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WELCOME NOTE

Dear reader,

It could have been worse, but there are no real achievements on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This is the case for both the vote in the Plenary of the European Parliament on 13 March and the adoption of Council Conclusions on 19 March.

The “Farms instead of factories” human chain around the Parliament in Strasbourg made the message clear: EU citizens want their tax money to be spent for farmers who maintain diverse landscapes, take care of natural resources and ensure employment in rural areas. For the first time the European Parliament has law making powers in the CAP reform process, but representatives of EU citizens missed their chance to vote for a real shift towards a substantially reformed, greener and fairer CAP. The Council of Agriculture Ministers continued its course of green-washing instead of greening the CAP.

Maybe the pressure was not high enough, as most media attention in the last days was given to food scandals, to the economic crisis and related unemployment, to the debate about the EU multiannual financial framework and question how much tax money should be spent and in which way in the years 2014-2020. But the CAP is the missing piece: The CAP is the European Policy that takes up the largest part of the EU budget. This money could be used effectively by the EU to supporting farming that produces good food, provides employment and brings the European rural areas out of the economic and environmental crisis, and moreover is less likely to produce scandals.

All is not lost, as the European institutions are entering trilogue negotiations in April. We must now raise hell to defend the few good pieces that came out of the Parliament vote such as the package of greening measures, the minimum spending of 25% of the Rural Development (RD) budget for agri-environment-climate and organic support, and the combination of other RD measures with organic support. We must continue to question the use of tax money to finance insurance schemes instead of sustainable development of farms and rural society. And we must prepare thoroughly for the discussions in our countries and regions on how to implement the CAP.

But is also time to look beyond agriculture policies for ways to support organic farming and the IFOAM EU Training Days in Ireland on 23-25 April will provide an opportunity to do so.

Andrea Ferrante,
Vice President of IFOAM EU Group
EU LEADERS MISS OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT DECISIVE MOVES TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE CAP

Ahead of political negotiations between the EU institutions on CAP reform, Farm Ministers and MEPs have missed a real opportunity to shift the EU food and farming towards greater sustainability.

Council and Parliament positions call for farmers to fulfil greening, but opt for weaker measures and include exemptions

Both Ministers and the Parliament support the principle of Pillar 1 greening. In a surprise move, MEPs chose to revert back to the Commission’s proposals, removing the equivalency mechanisms introduced by the Agriculture Committee that would have made agri-environment schemes and questionable certification automatically eligible for greening payments. In the Council, Ministers agreed to link greening requirements to the basic payment through stricter sanctions. However, both institutions weakened the Commission’s proposed greening measures. Ministers even supported a number of questionable exemptions that would allow member states to side-step a solid greening. Under both positions the results see organic farmers still automatically receiving greening payments in recognition of their enhanced environmental delivery under Pillar 1.

Different positions on advanced sustainability under Pillar 2

The Council and Parliament positions on support for advanced sustainability measures under Pillar 2 are different. Whereas MEPs voted against allowing farmers to be funded for exactly the same greening practices in the same area through both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2, Ministers took the opposite approach. This move could threaten money available for measures that deliver advanced environmental and socio-economic benefits.

MEPs also failed to distinguish between automatic greening payments for organic farmers under Pillar 1 and support for organic production support payments under Pillar 2 which fall outside the scope of greening. The result is that the calculation of organic farming support payments could be based on Pillar 1 greening. On the other hand, the agreement reached by Ministers failed to allocate minimum spending for the environment or prioritise organic farming. In contrast, MEPs voted to maintain a legally binding minimum spending of 25% of Pillar 2 funding for organic farming and agri-environment-climate measures as well as higher investment support for agro-ecological approaches and organic farming.

At the same time both Institutions unfortunately supported the introduction of costly insurance schemes and an income stabilisation tool which could put a significant strain on money for measures that deliver advanced environmental and socio-economic benefits.

