

Working for Organic Farming in Europe



Annual Report 2008

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Letter from the President

Dear reader,

I commend to you this 2008 Annual Report of the IFOAM EU Group.

It has been another year of intensive hard work and good progress. In particular, the implementing rules of the new organic regulation have dominated our activities. We have achieved much in this process, ensuring that the views of the European organic sector are heard in Brussels and their needs are taken into account. This is despite the tight deadlines imposed by the Commission which put extra pressure on our resources and our ability to respond effectively.

Through all this, we have continued to build on our good relations with Commission, Parliament and national officials and we are increasingly well received and respected.

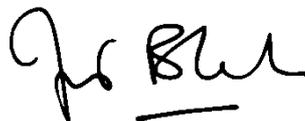
With organic farming being an information-intensive system, research is critical. A key achievement in 2008 has been the gathering together, with ISOFAR, of a wide range of stakeholders to form an organic farming research technology platform. Whilst applauding it as a model technology platform, the European Commission shamefully refused to fund it in contrast to the other 34 technology platforms. However, thanks to the generosity of a number of sponsors we have modest funding to co-ordinate its work. Its first project was to produce a "Vision for an organic food and farming research agenda to 2025" through a comprehensive and inclusive 14 month consultation process.

The IFOAM EU Group is nothing without its members and I would like to thank you all for the important contribution that you make, both financially and in terms of technical input. Your support gives us the credibility and the resources to represent you. As our activities expand, we also depend on funding from other sources, including the European Commission and a wide range of organisations and foundations. I thank them all.

And all of this important work would not get done without the untiring commitment of the board members and the incredible dedication and unbelievably hard work of our small team in Brussels. I cannot thank them enough, for they make this organisation what it is.

It has been a huge privilege to lead the IFOAM EU Group and serve as its president. I step down knowing the strength of the organisation we have built up. I am confident that it will continue to grow in influence and effectiveness 'working for organic farming in Europe'.

Yours sincerely,



Francis Blake, President



1. IFOAM EU Group: overview of activities in 2008

In 2008 the IFOAM EU Group developed its work in already established as well as in new areas. In continuation of its core activities aiming to voice the interest of the organic movement in Europe, it kept its focus on the Organic Regulation and other relevant to the organic sector policy developments. Throughout the year it also involved on a bigger scale in the specific area of organic aquaculture and in the establishment of a platform to serve to the research needs of the sector.

During 2008 the IFOAM EU Group:

‣ Launched, together with thirty partner organisations, a **Technology Platform for Organic Research (TP Organics)** and published a **Vision for Organic Food and Farming** to identify the priorities for organic research in the next 15 years. In the second half of the year TP Organics started work on a Strategic Research Agenda. IFOAM EU Group also hosts the TP secretariat in its Brussels office.

‣ Formed an **Organic Aquaculture Expert Group** to create internal capacity to organise stakeholder input and exert influence in the process of formulation of the EU's Aquaculture Implementing Rules to the new Organic Regulation.

It continued its earlier activities by:

‣ Working on the **Implementing Rules for the new Organic Regulation 834/2007** and initialising in 2008 the preparation of a **Regulation Dossier** to inform the organic sector about the new operational framework in the EU as of January 2009.

‣ Participating in the work of seven **Advisory Groups of the European Commission** and feeding into the Commission's ongoing regulatory work on main points of relevance for the organic farming. In DG AGRI of the Commission that is the Advisory Groups on Organic Agriculture, Rural Development, Fruits and Vegetables, Quality of Agricultural Production and since 2008 - Agriculture and Environment. In DG SANCO – the Advisory Group on Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health. In DG MARE, also since 2008 - the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

‣ Holding **meetings with the Organic Unit of DG Agriculture** in the European Commission as well as with high-positioned officials in **DG Environment, DG Research and DG Sanco**.

‣ Organising **two seminars co-financed by the European Commission** – in April in Bulgaria and in September in Hungary IFOAM EU Group gathered

groups of experts to discuss the role of organic food and farming in the context of the current challenges of the agriculture policy in Europe.

➤ Continuing work on **EU-supported projects** (ORWINE, where IFOAM EU Group was part of the partner consortium, and CAP projects, where it was main contractor and beneficiary) and concluding the ORGAP project (partner) - an organic policy project developed to provide scientific support for the implementation of the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming.

