



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate H. Sustainability and quality of agriculture and rural development
H.3. Organic farming

Brussels,
AGRI H.3/MF/ kt / D(2009) / 186986

Subject: poultry manure in organic farming

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 8 June 2009 in which raise questions on the use of farm yard manure from intensive poultry production in organic farming.

Organic farming standards are laid down on Community level in Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and the relevant implementing rules in Regulation (EC) No 889/2008. This legislation outlines the objectives, principles and production rules amongst others for the proper use of farm inputs such as fertilizers for organic production.

Organic farming aims to respect nature's systems and enhances the health of soil. Therefore it is based on the overall principles such as practicing land-related crop cultivation and livestock production, which excludes the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and products produced from and by GMOs.

Furthermore, the use of external inputs is restricted and only allowed under certain conditions. Where external inputs, such as fertilizers, are required they should be limited on first place to inputs derived from organic production.

The general production rule under Article 12(1)(d) of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 allows that:

"... only fertilizers and soil conditioners may be used if they have been authorised for use in organic production (...)"

This provision is further detailed in Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 where it is stated that only those fertilizers listed in Annex I of this Regulation may be used. This use is based on the conditions that the nutritional needs of plants cannot be met by:

- appropriate tillage and cultivation practices,

- multi-annual crop rotation including legumes and other green manure crops and
- the application of livestock manure or organic material, both preferably composted, from organic production.

Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 lists four types of farmyard manure including poultry manure which may be used under consideration of the before mentioned conditions and provided that they are not derived from factory farming origin.

A definition of factory farming is given in the Codex Alimentarius guidelines on organic farming, where it is stated that:

"Factory farming refers to industrial management systems that are heavily reliant on veterinary and feed inputs not permitted in organic agriculture"

Therefore certain types of farmyard manures have to be excluded from the use in organic farming.


I cannot follow your arguments that non-organic manure should be used on organically managed soil since this may contribute to the detoxification of non-organic manure and reduces the overall waste problem of intensive non-organic farming. This is maybe right from a technical point of view, but it is not in sense of the organic production system, which also aims to produce high quality products and where consumers trust and confidence is a major aspect of production.

In this respect, no further modification of the organic farming legislation is foreseen regarding fertilization.

Yours sincerely

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