

Organic aquaculture in the Naturland standards and in the EU organic regulation



The EU organic regulation constitutes a pan-European minimum standard under public law for all food, that is marketed under the terms “eco” and “organic”. Private standards of registered associations for organic agriculture, like those of Naturland set their requirements beyond the minimum requirements, for example mandatory social standards, stricter limited stocking densities or requirements for the protection of biodiversity. Conformity with the EU organic regulation is certified by an officially accredited inspection body. The compliance with the Naturland standards is certified during an independent, parallel procedure by the Naturland certification committee. The farm subsequently receives two separate certificates.

Naturland already developed the first standards for organic aquaculture in the middle of the nineties for carp farming. Those were supplemented step by step for other species and housing systems (salmonidae, mussels, tropical fresh water fishes, marine fish species, shrimp and macroalgae) and cover the worldwide relevant sectors of aquaculture in the current version. The Naturland standards for organic aquaculture are accepted by the most important environmental organizations and have proofed their practicability in various pilot projects in more than 20 countries.

The EU organic regulation has not been extended by standards of aquaculture till the 1st of July in 2010. Those came into effect as legal mandatory minimum standard. Through a period of time which ended January the 1st in 2015, already existing organic farms were furthermore allowed to be certified on a basis of single state accredited standards (e.g. Naturland) as an option in order to bridging a gap. This arrangement was significant, because from the beginning several of the phrases and requirements of the EU organic regulation raised heavy concerns by the private standards of registered associations for organic agriculture and the certified farms themselves. Corresponding petitions and modification proposals were repeatedly submitted to the EU commission in Brussels by Naturland and the umbrella organization IFOAM.

On the one hand this criticism refers to requirements that are phrased too weakly to be considered of serious organic quality. On the other hand different items in the EU organic regulation are not properly phrased. Many farms do not have precise instructions for particular treatments, the construction of sites and so on and only by hindsight conformity or non-conformity can be approved in individual cases by the responsible inspection body. Many questions of the interpretation of the regulations are unsettled so far. This of course decreases the planning reliability for the organic farms significantly. Furthermore there are requirements in the current EU organic regulation in the division of aquaculture that simply cannot be met by the state of research and development of the aquaculture farms (whereas the definition of the EU organic regulation is again not distinct in those especially critically acclaimed issues – a distinct clarification has not taken place yet). An especially critically requirement of the EU organic regulation is that as of 1st of January in 2017 a 100% juveniles should be exclusively from certified organic origin, although it is proven that in different countries and for some species there are not enough organic juveniles available.

Currently, a complete revision of the EU organic regulation is under preparation, and remains to be seen how far they will take the advice of organic associations and organic farmers into account. Till the conclusion of the revision process and till the clarification of the various possibilities of interpretation Naturland is not going to change or harmonize its standards of organic aquaculture according to those critically acclaimed topics. This leads to the condition that regarding some topics the requirements of the Naturland standards and the EU organic regulation differ. In the current version of the

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Naturland standards those particular points are marked with *) and accompanied with a footnote. We recommend farms who are concerned with those issues and requirements and who produce and market in the scope of the EU-regulation to consult Naturland and the EU certification body.

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