➤ **Organising discussions and/or presenting IFOAM EU Group and its standpoints** during the already traditional participation at events like BioFach, Organic Marketing Forum, Bioacademy, Green Week in Brussels, as well as other, non-regular events, like the international high-level conferences in Ukraine in April and in Cyprus in October 2008.



Left photo from right to left: the German board member of IFOAM EU Group Dr. Alexander Beck, the Head of the Organic Unit of the European Commission Jean-Francois Hulot, the Director and the President of IFOAM EU Group Marco Schlüter and Francis Blake, the Interim Executive Director of IFOAM International Diane Bowen and Richard Bates from DG Mare of the European Commission - during the IFOAM EU-organised workshop on the Organic Regulation, Nuremberg, BioFach 2008. Right photo: moment from the same workshop.

➤ On organisational level: IFOAM EU Group started in 2008 a **Strategy Process**, involving the board members of the Group, to define the future priorities and assess the challenges facing the organisation.

2. Regulation work of IFOAM EU – the new Organic Regulation and Implementing Rules

The activities of IFOAM EU Group in 2008 in this area were dominated by the setting up of the **Implementing Rules for the EU Council Regulation 834/2007** – i.e. the detailing rules to the new Organic Regulation. Through its Brussels office - in a coordinating function, and EU-wide expert groups, IFOAM EU followed the process closely in order to consult and formulate members' positions and communicate the agreed positions to the EU institutions.

During the year, through its continuous involvement in the process of shaping the Implementing Rules, the IFOAM EU Group's role as a main representative and communicator of the organic movement's positions on EU level was maintained and further confirmed. This is especially seen in the reinforced cooperation with the European Commission.

Furthermore, the regulation work included informing and updating members and the organic sector on the relevant legislative processes and providing official regulation documents via the IFOAM EU revision info webpage.

In 2008, the IFOAM EU Group met regularly with representatives of the Organic Unit in DG AGRI of the Commission to discuss the Organic Regulation and the Implementing Rules. The meetings allowed for more immediate and in some ways more effective exchange of views, which, together with the written communications of the Group on crucial issues, led in a number of cases where improvements occurred within the Rules. The points which constitute an improvement from 'organic point of view' include for example the introduction of organic yeast in the Regulation in a way that ensures that yeast will be of organic origin, and the amendment to the calculation of organic ingredients.

In addition to that, EU Commission representatives took part in the IFOAM EU discussions and presentations at BioFach'08 (*see also p.4*), and at the CAP Seminar in Hungary in September (*see also p.6 and 12*). Both occasions were well used to further exchange views on the Regulation.

The preparation of IFOAM EU positions came as a result of the active work of several expert networks coordinated by the Brussels office of the organisation. In addition to the **Regulation Group** and the **Aquaculture Group** of IFOAM EU, which were heavily involved in preparation of positions on the subsequent Commission proposals on the Implementing Rules, the **Specialist Group for Organic Processing (SGOP)** was also, especially in the spring of 2008, engaged in reviewing and issuing opinions on the Rules.

Big issues for SGOP were the arranging of a "new" counting system for recipes, installing appropriate transition times for labelling and the processing of yeast. The topic of yeast was finalised in December 2008. There have been

also intensive exchange of information over market developments and discussions on fraud and contaminants.

To be of service to all involved with the organic food and farming, towards the end of the year IFOAM EU Group started the preparation of an **info-Dossier on the new Organic Regulation**. The Dossier, containing substantial expert work, was to be published and distributed for free in the first half of 2009 among all interested in the new legal framework for organics in the EU. It was decided to make available the Dossier in six languages (English, French, German, Greek, Czech and Polish), all of which downloadable from the website of the Group at www.ifoam-eu.org. In most languages the Dossier was to be provided in print as well.

