

# Organic Farming in Poland

**DOROTA METERA**

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## 1 Agriculture in Poland

Farmland occupies 59 percent of the total surface area of Poland (18,5 million hectares) and is mainly owned by the private sector (92 percent). This means that individual farming methods affect the state of the environment in more than half the country. There are over two million private farms scattered throughout Poland, making all programmes in rural areas extremely difficult to implement.

The most significant problems include:

- the wide discrepancy of development level between regions, in terms of production intensity, farm surface area, infrastructure and unemployment;
- the fragmentation of farms, failure of small farms that cannot ensure a livelihood for the family, the growing unemployment (44 percent of the total number of unemployed live in rural areas).

Political and economical changes in Poland in the last decade resulted in a decrease in the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides. After a big reduction in 1989, the use of fertilisers grew by 4.5 percent in the last three years and in 1998 was at 88 kg (in 1989 nearly 200 kg per hectare, Denmark: 155 kg per hectare, Sweden 94 kg per hectare). Pesticide use increased more rapidly, to 0.6 kg per hectare (in 1989 1,6 kg per hectare was used).

## 2 History and Development of Organic Agriculture.

The organic agriculture movement started in the 1980's due to growing ecological public awareness. Early seminars given by the "revolutionary" scientists and German experts led to the establishment of the first organic farmer's association, called *EKOLAND* (<http://free.ngo.pl/ekoland>), in 1989. The association became a full member of IFOAM in 1990. In 1999 eight organisations were members of IFOAM.

In 1989 there were 27 certified organic farms. The rapid early growth slowed down once the certification system was changed. Now farms can only get the certificates after a conversion period of two years. After a positive annual inspection by inspectors from an independent inspection body, the Certification Committee makes its decision to award certification. By 1999 174 farms (with a total surface area of 5,578 hectares) and eight food-processing plants held EKOLAND Certificates. *The Polish Association of Organic Farming - Polskie Towarzystwo Rolnictwa Ekologicznego (PTRE)*, established in 1993, inspected 312 farms. The farms that produced for the EU-market were also controlled by EU inspection bodies such as *SKAL* (<http://www.skal.com/>; 46 farms, 5,367 hectares), *BCS*, *Lacon* (<http://www.lacon-institut.com>) and *Ecocert*, but there is no exact data on the number and land of the farms (some of these farms are under double inspection). The total number of certified organic farms in Poland is 555 (0.03 percent of the total number of farms).



### 3 The development of the number of organic farms

The number of farms certified by EKOLAND increased until 1996 (table 1). Since the mid nineties it is not growing anymore because of:

- a change in the certification system: only farms with a conversion period of two years can receive the certificate of EKOLAND and use the logo which makes it less attractive to convert for many farmers
- the start of the activity of the second farmers organisation PTRE in the south-east region of Poland.

Table1: Number of organic farms and land under organic management certified by EKOLAND

Year	Number of farms	Hectares
1990	27	300
1991	49	550
1992	94	1,240
1993	174	2,170
1994	225	3,540
1996	236	6,855
1997	207	6,010
1998	181	5,546

Source: EKOLAND archive

Table 2: Number of controlled organic farms (including the farms in conversion) in 1999

Certified by	Number of controlled farms	Number of processing plants	Hectares
EKOLAND	243	8	5,578
PTRE	312	5	3,837
Total	555*	13	Ca. 11,000**

\* some farms are inspected both by PTRE or EKOLAND and SKAL

\*\* including organic area inspected by SKAL (exact area is not published by SKAL)





Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

### 4 Organic Agriculture Organisations

The farmers' organisations, inspecting and certifying institutions and the different state institutions are key institutions for organic agriculture in Poland (see Table 3).



