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☀ Origin of Organic Food

Organic food originates in the aristocracy of England. In 1940, during WWII, Sir Albert Howard published An Agricultural Testament advising Britain to adopt 'permanent agriculture systems' and to use urban food waste to build soil fertility. J.I. Rodale first applied the term 'organic food production' in his 1942 publication Organic Gardening and Farming. In the 1950's, Lady Eve Balfour, inspired by Howard, set up the Soil Association as a farming charity. Today, this organization is the UK's primary organic food certification organization. In 1974, the UK ratified the first set of Organic Food Standards, which currently form the basis of EU Regulation 2092/91. Interest in organic farming and food has grown steadily throughout the EU and North America and accelerated during the 1990's.

☀ Global sales are booming

Worldwide sales estimated at US\$ 12 Billion are concentrated in the EU and the US, with much smaller markets in Canada and Japan. Annual growth is estimated at 10 - 15%, driven by a level of 25% in the UK. The US is a primary exporter. China, owing to large acreage of previously unused farmland, thus free of pesticide residues, is becoming a major source of organic produce.

☀ En fin! US National Legislation

In December 2000, USDA announced the long-awaited National Organic Program that sets national standards for organic agriculture and food. The final rule contains 574 pages of regulations. Ratification into national law will occur over the next few months, with full implementation in June 2002, at which time the official USDA Organic Seal may be legally applied.

☀ Harmonized Specifications

The USDA's NOP stipulates three categories of standards to be fully implemented in year 2002: **"100 percent Organic"** (self-explanatory – or is it?); **"Organic"** if at least 95% of ingredients are organic; and **"Made with Organic Ingredients"** if at least 70% of ingredient content is organic. While this sounds straight forward, some sector stakeholders find the new federal rule complex, difficult to interpret and lacking precise definitions.

EU regulation 2092/91 specifies identical standards. The NOP will serve not only the American domestic market, but more importantly, facilitate export of American organic produce and products to the lucrative EU organic market.

☀ Voluntary Guidelines

In 1999 in Canada, voluntary guidelines for organic food standards, consistent with ISO standards, were established. The buyer's requirements and expectations determine exact specifications. For example, Canadian organic produce and food exporters will certify their products so as to comply with the regulations operative in destination markets.

Also in 1999, Codex approved international organic food guidelines including production, processing, labelling and marketing so as to harmonize international trade and protect the consumer from fraudulent practices. **FF**

☀ Some web-sites

www.coab.ca (CDA)
<http://www.fao.org/organicag/> (FAO-CODEX)
www.soilassociation.org (UK)
www.ams.usda.gov/nop (USA)

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