Possibility to increase Pillar 1 funding at the expense of Pillar 2 funding

Farm Ministers and MEPs also decided that member states should have the option to move up to 15% of Pillar 1 funding to Pillar 2 (subject to co-financing requirements). In a backward step both Institutions agree that Member States should be able to shift Pillar 2 funds to Pillar 1. Here the Parliament opts to allow Member States with direct payments below the EU average to move 10% of rural development funding to direct payments, while the Ministers go even further by permitting Member States to shift up to 15% of Pillar 2 funds to Pillar 1, with an additional 10% allowance for Member States with direct payments below the EU average.

EU leaders remain committed to reaching a final decision on CAP reform by the end of the Irish EU Presidency in June, with 30 negotiation meetings between the Parliament, Council and Commission scheduled between 11 April and 21 June.

IFOAM EU will continue to fight for a greener and fairer CAP throughout the negotiations and in Member States. If you would like to take part in our activities on the CAP and supporting organic farming in Europe, join us at our Sustainable Rural Development Training Days in Ireland between 23 and 25 April. Or, keep up to date on our advocacy work and campaigning activities and by visiting the thinkingCAP blog.
1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 EU ORGANIC REGULATION 834/2007

IFOAM EU CRITICISES THE CONTROL DOCUMENT APPROVED BY STANDING COMMITTEE ON ORGANIC FARMING

The Commission’s proposal to amend regulation (EC) No 889/2008 as regards supervision and controls was approved at the Standing committee on organic farming meeting on 12-13 March. It means that a new implementing regulation will be published in the coming days and important amendments in the control system will be applied starting from 2014. At the previous standing committee the Commission proposal did not have a majority from Member States after the IFOAM EU Group opposed the document. The Commission now suggested a slightly improved version.

Nevertheless, IFOAM EU still criticises the adoption of the document as it fears that the document still includes measures that burden the system without enhancing significantly the efficiency of controls, as was communicated in several direct talks and communications to the Commission (1st letter, 2nd letter). We are in particular disappointed that concrete suggestion of the sector on how to improve the Commission’s text were mainly ignored.

Nevertheless, IFOAM EU fully supports the intention of improving the control system – as also requested in the European Court of Auditors special report. However new measures must be proportionate and lead to real improvements in the control system. Unfortunately, the measures will significantly increase burden for all control and supervising authorities without necessarily providing greater better oversight of the organic food chain. Furthermore, we believe it is unfortunate that during an ongoing impact assessment procedure on how to amend the organic regulation 834/2007, new regulations with such widespread impact are introduced without any proper stakeholder consultation.

The main changes are the following:

• New requirements will increase the transfer of information between all the control and supervising actors (Commission, competent authorities, accreditors, control bodies and authorities) and new information will be integrated into the operator’s declaration according to art. 63 of Reg. (EC) No 889/2008.
• The minimum percentage for sampling and analysis of operators has been established (5% of total controlled operators) and a minimum percentage of additional inspection and unannounced inspections have to be conducted (for example, 10% of the total visits must be unannounced).
• Proper rules on rotation of inspectors have to be in force.
• Competent Authorities shall communicate to control bodies a catalogue with the measures to be applied when irregularities or infringements affecting organic status are found.
• Member States must implement procedures to guarantee that information on inspection results and visits is transferred to paying agencies for rural development support measures.
• A huge amount of statistical data will have to be collected by Member States mainly through certification bodies: organic production data will have to be included in the multi-annual control plan and in the annual report that Member States have to prepare and send to Commission according to Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.
TWO WEEKS LEFT TO TELL THE COMMISSION WHAT YOU WANT FOR ORGANIC IN EUROPE

The European Commission’s online consultation is part of the current regulation review kicked off in 2012, which may result in a legal proposal by end of 2013 to amend current Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. This online consultation is of fundamental importance for us in the organic sector and for European citizens.

