The European organic movement stands with all victims of terrorism.
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Dear readers,

After more than three years the legislative process aimed at developing a new regulatory framework for the organic sector is approaching its conclusion. IFOAM EU and its members have had many successes in shaping the documents currently on the table. Now, we are working to make sure that the final text is as good for the sector as possible and that time is taken to make informed decisions on important issues.

In short, the process was as follows: The EU Council and the Parliament debated the Commission proposal for a new organic regulation during intense parallel processes and both institutions recently produced their opinions, in June 2015 and October 2015 respectively. The next and last step in this process is the negotiations between the three EU institutions to agree on a final legal text, presumably at the beginning of 2016.

IFOAM EU and all organic stakeholders were quite critical towards the initial Commission proposal, which was considered too far from reality and everyday practice. This proposal was even considered an obstacle to the sustainable development of the sector, contrary to the initial aim of the revision.

The work done both by the EU Council and the EU Parliament on the initial text ended up in significantly amended opinions, putting the situation back on track and introducing some innovative aspects and solutions.

IFOAM EU is glad to see that all the “ingredients” for a satisfactory final text are now there. For example, the sector’s rejection of specific thresholds for organic and for the certification of retailers selling only prepacked organic products, as well as our call for maintaining the control system within the organic regulation have all been picked up by the Council and Parliament.

The new EU organic regulation will affect European organic producers and consumers and - as the EU is a major importer of organic goods - it will also affect the life and work of tens of thousands of organic operators all over the world. So, the way in which the “ingredients” are combined is crucial in order to have a new organic regulation that fits sector needs and consumer demands. The final text must ensure the sustainable growth of organic in and outside the EU.

In this regard, some of IFOAM EU’s main concerns are the development and improvement of the rules governing controls, import, animal husbandry and the general implementation of the regulation. We have the opportunity to improve on the current regulation and, at the end of the day, the new legal framework must be better than what we have now. It is therefore important that we now focus on obtaining a basic regulation that provides the right framework and then immediately start working on implementing rules that provide the specific conditions for improvement in highly technical areas.

The Council opinion has a very good legal structure which would allow the Commission to decide the detailed production rules, e.g. for poultry and greenhouses, at a later stage. Such areas are highly complex and have a significant impact on specific geographic areas and operators. They therefore need careful evaluation in order to reach a text that is consistent and satisfactory. At the same time, the Parliament report proposes innovative concepts, for example a requirement obliging the Commission to establish specific “new structures” to solve the need for better implementation and EU co-ordination. Therefore if the final text includes both institutions’ constructive proposals, the result will be very positive.

IFOAM EU will continue to provide input and offer expertise, as it has done continuously throughout the entire process.

Sincerely,

Jan Plagge
IFOAM EU Board Member and Chairman of the IFOAM EU Farmers Interest Group
Heads of states from all over the world will gather on 30 November in Paris to launch the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, which will last until 13 December. Negotiators will have two weeks to try to design a new international “legal instrument” to replace the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2020, and that – contrary to it – should encompass all countries, including the USA and China (together the US and China represent more than 40% of the world’s emissions).

These negotiations are always a huge challenge and can always fail, but most observers believe that a meaningful agreement seems within reach. However, even if there is an agreement, the addition of “intended nationally determined contributions” (the greenhouse gas reduction effort that each party commits to on a voluntary basis) submitted so far will not be enough to limit global warming to the 2°C limit, even less 1.5°C. The setup of a mechanism to review national commitments on a regular basis and to compensate for the current lack of ambition, has therefore become an important part of the negotiations.

Agriculture has been a rather small but contentious topic so far in the UNFCCC process, as for years developing and developed countries disagreed on whether “mitigation” or “adaptation” should be the focus of action. Agriculture in itself will certainly not be a major topic in the COP21 negotiations, but will be addressed as part of the “land” issues.

While many countries are keen to see the land sector included in the new agreement for mitigation purposes, other countries are opposed to any reference to land, as they fear that mitigation efforts focused on the agriculture sector could undermine food security and increase competition for land. Regardless of the outcome on this topic, it is crucial to ensure that the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems are key, together with the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

In the official UN accounting system, the agriculture sector represents 10% of emissions. But its share in worldwide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is much higher according to other estimations. If emissions linked to the production of synthetic fertilisers and the indirect impact of agriculture – such as deforestation linked to feed or palm oil production – are taken into account, the share rises to 33% of emissions. Agriculture, and the globalised industrial food system, are therefore a big part of the problem. It is clear that this system needs to be transformed if the world wants to avert disastrous climate change.

