

# What is the Role of Certification Schemes?

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5 December 2013

**Feeding Europe with less pesticides**  
**European Parliament, Brussels**

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# Certification schemes

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- Apply to either a specific crop or commodity or to the farm as a whole, often covering the whole food supply chain
- May be operated by public authorities or private organisations which may or may not be connected with the sale of products
- Need to be subject to a process of verification
- Inform purchasers of the character origins or production processes associated with the product
- Are voluntary and distinct from mandatory requirements or standards set by food processors and retailers

# Coverage of certification schemes

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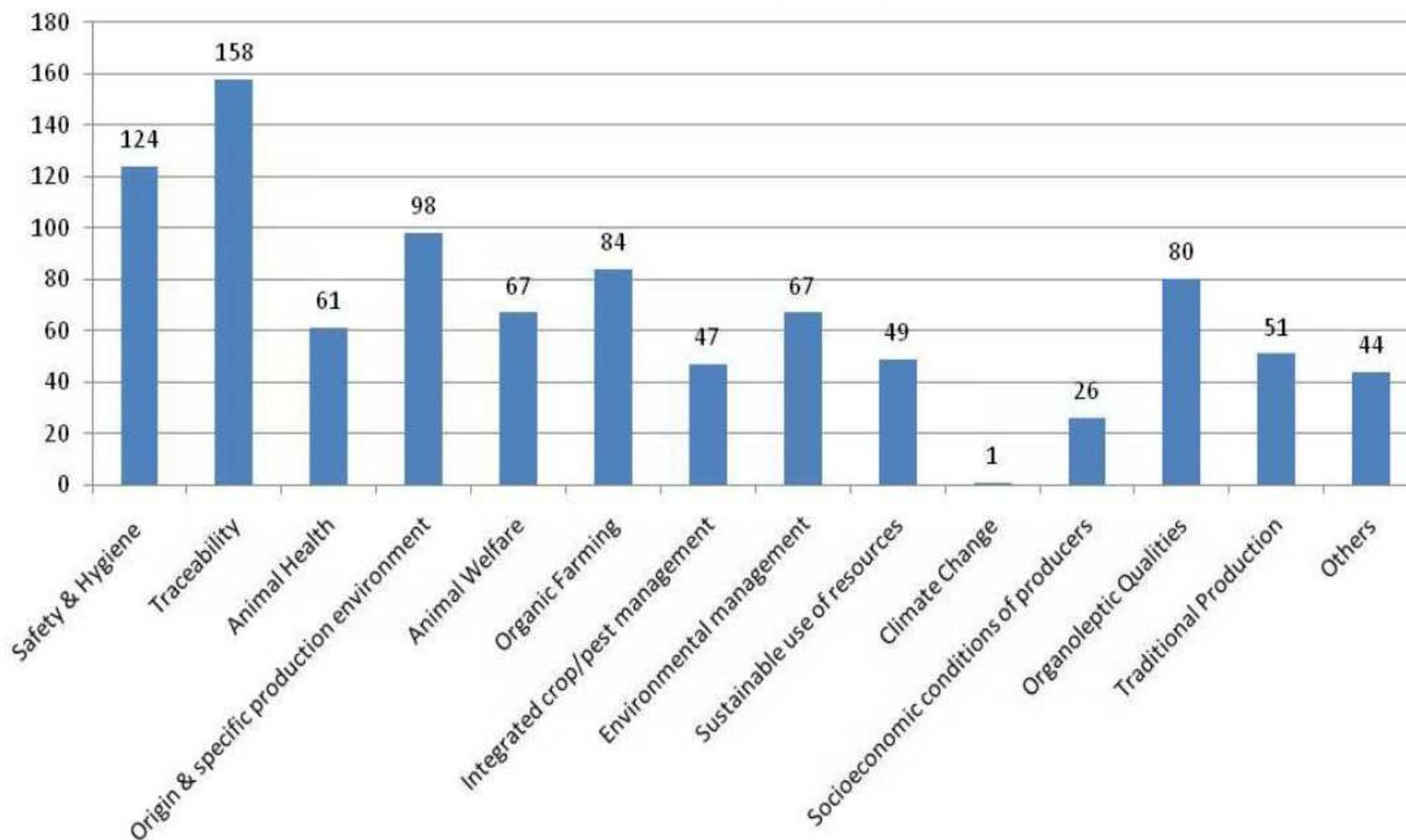
- They have grown greatly in number in Europe (424 listed in a recent EU study)
- They cover nearly all product groups, both crops and livestock
- Are most numerous in relationship to meat products, fruit and vegetable products, milk products and cereal products
- They are most prevalent in Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, and France

