

## **ECOCERT AND IMO STRENGTHEN THEIR COOPERATION**

The Bio-Foundation Switzerland, the founder and owner of the IMO group, took the strategic decision to create a strong partnership with a key player of the organic sector. After an intensive period of negotiation with different certification bodies, the decision was made to cooperate with ECOCERT, which shares many of the core values of IMO and provides great chances of successful collaboration.

**ECOCERT SA (France), internationally renowned in organic products certification, finalized the acquisition of IMOSwiss AG (Switzerland) and IMO Institut für Marktökologie GmbH (Germany) in the past two weeks.**

In a first step IMOSwiss AG was transferred to ECOCERT SA on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2013. IMOSwiss AG awards certification worldwide to projects in organic farming, organic textiles, aquaculture, responsible forest management (FSC and PEFC), with about 60 staff members in Switzerland and many international experts. It is also the only certification body accredited for the “Fair for Life Social and Fair Trade Programme” and the “AquaGAP Standard for Good Aquaculture Practices”; both standards remain owned by the Bio-Foundation Switzerland.

In a second step ECOCERT SA acquired the shares of IMO Institut für Marktökologie GmbH (“IMO GmbH”) on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. IMO GmbH is one of the largest organic certification bodies in Germany, with about 50 experts and a long established client base with 2.800 producers, processors and importers.

**The other IMO companies affiliated in the IMOgroup AG are not affected by these transactions.**

Rainer Bächli, founder of IMO stated once that „*The future of organic is: working together*“. ECOCERT and IMO wish to enhance the existing synergies between their organizations: “*We want to maintain the existing companies and protect their brands on the market. This is a challenge to all of us, we have to find the best solution together with the staff and the authorities to reach this objective*”, declared Philippe Thomazo, COO of ECOCERT SA. The new partners will build a powerful network with the primary goal to continue their commitment to high quality and to create trust in the certified products.

Both organizations share core values on organic agriculture, environmental protection and sustainability. „*Certification allows to honor and value products and services from actors which create and assure sustainable ways of production, change and development. The art of certification, as Rainer Bächli said, is not the only purpose but an instrument to evaluate the actions for the future of the human society*“, explained William Vidal, CEO of ECOCERT SA. The partners aim to continue acting as pioneers in their respective fields of activity and to give fresh impulses for the organic and fair trade sector.

ECOCERT Vice-President Michel Reynaud and Chief Operating Officer Philippe Thomazo have both been appointed as directors of IMOSwiss AG, and Philippe Thomazo is the new Managing Director of IMO GmbH.

**Going forward, all certificates and attestations issued respectively by IMO and ECOCERT as well as all agreements of all kind concluded by IMO GmbH or IMOSwiss AG remain valid and are not impacted by both acquisitions; contacts remain unchanged.**

## **About ECOCERT and IMO**

ECOCERT, founded in 1991 in France, is supported by a worldwide network of 23 subsidiaries operating in over 80 countries. Beyond the certification expertise, ECOCERT actively promotes good practices through the implementation of renowned and demanding standards: organic cosmetics, recycled and ecological textiles, ecoproducts, fair trade, ecological green parks, sustainable reforestation, etc. ECOCERT is also involved on a corporate basis in projects promoting environmental protection.

IMO (Institute for Marketecology) with about 400 staff members in 11 independent entities and over 20 international contact offices has been active worldwide in the certification of organic products for over 20 years; today it is among the experts in the sectors of Fair Trade & social accountability, natural textiles, responsible forest management, sustainable fisheries & aquaculture as well as wild collection. IMO is a pioneer in all these fields and has given important impulses for development. IMO checks according to 70 different environmental and social standards in over 90 countries.

## **MEDIA RELATIONS CONTACT – For more information, please contact:**

Julie BASDEVANT, ECOCERT Group Communications Manager  
Tel: +33 (0) 5.62.07.34.24 – [julie.basdevant@ecocert.com](mailto:julie.basdevant@ecocert.com)  
ECOCERT SA – BP 47 – 32600 L'ISLE JOURDAIN – France

Ines HENSLER, IMO Communications Manager  
Tel: +49 (0) 7531-94 29 252 – [news@imo.ch](mailto:news@imo.ch)  
IMOgroup AG – Weststr. 51 – 8570 Weinfelden - Switzerland