Table 3: Institutional structure

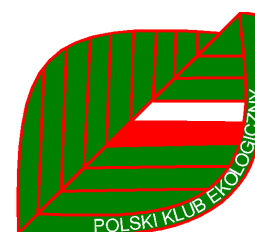
Farmers' organisations:	Scope of activities
<p>Producer Association EKOLAND (<a href="http://free.ngo.pl/ekoland">http://free.ngo.pl/ekoland</a>)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of standards for organic farming</li> <li>• Certification of organic farms and processing plants</li> <li>• Promotion of organic farming and environmental protection</li> <li>• Active in the whole country</li> </ul>
<p>Association Lub-Eko in Lublin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination of production</li> </ul>
<p>Association Radzanowskie Towarzystwo Ekologiczne in Radzanów n/b Radom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination of production</li> <li>• Joint use of machines</li> <li>• Sharing of experiences</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inspection bodies and certification organisations:</b></p>	
<p>Association Agrobiotest</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection</li> </ul>
<p>Bioekspert company</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection</li> </ul>
<p>Association Polskie Towarzystwo Rolnictwa Ekologicznego (PTRE)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection</li> <li>• Certification</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ministries:</b></p>	
<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (<a href="http://www.minrol.gov.pl">http://www.minrol.gov.pl</a>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of law and subsidy systems</li> </ul>



Working Group for Organic Farming	Advice of the Minister
Ministry of Environment, Nature Resources and Forestry	Consulting in the fields of law and ecological education
<b>State Inspection Institutions:</b>	
Main Inspection of Purchasing and Processing of Agricultural Products	Operation of the farm subsidies
<b>State Trade Inspection</b>	Control of labelling and quality of products on the market

Source: Metera 2000

Furthermore, there is the *Polish Ecological Club - Polsko Klub Ekologiczny, PKE*, a consumer organisation promoting organic agriculture and organic food in the society.



Another organisation working in the field of organic agriculture linked to public relations, teaching and politics is the Metera Dorota Consultancy.

## 5 Regional Distributions of Organic Farms

In the past, farms were mainly located near Thorn, where the regional Extension Service in Przysiek organised the first courses in organic farming. There are now many good organic farmers organised in a strong group of producers, connected with a water mill called „EKO”, the pasta processing plant „Bio” and the fruit and vegetables processing plant „Good Food Bio”.

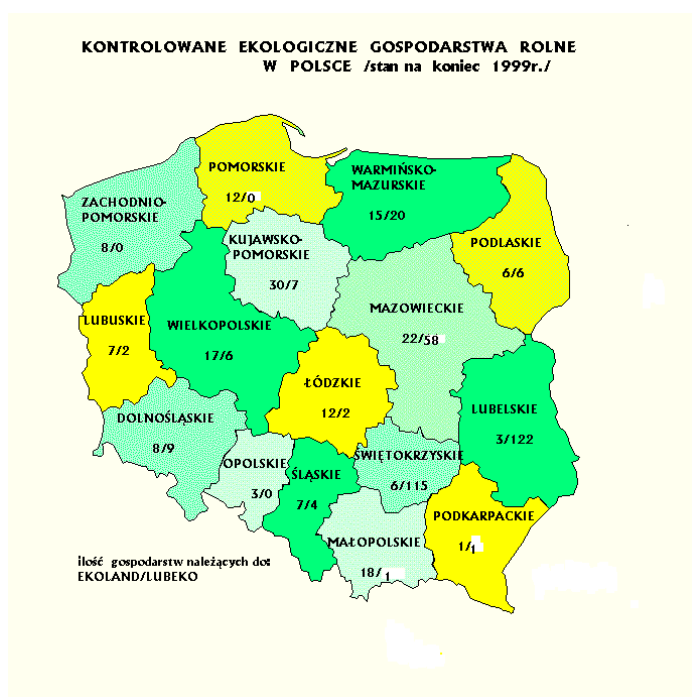
Nowadays organic farms tend to be located in the central part of Poland because of the shorter distances to big markets in cities like Warsaw, Crakow, Gdansk, Lodz and Silesia Region (figure 1 and map; [http://sunsite.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/Maps/europe/Poland\\_rel\\_97.jpg](http://sunsite.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/Maps/europe/Poland_rel_97.jpg)).