The benefits of organic farming for adaptation are recognised, because it provides healthy soils and more resilient agricultural systems. For mitigation, organic crop production reduces GHG emissions by 20 to 30% compared to conventional according to some estimations. Moreover, the impact of agriculture on biodiversity, water consumption, animal welfare, health, workers’ rights and farmers’ livelihoods also matter, and GHG reduction cannot be considered in isolation from the rest.

It has become impossible to discuss agriculture in research or policy circles without discussing climate change, other environmental impacts and food security. On all these fronts a reduction of meat consumption and a transition towards agroecology (whether it is certified organic or not) and food sovereignty would seem the only reasonable way forward.

Of course, this point of view is contested. Some argue further intensification is needed to “feed the planet”. This is the case of the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture, launched last year at the Ban Ki-moon UN summit, which is seen by most NGOs as no more than a greenwashing exercise by the fertiliser industry. At COP21, the French government will launch a voluntary initiative backed by an ambitious research programme, “4/1000 Initiative: Soils for Food Security and Climate”. The programme is based on the assumption that even a 4/1000 annual growth rate of the soil carbon stock would be crucial to achieving the long-term objective...
of limiting the temperature increase to +1.5/2°C. This initiative has some merits, because soil regeneration and fertility are at the centre of any sound agricultural system, as every organic farmer knows. But at the same time, some lobbies argue that since agriculture contributes to carbon sequestration, the sector “compensates for its own emissions.” This is far from the truth when one looks at the actual figures.

Given the weight of vested interests in the industrial food system and their political clout, significant mobilisation at all levels beyond COP21 and international negotiations is necessary to transform the agri-food system, and organic farming could be a significant part of the solution.

In the EU, it should start with next year’s preparation of the climate and energy package for 2030 – more about this on page 6 of our October newsletter. In the nearer future, the “Climate March” that will gather citizens from around world to tell world leaders to set up to the challenge on 29 November in Paris. IFOAM EU and IFOAM – Organics International will be present at COP21 and will provide you with regular updates and analyses on the state of the negotiations.

The impact of integrating emissions from LULUCF in the upcoming climate and energy package for 2030 – a study by Fern and IFOAM EU

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ANNOUNCES POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2016

The mid-term review of the EU budget for 2014-2020 and the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework will be just some of the main priorities for the EU in 2016, following the European Commission’s 2016 work programme published on 27 October. Other priorities of interest to the agri-food sector include the EU’s strategy for moving towards a “Circular Economy” and the implementation of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals adopted in New York, USA earlier this year. Elsewhere the Commission expects to continue its ongoing evaluations on EU Nature Directives and EU food legislation as well as the launch of new evaluations of EU legislation related to the implementation of ecological focus areas under the Pillar 1 greening component of the Common Agriculture Policy and the authorisation of plant protection products in the EU.
1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 REGULATION

HOW THE EU PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL OPINIONS COULD IMPACT THE NEW ORGANIC REGULATION

The final step of the legislative process for a new organic regulation will soon take place: the EU Parliament will now start negotiations with the Council and the Commission, in order to reach a final legal text.

While the Council adopted its position in June 2015, the EU Parliament Committee of Agriculture voted on almost 1,500 amendments to the initial Commission proposal and adopted its report on 13 October.

IFOAM EU has put together the most important areas of the organic regulation that might be affected by the legislative revision:

A specific decertification threshold for pesticide residues in organic products?

The Commission proposed creating a specific threshold for not allowed substances in organic products above which they would be automatically decertified. This requirement would have turned the polluter pays principle up-side-down. 95% of agriculture in Europe is not organic and, although contamination is very rare, in some cases organic farmers can do nothing to prevent it.

Thanks to the EU Council and EU Parliament, who largely support IFOAM EU’s rejection of such thresholds, it is most likely this requirement will be deleted and replaced with a requirement to improve and harmonise precautionary and investigative measures across EU Member States. This approach would sanction operators in case of misconduct and operators who have not undertaken the required protection measures.

However, both institutions include a request to the Commission to issue a report on residues in organic products in 2020, so the issue might be reopened again in 5 years.

Control system kept in the organic regulation, control frequency and scope

If the improved control requirements currently under discussions are adopted, controls will be more efficient. Although the Commission proposed moving the control requirements to the horizontal food and feed control legislation, the Council and Parliament want to keep it in the organic regulation. Moreover, mandatory annual inspection is likely to be maintained and, thereby, consumer confidence kept. The Council has proposed an exception for low risk operators with a good record.