Throughout 2008, to communicate and defend the organic interests, the IFOAM EU Group prepared and sent to the European institutions positions in the following areas:

IFOAM EU positions towards policy makers in the EU:

- ⇒ Several positions and letters on the general draft Implementing Rules to the Organic Regulation 834/2007
- ⇒ Several communications on the draft Implementing Rules for Imports
- ⇒ Several communications on the Implementing Rules for Organic Aquaculture and Organic Seaweed
- ⇒ Letter to the Commission regarding organic poultry production
- ⇒ Communication on the Implementing Rules for Organic Yeast

3. Policy Work

3.1 CAP Health Check

In 2008 IFOAM EU Group devoted discussion time to the CAP Health Check during the two seminars it organised throughout the year. This was in addition to being continuously alert on the CAP developments.

In April the Group delivered a seminar in Bulgaria (*see also p.12*), where more than 30 European experts from 21 countries looked into the future of organic food and farming in view of the current policy developments - CAP Health Check taking up a prominent place in the discussions. In September the Group continued the work on this topic, among others, during a seminar organised in a similar format and delivered in Hungary (*p.12*).



Left photo from right to left: the board member from Switzerland and the Director of IFOAM EU Group, Otto Schmid and Marco Schlüter, and the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Agriculture Dimitar Peychev during the Bulgarian seminar’s preliminary press conference in Sofia. Right photo: working session during the seminar in Hungary.

The experts called on the European Commission to **enforce higher mandatory modulation** (shifting funding from untargeted farm subsidies towards targeted support for sustainable farming) and to **change the single farm payments** so that it does not disadvantage the systems delivering high merits for society, notably the organic farming.

In May, on the occasion of the Commission’s launch of the CAP Health Check proposals, the EU Group insisted once more for a **shift of more funding towards the organic farming within CAP** and the member states’ rural development programmes, the obvious argument being that organic farming has an outstanding role in delivering to the aims of CAP.

In November, upon the decision of the EU Agriculture Council on CAP, IFOAM EU issued a statement expressing disappointment with the Council’s decisions which watered down even further the Commission’s proposals within the CAP Health Check. After the decision the attention moved to the discussions on CAP post-2013.

3.2 Rural Development

The rural development programmes under the so called second pillar of the CAP are one of the most important instruments to support organic food production and compensate it for the environmental benefits it delivers. Therefore it was logical that the IFOAM EU Group sent a delegation to contribute with the organic voice to the international conference **“Europe’s rural areas in action: facing the challenges of tomorrow”**, organised by the European Commission in October. The conference was opened by the EU

Agriculture Commissioner Fischer Boel and attended by high level representative from the EU Commission and Parliament.



The IFOAM EU Group's Director Marco Schlüter (second row, center) and German board member Thomas Dosch (second row, right), who took part in the conference, used the opportunity to also visit the Cyprus organic sector and strengthen its involvement within the IFOAM EU Group.

On the picture: in front of the organic shop of Savvas Mouzakis and his wife (first row), owners of the company Green Marketing.

3.3 Ecolabelling

The Commission's proposal for an EU Ecolabel was back to discussion in end-July when DG Environment of the Commission sent to the European Parliament and the Council a Proposal for a Regulation on a Community Ecolabel scheme (COM (2008) 401/3). With regards to the food products, the regulation was meant to apply to processed food and to the products of fishing and aquaculture.

The IFOAM EU Group is in favour of higher environmental protection but assessed the proposal as problematic due to the **risk of confusing consumers more than informing them**. The Group expressed this position in a Letter to DG Environment in October 2008 pointing to the concerns of the organic sector that, first, if the scheme is accepted, there is a great deal of risk for the consumers to wrongly presume that products bearing 'Ecolabel' are organic, and second, if the Ecolabel includes only organic food, it would compete with the mandatory EU logo (from 1 July 2010).

3.4 Nutrition (traffic light) Labelling

The Commissions' proposal for a new EU regulation on Nutrition Labelling also kept the Group's attention in 2008. The Commission proposed in the beginning of the year to substitute the present voluntary criteria for Nutrition Labelling with a mandatory nutritional labelling scheme – this was one of the provisions of the proposed new EU Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers.

The proposal included the so called 'traffic light system' which involved 'mandatory declaration' at the front of the product pack of the levels of energy, fat, saturates, sugar and salt expressed in a simple colour-coded way.