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<http://www.organic-europe.net>, 5.6.2000;  
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Figure 1: Regional distribution of certified organic farms in Poland 1999 (left figure: numbers of EKOLAND, right figure: LUB-EKO-farms)



Source: Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development, 1999

Most of the organic farms do not specialise in a specific type of production but are on the contrary mixed farms. They keep animals and produce grains, potatoes and vegetables in crop rotation. For the animals, they have grassland.

## 6 Land Use, Animal Husbandry

The average size of an organic farm in Poland is about 15 hectares, whereas the average size of all farms is seven hectares. Table 4 shows land use distribution data (derived from the Main Inspection of Purchasing and Processing of Agricultural Products). As much as two thirds of the organically managed area is used for arable crops.

Table 4: Land use in organic farms 1999

Land use	Land area (ha)	Percent of total total organic land
Arable crops	4590.27	66
Grassland	1922.20	27
Vegetables	193.07	3
Berries	147.69	2



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Land use	Land area (ha)	Percent of total total organic land
Orchards	137.15	2

Source: Main Inspection of Purchasing and Processing of Agricultural Products, 1999

No data on animal husbandry is available up to now.

## 7 Standards, Certification and State Regulations

### 7.1 Organic Farming Standards

The “Standards for organic farming of EKOLAND” were developed in 1990 and the “Standards for organic farming of PTRE” in 1992, on the basis of IFOAM basic standards for organic agriculture. The EKOLAND and PTRE standards have been revised since 1998 in accordance with the Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 ([http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/1991/en\\_391R2092.html](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/1991/en_391R2092.html)).

The following independent inspection bodies carry out the inspections:

- Association Agrobiotest,
- Company Bioekspert
- Association PTRE

The organic farms and processing units fulfill the requirements of the "Standards for organic farming" (either of EKOLAND or PTRE) and the standards for processing of such products.

### 7.2 Certification Programme

The Certification Committee of EKOLAND makes its decision to award certification to a farm after a two-year conversion period and successful annual checks by inspectors of the independent inspection body. The appeal of a farmer concerning a withholding of certification is directed to the Board.

In the case of PTRE, the president of PTRE decides on the certification and the claims are directed to the Certification Committee of PTRE.

### 7.3 Labelling

The growing consumer interest and the presence of organic products in shops aroused the interest of the Ministry of Agriculture, <http://www.minrol.gov.pl> (responsible for the implementation of the food law, Law Act on health conditions for food and nutrition, Law Journal NR 29, 1971). In order to prevent the misleading of consumers with “ecological” labelling, the Minister of Agriculture issued a regulation on the labelling of food products in 1992. The regulation was amended in 1994 and is currently still valid




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(Law Journal Nr 86, Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1994, 3.1. and 3.2.).

The implementation of this legal act was undertaken in 1995 by the State Trade Inspection. About 50 percent of controlled products labelled “healthy food”, “from ecologically clean regions”, “without pesticides” were not accepted by the inspectors. Despite the law, however, it remains unclear who can issue the certificate and upon what criteria it is based.

## 8 Implementation of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91

### 8.1 Draft of the Organic Farming Law

In 1996 a Working Group for Organic Farming was founded in order to advise the Ministry of Agriculture. Members of this group are experts from the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, from the inspection bodies, producer associations, from the state advisory service, universities and private institutions. Within this Working Group for Organic Farming a small group of four persons started working on a proposal for a law governing organic farming in early 1998 together with the Department for Agriculture Development of the Ministry of Agriculture (<http://www.minrol.gov.pl>). The proposal was ready in March 1999. In February 2000, after consultations with the relevant ministries, institutions and organisations, the text was accepted by the Economic Committee of the Ministers and in March 2000 by the Social Committee of the Ministers. The proposal was sent to the Parliament on 28.04.2000.