IFOAM EU has therefore consulted its broad membership and prepared suggested answers aimed at promoting what’s best for keeping organic food and farming alive in Europe.

The deadline is 10 April. Don’t wait!

REGULATION REVIEW PROCESS UPDATE

The next Advisory Group on Organic Farming (AGOF) will take place on 11 April. DG Agriculture Commissioner, Dacian Cioloș, will open discussions, with the only topic to be the organic regulation review. IFOAM EU will participate with a 10-person delegation to bring in the sector perspective. There will also be elections for the chairperson and vice chairperson of the group. The current AGOF chairperson is IFOAM EU President Christopher Stopes, who will be running for a second term.

UPDATED IFOAM EU POSITION ON GREENHOUSES

New topics included in the IFOAM EU position on greenhouses are conversion, soil, fertility, use of peat, CO₂ use, water use, steam sterilisation, energy use and urban farming. The Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production will work on the topic of protected crops in organic during the first half of 2013.

UPATED IFOAM EU DOSSIER ON APPLICATION OF THE EUROPEAN ORGANIC LOGO

This comprehensive publication on the European organic logo incorporates interpretations of EU Regulations and approaches worked out since the obligation of the EU organic logo use is in place. It includes also additional explanation related to new labelling rules of organic wines and feeds.

WATCH IFOAM EU BIOFACH CONTRIBUTIONS:
1.2 POLICY

COUNCIL AGREEMENT ON EU BUDGET 2014-2020 REJECTED BY MEPS

MEPs adopted a non-binding resolution rejecting the agreement reached by Heads of State and governments on the EU Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 at their European Council summit between the 7 and 8 February. The decision paves the way for the European Parliament and the Irish EU Presidency to reopen talks on some parts of the agreement including greater flexibility between different policy areas. These negotiations could have significant implications for allocation of spending under the CAP reform.

IFOAM EU MET AGRICULTURE CHAIR IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

IFOAM EU Director Marco Schlüter and TP Organics Relation Manager Eduardo Cuoco recently met Paolo de Castro, chair of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament. One of the main issues was the result of EP plenary vote on the CAP on 13 March and the upcoming trilogue negotiations between the Parliament, Council and Commission.

The IFOAM EU delegation asked for the Parliament to strongly defend its adopted position of ringfencing 25% of the Rural Development budget for agri-environment-climate measures and organic in 2nd pillar in these negotiations. Moreover, the delegation highlighted that the Parliament position on better use of various rural development measures in combination with support for organic is a positive point to be maintained in the text. IFOAM EU also underlined that it strongly supports the EU Parliament decision to keep greening as a clear set of three measures, such as proposed by the Commission, and not to adopt questionable equivalency mechanisms which would have allowed greening to be side-stepped.

GET INVOLVED IN YOUR NATIONAL/REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Last month we highlighted the importance of how new Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) are implemented in your country and region. This implementation is part of a wider process known as the Common Strategic Partnership, a process that requires all Member States are required to draw up EU multi-fund “Partnership Contracts”. This commits Member States to meet the EU’s targets and priorities for 2020 as expressed in the new RD regulation (articles 4 and 5) and relevant legislation as part of new operational programming for 2014-2020, including in their RDPs.

More information about the process can be found here including individual position papers prepared by the Commission, including recommendations regarding each country’s partnership contract. Some of these position papers include recommendations to support the development of organic farming. Partnership contracts are expected to be submitted by the Member States for Commission approval by the fourth quarter of 2013 and may have a significant impact on how well organic farming is supported in new RDPs. For further details please contact Stephen Meredith stephen.meredith [at] ifoam-eu.org
Environment and agriculture organisations have launched a new campaign today to prevent the further spread of genetically modified (GM) crops in Europe. The European Commission is currently considering reviving talks on 25 new GM-crops for cultivation in Europe – including crops resistant to the pesticide RoundUp and insecticide-producing varieties of GM maize, soybean and sugarbeet. The groups claim that such a move would drastically change farming in Europe, leading to a big increase in pesticide use, contamination of conventional and organic crops and further industrialisation of the countryside. Read more on the new anti-GMO website.

