

Exercise: Based on the project description below, do a rough draft of a press release

***OBS: Feel free to use your imagination add more information to make the release compelling!***

- Decide on the story and angle
- Decide on what type of media you aim for (dailies, TV, verticals?)
- Write a catchy headline
- Write a sharp summary – the story in a nutshell – 2-3 lines
- What sources / spokespersons could enrich the story? Suggestions for illustrations?
- AND: if you could, what more info would you ask the project team about?

## Project summary

The organic market in the European Union has developed significantly in recent years, the total value being approximately 19.7 billion euro with a 9% growth rate in 2011. As organic production grows in Europe, the sector's focus is on competitiveness and sustainability. While EU public policies have played an important part in the development of the EU organic sector regional authorities have huge potential to prioritise support for organic approaches, such as market development. In this respect, the EC proposal for an Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming encourages regions to find the most adequate policy and funding mix to support the development of the regional organic sectors.

The overall objective of SME-ORGANICS is to improve policies and programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal in order to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs in the organic sector of 7 EU regions plus Aargau Canton (Switzerland).

The project aims at supporting SMEs in improving their performance in order to enforce the growth capacity of the entire organic regional sector in regional, national and international markets. The interregional learning process will take place around four areas: i) production and processing; ii) commercialization and marketing; iii) training and advice; iv) organic value chain efficiency and governance.

The main outputs of the project will be: Method Guide, Diagnosis reports of the regional organic sectors, Good Practice Guide, Policy Road Map, Regional Policy Briefs and Regional Action Plans with recommendations for integration into RIS3. Stakeholders benefiting from the project will be all actors in the organic value chains at the regional, national and EU level: cooperatives, agri-food industries, retailers and distributors of organic products, advisory services, chambers of commerce and agriculture, experts on regulatory issues of the organic sector, policy makers, EU's DGs and other initiatives in the organic sector.

# One of several good practice activities in the project: EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme with organic emphasis

**In Finland it is decided to give bigger support for organic products to encourage kitchens and catering services.**

In Finland only the school milk programme has earlier been in use and support for the use of fruits and vegetables in schools has not been paid. Now also the consumption of fruits and vegetables is supported within short seasonal period. Milk products can be supported in Finland with 3,8 million and fruits and vegetables with 1,6 million.

The choice of products to be distributed in each EU country must be based on health and environmental criteria, seasonality, variety and availability, with priority given to European products. National authorities are also free to encourage for example local or regional purchasing or organic products as part of their overall programme.

In Finland it is decided to give bigger support for organic products to encourage kitchens and catering services to go for the government goal that 20 % of the food offered at the catering services of the state and central government is organic year 2020.



## Resources needed

The support for skimmed liquid milk products is 13 cents per litre and for corresponding organic products 31 cents per litre. For every child the support can be paid for 2,5 dl a day during the whole school year. It is under the EU funds, but the area or town need to have aspiration to use organic

## Evidence of success

National authorities in Finland encourage local or regional purchasing or organic products as part of their overall program. It is studied that in Finland, 67% of schools prefer to buy milk that is supported by the Finnish government. Through EU-funds the Finnish government supports organic milk purchase, and this has increased the level of organic consumption nationwide. Also, the number of organic milk farms has increased, while the traditional milk farms have decreased.

## Potential for learning or transfer

This good practice shows example to other European countries how the Finnish government supports citizens to consume more organic products, via schools all around the country, using dedicated EU funds for that. Other European countries should take this great practice of Finland to foster political commitment towards greater organic consumption nationwide.

[www.interregeurope.eu/smeorganics/](http://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorganics/)