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Thomas Fertl, IFOAM EU Board Member & Rapporteur for Farming; Michel Reynaud, EOCC Board Member; Matej Hudec, Head of the Agriculture and Fisheries Unit of the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the European Union; Sabine Eigenschink, IFOAM EU Vice President for Regulation and Certification; and Luc Gauduchon, Food R&D Manager, Léa Nature at EU Policy Day at BIOFACH 2017
WELCOME NOTE

After one year and a half of trilogue negotiations, the review of the organic regulation is still on the political agenda. IFOAM EU has always shared the objectives of this process that “aims at removing obstacles to the development of organic production in the EU, guaranteeing fair competition, maintaining or improving consumer confidence and simplify”. But considering the text as it stands now, the new regulation would not provide a significant additional value over the current legal framework. On the contrary, it risks watering down the standards and adding one or two years of uncertainty in the implementation period in addition to the 5 years of uncertainty already due to this review process.

The organic movement – gathered in February in Nuremberg at the world biggest organic trade fair BIOFACH – expects a regulation that supports the current growth of the organic market, and that meets the needs of producers and the expectations of consumers.

The latest EU market data, released at BIOFACH, shows that the organic retail market in the EU-28 grew with 12.6% in 2015, compared to 2014. The market for organic retail sales was valued at 27.1 billion euro. It is one of the few positive economic stories of growing demand for sustainable food in the EU with a market that meets consumer and community expectations for high quality food, and protects and improves the state of the environment. Organic also delivers on the political priorities of the European Union concerning employment, the environment, and sustainable economic development. The organic sector is a dynamic factory of ideas and innovations, which are transferred to both organic and non-organic farmers and the conventional industry at large.

Whilst farmers are increasingly choosing organic and the farmland area saw positive growth in 2015, the figures indicate that these developments in the supply base are not sufficient keep pace with growing consumer demand. The modest increase in the number of organic farmers compared to other actors in the supply chain is a case in point.

The new regulation should therefore build on well-established and functioning parts of the current regulation, which have supported the dynamic organic market and earned the trust of consumers, citizens and policy makers, and address its current well known problems and limitations. We need an organic regulatory framework that addresses the day to day realities of organic operators, but also a EU policy environment that creates the right conditions for farmers to take up more sustainable farming practices and sees the move to organic production an option for their farm business.

This is why the development of organic farming must be a key part of the public debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy launched by the European Commission. We need a new direction for the CAP, namely an approach that puts sustainability at the heart of a policy focused on rewarding and incentivising the delivery of positive environmental and social outcomes at farm level. As a first contribution of this process IFOAM EU, together with its organic farming association members, has called in an Open Letter to the EU Institutions to move the CAP post-2020 to a new model of farm payments which promotes sustainable farming systems (See Political Hotspot and CAP section).

The IFOAM EU’s Vision for transforming food and farming includes a commitment to exponentially increase Europe’s agricultural land managed according to organic principles, providing fresh, seasonal, fairly priced as well as minimally and carefully processed organic food to every European home, workplace and institution. To this end the sustainable development of the organic sector in Europe can only be achieved if the future organic regulation, along with an ambitious EU farming policy, are designed to stimulate a broad transition towards sustainable food systems in Europe, with organic food and farming as a flagship model for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Eduardo Cuoco,
IFOAM EU director
POLITICAL HOTSPOT

COMMISSION PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON CAP POST-2020

2017 will be an important year to decide on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy. On 2 February, the European Commission launched a 12-week public consultation to inform future policy direction of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2020. The consultation, open until 2 May 2017, is set around the aim of modernising and simplifying the CAP. It takes the form of a questionnaire based on a combination of mainly multiple choice and some open-ended questions. The consultation comes after IFOAM EU sent an open letter to the EU Institutions on 19 January 2016, calling for the CAP post-2020 reform to move the policy towards a new model of farm payments which promotes sustainable farming systems (see the CAP section of this newsletter for further details).

IFOAM EU argues that despite improvements over the past 25 years, in particular a greater focus on the development of our rural areas, sustainability is not at the core of the CAP’s architecture (see IFOAM EU’s 2016 study CAP 2014-2020: Organic farming and the prospects for stimulating public goods). IFOAM EU maintains that this makes the CAP ill-equipped to confront the multitude of demands that society makes of farmers and create a more positive environment for diversified markets and balanced rural development. Instead, a fundamentally new approach is needed to set in motion a new deal between farmers and citizens, that strengthens the environmental and socio-economic performance of the agri-food sector.

The consultation results and a Commission impact assessment are intended to inform the Commission’s forthcoming Communication on the next CAP expected to be published in the last quarter of 2017.

Elsewhere the Commission has announced plans for an Evaluation and Fitness Check roadmap of the CAP. This evaluation will look at how different CAP instruments are performing against the general objective of viable food production. The process will inform not only the CAP post-2020 debate, but also the next EU budget post-2020.

