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## WELCOME NOTE

Dear reader,

I am happy to welcome you to this year's last edition of our newsletter. I am proud to say we can look back on a productive autumn, slowly turning into winter. Just like the seasons, one day our work goes smoothly like a cold but sunny day, and other day it is stormy like a grey autumn day with heavy rainfall and gusts of wind.

However, we are keeping on the good work in what feels like a sometimes hostile environment. We have organised policy events and wrote letters with civil society on topics like [sustainability labelling](#), [new GMOs](#), [pesticide reduction](#) and [fertiliser use](#) – areas in which we are facing strong forces ranging from big agroindustry's influence to conservative policymakers protecting vested interests and to individuals who see technology as the solution, rather than the need to change a broken system and think about holistic solutions – put forward [by the EU Green Deal and it's Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies](#).

Last week's [GMO-free Europe Event](#) was a perfect example of this. If you regularly read our newsletter, you'll know the Commission announced a new legislative proposal for so-called 'new genomic techniques' in the second quarter of 2023. This may exempt certain GMOs obtained from CRISPR-Cas and other so-called 'Novel Genomic Techniques' from the present level of risk assessment, traceability, and labelling. The consequences of certain scenarios currently under consideration would be immense on environmental and consumer protection and on the GMO-free production chain – including organic production – in Europe.

We raised awareness about this at the [GMO-free Europe Event](#), co-organised with Save our Seeds and hosted by the Greens/EFA Members of the European Parliament. Representatives from GMO-free Regions, scientists, farmers, producers, retailers, and consumers as well as NGOs, civil servants, and politicians agreed: the Commission's legislative proposal must contain strong provisions for co-existence of GM and non-GM agricultural production in Europe, ensuring labelling and traceability. Read more about this event in our dedicated article.

Proponents of old and new GMOs argue that using them will reduce Europe's pesticide use, one of the goals in the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy. However, as European organic movement, we see this as flawed logic. New and old GMOs do not reduce pesticide use and the European Commission should achieve its Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies' goals by upscaling proven agronomic solutions to reduce our dependency on synthetic inputs. Organic farming and other agroecological methods will help reach these goals and at the same time improve agriculture's climate resilience and our environment and animal welfare.

Next week, on 29 November, we are co-organising a policy workshop on [Closing nutrient's cycles: reshaping EU agri-food system for greater autonomy and sustainability?](#) – together with Agroecology Europe, the European Environmental Bureau and the Clean Air and Climate Secretariat. This workshop is organised in the context of the development of the Integrated Nutrients Management Action Plan ([INMAP](#)) developed by the Commission (DG ENVI) and now expected for early 2023. The organic movement wants this INMAP to properly support organic farming as we already implement practises to cope with nitrogen losses and close the nutrient cycle. This workshop will gather scientific, farmers, NGOs, journalists, MEPs and Commission's representatives. [Join us online](#) on 29 Nov from 13:30-15:30.



We will also organise the new edition of [IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business](#). Our annual event will finally take place physically in Brussels. It will offer a great opportunity for businesses active in / interesting in organic to network with important stakeholders of the organic and food sectors to discuss the most important and recent developments for the organic sector. [Registration is still open, so join us for this great event](#) on 30 Nov from 9:30-17:00.

Hoping to see you at one of our events, and maybe at BIOFACH.

Stay warm, stay organic!  
Jan

PS: Next year you may expect to receive a special edition of our newsletter ahead of BIOFACH. Want to make sure you receive it? [Subscribe to our newsletter](#)

## POLITICAL HOTSPOT (500-700 words)

The legislative process of revising the EU's pesticide legislation, the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR), is full of hurdles, put up by some Member States and political groups at the European Parliament.

### **The battle between agriculture & environment**

Following publication of the Commission's 22 June 2022 proposal, an intra-Parliamentary battle started between the Committee on Environment (COMENVI) and the one on Agriculture (COMAGRI) over competencies. As pesticides have direct effects on the environment, COMENVI should get the lead. Austrian Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Sarah Wiener (Greens/EFA) was nominated rapporteur for COMENVI, and her report was initially expected before the winter break.

But COMAGRI requested some competencies over the file as well. Last week, COMAGRI nominated their own rapporteur, Spanish MEP Clara Aguilera (Socialists & Democrats), for their opinion. The Conference of Committee Chairs and the Presidents of the political groups have to take a final decision on the respective competencies of the two committees in the coming days.

This dispute between committees has now prevented the start of the negotiations within the European Parliament for more than two months, and is part of the delay tactics which Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the EPP group seem favouring against this proposal on pesticides reductions.

