

## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>CONTENTS</b> .....   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>WELCOME NOTE</b> .....   | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>POLITICAL HOTSPOT</b> .....  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1 NEWS</b> .....   | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.1 POLICY.....   | 4         |
| Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) .....                                    | 4         |
| Organic Regulations .....   | 5         |
| Food Policy .....   | 6         |
| Seeds .....   | 7         |
| Biodiversity, soil and water .....  | 8         |
| Climate Change .....  | 10        |
| Food, Farm and Environment.....   | 11        |
| 1.2 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION .....   | 12        |
| Knowledge for organic .....   | 12        |
| <b>2 IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENT</b> .....                          | <b>17</b> |
| <b>3 EVENTS</b> .....   | <b>21</b> |
| 3.1 PREVIEW OF EVENTS .....   | 21        |
| 3.2 REVIEW OF EVENTS.....   | 24        |
| <b>4 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE</b> ..... | <b>38</b> |
| <b>5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS</b> .....   | <b>38</b> |

## WELCOME NOTE

Dear readers,

On behalf of the European organic movement, I would like to welcome [the new European Organic Action Plan 2021-2027](#), published by the European Commission. With this plan, it has put forward concrete steps to boost organic supply and demand, such as the mandatory target for organic products in sustainable food public procurement. Increasing the share of Research and Innovation (R&I) funding is another crucial and timely step considering the importance of new knowledge and innovative solutions for organic farming systems.

The EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies put organic farming at the heart of a transition to sustainable food systems, with a target to reach 25% organic land on average by 2030. As IFOAM Organics Europe, we look forward to collaborating with relevant institutions and interested stakeholders to make this new Organic Action Plan a success. [Interested readers can learn more in our political hotspot.](#)

This success coincides with the ongoing trilogues between the three EU institutions on the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). On 22-23 March, EU Agriculture Ministers met in person to find compromise elements to meet the European Parliament's demands on the reform of the CAP post-2020. The aim of this two-day meeting was to prepare for the 'super trilogue', scheduled to take place on Friday 26 March. It has been called by the rotating Portuguese Council Presidency to advance the negotiations on the future CAP. Ahead of the 'super trilogue', IFOAM Organics Europe asks negotiators to include a binding national target for organic land in Member States' Strategic Plans and increase ambition on the CAP's Green Architecture. Eco-schemes and pillar 2 of the CAP are complementary and should reward organic farmers for delivering public goods. At the same time, payments for organic conversion eligible under Eco-schemes should be increased.

[I would also like to highlight our participation to the first digital edition of BIOFACH that took place on 17-19 February.](#) With more than 1,000 participants at 5 sessions, it was a huge success for the European organic movement. Among others, we talked about the 25% EU organic land target of the Farm to Fork strategy, the expected changes in the new EU Organic Regulation and the future of organic certification. Also, [TP Organics' Science Day](#) on 'Innovating for organic food processing' attracted a large number of participants. Last but not least, 2 sessions organised by LIVESEED on new plant breeding techniques and innovations on organic seed and plant breeding paved the way for LIVESEED's new EU Router Database.

Launched on 22 March, the new [EU Router Database connecting Member States' organic seed databases](#) is a long-awaited solution for seed suppliers, organic farmers, and national authorities. It will increase the availability of seed of organic varieties and improve the transparency of the European organic seed market by granting farmers across the EU access to a wider assortment of organic seed varieties in their national databases. The database was developed by [FiBL Germany](#).

Finally, I warmly invite you to take part in the European Citizen's Initiative '[Save bees and farmers](#)', ending in June 2021. The initiative aims at phasing out synthetic pesticides by 2035, supporting farmers, and saving bees and nature. If the initiative gathers one million signatures, the European Commission and Parliament must consider turning the campaign's demands into law. [Information about the initiative is available in more than 20 languages.](#)

Thank you all for your contributions!

Organic regards,

Jan Plagge  
IFOAM Organics Europe President



## POLITICAL HOTSPOT

The [new action plan for the development of the organic sector was published](#) on 25 March 2021. IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes this new Organic Action Plan 2021-2027 as it includes important push and pull actions that will contribute to the development of supply of and demand for organic products. It will therefore be an important instrument for reaching the Farm to Fork strategy's target of 25% organic land by 2030.

Jan Plagge, President of IFOAM Organics Europe welcomed that “the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies put organic farming at the heart of a transition to sustainable food systems, with a target to reach 25% organic land on average by 2030 and with the publication of a new EU organic action plan, which will mark a new era for the transformation of our food systems towards organic and agroecology”.

He elaborated on the details adding that “the Commission has put forward concrete steps to boost organic demand such as the €49 million budget for organic within the promotion policies framework as well as the integration of organic products into the minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable public procurement. Given the importance of knowledge in organic food systems and the role that organic practices play in the internalisation of external costs, allocating at least 30% of the Horizon Europe funding for agriculture, forestry and rural areas to topics relevant for the organic sector, as well as carrying out a study on the real price of food and the role of taxation are timely steps forward”.

Our President continued that he already looks forward to the annual EU ‘Organic Day’ which will be an ideal opportunity to take stock of how the organic action plan is performing.

Eduardo Cuoco, Director of IFOAM Organics Europe, elaborated on the Organic Action Plan [in a video](#).

Key take-aways from his message are that “we must not forget the importance involving national, regional and even local actors for this action plan to be as successful as possible in reaching the 25% organic target and transitioning towards more sustainable food systems. This action plan provides tools for Member States to fully tap into the potential of organic farming to regenerate European agriculture and to reconcile farming and nature. Specifically, involvement beyond the EU level is vital for actions related to public procurement, promotion, the implementation of bio-districts, to name but a few”.

Of course, the implementation of the Organic Action Plan will heavily depend on the CAP. On this, our Director added that “this action plan now needs to be implemented by Member States through their national CAP strategic plans. Therefore, the organic movement welcomes that the Commission will ensure Member States make the best use of the possibilities offered by the new CAP to support their national organic sector and that farm advisory services will be strengthened. It is time to properly reward organic farmers as well as conventional farmers transitioning to organic for the benefits they deliver to nature and society, and to properly fund farm advisory systems geared towards organic and other agroecological practices”.

Have a look at our our Director's reaction video and our [infographic on the EU Organic Action Plan](#). The Commission's press conference and Q&A are available on [the Commission's website](#).

IFOAM Organics Europe looks forward to collaborating with relevant institutions and interested stakeholders to make this new organic action plan a success, through concrete and workable actions on the ground.



# 1 NEWS

## 1.1 Policy

### Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

#### CAP negotiations and a 'super trilogue': An update

Agriculture Ministers of the European Union met on 22-23 March to further discuss their position on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). With a 'super trilogue' scheduled tomorrow, Friday 26 March, EU institutions might strike a deal on key aspects of the Strategic Plans regulation, such as the green architecture.

#### Ministers remind CAP recommendations are "non legally binding"

The aim of the two-day Council meeting was to prepare for the 'super trilogue' on 26 March, intended to advancing the negotiations on the future CAP. The Portuguese Presidency is committed to concluding the CAP reform by May.

On Monday, EU AGRIFISH ministers, the ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Member States, reminded that the CAP recommendations published by the Commission last December are "non legally binding" and should rather be considered as guidance. Despite the Commission's efforts to align the CAP with the European Green Deal, Member States are reluctant to increase their level of ambition through CAP funds.

IFOAM Organics Europe reaffirms that a strong link between the CAP and the Green Deal targets is crucial to use the Strategic Plans as an appropriate response to biodiversity, environmental and climate challenges.

#### Social conditionality in the new CAP?

Until now, the Council has been rather reluctant at introducing social conditionality to CAP payments, as proposed by the Parliament. But the Portuguese Presidency wants to push the pillar of social rights and its agri-component.

"I am sure that the new CAP will be the foundation for a fair and inclusive transition" declared Portuguese Agriculture Minister and Council Presidency chair Maria Do Céu Antunes.

#### Friday's super trilogue: last chance for a greener CAP?

Key components of the green architecture have not been decided upon yet by co-legislators. Despite agreeing on the 'no backsliding principle', the European organic movement is concerned that on some aspects, Parliament or Council will try to water down the CAP's environmental ambitions.

On conditionality, the Council is trying to reduce the scope of environmental standards, for example by adding "minimum protection" of wetlands (GAEC 2), or by re-introducing the concept of crop diversification (instead of crop rotation proposed by the Commission in GAEC 8).

The European Parliament, on the other hand, will defend its version of the Eco-scheme article, proposing they also "boost competitiveness" and "enhance economic performance", whereas according to IFOAM Organics Europe, their main goal should be the remuneration of public goods.

Together with several environmental NGOs, we have written a [letter](#) to the Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal, Frans Timmermans, the Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, the Portuguese Presidency and EP rapporteurs. In this letter, we urge co-legislators to deliver an ambitious, green, and fair reform, by incorporating the objectives and targets of the Green Deal into the CAP. We also ask them to adopt adequate instruments to manage and regulate agricultural markets to limit overproduction and to increase the fairness and transparency of supply chains.

### **National Strategic Plans to be submitted before end 2021**

Parallel to the trilogue negotiations, Member States are moving forward with their CAP National Plans and will submit their final version to the Commission within the next months. It will be of major importance that these plans put organic farming and sustainable agriculture at their core.

During the next weeks, IFOAM Organics Europe will work closely with its Interest Group of Organic Farmers (IGOF) to determine the general level of support for organic through national plans in different Member States.

For more information on the CAP and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please contact [lena.brisset@organicseurope.bio](mailto:lena.brisset@organicseurope.bio). Please do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

## **Organic Regulations**

### **Publication of two new regulations in the EU Official Journal supplementing Organic Regulation (EU) 2018/848**

The new EU Organic Regulation published in June 2018 will be supplemented and amended by 15 to 20 secondary acts before its entry into force on 1 January 2022.

Two new secondary regulations have been published in the EU Official Journal.