Undoubtedly agricultural spending largely based on income support with a limited impact can no longer be justified and the pressure on the EU budget will be greater than ever. However, EU citizens must be aware that a CAP orientated towards producing cheap food for global markets, offers insufficient economic motivation for farmers to provide public goods such as clean water, healthy soils, on-farm biodiversity and employment and high quality jobs.

The organic movement is strongly convinced that a strong budget must be allocated to agriculture, but only by overhauling agricultural spending priorities and fully aligning the EU’s farm policy to the EU’s commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Calls for the next CAP reform to place greater emphasis on risk management tools, such as insurance schemes which aim to address market volatility, mainly seem like good quick fixes, but will inevitably end up promoting further risk and channel public money into the pockets of the financial services industry at further expense of healthy farms, people and planet. The organic movement together with other farmers, civil society groups and industry is ready to work together to transition our Common Agricultural Policy towards the effective delivery of public money for public goods. IFOAM EU calls all its members to participate to the public consultation. Join us in calling for a transformative farming policy in the EU!
1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 REGULATION

UPDATE ON THE GUIDELINES ON ADDITIONAL OFFICIAL CONTROLS FOR UKRAINE, KAZAKHSTAN AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The guidelines on additional official controls applied in 2016 on organic products imported from 10 third countries – Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russian Federation – have been updated.

In 2017, the updated guidelines will only apply to products imported from Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. The guidelines address the following aspects:

- Tracking and identification of all consignments and imported food and feed
- Complete documentation checks at point of entry
- Sampling and analysing for presence of pesticide residues in each incoming consignment at the point of entry

Consignments originating from one of these three countries arriving at the EU border from another third country shall also be concerned by the updated guidelines.

UPDATE ON FOOD AND VETERINARY OFFICE REPORTS

The Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission published new audit reports on the organic control systems of Member States and third countries. FVO audits focus on either EU Member States, or third countries recognised as ‘equivalent’, or control bodies performing controls in third countries. In 2016, audits were carried out in Latvia (June 2016) and Hungary (May-June 2016) to evaluate the control system for organic production and labelling of organic products in these countries.

Following the controls that were performed in EU and non-EU countries in 2012–2014, the Commission published two overview reports on EU Member States and “equivalent” third countries: China, Turkey and Vietnam.

IFOAM EU PUBLISHES INTERPRETATION NOTE ON ART. 91 OF REG. (EC) NO 889/2008

IFOAM EU NEW POSITION PAPER ON CLIMATE CHANGE

IFOAM EU has published its new position paper on the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) and the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation. These proposals, currently discussed in co-decision by the Parliament and Council, are two of the main pillars of the climate change and energy policy package for 2030. The position paper highlights the need for the EU to raise its ambition for 2030, to be in line with its international commitment under the Paris Agreement. IFOAM EU believes that agriculture has potential to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and should do its fair share in the overall EU effort to reduce emissions. Most importantly, IFOAM EU asks for reduced LULUCF flexibility – 190Mt – instead of the proposed 280Mt. Too high a level of flexibility would fail to incentivise action on climate change in the agriculture sector, and would also fail to trigger a transition to more sustainable farming systems and climate-friendly agricultural practices.

Climate change mitigation should not be addressed in isolation of the need to adapt to climate change, nor of animal welfare and all the other environmental impacts of agriculture. To spread the message that organic agriculture can contribute to mitigating GHG emissions, but can also improve the environment on other aspects, IFOAM EU has created a short video explaining the co-benefits of organic agriculture. See the benefits or organic farming visualised in the video!

The agriculture (AGRI) committee of the European Parliament will vote on its opinion on the ESR and LULUCF proposals in early May, while a vote is expected in the lead environment (ENVI) committee at the end of the same month.
Transforming agriculture to combat climate change

WATCH OUR VIDEO

Learn about organic farming's contributions to the fight against climate change on ifoam-eu.org
IFOAM EU SETS OUT ITS VISION FOR AGRICULTURAL PUBLIC GOODS UNDER THE CAP

IFOAM EU, together with its organic farming association members from across Europe, set out a vision for delivering public goods under the next CAP in an open letter to the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan and key EU officials and representatives from the European Parliament and the Agriculture Council. The open letter calls on the EU Institutions to move the CAP post-2020 to a new model of farm payments which promotes sustainable farming systems. The open letter sets out the main parts of IFOAM EU’s new vision paper entitled A CAP for healthy farms, healthy people and healthy planet published in January 2017. These key elements include:

- A public goods payment framework that incentivises and rewards farmers delivering a range of environmental and socio-economic services at farm level (100% EU financed)
- Complementary supporting measures covering issues related to farm advice and extension services, supply chain development, infrastructural investments, innovation, organic farming payments, promotional activities, etc. (nationally co-financed)
- A single pillar structure with one budget, fully orientated to promoting agroecological outcomes – public goods payments representing 80% of the overall EU spending and supporting measures accounting for the remaining 20% by 2034.

