

International Federation  
of Organic Agriculture Movements  
EU Regional Group

Dacian Cioloş  
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development  
European Commission  
Brussels

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### **Risks of suspension and cuts to organic farming support payments**

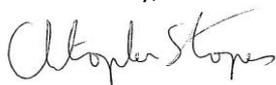
Dear Commissioner,

We wish to highlight our growing concerns about some Member States' intentions not to fully support organic farming during the CAP transitional period and in new rural development programmes (RDPs) to 2020. In Bulgaria, for example, a decision looks likely that all organic payments will be suspended in favour of funding low-level agri-environment measures in 2014, while in Ireland authorities are considering not to extend support to farmers who finish organic support schemes this year. Similarly in England with the new RDP starting from 2016, farmers coming out of current schemes in 2015 could face a year without support. Polish authorities have also drastically slashed their Pillar 2 budget and propose to only partly compensate for conversion and maintenance by introducing a digressive organic support scheme.

A positive environment for organic farming is urgently needed to deliver advanced sustainability outcomes under new RDPs building on Pillar 1 greening. As a result the choices of national and regional authorities over the coming months will highly influence the future development of a more sustainable agriculture and the uptake of agro-ecological approaches. The dual role of organic farming in delivering public goods and rural development objectives as well as meeting EU consumer demand for high quality food in a growing market - valued at EUR 21.8 billion in 2012 - clearly shows the potential for further expansion. We welcome the Commission's recognition of this dual role and its efforts to better promote organic farming in the new CAP as a means to build confidence among existing organic farmers and incentivise further conversion. However the current signals of some Member States look certain to be a backward step in making Europe more organic and supporting green rural economies and job creation. The Commission's new EU Organic Action Plan would be seriously undermined if Member States do not clearly demonstrate their commitment to the long-term development of the organic sector through appropriate rural development support.

Together with Member States the Commission plays a key role in determining the implementation of current and new rural development programmes including support for organic farming. Therefore we call on you and your officials to send a clear message to the Agriculture Council this coming Monday 24 March 2014 to use the new EU Organic Action Plan to build on their current plans for rural development. It is time for all Member States to demonstrate their commitment to make the new CAP a success for the future sustainability of rural communities by supporting organic farming during the transitional period and in new programming to 2020.

Yours sincerely,



Christopher Stopes  
IFOAM EU President