# The primary topics

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- Traceability
- Food safety and hygiene
- Geographic origin and production conditions
- Organic farming
- Food character and quality
- Animal welfare
- Animal health
- Traditional production systems
- Sustainable resources
- Integrated crops/pest management

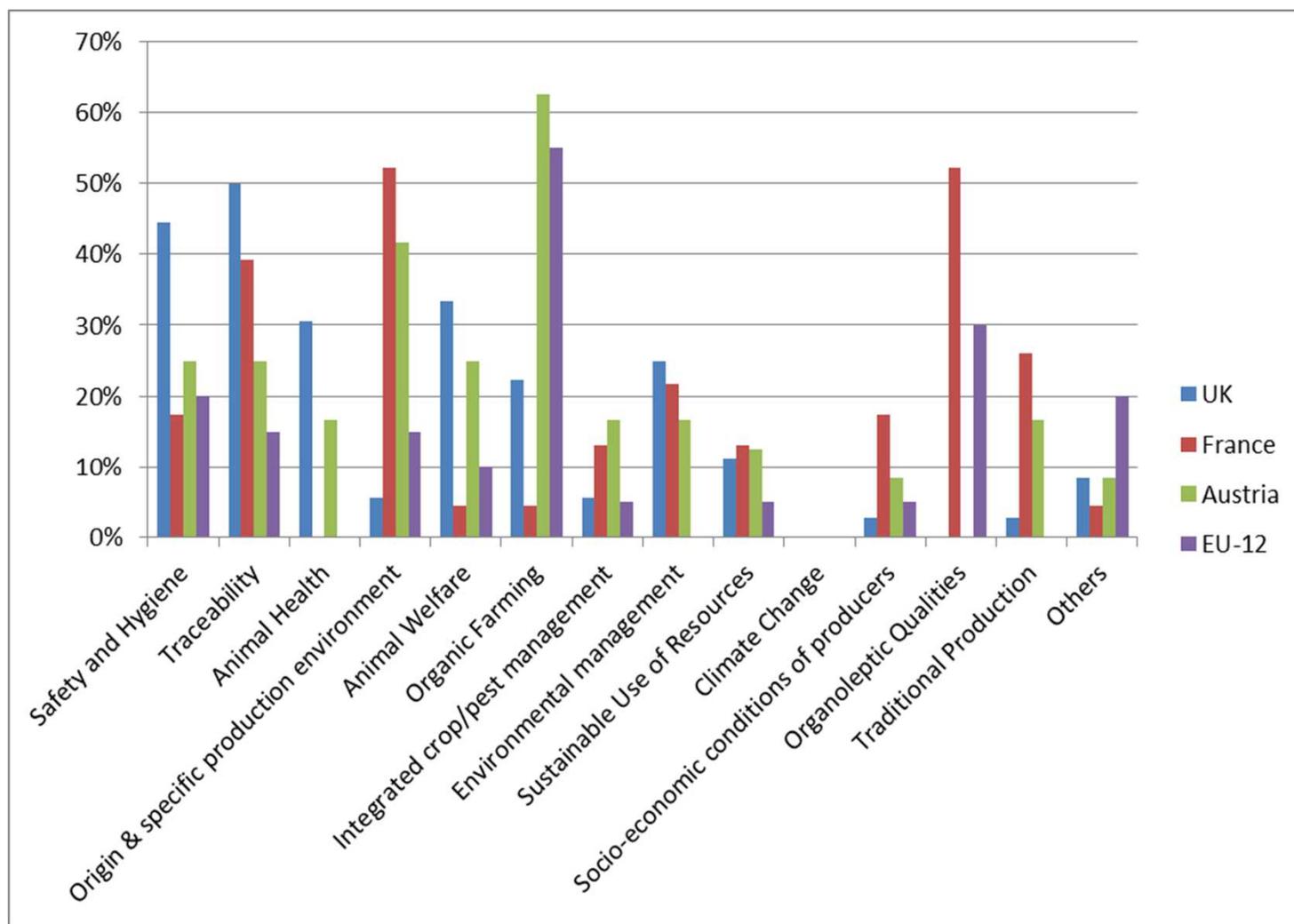
# Number of schemes by topic in 2010



Source: Areté, 2010

NB: Aggregation fed by total of 346 schemes out of a theoretical total of 352 – schemes can cover multiple policy areas – only main schemes included.

