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WELCOME NOTE – SETTING THE AGENDA

Dear friends,

The IFOAM family always inspires me – globally and in Europe.

Whilst doing essential work on behalf of the sector in terms of the organic regulation, R&D and Horizon 2020, the CAP and Rural Development Programmes and more, IFOAM EU has also been thinking strategically. We realised that we must not lose sight of the bigger picture and it was time to build a shared vision of amongst our stakeholders. Although our individual passions may vary, our organic food and farming movement provides a pretty good idea of how our food system could look in the future. As organic moves beyond a niche we need to take stock of what has become of organic, what the future holds for us all.

So we have been taking some time to collective set our own agenda, aiming towards a vision for organic in 2030. We want to define where the organic sector & movement wants to be in 2030, what strategies are needed to deliver this vision.

How do we balance strong, well articulated and far reaching organic principles with the goal of making organic available to all? How can organic contribute to healthier living? What role should rapidly developing technologies – the internet of things, nutrigenomics, synthetic biology and agricultural robotics, and many others, play in organic? Organic has led the way with innovative consumer models, intensifying the relationship between consumer and producer; how should these develop? These are a few of the important questions we need to answer.

We have been working on this together with IFOAM - Organics International and with many of you. Sincere thanks for your participation. We have thought about our strengths, values and role in society, initiated a public, online consultation, and have engaged in many discussions. I have always been moved by the commitment and drive of the participants. Opinions and backgrounds may differ, but we clearly share the common goal of making the world we live in a better place by improving that vital system that touches all of us: food and farming.

Keep sharing your aspirations and dreams for the movement with us; there is still ample opportunity. In April we will start the final online public consultation on our vision. We want to inspire, be bold and motivate our stakeholders. Your input will help refine and sharpen the final vision so stay tuned.

Our 9th European Congress in Riga (11–13 June) will be our next opportunity to get together and updated on the regulation, policy and R&D issues. It will also be the end-point of our visioning work. It will launch our coherent and viable mid-term strategy development to propel the organic movement in Europe to 2030. I look forward to seeing you in Riga; together we can empower our vision for organic food and farming.

Sincerely,
Christopher Stopes
IFOAM EU President
POLITICAL HOTSPOT – ORGANIC REGULATION

NO NEED FOR FALSE URGENCY

It is good that the Commission has acknowledged the problems with their proposal and that the Council and Parliament are working hard on making improvements to the proposal. However, IFOAM EU is pushing policy makers to must remember that it’s not only about deciding on the political questions.

At the AGRIFISH Council on 16 March, the diversity of opinions among EU ministers was clear. While acknowledging the progress made under the Latvian Presidency, most ministers also cited areas that require deeper analysis and points that must be addressed in order to reach a coherent final compromise text.

There are still differing opinions on a number of topics, including thresholds, the frequency of controls and import.

On thresholds, the sector position is clearly and strongly against the setting of decertification thresholds that would sanction organic farmers for the actions of their conventional neighbours. IFOAM EU supports the harmonization of the procedures following suspected or confirmed non-compliance, including – but not limited to – findings of non-allowed substances in organic products.

On import, many Member States prefer the compliance approach – meaning the strict application of the EU Regulation worldwide – while a number of countries insist that equivalency approach is the fairest way to deal with developing third countries. IFOAM EU suggests an improved approach to equivalency, which would include the recognition of already-existing locally adapted standards in third countries and would replace the more than 60 control body standards currently accepted. This would drastically decrease the number of standards to be recognised and would avoid forcing organic farmers in developing countries to obtain certification according to EU-developed standards in addition to their local ones.

Many IFOAM EU suggestions, such as putting controls back into the organic regulation, have been taken up and the Latvian Presidency has done a good job moving things forward. However, with the integrity of the EU organic standard and the livelihoods of thousands of organic producers at stake, sufficient time must be spent analysing the practical impact any new legislation would have. The technical details must be analysed properly and their potential impact must be thoroughly evaluated to avoid unforeseen, adverse effects.