Obligatory certification for all retailers is another Commission proposal rejected by both the Council and Parliament, with retailers exclusively selling packaged organic food to be exempt.

Group certification will be introduced to and allowed in the EU, although the size and turnover of farmers who will be permitted to join a certified group is still under discussion.

The Parliament has also proposed creating “new structures” to improve the implementation of the organic regulation and coordination of member states at EU level.

Import regime based on EU standards

The three institutions agree that organic products can be imported exclusively from third countries with which EU has a “trade agreement”, e.g. the USA, Canada and Japan, and that producers from countries with which the EU does not have a “trade agreement” must fully comply with the EU standards to export.
Exceptional production rules and mixed farms
It will still be possible to have the flexibility on production rules needed to make organic production in all regions of the EU possible. Farms producing both conventional and organic products will probably be allowed to continue as today, that is, provided the products are different such as apples and cattle.

“Regional” feed
The question of how much feed should originate from the same region as the livestock farms and the related definition of “region” are being discussed. The Commission proposes high percentages (60% for non-herbivores and 90% for herbivores) of feed must be “regional” without defining what “region” means; the Council prefers not to take a position at the moment; and the Parliament proposes today’s percentages (20% for non-herbivores and 60% for herbivores) and a limit of 150 km radius from livestock farms.

Environmental performance
The final outcome is difficult to predict as the position of the three EU institutions differs. The Commission proposed obliging processors to set up environmental management systems; the Council decided to delete the entire requirement; and the Parliament proposed a general text on the need to improve processors’ environmental performance. The final outcome might be a requirement for organic processors to measure and improve their environmental impact regarding energy and water use, waste management, etc.

IFOAM EU involvement
Many amendments to the initial Commission proposal brought forward by IFOAM EU are now on the table for discussions either through the Council’s general approach or the Parliament report, e.g.:
- There will not be a decertification threshold for non-authorised substances
- Control requirements will be kept in the organic regulation, and not moved out as the Commission initially proposed
- There will be flexibility in the application of production rules and, at the same time, harmonisation in the control measures
- There will still be room in the negotiation talks to allow for a certain flexibility in the application of the EU regulation in third countries

During the process, IFOAM EU and its members have been in continuous contact with EU and national institutions both face-to-face and in correspondence. Press releases and media activities helped gather momentum. Last, but certainly not least, we brought together the sector to define what would help the organic develop both in terms of practices and economic expansion and presented this to policy-makers. Along the way we have been asked to provide technical opinions too. We will continue this work throughout the process.

NEW IMPORT REGULATION PUBLISHED
On 5 November 2015 a new regulation amending the organic import regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 was published. The new Regulation (EU) 2015/1980 corrects some mistakes in the list of control bodies approved to operate as “equivalent” in third countries. An updated list of all organic regulations, including consolidated versions, can be found on the IFOAM EU website.
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT REJECTS COMMISSION PROPOSAL ON GMO FOOD AND FEED IMPORTS

On 28 October, a majority of MEPs rejected the Commission’s proposal for Member States to opt out of GMOs for imports, and called on the Commission to submit another proposal that better reflects the views of countries and their citizens.

Both the Parliament’s Agricultural and Rural Development Committee and the Environmental, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee had called for a rejection of the proposal.

At the July AGRI Council a majority of EU Ministers of Agriculture had expressed concern that the proposal would disrupt the single market and that no impact assessment had been done concerning the proposal.

Commissioner Andriukaitis, the Commissioner responsible for the dossier, said that the Commission will wait for the official position of the Council before making a decision about the next step.

Commission must keep promise and make approval system democratic

IFOAM EU and NGOs criticised the proposal for not being in line with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker’s promise to make the EU approval system for GMOs more democratic. The attempt to shift the responsibility for the authorisation of GM crops from EU to national level would not have prevented the Commission from authorising GM crops because the system to approve them would not have changed. If there is no majority to approve a GMO application the Commission should withdraw the authorisation proposal and instead propose a prohibition of the GMO in question on the European market.

IFOAM EU believes that the Commission should withdraw its proposal and present a new one modifying the authorisation system, as demanded by the Parliament.

KEEPING GMOS OUT OF FOOD: WORKSHOP ON THE AVAILABILITY OF NON-GMO FEED IN EUROPE AND EXPERT ROUNDTABLE

From 27–28 October, in the city of Ulm (Germany) experts on prevention of contamination of GMOs across the non-GM and organic food chain, researchers, certifiers and NGOs participated in a workshop on availability of organic and non-GM feedstuff in Europe and in the second roundtable of the Keeping GMOs out of food project. The event was hosted and supported by the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg with the collaboration of the Alb-Donau-Kreis district.

