

22 February 2018

Open Letter: MFF post-2020 - Prioritising organics can transform the agri-food sector and rural areas

Dear President Tusk,

CC: President Juncker, Commissioners Oettinger, Hogan,

Decisions on scope and ambition of the new Multiannual Financial Framework post-2020 will play a decisive role in how the EU confronts the key sustainability challenges facing the agri-food sector and rural areas.¹ As you engage in intensive discussions with Heads of State and Government on the EU's future spending priorities, the European organic movement calls on you and other EU leaders to build on the Commission's Communication on the MFF² to enable a more prosperous and sustainable Europe that delivers an ambitious implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Backed by an EU-wide legal framework and standards, organic food and farming can play a key role in achieving more sustainable food systems.³ The organic market - valued at 30.7 billion euro in 2016 - is growing fast and is proof that European citizens demand high quality food that also delivers a range of societal benefits.⁴ To leverage its full potential, it is essential to prioritise organic sector development in 3 key areas of the next EU budget:

- The **Common Agricultural Policy** remains a key policy to support ambitious SDG implementation. Cuts to agricultural spending must be rejected by putting the principle of public money for public benefit at the heart of the next reform. This means explicitly linking farm income support to the delivery of a wide range of environmental and social public goods at farm level – 100% financed by the EU. Organic farming must play a key role in a future CAP where farmers no longer have to choose between price competitiveness and meeting societal expectations. Such an approach should foresee a **quarter of the EU's farmland area under certified organic production by 2030**.
- Smart use of the regional and social funds under the EU's **Cohesion Policy** can also support ambitious SDG implementation by investing in sustainable food businesses. Organic SMEs and other businesses have been at the cutting edge of developing business models and supply chains that generate more added value for primary producers and make better connections with citizens. **Targeted investment in organic SMEs and entrepreneurship** can therefore better enable urban and rural businesses to thrive and flourish. The development of a diversity of marketing channels can also help to foster fairer distribution of value amongst all actors in the supply chain.
- Proposed budget increases in the **research and innovation policy** framework can assist in boosting competitiveness and productivity. However, new and existing investment must be directed at an ambitious implementation of the SDGs that has the greatest possible impact for society. Dedicating **at least 10% of the total agri-food research budget to organics** has huge potential to

maintain a strong agronomic and ecological knowhow at farm level. It would also stimulate the development of more sustainable supply chains including more minimal food processing, fairer distribution and sustainable consumption based on organic and agroecological principles.

The European organic movement, together with a broad range of civil society organisations, are united in our calls for a citizen centred MFF which enables the EU to become a driver of sustainability in Europe and beyond.⁵ The organic movement therefore looks forward to working with you, Member States and the wider stakeholder community to transition towards more sustainable food and farming for the future of Europe.

Yours sincerely,



Christopher Stopes, President IFOAM EU

¹ IPES-Food. (2016). From uniformity to diversity: a paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems. International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food systems; EPSC, (2016). Sustainability Now! European Political Strategy Centre.

² European Commission (2018). A new, modern Multiannual Financial Framework for a European Union that delivers efficiently on its priorities post - 2020

³ Sanders, J. ed. (2013). Evaluation of the EU legislation on organic farming. Braunschweig: Thünen Institute of Farm Economic; Muller, A., et al., (2017). Strategies for feeding the world more sustainably with organic agriculture, Nature Communications 8;

⁴ Willer, H., Lernoud, J. eds. (2018). The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2018. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, IFOAM – Organics International, Bonn

⁵ SDG Watch Europe (2017). Sustainability Principles for the future EU budget. Available at: [www.ifoam - eu.org/sites/default/files/ngo_policy_mff_post2020_sustainability_principles_201706.pdf](http://www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/ngo_policy_mff_post2020_sustainability_principles_201706.pdf)