[MEPs from the European Political Party \(EPP\), led by German MEP Norbert Lins and Italian MEP Herbert Dorfmann, expressed their opposition to the SUR reform](#) and even asked the European Commission to withdraw its proposal. They claim that the 50% target of pesticide use reduction, set in the Farm to Fork Strategy, would lead the EU to food insecurity because the efficiency of pest management would decrease, leading to yield reduction. [Such claims are exaggerated](#) and synthetic pesticides are harmful for the environment, biodiversity as well as the quality of water, soil and air. We need farming systems that protect the natural resources on which we depend to produce food in the long-term.

### **Unwillingness among (some) EU countries to cut down on pesticides**

There does not seem to be more enthusiasm to reduce harmful pesticides on the Council side. [A group of eighteen Member States voiced their concerns](#) on the SUR reform, and asked the European



Commission to launch a second impact assessment to analyse the consequences of pesticide use reduction on food security – claiming it is at risk in the EU because of the war in Ukraine.

### **NGOs: Don't delay adoption of the SUR, existing practices can deliver!**

To counter this narrative that environmental action endangers food security, a coalition of 32 organisations including [the European organic movement, beekeepers, biocontrol manufacturers and environmental NGOs joined forces in a letter sent on 10 November](#). The letter addresses Ministers of Agriculture, Environment and Health, as well as to MEPs in COMAGRI and COMENVI and the President of the Parliament.

This wide group of civil society organisations calls on policymakers: “We urge Agriculture, Health and Environment Ministers and Members of the European Parliament not to call for further delays in the adoption of the SUR, and to work towards achieving an ambitious SUR”. Moreover, they also remind them that existing farming practises, like organic and other agroecological practices, already implement preventive and indirect methods to manage pests and diseases, (and use natural and biocontrol substances as a last resort for certain crops).

### **What comes up and what do we do?**

The next steps of this pesticide regulation reform are:

- A discussion between Member States during the next AGRIFISH Council (meeting of Agricultural Ministers) on 12-13 December;
- The publication of the two Parliamentary Committees' report, likely early 2023.

We do not expect the European Parliament's Plenary to vote on the reform of the pesticides regulation before April 2023 – at the earliest.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we are meeting weekly with MEPs and their teams to highlight the need and feasibility to reduce the use of synthetic pesticides. Together with NGOs, we also [highlight the issues identified with regards to the Harmonized Risk Indicator \(HRI-1\) the Commission chose to measure pesticides use reduction](#), which shows limitations in its methodology and discriminates against natural substances.

Read more about [our work on plant health care on our website](#).



# 1 NEWS

## Policy

### GMOs

The European Commission announced a new legislative proposal for so-called ‘Novel Genomic Techniques’ in the second quarter of 2023. This may exempt certain GMOs obtained from CRISPR-Cas and other so-called ‘Novel Genomic Techniques’ from the present level of risk assessment, traceability, and labelling. The consequences of certain scenarios currently under consideration would be immense on environmental and consumer protection and on the GMO-free production chain – including organic production – in Europe.

Together with Save our Seeds, we organized the [GMO-free Europe Event 2022](#) on 17 November. The event was hosted in the European Parliament by Green/EFA Members of Parliament and united representatives of GMO-free Regions, scientists, farmers, producers, retailers, and consumers as well as NGOs, civil servants, and politicians to scrutinize the proposal and take a stand together. The event was a full success with more than 250 participants joining online and in person.

As it stands today, the European Commission is in the process of creating a huge conflict of goals in its Farm to Fork Strategy. On the one hand it recognises the benefits of GMO-free organic farming and proposes to expand it to 25% by 2030. On the other hand, it mulls over the idea to abolish the basis for GMO-free agriculture in the EU with a new legal framework.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we stressed that:

- Any future legislative proposal must contain strong provisions for co-existence of GM and non-GM agricultural production in Europe;
- Systemic problems must be answered with systemic solutions: to secure food for the people of our planet, we need a holistic, sustainable agriculture that takes nature and the many interactions in our land use into account.

We will continue to advocate on this topic on behalf of the organic sector to make co-existence a focal point in the upcoming legislation.

The recording of the event will be on our website by the end of November. Make sure to [keep an eye on our GMO-page](#) and [read our Twitter chat](#).

For more information on (new) GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe’s work on this issue, please contact [helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio](mailto:helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio). IFOAM Organics Europe members can find more information on [the member extranet](#) and background materials in the [arguments database on the member extranet](#) (main messages, arguments/FAQs, visuals & videos). Contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio) for access rights (issues).

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### Add your signature – Support these EU-wide petitions to stop attempts to deregulate new GMOs

The European Commission is working on a [new legislative proposal](#) for ‘New Genomic Techniques’ (NGTs). We expect this to be released in the second quarter of 2023, and it is supposed to govern new Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) outside of the current legislation. The expected new legislative proposal is a consequence of high pressure of the agribiotech industry and will most likely deregulate certain products from these new genetic engineering techniques.