Workshop: Increasing the availability of GM-free feed in Europe

The main objective of the workshop was to discuss the main challenges for the production and import of GM-free and organic feedstuff and define a common approach to increasing its availability. The last section of the workshop focused on assessing contamination in the feed supply chain and developing best strategies to keep GMOs out of the feed chain.

The main conclusions were:

• The GM-free soy sector lacks of long term research breeding programmes as well as a lack of political support from the EU. In this sense, EU institutions must work to help the market fulfil this need
On research and availability of organic and GM-free input and raw materials generally, more (funding for) research is needed on organic seed breeding and access to high quality GM-free seeds and reduce the use of processing aids additives to avoid contamination.

On the other hand, the GM-free and organic sectors should promote more European, regional and national value added chains that include stakeholders from all operators: livestock farmers, protein crop producers, compound feed companies and raw material transformers.

Regarding the cost of raw materials, agricultural policies should be changed to reflect the complete cost of production, taking into account damage and benefits to the environment, biodiversity and local communities.

Regarding contamination cases and communication, there is a strong need to develop guidelines to better communicate between certifiers and public authorities in order to identify sources and types of contamination.

**Roundtable: Current contamination prevention challenges for organic and non-GM**

This year’s roundtable focused on two main topics: the impact of the potential harmonisation of GMO-free labelling schemes at EU level on the GM-free and organic sectors and how both sectors could define a common and fair approach to labelling products as GM-free within the national GM-free labelling schemes. Latter discussions focused on the issue of communication to customers and thresholds.

The main conclusions were:

- Regarding GM-free labelling, the focus should be on closing the EU labelling loophole involving products from animals fed GMOs.
- Organic should take advantage of the increasing interest in GM-free labelling among citizens to communicate the holistic approach to the production of organic products. In this sense, there is no strong push to label organic products GM-free, but in some countries the current situation is an opportunity to educate consumers on the organic approach. Member States should identify the standards that fit the reality of their market rather than pushing for harmonisation at EU level.
- Organic and conventional actors should support research and innovation on manufacturing that uses fewer additives and processing aids in the short term.
FOOD, FARMING AND ENVIRONMENT

AIR QUALITY VOTE

On 28 October, the European Parliament voted on the revision of the National Emission Ceilings (NEC) Directive, which limits different types of air pollution. Agriculture is indeed responsible for 40% of methane emissions and 95% of ammonia pollution in the EU. MEPs confirmed the proposed cap on ammonia and methane emissions (reductions of 27% and 30% respectively by 2030) but – following intense pressure from some farmers organisations – exempted enteric methane emissions from livestock from the NECs.

The Commission’s proposal targeted intensive large-scale livestock production, and would not have applied to smaller farms. Most of the reduction was expected to come from extending treatment of manure in anaerobic digesters on farms with at least 100 cows or 1,000 pigs.

Some MEPS argued that methane emissions would be covered by the future Effort Sharing Decision on greenhouse gas emissions reduction. However, a strong lobby to exempt agriculture from any significant reductions is to be expected.

Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella has been quoted as telling MEPs that “to move forward, sectors that have so far done little will need to do more. […] Efforts are needed from all sectors, including the agriculture industry. What we are after is better and healthier agriculture.” He added that there was absolutely no need to reduce the number of animals raised to reach the targets in the Commission proposal, and denied that methane cuts would force animals to be kept inside. The Environment Council of Ministers is now expected to take a position. Last June they demanded flexibility on air quality targets and also proposed to drop the cap on methane emissions.

IFOAM EU work and advocacy

IFOAM EU sent a letter to MEPs, highlighting that the proposed ceilings on ammonia and methane emissions would not jeopardize agriculture production. There are several techniques and management measures that both organic and conventional farmers can implement to reduce ammonia and methane emissions.

Organic practices can reduce emissions

Last year, IFOAM EU and FiBL published a report evaluating good management practices for livestock and crop production. It concluded that a system approach to the farm with nitrogen balances at farm-gate level can lead to a significant reduction of ammonia losses, increase nutrient efficiencies and reduce long-term costs. Manure management, appropriate grazing management and changes in feeding strategies, such as low-protein animal feeding, can also reduce methane emissions. Sustainable biogas production, based on waste and residues, also offers significant emissions reduction potential, as demonstrated in the Sustaingas project.