The legislative proposal for new rules for the marketing of seed and propagating material is still under negotiations between the different bodies of the European Commission. The adoption of a revised text by the Commissioners can be expected by mid April at the earliest, with the legislative process to follow. On behalf of IFOAM EU Group IFOAM EU, seed task force member Gebhard Rossmanith took part in the EU Commission advisory group on seed on 8 March. He presented the problems small and medium-sized breeders, farmers and gardeners face if they want to register and market open pollinating varieties, population varieties and landraces.

On 12 March 2013, the European Parliament (EP) adopted its position on ‘accounting rules and action plans on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities related to land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF)’. As implementation of the UNFCCC Durban agreement on climate change, Member States will have to monitor and account for relevant emissions and removals of greenhouse gases related to LULUCF. The EU text includes accounting related to agricultural activities. Moreover, Member States will have to set up climate change action plans. The text was the subject of an informal trilogue in 2012 and still needs to be officially adopted by the Council. Once fully in force, this new legal framework may provide possibilities for Member States to recognise the advantages organic farming provides by stocking carbon in soils.
1.3 EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION POLICY/TP ORGANICS

TP ORGANICS’ PRIORITY TOPICS FOR THE HORIZON 2020 WORK PROGRAMME 2014 / 2015 SENT TO COMMISSION

At the beginning of March, TP Organics has sent a list with 13 priority topics for the first Work Programme (2014 / 2015) of Horizon 2020 to the Commission. These topics were drawn from the Strategic Research Agenda published by TP Organics in 2009 and have been further developed based on discussions and a consultation in 2012-2013.

One of the most prominent proposals is for a European knowledge exchange platform for the organic and low-input food & farming sector. This platform should benefit farmers & companies, both from the organic and conventional sector and promote uptake of agro-ecological innovation. The project will also help research funders and researchers have greater impact on practice.

In line with the themes of TP Organics’ strategic research agenda, the other topics promote the empowerment of rural areas, enhance eco-functional intensification of agriculture and contribute to the production of healthy food.

It is important that the topics be promoted at national level as well. National programme committees have an important voice in the selection of topics at EU level.

You can use TP Organic’s as the basis of your presentation to the programme committee in your country.

HELP SET PRIORITIES FOR ORGANIC FOOD & FARMING RESEARCH

TP Organics is pleased to invite you to the upcoming Stakeholder Forum which will take place on 25 June 2013 in Brussels.

The one-day event will serve as a discussion forum to set the priorities for the organic and low-input food & farming sector for the first Horizon 2020 working programmes and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for “Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability”.

The stakeholders will also have the opportunity to provide input to the updated Strategic Research Agenda of TP Organics to be published at the end of 2014.

Find the draft agenda here
Please register here before 12 June 2013

GOOD FARMING PRACTICES UNDERLINED AT FACCE-JPI MEETING

On 13 March, Bram Moerskops, TP Organics scientific coordinator, participated in the 2nd Stakeholder Advisory Board of FACCE-JPI. During the meeting, TP Organics underlined the role of soil management in climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as the adaptation potential of local traditional plant varieties and animal breeds. Intercropping and crop rotation were presented as ways to increase resilience against erratic weather patterns, pests, diseases and weeds. Furthermore, TP Organics highlighted that innovation is not just about new technology; it can also be new combinations of existing knowledge, new way of cooperating and changes in behaviour. Finally, TP Organics stated that FACE-JPI must better reflect how knowledge can better be brought to end-users (farmers, advisors and companies).