Key elements of the IFOAM EU’s vision for public goods under the CAP post-2020 as well as existing positions will be used to prepare IFOAM EU’s submission to the Commission’s 12-week public consultation on the future of the CAP launched in February 2017 (read the political hotspot of this newsletter for further details). For more information about the Vision and how to take part in the consultation, please contact stephen.meredith [at] ifoam-eu.org.

Elsewhere IFOAM EU and 150 other NGOs called on EU leaders to support Good Food and Good Farming Now! in a common statement launched in Brussels on 06 March.

COMMISSION SET OUT PLANS FOR CAP FITNESS CHECK

The Commission has set out initial plans to conduct an Evaluation and Fitness Check of the CAP between March 2017 and June 2018. In a roadmap document published on 15 February the Commission outlines that the evaluation will look at how different CAP instruments (under Pillar 1 and Pillar 2) are performing against the general objective of viable food production and specifically issues related agricultural income and competitiveness and market stability. As part of the Fitness Check an evaluation study will be conducted by external consultants, with the preliminary results used to feed into the forthcoming CAP Communication and Commission’s Impact Assessment of the CAP after 2020 as well as the EU budget or so called Multiannual Financial Framework post-2020. The Fitness Check process is part of the Commission’s Better Regulation Agenda where existing EU legislation is evaluated against five evaluation criteria – effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value.
EU SEES DOUBLE GROWTH IN ORGANIC FOOD MARKET IN 2015, BUT SUPPLY NOT KEEPING PACE WITH DEMAND

The EU market for organic food recorded double digit growth in 2015 with retail sales increasing by 12.6% – valued at 27.1 billion euro (€29.8 billion in Europe). In the past decade, the value of EU market for organic food has almost doubled, with the bloc the second largest single market for organic food globally after the United States (35.8 billion euro). The total area of EU organic farmland was also on the increase in 2015 reaching 11.2 million hectares constituting 6.2% of EU agricultural land. The latest figures indicate that organic production is not keeping pace with demand as there were only modest increases in number of organic producers compared to processors and importers.

Production highlights

- EU organic farmland saw a growth rate of 7.8% on 2014 figures (over 800,000 hectares)
- Permanent grassland accounted for the largest proportion of farmland (5.1 billion hectares), followed arable land (4.7 million hectares) and permanent crops (1.2 million hectares)
- Organic farmers grow by 5% – reaching almost 270,000 in the EU (almost 350,000 in Europe)
- Over 58,000 processors (over 60,000 in Europe) and almost 3,500 importers (about 3,700 in Europe) are part of the organic sector - a growth rate of 12% and 19% respectively in the EU

Market highlights

- The highest market growth was observed in Spain (24.8%), Ireland (23%) and Sweden (20.3%)
- Germany (€8.6 billion) remains the largest EU market, followed by France (€5.5 billion), the UK (€2.6 billion) and Italy (€2.3 billion)
- Per capita consumer spending on organic food has nearly doubled in the last 10 years with consumers in the EU-28 spending about €53.7 per person (€36.4 in Europe) in 2015
- The Danes, for example, spent €191 per capita on organic food, followed by the Swedes with €177

The latest production and market trends for Europe can be explored by country using IFOAM EU’s interactive infographic Organic in Europe. Further information and analysis can be found in The World of Organic Agriculture 2017 published by FiBL and IFOAM in February 2017.
GMOs

MAJORITY OF MEMBER STATES SAYS NO TO GMO CULTIVATION, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSES TO CHANGE THE VOTING PROCESS

A few months ago, the European Commission proposed the authorisation of two GMOs for cultivation (maize Bt11 and 1507), and the renewal of the authorisation of maize MON810.

On 27 January, a majority of Member States voted against these new authorizations, but this was not a sufficient number to reach the qualified majority necessary to stop the authorisation. This vote clearly shows the strong opposition against GMOs in the EU. The European Commission already announced that its propositions will go to the Appeal Committee in March, where Member States experts will vote again. In case of “no opinion” (no qualified majority either in favour or against the proposal), the European Commission will have to decide whether or not they authorize these GMOs.

IFOAM EU strongly urges Member States to vote against any new GMO authorisation for cultivation in the EU. In the absence of efficient coexistence rules at the European level and in countries where those GMOs could be grown, every new GMO authorisation heightens the risk of contamination and significantly increases the costs of remaining GMO-free. It jeopardizes the development of the organic sector, which is GMO-free by definition. It is particularly important that every country with a national ban (17 countries) votes against any new authorisation at the European level. National bans will not be sufficient if more GMOs are authorized at EU level. Nine countries and two regions in the UK have not opted-out from GMO cultivation, which means that GMOs could be cultivated on their territory.

Meanwhile, the European Commission decided to modify this procedure to authorize GMOs (comitology procedure), not to be in a situation of “no opinion” anymore. IFOAM EU and other NGOs wrote an open letter to the Commission President Juncker to ask for more transparency and a voting system taking into account the precautionary principle. On 14 February, the European Commission released its proposition, mainly about a new calculation of the qualified majority. Abstentions would not anymore be taken into account during the vote of the Appeal Committee. A proposal far away from the NGOs’ expectations to improve the process.

