

How Can a Private Standard Accelerate the Development of Organic Production?

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Implications

It is possible to use private standards to increase the speed in development of organic production in a wide range of areas and to do that on a solid scientific basis. KRAV has recently improved the standard performance in reducing climate impact of the production and the methodology from this work will be possible to use in several areas such as reduction of environmental impact, animal welfare and reduction of health risk for consumers

It is obvious, though, that we need to get more knowledge on how consumers value our extra requirements in the standard and their willingness to pay for these since this is of crucial importance to motivate the producers to accept more stringent standards.

Background and objectives

KRAV has been developing standards for organic production since 1985. Around 80 % of all organic products on the Swedish market are certified according to the KRAV standard. Since 2007 audits and certification has been done by contracted, accredited, independent certification bodies. The standard is today based on the EU legislation for organic production but is continuously developed to have stronger sustainability performance especially in relation to:

- reduced climate impact including total energy used, reduction of the use of fossil energy and use of electricity from renewable sources
- social responsibility
- animal welfare including:
 - Sows must be able to farrow in seclusion under protection, for example in a farrow hut
 - The natural behavioural patterns of pigs should be provided for, such as rooting and food searching behaviour e.g. through fallow land, forest or woodland and deep litter beds.
 - During the warm part of the year pigs must have access to mud baths or other way of cooling off in water.
 - During the vegetation period all types of animals must have access to grazing during most of the day. Poultry can be kept inside during the night.
 - Established groups of animals must be kept together during transport, barn boarding and anaesthetisation.
 - Every animal must be anaestheticized before slaughter

KRAV is continuously pushing for improvement of the EU legislation through contacts with Swedish authorities and, in cooperation with the IFOAM EU Group, the European Commission

Key results and discussion

1. We have established a method for performing standard development with emphasis on climate impact on a solid scientific basis **and** with a reasonable

acceptance among the certified producers. It is possible to apply the method on any other aspect covered by our standard.

2. We have shown in practice that you can combine in the same standard a high performance in a wide range of aspects, in our case mainly;
 - a. Reduction of environmental impact evaluated against 12 of the 16 Swedish national environmental goals
 - b. Animal welfare
 - c. Reduction of health risk for consumers
 - d. Social responsibility through the chain of custody for food products

We still need to improve our cooperation around research on how consumers value our extra requirements in the standard and their willingness to pay for these which is crucial for our possibility to convince producers to do extra efforts. We would also enjoy seeing more research on best practice to get acceptance for new extra requirements from the producers. Further we would love to see research on possibilities to be independent of risky practices that we have inherited from conventional production e.g use of antibiotics.

How work was carried out?

KRAV develops its standard in close cooperation with scientists, producers, consumers authorities and other stakeholders. When our board has decided that we shall improve the standard in relation to an aspect of sustainability, the following steps are performed:

- The KRAV staff works in cooperation with our Standards committé (with representatives of all the mentioned categories of stake holders) and a reference group with experts from relevant stake holder categories
- The team identifies what relevant scientific data are available as well as all input that has reached us from stake holders since the last standard revision. The team produces a proposal for revised standard based on optimal sustainability performance in a balance between best practice in relation to scientific data, consequences for the economy of certified producers and risk for loss of sustainability performance through loss of certified producers
- The proposed standard is sent for referral to KRAV members, relevant stake holders and producers and. It is also displayed at KRAV website, open for anybody to comment. The consultation period is normally at least six weeks.
- The contributions are compiled and taken into consideration and a revised version of proposed standard is prepared for the KRAV boards decision.

When developing standards for reduction of climate impact we worked in cooperation with a team of scientists from SIK – the Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology – specialists in life cycle assessment of food production. The project collected data that we used as a basis for standard development according to our usual procedure. Data and results can be found on <http://www.klimatmarkningen.se> Our freedom as private standard owners makes it possible for us to advance fast as compared to the development of the common EU legislation and, thus, set example of how far it is possible to increase the sustainability performance of the standard in practice.

References

<http://www.klimatmarkningen.se>