This is the third issue of the Newsletter of the EU Access programme, a co-operation programme on sustainable agricultural supply chains in pre- and post-European Union accession countries. This programme started at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Netherlands and is now running in co-operation with partners from Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania.

The quarterly Newsletter intends to inform you about new developments around the various projects of the programme. A Policy Brief is also published; this contains more information around a specific theme. For more information about programme, projects, newsletter or policy brief, please contact us (arij.everaarts@wur.nl; phone +31 320 29 11 11).

Qualiman in progress

In 2004, a quick scan was made in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Netherlands for which in each country 10 to 15 interviews were held to identify the bottlenecks in food safety and quality management. On March 22, 2005 a Qualiman workshop was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, immediately following the EU Access meeting there. The Qualiman workshop was held to:

- present the results of the interviews,
- define common grounds in bottlenecks in food safety and quality management,
- brainstorm about new ideas for solutions of bottlenecks, and
- define ideas for pilots to be carried out within the Qualiman project in 2005 and 2006.

Besides the project group with members from the participating countries, some new potential participants from Bulgaria joined the presentations and discussions.

A shared analysis of the interview results gave insight in the common grounds in bottlenecks for all countries. The bottlenecks could be divided into three categories: product quality, quality management and chain management. The problems as regards product quality concerned the lack of knowledge about EU quality standards, together with poor product handling and unsuitable storage and sorting capacity. The implementation of quality management is restricted by insufficient knowledge of quality systems and food safety demands, the lack of motivation at farm level, and the fact that the infrastructure for control, residue analysis etc. is still in its early stages. At chain level, lack of communication, cooperation and strategy impede an efficient and effective chain organisation. The common grounds in the bottlenecks found in the quick scan form the basis for four directions for improvement in the scope of the Qualiman project.

Organics

This year, two major activities are organised for the Organics Project. A seminar on organic farming has been organised (July 27–29) together with the Research Institute for Vegetable Crops at Skierniewice in Poland. Experts from various EU countries presented a lecture at the seminar. Two topics were covered on the first day: “Organic farming methods in vegetable production - research and practice” and “Action plans for organic farming in EU countries”. The last topic is intended to stimulate the development of an Action Plan for organic farming in Poland. Organic farms were visited on the second day. 170 participants, advisors, farmers and various stakeholders in the field of organic farming from Poland, attended this seminar.

In September, a course on organic vegetable production will be given in Wageningen for approximately 15 participants from new and
Agribusiness Day

An Agribusiness Day was organised in The Netherlands on April 19, 2005. The subject was “Perspectives for the Dutch fruit and vegetable industry in Central and Eastern Europe” and Dutch fruit and vegetable growers, fruit tree nurseries and policy makers were informed about opportunities and threats from the new EU member states. F. Adamicki (Poland), K. Zmarlicki (Poland) and M. Dokupil (Slovak) described the fruit and vegetables industries in their countries together with possibilities for co-operation or foreign business opportunities. Representatives of the Dutch growers associations gave their view on these presentations. This was followed by discussions and an exchange of information. For more information, please contact arij.everaarts@wur.nl; phone: +31 320 29 11 11.

TRANSFER

New members joined the Transfer network during the annual EU Access meeting in Sofia and Bucharest held from 20-25 March 2005. In Sofia, we organised a planning workshop with representatives from Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria. We discussed the main plans for 2005. Main activities to be implemented this year are an exploratory study aimed at increasing advisory responsiveness towards farmers, to share the experiences each country has in farmer study clubs or farmer cycles, and to open a website on which experiences can be shared.

Currently we are also making an inventory of ideas and issues that Transfer members want to elaborate during a workshop that will be organised in the fourth quarter of 2005. Topics mentioned so far are the farmer study clubs and developing advisory competencies. This workshop will probably take place in Czech Republic.

If you wish to become a member of the Transfer network, please contact dieuwke.klaver@wur.nl; phone +31 317 49 52 40.

Producers’ Organisations (POs)

During the first week of July a presentation about the project was given at a symposium for Romanian growers. The theme of the symposium was: “The marketing of horticultural products in the context of Romania’s European integration”.

The participants of the workshop “Organisational development in Czech Republic and Slovakia” will be visited individually in August. Organisational developments in the Producers’ Organisations will be discussed. For more information, please contact marianne.groot@wur.nl; phone +31 488 47 37 12.

Market

A new project is being started this summer: Improving market orientation and chain management analyses for vegetables and fruit. The project proposal is currently being written and more news will follow in the next Newsletter.

Agenda 2005

| July 27-29: | Seminar Organics |
| September 1-10: | Course on Organic Vegetables |
| November 6-9: | Transfer Workshop |

Addresses

If you would like to unsubscribe or subscribe to the electronic version of this Newsletter or if you would like to be included in the mailing list of the printed version, please contact Herman de Putter (herman.deputter@wur.nl; phone +31 320 29 11 11).

Three institutes of Wageningen University and Research Centre are involved in this programme: Applied Plant Research (PPO), International Agricultural Centre (IAC) and Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI).

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