MEMBER STATES AGREE WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION: PLANTS OBTAINED FROM CONVENTIONAL BREEDING SHOULD NOT BE PATENTABLE

The European Patent Office (EPO) grants patents for 38 countries in Europe. The EPO is not an EU institution, its members consist of EU Member States. Even though the EPO is not an EU institution, it applies Directive 98/44 on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions as part of its legal basis. The EPO has an extensive interpretation of this text. Even if “essentially biological processes” (conventional non-GM breeding) are excluded from patentability, the EPO has granted patents on products obtained from such processes (e.g. tomato and broccoli cases). This broad interpretation is highly criticized because it fosters patent granting and concentration of power in the seeds sector at the expense of farmers’ rights and cultivated biodiversity.

Last November, the European Commission adopted a legal notice about the interpretation of Directive 98/44. The intention of the EU legislator, with the adoption of this Directive was to exclude products obtained by essentially biological processes from being patented. This important interpretation, supported by IFOAM EU, is not mandatory to the EPO.

On 20 February 2017, the Council of the European Union (Competitiveness), adopted similar conclusions on the intention of the EU legislator towards products from essentially biological processes. Furthermore, the Council urges Member States to “advocate that the practice of the EPO is aligned with these conclusions”. As Member States agree on the interpretation, they now have to make sure this interpretation is enforced by the EPO. A meeting of the administrative board of the EPO is expected in June, and national governments representatives at the EPO should be encouraged to demand that the EPO applies this interpretation, but also that it reduces the scope of the patents granted so that native traits are also excluded from patentability, whatever the breeding process described in the patent.
FOOD, FARMING AND ENVIRONMENT

BAN GLYPHOSATE! SIGN ON TO THE NEW EUROPEAN CITIZEN INITIATIVE

On 25 January, 38 organisations from all over the European Union launched a European citizens’ initiative to “invite the European Commission to propose to member states a ban on glyphosate, to reform the pesticide approval procedure, and to set EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use”.

Glyphosate is the active substance used in many herbicides, notably in Monsanto’s Roundup. Many GMOs are made to be tolerant to glyphosate. In 2015, glyphosate was classified as a “probable carcinogen” by the WHO’s International Agency for the Research on Cancer (IARC). Since then, the renewal of authorization of the molecule in the EU was in middle of a fierce debate. In June 2016, Member States failed to reach a qualified majority against or in favor during the comitology procedure – which the EU executive wants to reform (read the article on GMOs for more information).

The European Commission decided to extend the authorization for 18 additional months. In this context, many European NGOs ask for a ban of the substance, dangerous for human health and the environment.

IFOAM EU supports this citizen initiative, which aims to reduce chemicals in agriculture in favour of the development of more sustainable farming systems. IFOAM EU is of the opinion that plant health should be managed mainly through preventive and indirect measures, such as locally adapted and resistant varieties and crop rotation, instead of through harmful chemicals. At the same time, it is important to reform plant protection legislation to introduce different procedures to authorize synthetic molecules and well-known substances with high natural background.

Take a stand against glyphosate and sign the citizen initiative!

IFOAM EU SETS OUT KEY PRIORITIES FOR ORGANIC SECTOR FOR THE EU FERTILISER LEGISLATION REVIEW

IFOAM EU has published a position paper on the new Commission’s proposal for fertilisers. Key priorities include:

• Terms legally linked to organic farming should be clarified on the labels of organic fertiliser products
• All organic fertiliser components and processes should be clearly labelled with no exemption for quantities below 5%
• Indicative figures should be permitted in the labelling of organic fertilisers
• Mining of phosphate rock with high levels of cadmium should be strictly limited
• Registration of new fertilisers and biostimulants for organic farming should be as straightforward as possible, whilst safeguarding public health and the environment

IFOAM EU’s position will be used to influence the review of EU regulation which is currently under co-decision procedure in the European Parliament and agriculture (AGRI) Council following the launch of Commission proposals in March 2016 as part the EU Circular Economy agenda.
MAKE EUROPE RECOGNIZE SOIL AS A COMMON GOOD

Sign and share People4Soil’s European citizen’s initiative

The aim of the People4Soil initiative is to have soil recognised as a common good by putting pressure on the European institutions to adopt specific legislation on soil protection. At the moment, soil is not subject to a coherent set of rules in the Union; the proposal for a Soil Framework Directive was withdrawn in May 2014 after it ran into a blocking minority in the Council for eight years. Existing EU policies in other areas are not sufficient to ensure an adequate level of protection for all soils in Europe. Europe should recognize soil as a common good that is essential for our lives and must take on the sustainable management of soil.

Following recognition as a European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI), People4Soil is now working to collect 1 million signatures. When 1 million citizens have done so People4Soil will exercise the civil right to recommend EU legislation via the European Citizen’s Initiative.