First, Implementing [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/279](#) published on 22 February 2021 establishes additional requirements for the following criteria:

- Procedural steps to be followed by the operator in case of detection of residues of non-allowed products & substances
- Official investigation methodology
- Use of indications in labelling
- Composition and dimension of group of operators (maximum 2,000 members per group)
- Documents and records for groups of operators and notification from the Internal Control Systems (ICS) manager
- Minimum percentages of controls and samplings
- Measures in case of non-established non-compliances
- Exchange of information
- Annex I: National catalogues of measures

Second, Delegated [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/269](#) published on 4 December 2020 adapts the previous Delegated [Regulation \(EU\) 2020/427](#) to the postponement of the application of the new EU Organic Regulation.



Another regulation which amends current Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 was published: [Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/461](#). It is for postponing until 30 June 2021 the possibility for Control Bodies and Authorities to send the EU Commission requests related to their recognition for equivalency purpose.

If you have difficulties following the regulatory developments of the EU's organic sector, [have a look at our dedicated website page listing all current regulations](#).

## Food Policy

### **“Develop a sustainability claim, they said; It will be fun, they said” - IFOAM Organics Europe position paper on substantiating claims & Product Environmental Footprint (PEF)**

The [Farm to Fork strategy](#) reveals that the Commission will set up an EU sustainable food labelling framework, likely as part of the highly anticipated legislative proposal on sustainable food systems. While IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes the idea of a sustainability label, what this sustainability label will look like plays a big role.

In this context, the European organic movement unveiled its [position paper on substantiating claims and the Product Environmental Footprint](#) (PEF). In this paper, IFOAM Organics Europe explains its concerns regarding the PEF as a basis for a sustainability label. Indeed, the PEF does not consider in its impact categories those externalities for which sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming have a positive impact, such as animal welfare, soil fertility, and biodiversity to a large extent.

Also, producing a PEF score requires large amounts of data. While this may be feasible for bigger companies, it is much harder for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to collect primary data. Secondary data could be used as well, but it is not only clearly less precise, it is also particularly hard to come by for organic products.

In light of the above, and considering other concerns highlighted in the position paper, IFOAM Organics Europe concludes that “At this stage, (...) the PEF should only be used on a voluntary basis as an internal tool for companies to evaluate and compare the environmental performance of their products. The PEF may be used cautiously in B2B communication at this stage, if accompanied by other assessment tools, and if on a voluntary basis. However, the PEF should not be used for B2C communication due to (...) several shortcomings”.

For more information on the PEF and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on the issue, please contact [silvia.schmidt@organicseurope.bio](mailto:silvia.schmidt@organicseurope.bio). Please do note that we prioritise our members' requests. For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).

### **IFOAM Organics Europe's expert session on promotion policies during BIOFACH 2021**

During BIOFACH 2021, IFOAM Organics Europe's Food Policy Officer Silvia Schmidt organized an “Ask the Expert” Session on the Commission's promotion policies. Two speakers from the European Commission, Christina Gerstgrasser, Head of Unit for external communication and promotion policy at DG SANTE and Aleksandra Mecilosek, Head of unit for promotion of agricultural products at CHAFEA (the consumers, health, and agriculture and food executive agency), presented the policy. As the



European Commission **earmarked an unprecedented share of the EU promotion policy budget of 2021 to organics**, this session was dedicated to presenting funding opportunities and explaining the application process.

To reach the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies' goals of 25% organic land in the EU by 2030, it is paramount to reach out and engage with consumers. This can be achieved by actively promoting organic and sustainable agricultural practices, which is why the Commission pledged a total €49 million for the promotion of organic and additional funding for sustainable agriculture. Details about the facts and figures as well as the application process were laid out by the speakers.

[To apply for promotion policies, submit your proposal through this portal by 11 May at 17:00 CET.](#)

If you are a member of IFOAM Organics Europe, you can [re-watch the session on our member extranet](#). All members can get more information about promotion policies and how to apply on our [dedicated extranet space](#) with useful information about proposal writing.

For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).



*These sessions are co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

## Seeds

### Secondary legislation on 'Organic Heterogenous Material' finalized

The secondary legislation on Organic Heterogenous Material (OHM) is in the process of being finalized and soon to be published in the journal of the European Union. This piece of legislation defines the rules for the production and marketing of heterogenous material that can be used in organic agriculture from 1 January 2022, for example in the form of seeds.

The act is a product of thorough discussions between the European Commission, seed companies, organic breeders, amateur variety groups as well as Members of the European Parliament, Member States and the organic sector. IFOAM Organics Europe was involved in the process from the beginning and sent several formal letters on this issue and went into discussion with the EU Commission and other stakeholders to make sure that this act reflects the needs and principles of organic agriculture.

The result of this long process and hard work is a legal text that gets many things right and organic agriculture can work with. OHM provides exciting new opportunities for organic. Now it is now up to organic operators to assess what OHM can do for them and integrate it into production processes.

There are several key facts about OHM you should know as part of the organic food system:

- OHM is not a mixture of seeds, but a new category of material characterised by a high level of phenotypic and genetic diversity, designed to evolve and adapt to local growing conditions;
- OHM is not classified as a variety and therefore does not have to be registered as one;



- Instead of registration, operators producing or marketing OHM, notify OHM to their national authority in a simplified procedure;
- Description of characteristics shall include the phenotypic characterisation, agronomic aspects such as yield, yield stability, suitability for low input systems, disease resistance, taste or colour. Reference to the country of breeding or production and description of the pedo-climatic conditions are also essential for operators to assess whether OHM will perform well in a certain region;
- Simplified requirements concern packaging and labelling for small packages (max. quantities defined) for small-scale and amateur use.

IFOAM Organics Europe will inform its members about the final text once its published. For more information on Organic Heterogenous Materials and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on the issue, please contact [martin.sommer@organicseurope.bio](mailto:martin.sommer@organicseurope.bio). Please do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

## **Biodiversity, soil and water**

### **European Commission's Soil Strategy**

Healthy soils are essential to meet climate and biodiversity goals set by the European Green Deal.

As part of the EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030, the Commission's Soil Strategy will update the current strategy to address soil degradation and preserve land resources ('land degradation neutrality').

The new Strategy's goals are:

- Protecting soil fertility,
- Reducing erosion and sealing,
- Increasing organic matter,
- Identifying contaminated sites,
- Restoring degraded soils,
- Defining 'good ecological status' for soils.

Soils are key for organic farmers, and IFOAM Organics Europe will contribute to the Commission's consultation by 27 April 2021.

Do not hesitate to send your input, studies and relevant documentation to [lena.brisset@organicseurope.bio](mailto:lena.brisset@organicseurope.bio).

### **Have your say on future EU policy options on the sustainable use of pesticides: participate in the Commission's public consultation**

The European Commission is looking for stakeholders' feedback to design future policy options for the revision of the Sustainable Use of pesticides Directive (SUD) 2009/128/EC.

While the current SUD is a key instrument to reduce the risks and impact of pesticide on human health and the environment, very limited progress has been made in ten years, mainly due to a lack of implementation. Planned for early 2022, the new SUD legislative proposal will be one of the main tools



to achieve the Farm to Fork strategy's target of a 50% reduction in chemical pesticide use and risks by 2030.

As European organic movement, our key demands include:

- Prioritising organic agriculture in National Action Plans implemented under the SUD;
- Developing coherent indicators on pesticide risks, reflecting the whole plant health strategy adopted by farmers and not only pesticide use;
- A dedicated registration process for natural substances to increase alternatives to chemical pesticides;
- Provisions ensuring the SUD's implementation, such as EU legally binding targets on pesticide use and risks reduction.

IFOAM Organics Europe' contribution will also emphasise the need for effective implementation the SUD to reduce the risks of pesticide contamination of organic food.

We encourage our members to fill in [the questionnaire of the public consultation on the EU Commission's website](#) by 12 April.

Please contact [mathilde.calmels@organicseurope.bio](mailto:mathilde.calmels@organicseurope.bio) for questions on pesticides and natural inputs. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests. For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).

### **The European Commission proposes updated rules for agricultural statistics on pesticides and fertilisers**

The Farm to Fork strategy's ambitions and targets have created needs for new data on pesticide and fertiliser use. In January 2021, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a new Regulation on Statistics on Agricultural Inputs and Outputs (SAIO Regulation), covering data on agricultural production (crops and animal), plant protection products, nutrients and agricultural prices. For the first time, data on organic production and products will be integrated into the data sets to ensure consistency with other agricultural production statistics.

IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes the Commission's proposal as it paves the way for developing coherent indicators for monitoring the implementation of the CAP's environmental measures and the Sustainable Use of pesticides Directive (SUD).

Currently, indicators on pesticides do not provide sufficient information as they focus only on the quantity of pesticides sold, or the number of applications of a product. For the organic movement, it is crucial that the data collected reflects the plant health strategy adopted by farmers, where pesticide use is one element among others (choice of varieties, crop rotation, prevention measures, etc...).

We will continue monitoring the legislative process closely to ensure that these developments are considered by the co-legislators.

Please contact [mathilde.calmels@organicseurope.bio](mailto:mathilde.calmels@organicseurope.bio) for questions on pesticides and natural inputs. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests. For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).



**Help us save bees and farmers - sign the petition to transform Europe's food and farming systems now!**



Do you want to help save bees and farmers? Then add your signature to The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) before the end of June 2021.

The ECI '[Save bees and farmers](#)' aims at phasing out synthetic pesticides by 2035, supporting farmers, and saving bees and nature. If the initiative gathers one million signatures by the end of June 2021, the European Commission and Parliament must consider turning the campaign's demands into law.

You can contribute by signing and sharing the initiative widely within your networks. Have a look at [their website](#) and browse the [initiative's communication materials, including a set of animation videos on why it is crucial to sign this petition](#). Information about the initiative is available in [more than 20 languages](#).

For additional background information, check out [our website](#). IFOAM Organics Europe's members can visit the [member extranet](#) or contact [verena.mitschke@organicseurope.bio](mailto:verena.mitschke@organicseurope.bio) for more details and images for social media.

Join 'Save the bees and farmers' on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and sign it on [www.savebeesandfarmers.eu](http://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu) before the end of June 2021.

## **Climate Change**

**Read EIP-AGRI's brochure on climate-smart agriculture and learn about solutions for resilient farming and forestry**

Farming significantly contributes to climate change with agriculture being responsible for about 10% of greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union. Applying the right farming techniques, such as organic practices, can make a difference.



