

EIP must recognise the innovative potential of organic farming

European Innovation Partnerships should address food systems in a comprehensive way

Brussels, 29/02/2012 – The IFOAM EU Group (1) welcomes the Communication on European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (2) published by the European Commission today. This new measure opens the potential for knowledge transfer between farmers, researchers and other stakeholders, which is often lacking in European agriculture. Now it is crucial that truly sustainable, comprehensive approaches towards innovation are targeted within the EIP.

Marco Schlüter, Director of the IFOAM EU Group broadly welcomed the Commission's new strategy as a useful tool to drive sustainability in European agriculture. "From the beginning of the discussions about the EIP on agriculture's development the IFOAM EU Group has stressed the importance of efficient, sustainable resource use and soil functionality and the importance of **including all stakeholders in the knowledge transfer process**". He said "We are confident that organic farming will play a key and decisive role in this initiative as organic farmers have already demonstrated that they can be a fundamental source of agricultural innovation in agriculture."

Eduardo Cuoco, Research Coordinator of the IFOAM EU Group, added "The gradual shift towards more resource efficient farming is very much welcome, but it is essential that the recommendations made in the 3rd SCAR foresight report (3), regarding the concepts of **productivity and sufficiency**, are emphasised more in the implementation of the EIP. The EIP must foster an approach that integrates farmers' knowledge and considers the whole food system, including advisory services, marketing and consumption (4). Moreover, it is essential to focus on truly sustainable food and farming systems with proven environmental benefits. This is an area where organic farming practices having taken a pioneering role (5)."

Antje Kölling, Policy Manager of the IFOAM EU Group, pointed out: "The fact that organic farming and an increase in agricultural genetic diversity are recognised as areas for innovative action shows that the still predominant 'productivity' paradigm is slowly moving towards a more comprehensive approach, which takes into consideration broader aspects of sustainability. However, it must be ensured, in the end, that comprehensive practices such as crop rotation and functional biodiversity are considered as key solutions within partnerships, and that EIPs are not taken over by interests of the agri-food industry, but work for the benefits of the whole society."

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NOTES:

- (1) The **IFOAM EU Group** represents more than 300 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU-27, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organisations include: consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies.
- (2) Commission Memo on the EIP "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability": <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/12/147&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>
- (3) European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR): The 3rd SCAR Foresight Exercise Sustainable food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world (February 2011): http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/scar/pdf/scar_feg3_final_report_01_02_2011.pdf
- (4) Implementation Action Plan, TP Organics, 2010: <http://www.tporganics.eu/index.php/actionplan.html>
- (5) Organic food and farming – a system approach to meet the sustainability challenge, IFOAM EU Group 2010: www.ifoam-eu.org/workareas/policy/pdf/IFOAMEU_dossier_organic_farming_system_approach.pdf ; The Contribution of Organic Agriculture to Climate Change Mitigation, IFOAM/IFOAM EU Group, 2009: http://www.ifoam.org/growing_organic/1_arguments_for_organic/environmental_benefits/pdfs/IFOAM-CCMitigation-Web.pdf