There are a few EU-wide and national petitions, raising awareness and providing a critical voice to the debate surrounding GMOs and the so called ‘New Genomic Techniques’. **There are three petitions in which we recommend you to make your voice heard.**

#### European NGO petition calling for regulation and labelling

Firstly, there is EU-wide petition, spearheaded by a coalition of environmental and agricultural NGOs called [Keep new GM food strictly regulated and labelled](#). The petition will call on EU decisionmakers to:

- Take a strong stand against any deregulation attempts; and
- Uphold mandatory risk assessment, transparency and labelling for all GMOs on the market.

With the Commission’s plans to propose a new legislation for NGTs, it is more important than ever to **insist on the existing safeguards of regulation and mandatory labelling so we can protect EU consumers and food producers’ freedom of choice.**

The petition’s key demands are:

- New GMOs are GMOs and should be regulated as such, in line with the precautionary principle. All GMOs must undergo a strict safety evaluation and be labelled as genetically modified, to ensure transparency throughout the whole supply chain for citizens and farmers;
- More research must be carried out on the environmental, biodiversity and health risks of new GMOs, on their socio-economic impacts for farmers and the food system, and on the development of detection methods;
- European decision makers need to promote and support proven solutions for a sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture, such as agroecological practices and organic farming, and to protect the freedom of breeders to operate without being restricted by the far-reaching scope of patents on seeds produced with new GMOs.

With more than 318,000 signatures, the petition is gaining a broad momentum and enters its last stages, culminating in an event in December to hand over the signatures to the European Commission. The petition is running in 17 European countries and shared by [a coalition of around 50 organisations](#).

#### German and Austrian petitions



Some of our members are also involved in this initiative and have translated these petitions into their national contexts. The organic umbrella organisation BÖLW calls the petition [Nicht hinter unserem Rücken - Kein Freifahrtschein für neue Gentechnik in unserem Essen](#). Austria's organic umbrella organisation Bio Austria is leading a petition called [Keine neue Gentechnik durch die Hintertür](#).

### Share these petitions to help keep GMOs regulated & labelled

- We suggest you to sign these petitions and share them with your friends and networks. You can do so by sharing:
- Our messages on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook,
- BÖLW's messages on [Twitter](#),
- Bio Austria's messages on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#), and/or
- Posting your own. Here are a few example messages:
- [A new potential new legal framework for new GMOs could exclude them from the current approval processes and risks assessments. Sign this petition to call on EU decision makers to maintain safety checks, transparency and labelling for all GMOs on the market!]
- [The freedom of choice for consumers and producers to use or not use GMOs is central to the current EU regulatory framework on GMOs. Sign this petition to re-affirm this fundamental freedom and protect organic and GMO-free food producers in the EU];

For more information on (new) GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please contact [helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio](mailto:helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio). Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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### The scientists behind the GMO deregulation lobby – A story of vested interests

Many scientists currently active in agricultural biotechnology who lobby for deregulating so-called 'new genomic techniques' (NGTs) in the European Union (EU) have either direct or indirect interests in commercialising and marketing new genetically modified organisms (GMOs), for example, through patents, patent applications, or other connections to the seed industry. An investigatory report commissioned by the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament called '[Behind the smokescreen: Vested interests of EU scientists lobbying for GMO deregulation](#)' recently uncovered this.

#### Context: A political momentum to deregulate

There is a strong push for relaxing requirements in the [regulatory framework](#) governing all GMOs in the EU – which mandates strict risk assessments, traceability, and labelling requirements. **This current framework guarantees food producers' choice to use or not use GMO crops, transparency and freedom of choice for consumers to eat GM-free food.**

Large corporations are increasingly developing and using NGTs like TALENs, Zinc Finger Nuclease, or CRISPR/Cas9 under the mantle of food security, innovation, and sustainability. This discourse is highly contested but, worryingly, increasingly picked up by EU policymakers.



The role of industry-linked science in this push for new GMOs is not to be underestimated – especially as a source of alleged credibility. Already in 2021, the lobby watchdog Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) has published [a study on the three largest scientific institutes that contribute to the pro-GMO lobbying campaign](#): the European Plant Science Organisation (EPSO), the EU network for Sustainable Agriculture through Genome Editing (EU-SAGE) and the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA).

### **New report reveals depth of vested interests among EU scientists**

The new report, written by a group of researchers and editors, dives deeper into the commercial interests of the scientists largely affiliated with the agribiotech industry. Some of the key findings: 64% of the members of the EPSO working group on Agricultural Technologies and 32% of EU-SAGE members have a vested interest in the commercialisation of GM plants. This means they benefit from it financially or in terms of career development, either personally or via their organisations. However, none of them declare these economic interests; 38% of EPSO Agricultural Technologies working group members and 23% of EU-SAGE network members hold one or more patents or patent applications related to GM processes or products; 21% of scientists at EPSO and 10% at EU-SAGE are involved in a seed or biotechnology company, by holding a position or shares in such companies; Certain public research institutions, like the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology, have strong links with one or more of the three lobby groups, as well as the agricultural biotechnology industry.