The FACCE-JPI is an important Joint Programming Initiative, which endeavours to align the research funded by EU and Member States in the field of agriculture, food security and climate change for the following programming period and beyond. To this aim FACCE-JPI has recently published its own research agenda. The next action of FACCE-JPI will be the launch of the ERA-Net+ call on climate-smart agriculture at the beginning of October.
Almost 30 experts from throughout Europe met for the workshop organised by the Organic Research Centre in Newbury, UK on 13 March 2013. Problems in current organic market data collection were identified and potential approaches for improvements were discussed.

A key outcome is proposed approaches for improving the quality and scope of collected organic market data in Europe by strengthening of the legal basis in the EU legislation.

The initial results of the workshop will be available soon on the OrganicDataNetwork website and the discussion will continue on the OrganicDataNetwork Forum. The debate on the forum gains special relevance due it is timing and will be used to provide recommendations in the context of the ongoing EU organic regulation review and future Organic Action Plan.

These initiatives are part of the OrganicDataNetwork project, of which IFOAM EU is a participant.

STOAS PROJECT - INTERVIEW WITH HARALD RASCH FROM BIOLOAND BERATUNG

1. **STOAS stands for Sustainability Training for Organic Advisers. What is your role in the project?**
I have actually 3 roles. My colleagues at Bioland Beratung and I are responsible for the curriculum of the four workshops. Next, I am one of the teachers in the course for ‘practising advisers’. Finally, I participated in the course for executive staff. Together with a colleague, I am responsible for the sustainability issue at Bioland Beratung. That’s why I have to keep myself informed as well.

2. **What did you learn at the workshop for executive staff?**
Participants learnt what sustainability means in the context of organic farming and got an overview of the existing tools for sustainability assessment in agriculture. Secondly, I learnt a lot from the exchange between the participants, how sustainability is addressed in other countries and about the diversity of organic farming. I hope the network we created will remain active after the end of the project.

3. **Isn’t the organic sector already sustainable? Why more efforts are needed?**
I can give you one example from the project Pilot-betriebe (pilot farms) which I coordinate. The project showed that organic farming partly performs better than conventional farming when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless, huge differences were found between organic farms as well. This means there is still a big potential for our sector to improve. Not to mention the economic and social pillars of sustainability. We still have a lot of work ahead.

More info about the STOAS project at [www.stoas-project.eu](http://www.stoas-project.eu)

YOUR INPUT ON SUSTAINABLE BIOGAS

IFOAM EU group in cooperation with other partners of the SUSTAINGAS project is collecting input for recommendations of standards for sustainable Biogas production on organic farms. Should your organisation have such a standard under discussion, should another standard for sustainable Biogas exist in your region or if you want to contribute your ideas on the criteria such a standard should consider, please contact antje.koelling[at]ifoam-eu.org.

The SUSTAINGAS project thanks all those who have helped it by filling in the farmer questionnaire!
2 SPONSORSHIP

SUPPORT IFOAM EU GROUP!

Next to membership fees, sponsoring is the only other financial input that can guarantee the carrying out of independent advocacy work and a proper presentation of the organic movement in Brussels.

To gain a wide number of sponsors, the IFOAM EU Group offers a variety of sponsorship options – there is at least one that will fit your needs!

The IFOAM EU Group will be pleased to jointly develop with you the best sponsoring option with you. Get in contact with us to fine-tune your sponsor ideas: Laura.Ullmann@ifoam-eu.org Tel: +32 2 808 79 91

KEY SPONSOR PRESENTATION

IFOAM EU key sponsors 2013:
- ARIZA
- Ecovalia
- Wessanen

ARIZA, Ecovalia and Wessanen show their support for the work of IFOAM EU by a financial cooperation with IFOAM EU throughout 2013. Their money will be used to co-finance IFOAM EU events, projects and publications and is a highly valued contribution to our work.

IFOAM EU SPONSORSHIP IN ACTION!