ORGANIC FARMING CAN HELP THE EU REACH ITS BIODIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

IFOAM EU has called on EU and national leaders to make more concrete efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity and agrobiodiversity which are necessary to ensure farm resilience and long-term food security, in addition to helping the environment and reducing the impact of climate change on farms. The call follows the publication of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 mid-term review by the European Commission on 2 October. It shows that the agricultural sector is not delivering well on the EU’s biodiversity commitments.

IFOAM EU also welcomed the report’s recognition of organic farming’s biodiversity, green growth and job creation credentials.

Increasing our overall agri-food chain sustainability delivers environmental public goods, meets EU citizens’ demand for high quality food production and also supports the development of rural areas.

The results of the mid-term review are a clear signal that a stronger link between Common Agriculture Policy spending and farming that benefits ecosystems is needed to safeguard and restore biodiversity in the agri-food sector.
DEBATE ON PATENTING SEED GAINS MOMENTUM

Yet another patent on conventional breeding was granted by the European Patent Office (EPO), this time to Syngenta, on a seedless pepper developed to be used “as fresh produce, as fresh cut produce, or for processing such as, for example, canning”. The patent also covers the plants, their cultivation, harvesting and seeds.

The No Patents on Seeds coalition called on European governments to strengthen the existing prohibitions on the patenting of conventional breeding processes both at the EU level and at the EPO itself, as national governments have a seat on the Administrative Council of the EPO.

The Netherlands – home to many seed companies and President of the EU Council from January 2016 – is concerned about the increasing number of patents effectively covering plant varieties in Europe and is putting the issue back on the political agenda. Under their impetus, patents were discussed at the Agriculture Council on 22 October. Ministers stated that the patent system is too restrictive and limits innovation, and appeared keen to defend the breeders’ exemption, i.e. the possibility for seed companies to use a protected variety to create a new variety without asking for a license nor paying fees on the original variety. This increases the pressure on the Commission to accept to launch a long overdue revision of Directive 1998/44 on the “patentability of biotechnological inventions”.

SO-CALLED NEW PLANT BREEDING TECHNIQUES TO GAIN LEGISLATIVE ATTENTION

Context
Biotech companies are experimenting with a number of New Plant Breeding Techniques (NPBTs) which did not exist at the time the EU Directive on the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the environment (Directive 2001/18/EC) was first adopted in 1990 or revised in 2001. Some plants bred using these techniques have already been released into the environment through open field trials.

The European Commission is expected to provide a legal interpretation which of these NPBTs fall within the scope of the GMO Directive.

The biotech industry has been lobbying the Commission and the Parliament to prevent these techniques from being governed by any specific regulation, in the hope of escaping a fate similar to other GMOs in Europe.

On 1 November, the New Zealand government decided to continue to regulate these emerging new GM techniques, which will continue to be covered by GM law and any use being subject to EPA approval and public consultation. This decision follows a ruling by the New Zealand High Court last year; the Sustainability Council of New Zealand challenged the government decision to deregulate these new techniques and won its case.

Political process
The German government initiated discussion on NPBTs in the Council, with the first discussion taking place on 22 October. It argued – together with the UK and Spain – that one of these techniques called oligonucleotide directed mutagenesis (ODM) should not be considered genetic modification. The upcoming Dutch Presidency is expected to steer Council discussions on this file, and the European Parliament’s Agriculture Committee will host a hearing on 1 December (15:00–17:00).

Impact on organic and IFOAM EU position
IFOAM EU considers a number of these techniques – including oligonucleotide directed mutagenesis, zinc finger nuclease technology, CRISPR/Cas, meganucleases, cisgenesis and synthetic genomics – to clearly be GMOs according to the EU’s legal definition and therefore calls on the Commission to explicitly confirm that they fall within the scope of the GMO legislation.

It is of crucial importance for the organic sector that techniques that engineer living organisms through technical, chemical or biotechnological intervention in the cell and/or nucleus be traceable and labelled, in order for organic and GM-free operators to be able to avoid them. Only confirmation of these new techniques as GMOs provides for this. Furthermore, complete risk assessments should be carried out for all material and processes generated using these techniques. Again, only confirmation of GMO status provides for this.

IFOAM EU will release a position paper about New Plant Breeding Techniques soon, keep an eye on our website
COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY

RURAL STAKEHOLDERS EXPLORE NEW CAP’S BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

More work needs to be done to address the growing vulnerability of farmers to globalised markets, whilst ensuring that producers get remunerative prices for the produce and public goods they deliver. This is according to organic stakeholders who took part in a public debate on organic farming and sustainable rural development to 2020 in Rome on 6 October. Delegates reflected on the fact that a major conflict continues to exist in the new Common Agricultural Policy between piecemeal strategies targeted towards the delivery of public goods, creating more balanced local, regional and international market development and the strategies largely focused on increasing competitiveness and export-orientated business models.