The proposal has been compared and brought into line with the new regulation of the European Council on animal production (Council Regulation (EC) 1804/1999; [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/1999/en\\_399R1804.html](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/1999/en_399R1804.html)) which is part of Council Regulation (EEC) 2092/91 ([http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/1991/en\\_391R2092.html](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/1991/en_391R2092.html)). The proposal was presented to the European Commission in Brussels in November 1999.

The proposed law consists of 31 articles regulating:

- agricultural production,
- processing,
- the trade of organic agricultural products,
- production inspection,
- the labelling of organic agricultural products,
- requirements of the certifying organisations,
- sanctions.



The law describes the organic production system as ecologically, economically and socially sustainable, activating natural processes of agriculture using natural production methods, and guaranteeing the soil fertility and health of plants and animals.

According to the the proposed law farms are required to be located in an area where air, soil and water pollution are below prescribed levels. The use of genetically engineered plants, animals, micro-organisms is excluded in the production and processing.

The regulation describes the exact principles of plant and animal production and includes the following annexes:

1. Fertilisers accepted for use in organic agriculture.
2. Plant protection products permitted for use in organic agriculture.
3. Fodder for the animals permitted for use in organic agriculture.
4. Non-agriculture substances as food additives.
5. Processing aids permitted in the processing of organic agriculture products.
6. Ingredients of agricultural origin which have not been produced organically.

## 9 State Support and Policy Initiatives

### 9.1 Subsidies

Since 1993 the Ministry of Agriculture (<http://www.minrol.gov.pl>) has funded soil and water analysis. The Working Group for Organic Agriculture (see chapter 8 under “Draft of the Organic Farming Law”) proposed a system of subsidies for organic agriculture to the Minister of Agriculture in 1998. In accordance with an Agriculture Minister directive, in 1998 organic farm inspections were funded by the State. On the basis of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy Decree of May 11, 1998 for providing agriculture grants and specifying their mode of allocation (Law Journal Nr 71), the subvention was available to two inspection bodies.

Despite the first state subventions - reimbursement of the costs of soil analysis since 1993 and of the inspection costs in 1998 - the number of certified farms increased very slowly in the last three years. As a result, the Working Group proposed to the Minister of Agriculture to change the subvention system. Based on a review of subvention systems in different EU countries, the Working Group proposed direct subsidies to farmers in the second year of conversion and in the first year of the certification. The regulation on direct subsidies for organic farms was signed by the Minister of Agriculture in March 1999. They are payed from 1999 on (see table 5 and table 6; Law Journal Nr 33, Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy, March 19<sup>th</sup> 1999 and Law Journal Nr 35, Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy, April 19<sup>th</sup> 2000 concerning the height of subsidies for organic farming).



Table 5: Aid for Organic Farms and for Farms Converting to Organic Farming (according to Annex No. 16 of the Decree of March 19<sup>th</sup> 1999)

	Crop	Subvention for 1 ha in Polish Zloty / Euro	
		In conversion*)	Organic farms*)
1	Vegetables	200 / 48	150 / 36
2	Arable land	150 / 36	120 / 29
3	Orchards	220 / 53	180 / 43
4	Berries	230 / 55	200 / 48
5	Meadows and pastures	75 / 18	50 / 12

\*) subvention for the farms of a surface: up to 50 ha: 100% of the sum for 1 ha, over 50 ha to 100 ha: 50% of the sum for 1 ha, over 100 ha: no subvention.

