the final analysis showed the major importance of the conflict between the organic food and farming sector on the one hand and various threats against it from the socio-economic context, from the ideas behind the EUOAP and from its unintended impacts. This demonstrates that the organic sector comprehends itself in conflict with various aspects of the socio-economic context including the conventional and non-organic part of the food sector and agricultural policy.

Ambiguity is reflected in the analysis done here in the way expected since at least some of the members of the focus groups expressed reservations toward the market orientation of the EUOAP. It seems, however, that the ambiguity of the action plan rests on the view that organic food and farming have to accept the market orientation if it is to gain support for its contribution to public goods. If this is correct, it points towards potential synergies between the EUOAP and the Rural Development Plans. From the two focus group discussions on this issue reported here, no such synergy is visible, but it might be otherwise in other member states.

Hence, the theoretically important concepts of conflict, synergy and ambiguity are issues relevant to the analysis of implementation, but they did not appear at first sight in the empirical analysis. They only appeared in relation to the conclusions of the analysis. This makes it relevant to assess the methodology used.

### **Assessing the focus group methodology**

The reason for choosing the focus group discussion as methodology for the issue of implementing the EUOAP was that at the time of the analysis the issue was highly hypothetical as implementation was only in the making and mainly involved a few central actors. This implied that anyone involved with implementing the EUOAP would need an introduction to the topics discussed as implementation issues are seldom in the centre of the stakeholders' attention. This could be done in group discussions that even would allow participants to learn from each other on how to comprehend the implementation issues mentioned and prepare for coping strategies. Moreover, it was clear that only few people would be involved in implementation in each member state and that it would be possible to obtain representativeness in terms of coverage of the main actors involved in implementation through the composition of participants in focus groups. Hence, the material was expected to be representative in terms of the views held by stakeholders with a central position in the member states' future implementation of the EUOAP.

The choice of focus groups was thus a pragmatic solution in a situation with very little information available on the implementation of the EUOAP. Against this background the data collected are very rich. All focus groups took the discussions seriously and came out with a rich material suited for analysis. However, there are even clear shortcomings of this analytical design.

The catalogue presented above is based on the relatively incidental points mentioned by the participants of the focus groups. Although they all were highly competent and capable within the field of organic food and farming policies, discussions were not systematic. This drawback is met by including eight focus groups from very distinct political and social environments in the analysis.

The most obvious problem is the lack of participants from the socio-economic context, which seem to have a negative influence on the political perception of organic food and farming and negative impacts on the implementation results. This methodological problem was foreseen, but the attempts made to deal with it were unsuccessful. Only very few representatives of organisations with a clear preference for non-organic food and farming participated – and they did not appear in the material in terms of clear statements distinguished from the statements made by the participants from the predominantly organic food and farming sector. When realising the fact that all focus groups developed some kind of consensus and conflicts only appeared after a thorough analysis, it must be concluded that the idea of having group discussions involving conflict cannot be recommended for other studies.

Still, the issues of conflict and the involvement of actors with a clear preference for non-organic food and farming are important to the analysis of implementation regarding willingness, capability and comprehension. The experience done here, suggests that focus group discussions may be used to gain information from the organic food and farming sector itself, while outsiders should be approached in a different way. One proposal is that since



outsiders to the organic food and farming sector by definition have far less interest in the issue of implementing organic action plans, they should be approached in individual interviews. Preferably the individual interviews should be made after data had been collected from members of the organic food and farming sector in order to ask the outsider for comments to the main arguments of the organic sector.

## 5 Lessons to be learnt for ORGAPET

WP 3 comprises some very heterogeneous tasks and reports. A single recommendation or conclusion on how to amend the evaluation toolbox ORGAPET as result of the WP is not feasible, but this article tries to summarize the most important findings and implications for the ORGAPET toolbox.

### Basics and statistics on organic action plans in Europe

The main outcome of the first step in WP3, the “Documentation about national Action Plans for Organic Food and Farming” produces a plenty of information on the situation and also the functioning of organic action plans in Europe. These consolidated findings could be used in all further steps of the WP.

### Meta-evaluation of organic action plans - implications for the project

In conducting the meta-evaluations in “ORGAP WP3, task 3.2, final version” the ORGAP team members could learn about structuring evaluation plans dealing with organic action plans as well as gaining knowledge on important steps relevant to the evaluation process. For that purpose an adapted set of *general evaluation standards* (based on the standards of the German evaluation society DEGEVAL) were probed and assessed regarding its applicability for the evaluation of organic action plans. As a result it is at the one hand important to build-up *specific, tailored standards* (cp.: in ORGAPET the wording *indicators* will be mainly used for it) which can measure the programs specific characteristics. At the other hand it seems to be important when preparing a suchlike evaluation study to keep in mind and integrate a set of *general standards* (like the standard set of DEGEVAL). *General standards* seem to safeguard the evaluators from generating beginner’s mistakes and ameliorate the quality and acceptance of the evaluations` results. The consideration of a set of established and accepted standards can be recommended for the future evaluation of organic action plans.

### Recommendations and remarks from experts’ view

In the report “Comparative Documentation and Synthesis of ORGAPET testing” evaluation experts and other stakeholder involved in organic action plans gave a plenty of recommendation and appraisals on the applicability and the purpose of the toolbox ORGAPET. According to these recommendations the toolbox was updated, supplemented and optimized by the ORGAP team in spring/summer 2007.

The experts suggested establishing a user interface allowing a differentiation between different user types (e.g. separate "entrance" for evaluators, non-experts, etc.). It was further proposed to prepare a *guide book* of the toolbox describing all important steps and links of an evaluation. Concrete and practical examples should be designated throughout the text, for example from experiences in existing evaluations.

Some negative remarks addressed the number of indicators: "*Perhaps fewer indicators should be planned to ensure that sufficient resources available for those which are most important*". Most other comments dealt with details which were updated or corrected as mentioned before.

## Recommendations and remarks from stakeholders' view

The final document “Implementing the European Organic Action Plan in EU member states - stakeholders' perceptions of implementation problems and coping strategies” delivers the stakeholders view on the European (and also the national) action plan. The stakeholders impression on and experience with the European and their national action plan were collected and further grouped and categorized. Another important point under consideration was the *interplay* and possible problems occurring between the European and the national plans.

The findings has also fed into an update of the ORGAPET section B3 describing the role of stakeholders in influencing, planning, conducting and assessing an organic action plan. Some of these findings will be recapitulated under the next heading (*General remarks and findings on the role of stakeholder*).

## General remarks and findings on the role of stakeholder

When looking at examples of the way in which stakeholder interests have been taken into account in action plans, it is interesting that the approach chosen in some countries was quite differing, ranging from a broad participatory approach to a very top-down approach with a small expert group. Interesting and diverse examples are:

- A. Netherlands, where the stakeholders were grouped looking from a marketing or supply chain point of view, e.g. by creating different platforms for different product groups and activity fields.
- B. Denmark, where there is a long tradition that in national boards not only representatives of the organic sector but also of the conventional farmers organizations and many researchers did participate, which might have contributed to a higher acceptance of organic farming in the society.
- C. Germany, where stakeholders were involved comprehensively in the evaluation of a national action plan.

Stakeholder integration into the political process and also in the evaluation of a program seems to be a very important milestone for the functioning of a policy.