The IFOAM EU Group opposes the 'traffic light' system. The Group expressed this position in a letter to DG SANCO of the European Commission in the middle of November. The letter stated that the organic sector promotes a holistic quality view on food which includes aspects such as natural vitamins, vital quality, animal welfare, fair trade, etc. The 'traffic light' system not only does not consider such qualities, but also de facto gives preference to fat-reduced, artificially sweetened, fibre enriched and highly processed foods.

3.5 Cloning of animals for food

In the beginning of March IFOAM EU Group joined an action against cloning of animals for food. The Group and 11 other organisations sent an open letter, addressed to the EU Commission President Barroso, calling on the Commission and the EU Member States to introduce a **ban on the cloning of animals for food production**, and on the import and sale of imported food products from cloned animals and their offspring.

In end-April members of the Brussels office of IFOAM EU took part in an informal meeting of organisations concerned with animal cloning, which discussed possible future actions.

3.6 Non-GM seed threshold

The IFOAM EU Group has for years been defending the position of **labelling threshold for non-GM seed at the detection limit**. The Group held in 2008 meetings with representatives of DG Environment to communicate its positions, and commented on the results of the questionnaire on the issue.

The EU Environment Council approved in December 2008 its GMO Conclusions agreeing that there is a need for "one or more labelling thresholds for the adventitious presence of authorised GMOs in conventional seeds". The thresholds were to reflect "the lowest practicable, proportionate and functional levels for all economic operators".

On the occasion of the December conclusions, the IFOAM EU Group welcomed the fact that the Council took into account for the first time the socio-economic implications of placing on the market of GMOs, but reiterated its position that only a threshold at the detection limit is acceptable.

3.7 GMO policy and food and feed prices

Together with like-minded organisations, IFOAM EU Group sent in the second half of April a common statement to the members of the European Parliament, calling for **investigation on the real reasons for the food and feed price increases** – instead of linking the increasing prices to unrelated issues, specifically the GMO regime in Europe.

The statement pointed to the causes for the observed price increase and the lack of evidence to suggest that the GMO regime in Europe is one of them, and

called to the Parliament to ensure that the EU resists pressures to weaken its GMO regulations.

3.8 Soil Directive

In 2008, the IFOAM EU Group followed closely the political process towards an EU Soil Directive. The IFOAM EU Group emphasised already in 2007 the **need for a better soil protection on European level**. The IFOAM EU Group participated and contributed with a speaker in a workshop organised by the European Environmental Bureau in July. After the French Presidency ended without real progress the IFOAM EU Group decided to continue putting efforts on this issue in 2009.

4. Research

4.1 TP Organics

'TP Organics' is a **Technology Research Platform on organic food and farming**, which was established and officially launched in 2008 with the active participation of the IFOAM EU Group, as a new tool for defining research priorities, above all within the EU Research Framework Programmes, in favour of the much needed organic research.



The launch of TP Organics on December 2nd at the permanent representation of the Check Republic in Brussels. The launch took place under the auspices of the Check Ministry of Agriculture and was attended by partners, representatives of Brussels NGOs and the EU institutions, and journalists. Left photo: part of the audience. Right photo from right to left: Marco Schlüter (IFOAM EU Group), Nic Lamplin (International Society of Organic Agriculture Research - ISOFAR), Otto Schmid (Research Institute of Organic Farming - FiBL, IFOAM EU Group's board member), presenting the goals of the platform, and Jiri Urban, Vice Minister of Agriculture of the Check Republic.

Initiated by IFOAM EU Group and ISO FAR and supported by a growing number of partners, in 2008, after several consultation rounds, the TP published its first major document – a **'Vision for an Organic Food and Farming Research Agenda to 2025'**.

To facilitate the communication between its members and coordinate the common work, a TP **Secretariat was organised and a TP Coordinator employed in mid-2008. Both were based in the Brussels office of the IFOAM EU Group.** In the second half of the year the Secretariat arranged working groups, involving scientists and stakeholders, for each of the three main research priorities formulated by the Vision document:

- ⇒ Empowerment of rural area
- ⇒ Eco functional intensification
- ⇒ Food for health and well-being

The Secretariat also maintains a website and a stakeholder forum at: www.tporganics.eu

Towards the end of the year, TP Organics planned out an intensive agenda for its future work, involving series of workshops to hear and collect ideas for research in the area of organic food and farming and subsequently shape them up in a document containing concrete research proposals.