Sponsorship awards at the 6th European Organic Congress

© John Portelli

5th European Organic Congress

© John Portelli
3 EVENTS

3.1 PREVIEW OF EVENTS

IFOAM EU SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING DAYS EVENT

IFOAM EU is organising a 3-day programme of Sustainable Rural Development Training Days in Ireland on 23-25 April. The programme is co-organised with Irish IFOAM EU members from the Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association and the Organic Trust. In Ireland participants will visit a number of organic farms and businesses in the Leinster region on 23 April. A public seminar and strategy meeting on CAP reform and innovation policy will take place on 24-25 April at European Union House in Dublin with a key focus on the implementation of new rural development programmes 2014-2020 and the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability. An internal meeting of the IFOAM EU farmer sector group will also be held on 25 April. Sustainable Rural Development Training Days is aimed at organic farming associations and other interested stakeholders. Arrangements for travel cost support are possible on request. You can sign up for this event by completing the online registration form.
7TH EUROPEAN ORGANIC CONGRESS

Shaping Europe’s Organic Future Together: Making an impact on the EU organic legal framework within the future CAP (Vilnius, Lithuania - 2-4 July 2013)

Registration open – 20% off if you register before 30 April

2013 will be a key year for organic food and farming. The European Commission launched a review of the European legal and political requirements for organic food and farming, and a legal proposal to amend the current regulation (EC) No 834/2007 may be submitted by the Commission to the European Parliament and Council at the end of 2013. The EU organic action plan from 2004 may also be updated. Together with the reform of the CAP, this will define a new political framework for organic food and farming in the EU.

Contribute to the process: Your input at this congress will be used to feed into the IFOAM EU proposals provided to the Commission. Gathering opinions from and mobilising the European organic sector is thus the focus of the 7th European Organic Congress, organised by the IFOAM EU Group in co-operation with the Lithuanian EU Presidency.

We expect 250 people from the Commission, the European Parliament, Member states, the organic sector and agri-environmental stakeholders. Useful discussions and lectures, excellent networking opportunities and Lithuanian culture await you. Looking forward to seeing you in Vilnius.

July is the right time to act: let’s shape Europe’s Organic Future together

ORGANIC MARKET FORUM

The Organic Marketing Forum (OMF) is an international business to business exhibition as well as a networking and training meeting for companies and organisations from Eastern and Western Europe for a trade exhibition, conference, workshops, networking and excursion. The 8th edition will be held in Warsaw, Poland, from 17-19 June 2013. IFOAM EU is proud to be a patron of this event organised by EkoConnect.
3.2 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **20–30 March**  
  Pesticide action week

- **15 April** (application deadline)  
  IFOAM Academy for Organic Excellence: Cultivating Organic Leadership, Europe – [apply here!](#)  
  Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland

- **23–25 April**  
  IFOAM EU CAP seminar  
  Dublin, Ireland

- **May**  
  Bio Forum 2013  
  Bratislava, Slovakia

- **17–19 June**  
  8th Organic Marketing Forum  
  Warsaw, Poland

- **2–4 July**  
  7th European Organic Congress  
  IFOAM EU in collaboration with the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU  
  Vilnius, Lithuania

- **9–13 October**  
  4th International Conference on Organic Agriculture Sciences (ICOAS)  
  Hungary

- **11–13 October**  
  Natura Food Fair  
  Lodz, Poland

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**THE IFOAM ORGANIC LEADERSHIP COURSE (OLC) EUROPE 2013**

Do not 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. 15 April is the deadline, so apply now!

Find out more about the **Organic Leadership Development Course** and other courses.

First residential session: 14–21 July, 2013 in Dornach, Switzerland.

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This newsletter exists to inform IFOAM members about the work of the IFOAM EU Group and its liaison and coordination office in Brussels. The IFOAM EU Group is the European Regional Group of the worldwide umbrella organisation IFOAM and is responsible for all matters related to organic farming with a Europe-wide scope.


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Please send any comments or contributions to the newsletter to communication@ifoam-eu.org.

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