# Proportion of certification schemes by topic (4 MS)



Source: own compilation based on Areté, 2010

NB: Total schemes: UK (36); FR (23); AT (24); EU-12 (20) – each scheme can cover multiple policy areas

# Environment in certification schemes

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- Environment not the key objective of most schemes
- Nonetheless, some schemes will have multiple objectives, with an environmental element
- Organic schemes are the most widespread and best established of those focusing on the environment
- A more limited number refer particularly to pesticides/IPM but may not necessarily incorporate more demanding standards than those embodied in legislation or, in some cases, good practice
- Some require producers simply to receive advice about plant production products

# Changing policy context

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- Certification schemes have grown alongside changing patterns of payment to farmers under CAP, including agri-environment programmes and cross-compliance
- Are an important accompaniment to payments for organic farmers within rural development programmes
- But could have a larger role under the reformed CAP in relation to the new greening measures in Pillar 1



# The three greening measures

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- Crop diversification: at least two different crops grown annually, with main crop not more than 75% of arable area (arable area 10-30 ha)
- Permanent grassland: farmers not to convert or plough permanent grassland in “sensitive” areas and limits on the overall loss of permanent grassland in an MS
- Ecological focus areas: a variety of environmental land uses and crops, covering 5% of the arable area from 2015, possibly 7% of the area from 2018

# Flexibility and equivalence – the study

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- Member State flexibility to determine how to apply greening – decisions now being made
- Potential for certification schemes and agri-environment measures to be deemed ‘equivalent’ to the three agreed greening measures for the new CAP
- Broad brush review of existing ‘equivalence’ in 5 countries: France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain
  - Key findings
  - Conclusions and implications



# Equivalence to the Basic Greening Measures

- An equivalent Certification Scheme would need to include one of the three basic greening measures

OR

- One or more of the equivalent measures specified in the Annex Via of the direct payments regulation

OR

- A combination of both



# Crop Diversification

Standard practice to which practices are equivalent	Equivalent practice	Requirement
Crop diversification	Crop diversification	<p>At least 3 crops, maximum 75% for the main crop, and any one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with at least 4 crops,</li> <li>• with lower maximum thresholds,</li> <li>• with a more appropriate selection of crops, such as, for example, leguminous, protein crops, crops not requiring irrigation or pesticide treatments, as appropriate including regional varieties of old/traditional/endangered crop types (on at least 5% of the rotated area)</li> </ul>
	Crop rotation	<p>At least 3 crops, maximum 75% for the main crop, and any one or both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with a more environmentally beneficial multiannual sequence of crops and/or fallow,</li> <li>• with at least 4 crops</li> </ul>
	Winter soil cover*	No specific requirements identified
	Catch crops*	No specific requirements identified

# Maintenance of permanent grassland

Standard practice to which practices are equivalent	Equivalent practice	Requirement
Maintenance of permanent grassland	Management of meadows/ pastures	<p>Maintenance of permanent grassland and any one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cutting regime/appropriate mowing (dates, methods, limits),</li> <li>• Maintenance of landscape features on permanent grassland and control of scrub,</li> <li>• Specified grass varieties and/ or seeding regime for renewal depending on the grassland type (no destruction of high nature value),</li> <li>• Evacuation of forage/ hay,</li> <li>• Appropriate management for steep slopes,</li> <li>• Fertiliser regime,</li> <li>• Pesticide restrictions</li> </ul>
	Extensive grazing systems	<p>Maintenance of permanent grassland and any one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive grazing (timing, maximum stocking density),</li> <li>• Shepherding/ mountain pastoralism,</li> <li>• Using local/traditional breeds for grazing the permanent grassland.</li> </ul>

# Ecological focus area

Standard practice to which practices are equivalent	Equivalent practice	Requirement
Ecological Focus Area	Alternative forms of ecological management to be applied on at least the percentage of the arable land set pursuant to Article 32(1)	<p>One or more of the following alternative forms of management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological set-aside</li> <li>• Creation of "buffer zones" for high nature value areas, Natura 2000 or other biodiversity protection sites, including along hedgerows and water courses</li> <li>• Management of uncultivated buffer strips and field margins (cutting regime, local/specified grass varieties and/ or seeding regime, re-seeding with regional varieties, no use of pesticides, no disposal of manure and/or mineral fertilizers), no irrigation, no soil sealing</li> <li>• Borders, in-field strips and patches managed for wildlife/ specific fauna (herbaceous border, protection of nests, wildflower strips, local seed mix, unharvested crops)</li> <li>• Management (pruning, trimming, dates, methods, restoration) of landscape features (trees, hedgerows, riparian woody vegetation, stone walls (terraces), ditches, ponds)</li> <li>• Keeping arable peaty/ wet soils under grass (with no use of fertilisers and no use of plant protection products)</li> <li>• Production on arable land with no use of fertiliser (mineral fertiliser and manure) and/or plant protection products, and not irrigated, not sown with the same crop two years in a row and on a fixed place (*)</li> <li>• Conversion of arable land into permanent grassland extensively used</li> </ul>

## Comparison of selected certification schemes with the proposed content of the Pillar 1 greening measures

- Variable schemes in different countries
- Very variable coverage of green measures

