

21 September 2020

Letter to Presidents of the European Parliament's Political Groups on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and organic farming as a tool to reach Green Deal targets

Dear Presidents and Vice-Presidents,

As President of IFOAM Organics Europe, the European umbrella organization for organic food and farming, I would like to draw your attention to several issues concerning the CAP Strategic Plan regulation that you are currently negotiating.

To build a sustainable future and resilient societies, the Green Deal must be at the heart of the recovery plan and all public policies. The organic movement fully supports the objectives of the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies to halve pesticide and antibiotic use in agriculture and to reach 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming by 2030. The CAP is a crucial public policy to reach these targets.

An **ambitious environmental and climate ringfencing of the CAP budget for eco-schemes** is key to incentivize and help all farmers to transition to more sustainable practices, to increase the provision of public goods that benefit the environment and European citizens, and to ensure a high-level of ambition and a level-playing field across all Member States.

The use of organic farming in this transformative process is smart and reasonable. On the one hand, the organic system approach delivers the ecosystem services needed for reaching EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity targets. On the other hand, organic agriculture is a well-known and EU regulated food production system, and Member States and stakeholders can make full use of such a well-established and dynamic movement to make this transition to sustainable food systems a reality.

But we would like to underline that the ambition to convert at least one quarter of the farmland to organic farming within the next ten years is only reachable if appropriate measures are available in all Member States to remunerate farmers who deliver this additional environmental performance. When it comes to organic farmers, an appropriate remuneration for their delivery of public goods is crucial, as it is evident that the market for public goods is not functional and cannot be paid only by organic consumers. The Strategic Plans must underpin these goals and help to transition to organic and agroecological farming through both CAP pillars. Conversion and maintenance payments play a crucial role to make this organic system approach competitive for the farmers.

Whereas in theory Member States have the possibility to support organic conversion and maintenance either through rural development measures in article 65 or through eco-schemes in article 28 -or

through a combination of both- organic farmers are concerned that the flexibility given to Member States in the current draft regulation would lead to a decreased level of ambition.

To ensure coherent policy support throughout Europe, Member States should be obligated to include in their CAP Strategic Plans an analysis of the organic sector's production needs, and a national target to increase the share of agricultural land under organic management. The level of this target should be decided at the national level.

In addition, we recommend mentioning in the regulation that payments towards organic conversion and maintenance (under articles 28 and 65) shall exceed the total payments made before 2021, calculated as a yearly average and using constant prices, as proposed in the ENVI opinion voted in February 2019.

A set of policy action is needed to enable both organic production and demand to rise in a balanced way (push-pull approach), and CAP measures to support organic production should go hand in hand with policy measures such as green public procurement (e.g. to increase the share of organic in public canteens), and measures to raise consumers awareness on the benefits of organic farming for biodiversity, soil health, air and water quality.

The organic food and farming movement, widely supported by European consumers and citizens, is committed to do its part to achieve the new CAP's objectives, and the Farm to Fork strategy vision. Hundreds of thousands of organic farmers across Europe are already leading the way to make agriculture fairer and more sustainable, to preserve our soils, water and biodiversity, and to regenerate rural areas. They count on you to ensure that the new CAP will properly acknowledge and support their efforts to make Europe's agriculture greener and to revitalize rural communities.

With Kind regards,

Jan Plagge

IFOAM Organics Europe President