Aid for Organic Farms and for Farms Converting to Organic Farming (according to Annex No. 17 of the Decree of April 19<sup>th</sup> 2000)

	Crop	Subvention for 1 ha in Polish Zloty / Euro	
		In conversion*)	Organic farms*)
1	Vegetables	600 / 144	450 / 108
2	Arable land	450 / 108	360 / 87
3	Orchards	660 / 159	540 / 129
4	Berries	690 / 165	600 / 108
5	Meadows and pastures	150 / 36	120 / 29

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Table 6: Subvention for the Inspection of Organic Farms (according to Annex No. 17 of the Decree of March 19<sup>th</sup> 1999)

	Hectares of the farm	Sum in Polish Zloty / Euro
1.	Up to 5 ha of agriculture area	100 / 24
2.	Over 5 ha up to 10 ha of agriculture area	130 / 31
3.	Over 10 ha up to 20 ha of agriculture area	150 / 36
4.	Over 20 ha up to 50 ha of agriculture area	180 / 43
5.	Over 50 ha up to 100 ha of agriculture area	200 / 48
6.	Over 100 ha of agriculture area	350 / 84

Subvention for the Inspection of Organic Farms (according to Annex No. 18 of the Decree of April 19<sup>th</sup> 2000)

	Hectares of the farm	Sum in Polish Zloty / Euro
1.	Up to 5 ha of agriculture area	300 / 72
2.	Over 5 ha up to 10 ha of agriculture area	350 / 84
3.	Over 10 ha up to 20 ha of agriculture area	400 / 96
4.	Over 20 ha up to 50 ha of agriculture area	450 / 108
5.	Over 50 ha up to 100 ha of agriculture area	500 / 120



	Hectares of the farm	Sum in Polish Zloty / Euro
6.	Over 100 ha of agriculture area	600 / 144

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

## 10 Implementation of Agenda 2000

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has long been criticised by farmers, politicians, consumers, economists and environmentalists for various reasons: its price policy, bureaucracy, budget spending, trade difficulties, unjust distribution of financial aid for farmers, and the harm it brings to the environment. In spite of its reform in 1992, the CAP continued to support big producers and led to a concentration of production in high production potential areas and to a depopulation of areas with less favourable conditions. 80 percent of the budget continued to go to 20 percent of the producers. Therefore the decision to change the direction of the reform with Agenda 2000 ([http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agenda2000/index\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agenda2000/index_en.htm)) and give more support to rural development was a good one.

Environmental organisations point out that the high input agricultural production favoured by CAP is harmful to the environment, while traditional methods of farming - truly beneficial to the environment - are used on very small areas. This will result in unfair competition on the common market from goods produced in countries that do not follow the rules of environmental protection.

## 11 Marketing

The market share of certified organic food products in the domestic market is very small. On the one hand a proportion of certified products are sold as conventional products and on the other the shopkeepers are looking for a stable supply of organic products such as fresh vegetables and fruits, dairy products and bread.

Organic products were first offered in the Warsaw shops as early as 1989. Nowadays about 200 shops all over the country sell a wide assortment of both Polish and imported, fresh and processed organic products.

Export of organic products from Poland is at the infancy stage. A few exporters sell fruit for processing (frozen black and red currants, strawberries, wild fruits, canned cucumbers and coffee grains). Lack of organisation of the small farms is the one of the biggest barriers to the development of the export sector.



## 12 Training

Training and education of the farmers is organised by numerous institutions and organisations, such as:

- Centres for Extension Service in Agriculture, working in all voivodships (administrative regions),
- Organisations of organic producers,
- Trade companies,
- Foundations and other ecological non-governmental organisations,
- Private consulting companies.

A few agriculture secondary schools and universities include organic agriculture in their curricula:

- the University of Warmia and Mazury (Uniwersytet Warmii i Mazur) in Olsztyn,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Kraków,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Lublin,
- Marine University (Wyzsza Szkoła Morska) w Gdynia and Agricultural University (SGGW) in Warsaw.

At the Department of Organic Foodstuffs at the Warsaw Agricultural University the following subjects are taught: ecology and environment protection, ecological methods of food production, ecophilosophy and human ecology and ecology of the agricultural landscape. These subjects are connected with organic farming and the relation between agriculture and environment.