### **Other scientific voices oppose ‘precision breeding’**

At the same time, a group of 91 international scientists and policy experts have released a [public statement](#) opposing the use of the term ‘precision breeding’ to describe gene editing, on the grounds that it is ‘technically and scientifically inaccurate and therefore misleads Parliament, regulators, and the public’ because gene editing is neither precise nor is it breeding. Claire Robinson from the watchdog “GMwatch” [comments](#): “It is not only misleading but also dangerous, as deregulating these new techniques will have serious socio-economic consequences, as well as potentially serious impacts on health and the environment.”

According to the Greens/EFA report, similar scientific concerns can be found in research areas that pertain to the negative consequences of an unchecked release of new GMOs, like ecology, agroecology, socioeconomics, toxicology, and public health that are severely underrepresented in the scientific discourse.

### **Transparent science and the precautionary principle**

It is clear that scientists and scientific institutes mobilized by the agribiotech lobby give credibility to pro-GMO discourses have vested interests, beyond the scientific strive for knowledge creation. This needs to be communicated transparently to and recognized by policymakers.

At the same time, many researchers oppose deregulation efforts and appeal to the precautionary principle that applies in science, and which was re-affirmed by the European Court of Justice ruling in July 2018. These voices must be heard on the EU level to have a fair and balanced discussion about the merits and limitations and risks of GMOs, NGTs, and the consequences of potential deregulation.

For more information on (new) GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe’s work on this issue, please contact [helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio](mailto:helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio). Do note that we prioritise our members’ requests.





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## Plant health care

### Commission's fertiliser communication, short term fixes, no long-term solutions

In its Communication on ensuring availability and affordability of fertilisers, the EU Commission postpones necessary changes to achieve more sustainable food systems by implementing short-term fixes to a broken system highly dependent on fertilisers. Instead of moving away from this toxic dependency, the Commission suggests short-term fixes to ensure access to unsustainable markets.

As organic movement, we see and acknowledge the current difficulties of those producing our food. However, it's crucial we apply long-term perspective to reduce environmental harm & climate & biodiversity crises,

We welcome the Commission's efforts to ensure better access to organic fertilisers & nutrients from recycled waste streams. However, it's crucial that waste streams are no source of contamination.

We further acknowledge the Commission's initiative to encourage Member States to revise their CAP Strategic Plans to close gaps concerning efficient and decreased fertiliser use.

In short, our food system's addiction to fertilisers comes at a high cost financially, environmentally & socially. Transforming to a more sustainable future means moving away from synthetic fertiliser and recognising that organic is part of the solution.



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### Organic movement asks for higher environmental ambition in the upcoming Fertilizer Communication & digitalization of pesticide use data in SAIO's implementing act

#### Upcoming Fertilizers Communication of the Commission

On 24 October, we co-signed a [joint letter with 9 NGOs](#) calling on the Commission to:

- Set a long-term vision for the sustainability and resilience of the farming sector for the upcoming Fertilizer Strategy (expected on 9 November 2022), and
- Not further delay the publication of the Integrated Nutrients Management Action Plan ([INMAP](#)).

The INMAP provides the best framework for addressing the immediate issues relating to fertilisers as part of a strategic and holistic strategy for balanced nutrient management. With an eye on the current energy crisis, the European Union should be less dependent of synthetic fertilizers imports and should promote farming practices which rely on system approaches and alternatives to synthetic fertilisers, such as organic fertilisers and a better recycling of nutrients already in the system

#### Statistics on Agricultural Inputs and Outputs (SAIO) Regulation

On 3 November 2022, we signed [a joint-contribution with 15 NGOs](#) on the Commission's public consultation on an implementing act of the Statistics on Agricultural Inputs and Outputs (SAIO)



Regulation. The implementing act wants to ensure digitalisation of pesticides use records across the EU and therefore a better collection of data.

Reforming the SAIO is crucial to get more data on organic farming practices. Since its reform, it foresees that pesticide use data will be collected every 2 years for a common selection of crops until 2028 and every year after 2028 (instead of every 5 years as is currently the case).

But Member States represented in the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF Committee) still need to approve this implementing act during the upcoming vote, scheduled on 8-9 December 2022, to ensure proper implementation at national level. That is why [we call on the national governments represented in the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed \(PAFF committee\) to vote in favour of the adoption of this Implementing Regulation.](#)

### **The SAIO and the EU's green targets**

The European Parliament approved the Statistics on Agricultural Inputs and Outputs (SAIO) Regulation on 4 October 2022. Now, the Regulation will be detailed through implementing and delegated acts.

Having more data on pesticides use will help realise the Farm to Fork Strategy's targets of 50% pesticide use reduction by 2030 across Europe. It will also ensure proper implementation of the Commission's proposal on the Sustainable Use of Pesticide Regulation (SUR) currently discussed in trialogue.