The Commission’s need for speed should not jeopardize the quality of the final regulation and principle-driven development of the organic sector. The sector must look to the future and think how standards can reach higher to take account of new issues and new concerns, which is not feasible in the time currently allotted. IFOAM EU has proposals on the table, is eager to deliver concrete solutions and continue to work with the institutions on a practical way forward.

Watch the Council meeting

Jānis Dūklavs, Minister of Agriculture of Latvia, at the AGRIFISH Council on 16 March
POLICY MAKING AT BIOFACH

On the opening day of the world’s leading organic fair, EU policymakers and organic stakeholders met to discuss the future of the organic regulation at the EU Policy Day organised by IFOAM EU & BioFach. The message from the organic movement was clear: Organic is the only sustainable food and farming concept regulated at EU level and despite ongoing financial crisis still shows continuous growths in Europe. The organic regulation must therefore support the dynamic development of the sector and not threaten its growth.

Policy makers echoed sector demand to find constructive solutions: The new European Agriculture Commissioner, Phil Hogan, promised a fresh look and a new, solutions-oriented approach in his keynote address to the opening ceremony, and key EU policymakers repeated their commitment to listen to the sector’s needs. Policy makers must now be held to their words.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- IFOAM EU’s position paper ‘A Roadmap towards sustainable growth of the EU organic sector’ provides a complete overview of the IFOAM EU position on the organic regulation process
- DG Agriculture’s presentation of the state of play of the legislation review – BioFach, February 2015
- Non-binding Council report summarising the progress made under the Italian presidency – December 2014. Read the IFOAM EU press release for further details

BACKGROUND

The review of the European organic regulation started on March 2014 with the Commission presenting its proposal. Since the beginning of the process, IFOAM EU has said that it would be more effective to improve the existing regulation, while pointing out the major issues with the several aspects of the Commission proposal and advocating for an improved proposal. Happily many improvements have been made and everyone – including all the EU institutions – now recognize that the original proposal is unworkable. However, there is now unnecessary pressure to reach a deal quickly, putting the success of the regulation at risk.

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1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 REGULATION

UPDATE ON FOOD AND VETERINARY OFFICE REPORTS

New reports on audits carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission on the organic control systems of Member States and Equivalent Third Countries has been published.

Audits reports are available for France and Spain (2013) and Argentina and Slovakia (2014).

Furthermore, visits to control bodies operating in Turkey and China were carried out and reports on them were published (reports 1, 2 and 3).

The working programme of the FVO for 2015 was also published. DG SANCO will carry out more specific visits.

Highlights of the 2015 programme are:
• Pesticide residue testing in organic farming in Finland, Germany, Poland and United Kingdom
• Organic farming and labelling in Member states: Bulgaria, Denmark, Lithuania and Sweden and in third countries: Canada, India, Israel and four recognised control bodies operating in third countries
• A cross sector report on aquaculture in different Member States and Third Countries will cover additional standards including organic production

PUBLICATION OF THE IMPLEMENTING REGULATION ON SOUTH KOREAN EQUIVALENCE WITH EU


This implementing regulation is based on the current regulation. With the Commission proposal for a new organic regulation the current import regime would be changed into an import system with two alternatives: control bodies and authorities recognised for the purpose of compliance and countries recognised as equivalent under a trade agreement. The organic sector is worried that the Commission’s approach will create a two-tiered system, which would provide trade advantages to developed countries via equivalence deals and, at the same time, disadvantage other imports by requiring strict compliance with EU production rules. All the IFOAM EU recommendations for making the European organic import system fairer and more transparent are available in the updated position paper: Roadmap towards sustainable growth of the EU organic sector.

IFOAM EU MEETING ON AQUACULTURE

On 5–6 February, as follow up of the meeting of the 10 December 2014, the IFOAM EU Organic Aquaculture Expert Group met in London. During this meeting, some clear actions were agreed relating to changes required to the EU organic regulation which will be developed into IFOAM EU positions. If you would like to get involved, please send an email to emanuele.busacca [ at ] ifoam-eu.org.
1.2 POLICY

GMOS

DECISION ON GMO CULTIVATION READY TO ENTER INTO FORCE

The Directive granting Member States the right to ban a GMO or a group of GMOs was approved by the Council on 2 February 2015. The Directive is expected to enter into force in April, after the formal signature at the European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg on 11 March.