Focusing on climate-smart agriculture practices, [EIP-AGRI](#) released a [brochure on solutions for resilient farming and forestry](#). It highlights several EIP-AGRI Operational Groups and other innovative projects in which farmers and foresters are developing and testing climate-smart practices that address local challenges.

The [SOLMACC project](#) is among the initiatives presented by EIP-AGRI that help build a more resilient European agriculture and forestry. It serves as an example for how organic can be part of the solution in transforming food and farming systems and fighting against climate change.

“Strategies for organic and low-input farming to mitigate and adapt to climate change” (SOLMACC) demonstrated that farming can be climate-friendly. Between 2013 and 2018, practitioners successfully implemented a combination of optimised organic farming practices to mitigate and adapt to climate change. IFOAM Organic Europe was the project’s day-to-day coordinator.



Read more about climate-smart practices, the SOLMACC project and other [“Climate-smart agriculture: solutions for resilient farming and forestry”](#).



*SOLMACC was supported by the LIFE financial instrument of the European Union under grant agreement number LIFE12 ENV/SE/000800 and the Mercator Foundation Switzerland*

## Food, Farm and Environment

### Policy report "Roots of resilience: Land policy for an agroecological transition in Europe"

A collective of organisations, coming together under the banner of the Nyéléni Europe Food Sovereignty have released a new policy report on access to land named "[Roots of resilience: Land policy for an agroecological transition in Europe](#)".

As Europe enters the 2020s, issues of sustainability will take centre stage with future-oriented policy frameworks such as the European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform – all seeking to rise to the challenges confronting Europe in terms of food production, decent work, economic prosperity and climate change.

Land politics – who controls what land, how it is used, for how long, for what purposes and to whose benefit – is a central pillar of the debate. As politicians across Europe struggle to balance the urgent need for climate action with the need to strengthen equity and popular support for new policies, the risk of societal discord looms large, fuelled by farmer protests, perceptions of ‘Agri-bashing,’ and long-running tensions between conservation movements and agricultural communities.

"[Roots of resilience: Land policy for an agroecological transition in Europe](#)" offers policymakers recommendations to counter these trends and take the goal of increasing access to land for agroecology in Europe seriously.

Read the report "[Roots of resilience: Land policy for an agroecological transition in Europe](#)".



A collective of organisations, coming together under the banner of the Nyéléni Europe published this report. IFOAM Organics Europe contributed by providing content and expertise. This report was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

For more information, [visit www.accesstoland.eu](http://www.accesstoland.eu) or contact [lena.brisset@organicseurope.bio](mailto:lena.brisset@organicseurope.bio).

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

## 1.2 Research and innovation Knowledge for organic

### New router database connects Member States' organic seed databases

A long-awaited solution for seed suppliers, European organic farmers, and national authorities arrived. The new router database will increase the availability of seed of organic varieties and help increase the transparency of the European organic seed market.

In the framework of the Horizon 2020 funded [LIVESEED](#) project, [FiBL-Germany](#) developed the EU-wide router database, open to all interested parties and offering information on:

- Registered seed suppliers
- Links to national organic seed databases
- Organic production regulations
- Information to public-funded projects in the organic seed and breeding sector

Online trainings will take place :

- For national competent authorities on 26 April, from 14:00 to 16:00 CET
- For seed companies/suppliers on 28 April, from 10:00 to 12:00 CET

If you would like to participate, please send a mail for registration for the respective training to [Xenia.Gatzert@fibl.org](mailto:Xenia.Gatzert@fibl.org). Authorities will receive login-data before the training via mail, seed supplier can create an account themselves by visiting [www.seeds4organic.eu](http://www.seeds4organic.eu).

[Read LIVESEED's full press release.](#)

**LIVESEED** is a research project boosting the availability and use of organic seed in Europe. IFOAM Organics Europe and [FiBL-Switzerland](#) coordinate the project. To stay tuned about the latest developments, visit [www.liveseed.eu](http://www.liveseed.eu) and follow @LIVESEEDeu on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)



The database was developed in the framework of the Horizon 2020 funded project LIVESEED. LIVESEED aims to boost organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. IFOAM Organics Europe and FiBL-Switzerland coordinate the project with 50 partners covering 18 EU countries.





*LIVESEED has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727230 and the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation under contract number 17.00090. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

### **Did you miss RELACS' workshop on the replacement of anthelmintics at the Oxford Real Farm Conference? Then check out the project's latest news story!**

On 10 January 2021, [RELACS' project](#) partners [Soil Association](#) and [Scotland's Rural College \(SRUC\)](#) took part in the [Oxford Real Farm Conference 2021](#) for a workshop session on « [Worm Control Without Anthelmintics](#) ».

The event, organised and chaired by Soil Association's Ana Allamand, took place via Zoom, bringing together over 150 participants from across the world.

Its primary focus was discussing the "Replacement of Anthelmintics in Organic Livestock", one of the RELACS project's objectives. It offered participants the opportunity to learn about using bioactive agents as worm control tools, for example heather and *Duddingtonia flagrans*, a natural strain of fungus isolated from the environment.

As anthelmintic resistance becomes an increasing issue for small ruminant farmers, and reducing reliance on contentious inputs and important goal, these insights on worm controls are crucial.

RELACS has summarized the findings of this event in a recently published [news story about the workshop on the replacement of anthelmintics in organic livestock farming](#).

Visit the [RELACS website](#) to learn more and follow the latest project's developments on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) using @RELACSeu and #RELACSeu.



RELACS seeks to promote the development and adoption of environmentally safe and economically viable tools and technologies to reduce the use of external inputs in organic farming systems.

[IFOAM Organics Europe](#) is responsible for the communication and dissemination of project results as well as the coordination of the science-practice-policy dialogue.



*RELACS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773431. The information contained in this communication only reflects the author's view.*

### **Watch RELACS' new project video on copper replacement in Hungarian organic vineyard**

[RELACS](#) just released a new project video on replacing copper in plant protection products in organic viticulture.



In the organic vineyard inherited from his grandfather, vintner and owner Márton Ruppert has been cultivating Blue Frankish grapes since 2016. Over the past two years, Márton has been using tagatose to replace copper in the framework of a RELACS project's experiment.

To better evaluate the effectiveness of tagatose, Márton Ruppert also carried out copper-based treatments in control plantations. According to him, tagatose is effective, useful and can be easily mixed and used in tank mixtures when applied as a powder. Hence, no disadvantage in comparison to common plant protection products with copper content could be found.

In addition to using tagatose, Márton Ruppert implements several other organic practices, such as large row spacing, planting cover crops, and removing unnecessary leaves. This further reduces the number of plant protection treatments on his vineyard significantly.

[Watch the video](#) (English subtitles available) and learn more about the results of the experiment. RELACS' project partner [the Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture \(ÖMKi\)](#) produced this video.

Visit the [RELACS website](#) and follow the latest project's developments on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) using @RELACSeu and #RELACSeu.



RELACS seeks to promote the development and adoption of environmentally safe and economically viable tools and technologies to reduce the use of external inputs in organic farming systems.

[IFOAM Organics Europe](#) is responsible for the communication and dissemination of project results as well as the coordination of the science-practice-policy dialogue.



*RELACS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773431. The information contained in this communication only reflects the author's view.*

### **Funding available for digital innovations - SmartAgriHubs PREPARE open calls**

Since July 2020, SmartAgriHubs opened the RESTART and EXPAND open calls, assigning up to €5,000,000 funding for Digital Innovation Hubs that are supporting diverse stakeholders in the agri-food economy. As of 18 March 2021, SmartAgriHubs announced the launch of a new Open Call, PREPARE, for which €1,200,000 is allocated.

#### **Why should the organic sector take part?**

Digital innovations implemented throughout the organic value chain have a huge potential to contribute to the current and future societal challenges.

SmartAgriHubs' open call is also a unique chance to connect with a wider community and exchange on latest knowledge and expertise.

#### **PREPARE open call**

This new funding opportunity targets **Digital Innovation Hubs<sup>1</sup>** (DIHs) that are supporting organisations in the **planning and definition of Innovation Experiments** for digital transformation in the Agri-food



economy. DIHs can propose activities and services that support companies and/or organisations in the definition and planning of so called “Innovation Experiments”.

### **PREPARE a proposal**

- Proposal text no longer than 2 pages;
- One additional page with requested budget, milestones, and work steps;
- One page presenting the involved DIH team;
- Optional one extra page with a figure, presenting your proposal graphically with timing, main activities and expected results.

### **Timeline and submission**

- Register **to the SmartAgriHubs’ Innovation Portal. It will give you access to all** information needed and direct communication to the community if any questions on the application arise;
- After that, **start applying**;
- The deadline for the PREPARE Open Call is 26 May 2021, 17:00 CET.

### **Any questions about the PREPARE Open Call?**

- Join SmartAgriHubs team on 25/03/2021 at 2pm CET: [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](https://gotowebinar.com);
- Read the call document on the [dedicated page](#) of the SmartAgriHubs website.

### **The RESTART & EXPAND Open Calls are still open with EXTENDED DEADLINES!**

- Read the RESTART call document [here](#)
- Read the EXPAND call document [here](#)
- Read the [RESTART & EXPAND FAQ](#)

### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Digital Innovation Hubs as defined on the Smart Agri Hubs website are public-private partnerships for innovation, providing a mix of different services to their clients. These include technology services such as R&D, provision of lab facilities, testing and validation are mainly the domain of the competence centres. Innovation ecosystem support services include community building lobbying, brokerage, knowledge sharing and advocacy.



SmartAgriHubs is a €20 million EUR project under the Horizon 2020 instrument and brings together a consortium of over 164 partners in the European agri-food sector. The project aims to realise the digitisation of European agriculture by fostering an agricultural innovation ecosystem dedicated to excellence, sustainability, and success.

IFOAM Organics Europe’s role is to connect the dots between SmartAgriHubs and the organic sector, disseminate project outputs and communicate key messages during the project run.



*SmartAgriHubs has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 818182. This communication only reflects the author’s view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*



## Farm fish for the future – Discover FutureEUAqua’s new Instagram page!

[FutureEUAqua](#) is now on [Instagram](#)! Follow the project to learn more about the most recent innovations and challenges in fish farming, to expand your knowledge on the more and less known fish species, and to get to know aquaculture stakeholders. Expect yummy recipes and fun fish facts as well !