4.2 Research projects

4.2.1 ORGAP

In April 2008 the three-year EU-funded project ORGAP concluded with **guidelines for successful organic action plans' development and evaluation.** The project outputs were published and presented at the July meeting of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming in Brussels. IFOAM EU had been part of the project consortium since 2005.

ORGAP – "European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming – Development of criteria and procedures for the evaluation of the EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture", did major work on the **methodology to evaluate the EU action plan** in this area, but it also made an extensive research on the numerous organic action plans developed on national and regional levels in Europe. This background research, and the wealth of input from experts and stakeholders, was used for the development of a **practical manual** (IFOAM EU Group was one of the producers) and **evaluation toolbox** (ORGAPET) – two main project outputs designed to support the initiation, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of EU and national action plans for organic food and farming.

4.2.2 ORWINE

The EU-funded research project ORWINE experienced a busy last third project year. The aims of the project are to provide **technical expertise for the**

development of the EU legislative framework for organic wine-making and to work out a **code of good practice for organic viticulture and wine-making**.

The project partners from all over Europe came together in two project meetings in spring 2008 and further stakeholders were involved in the European Project Advisory Committee (EPAC) meeting in May 2008. In December 2008 the project was presented to the Standing Committee on Organic Farming. Moreover, a survey on the most important issues has been widely circulated among organic wine producers in Europe as one of the project activities to collect grassroots input.

In 2008 the project could already draw conclusions, some of which are:

- ⇒ Most producers and traders wish to have an EU Regulation on Organic Wine which clearly defines its identity.
- ⇒ Consumers are attracted by the organic concept, but there is a lack of knowledge on the differences with conventional wine.
- ⇒ Organic wine must compete with conventional wine on the market, therefore its quality must at least be comparable.
- ⇒ A zero-input regulation (i.e. to forbid the use of any additives and processing aids in wine-making) would impose on producers a non-acceptable commercial risk.
- ⇒ It is possible to drastically reduce the use of chemical additives through a coherent application of soft technologies (i.e. biological tools, oxygen and temperature management, physical treatments).

IFOAM EU Group has been involved in ORWINE since 2006. The project will be concluded in 2009 with a Recommendation to the European Commission regarding the organic wine production.

5. IFOAM EU in public

IFOAM EU Group was present in public throughout the 2008 thanks to the organisation and delivery of well-attended seminars in two of the new EU member states, through its presentation at two large events - patronaged by the Group in the last years, via its participation at conferences and events, as well as by means of its regular communications not only to its members but also to the wider public.

In April 2008, with co-financing from the European Commission, the EU Group delivered a **seminar on “The future of organic food and farming within the context of the European Organic Action Plan and the CAP Health Check”** (see also p.6) in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, which attracted considerable attention. With similar success, and again with the financial support of the Commission, it organised in September in Hortobagy, Hungary, a **seminar on the “Sustainable agriculture in Europe - the role of organic food and**

farming and its political framework” (p.6). Organising the seminars in different countries had the added value of putting the organic farming into the focus of different audiences. Both seminars were concluded with public presentations and press conferences to inform the local public on the seminar results.

Throughout the year IFOAM EU Group was **patron of three events: the 3rd International Meeting on Processing and Marketing of Organic Food** – better known as the Organic Marketing Forum, which took place in the end of May in Warsaw, Poland. In continuing an established partnership, it was also a **patron of the 8th Bioacademy** in the Czech Republic later in the year. Both events were major come-togethers for the organic movements in Europe (with a focus on the cooperation between the East and West of Europe). The Group patronaged as well **the 14th International Conference on Organic Fruit Growing - Ecofruit**. At all events IFOAM EU was present in various ways – through speeches and presentations as well as with abundance of information material.

In April the Director of IFOAM EU Marco Schlüter took part in the **“International Conference on the Organic Sector Development in Central/Eastern European and Central Asian countries”** in Kyiv, Ukraine.

As always, IFOAM EU Group put a significant effort into its presentation at the biggest event for the organic sector in Europe – **BioFach 2008**, and the **Green Week** in Brussels - traditionally organised by the European Commission in June as an opportunity for the ‘green organisations’ to exchange information and present developments and work efforts.