For more information on these topics and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on them, please contact [amelie.steu@organicseurope.bio](mailto:amelie.steu@organicseurope.bio). Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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## Organic Regulations

### Changes in regulation on recognition of control authorities & bodies for the purpose of import of organic products into the EU

While the EU Organic Regulation 2018/848 has been in force since the start of the year, implementing regulation that specify the rules is continuing to be published. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2325, among others, sets out the list of control authorities and control bodies recognised for the purpose of equivalence and competent to carry out controls and issue certificates in third countries.

Amendments and corrections to this implementing regulation have been published on 25 October, correcting list of third countries and the list of control authorities and control bodies that have been recognised under Article 33(2) and (3) of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 for the purpose of importing organic products into the Union:

- Regulation EU [2022/2047](#) is correcting Annex II of Regulation EU 2021/2325
- Regulation EU [2022/2049](#) is amending Annexes I and II of Regulation EU 2021/2325.

These Regulations have already entered into force.

For more information on the organic regulation and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please contact [martin.sommer@organicseurope.bio](mailto:martin.sommer@organicseurope.bio). Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.



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## Climate change

### This was COP 27 for agriculture

From 6-18 November the COP27 took place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Like every year, our colleagues from IFOAM – Organics International participated to the COP, bringing the voice of the organic movement to the UN Climate Change Conference.

Historically, agriculture has not been very prominent on the agenda of climate negotiations. This year, however, several pavilions were dedicated to food and farming. Saturday 12 November was also dedicated to adaptation and agriculture.

We have co-signed a [letter with 70 other organisations representing more than 350 million family farmers and producers highlighting the critical role that small-scale farmers play for global food security](#) and the need to significantly increase the amount of adaptation finance available to them.

Our colleagues from IFOAM – Organics International participated in various sessions to highlight the contribution of organic farming to climate mitigation and adaptation. You can watch some of the sessions in case you have missed them. For example, a [session on the climate impact of industrial farming](#) with IFOAM – Organics International’s Policy Manager Gabor Figezky and an [interview](#) IFOAM – Organics International’s President Karen Mapusua.

Find out more about the work of the organic movement related to COP27 in their [blogpost](#).

For more information on climate change and IFOAM Organics Europe’s work on this issue, please contact [hanna.winkler@organicseurope.bio](mailto:hanna.winkler@organicseurope.bio). IFOAM Organics Europe members can find more information on [the member extranet](#) and background materials in the [arguments database on the member extranet](#) (main messages, arguments/FAQs, visuals & videos). Contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio) for access rights (issues).

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## Biodiversity, soil, and water

### Organic movement responds to public consultation on Soil Health Law

Soil health is a cornerstone of organic farming and common organic farming practices improve actively soil quality. Healthy soils are fundamental to produce nutritious and sustainable food and deliver a wide range of ecosystem services such as water purification and carbon sequestration.

The organic movement welcomes the European Commission's initiative to develop a soil health law. Farmland soils must be kept in good state or restored to fulfil their function of producing healthy food. As intensive agriculture is one of the main drivers for soil deterioration, legally binding action and a holistic approach at EU are crucial to restore and protect Europe's soils and make sustainable soil use the norm.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we replied to the public consultation in which the Commission asked for input from stakeholders. These are our main demands:

#### **Recognize organic farming's benefits for soil health and define it as sustainable soil management**

**practice:** The holistic and systemic approach of organic farming and its variety of practices sustain important soil functions and deliver on environmental benefits. The multiple positive effects that organic farming has on soil health and soil functions should be recognized within the legislative proposal and be recognized as sustainable soil management.

**Contribution to Farm to Fork targets and ensure policy coherence:** IFOAM Organics Europe urges the Commission to ensure the Soil Health Law delivers on the implementation of soil-related targets from the Farm to Fork Strategy. Namely the reduction of synthetic fertiliser use by at least 20% and the reduction of nutrient losses by at least 50% and to support the objective of at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming by 2030.

**Incentivise farmers in adopting more sustainable soil management practices:** Approaches such as organic farming, agroforestry and other agroecological approaches have proven efficient for restoring degraded land and soil-associated ecosystem functions and should be incentivized. Training and advice also have a major role to play, and farm advisory services (FAS) must be strengthened in this regard.

Read our full [contribution to public consultation on the Soil Health Law](#) to find out more about the organic sector's view.

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### 1 million EU citizens knock on EU's door: No synthetic pesticides to save bees & farmers

Over 1 million EU citizens are asking to restore nature, provide healthy food, healthy soil and clean water. On Friday 25 November at 15:00, civil society formally will knock on the EU institutions' door.

Representatives of the [European Citizens Initiative \(ECI\) Save Bees and Farmers](#) will deliver a message to Commissioners for Values and Transparency, Jourová and Health and Food Safety, Kyriakides asking to restore biodiversity and support farmers to achieve these goals.