## 13 Advisory Service

The advisory Centres of the State Extension Service of Agriculture, located in the 49 old voivodships (administrative regions) that existed before 1998, have had an important role in the development of organic farming. Many local advisers attended the courses taught by Polish and foreign experts, organised in Poland and in other countries, with the support of:

- Demeter Bund (<http://www.demeter.de>), Germany,
- Heinrich Böll Foundation, Germany,
- Foundation Leben und Umwelt, Germany,
- Institut Grüner Zweig, Germany,
- Ernte (<http://www.ernte.at>), Austria,
- Avalon Foundation, The Netherlands,



- Schweizer Verein für West-Ost Zusammenarbeit in der biologischen Landwirtschaft, Switzerland,
- and many others.



ROL-EKO (<http://www.roleko.com.pl>) is a private consulting firm that was founded in March 1989 by a group of scientists associated with the Warsaw University of Agriculture (SGGW) and by business people interested in the idea of ecological agriculture.

Since 1991, the Company has been operating as an Agro-Horticultural Consulting Group. Its parts are an agro-ecological consulting bureau, a horticultural promotion bureau and a food processing plant. ROL-EKO's consulting activities are focussed at the organization of ecological and integrated agriculture, dissemination of modern, proecological technologies in greenhouse crops and fruit production. The Company employs 18 staff and collaborates with 20 experts engaged for their projects.

## 14 Research

The following universities conduct research in organic agriculture:

- University of Warmia and Mazury (Uniwersytet Warmii i Mazur) in Olsztyn,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Kraków,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Lublin,
- Marine University (Wyzsza Szkoła Morska) w Gdynia and Agricultural University (SGGW) in Warsaw.

Since 1987 at the Department of Organic Foodstuffs at the Warsaw Agricultural University scientific research has been done on the following issues:

- impact of ecological production methods on:
  - quality of plant crops
  - quality of drainage water
  - pests and weeds populations at the field
  - quality of milk and dairy cows health
- organic food marketing
- socio - economic aspects of organic farming
- legal and organisational aspects of organic farming.

From 1995 to 1999 the Logistic Centre of Organic Agriculture at the Warsaw Agricultural University (Centrum Logistyczne Rolnictwa Ekologicznego) was involved




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in the project „Model of development and functioning of organic agriculture”. The results of the project were used for the strategy on the development of organic farming prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture (<http://www.minrol.gov.pl>).

## 15 Challenges and Outlook

The year 2000 will no doubt be significant in the history of the development of organic farming, with the farmers receiving the highest historic level of direct subsidies and the law on organic farming being accepted by the Parliament.

There are big expectations of a rapid growth in the number of organic farms. But the market will pronounce the final verdict on the Ministry of Agriculture’s strategy (<http://www.minrol.gov.pl>). The farmers must stabilise their market position, as the subsidy is not intended to be a source of income, but rather help to cover extra costs connected with organic farming (e.g. control costs, time for special documentation). The market is promising: According to a consumer pool in 1998, 40 percent declare that they are ready to buy organic food, if it is available in their regular shop.

There are still some important acts under preparation: a law on the regions of origin of the products and the Polish agri-environmental programme. Organic agriculture is also important for „Coherent structural policy of the development of agriculture and rural areas” and the “Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development – SAPARD” ([http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/publi/fact/sapard/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg06/publi/fact/sapard/index_en.htm)). Further growth in organic farming will take place when the support programmes include not only training and subsidies but also technical assistance in finding markets for organic food. Good co-operation between the government and producers’ organisations can be a guarantee for success in the near future.

## 16 Author

Dorota Metera, Metera Dorota Consultancy, ul. Boya-Zelenskiego 6 m. 34, PL 00-621 Warszawa, phone and fax +48-22-8252231, e-mail [Dometera@promail.pl](mailto:Dometera@promail.pl)

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- Address of Editor of Internet Site  
Stiftung Ökologie & Landbau (SÖL)  
Weinstraße Süd 51, D-67098 Bad Dürkheim  
Tel. +49-(0)-6322-8666, Fax +49-(0)-6322-989701  
E-Mail: [info@soel.de](mailto:info@soel.de), Internet: <http://www.soel.de>



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