This will be a step forward for Member States since the previous safeguard clauses did not have sufficient legal weight, exposing countries bans to litigation. However, this Directive does nothing to solve theproblems with the EU risk assessment and authorisation process and could strengthen the Commission’s resolve to authorise new GMOs, including a GM maize (1507) very soon.

GMO AUTHORISATION SYSTEM REVIEW UPDATE

Mr Juncker has stressed that democratising the GMO authorisation process would be one of his priorities as Commission president. Following this statement, the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Mr Vitielys Andriukaitis, received a clear mandate to review the existing decision-making process within the first six months of 2015.

Mr Andriukaitis has said that the scope of the review will be announced on 22 April. We understand that the review may only cover imports and not include the current procedure for cultivation. Only including GM import for food and feed in the revision would not be a fulfilment of Mr Juncker’s promise to democratize the GM authorisation process. Moreover, revision of GMO risk assessment as conducted by EFSA must be included, as the current risk assessment procedure is based on faulty sampling and does take the diversity of ecosystems, the impacts on key (protected) species and the risks generated by systemic use of GMOs and correlated increased pesticide use (e.g. increase of resistance) into account. Food and farming are intricate systems and the impact of GMO cultivation needs to be evaluated in this complete context.

President Juncker should stick to his promise not to approve GMOs when a (simple) majority of Member States are against it, and review the system accordingly.

FOOD & FARMING

EUROPEAN ORGANIC MARKET GREW 6% IN 2013

The European organic market recorded a growth rate of almost 6% on 2012 figures with retail sales valued at 24.3 billion euros in 2013 (22.2 billion euro in the EU-28) according to the latest edition of The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends 2015 launched by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and IFOAM on 11 February at BioFach in Nürnberg, Germany. The latest data shows Denmark, Luxembourg, and Austria recording the highest per capita spending in the EU. Organic farmland in Europe totalled about 11.5 million hectares in 2013 (10.2 million hectares in the EU-28) constituting 2.4 percent of the continent’s agricultural land in 2013 (5.7% in the EU-28). Europe has more than 330,000 producers with almost 260,000 of them located in the EU-28.

Latest European and global figures
On 30 January IFOAM EU participated in a stakeholder meeting with the new DG SANTE Commissioner, Vytenis Andriukaitis. Gebhard Rossmanith, from the IFOAM EU seed expert group, told the Commissioner that a change of the European seed legislation was urgently needed. He explained why the uniformity requirements are not adapted to open pollinating varieties used in organic farming, and stressed that a new proposal to revise the seed legislation should:

- Recognise the diversity of users and providers of seeds and plant propagating material
- Create rules adapted to the needs of each different sector, also Organic Agriculture and Organic Breeding
- Consider biodiversity a key value, as maintaining and developing plant genetic diversity is key to food security for future generations
- Respect the exchange and informal sale of seeds between farmers, gardeners and users as an (agri) cultural asset
- Ensure fair market access for new population varieties by adapting examination criteria for registration (DUS)
- Adapt examination criteria for varieties derived from organic breeding with regard to value of cultivation and use (VCU)
- Adapt examination criteria with regard to climatic and cultivation conditions, including testing under organic conditions
- Simplify the regulation for varieties for commercial niche markets and allow the registration of new breeds in the context of officially recognised descriptions
- Provide transparency on the breeding techniques used and intellectual property rights of varieties
- Include all major legislative decisions and not leave them to delegated acts

In his reply, the Commissioner showed openness but said that it was uncertain whether a new proposal to revise the seed legislation could be issued anytime soon, or at all in the next five years. The old proposal, rejected by the European Parliament in March 2014, has now officially been withdrawn, following the decision of President Juncker to clear the Commission work programme last December.

It seems that it will take some effort to convince President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans to launch a new process in the Commission to revise the seed legislation, which would likely be preceded by a new impact assessment lasting up to three years.

IFOAM EU continues to push for a rapid review of the seed legislation and the presentation of a better proposal than the previous one.