As EU organic movement, we are fully behind the demands of this ECI, as organic is part of the solution. There can be no agriculture and food security without healthy soils, clean water and biodiversity, which is supported and encouraged through organic farming techniques.

The formal Save Bees and Farmers initiative demands are:

**1. A phase-out of the use of synthetic pesticides**

By 2030 the use of synthetic pesticides shall be gradually reduced by 80% in EU agriculture. By 2035, agriculture in the entire Union shall be working without synthetic pesticides.

**2. Measures to recover biodiversity**

Habitats shall be restored and agricultural areas shall become a vector of biodiversity recovery.

**3. Support for farmers**

Farmers must be supported in the necessary transition towards agroecology. Small, diverse, and sustainable farms shall be favoured, organic farming expanded, and research into pesticide-free and GMO-free agriculture will be supported.

Since October 2022, the citizens' initiative is officially validated and the European Commission will have to come with a formal answer. In January an official hearing in the European Parliament will follow.

#### Background

The European Citizens Initiative was organised by [organisations from all countries in the EU](#). Signatures with the formally required personal data were collected in all EU Member States. Ten countries reached the minimum threshold set by the EU and the total number of valid signatures makes it an official request on the agenda of the European Commission and Parliament.

Out of the total amount of 1.18 million signature 89% was valid, so 1.05 million signatures and 10 threshold countries. The official results can be found on the website of the European Commission.

Visit [www.savebeesandfarmers.eu](http://www.savebeesandfarmers.eu) to stay up to date, or follow them on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



## Food policy

### Put sustainable school meals on the EU agenda - Sign the petition

The Buy Better Food Campaign has initiated an [EU-wide petition for 'A healthy meal for every child in every EU School'](#). The aim is to It invites cities and citizens to urge EU and national policy makers to implement put sustainable school meals on the menu and help realise for the implementation of the EU Farm to Fork strategy.

Currently, not all EU schools offer lunch, which leaves children at risk of hunger during the day. Better school food would help combat poverty, improve children's school performance and health. In short, it would help deliver the [European Child Guarantee](#), that wants announced by EU Commission president in 2019 and designed to ensure that every EU child at risk of poverty has access to their most basic rights.

Peter Defranceschi, who heads the food work at from ICLEI (local governments for sustainability), one of the Buy Better Food Coalition members, contributed stated ““The European Commission told us on several occasions that the time for inspiring them with concrete ideas was now. The #SmallPlateBigImpact Petition is about school food healthy for people and planet and about social justice. Combined with food education on healthy food habits and local food culture, your support can make change happen””.

As the academic year begins for many EU schools, support the ['A healthy school meal for every child in every EU school' petition here](#), in English. The petition is also available translated here in French, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish, Czech, and Greek. More For more information about the BBF Buy Better Food campaign, visit [ICLEI's website available here](#).

For more information on this topic and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please contact [laura.saugues@organicseurope.bio](mailto:laura.saugues@organicseurope.bio). 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).



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## Organic Textiles

### NGOs demand adequate methodologies in upcoming legal proposal on green claims – also for apparel & footwear

The European Commission's is working on an upcoming legislative proposal to help justify ('substantiate') green claims and prevent greenwashing. However, this proposal runs the risk of being misleading and to worsen ongoing greenwashing in the food and the fashion industries. [NGOs have taken a strong stance against this in a recent joint letter.](#)

#### Initiative on substantiating green claims

There is a plethora of new policy initiatives on the EU horizon and they all seek to reduce greenwashing in various economic sectors. Among others, the [initiative on substantiating green claims](#), expected by the end of November 2022, which would tie into the legislative proposal on empowering consumers in the green transition. This initiative will require companies to substantiate any sustainability and impact claim.

This initiative would favour the use of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) methodology, which is based on a life cycle analysis (LCA) to assess a products' impact on the environment. Meaningful and balanced environmental and social information of textile products is essential. However, **the PEF has various shortcomings, and cannot be the sole methodology to underpin this information.** [This holds true for agri-food products](#), as [this joint letter by a coalition of environmental NGOs explains](#), and also for textile products.

#### Preventing greenwashing in sustainable textiles is essential

Over the past 20 years, we have seen a steady increase in the production of clothes with a shorter and shorter life cycle. Many of these textiles become waste and are not recycled. [Our planet cannot sustain this](#) in the long-term. The current conventional supply chain negatively impacts the environment, it especially damages our soil health, emits a lot of greenhouse gas emissions, negatively affects the well-being and health of workers who are exposed to chemicals and endure poor working condition.

EU consumers want [stricter](#) environmental and labour conditions, but the confusing landscape of 'sustainable' fashion claims makes informed consumer choice difficult. About [60% of green claims in the textile sector](#) are exaggerated, false or deceptive.