Take action now!

People4Soil is a free and open network of European NGOs, research institutes, farmers’ associations and environmental groups that is concerned about the increasing degradation of soils both in the EU and at global level.

Get informed on why soil matters

OUR FUTURE IS IN DANGER. SAVE THE SOIL WITH YOUR SIGNATURE.

Each passing minute, the soil is assaulted, suffocated, contaminated, exploited, poisoned, mistreated, and depleted.

Sign the petition www.people4soil.eu
1.3 EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION POLICY

THE INTERNET OF THINGS GETS CLOSER TO YOUR PLATE

IFOAM EU is embarking on a new Horizon 2020 project entitled the Internet of Food & Farm 2020 (IoF2020) that investigates and fosters a large-scale implementation of Internet-of-Things in the European farming and food sector. The project that will run for four years has the potential to bring a shift in this domain by drastically improving productivity and sustainability. IoF2020 focusses on 19 use cases spread throughout Europe with 14% of trial budget allocated to organic farming. Taking into account needs and obstacles of farmers, the project provides solutions to 5 agri-food areas: arable farming, dairy, meat, vegetables and fruits. Learn more about the trials and receive project updates on the IoF2020 website.

IMPROVE ORGANIC PRODUCTION BY JOINING THE OK-NET ARABLE ONLINE COURSE

The OK-Net Arable project aims at increasing the productivity and quality of organic arable farming in Europe, by improving exchange of knowledge among farmers, farm advisers and scientists. In this framework an online course introducing material collected and produced by the project will be delivered.

The objective of this three-month course is to enable students and professionals to familiarize themselves with the latest insights and concepts of organic arable farming and to provide them with new tools that offer practical solutions for tackling difficulties in organic production.

The course is free and will start on 3 April 2017. Candidatures (Application form + CV) should be sent to the following address: oknet [@] iamb.it. Visit the OK-Net Arable website for more information.

EIP-AGRI UPDATE

NEW FOCUS GROUPS

EIP-AGRI has launched two new Focus Groups. The topics are:

- Grazing for carbon: The Focus Group will explore management practices and business models for increasing the soil carbon content from grazing systems
- New forest practices and tools for adaptation and mitigation of climate change

Are you a livestock farmer, forest manager or researcher in one of these areas? Apply for a seat in the Focus Groups before 23 March.

The projects ‘The Internet of Food & Farm 2020’ and ‘OK-Net Arable’ are funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union under the Grant Agreement no. 731884
EIP-AGRI WORKSHOP TOOLS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PERFORMANCE

On 7–8 February, the EIP-AGRI workshop ‘Tools for environmental farm performance’ took place in Zagreb, Croatia. The aim of the workshop was to stimulate the uptake of environmental sustainability tools that have already been tested in various initiatives, such as SMART and HNV-link. Fiona Marty from FNAB took part on behalf of IFOAM EU. She stressed the need for a systems approach when assessing sustainability. Socio-economic aspects, landscape conservation and animal welfare should be equally considered along with environmental performance. Fiona also made the point that IT tools cannot replace on-site assessment. IT tools only provide additional support for work on the ground. All presentations of the workshop are available.

EIP-AGRI SEMINAR ‘DIGITAL INNOVATION HUBS: MAINSTREAMING DIGITAL AGRICULTURE’

ICT is developing faster than ever and agriculture, including organics, needs to take full advantage of the “digital revolution”. Farmers, entrepreneurs and ICT developers are invited to apply for the EIP-AGRI seminar ‘Digital Innovation Hubs: mainstreaming digital agriculture’ which will take place 1–2 June 2017 in Kilkenny, Ireland. Apply before 8 March 2017.

NEW EIP-AGRI PUBLICATIONS

The EIP-AGRI Service Point has made two new publications

- **Smart solutions for on-farm water management**: Climate change is forcing farmers to rethink how to produce their crops, breed their animals and manage their farms. The new EIP-AGRI brochure on Water management offers ideas for innovative strategies that can be applied on the farm.
- **Farm benchmarking data to improve productivity and sustainability**: This Focus Group report investigates how sharing farm data and benchmarking can help farmers to improve their farm productivity and sustainability.
11th EUROPEAN ORGANIC CONGRESS
5–7 SEPTEMBER 2017
TALLINN, ESTONIA

Transforming food & farming
- Organic on every table
- A holistic answer for food & agriculture
- Fair & transparent food chains

More information soon on organic-congress-ifoameu.org
SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 5TH ORGANIC PROCESSING CONFERENCE

Following the success of the 4th Organic Processing Conference that gathered more than 140 participants from 18 countries, IFOAM EU is already planning the 5th edition.

At the 2016 conference, policy makers and organic stakeholders from all over the EU discussed topics such as the improvement of environmental performance in the organic food chain, the integrity of the supply chain, new market trends and the development of EU policies. The 4th Organic Processing Conference took place 24–25 November 2016 in Sevilla, Spain and was organised by IFOAM EU and Ecovalia.

