

**COSTA RICA – INCLUSION IN THE LIST OF THIRD COUNTRIES IN THE
EUROPEAN MARKET FOR ORGANIC PLANT PRODUCTS**

Communication from Costa Rica

1. Having satisfied a number of requirements and procedures laid down in Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 on organic production, Costa Rica has been included in the list of third countries established under Article 11 of that Regulation.
2. The approval granted covers plant products and their derivatives and the application for the inclusion of products of animal origin will be made in due course. Ms Elizabeth Ramírez, Head of the Office of Certification and Registration for Organic Farming of the State Phytosanitary Service, has stated that although this news was received unofficially in February 2003, it was not published in the Official Journal of the European Communities until 28 March 2003.
3. The favourable decision of the European Commission followed an on-the-spot evaluation in Costa Rica, which showed that the domestic regulations were equivalent to those applying in the European Union; furthermore, the existence of an official inspection system provided sufficient guarantee regarding the certification of products which we export to the EU under the organic label.
4. Such recognition will enormously facilitate the trade in organic products between Costa Rica and the EU, obviating the previous procedure based on import permits which required each individual shipment to demonstrate observance of the standards set by the EU. A further advantage is the great economic benefit for farmers of reduced certification costs.
5. Costa Rica and Argentina are the only countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that have received such recognition, because the legislation in force is actually implemented.
6. Countries such as Switzerland, Israel, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Australia and New Zealand complete the current list of third countries (some of which have recently joined the European Community).
7. The national authorities greatly welcome the opening up of such an important market for organic products, a success which has been achieved thanks to the efforts made by all those involved in organic farming.
8. However, maintaining the good name of our products and the recognition that the European Union has granted us as a country is a great responsibility, and therefore we urge producers, exporters and certification bodies to remain responsible and committed in their approach, because if it was difficult to achieve such a success, it will be no less so to maintain this privileged position.