

Admission of commercial fertilizers in the FiBL inputs list

Admission procedure and involvement of stakeholders

The FiBL inputs list is prepared by the FiBL inputs list team, based on the relevant legislation and guidelines, as well as on precedent decisions by the label organizations. Each year, a draft version together with explanations on critical issues is submitted to the label organizations and the relevant authorities for comments, decisions on precedent cases and approval. Representatives of BIO SUISSE and the inputs list team meet in an event called the 'round table' and discuss the critical issues before BIO SUISSE takes decisions. The approved version is then published by FiBL.

The FiBL inputs list is updated annually and published in German and French. The guidelines of BIO SUISSE and Migros-Bio require that only commercial fertilizers listed in the FiBL inputs list may be used.

Legal requirements

All commercial fertilizers must be approved by the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture. The relevant legislation is 'Eidgenössische Düngerverordnung' (DüV) and 'Eidgenössische Düngerbuchverordnung' (DüBV), 'Stoffverordnung' (StoV) and 'Verordnung über tierische Nebenprodukte' (VTNP).

- DüV and DüBV are the basis for approval of commercial fertilizers.
- StoV limits the use and the heavy metals contents of composts.
- VTNP regulates all uses and manufacturing of animal by-products, to exclude health risks. VTNP has been issued in 2004 as a reaction to the BSE crisis.

Consideration of organic farming principles

Commercial fertilizers are evaluated according to the IFOAM criteria necessity, origin, environment and human health, quality and socio-economic impact (see IFOAM Basic Standards), and according to the additional requirements of BIO SUISSE.

The range of manufacturing procedures is limited to a few acceptable processes which are consistent with the IFOAM Basic Standards and the European regulation 2092/91 (which is different from the requirements of the US 'National Organic Program'). Whether hydrolyzation is acceptable is currently discussed at EU level. When this issue is clarified, the policy for the FiBL inputs for Switzerland list will be adapted accordingly.

Acceptability to the public

Acceptability to the public is evaluated as part of the above process. In general, the recycling of plant and animal materials for fertilization is judged favourably by the public in Switzerland. There is no objection to the use of fertilizers which fulfil the same BSE safety standards as steaks.

Food safety

Occasionally, the safety of certain organic fertilizers is questioned. In Switzerland, all fertilizers based on animal by-products must be approved by the authorities, before they can be used. All fertilizers based on bone-, meat- or bloodmeal currently approved for use are manufactured from materials of category 3 of VTNP (= suitable for human consumption). Horns for the production of hornmeal may only be imported from countries with a low-risk BSE status.