Visit the [FutureEUAqua website](#) to learn more and follow the latest project’s developments on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) using #futureeuaqua.

Curious to learn about aquaculture research and innovation? [Subscribe to FutureEUAqua's bi-annual newsletter](#).

[FutureEUAqua](#) promotes sustainable growth of environmentally friendly organic and conventional aquaculture of both major fish species and low trophic level organisms resilient to climate change. [IFOAM Organics Europe’s](#) role in the project is to work on training, capacity building, communication, and dissemination.



*FutureEUAqua has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 817737. This communication only reflects the author’s view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

## Interested in organic aquaculture? Read FutureEUAqua’s report on consumer awareness, perception and acceptance of European aquaculture and production methods

[FutureEUAqua](#) has released a [report on consumer awareness, perception and acceptance of four European aquaculture production systems](#): organic, conventional, recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) and integrated multitrophic aquaculture (IMTA).

The main objective of the report was to assess consumer awareness and perception of feed, products, and aquaculture production methods. A representative sample of 2,500 consumers from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy was taken to fulfil this goal.

The report highlights that **awareness** about aquaculture is generally low on a global scale. However, consumers tend to be more aware of organic and conventional aquaculture than RAS and IMTA. Participants of the survey also scored positively concerning the **perception** of the more familiar organic and conventional production systems. Overall, ratings of organic and conventional aquaculture were higher for people in the upper age group. Organic aquaculture scored best for highly educated females. On top of that, organic production was perceived to have most benefits, such as job creation, improved fish and human health, reliable and affordable food source, and higher nutrition scores. Consumer **acceptance** was higher for organic aquaculture compared to the other three production systems.

[Read the full report.](#)

To learn more, visit [FutureEUAqua’s website](#), follow the latest project’s developments on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) using #futureeuaqua and [subscribe to the bi-annual newsletter](#).





*FutureEUAqua has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 817737. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

## 2 IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENT

### **New contact details for member access requests**

IFOAM Organics Europe members with issues accessing [our member extranet](#) can now contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio) with their questions. We have made this change to streamline all membership requests. Looking forward to hearing from you!

### **Our members can provide input to our new internal strategy soon**

In 2015, we [launched the European organic movement's shared Vision](#). In 2017, a movement-wide strategy culminated in a strategic [Roadmap "Making it Happen"](#), highlighting pathways for stakeholders, policymakers and civil society to transition to sustainable food and farming.

In parallel to the movement-wide strategy, as IFOAM Organics Europe, we developed our internal strategy. Since 2016, this has been a cornerstone of all activities implemented in the annual work programmes.

We are set to start reviewing the progress on achieving our shared vision as a movement and our internal strategy – especially with an eye on the European Union's target of 25% organic land by 2030.

We are eager to get your feedback! In the coming weeks we will publish an online survey through which you can provide your input. We will email you a link for this.

Following this survey, we will hold workshops with the Board, Council and a Strategy Camp including experts and aim to finalise the new internal strategy by the end of 2021. We will keep you posted about key developments on [our member extranet](#) and via direct emails.

Only our members can provide feedback to our internal strategy. For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).

### **[Exclusive for members] Let's discuss organic hot topics**

As a follow-up of the thematic sessions hosted during BIOFACH, we are bringing our members live sessions during which they can exchange with experts.

Once per month, from 14:30 to 15:30 CET, IFOAM Organics Europe will host an online space to learn and exchange on the hot topics of organic agriculture. Upcoming webinars are:

- Wednesday 14 April – The Organic Regulation, hosted by Emanuele Busacca, Regulations Manager at IFOAM Organics Europe



- Wednesday 26 May – A common vision to improve the organic seed sector by 2036 and a roadmap to 100% organic seed in the EU, hosted by Agnes Bruszik, LIVESEED Project Coordinator at IFOAM Organics Europe
- Wednesday 23 June – The organic action plan 2021-2027: actions & actors, hosted by Silvia Schmidt, Food Policy Officer at IFOAM Organics Europe

[Registration is possible on our member extranet!](#)

Are you an IFOAM Organics Europe member who is interested in the sessions but cannot attend them? Do not worry, recordings will be available on the extranet.

Are you interested in these sessions but not an IFOAM Organics Europe member? Contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio) for information about what you can gain from being a member.

**Want to learn more about IFOAM Organics Europe’s present, past and future work? Have a look at our updated 2-pages prospectus!**



IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. We represent organic in European policymaking and advocate for fair, environmentally conscious, healthy, and caring food and farming systems across Europe, in line with [our Vision 2030](#).

To present who we are and what we will do to transform the European food and farming sector, we have recently [updated our prospectus covering our past, present and future work](#).

Read it to learn more about our advocacy work, our milestones, our hot topics for 2021 and beyond, who our stakeholders are and more!



*This publication is co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). This publication only reflects the views of the authors and its sole responsibility lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*



## Listen to first episode of the #Food4EU podcast with IFOAM Organics Europe President Jan Plagge on the European Union's role in shaping the organic market

IFOAM Organics Europe President Jan Plagge spoke during the first episode of the new podcast series on food and farming "[The Food for Europe podcast](#)", launched by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The first episode "[Organics: The European Union's role in shaping the market](#)" focused on introducing organics. Hosts Paul Anderson and Patrick Delfosse interviewed European Commissioner for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski, Irish farmer Trevor Harris and IFOAM Organics Europe President Jan Plagge. Together they discussed the definition of organic, traced the journey of the organic sector and shared their experiences and concerns for the development of the organic sector in the future.

Jan Plagge stated that, "we [do] have not a level playing field for farm decisions. One example is the implementation of the [Common Agricultural Policy] CAP rural development measures in pillar 2. Organic farmers often get less money for better performance than conventional farmers who reduce pesticides, while organic reduce to zero and have 10-20 other benefits. Policymakers need a fair system of indicators showing which farming system delivers best ecosystem services, climate protection and animal welfare in the long term."

[Listen to the entire episode in English, French or German.](#)

This European podcast series will consist of 5 episodes focusing on organic farming as a key part of the Farm to Fork strategy with its 25% organic land target in the EU by 2030. New episodes are released every two weeks in English, French and German and are available on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), Google Podcasts and [SoundCloud](#). Stay tuned for further contributions from the European organic movement!

**Do you have an initiative making Europe more organic? Share it with us and inspire others to transform food and farming systems!**



**ORGANIC ON EVERY TABLE**

**IMPROVE INSPIRE DELIVER**

**FAIR PLAY FAIR PAY**

**HAVE AN INITIATIVE THAT TRANSFORMS FOOD AND FARMING? VISIT [EUORGANIC2030.BIO](https://euorganic2030.bio) TO SEE INSPIRING EXAMPLES AND SUBMIT YOUR OWN!**



This project is co-financed by the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility for this communication lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.



Making Europe more organic has always been the European organic movement's mission. Working towards this goal means leading change, believing in holistic approaches and thriving on interactions with other like-minded initiatives.



That is why, to achieve our ambitious and [shared Vision for organic in 2030](#), IFOAM Organics Europe is collecting successful initiatives and projects that are [transforming food and farming](#) and can be an inspiration to other food and farming actors and policy-makers.

Are you contributing to transforming European food and farming systems? Do you have an initiative that is not older than five years and is helping bring organic on every table, improve organics further, and make the value chains more transparent and fairer?

Then submit your initiative to [EUorganic2030.bio](#)!

If your initiative is in line with our vision, we will upload it and promote it on our social media using #EUorganic2030.

Need inspiration? Have an initiative? [Visit EUorganic2030.bio](#)



*The work of IFOAM Organics Europe on this topic is co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). This page only reflects the views of the authors and its sole responsibility lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided*

### **They make it happen! Generating added value through an organic grass-fed beef quality scheme**

By 2030, the European organic movement wants a fair distribution of value and power in the food supply chain, and the costs and benefits of food production accounted for.

Across Europe, initiatives are already working towards achieving this goal. Get inspired by Liivimaa Lihaveis, an Estonian NGO, which created a government-certified quality scheme uniting Estonian organic beef farmers. The scheme ensures animal welfare, sustains the country's diverse grasslands' biodiversity, and offers producers the highest prices.

Through this organic grass-fed beef quality scheme, Liivimaa Lihveis contributes to generating more added value to organic products, offers better prices to the producers, and helps linking growers and consumers.

Read more about this initiative on [euorganic2030.bio](#), and share it on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Find out how other initiatives are transforming food and farming in Europe on social media using #EUorganic2030.

Learn more about this and other initiatives that are transforming food and farming in Europe and get inspired on [euorganic2030.bio](#).



*The work of IFOAM Organics Europe on this topic is co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). This page only reflects the views of the authors and its sole responsibility lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided*



## Welcoming our new colleague

### Emel Ozturk

IFOAM Organics Europe is excited to welcome their new colleague Emel Ozturk. She joined the Research and Innovation unit as an in-house consultant on 1 March and will provide support for several Horizon 2020 projects, namely [EUREKA](#), [LIVESEED](#), [OK-Net EcoFeed](#) and [ReMIX](#) until November 2021.



Emel is a food engineer with two master's degrees on organic food quality and the socio-economic impact of organic agriculture. Prior to joining IFOAM Organics Europe, she worked at Ecocert Turkey for eight years, where she acquired experience in inspection and certification of organic products. She then completed her Ph.D. at Marche Polytechnic University in Italy on consumer behaviour, focusing on behaviour analysis with neuro-marketing tools, such as Eye Tracker. She will continue to collaborate with the Marche Polytechnic University on different projects.

Emel is a Turkish native who has been living in Italy for the last seven years. She is very excited to join IFOAM Organics Europe and gain new experience

## 3 EVENTS

### 3.1 Preview of events

#### **Interested in organic contaminants in recycled fertilizers? Register to RELACS webinar series!**

3 March 2021 - 22 April 2021, online

The area under organic production is growing, leading to an increased demand for nutrient sources suitable for organic agriculture. The [Research Institute of Organic Agriculture \(FiBL\)](#) is organizing a webinar series in the frame of the [RELACS project](#), themed "Organic contaminants in recycled fertilizers and their fate in soil-plant systems: Knowledge gathering and discussion with organic stakeholders".