Mitigating the impact of agriculture on air quality and climate change requires a farm system approach to avoid the negative trade-offs between ecology and economy according to Andreas Gattinger, Head of Climate at the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL). Gattinger was speaking at a European Parliament breakfast meeting of MEPs and experts organised by the European Environmental Bureau and the Swedish civil society platform Air Pollution & Climate Secretariat on 24 February 2015. Whilst there a number of agro-ecological solutions that can be applied across different farming enterprises, Gattinger pointed out the importance of re-integrating livestock and crop operations to improve overall resource use-efficiency.

The recommendations to policymakers are part of a study on solutions for improved nitrogen management conducted by FiBL for IFOAM EU. The study also calls for ambitious ammonia and methane targets to put in place under the review of the EU’s National Emissions Ceilings (NEC) Directive as part of the European Commission’s Clean Air Policy Package. Positions on the Package are currently being developed by the European Parliament and Member States before the EU Institutions enter into negotiations expected in the second part of 2015.
IFOAM EU MEMBER OF THE RURAL NETWORKS ASSEMBLY

The EU Rural Development policy has created two networks, namely the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and the European Innovation Partnership Network for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-network). In order to ensure coordination between the ENRD and the EIP-network, the European Commission has created a Rural Networks Assembly which decides on the strategic framework for both networks. It consists of civil society organisations, research and advisory organisations, and representatives of Member States. In addition, a sub-group of the assembly has been created that specifically deals with the implementation of the EIP-AGRI. IFOAM EU is member of both the assembly and the sub-group.

The first meeting of the assembly decided on the set-up of its governance structure. In his keynote message, Commissioner Phil Hogan highlighted that simplification of rural development policy is a key priority and announced that a robust monitoring system was put in place to measure progress and achievements of Rural Development Policy.

Speaking at an informal meeting of EU Rural Development Directors held in Jurmala, Latvia on 4–6 February organised by the Latvian Council Presidency, IFOAM EU Director Marco Schlüter said that the projected funding for organic farming under the CAP Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) 2014–2020 risks only maintaining the status quo. He added that if we want to make Europe more organic, greater political ambition is needed to increase agricultural sustainability and support the development of short supply chains based on organic principles. He contended that investments in a policy mix of supply and demand side support mechanisms including research and investment funds can really boost the development of organic and agro-ecological approaches.

27 out of 28 Member States are expected to offer organic farming support under their new Rural Development Programmes for the CAP support period 2014–2020 according to the European Commission. This represents 6% of the total EU budget for rural development to 2020.

IFOAM EU INVITED TO INFORMAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS’ MEETING

CAP UPDATE

The European Commission announced the approval of a further 18 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) on 13 February 2015. This follows the adoption of 9 RDPs in December 2014. The remainder of RDPs are expected to be adopted as of mid-2015. This is because many of the previously unapproved RDPs come under the EU budget criteria for 2015 and therefore will be passed after an agreement is reached between the European Parliament and Council on necessary technical revisions to the 2015 budget. These revisions are expected to take place before 1 May 2015. More information about the approved Rural Development Programmes.

CAP UPDATE

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CIVIL SOCIETY MUST PUSH FORWARD NEW SUPPORT MODELS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE UNDER CAP

Organic farming experts have called on civil society to push forward new support models for sustainable agriculture under the Common Agricultural Policy to 2020. Speaking at the conference ‘A Sustainable future for EU farming’ organised by the European Environmental Bureau, the Danish Ecological Council and BirdLife Europe in Brussels on 4 March Jan Plagge, chair of the IFOAM EU’s Farmer Interest Group, called on civil society groups to respond to the failed greening concept by putting public goods at the heart of new CAP support models. These comments were echoed by Laurent Moinet also from IFOAM EU’s Farmers Interest Group at the Good Food and Good Farming Conference 2015 organised by Friends of the Earth and IFOAM EU as part of the Agriculture and Rural Convention, ARC2020, civil society platform and hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee on 10–11 February 2015. At the conference Moinet contended the CAP’s Pillar 2 Rural Development Programmes had been a significant driver in the uptake of sustainable practices, despite remaining a fraction of the overall CAP budget and that it was now time for civil society to mobilise behind organic and like-minded conventional farmers. This is needed to shift to new support models based on environmental performance and wider sustainability that can benefit rural economies and society. Both conferences brought together stakeholders from across civil society to assess the implementation of the reformed CAP 2014–2020 and look towards the next CAP reform.