The 5th Organic Processing Conference will take place at the beginning of 2018, in close connection with BioBeurs, the Dutch Organic Trade Fair.

SAVE THE DATE

5TH ORGANIC PROCESSING CONFERENCE
January 2018
Zwolle, The Netherlands

Participants to the 4th Organic Processing Conference gathered in the beautiful Sevilla, Spain, to network and exchange with organic business leaders, and to get informed on the latest organic supply chain developments, market trends & EU policies.

All pictures on these pages are taken by Ecovalia
2.1 REVIEW OF EVENTS

SME ORGANICS: STAKEHOLDERS AND POLICY-MAKERS LEARN ABOUT ORGANIC ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT IN ITALY

6–8 February 2017, Puglia, Italy

IFOAM EU together with other project partners and regional stakeholders travelled to Puglia, in the South of Italy, for the third interregional Field Visit of the SME ORGANICS project. The visit was hosted by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (IAMB) which is part of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) and the regional Government of Puglia.

On Day 1 project partners had the opportunity at CIHEAM-IAMB to exchange on different regional examples regarding training and advice deemed to be of interest in the development of partners’ regional organic plans. Partners also discussed the latest developments in the project’s implementation.

This was followed by plenary sessions with regional stakeholders on Day 2 at the Government of Puglia. Here participants learned about the policy support options available to producers and SMEs, and best practice initiatives by organic stakeholders in the Puglia region. This included the development of an observatory for monitoring the development of organic farming in the region and a forum for bringing together social agriculture initiatives amongst other. Participants also had the chance to visit regional organic SMEs including olive oil processing, pasta production and an agri-tourism business.

The final day included discussions and exchange, facilitated by Stephen Meredith, IFOAM EU Deputy Policy Manager and Nic Lampkin, Executive Director of the Organic Research Centre, on training and advice for the organic sector at different stages in the food chain and a series of break-out sessions on action plan thematic areas. The next field visit will also take place in Italy, in the Lombardy region in April 2017.

Elsewhere IFOAM EU hosted a special SME ORGANICS session at BIOFACH on 16 February 2017. An overview of this session can be found under the BIOFACH event review in this newsletter.

SME ORGANICS seeks to improve policies and programmes under the EU’s Investment for Growth and Jobs goal in order to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the SMEs in the organic sector of the participating regions. The project aims both at enhancing entrepreneurship but also at supporting existing SMEs in improving their performance. Learn more about SME Organics.
EXPERTS DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FARMING – SOLMACC SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

14 February 2017, Nuremberg, Germany

How can the use of climate friendly farming practices be scaled up in order to make a contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation? To address this question, 17 experts with backgrounds in research, retail, and processing gathered to develop potential strategies.

The event started with presentations about the benefits of the climate friendly practices applied in the SOLMACC project, as well as barriers to their use and served as a background for the experts’ talks. Afterwards, the participants discussed potential strategies for communicating with farmers and consumers, as well as possible improvements in existing policy frameworks to help farmers overcome structural and financial barriers for applying climate friendly agriculture practices.

The discussions brought up various ideas, starting from discussing crop-specific implications of climate change with farmers to introducing a climate friendly menu in restaurants. The outcomes of the roundtable will be gathered in a brochure, which will be published during the summer of 2017 on the IFOAM EU and SOLMACC websites.

The meeting was part of the SOLMACC project and its objective was to develop concrete strategies on how to make climate-friendly farming practices more economically viable for farmers, thereby encouraging their wider uptake. The SOLMACC project aims at demonstrating that by applying optimised farming practices organic farming can contribute even more to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Visit the SOLMACC website to find all the presentations from the event, learn more about the project or read the latest SOLMACC newsletter.

FUTURE ORGANIC LEADERS GRADUATE

14 February 2017, Nuremberg, Germany

Two IFOAM EU staff members, Caterina Berardi and Eva Berckmans, participated to the 2016/2017 European Organic Leadership Course (OLC). Together with ten other graduates they successfully concluded the course and received their certificates during a graduation ceremony, attended by OLC alumni from across the globe and representatives of the IFOAM self-organised structures.

Visit the SOLMACC website to find all the presentations from the event, learn more about the project or read the latest SOLMACC newsletter.

Future organic leaders and OLC alumni gathered at the OLC graduation ceremony

Andre Leu, President of IFOAM - Organics International, addresses representatives of the IFOAM self-organised structures, and OLC alumni

This event is supported by the LIFE programme in the frame of the SOLMACC project (agreement number: LIFE12 ENV/SE/000800) and by the Mercator Foundation Switzerland

IFOAM – Organics International’s Organic Leadership Courses offers a place to soak in knowledge on Organic Agriculture and hone holistic leadership skills in an interactive environment. Providing 150 hours of intensive training in a class of 20 to 26 participants, OLCs are organized in nearly all world regions, each with locally relevant content put into international perspective. More information about the OLC is available on its website.
IFOAM EU organised and participated to numerous events at BIOFACH 2017.