The workshop, taking place March-April 2021 in five two-hour sessions, brings together researchers in nutrient recycling and organic stakeholders.

The webinar series will be the opportunity to gather current knowledge on potential risks associated with using recycled fertilizers, learn about their fate in soil-plant systems, examine approaches for a sound risk assessment and discuss options for closing nutrient cycles between society and agriculture as well as their acceptability for organic agriculture.

#### **Short overview of the webinar series**

- Wednesday 3 March: Introduction - Setting the scene
- Thursday 11 March: Organic contaminants and other risks
- Wednesday 17 March: How to recycle nutrients from household wastes and the food industry
- Monday 12 April: How to recycle nutrients from human excreta
- Thursday 22 April: Socioeconomy and final discussion

Register to the webinar series by emailing [kurse@fibl.org](mailto:kurse@fibl.org).



[Have a look at the workshop description and the full programme.](#)

Visit the [RELACS website](#) to learn more and follow the latest project's developments on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) using @RELACSeu and #RELACSeu.



RELACS seeks to promote the development and adoption of environmentally safe and economically viable tools and technologies to reduce the use of external inputs in organic farming systems.

[IFOAM Organics Europe](#) is responsible for the communication and dissemination of project results as well as the coordination of the science-practice-policy dialogue.



*RELACS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773431. The information contained in this communication only reflects the author's view.*

## **BEST ECONOMY forum 2021: Global players meet regional companies**

20-22 April 2021

Why is it that only the business leaders represented in Davos speak for the global economy? Where is the voice of the many dynamic entrepreneurs in all parts of the world who are already implementing solutions for our planet with a new way of doing business?

### **The foundation of the BEST ECONOMY forum**

Initiated by conversations of the BIO hoteliers with their guests about exactly these questions, the idea to create an alternative arose. In discussions with the partner organizations Bioland and Economy for the Common Good, this idea has grown steadily. The entrepreneurs in these organizations are united by their desire to act on their own initiative, to run their businesses in an ecologically sustainable and socially just manner, and not to wait for politics - because the time to establish a new economic model is pressing. This was the impulse for the foundation of the BEST ECONOMY forum - a sustainable alternative to the World Economic Forum.

A three-day event 2019 in Bolzano laid the groundwork for a new - for a sustainable economy that truly deserves the title "sustainable". A manifesto adopted at the event shows a clear plan to be followed over a period of 2, 5 and 10 years to achieve our global goals.

Jan Plagge, President of Bioland e.V. and IFOAM Organics Europe and one of the founders of the BEST ECONOMY forum, was overwhelmed by the number of entrepreneurs participating. "They all recognized that it is urgent time to act." Now it is time to take the manifesto to the broadest level and implement it. And this is precisely why the BEST ECONOMY forum 2021 will take place under the motto "Take action not words!".

According to Jan Plagge at BIOFACH 2021, the global economy and the World Economic Forum are looking for an alternative to solve global problems and are relatively clueless.

The BEST ECONOMY forum is the perfect opportunity to show that there are alternatives. The participating entrepreneurs of the BEST ECONOMY forum have been showing for years that it is possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 1.5° target set by politics, more



Rue du Commerce 124 – 1000 Brussels – Belgium – Phone: +32 2 280 12 23 – Email: [info@organicseurope.bio](mailto:info@organicseurope.bio)

---

precisely by the United Nations (UN). What is missing are collaborations across all sectors and company sizes, as well as energetic, political decisions.

### **Aligning the world economy sustainably - Global players meet sustainable pioneers**

To make a difference in the global economy, a broad cooperation is needed. Through the cooperation with many entrepreneurs who already make the difference now or in the near future and also the dialogue between Bioland, IFOAM Organics Europe and big players of the global economy such as Amazon Germany or Epson Europe, the economy will be changed in a sustainable, ecologically and socially compatible way.

The exchange with political decision makers is also important in this sense and planned at the BEST ECONOMY forum. Jan Plagge and many other representatives of the sustainable economy will discuss our demands for a future worth living on the last day of the event with international, national and regional politicians.

Become part of the development - for a sustainable economy in all market segments. Get in touch with other participants from a wide range of sectors, no matter whether you are a corporate group, a medium-sized company or a small business, globally, nationally or regionally. Because it is time to act: Take action not words!

### **You do not have a ticket yet?**

With the discounted "**light**" ticket you get access to all our lectures and the virtual lobby. With an "**all-access**" ticket (including student and start-up tickets), we will also provide you with our qualified business consultants who will help you make new contacts and create realistic sustainability strategies for your own company. Because one thing we have learned from countless online congresses in recent months is that artificial matchmaking is not yet at the level we need it to be. With us, you achieve real collaborations like at a face-to-face event through targeted interaction and human contact - exclusively in your "all-access" ticket.

If you have any questions, the Best Economy Forum is of course always at your disposal. Find us at [www.besteconomy.org](http://www.besteconomy.org) and [info@besteconomy.org](mailto:info@besteconomy.org).

### **Save the date for our European Organic Congress 2021 on 16-18 June**



The 2021 edition of our [European Organic Congress](#) will take place on 16-18 June 2021, organised by [IFOAM Organics Europe](#) and our Portuguese partner [Agrobio](#).



Rue du Commerce 124 – 1000 Brussels – Belgium – Phone: +32 2 280 12 23 – Email: [info@organicseurope.bio](mailto:info@organicseurope.bio)

As in previous editions, this year's Congress will bring together organic stakeholders from all over Europe and offer participants the possibility to attend sessions and engage with experts on the most relevant topics related to organic food and farming. Join the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of our European Organic Congress and benefit from the knowledge and expertise of high-level speakers and moderators.

More information and registration will follow soon. Stay tuned for updates by visiting [our website](#) and following @OrganicsEurope on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



### 3.2 Review of events

#### Organic and Conventional sectors discuss genome editing at IFOAM Organics Europe event

10 February 2021, online

IFOAM Organics Europe invited food & farming stakeholders and policymakers to discuss GMOs and gene editing in agriculture. With the study of the European Commission on practical aspects surrounding the application of the European Court of Justice ruling on 'New Genomic Techniques' expected for spring 2021, the topic is high on the agenda of EU and national policymakers again.

Steven Jacobs, Business Development Manager at Organic Farmers & Growers started the event with a presentation of the organic control system and the role of good regulation in preventing contaminations. He concluded that detection of GMO contamination is dependent on both routine and targeted monitoring regimes.

Yves Bertheau, co-founder of the European Network of GMO laboratories, continued by elaborating on the feasibility of detection strategies for products from new genetic engineering techniques and presenting how detection routines for GMO testing laboratories could look like. He concluded that detection strategies are technically feasible, but it requires also a political will to direct resources into this, which appears to be currently lacking.

These presentations were followed by a discussion on the status quo of the EU GMO Regulation, namely scenarios of its future implementation in the light of novel products and their relevance to trade, retail and different production systems, including organic farming.

During the discussion, Alexander Hissting from the European Associations of non-GMO producers (ENGA) highlighted the need for non-GMO food supply chains and why they are well-received by retailers and consumers. Benoit Biteau, a farmer and Member of the European Parliament emphasized that the European Parliament regularly votes against the authorization of GMOs for import and cultivation, mainly due to environmental concerns, but it remains to be seen what the majority position of the Parliament will be on new genetic engineering techniques such as genome editing. Thor



Gunnar Kofoed, member of COP-COGECA underlined the need for traceability of GMOs and argued that coexistence of organic and non-GMO agriculture with GMO agriculture is possible, if nationally defined rules are respected.

This conclusion was put into question by Daniel Evain from Federation Nationale d'Agriculture Biologique (FNAB), who made the point that while coexistence might appear simple in theory, the situation is quite different in practice as examples of GMO cultivation in Spain are showing. He described though that contamination in seed production is currently exceptional, this might change if (imported) products of genome editing end up on the EU market unregulated.

Sirkku Heinimaa from the EU Commission concluded the discussions by reminding participants about the legal status of New Genomic Techniques that had been clarified by the ECJ decision in 2018 and the request by member states for a study on the practical implications of this ruling. She emphasized that based on the study (to be published until by 30 April 2021), discussions in the EU Council (of the member states) and the European Parliament will guide the way forward. Different options are on the table, including a legislative proposal for New Genomic Techniques.



*This event was co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility for this event lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

**More than 1,000 attended our sessions at BIOFACH's e-Special**  
17-19 February 2021, online



On 17-19 February 2021, the first online edition of [BIOFACH](#) took place with more than 13,800 participants.

#### **17 February: Opening & launch data on organic**

Julia Klöckner, German Minister for Agriculture and Food and Felix Prinz zu Löwenstein, Chairman of the German Association of Organic Farmers, Food Processors and Retailers (BÖLW) opened BIOFACH's e-Special and welcomed participants and speakers to the first day of the world's largest trade fare for organic.



Rue du Commerce 124 – 1000 Brussels – Belgium – Phone: +32 2 280 12 23 – Email: [info@organicseurope.bio](mailto:info@organicseurope.bio)

One of the first day's first highlights was the launch of "[The World of Organic Agriculture 2021](#)", published by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL). [According to the latest statistics, the organic market grew by €45 billion in 2019](#). As Eduardo Cuoco, IFOAM Organics Europe Director states "This data shows the European organic market's potential to reach the objective of 25 percent organic land by 2030 put forward in the EU Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies. To reach this target the organic sector needs political support at all levels. This includes a good regulatory framework, adequate support under the CAP – with clear support for organic in the national strategic action plans – and a powerful European Organic Action Plan with concrete actions supporting conversion, market development and capacity building of the European organic sector".

### **17 February: Policy Day with the Presidency, Commission & Parliament**

During our Policy Day on 17 February, we discussed how to reach 25% organic land in the EU by 2030. We did this in the presence of high-level speakers from the Portuguese Council Presidency, the Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), the European organic movement and 586 participants.

After the opening by IFOAM Organics Europe Director Eduardo Cuoco, Maria do Céu Antunes, Portuguese Minister of Agriculture, mentioned the four priorities of the Portuguese Presidency for agriculture to promote a resilient Europe. These include reforming the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to support sustainable agriculture, strengthening rural development, generation renewal and organic farming, boosting EU food security in line with the Farm to Fork strategy and innovating agriculture through digitalisation. Maria do Céu Antunes believes that the development of organic farming is key in transitioning to a sustainable food and farming system.