#### Shortcomings of the PEF for apparel and footwear

**The PEF methodology the European Commission proposed to address this problem is insufficient.**

While the product-focused PEF serves well to compare manufactured industrial goods, the approach significantly lags when evaluating the environmental performance of complex agricultural systems, including natural fibre production, in a holistic way.

When applied to agriculturally derived natural products, such as cotton, wool, hemp, jute, kenaf, and flax, the PEF gives misleading results in which synthetic and industrial fibre production score better. In other words, **the PEF favours intensive, industrial textile production instead of extensive, natural agricultural practices and has no eye for both the positive and negative external costs of the production process.** Among other things, the PEF does not account for the impacts of production



systems on biodiversity and the use of pesticides and does not have an indicator on microplastic emissions and end-of-life practices.

As IFOAM Organics, we [co-signed an open letter to the European Commission](#) criticising the standalone application of the methodology in the textile and apparel industry.

For further questions, feel free to contact [helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio](mailto:helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio). 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).



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## 1.2 Research and innovation

### Research and innovation advocacy / TP Organics

#### Farmers at the centre of research, innovation & knowledge exchange in TP Organics new study

[Organic living labs and lighthouse farms in Europe](#) is a brand new study by [TP Organics](#), the European technology platform for organic food and farming. It puts the spotlight on seven [living labs](#) and five [lighthouse farms](#) in the organic sector in Europe, putting farmers at the centre of research, innovation and knowledge exchange.

#### Organic farms, innovators at heart

The initiatives showcase technological, social, economic, organisational and governance innovation. They apply various approaches and methodologies to find local solutions and improve knowledge and innovation sharing in organic. By involving multiple actors, the case studies demonstrate how innovative the organic sector is in improving practices, building capacity and inspiring the transformation of the agri-food system at large.

#### Actions to ensure living labs & lighthouse farm reach their full potential

The results of the study indicate actions to ensure organic living labs and lighthouse farms reach their full potential:

- Support peer-to-peer learning events;
- Invest in online platforms and social media;
- Bring organic and conventional farmers together;
- Raise awareness about the living lab and lighthouse farm concepts in the organic sector;
- Invest in courses and trainings for farmers;
- Set up a sub-network for organics in the Soil Mission network of living labs and lighthouse farms;
- Better connect and integrate organics in national AKIS;
- Set up an EU network of organic advisory services.

The study also points out that the needs of organic farmers and other actors are currently not sufficiently met through existing Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems ([AKIS](#)). The national advisory services rarely include and communicate about organic solutions, let alone the latest innovation.

To organise a better flow and exchange of information, a European organic advisory network should be developed to solve the problem of disconnect from and underrepresentation of organics in national AKIS. It would also have the potential to function as a platform that supports participatory, farmer-led research and innovation.

[Download the full study.](#)

#### Why this study?

The new [Organic Action Plan for the EU](#) recognises the importance of research and innovation for organic, knowledge exchange on organic farming, and building organic agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS). TP Organics' study, based on mapping and screening existing cases in Europe, presents seven organic living labs and five organic lighthouse farms.

The study was subcontracted to Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture ([ÖMKI](#)) and launched at the [Organic Innovation Days 2022](#) on 11 October, at agri- and horticultural research and



knowledge centre and TP Organics Member [Inagro](#) (Flanders, Belgium). Stay tuned for an event review and the presentations on the [TP Organics website!](#)



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## Knowledge for organic

### FarmDemo Training Kit helps you organise successful farm demonstration – Available in all EU languages

Do you want to organize a successful farm demonstration? FarmDemo's Training Kit collects tools, guidelines, and videos that will help organizing a successful farm demonstration. The toolkit will inspire both farmers and other organizers of farm demonstration events to uplift their events, whether on-farm or online. And it is available in all EU languages! In 6 easy steps, the Training Kit gives you an overview of the most important elements to be considered when you are preparing, delivering, and evaluating demonstrations on the farm. It will increase awareness of the value of farmer-to-farmer exchanges during farm demonstrations. Check out the FarmDemo Training Kit in all EU languages. The FarmDemo Training Kit is the result of a unique collaboration between three European Horizon 2020 projects: NEFERTITI, AgriDemo-F2F and PLAID. The NEFERTITI project is an EU-wide connected network of demonstration and pilot farms to enhance knowledge exchange and innovation uptake. It established 10 interactive thematic networks, connected 45 regional clusters of demo-farmers and related actors in 17 countries. IFOAM Organics Europe is a partner in the project. Make sure to follow @NEFERTITI EU on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.



NEFERTITI has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 772705. 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.

### Policy recommendations to reduce inputs like copper, antibiotics and introduce new nutrient sources

The RELACS project developed and researched alternatives to contentious inputs in organic crop production, think about copper and mineral oils, nutrient inputs, and in livestock production, for example anthelmintics, antibiotics and vitamins.