The public debate was part of a series of events on Organic Opportunities for Sustainable Rural Development to 2020 attended by a wide range of rural stakeholders and citizens - including members of the IFOAM EU farmers group - from across Italy and multiple EU countries and regions. Participants took part in different workshops looking at the support options for organic food and farming in new Rural Development Programmes across Europe and had the opportunity to see good rural development policy in action with visits to a multifunctional organic farm involved in small scale processing of aromatic herbs and ancient fruit varieties and another farm selling its vegetables and beef from the traditional Maremmanana cattle breed direct to consumers and through short supply chains in Rome.

The overall programme took place on 5–6 October and is part of the IFOAM EU’s Boosting organic: making the CAP effective project, co-financed by the European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development and organised in collaboration with Legambiente and FIRAB as part of AIAB’s annual BioDomenica programme.

94 OF 118 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL RDPS NOW APPROVED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Since the end of October 94 out of 118 of new Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) for the period 2014–2020 have been approved by the European Commission. To date national and regional RDPs have been approved in 25 Member States with all programmes in 22 Member States now fully approved. These are expected to be adopted on a rolling basis throughout the second half of 2015 and possibly into the beginning of 2016. Further information can be found on the Commission’s website.

This event is co-financed by the European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development
BRAZIL AND EU AGREE THAT ORGANIC INNOVATION IS KEY TO SOLVING TODAY’S CHALLENGES

On October 16, the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação – MCTI) and TP Organics signed a memorandum of understanding to start cooperating on nutrition security, agroecology and organic food systems. The signature ceremony took place at EXPO Milano 2015 during World Food Day.

The Memorandum of understanding outlines four major areas of common interest:

- Developing, planning and implementing projects on themes of common interest in the field of organic food and farming with transnational context
- Implementing common research projects on and analysis of issues and trends relevant to organic agriculture
- Collaborating on the dissemination, educational and training activities related to the area of sustainable food production
- Organising and promoting conferences, seminars and expert meetings on relevant topics

Both parties have also committed to exchange essential information regarding common research, training and cooperation activities as well as knowledge in the areas of mutual interest including scientific meetings, conferences, workshops and seminars.

To present the agreement and discuss future development a large delegation attended the signature ceremony, including Eron Bezerra, State Secretary for Social Inclusion of the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation; Eduardo Cuoco, Head of the TP Organics Secretariat; Marco Schlüter, Director of IFOAM EU and member of the TP Organics Steering Committee; Jose Caetano Minchillo, President of the Bank of Brazil Foundation; Daniel Gobbi from the Brazilian Ministry of Agricultural Development; Alexandra Vieira, General Coordinator of Food Security at MCTI; and Guilherme Wiedman, Coordinator of the Technology for Sustainable Cities Program at MCTI.

The memorandum of understanding will be followed by a three-year work programme in which specific action will be identified and implemented.

Read TP Organics’ press release

EU RESEARCH MONEY SHOULD BE SPENT ON ORGANIC FARMING SAYS NEW STUDY

Increasing investment in research for organic farming will help provide answers to many environmental and social issues faced by Europe’s farming systems, says a new study from the Université Catholique de Louvain (BE) and the Organic Research Centre (UK). The study was commissioned by the Green Party in the European Parliament and reveals a paradox between the potential for and actual investment in organic farming research. According to the study, scientific evidence shows that organic farming is better placed to address sustainability challenges than conventional farming – it performs better on environmental impact, reduction of antibiotic use, food quality and job creation. Despite its better performance organic farming only receives 1 to 5% of national budgets for agricultural research. More research funding would enable organic to perform even better and help the EU to make food systems more sustainable.

Read more in TP Organics’ press release
UPDATE ON HORIZON 2020 AND EIP-AGRI

Horizon 2020: calls for 2016–2017 officially adopted

On 13 October, the European Commission officially adopted the Work Programme for 2016/2017 as part of the EU’s framework programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020. As reported in the previous issue of the IFOAM EU newsletter, the new Work Programme is full of opportunities for organic food and farming research.

Download the full assessment of organic opportunities in the new Horizon 2020 Work Programme.