NEW BROCHURE OF BEST PRACTICES ON ‘TRANSITIONING TOWARDS AGROECOLOGY’ UNDER CAP

IFOAM EU, together with Friends of the Earth Europe, as part of the Agriculture and Rural Convention, ARC2020 civil society platform, have launched a new brochure showcasing farming and food best practices from around Europe: Transitioning Towards Agroecology: Using the CAP to build new food systems.

In the context of the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2014-2020 and in particular new EU Rural Development Programmes, the brochure highlights 10 initiatives. Examples range from marketing for traditional orchards in Poland and an organic beef producer group in Ireland to nutrient management and recycling in the Baltic region and the development of organic fruit and vegetable short supply chains for caterers in the UK.

The examples show how Rural Development Programmes supported under Pillar II of the CAP – although underfunded – remain the best vehicle for supporting the necessary agro-ecological transition. However, significantly more of the CAP budget needs to be invested in these approaches to radically improve the overall sustainability of the food chain and to support farmers and rural communities pioneering agro-ecological approaches.

Agro-ecological practices pioneered by the organic food and farming movement are a more holistic way to farm and produce food than agro-industrial models of food and farming. They are based on the principles of organic farming – health, ecology, fairness and care. More information about learning and innovation in organic and agro-ecological farming can be found in TP Organics’ Action Plan for Innovation and Learning.

Best practices
More information
SUSTAINGAS PROJECT NEWS

Sustainable biogas production in organic farming: project results and impact

The benefits of organic biogas production on organic farms were presented as a sustainable source of renewable energy in the European Union to help reach the European target of producing 20% renewable energy by 2020 at the final event of the SUSTAINGAS project. ‘Organic biogas: generating green energy in our regions’ took place at the Committee of the Regions on 11 March with the support of the Brittany region.

Participants were welcomed by Pierre Karleskind, Vice-President of the Brittany region for EU affairs, sea and coastlines and Marco Schlüter, Director of IFOAM EU. Mr Karleskind reminded the public of the link between climate change and agriculture, and Mr Schlüter pointed out that projects like SUSTAINGAS reaffirm organic farmers’ commitment to be part of the solution to climate change.

During the first panel, three project partners – Michael Tersbøl, Frank Hofmann and Wolfgang Baaske – presented the project results and discussed the sustainability and economic feasibility of organic biogas production. It was underlined that biogas production contributes to closing the nitrogen cycle, and can achieve significant reductions in methane emissions when manure is the main feedstock, and heat is co-generated. Soil fertility, biodiversity and water quality can also be improved through utilising a biogas plant. As the main purpose of biogas production on organic farms is not to produce energy, but to treat manure, the use of energy crops is limited, as is competition to food production.

SUSTAINGAS developed an eco-tool aimed at helping farmers to calculate the potential economic benefits or losses of the introduction of a biogas plant to an organic farm. The analyses conducted shows that organic biogas production can offer additional income to farmers and create employment opportunities. However, this is dependent on the level of public support, e.g. feeding tariffs or investment support).

During the second panel, the opportunities and barriers to the production of sustainable biogas at regional and EU level were presented. Silvia Vivarelli, Project Advisor of Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) presented EASME’s work and provided an overview of biogas related projects co-financed by Intelligent Energy Europe. Benjamin Blumenstein, Research Associate at Kassel University presented an economic evaluation of organic biogas and German perspectives. Mr Blumenstein highlighted the fact that biogas production has a negative image and organic lacks credibility to some. Frédéric Lionneton, President of Agritexia provided an insight into the practical side of organic biogas production and explained the advantages of methanisation and its economic benefits. He added that some aspects can be improved in the future, e.g. the optimisation of spreading and a more frequent soil analysis. Michael Köttner, Director of IBBK started his presentation stating that biogas production in Germany started on organic farms looking for ways to close the nitrogen cycle and work without needing atomic energy or fossil fuels. The current support of biogas production led to perverse effects, e.g. maize which is grown specifically for energy production. He also added that the obstacles for biogas production are expensive technology, difficult logistics, problems with the waste legislation, low compensation tariffs, and many other according to the country and conditions.