Wolfgang Burtscher, Director-General of DG AGRI agreed and stated that everyone in the supply chain, from producers to consumers, will have to work towards reaching this goal. To do so, the Commission needs to ensure sufficient financial support for farmers to convert to and maintain organic farming. He proposed ringfencing 30% of the second CAP pillar for environmental measures (including organic farming), while attributing 20-30% of the first pillar to Eco-Schemes, investing in research and innovation for organic and setting national targets.

Jan Plagge, IFOAM Organics Europe and Bioland President, welcomed that organic is mentioned as part of the solution and emphasised that [Member States need to set ambitious targets for organic land in their CAP Strategic Plans](#), encouraging farmers to make vital economic decisions. Aina Calafat, International Project Manager at [Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica/Agroecología \(SEAE\)](#) added that organic farming needs increased payments as it truly delivers environmental and social benefits. In France, for example, CAP money has boosted organic conversion and maintenance, said Thierry Stoezel, CEO at [Ecocert](#).

The Policy Day panel agrees that reaching 25% EU organic land by 2030 is ambitious but possible with the right tools in place. This includes a [strong new EU Organic Action Plan](#), which is being developed by the Commission and expected to be published the end of March, as stated by Wolfgang Burtscher. To wrap up a successful digital Policy Day, IFOAM Organics Europe Director Eduardo Cuoco announced our [European Organic Congress 2021](#), which will take place on 16-18 June and where we will continue the discussion with the Portuguese Ministry.

[If you attended BIOFACH2021, you can relive this session by visiting the event platform.](#)



### **18 February: Impact new EU Organic Regulation on producers & operators**

Of course, we also organised a session on the new EU Organic Regulation, moderated by IFOAM Organic Europe's Regulation Manager, Emanuele Busacca and attended by 435 participants. It took place on the second day of BIOFACH and aimed at providing organic producers and operators worldwide with an overview of the expected changes.

Luis Martin Plaza, Policy Officer in the Organic Unit of DG AGRI, informed participants about the changes related to organic international trade. In the future, control bodies will be recognised for compliance (instead of equivalence) after a transition period until the end of 2024. He was followed by Antoine Faure, Board member of the [European Organic Certifiers Council \(EOCC\)](#), who explained the regulatory changes expected for organic certifiers operating in third countries.

Finally, Florentine Meinshausen, Smallholder Group Certification Expert at [IFOAM Organics International](#) told BIOFACH participants about the challenges for groups of organic operators producing coffee, cacao, tea and tropical fruits in third countries. She concluded that even though the new EU Organic Regulation aims at strengthening and harmonizing group certification, especially for larger groups, it is likely to create higher administrative burden, increase costs and lead to drop-outs of organic operators. This makes the provision of guidance and training for certified organic operators by organic associations and institutions even more important. IFOAM Organics Europe Regulation Manager Emanuele Busacca reassured participants that the European organic movement will support its members and the organic sector in this transition.

Were you an attendee and would like to re-watch this session? [Visit the event platform.](#)

### **19 February: Organic certification**

We ended this year's BIOFACH with a session on organic certification, where speakers from DG AGRI, EOCC and Ecocert discussed how organic certification should be in the future, considering among others new technologies. Jan Wicher Krol from Skal Biocontrole moderated the session with more than 360 participants and first handed the virtual microphone to Paschalia Koufokotsiou, Team Leader in the Organic Unit of DG AGRI, who elaborated on the why and what of organic certification.

She was followed by Michel Reynaud, Vice-President of Ecocert and IFOAM Organics Europe Board member, who emphasised that organic certification covers the entire organic production system rather than a final product. He further stated that organic certification could be improved by using data collection systems and analysing data more efficiently, which would benefit organic operators, certifiers, and competent authorities. However, he warned that new technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT) are tools to improve and should not be seen as solutions themselves. Georg Eckert, President of EOCC continued that organic production is process-based, so new technologies and availability of big data should be adjusted to that, not simply detect residues.

[If you want to relive this session, visit the BIOFACH platform.](#)

### **Relive the experience**

Attendees can watch the recordings on the BIOFACH platform until August 2021. You can also relive our sessions by going through our [Twitter moment](#) and browsing #BIOFACH2021.

We would like to thank BIOFACH/Vivanes for organising this year's BIOFACH e-Special as well as our speakers, participants, members, and dedicated staff for making our sessions a success.





*These sessions are co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

## **TP Organics' Science Day at BIOFACH 2021: Innovating for organic food processing**

19 February 2021, online

At TP Organics' Science Day at BIOFACH's 2021 e-Special, more than 150 participants learned about ongoing research projects funded by [ERA-NET CORE Organic](#) and opportunities for organic companies in Horizon Europe, the upcoming research framework programme of the European Union.

### **Current research on organic food processing**

Gardis von Gersdorff, PhD Student at University of Kassel and project coordinator of [SusOrgPlus](#), presented the CORE Organic project's main results. The project aims at developing smart processing chains, natural food additives and colorants. One of the findings Gardis shared was that smart drying by reheating drying air makes organic food processing more efficient and climate-friendly. Energy consumption can be reduced by up to 40%.

Flavio Paoletti, Senior Researcher at the Italian Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA), coordinator of the CORE Organic project [ProOrg](#), presented the progress of the project. ProOrg will provide guidance for choosing careful, minimal, and mild processing methods and has developed 'Management Guidelines for Organic Processors' to help them implement regulatory requirements for the organic food sector. An 'Assessment Framework' will help to objectively assess the quality of organic food. Ultimately, the strategies and tools will contribute to the sustainable development and innovation in the organic sector, help processors comply with the EU Organic Regulation and optimise organic food processing.

### **Horizon Europe and the new Food Systems Partnership: Advancing organic through research & innovation**

In his presentation of Horizon Europe (Cluster 6), Hans-Jörg Lutzeyer, Scientific Officer at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), announced that they are expecting to launch first calls in April 2021. Project proposals should be developed with an eye on targets set in [Food 2030](#) and the European Green Deal, particularly the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies. According to Hans-Jörg Lutzeyer, the Farm to Fork strategy's target of 25% organic land in the EU by 2030 is not yet sufficiently represented across all programmes. Dr. Lutzeyer also pointed out that CORE Organic should find its place in the Food Systems Partnership to maintain networking between organic stakeholders, enable knowledge sharing and push for 25% organic farmland.

The new Food Systems Partnership, to be launched in 2023, was presented in more detail by Hugo de Vries, Research Director at INRAE and member of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR)'s Strategic Working Group Food Systems ([SCAR Food Systems](#)). Hugo de Vries said it will be an interdisciplinary and inclusive partnership that aims at reaching sustainable food systems in the EU and worldwide in the long term. Four different narratives have been developed for the partnership

and presented to the European Commission, as well as a consolidated narrative. A factsheet will be published at the end of March. Hugo de Vries stressed that the partnership should aim at disruptive innovations rather than optimisations of food systems only. Inclusive governance needs to ensure all people are heard at a common European level as well as locally. Biodiversity and cultural diversity are basic building blocks of the partnership.

For the presentations, check the [event review on TP Organics' website](#). The session can be re-watched on the BIOFACH platform until August 2021 if you have a BIOFACH ticket.

**Save the dates:**

- 18 March 2021: TP Organics webinar on EU funding, proposal writing and the evaluation process. Free for members of TP Organics and IFOAM Organics Europe. [Register by 16 March](#);
- 8-18 September 2021: Presentation of ProOrg's Code of Practice at [IFOAM – Organics International's Organic World Congress](#);
- 30 November-1 December 2021: TP Organics' [Organic Innovation Days](#) (tentative dates).



*This session is co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

**FoodSHIFT2030's webinar 'Education for a new generation of food citizens'**

25 February 2021, online

On 25 February, [FoodSHIFT 2030](#) held a webinar highlighting the role of education to raise children's awareness on the impact of food on the planet, health, and climate change.

Athen's FoodSHIFT2030 Lab increases children's knowledge on the benefits of plant-based, circular, resilient, and local diets through involving children in events with external stakeholders. These include presentations on obesity prevention or a national contest during which children can make healthy snacks. The Lab also worked on a project aiming at collecting data to better understand children's food habits. More than 100,000 meals have been assessed for two months. The results showed that children ate more frequently during the Covid-19 crisis as they were home more often. However, their snacks were healthier and contained more fruits and vegetables.

Copenhagen's FoodSHIFT2030 Lab considers food as an integral part of school education and decided to directly involve children in meal preparation and distribution. 95% of the food served in the 16 public schools is organic. Schools also organise communal lunches to involve parents.

The webinar also explored the ['Shifting Urban Diets' project led by EAT-Lancet](#). Three Master's degree students designed food menus aimed at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 25% in school canteens where 90% of all food already is organic. They analysed different diet scenarios and noted that reducing meat consumption to once a week could decrease GHG emissions by 22%. GHG



emissions could even be decreased by 45% if meals were fully vegetarian, and by 65% if they were vegan.

The London-based charity [Food Matters](#) presented their Fresh Enterprise programme, implemented in collaboration with the BELAZU company. The programme already allowed more than 218 children to visit the company production workplace and 382 to attend cooking masterclasses. 54 children had the opportunity to participate in a contest to create their own pasta sauce, which has been tested by a professional panel and was sold by BELAZU afterwards. Three children testified during the webinar and expressed the benefits of such a programme. Among others, they learned more about the food production process, cooking practices, and food marketing. One of the children is now eager to work in food marketing.

If you are keen to discover more about the above initiatives, [watch the recording](#).



[FoodShift2030](#) will launch an ambitious, citizen-driven transition of Europe's food system to a low carbon, circular future. This Horizon 2020 project is promoting food systems innovations in nine cities across Europe.

More information about the nine FoodSHIFT Labs is available [on the FoodSHIFT2030 website](#). Follow the project on social media using @FoodSHIFT2030 on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

IFOAM Organics Europe contributes to the conceptual framework for further development of governance strategies and food policy strategies. We will also disseminate project outputs within the organic network and at our main events.



