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## Newsroom

### News Release

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#### European Union and United States Agree to Historic New Partnership on Organic Trade

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NUREMBERG, Germany, Feb. 15, 2012-The European Union and the United States announced today that beginning June 1, 2012, organic products certified in Europe or in the United States may be sold as organic in either region. This partnership between the two largest organic-producers in the world will establish a strong foundation from which to promote organic agriculture, benefiting the growing organic industry and supporting jobs and businesses on a global scale.

The organics sector in the United States and European Union is valued at more than \$50 billion combined, and rising every year.

Formal letters creating this partnership were signed on 15 February 2012 in Nuremberg, Germany, by Dacian Ciolos, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development; Kathleen Merrigan, U.S. Agriculture Deputy Secretary; and Ambassador Isi Siddiqui, U.S. Trade Representative Chief Agricultural Negotiator. The signing took place at the BioFach World Organic Fair, the largest trade show for organic products in the world.

"This partnership connects organic farmers and companies on both sides of the Atlantic with a wide range of new market opportunities," said U.S Deputy Agriculture Secretary Merrigan. "It is a win for the American economy and President Obama's jobs strategy. This partnership will open new markets for American farmers and ranchers, create more opportunities for small businesses, and result in good jobs for Americans who package, ship, and market organic products."

"This agreement comes with a double added value. On the one hand, organic farmers and food producers will benefit from easier access, with less bureaucracy and less costs, to both the U.S. and the EU markets, strengthening the competitiveness of this sector. In addition, it improves transparency on organic standards, and enhances consumers' confidence and recognition of our organic food and products," stated the EU Commissioner responsible for agriculture and rural development, Dacian Ciolos. "This partnership marks an important step, taking EU-U.S. agricultural trade relations to a new level of cooperation".

"This is a significant step in strengthening our bilateral trade relations," added Ambassador Isi Siddiqui. "I am confident that this arrangement will facilitate and boost agriculture trade between the European Union and the United States - and lead to more jobs in this important sector for both America and Europe." Previously, growers and companies wanting to trade products on both sides of the Atlantic had to obtain separate certifications to two standards, which meant a double set of fees, inspections, and paperwork. This partnership eliminates significant barriers, especially for small and medium-sized organic producers. All products meeting the terms of the partnership can be traded and labeled as certified organic produce, meat, cereal, or wine.

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Leading up to today's historic announcement, both parties conducted thorough on-site audits to ensure that their programs' regulations, quality control measures, certification requirements, and labeling practices were compatible.

Although there are small differences between the U.S. and European Union organic standards, both parties individually determined that their programs were equivalent except for the prohibition on the use of antibiotics. The USDA organic regulations prohibit the use of antibiotics except to control invasive bacterial infections (fire blight) in organic apple and pear orchards. The European Union organic regulations allow antibiotics only to treat infected animals. For all products traded under this partnership, certifying agents must verify that antibiotics were not used for any reason.

In addition, all products traded under the partnership must be shipped with an organic export certificate. This document will show the production location, identify the organisation that certified the organic product, verify that prohibited substances and methods weren't used, certify that the terms of the partnership were met, and allow traded products to be tracked.

Both parties are committed to ensuring that all traded organic products meet the terms of the partnership, retaining their organic integrity from farm to market. The European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program—which oversees all U.S. organic products—will both take on key oversight roles.

The United States and the European Union will continue to have regular discussions and will review each other's programs periodically to verify that the terms of the partnership are being met. The EU and U.S. will also begin to work on a series of cooperation initiatives to promote organic production and tackle important topics such as animal welfare and other issues. Both programs will share technical information and best practices on an ongoing basis to further enhance the integrity of organic crops and livestock production systems.

Currently, this agreement only covers products exported from and certified in the United States or the European Union. For additional details on this agreement, please visit <http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOPTTradeEuropeanUnion> or [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/home\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/home_en), or contact one of the following:

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