

ProOrg final project summary



Project purpose

The project “Code of Practice for organic food processing – ProOrg” is based on the fact that the EU organic regulations only set a legal frame with mainly general principles for technologies used in organic food processing. With the exclusion of a positive list of additives and processing aids, mandatory standards for the processing technologies used for organic food are lacking in the European Regulation 2018/848. Indications that can guide the processors in the selection of appropriate technologies and innovations in line with the organic principles are very limited.

The aim of the ProOrg project was to contribute to fill this gap by developing a Code of Practice (CoP) for organic food processors (<https://www.proorgproject.com/codeofpractice>). Specifically, the objective of ProOrg was to develop a Code of Practice addressed to organic food processors as well as labeling organizations, with the aim to provide a set of strategies and tools that can help them for making the best choice for careful processing technologies, methods, and formulations free of additives, while addressing the organic principles, high food quality, low environmental impact, and high degree of consumer acceptance. The ProOrg Consortium was composed of 15 partners from 8 European countries, with a balanced geographical distribution.

The project was based on a participatory approach with a direct involvement of organic food processors and other stakeholders that contributed to the development of the CoP and participated throughout the duration of the project.

The Code of Practice for organic food processors is composed of three parts: the “Management Guideline for organic food processors”, the “Assessment Framework for the evaluation of the organic food processing”, and the “Guidelines for consumer communication”.

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The “Management Guideline” (MG) (<https://www.proorgproject.com/codeofpractice>) aims to give organic food processing companies a guideline for the implementation of the regulatory requirements of the organic food sector applicable for the daily practice. It came just in time for the implementation of new organic regulation from 1st of January 2022 on. It also addresses

other aspects that exist in the industry but are not legally anchored and provides existing documents, tools, and information. For the MG, an Excel format was chosen which can easily integrated into existing internal documentations and systems. The user can find an overview of the legal requirements in several spreadsheets, divided into the different areas in a company, as well as a checklist with the relevant information.

The “Assessment Framework” (AF)

(https://www.proorgproject.com/files/ugd/88a346_72d47789193346a1ba42b030b46f39e7.pdf) is a guidance that enables companies or labelling organisations to compare potential processing technologies under the organic principles and to decide on the gentlest possible variant. The AF is generic, flexible, adaptable to all conditions and situations. Aspects and criteria for the evaluation of processing technologies have been defined based on existing concepts from the literature, of the legal requirements and the IFOAM organic principles. The AF is presented as a step-by-step guide and a calculation method is provided to get a score for each alternative to be compared to make the choice. An Internet-based version of the AF is under development to facilitate the daily usability of this tool.

The “Guidelines for consumer communication”

(https://www.proorgproject.com/files/ugd/88a346_cf27fc4976c845f78655d084f565d049.pdf) aim to give organic food processors an idea of how to deal with consumers’ expectations on food processing. In particular, the aims are: i) to improve processors’ understanding of consumers’ perception of processing technologies; ii) to support processors in the selection of processing technologies which are acceptable for/accepted by consumers; iii) to support processors in successfully communicating with consumers.

The development of the Code of Practice followed an iterative process. A first draft of the Code was tested for its understandability and practicability in the so-called “case studies”, mainly performed at level of companies. The feedbacks from the case studies were used for adjusting and finalizing the Code of Practice.



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