*FoodShift2030 has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 862716. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

### **EURAKNOS Final Conference: From EURAKNOS to the EUREKA of European knowledge exchange** 25-26 February 2021, online

The [EURAKNOS](#) final consortium meeting took place on 25 February, the Final Conference on 26 February. As more sustainable practices are by nature more knowledge intensive, making practice-oriented knowledge readily available and easily accessible to end users is very relevant.

The EURAKNOS project, which aimed at strengthening the EU agricultural knowledge base, is already inspiring other projects and initiatives like the Yield Enhancement Network ([YEN](#)) in the UK. Connecting to national initiatives is key for a wider spread across Europe. Key outputs of the EURAKNOS project were presented, including the EURAKNOS [Explorer's Guide for Thematic Networks](#). It summarises experience from all Thematic Networks (TNs) on how to set up successful, impactful and engaging projects and presents best practices and key insights from TN communities of practice. The outputs of the EURAKNOS project moreover resulted in an aspirational [Vision Paper](#) for a high-impact knowledge reservoir for agriculture and forestry.



The consortium meeting ended with a reflection exercise to gather feedback from all partners. Connections between the Work Packages are key, as are expectation management and end user engagement as well as good coordination and leadership, to make roles responsibilities clear. During break-out sessions, participants of the Final Conference pointed out that the platform should be used as well to showcase best practices, such as how to involve farmers more. The Explorer's Guide and the platform should be a 'living product', meaning the content should be regularly updated. The policy discussion showed that, while a central repository will avoid double work, the communication/socialisation part is important as well.

By developing a proof, concept, and visuals for the future platform on a smaller scale, EURAKNOS laid the foundation for sister project [EUREKA](#). EUREKA will connect all multi-actor projects, helping to ensure the long-term and wider use of practical knowledge and innovative solutions by the rural community.

[Re-watch the Final Conference sessions.](#)

IFOAM Organics Europe is a partner of both projects. For EURAKNOS, IFOAM Organics Europe's role was to report on similar existing initiatives, capacity building through cross-exchange visits, networking as well as communication and dissemination. For EUREKA, IFOAM Organics Europe's role is to contribute to the project with its expertise on organic farming and experience with multi-actor projects in the organic sector.



EURAKNOS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 817863. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.

### **EUCARPIA-LIVESEED Conference -Breeding and seed sector innovations for organic food systems** 8-10 March 2021, online

A conference organised by Latvian [LIVESEED](#) partner [AREI](#) to present recent scientific results in organic plant breeding took place on 8-10 March 2021, as part of the EUCARPIA Section Organic and Low-Input Agriculture. Horizon 2020 sister projects [BRESOV](#), [ECOBREED](#) as well as [ECO-PB](#) and Latvian FLPP-funded research outcomes were also presenting.

In her keynote speech, Louise Luttkholt from [IFOAM Organics International](#) highlighted the important contribution of organic breeding and propagation towards the necessary transformation of agriculture. She warned that legal measures such as allowing commercialization of Organic Heterogenous Materials (OHM) in the EU need to go hand in hand with raising general industry norms. A coherent policy package would get underpinned through true or full cost accounting implying accounting for all inherent negative effects of plant breeding for high-input agriculture and food systems.

The 50 following oral presentations and 48 posters were clustered in 10 sessions, including underutilized genetic resources, breeding for diversity and culinary and nutritional quality, soil – plant interactions, organic seed production, multi-actor & participatory approaches, market and consumer aspects of seed systems, regulations and policy, and sustainability.



LIVESEED presented its pre-breeding effort in white lupin for anthracnose resistance while BRESOV's showed how they identified drought resistant genotypes of Brassica oleracea crops. Prof. Moreira from the [University of Coimbra](#) talked about how LIVESEED developed an overarching breeding approach to maintain agrobiodiversity and make agriculture more climate robust through breeding. Edwin Nuijten presented the results of research conducted on two biodynamic farms with three crops, where relationships between yield, storability, taste and nutritive quality were studied. LIVESEED presented furthermore its participatory evaluation and breeding efforts of tomato landraces in Spain and Italy, and how farmer acceptability as predicted by a genomic model could be valuable whenever farmers' selection is difficult, such as in the presence of large sets of test lines and/or in early selection stages, based on a study using 144 pea lines issued by six crosses among elite cultivars, which underwent GBS molecular characterization and field evaluation in Northern Italy. The implementation of the system-based breeding concept by Edith Lammerts van Bueren and Edwin Nuijten in practical steps was also discussed.

Several LIVESEED partners presented recent results on on-farm and official cultivar testing, on seed health issues including case studies on common bunt and efforts against Alternaria diseases in carrot.

Prof. Gabriele Berg from the [University of Graz](#) invited us into the fantastic world of the microbiome and talked about how soil type, climate, geography and plant genotype were identified as main drivers of the seed microbiota and how breeding changes plants that is reflected in the seed microbiota.

In her sobering speech, Susanne Padel from the [Thünen-Institut](#) warned that it is unlikely that increase in demand will result in further investment in breeding and increases in organic seed production, as the organic breeding sector is characterised by a shortage of funds: "The market for organic seed cannot be categorized as a well-functioning competitive market. The market alone cannot deliver organic seed".

Preliminary results by Eva Winter from [FiBL](#) of a market modelling exercise for durum wheat in IT and carrot in DE showed that a gradual phasing out of derogations for using conventional seed helps avoid losses in farm enterprise gross margin. Eric Gall from IFOAM Organics Europe talked about the changes and opportunities in the new organic regulations for plant reproductive materials. Maaïke Raaijmakers from [Bionext](#) (NL) explained that to reach 100% organic seed by the end of 2035 a proactive, comprehensive approach is needed with all stakeholders who are willing to develop national roadmaps.

Interesting perspectives and experiences were brought in from the USA as well. Julie Dawson from the [UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences](#) described the development of a professional community of practice for regional seed systems and breeding, as well as digital tools to use to evaluate varieties over a wide range of adaptation and culinary quality. We learned from Micaela Colley that the next State of Organic Seed report from in USA (published by the [Organic Seed Alliance](#)) is for release in 2021 and will include a national survey of certified organic seed producers and provide recommendations for future research, education and policy efforts for organic seed availability, quality, and diversity. She also presented a case study on how they developed a sweet corn variety 'Who Gets Kissed?' that was released in 2014 in partnership with a seed company that got expanded to be sold very widely and used in further breeding. Nicolas Enjalbert shared an important collaborative digital platform dedicated to data sharing to help characterize, breed, source, and harvest the best cultivars. The book of abstracts will be made available on [OrganicEPrints](#).





LIVESEED aims to boost organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. IFOAM Organics Europe and FiBL-Switzerland coordinate the project with 50 partners covering 18 EU countries.

*LIVESEED has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727230 and the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation under contract number 17.00090. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

## **Organic agriculture as a living lab and front runner in applying digital technologies adapted to farmers' needs – Internet of Food & Farm 2020 final event**

16-18 March 2021, online

On 16-18 March, the [final event of the Internet of Food and Farm 2020 \(IoF2020\) project](#) took place online. More than 900 people registered to the event, ranging from policy-makers to project partners and civil society.

### **Day 1: Workshops & organic farming**

George Beers, IoF2020 Project Coordinator from Wageningen University & Research (WUR) kicked off the event with a series of transversal workshops on the 33 IoF2020 Use Cases. Among others, Benoît de Solan, Research Engineer at ARVALIS, presented organic Use Case '[Precision Crop Management](#)', introducing smart wheat crop management by sensor data embedded in low-power, long-range infrastructure. According to Benoît, the sensors act as farmers' eyes, enabling them to make informed decisions about improved crop management.

During a session on organic farming with Cristina Micheloni from the Italian Association for Organic Agriculture (AIAB), Jos Ruizendaal from WUR and Stephanie Weyenberg from the Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (ILVO), participants and speakers discussed how organic farming can benefit from digitization and the Internet of Things (IoT). Two organic Use Cases, the 'Grazing Cow Monitor' and the 'Added-Value Weeding Data' demonstrated how organic agriculture can take advantage of new technologies. Besides making organic farming more attractive through reduced labour intensity and greater financial viability, IoT can contribute to transparency in the EU's food and farming sector.

Day 1 ended with a session on how IoT might change certification together with Dr. Ayalew Kasahun from WUR, Matteo Balderacchi, consultant at Valoritalia, Theocharis Moysiadis from F6S and Carlos Callejero from SensoWave. Speakers agreed that IoT can improve transparency in organic certification. Yet, a constructive dialogue between organic certification bodies and IoT and blockchain technology providers is essential for control bodies to see the benefits of these novel technologies, concluded Cristina Micheloni from AIAB.

If you're interested in learning more about the IoF2020 Use Cases, [have a look at the project's Use Case catalogue and filter for organic](#).

### **Day 2: Gender inequality in agri-tech**

Day 2 featured a panel discussion on the achievements and impact of IoF2020 as well as a debate on how to address gender inequality in agri-tech. Simone van der Burg from WUR, Alexander Berlin from Berlin Thinking, Milica Trajkovic from BioSense, Harald Sundmaker from ATB Bremen and Joël Bacquet,



Programme Officer at DR AGRI were of the opinion that IoF2020 was a huge success and served as a platform of collaboration for more than 80 external stakeholders. Among the lessons learnt, speakers agreed that data sharing within and without a project is an important factor.

According to Alexander Berlin, future projects will benefit from the learning curve made during IoF2020. During the session on gender inclusiveness in agri-tech, Jovana Vlaskalin, Cynthia Giagnocavo from Universidad de Almería, Doris Letina from the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA), Doris Marquardt, Programme Officer at DG AGRI, Ntuthu Mbiko-Motshegoa and Antonella Di Tonno from Coldiretti talked about the challenges and constraints women in agriculture are facing.

Doris Marquardt stated that digital skills are crucial for balancing perspectives in agri-tech right from the beginning, starting with programming and in research and should be embedded in school education. Antonella Di Tonno highlighted that women are agents of change and sustainable development due to their different leadership style, privileging cooperative systems and building relationships. Ntuthu Mbiko-Motshegoa, successful agripreneur from South Africa added that women empowerment in agri-tech will contribute to food security and inspire young women for the generations to come. Visibility, education, capacity building, encouraging leadership, networking, acting locally and the support from institutions and organisations are important factors to reach gender inclusiveness in agri-tech, concluded Cynthia Giagnocavo.