Apply for funding through the Horizon 2020 participant portal

The new Work Programme directly provides 33 million euros for organic farming research. In addition, many calls address challenges relevant for organic farming (174 million euro) and specifically mention its important role. The increased recognition of research and innovation needs of the organic sector in Horizon 2020 is a first step towards a successful implementation of the European Commission’s European Organic Action Plan. Nevertheless, more ambition is needed to significantly support growth for the innovative organic sector.

IFOAM EU and TP Organics will continue to promote the benefits of organic and advocate for its rightful share of public research funding.

EIP-AGRI Focus Group Report on suppressing soil-borne diseases

In 2014, the EIP-AGRI Service Point established a Focus Group to address the question of how to suppress soil-borne diseases in vegetable and arable crops. The absence of an integrated approach to soil health and soil quality is the main cause of soil-borne diseases, according to the group’s final report. Instead of case-by-case management of emerging soil-borne diseases, continuous enhancement of soil health should be the guiding principle. Soil health is more than the absence of disease, it is the ability of the soil to cope with new diseases and to keep infestation levels sufficiently low so that plants do not suffer damage. Applying good quality compost and other organic practices are recognised as crucial for promoting soil health.

EIP-AGRI Focus Group report on cooperation models for genetic resources

There are a number of bottlenecks that limit cooperation between European farmers, breeders and researchers in the field of conservation and use of genetic resources in agriculture. The EIP-AGRI Focus Group on Genetic Resources has been looking into new and existing ways to motivate different groups of people to engage in joint actions and has published suggestions on the development of varieties and breeds that are particularly adapted to specific social, economic and ecological conditions.

Read the final report
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN ORGANIC FORUM: GREATER CAPACITY-BUILDING AND SUPPORT CAN FURTHER STIMULATE ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT

Whilst organic in Europe is very dynamic there is still great potential to further develop the sector in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), including through greater capacity building amongst organic stakeholders according to IFOAM EU Vice-President Thomas Fertl. He was speaking at the Central and Eastern European Organic Forum which took place on 29–30 October in Bucharest, Romania. The Forum organised by IFOAM EU and Bio Romania brought together organic stakeholders from CEE and included a series of public discussions on the opportunities to better develop organics in these countries.

Delegates concluded that multiple means must be used to support the growth and expansion of organic food and farming in CEE countries. A policy mix is needed that incentivises and remunerates producers who farm organically and supports knowledge transfer, education, market development and innovation.

The Forum also included the launch of roundtable to develop and sustain continuous dialogue between the key organic players on policy & market-related issues in Central & Eastern Europe, as well as a workshop on development strategies for organic in Central and Eastern Europe. The roundtable will continue to meet in 2016 and will support the sector in CEE countries to develop organic in CEE countries.

For more information contact Yulia Barabanova

EUROPEAN VOLUNTEERS AT IFOAM EU LEARN ABOUT ORGANIC FARMING DURING STAY AT GUEST FARMS

As part of their year-long experience, European Volunteers at IFOAM EU stayed at a local organic farm to learn more about the realities of producing organic food and feed during one week during September 2015. This is their experience in their own words:

The farm that we stayed in was really impressive. Beside the fact that the owner was producing almost all kind of vegetables you can think of, he has an organic shop as well, where he is selling not only his products, but also products from the organic farms in the region. It is really interesting to see how they are uniting and helping each other. Basically in the middle of nowhere, you have the possibility to experience more than just observing how exactly the organic farming works. With all the different kind of flowers, you can get some really useful information about the plant care.

Our experience in the farm was a part of our European Volunteer Service in IFOAM EU and it could be divided in two parts. First, it was a great possibility to see the local farmers’ lifestyle and live it for a week. For me it was a big surprise how one farmer (with a help of only 2 permanent half-time workers) can manage such a big farm (more than 3 greenhouses, home animals, a bakery and a shop). I have realized that organic farming for a farmer is not just a label, it is a way of living. It also adds an extra responsibility about the techniques use and waste management.
10th EUROPEAN ORGANIC CONGRESS
4–6 APRIL 2016
THE NETHERLANDS

More information coming soon on organic-congress-ifoam.eu.org
2 EVENTS

2.1 PREVIEW OF EVENTS

ORGANIC INNOVATION DAYS

1–2 December 2015, Brussels, TP Organics is organising the Organic Innovation Days. The aim of the event is to show the innovation potential of the organic food and farming sector. In that context, TP Organics has launched a call challenging researchers, companies and farmers to propose innovative solutions to one of the following needs of the organic sector:

- Innovative technologies for pest management in organic cropping systems
- New organic processing concepts and technologies
- New business models of value addition at the farm level

The winners of the call will present their innovations and discuss the results with invited experts and policymakers in order to contribute to the implementation of EIP-AGRI and Horizon 2020.