15 February
Practical research for climate protection in organic agriculture

The SOLMACC project coordinated by IFOAM EU was presented at the BIOFACH seminar “Practical research for climate protection in organic agriculture” as an example for the importance of actively involving farmers in agricultural research. The speakers outlined the benefits of working closely with farmers on the topic of climate change in agriculture as it increases their motivation and involvement and the effectiveness of research and development projects.

At the session on the Making the CAP More Sustainable IFOAM EU Board Member Thomas Fertl presented IFOAM EU’s vision for environmental and socio-economic public goods under the CAP. This vision seeks to create a new deal between farmers and citizens by introducing a new model of farm payments which incentivises and rewards public good delivery as part of a sustainable farming systems. This public goods theme was also tackled by Angelika Lischka, Policy Officer Agriculture and Nature Conservation/ Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU). Lischka presented the main findings of a NABU commissioned study setting out a model to create a CAP that delivers on the EU’s biodiversity and other environmental targets taking into account effects on farmers’ income. Finally, Susanne Padel, Senior Programme Manager from the Organic Research Centre, looked at the opportunities and risks for mainstreaming public good delivery under the CAP.

Ecocert presented their biodiversity commitment certification at the session on the environmental performance of organic farming. Together with AÖL, Ecocert warned that if the organic processing industry does not step up its efforts to improve its environmental footprint, it might be outperformed by the conventional industry. German company Lebensbaum raised concerns that organic products might not score well in the Product Environment Footprint methodology currently developed by the European Commission – even though organic farming has far less negative environmental impacts than conventional farming – and that the new scheme may discriminate SMEs against large food corporations.

During IFOAM EU and BIOFACH’s EU Policy Day on the new organic regulation, organic stakeholders representing farmers, processors and traders and certifiers highlighted the shortcomings of the current text being negotiated by the EU Institutions – the Council, the Parliament and the Commission. Proposals on the table on important issues such as the use of seed, the control system, the import regime, the management or residue findings and many others are not yet satisfactory for the sector. The representative of the EU institutions in the panel reminded that all EU legislations – including the organic regulation – have to be in line with the Lisbon Treaty by Spring 2018.
16 February

12 representatives from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries met in the framework of the CEE permanent roundtable. The purpose of the meeting was to get an update on the situation in these countries as well as to inform the participants about fundraising strategy and progress. Most of the participants stated that the market in their countries is growing, but that there is a strong need for professional extension services as well as subsidies that support the development of organic agriculture in the long term. The need for strategies to produce and sell more locally was also mentioned. The roundtable is part of the IFOAM EU capacity building program for its members from CEE countries, aimed at further developing their advocacy capacity and the sustainability of their organizations.

Major private standard-owners were present at the session on cosmetics and textile, and debated possible options on protecting the use of the term organic for non-food products. Different solutions are on the table from the recognition of credible standards by the Commission to better definitions for organic cosmetics and textile in the sectorial legislations. This issue will continue to be discussed in the next months by the recently established IFOAM EU Task Forces on Organic Textile and Cosmetics.

IFOAM EU and the US Organic Trade Association (OTA) co-organised a session on the EU – US organic equivalency agreement. European and American companies’ opinion on the agreement between the two world organic leading markets was very positive because it decreased the bureaucracy and costs regarding certification. Companies also underlined the importance of going towards global multilateral agreements in the medium-term.

During the SME ORGANICS session on Using action plans to develop organics in Europe, Jérôme Cinel, Director of INTERBIO Nouvelle Aquitaine, a French regional organisation for the organic sector and member of the SME ORGANICS consortium, presented the main aims and objectives of the project to improve policies and programmes for enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of the SMEs in the organic sector at regional level through the development of organic action plans. Otto Schmid of the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), a member of the SME ORGANICS consortium for the Swiss region of Aargau, gave an overview about the
strategic important of organic action plans as a tool to create a partnership between policymakers and organic stakeholders in meeting common goals and objectives. Finally, on invitation of the SME ORGANICS Consortium, Andrea Hrabalová of Czech Technology Platform for Organic Agriculture looked at how the action plan concept is being used at national level to develop organic farming in the Czech Republic.

During the OK-Net Arable session at BIOFACH, the OK-Net Arable online knowledge platform was presented, as well as experiences of the Farmer innovation Groups in France. The OK-Net Arable platform provides a wide range of resources, and a virtual meeting place for cross-border learning.

All speakers at the session on "new breeding techniques" agreed that these techniques should be considered as genetic engineering techniques. This means that these techniques would be subject to a risk assessment, traceability and labelling. This is in line with IFOAM EU’s position adopted in December 2015 and would ensure that the organic sector has the choice to avoid using these techniques. IFOAM EU called on the organic movement to urge their national governments to take the concerns raised in the position paper into account, as unregulated genetic engineering techniques would strongly impact the organic sector.