	EFA: 5% of the arable area to be made up of one or more of the following elements (Member States to determine which elements are eligible in their country):										CD		PG	
	% requirement on arable area	Land laying Fallow	terraces	landscape features	buffer strips including grass margins	agro-forestry as defined within EAFRD	Uncultivated strips along forest edge	short rotation coppice	afforested areas (as under EAFRD)	catch crops or green cover	nitrogen fixing crops	2 crops	3 crops on arable land > 30 ha	No ploughing of PG in areas designated as environmentally sensitive
<b>United Kingdom</b>														
LEAF Marque -Linking Environment and Farming-	~	•		•	•		•	•	~		~	~	•	
Conservation Grade	~	•		•	•		•	•	~					~
Waitrose's Wildcare Milk	~	•		•	•		•	•	~					
Tesco Nurture		•		•	•		•	•						~
Genesis Quality Assurance														
Red Tractor Farm Assurance Scheme											~	~	~	
Scottish Quality Crops													~	
Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme -NIBL FQAS-														
The Farm Assured Welsh Livestock Beef and Lamb Scheme														
<b>France</b>														
Certification environnementale des exploitations (CEE) – Level 2				~										
Certification environnementale des exploitations (CEE) – Haute Valeur Environnementale	~	•		•										
La marque 'Parc naturel régional' du Queyras		•		•										~
Production Fruitière Intégrée - Vergers ecoresponsables, Charte Qualité					•									
<b>Lithuania</b>														
National Food Quality Scheme of Lithuania – The superior quality agricultural products and foodstuffs (SQP)														
<b>Czech Republic</b>														
IPZ											~	~		
SISPO														

Key: • Equivalent requirement ~ Similar requirement, including to those set out in the 'equivalence' Annex

Source: Own assessment based on publicly available scheme literature

# Characterising certification schemes

- 67 certification schemes with an environmental component were screened in France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain (7 = organic).
- No readily available up to date information was found on Poland.
- Up to four schemes (excluding organic) were investigated in more detail in each country

	No of schemes	Organic	Integrated crop management	Environmental management	Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	Climate change	Traditional products / methods	Origin and specific production: <sup>1</sup> environment	Crop Production	Livestock / meat production
France	17 <sup>2</sup>	1	2	4	3	0	5	11	15	12
Ireland	6	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	5	4
Netherlands	18	2	1	10	4	4	0	0	8	10
Spain	26	2	15	3	3	0	8	9	19	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>41</b>

## GAEC and SMR standards for environment, climate change and good agricultural condition of land

Main Issue	Requirements and standards		
Water	SMR 1	Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources (OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1)	Articles 4 and 5
	GAEC 1	Establishment of buffer strips along water courses	
	GAEC 2	Where use of water for irrigation is subject to authorisation, compliance with authorisation procedures	
	GAEC 3	Protection of ground water against pollution: prohibition of direct discharge into groundwater and measures to prevent indirect pollution of groundwater through discharge on the ground and percolation through the soil of dangerous substances, as listed in the Annex to the Directive 80/68/EEC in its version in force on the last day of its validity, as far as it relates to agricultural activity.	
Soil and carbon stock	GAEC 4	Minimum soil cover	
	GAEC 5	Minimum land management reflecting site specific conditions to limit erosion	
	GAEC 6	Maintenance of soil organic matter level through appropriate practices including ban on burning arable stubble, except for plant health reasons	
Biodiversity	SMR 2	Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7)	Article 3(1), Article 3(2)(b), Article 4 (1), (2) and (4)
	SMR 3	Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7)	Article 6 (1) and (2)
Landscape, minimum level of maintenance	GAEC 7	Retention of landscape features, including where appropriate, hedges, ponds, ditches, trees in line, in group or isolated, field margins and terraces, and including a ban on cutting hedges and trees during the bird breeding and rearing season and, as an option, measures for avoiding invasive plant species.	

<sup>11</sup> The GAEC buffer strips must respect, both within and outside vulnerable zones designated pursuant to Article 3(2) of Directive 91/676/EEC, at least the requirements relating to the conditions for land application of fertiliser near water courses, referred to in point A.4 of Annex II to Directive 91/676/EEC to be applied in accordance with the action programmes of Member States established under Article 5(4) of Directive 91/676/EEC.

<sup>12</sup> The requirement can be limited to a general ban on burning arable stubble, but a Member State may decide to prescribe further requirements.

# Implications...

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- The concept of equivalence could be a reasonable and convenient approach
- And could allow for more tailored and flexible approaches with greater ambitions than those in the three greening measures
- ... but there are significant issues with its application in practice.
- For certification schemes, new schemes would need to be developed given lack of 'off the shelf' equivalents – issue of controls?
- An opportunity for advancing IPM and other new approaches to plant health?



Thank you for your attention



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