The event also intends to explore opportunities and potential risks of innovations developed outside the organic sector, such as bio-plastics, the Internet-of-Things, proteins derived from insects or algae, and the recycling of urban and human waste. Should these innovations be taken-up by the organic sector and under what conditions?

Check out the agenda and register.

ECOFRUIT: CONFERENCE ON ORGANIC FRUIT GROWING

15–17 February 2016, Hohenheim, Germany.
Registration is now open for the International Conference on Organic Fruit Growing ‘Ecofruit’. Now in its 17th year and under the patronage of IFOAM EU for a number of years – Ecofruit brings together European organic fruit researchers, advisors and interested practitioners to communicate and discuss the latest results connected with organic fruit production systems and their improvement. It is also a great opportunity for fruit-growing stakeholders to network and develop new forms of co-operation. Different topics up for discussion can include disease control and copper use reduction, fruit quality and storage, oil management, pest control and functional biodiversity, crop regulation, cultivars, sustainability/system design and economy.

Contributors are also invited to submit topics on the latest findings of their work that they would be interested to present at the conference. To register visit the Ecofruit website or for further information please contact Jutta Kienzle.
2.2 REVIEW OF EVENTS

NATURA FOOD: IFOAM EU CALLS ON POLAND TO MAKE FULL USE OF NEW RDPS TO SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

IFOAM EU has called on the Polish authorities to use the new Polish Rural Development Programme to transform consumer demand for organic into greater environmental public goods. Stephen Meredith, IFOAM EU Deputy Policy Manager spoke at the Biodiversity Forum “Consumer demands as an opportunity for Biodiversity” which took place on 2 October 2005 during the NATURA FOOD Fair in Łódź, Poland. He said that stakeholders needed to work together to ensure that measures in Rural Development Programmes were taken advantage of, including measures to support the development of knowledge transfer, and the greater market access tailored to needs of farmers and citizens committed to biodiversity and the environment. Nevertheless, he continued, a supportive policy environment for the development of agro-ecological and organic farming was highly dependent on good implementation of the new CAP by Member States and regions. The 8th International Organic and Regional Food Fair NATURA FOOD which took place 2–4 October is one of the largest events dedicated to organic food in Poland.

INTERNATIONAL AND FRENCH ORGANIC PLAYERS MEET AT NATEXPO

NATEXPO, a strictly trade-only show held this October in Paris, had more than 12,000 visitors and 550 exhibitors at the Paris-based NATEXPO. More than 14% of visitors and 16% of exhibitors came from abroad, strong growth from the 2013 edition. IFOAM EU is pleased to be a partner of Natexpo and we were very honoured to be present together with Natexbio, Synabio, Agence Bio and France Vin Bio.

As part of the NATEXPO conference programme, IFOAM EU and Synabio teamed up to present insight into how agribusiness interests are represented at EU level as well as an overview of recent developments at the European level. The highly engaged audience was struck by the amount of funding traditional agribusiness puts into lobbying.
NORDIC ORGANIC ORGANISATIONS SPEAK TO THE FUTURE AND THE NORDIC ORGANIC FOOD FAIR

Organic Denmark, Organic Sweden, Oikos, Pro Luomo and KRAV representatives on the IFOAM EU panel spoke to a packed room about how we can transform food & farming, and how to stimulate organic development. Although the situation differs greatly in the region, there was agreement that it is important for local organic production to grow with the rise of consumption and that national governments and the EU could do more to help organic lead. Some examples of effective measures: keeping the regulatory situation stable, providing incentives to farmers to increase conversion, setting targets for organic production and consumption, including in public procurement.

Held in Malmö, Sweden on 1–2 November 2015 for its third edition, the Nordic Organic Food Fair was a success with 10% more visitors than last year. It’s already the largest fair for the region and is growing well. The Nordic Organic Food Fair is an essential industry event for trade buyers who are looking to source the very best in organic food and drink.
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Protect your interests and help us make Europe more organic by:

• Ensuring that EU regulations match the reality of organic producers
• Ensuring that EU and national legislation do not discriminate against organic and traditional seed production
• Fighting the expansion of GMO use in Europe and protecting organic farmers and producers from contamination

You can help MAKE EUROPE MORE ORGANIC

Join our current partners and make your donation!
### 4 Calendar of Events

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–2 December</td>
<td>Organic Innovation Days</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
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<td>15–17 February 2016</td>
<td>17th International Conference on Organic Fruit Growing</td>
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<td>10th European Organic Congress</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
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