

# The ECCE-Bio Charter

ECCE-Bio is a European organic producer co-operative which believes that a fair, ecological and co-operative food system is vital for the future of farming, the environment and a healthy society.

ECCE-Bio believes that a cornerstone of a new food system based on 'convivial economics' is the building of a production, distribution and retailing system based on open, fair and co-operative relationships between producer organisations across Europe and the world.

ECCE-Bio sees food a means of building bridges between communities in towns, rural areas and other countries, creating a global network of communities, not a globalised food system of isolated individuals.

## *The members of ECCE-Bio will;*

- ★ Prioritise direct sales; the independent retailers and processors; consumer co-ops and buying groups; partner organic producer co-operatives and the public sector.
- ★ Provide the highest quality seasonal produce at fair prices for the producer and consumer, to enable consumers of all incomes to have the best food the earth can offer.
- ★ Allow all staff and members to play an active role in the operation of the organisation and receive full rights.
- ★ Operate with complete transparency, giving full information about the production and distribution chain.
- ★ Aim to source all produce from socially and environmentally responsible producers and co-ops actively promoting local, direct and co-operative marketing.
- ★ Favour local, seasonal produce, supplemented by products from known co-operative sources
- ★ Use international and inter-regional trade as a means of a) complementing not replacing local produce and to offer a complete organic alternative b) ensuring the survival of producer communities for whom non-local trade is a necessary strategy.
- ★ Minimise packaging, waste and transport, by ensuring the freshness of produce
- ★ Minimise greenhouse gas emissions through a responsible approach to the transport of food as well as its production.
- ★ Offer farm visits, educational and practical information to raise awareness of the environmental and social advantages of organic seasonal and fairly traded food

## The ECCE - Bio co-operative

### A) Aims and Objectives

#### Principal aim:

The creation of a fair, ethical and co-operative organic trading system in Europe which will:

- ❖ Prioritise proximity and co-operation between producers and consumers
- ❖ Increase local, direct and co-operative sales
- ❖ Increase the viability of organic production, processing, distribution and retail businesses operating according to agreed fair, ethical and co-operative criteria
- ❖ Work closely with South-North Fair Trade organisations and products to create a complete system and genuine co-operative links between the Southern and Northern producers
- ❖ Be based on a charter and principles which enable the products and organisations operating within the system to offer genuinely sustainable and ethical products and obtain a fair price
- ❖ Offer consumers a guarantee that the products they purchase come from a sustainable and ethical origin wherever they are produced
- ❖ Provide a platform to mobilise producers and public opinion on the threat posed by GMO's

#### *Specific aims and areas of work*

##### 1. Standards

- To promote higher level agro-ecological standards
- Members will only use higher level organic certification standards, as agreed by the co-operative
- To use social and ethical standards in all actions undertaken by the co-operative
- To ensure high quality standards of all the products supplied by the co-operative's members

##### 2. Transparency & Accountability

- Open access to information within the co-operative about decision making processes and transactions
- To have an active Board of Directors
- To give local customers of members information about the working of the co-operative
- Traceability of information
- Traceability of products

##### 3. Trust & Commitment

- Ensure long term buying & supplying commitments
- Involve all participants in the supply chain in the co-operative and its actions - in particular the farmers and workers of member co-ops
- Developing our own approach of "Convivial Economics"

##### 4. Agent for political change

## The ECCE-Bio Charter: Villamartín Declaration, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007

- To be an agent and an advocate for political change at local, national and European levels in sustainable food and food systems, e.g. on organic and genetically modified foods
- 5. To be a model of Co-operation**
- To ensure that the principles of co-operation are used in all activities undertaken by the co-operative
  - To have a system of common values employed by all co-operative members
- 6. Small/medium family farms**
- To support and develop a distribution and marketing system designed to meet the needs of smaller and family farms and those excluded or marginalised from the current dominant multiple-retail and globalised system.
    - ▶ Supporting so called 'marginal' farms
    - ▶ Enabling farmers to survive outside the conventional supermarket system
    - ▶ Enable members to supply to whom they want
- 7. Consensus & Democracy**
- Application of democracy as per co-operative principles
  - Strive for consensus, recognising that consensus does not always mean 100% agreement
- 8. Health: physical, mental, environmental & spiritual**
- Good food for a good diet
  - Production systems that enhance not despoil natural and man-made environments
  - More time and less stress for the farmers and workers - improve the quality of life
  - Minimize Green House Gas Emission in food transport and storage
- 9. Education**
- Create a continual and open education systems within the co-op and with customers and citizens
- 10. Sustainability**
- Ensure the sustainable livelihood of the co-op and all its members
  - Support and increase biodiversity, in particular relating to the varieties and breeds used by the members of the European Co-operative
  - Human diversity
  - Encourage organisational and occupational diversity

## B) Functions of the co-operative

### Information

- Maintain common production database
- Co-ordinate of production and transport planning

### Trade

- Set up and maintain common (electronic) information and tools to assist trade
- System for discussing and arriving at reference prices and pricing structures (*Borsa* in Italian) to build confidence, understanding & trust
- Develop & manage tools & mechanisms that facilitate trading, including setting up formal and informal internal commitments

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### **Internal organisational development**

- Monitoring - to ensure that members are fulfilling commitment to co-operative, ethical and ecological standards.
- Building the social dimension - organise co-operative events and general meetings, facilitate exchange visits etc

### **Training**

- Identify training needs and develop common solutions for members, staff and Directors
- Linguistic (all languages not just English!)
- Mentoring - larger to smaller co-ops
- Work placements
- Sharing technical expertise, quality control and marketing systems