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## ***Organic Certification is now available by a Bulgarian company***

**BALKAN BIOCERT LTD** was registered in January 2003 and has conducted the first inspections in Bulgaria. BALKAN BIOCERT Ltd, a private shareholder company which is fully owned by Bulgarian shareholders, offers inspection and certification services for organic production, processing and trade in Bulgaria and its neighbouring countries. Certification is done in accordance with Bulgarian legislation as well as EU-Regulation. BALKAN BIOCERT technically collaborates with the reputed Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), which has been active in Bulgaria for several years, and with IMO (Institute for Market Ecology), a certification body based in Switzerland that is well-recognised internationally.

“We would like to offer competent and affordable organic inspection and certification services to all farmers in Bulgaria and are convinced that this will contribute to the further development of organic farming in Bulgaria”, said Teodora Husich, the recently appointed General Manager of BALKAN BIOCERT Ltd.

The collaboration with IMO ensures that farmers inspected by BALKAN BIOCERT Ltd. can receive certificates which are valid immediately for the main export markets such as the EU and US. In order to be fully independent BALKAN BIOCERT has applied for national accreditation and plans to obtain international accreditation at a later stage (EN 45011, IFOAM and US).

The office of BALKAN BIOCERT is located in Plovdiv and currently employs three persons. The nine shareholders of BALKAN BIOCERT are organisations active in the organic farming sector and rural development, including AgroBioconsult, BioBulgaria, Bioselena, Ecofarm, FAEL and Time Ecoproject, as well as individual persons involved in the field of organic farming.

The Swiss institutions have supported BALKAN BIOCERT in setting up management structures and complying with national and international accreditation requirements. This cooperation assures highly competent BALKAN BIOCERT services in organic certification and will help to build consumer trust in the integrity and reliability of this certification mark at both domestic and international levels.

The Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) has agreed to provide funding for the development costs of the Bulgarian initiative for a period of five years.

### **Organic Farming in Bulgaria**

Organic Farming has gained attention and importance not only in western countries, but also in Eastern Europe. The increasing international market demand for organic products and the potential of local markets form an interesting opportunity for the development of the organic agricultural sector in Eastern Europe.

In Bulgaria, different actors are developing the organic movement. Private NGO's and state institutions offer consultancy services and market information, and carry out applied research. In 2001, the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MoAF) adopted a National Legislation, regulating the production of organic plant and animal products. It will soon start a scheme of direct payments for organic producers.