Left photo: the EU Environmental Commissioner Stavros Dimas was one of the many visitors to the stand of IFOAM EU Group at the European Commission during Green Week 2008. On the picture he is in the company of the Project Coordinator of IFOAM EU Lena Wietheger. Right photo from left to right: Michaela Senek, a trainee at IFOAM EU in 2008, with a representative of one of the sponsors of the stand.

6. Finance

Despite, the limited resources, the finances of the IFOAM EU Group were as a whole successful in 2008 and allowed for the implementation of the activities of the Group. During the year a substantial effort was put into the collection of the annual **membership fees** and the targeted amount of 140 000 euro was reached. Thanks to this success - and combined with the cost saving budget management, the year ended with increase of the reserves.

Further financing included **project grants** from the European Commission, **donations and financial contributions**:

- ⇒ Commission grants for the implementation of CAP information measures, which co-financed the seminars in Bulgaria and Hungary (*p. 6 and 12*)
- ⇒ Grants from the European Volunteers Service Programme (EVS)
- ⇒ ORWINE project grant
- ⇒ Contributions for the establishment of the Technology Platform 'Organics' from the Software Foundation, the Schweisfurth Foundation, as well as the Heinrich Böll Foundation
- ⇒ Contributions for the preparation of a Regulation info-Dossier from ARIZA, HiPP, Swedeponic Holding, Organic Food Finland, Freiland Puten, BNN, AgroBioTest, Bioekspert, SIPAL, DEBIO, GIMEL, ICEA, Georg Rosner, AGRANO (further contributions were expected in the beginning of the next year).
- ⇒ Donations from BioAustria and BioApfelforum.

In December 2008 the board of IFOAM EU Group approved the budget for 2009-2011 and a new financial concept.

During the year the Group took part in the meetings of the Financial Managers of the Green 10 network of environmental NGOs.

7. Staff development

During 2008 in the Brussels office of the IFOAM EU Group worked as fixed staff: Marco Schlüter – Director of IFOAM EU Group, Lena Wietheger – Project Coordinator, Camilla Mikkelsen – Regulation Coordinator, Sevelina Todorova – Finance and Administration. The office hosted the Technology Platform Coordinator Eduardo Cuoco. IFOAM EU was also hosting organisation for two EVS-supported trainees – Monika Styczek and Andrzej Szeremeta. It also benefited from the support of four other trainees – Guillaume Coutelet, Angela Morell, Michaela Senek and Tomas Milar.

8. List of board members

IFOAM EU Group board members (and substitutes) in 2008
Austria – Sabine Eigenschink (Thomas Fertl)
Belgium - Leen Laenens (Roland Cartrysse)
Bulgaria – Svetla Nikolova
Czech Republic – Karolina Dytrtova (Katerina Nesrstova)
Cyprus - Savvas Mouzakis (Stelios Orphanides)
Denmark – Sybille Kyed (Birgit Ingvorsen)
Estonia – Merit Mikk
Finland – Visa Vilkuna, (Esa Partanen)
France – Anton Pinschhof (Marie-Christine Monnier)
Germany – Thomas Dosch (Alexander Beck)
Greece – Dimitrios Bilalis
Hungary – Acs Sandorné (Eva Cellerne Daroczi)
Iceland – Olafur Dyrmondsson (Gunnar Gunnarsson)
Ireland – Eveline Gill (Mary Linch)
Italy – Alessandro Triantafyllidis (Fabrizio Piva)
Latvia – Dzidra Kresimane (Aistara Guntra)
Lithuania – Antanas Svirskis
Luxembourg – Raymond Aendekerk
Malta – John Portelli (Mario Salerno)
Netherlands – Marian Blom (Maiike Raaijmakers)
Norway – Gerald Altena (Grete Serikstad)
Poland – Maria Staniszevska (Urszula Soltysiak)
Romania – Ion Toncea
Slovakia – Zuzana Lehocka
Slovenia – Anamarija Slabe (Boris Fras)
Spain – Victor Gonzalvez
Sweden – Marianne Schönning (Kjell Sjödaahl Svensson)
Switzerland – Otto Schmid (Hans Ramseier)
United Kingdom – Francis Blake (Christopher Stopes)

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