The presentations of the event are available on the SUSTAINGAS website.

Project results: brochure and newsletter

‘Sustainable biogas production in organic farming: Project results and impact’ offers an overview of the accomplishments of the SUSTAINGAS project, set up three years ago in response to the lack of standards and information for the production of biogas on organic farms. The project supports the development of organic biogas production by assessing the conditions for its sustainability, barriers and opportunities for farmers, as well as its economic viability. Best practices were identified, sustainability guidelines & handbooks for farmers were produced, and workshops & online training sessions and webinars were held to spread information about organic biogas.

As the project winds down, find out more on the best-practice interactive map, the Bulgarian press conference, training sessions and expert meeting in the last newsletter, now online. The newsletter is available on the website in 7 languages (BG, DE, DK, EN, ES, FR and PL).

For more information, please contact Effimia Chatzinikolaou Effimia.chatzinikolaou [ at ] ifoam-eu.org or visit the project website.
1.3 EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION POLICY / TP ORGANICS

STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AGENDA LAUNCHED AT BIOFACH SCIENCE DAY

TPO’s research and innovation priorities of the European organic sector until 2020 have been published based on broad stakeholder consultation. The new Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda will be used to influence funding priorities of EU and national research programmes.

The document demonstrates that increased research investment for the organic sector has much to offer, not only in terms of designing more sustainable production systems, but also for the design of new and resilient business models. TP Organics therefore demands that at least 10% of the Horizon 2020 research budget for agriculture and food production (Societal Challenge 2) be dedicated to the organic sector.

After the launch of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, speakers from the European Commission and the Enterprise Europe Network gave an overview of the instruments available in Horizon 2020 and Rural Development to fund innovation in the organic sector. Special attention was paid to instruments targeted at SMEs.

Find all presentations on the TP Organics homepage.

CALL FOR FARMERS AND FARM ADVISORS: SET THE PRIORITIES FOR ORGANIC FARMING

With the aim of setting priorities for production, research and innovation in the organic sector, the European Commission is organising a conference on 28–29 May 2015 in Milan and has launched a call for organic farmers and organic farm advisers interested in participating.

The call is open until 25 March 2015.

In addition to plenary sessions, there will be 5 parallel sessions on the following topics:

- Plant production, including soil and plant protection issues
- Seed
- Animal production, including breeding, feed, aquaculture
- Food and feed processing
- Means of stimulating the exchange of knowledge

For the plenary sessions interpretation will be provided in English, French, German and Italian, whereas the language of the parallel sessions will be English only. Therefore, the applicants should be able to communicate English.

The conference takes place in the context of the Universal Exhibition in Milan “Feeding the planet – energy for life” (Expo Milano 2015).

Applicants are invited to express their interest by writing to AGRI-B4@ec.europa.eu

More information is available on the EIP-AGRI website.
**EIP-AGRI UPDATE**

*Increasing production and yield of protein crops*

Based on the work of the Focus Group on Protein Crops, the EIP-AGRI Service Point published a brochure on how production of soy bean, fava beans and other protein crops can be increased in Europe. This brochure highlights the current challenges and provides examples of what is already going on, including projects in France and Germany that also address organic farming.

**Read and download the brochure**

*New EIP-AGRI Focus Groups expected*

Two new EIP-AGRI Focus Groups will be launched in the first half of 2015. The topics will be:
- Innovative solutions to water scarcity at farm level
- New entrants in farming: lessons to foster innovation and entrepreneurship

Focus Groups are temporary groups, consisting of 20 researchers and practitioners, which explore innovative practices and identify research needs in specific areas. The call for participants for the two forthcoming Focus Groups will be announced through the EIP-AGRI newsletter and website.

