

## State of soils requires policy action to ensure future food security

- *Commission soil strategy report highlights necessity of a European framework for soil protection*
- *CAP reform and resurrection of soil directive of utmost importance for future of soils*

**Brussels, 13/02/2012** – The IFOAM EU Group<sup>1</sup> sees clear evidence in the Commission's *'Implementation of the Soil Thematic Strategy'*, published today<sup>2</sup>, that policy action on soil is extremely urgent. Soil erosion by water is estimated to affect 1.3 million km<sup>2</sup> in Europe, an area equivalent to 2.5 times the size of France.

"Healthy soils are fundamental to food and water security. Today's *'progress report'* is a depressing catalogue of continued destruction rather than showing progress; it is a solemn reminder that the EU is failing to ensure soil protection," says Christopher Stopes, President of the IFOAM EU Group. "Due to a deadlock<sup>3</sup> in the Council on the establishment of an EU Soil Directive<sup>4</sup>, this opportunity for coordinated action on soils has not been exploited since it was initially proposed in 2006. It is high time that member states take responsibility for the future of our soils and resurrect the Soil Directive!"

"The reluctance of Member States such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, UK and Austria to make real progress on soil protection has incurred enormous costs and continued damage to soil over the years," adds Marco Schlüter, Director of the IFOAM EU Group. "The IFOAM EU Group demands that these countries finally opt for an improved EU framework for the protection of soils."<sup>5</sup>

The maintenance and restoration of vital soil functions must also be addressed in the Common Agricultural Policy<sup>6</sup>, with appropriate measures essential in both the first and second pillar. "Organically-managed soils and farmland can maintain soil fertility, enhance biodiversity, ensure carbon sequestration, and improve water retention capacity," remarked Otto Schmid, Vice-President of the IFOAM EU Group for research. "Organic farming methods must be taken up as best practice examples and used as tools for learning and innovating to enable further progress within the CAP. The European Innovation Partnership can help ensure real progress in this field if it focuses on innovating an entire system approach, such as organic farming<sup>7</sup>."

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### Footnotes:

- (1) The IFOAM EU Group represents more than 300 member organisations of IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in the EU-27, the EU accession countries and EFTA. Member organisations include: consumer, farmer and processor associations; research, education and advisory organisations; certification bodies and commercial organic companies.
- (2) "Environment: Commission calls for a stronger response to soil degradation": <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/128&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLang=ue=en> - European Commission Website on Soil: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index_en.htm)
- (3) Read more on the Council deadlock in this news article: <http://euobserver.com/885/29686>
- (4) The Commission proposal directive can be read here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0232:FIN:EN:PDF>
- (5) IFOAM EU's position paper on soil can be downloaded here: [http://www.ifoam-eu.org/positions/Papers/pdf/110919-IFOAM\\_EU-position-soil.pdf](http://www.ifoam-eu.org/positions/Papers/pdf/110919-IFOAM_EU-position-soil.pdf)
- (6) Find out more about the CAP reform and IFOAM EU's position via this website: <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/workareas/policy/php/CAP.php>
- (7) Innovation definition outlined by TP Organics: <http://www.tporganics.eu/index.php/actionplan.html>