### **Day 3: Future of digitalisation in farming**

Finally, day 3 of IoF2020 final event was dedicated to the research and innovation ecosystems of the project, starting with a panel discussion with more than 130 participants. Together with Sjaak Wolfert from WUR, Doris Marquardt, Daniel Azevedo from Copa-Cogeca, Jérôme Bandry from the European Agricultural Machinery Association (CEMA) and Bert-Jan Ruissen from the European Parliament, our Director Eduardo Cuoco discussed the policy recommendations for the future of digitalisation in farming.

“TP Organics’ [Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda](#) highlights the role of digitalization in creating more diversified farming systems, efficient resource use, food safety, traceability and transparency and strengthening Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS)”, said Eduardo Cuoco. IoT can help improve agricultural production, but incentives are needed to implement technologies with sustainability benefits by farmers while considering all relevant sustainability variables and entire value chain. In organic farming, IoT, blockchain and other new technologies might be used to minimize accidental pesticide contamination, other non-admissible substances, and food-borne bacteria, improving organic food safety, quality, and health.

Furthermore, digital tools can strengthen AKIS. For organic farming, this could mean targeted advisory services using technical solutions, networking, training, and demonstrations for effective knowledge exchange. Eduardo also pointed out the need to create substantial benefits and incentives for farmers through smarter regulation, simplification, higher tolerances, smaller penalties and more guidance and correction, adding value for all stakeholders. He continued that it is crucial to ensure rural actors adapt new technologies without leaving anyone behind and to avoid a digital divide through fair access to and education about technology by ensuring a level playing field and affordability of digital solutions. To do so, digitalisation and smart farming could be eligible under the [Eco-Schemes of the new Common Agricultural Policy \(CAP\)](#), provided they contribute to environmental and climate objectives.

Eduardo Cuco concluded that digital solutions can help facilitate waste reduction, increased productivity and diversity, and knowledge exchange if data governance is organized in a balanced way and market imperfections are tackled sufficiently. Technologies should be adapted to comply with organic principles and meet the needs of organic farmers. To improve Europe's food and farming system's sustainability, farmers need to be involved from the start, local knowledge integrated, and tailored advisory services developed.

Sjaak Wolfert agreed by stating that technology should also better connect farmers and consumers and not only support productivity and profit goals, but the sustainability goals we have set as a society. Bert-Jan Ruissen underlined that the new CAP will play a crucial role in ensuring access to new technologies by all agricultural stakeholders, especially under Eco-Schemes in pillar 1. He further made clear that farmers must remain in control of their data at any point. According to him, the new CAP is key in supporting bottom-up approaches by farmers to take ownership of their data and data sharing.

IFOAM Organics Europe Director wrapped the session up by highlighting that organic farming is green in both areas, on the field and on the accounts as one of the most financially viable agricultural production systems. Organic agriculture can be front runner in applying digital technologies adapted to organic farmers' needs and a living lab for applying them. We were front runner on ecology and we also want to be front runner on IoT.

#### **Session on EURAKNOS & EUREKA projects**

IFOAM Organics Europe also chaired the session on EU Horizon 2020 project [EURAKNOS](#), in which the main outputs of the project were presented, as was the sister and follow-up project [EUREKA](#). IFOAM Organics Europe is a partner in both projects, which aim to build an EU-wide digital knowledge reservoir for agriculture, thereby strengthening the EU agricultural knowledge base and facilitating (digital) exchange of best practices.

After an introduction of the EURAKNOS project by Maria Gernert, guest and project partner Laura Palczynski from Innovation for Agriculture presented the [EURAKNOS Explorer's Guide for Thematic Networks](#), the [Vision Paper](#) as well as the [policy recommendations](#). The Explorer's Guide provides information on how to design and implement Thematic Networks and other multi-actor projects to maximise user engagement and impact. The Vision Paper sets out a vision for an EU-wide, open-source, digital database platform where project outputs can be stored and easily accessed by end users. The Policy Brief includes recommendations on how to improve the (digital) exchange of best practices, such as sufficient funding to stimulate the connection to digital learning.

While EURAKNOS has developed a prototype for the future 'FarmBook', EUREKA is setting up the actual platform, which will host the outputs/data objects of all EU multi-actor projects, thus scaling up the scope of the platform. Project coordinator Pieter Spanoghe from Ghent University explained why and how end users are involved during the development of the platform as well as how IoF and other project partners can connect with EURAKNOS and EUREKA.

#### **Relive the event & 'thank you'**

Couldn't make it or want to relive the event? [Watch all recordings here](#) or browse #IoFinalEvent and #IoF2020.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we would like to thank everyone who visited our booth, all project partners, Ecosystem Chairs, Use Cases and other involved stakeholders for making IoF2020 a success. A heartfelt 'Thank you' also to Schuttelaar and Partners for organising this professional and inspiring



final event. We look forward to continuing our collaboration in the framework of the [SmartAgriHubs](#) project and other future endeavours.



The [Internet of Food & Farm 2020](#) project is a large-scale pilot under Horizon 2020 investigating and fostering large-scale implementation of the Internet of Things in European food and farming. [IFOAM Organics Europe is a project partner](#) and represents the European organic movement.



*IoF2020 has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 731884. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*

### **ReMIX final Conference “Intercropping to boost agroecology in European Agriculture”**

23 March 2021, online

As the Horizon 2020 multi-actor project [ReMIX](#) draws to a close, its final conference “Intercropping to boost agroecology in European Agriculture” was held in collaboration with [DIVERSify](#) project on 23 March 2021.

Species mixtures can increase productivity while reducing external inputs and nutrient losses. Furthermore, they can secure farmers' income. ReMIX partners proposed solutions and recommendations to boost the adoption of intercropping and delivering ecosystem services. Moreover, it was discussed how to support wider use and uptake of intercropping by farmers.

The afternoon sessions were dedicated to policy debates and discussions on the contribution of species mixtures to shift to more sustainable food systems and preserve ecosystems. Within this context, 9 panellists including policy makers and experts from the [crop diversification cluster](#) discussed the role of intercropping in the EU's agri-food chains and agroecology within the Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity strategies. Several interventions stressed points like:

- Adopting intercropping does not depend on farmers alone;
- New value chains should be set up; and strong collaboration among all actors is needed for that;
- Public policies are very important. In that respect, the CAP offers opportunities to support species mixtures and they need to be used by Member States.

Recordings of the sessions and presentations from speakers are available [on the conference platform](#).



The Horizon 2020 project [ReMIX](#) exploits the benefits of species mixtures to design more diversified and resilient agroecological arable cropping systems. [IFOAM Organics Europe](#) is a project partner representing the European organic movement and ensuring knowledge transfer and dissemination towards stakeholders and policy-makers.



*ReMIX has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727217. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*



## **Workshop "Organic districts revitalizing Rural areas" during Rural Vision Week 2021**

25 March 2021

During the [Rural Vision Week: Imagining the future of Europe's rural areas](#), IFOAM Organics Europe organised a fringe workshop on 25 March. IFOAM Organics Europe's Director, Eduardo Cuoco, moderated a session on the concept of Organic Districts (or biodistricts) and planning and implementing them. Raffaele Basile, Coordinator of the [Global Alliance for Organic Districts G.A.O.D](#) shared his 15-years of experience with successful Organic Districts in Italy and worldwide. He gave an overview of the status of Organic Districts and outlined their social, economic, and ecologic benefits.

"Organic Districts could be a way to redesign local economics" said Aina Calafat Rogers presenting her work on Organic Districts in Mallorca. As international project manager for SEAE, the Spanish Society for Organic Farming and Agroecology, she spearheads the development of an Organic District while actively contributing as part time organic farmer at the same time. Her presentation highlighted both the urgent need for transformation at all levels of the food system and the positive potential of all actors working together to create a more sustainable vision of rural development.

As third member of the high-ranking speaker panel, Jaime Ferreira, head of the Board in the Portuguese association for organic farming, AGROBIO, showed the influx of Organic District developments in Portugal. "The promotion of Organic Districts in Portugal as a strategy to connect all actors, [...] proves to be intelligent, contributing to the cohesion of the territory and, particularly, to the ecological transition" he pointed out, followed by outlining plans for further developing Organic Districts in the region.

After their keynote speeches, the experts answered questions from the participating audience, that showed strong interest in Organic District. The experts and audience emphasised the debate on access to land and challenges in implementation. The expert pointed out that long term engagement is crucial for successful implementation, and Aina Calafat Rogers stressed that Organic Districts "give people hope and that is something that is very much needed in these times".

The speakers welcomed and highlighted the importance given to Organic Districts in the recently published [Organic Action Plan](#), in which Members States are "encourage[d] to support the development and the implementation of 'Bio districts'". On this, Eduardo Cuoco added that Organic Districts' concept involves multiple stakeholder interaction which leads to a high variability in the design but it is united by shared values and goals.

Do you want to find out more about Organic Districts and their implementation? Our members can check out our [expert's presentations](#) on our member extranet. Other interested parties can visit the website of the [international network of Eco-Regions](#).

For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).



## 4 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE

### IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE MAIN SPONSOR 2021

The contributions of sponsors allow IFOAM Organics Europe to focus on its most important work – representing organic stakeholders. This funding is a means to co-finance IFOAM Organics Europe events, projects and publications and is a highly valued contribution to our work.



### IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE MEDIA PARTNER



## 5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

20-22 April 2021

[Best Economy Forum](#)

Online

26-30 April 2021

[XF-ACTORS final event](#)

Online

16-18 June 2021

[European Organic Congress](#)

Online, live from Lisbon, Portugal

6-10 September 2021

[Organic World Congress 2021](#)

Rennes, France

30 September-2 October 2021

[BIOEXPO Warsaw](#)

Pruszków, Poland



30 September-1 October 2021

[Organic Food Conference](#)

To be determined

30 November-1 December 2021 (tentative)

TP Organics' [Organic Innovation Days](#)

To be determined

9-10 December 2021

[IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business](#)

To be determined

15-18 February 2022

[BIOFACH 2022](#)

Nuremberg, Germany



*This newsletter is co-financed by the European Union under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility for this communication lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.*