**OK-Net Arable: Exchanging Knowledge to Improve Organic Arable Cropping**

Coordinated by IFOAM EU and funded by Horizon 2020, the OK-Net Arable project aims to improve the exchange of knowledge among farmers, farm advisers and scientists to increase productivity and quality in organic arable cropping all over Europe. The project started in March 2015 and will last for 3 years.

OK-Net Arable has three specific objectives:
- Synthesize the practical and scientific knowledge already available about organic arable farming to identify the best methodology in knowledge exchange and to transmit this knowledge in an easy to understand manner via diverse education materials
- Create a European network of farmer innovation groups. This network will serve to exchange experience and test the education material developed in the project
- Create an online platform for knowledge exchange across Europe unique in organic farming

The consortium consists of 17 partners, covering 13 countries from all corners of Europe.
IFOAM EU KEY SPONSORS 2015

The contributions of sponsors allow IFOAM EU to focus on its most important work – representing organic stakeholders. This funding is a means to co-finance IFOAM EU events, projects and publications and is a highly valued contribution to our work.

WORKING IN THE ORGANIC SECTOR?
COMMITTED TO MAKE EUROPE MORE ORGANIC?

DONATE NOW!

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

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Join our current partners and make your donation!
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3 EVENTS

3.1 PREVIEW OF EVENTS

GMO-FREE CONFERENCE

6–8 May 2015 – Berlin, Germany

Policy makers, economists, scientists and civil society from all over Europe, as well as guests from America, Asia and Africa will discuss the chances of a future agriculture without genetically modified plants and animals.

This three day conference will be held in Berlin and is organised by the governmental network of European GMO-free Regions, the NGO and scientist network and the Danube Soya Association.

Read more on the GM-free conference website

NATURAL & ORGANIC PRODUCTS EUROPE 2015


COME AND SEE IFOAM EU SPEAK AT NATURAL & ORGANIC PRODUCTS EUROPE 2015

IFOAM EU are once again delighted to be supporting the event, and will be hosting a session on Monday, 20 April at 1.25pm–1.55pm in the Natural Products Talks Theatre: Who’s protecting your interests?

Do you know how much of the regulations governing the organic food you produce and market are decided in Brussels? How much the costs you incur are decided by these regulations? And, most importantly, who is fighting for the development and protection of organic at EU level? Find out more about the ins-and-outs of Brussels lobby work and its impact on your business from the organization uniting organic stakeholders across Europe, IFOAM EU.

Natural & Organic Products Europe is a leading natural business event and showcases the very best that the natural and organic world has to offer. Registration for the event is free

This year’s show is shaping up to be the best ever, with thousands of great new products to sample and see from over 600 exhibitors, a brilliant line-up of seminar sessions, fantastic international pavilions and fresh look and feel at our new venue – ExCeL London.

Whether you are looking for new organic food and drink, health and living products or the latest in natural beauty, you will find thousands of products and free business advice at Natural & Organic Products Europe this April.

• Attract new customers and source from the widest selection of big brands, innovative start-ups and best-sellers from around the world that you won’t see at any other trade show!

• FREE seminars covering latest trends, regulations, retailing and innovative products delivered by leading industry figures

• Save time and money – with exclusive show-only offers and thousands of brands all under one roof, just one visit will make discovering the next best-seller so much easier!

• NEW Products! Be the first to find your new best sellers with over 400 innovative products launched exclusively at the show

Stay ahead of growing consumer demand and visit us this 19–20 April at our NEW VENUE EXCEL, London – www.naturalproducts.co.uk

GMO-FREE EUROPE

Future Opportunities and Challenges Conference May 6 to 8, 2015

Join us in Berlin! Register now!
9th EUROPEAN ORGANIC CONGRESS: DESIGNING OUR FUTURE

11–13 June 2015 – Riga, Latvia

Where does the organic movement want to be in 2030? What can we deliver to the society? And most importantly, how will we do so?

