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Certification of Organic Foodstuffs in Developing Countries

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Abstract

In the EU and USA, organic products are obtaining an increasing share in the market. The necessary inspection of farms and foodstuffs industries shall be carried out by independent institutions, so called certification bodies, which can be state-run or private.

In developing countries, still today the necessary inspections are mainly carried out by European and North American certification bodies. The high costs however, limit the market access for small producers. This kind of inspection and certification system may lead to new dependencies which is undesirable from the point of view of development policy.

The inspection and certification of organically produced goods in third countries can be carried out through:

1. Direct Certification — farms or small scale farming cooperatives, as well as processors and exporters of organic products are to be inspected by supervisors from certification bodies of the EU or the U.S.A.
2. Co-Certification — a certification body not recognized at the importers location comes into action in a third country and conducts the on-site inspection and makes a certification decision but it is finally the international certification body that issues the certificate.
3. Local Certification — inspections and certifications in third countries can also be carried out by recognized local certification bodies.

Establishing such institutions and developing legal regulations for organic agriculture in developing countries is also being promoted in the framework of the GTZ — development cooperation projects.

There are 3 options in the EU for the recognition of control bodies:

1. the supervision can be carried out by accreditation bodies,
2. the supervision can be carried out by qualified authorities in third-countries,
3. the supervision can be carried out by experts recognized by the EU inspection authorities.

The inspection and certification of organically grown products must be, in the long run, undertaken by local certification bodies in developing countries. Only this way there can be a guarantee for a cheaper and long-term secure market access for small producers. Like this, new undesired dependence can be avoided.

The GTZ has supported different local certification bodies in developing countries like Peru, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Mexico, Chile and Costa Rica, among others.

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