



FQH Researchers met last October 2003 at the Louis Bolk Instituut in the Netherlands for a working meeting. (Absent are Board members Angelica Meier Ploeger and Jens Otto Andersen)

Foto: FQH

International research association FQH intensifies research

Is organic food healthier?

A better taste, a high nutritional value and health benefits are what consumers expect from organic food. Although many findings show positive health qualities of organic food, further scientific work in this area is needed. See also www.organicfqhresearch.org.

The Louis Bolk Instituut in the Netherlands was one of the first institutes to combine research work on organic food quality, human nutrition and health aspects. Its projects have been supported by organizations such as the Dutch Triodos Bank and the trading company Eosta. The German University of Kassel (Department of Organic Food Quality and Food Culture), the Research Institute of Organic

Agriculture (FiBL) in Switzerland and the Biodynamic Research Association (BRAD) in Denmark joined in this work resulting in the founding of the International Research Association for Organic Food Quality and Health (FQH) in January 2003. Six more research institutes have become members since then and FQH is supported by a growing number of organic trade and processing companies as well

as non-profit organizations. The co-operation of leading research institutes within FQH will strengthen research work on organic food quality and health considerably.

Special emphasis will be given to the development and evaluation of novel methods and research designs that could help to evaluate the quality of food, but also interactions with human health and well-being. Holis-

tic methods and interdisciplinary co-operation are highly prioritized by the research consortium. A close link to the organic industry (processors, trade, producer and consumer groups) integrates user groups into science and makes FQH, research highly relevant.

For those readers interested in research findings so far, several comprehensive literature reviews have been

Tip

Seminar at BioFach 2004
Fr. 20.2.; 1 p.m.-2.30 p.m.,
Room Brüssel 4
Organic Food Quality
and Human Health what
research is needed and
currently under development

published on the differences between organic and non-organic food. These reviews from The United Kingdom (2001), Germany (2003), Denmark (2001), Switzerland (1999), the Netherlands (1998) and France (2003) are available on the FQH Web site:

www.organicfqhresearch.org

Research topics of FQH

Consumers, producers, traders and processors of organic food are asking questions like:

- Can the consumption of organically produced food improve our health?
- Do organic farming methods have an important effect on the nutritional quality of food?
- Do organic or bio-dynamic food products have distinct or special quality characteristics?
- Does organic food processing decrease the risk of allergic reactions?
- What do we consider as authentic and organic food processing?

Joint activities already started

Since the festive launching of FQH during BioFach 2003, several joint activities have started in order to answer these questions. At the first working meeting in Driebergen (Netherlands) in October 2003, FQH assisted by external scientists addressed methodological aspects of how to measure effects of food on human well-being and health. Topics varying from anti-mutagenic to immunological properties of food were

presented. Several existing and novel methodologies and techniques were discussed and weighted in terms of appropriateness and usefulness in future research projects. All this with reference of course to the new EU regulation on health and nutrition claims, which is currently being finalized by EU officials and the relevant committees.

New methods were presented

In November 2003, the FQH member at the University of Kassel-Witzenhausen in cooperation with the Federal Agricultural Research Centre organized a European Scientific Conference in Berlin, Germany, on methods of comparing the quality of food from different farming methods. In addition to standard methods of analysis, new methods were presented that aimed at assessing authenticity, food safety and food quality as a whole. The methods presented have been validated to discriminate between conventional, organic and bio-dynamic crops and processed food.

Join and support FQH!

Are you interested in membership as a research or supporting member? Do you want to be involved in planning and implementing scientific projects? More information and a list of the research and supporting members that have joined already can be found on the Web site: www.organicfqhresearch.org. You can contact us via the Web site or we invite you to attend the BioFach session organized by FQH.

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Hooijdonk, van, Marijke (2004): Is organic food healthier? International research association FQH intensifies research. ÖKO-TEST BioFach-Messejournal 2004:66-67.

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