This year’s European Organic Congress is dedicated to looking to the future and giving ourselves the means to make it possible, both in the short and long term. First, we will explore how the new organic regulation process and the CAP introduced in 2014 can be used to support the development of organic. Then, the results of the vision 2030 process in which so many of you participated will be shared. We clearly share the common goal of improving that vital system which touches all of us: food and farming. Together we will begin to build practical strategies we will need to achieve the shared goals.

Engage with organic leaders and policymakers from the Latvian and Luxembourgish EU Presidencies, the European Commission and Parliament and take part in designing our organic future. Register now and enjoy an early bird discount up to -30%!

Day I – 11 JUNE: Policies for green growth?

Using the new organic regulation and CAP to generate organic development

Day II – 12 JUNE: Strategies for Vision 2030

Making the vision a reality for the movement, from farmers to processors

Day III – 13 JUNE: Excursion

Visit Latvian organic farms and enjoy rural hospitality

Early bird discount of up to 30% available until 31 March

More information and programme coming soon on the 9th European Organic Congress website

More information and programme: organic-congress-ifoameu.org
Natural & Organic Products Europe
LONDON
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Session Title: Who’s Protecting Your Interests?

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3.2 REVIEW OF EVENTS

IFOAM EU AT BIOFACH 2015

The role of stakeholders in implementing the European Organic Action Plan

On 12 February, Alina Ujupan from the European Commission presented the actions and recommendations outlined in the European Organic Action Plan at IFOAM EU organised session. She said implementation should be a common effort of policy-makers and stakeholders. In his reply, IFOAM EU vice-president Thomas Fertl stated that the Organic Action Plan is not ambitious enough. He regretted that the plan lacks clear objectives, timeframes and a dedicated budget. Furthermore, the plan does not mention if any monitoring or evaluation of the actions is foreseen.

Workshop on sustainable biogas production at BioFach

Marco Schlüter, IFOAM EU Director, and Eric Gall, IFOAM EU Policy Manager, presented the SUSTAINGAS project’s accomplishments at a seminar on 13 February 2015: a tool that can calculate the economic benefits for farmers, sustainability criteria for biogas production, environmental benefits and best practice examples from across Europe. After the presentation of the project, the audience and the speakers discussed the project’s content, the possible adaptation of organic biogas production in developing countries, the uptake of organic biogas production in different European countries as well as the profitability of biogas production.

Seminar on controls

The move of the organic control system to the horizontal legislation of controls on food and feed and the future of organic controls were the focus of an IFOAM EU organised conference at BioFach 2015. Dr. Jürg Sanders from the Thünen-Institut, Dr. Alexander Beck from AöL and Tom Nizet from EOCC presented under the moderation of Emanuele Busacca from IFOAM EU.

Improving processing

At “New challenges for organic Processors and Traders” the latest and most important issues for organic processing sector were presented and debated. From the three Expert Group for Technical Advice in Organic Production reports on processing practices, additives, flavour and processing aids, to the IFOAM EU concept for reaching 100% organic ingredients, as well as an obligatory system for measuring the environmental performance of processors and traders. The discussion, was moderated by Erkki Pöytäniemi from Organic Food Finland, and brought together European processors experts Bavo van den Idsert from BioNext, Dr. Alexander Beck from AöL and Charles Pernin from Synabio.
4 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

20–30 March Pesticide Action Week across Europe

6–8 May GM-free conference
Berlin, Germany

19–20 April Natural Products UK
London, United Kingdom

4–5 June Sustainable Foods Summit: European edition
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

11–12 June 9th European Organic Congress
Riga, Latvia

IFOAM ORGANIC LEADERSHIP COURSE (OLC) EUROPE 2015
First residential session: 12–19 July 2015 in the Netherlands
Second residential session: February 2016 in Germany

Don’t miss this unique opportunity to develop your skills, knowledge and leadership attitude. The IFOAM OLC brings international expertise and vision to a course that will help you attain your personal development goals. Applications are currently being accepted. The deadline is 15 April, so follow the instructions on the OLC Europe page and apply!

Find out more about the leadership course.

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For further information contact your national board member or the office in Brussels.

Editors IFOAM EU Newsletter: Laura Ullmann, Marco Schlüter, Eva Berckmans
Newsletter layout: Diana Jastrzębska, HeroldArt