

Comment on the three EU organic logos selected by the EU Organic Logo Jury by Urs Niggli,

Director of FiBL and member of the Jury:

”The harsh criticism of the organic stakeholder over the three proposed organic logos is not justified.”

Urs Niggli about the selection procedure

“A jury of four leading European graphical designer and of four organic experts, as well as the former bicycle racer Miguel Indurain, selected ten logos from several thousand submission by young graphical designer and design students. The criteria for the selection were clearly defined, e.g. they should give the message of organic agriculture and of EU origin in a picture, not in words, should be easily recognisable, have high quality graphical design elements and should be applicable in different colours and sizes on food labels. The young designer contest started in May 2009, the jury selected in July 2009.

After legal, administrative and other investigations, the European Commission selected, from the 10 proposals selected by the jury, the three above mentioned logos for a public internet vote which is open now till the end of January 2010.”

Urs Niggli analyses the different proposals

“It didn’t come much as a surprise that once published, the three proposals aroused a lot of criticism. I don’t share most of these criticisms and I’d like to define my position.

The **first logo** shows the EU stars in the shape of a leaf. It is a very straightforward sign containing two clear messages: Nature and Europe. The graphical design is soft-footed and elegant. A further advantage of the first proposal is that it is not a dominant one, it is low profile in a gentle way. Therefore, it won’t compete with attractive private, regional or national logos, but it will add a congenial “green European element”.

The **second logo** is an amalgam between a leaf and an ear. In addition, it connotes germination: the leaf shape sprouts out of a lengthy seed. And finally, it shows a check sign at the bottom like the German organic logo. This second proposal is extremely dense in information. It shows the different dimension of organic agriculture: nature and human interactions as a metaphor for “Farmers who listen to nature”. With the check sign it symbolises the organic certification.

The density of information of the second logo might have made the design a bit more clumsy than the one of the other two. Nonetheless, the simple and clear lines of this logo are catchy and will give a profile to it which can be easily remembered.

The **third logo** narrates the story of organic agriculture in a very precise way: integrating animals (dairy cow), apple, beetroot, cereals, grass, soil and water, all intrinsic elements of an organic system, positioned on a warm and harmonic green background. This logo fully meets the requirement of all those critics saying that a logo should contain the information “what is organic?”. In my opinion, out of about 3400 submitted logos that tell the story, this third logo was far the best. In addition, it was the only one which could be reduced to a certain degree.

The graphical design of the third logo is sensational! It realises the concept “reduce to the max” and appeals to young people and has a maverick shape. It tells a story like every good commercial. Contemporary design, with no hang-over to the pseudo-romantic design of 1968 generation, indeed.

Nonetheless, the third logo shows the limits of a sign which tells a story. Although it works in all colours and it can be shrunk in a considerable way, it takes its room on every label. Beyond 4 to 2 millimetres, it doesn't work anymore.

All three logos which are proposed are eligible. It is a very good range submitted to public voting by the Commission. Each of them has a real potential to become an EU-wide appreciated logo. Personally I think that with the supplement of “organic”, “ökologisch”, „biologique“, „økologisk“, all three logos will be a very good and visible organic EU-logo. It is also important to note the ancillary word-mark is very important as there is no picture or pictogram which can deliver the information “organic” by itself.

Urs Niggli, 21 December 2009