At the event on patents on life, Kultursaat and Bionext reminded the audience that patents on seeds and genes hinder innovation and access to genetic resources, and that this has consequences for breeders, farmers and consumers. TestBiotech welcomed the progress made at the EU political level with the recognition by the Commission and the Council of Ministers that "essentially biological processes" should indeed not be patented, but warned that the European Patent Office should also reduce the scope of the patents so that native traits are excluded from patentability. The organisations present agree that mobilisation should continue until the administrative meeting at the EPO in June 2017.

SME ORGANICS: A DYNAMIC LEARNING PROCESS

Get inspired on using action plans to develop organics in the SME ORGANICS project’s brochure.
17 February

The EU Organic Certifiers Council (EOCC) and IFOAM EU organised a session on **organic controls** to discuss the possible changes on the organic control system that the new organic regulation and the new Official Controls on Food and Feed would bring. All speakers agreed that the annual control should be kept as a minimum basis for a risk-based system. Group certification and trade with Third Countries were also addressed.

On Friday afternoon, IFOAM EU’s session on the Brexit brought together experts to discuss the consequences of the Brexit on organic in the UK and Europe. Panellists noted that, as a consequence of the Brexit, the UK’s organic sector is increasingly working together. Collaboration, both at national and EU-level, is very important with an eye on the uncertainty farmers in the UK are facing. The main concerns that were raised during the session are the future of payments to farmers made through the Common Agriculture Policy, and trade relations with the EU and non-EU countries that have to be renegotiated.

**SCIENCE DAY 2017 – DEFINING THE NEW TP ORGANICS STRATEGY**

17 February, Nuremberg, Germany

TP Organics and TIPI, Technology Innovation Platform of IFOAM – Organics International, organized the 5th edition of the Science Day at BIOFACH. The morning session was devoted to the review of TP Organics’ achievements in the wake of its 10th anniversary and the development of a new long-term strategy. The participants had the chance to put forward their priorities for TP Organics’ advocacy work and suggestions for improving services for members. Based on the outcomes of the workshop, TP Organics will prepare a draft strategy document which will be open for consultation during spring-summer 2017. The final strategy will be presented at the Organic Innovation Days on 15–17 November in Brussels.

In the afternoon, the **TIPI** workshop entitled 100 Questions for Novel Organic Food and Farming Systems took place. Building on the vision and strategic action plan of TIPI, this workshop identified the research gaps in organic food and farming systems in the context of international cooperation.
THE INTERNET OF FOOD & FARM PROJECT KICKS OFF

21–22 February, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

More than 150 participants gathered for the kick-off meeting of the Internet of Food & Farm project (IoF2020) in Amsterdam. The main aim of the project is to ensure a large scale uptake of Internet of Things technologies in the European food & agriculture while also creating new business models and ecosystems to support the application of these technologies. IFOAM EU is a leading partner in the dissemination and communication of the project developments to the organic food & farming sector. An open call will be launched in the second year of the project to involve new actors in the projects, test new solutions and extend the test sites to new case studies. Interested to receive updates about the project? Contact: yulia.barabanova [@] ifoam-eu.org

The project ‘The Internet of Food & Farm 2020’ is funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union under the Grant Agreement no. 731884
IFOAM EU KEY SUPPORTERS 2017

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.

SUPPORT THE ‘KEEPING GMOS OUT OF FOOD’ PROJECT

The ‘Keeping GMOs out of food’ project is a three-year project (2014–2017) aimed at protecting the food chain against GMO contamination. The project aims to develop practical materials for the organic and GM-free sector and lead advocacy work through:

- Analysis of the current legal framework
- Assessment of the socio-economic impact of the cultivation and & of GMOs in the EU
- Lobby meetings and a high level conference
- Practical strategies developed with a roundtable
- Discussion in focussed sector, national and European workshops
- Publication of practical guidelines to avoid GMO contamination in the food chain

IFOAM EU previously released Preventing GMO contamination – An overview of national “coexistence” measures in the EU in the frame of the ‘Keeping GMOs out of food’ project.

For further information, contact pauline.verriere [at] ifoam-eu.org

HELP US TO MAKE EUROPE MORE ORGANIC

Write to communication [at] ifoam-eu.org or call +32 (0)2 808 79 91 to find out which sponsorship opportunities are available and suit your organisation
4 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **2–3 April** Natural & Organic Products Europe
  London, UK

- **20–28 May 2017**
  IFOAM Organic Leadership Course (OLC)
  Europe 2017
  Croatia

- **3 July 2017**
  Agrispin project end conference: Space for Innovation in Agriculture
  Crete, Greece

- **5–7 September 2017**
  11th European Organic Congress
  Tallinn, Estonia

- **22–24 October 2017**
  Natexpo
  Paris, France

- **9–11 November 2017**
  19th Organic World Congress
  New Delhi, India

- **15–16 November 2017**
  Nordic Organic Food Fair 2017
  Malmö, Sweden

- **15–17 November 2017**
  Organic Innovation Days & Horizon 2020 Brokerage Event
  Brussels, Belgium