Organic farming has always been an incubator of innovation. Of course, organic farmers cannot change the farming system by themselves. The rules and regulations in which they operate should allow them to realise this.

So, the RELACS project developed roadmaps for policymakers and the sector with measures that could realise implementation of these alternatives in practice. Read the fact sheets:

- [Reduction of copper and mineral oils](#)
- [Phasing-in new nutrient sources](#)
- [Reduction of antibiotics, anthelmintics and vitamins in livestock production](#)

Of course, in the RELACS project, we produced many other documents to help reducing inputs in organic farming. These are targeted at practitioners, scientists, EU policymakers and the interested public:

- 3 [roadmaps](#) for European policymakers
- 29 [scientific publications](#) for scientists
- 20 [practical guidelines](#) for farmers and practitioners
- 20 [deliverables and reports](#)



- 8 [news stories](#)
- And several [videos summarising RELACS' results](#)

Visit the [RELACS website](#) to learn more and read up on the project's deliverables.



RELACS promoted 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 was responsible for the communication and dissemination of project results as well as the coordination of the science-practice-policy dialogue. RELACS was an EU Horizon 2020-funded project.



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### Climate Farm Demo, a project of 1,500 pilot demo farms to increase climate smart farming

In October, the Horizon Europe Project Climate Farm Demo has started. It aims to increase, speed-up and disseminate the adoption of climate smart farming practices and tools. To reach this goal, it will set-up a network of pilot farms across Europe and associated countries.

This network will consist of 1,500 pilot demo farms covering all European pedo-climatic areas and different agricultural sectors, from animal husbandry and mixed farming systems, to specialised arable crops and horticulture crops, including organic farming.

Climate Farm Advisors will support the pilot demo farmers to implement climate smart farming practices. Farm demo events will demonstrate technical and social innovations to the wider farming community.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we will facilitate knowledge sharing and the development of synergies between Climate Farm Demo and other EU projects, policy makers and flagship initiatives. Moreover, IFOAM Organics Europe will be the thematic leader of the organic sector.

IDELE coordinates Climate Farm Demo which will run until the end of September 2029.





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## 2 IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENTS

### IFOAM Organics Europe members, do you wonder how we spend your membership fee?

As part of a membership organisation, it is normal to pay a fee. Sometimes it can get a bit abstract what this money is used for, so we have visualised this for you. Please have a look on [our member extranet](#) and learn what we have achieved with:

- Your membership fee
- Sponsorship & foundations' donations
- The LIFE-grant

For more information on this, please contact [Joanna.wierzbicka@organicseurope.bio](mailto:Joanna.wierzbicka@organicseurope.bio). Contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio) for access rights (issues). For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).



## 3 EVENTS

### 3.1 Preview of events

#### Last chance to join organic sector's signature event for companies involved & interested in organic

This year's meeting of companies active in and interested in organic will take a deep-dive into a variety of topics ranging from updates on the EU political context to the relationship between organic and regenerative agriculture.

We have the honour to welcome high-level experts for the discussions. Pasqual di Rubbo (Policy Analyst at the European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture & Rural Development) will share their insights on the political and market contexts. Sarah Compson's (Associate Director at the Soil Association), Dorothy Shaver (Sustainability Director at Unilever) and Paul Holmbeck (Director at Holmbeck EcoConsult) will explore the relation between organic's principles and regenerative agriculture.

Besides these informative sessions, participants will also have the chance to network with key actors from the organic sector.

This year's edition of IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business will be held physically on 30 November, 9:30-17:00 at L42, in Brussels. [Reserve one of the last spots](#) before Friday, 25 November.

For the full programme of the event, visit our [dedicated webpage](#).

We thank our events sponsors for making IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business 2022 possible.



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## 3.2 Review of events

### ClieNFarms online public policy workshop on climate neutrality and food security

8 July 2022, online

On 8 July 2022, the first ClieNFarms public policy workshop, organised by IFOAM Organics Europe, took place online. The workshop was about climate neutrality and food security in the context of the war in Ukraine.

First, keynote speakers Alexander Müller ([TMG Think Tank for Sustainability](#)) and Nathalie Bolduc ([IDDRI](#)) took the floor. Alexander Müller stressed that short-term responses to tackle the current food affordability crisis should not put the urgently needed transformation of the food system at risk. Nathalie Bolduc highlighted that the Farm to Fork Strategy promotes a systemic approach to food system sustainability. Its targets are ambitious but coherent with the need to foster the resilience of our food system.

First, ClieNFarms coordinator, Jacques-Eric Bergez (INRAE), presented the project after which a policy debate ensued with representatives from the EU Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), [the European Environmental Bureau \(EEB\)](#), [COPA-COGECA](#) and [IFOAM Organics Europe](#).

In the discussion, Eric Gall, Deputy Director of IFOAM Organics Europe, pointed out how organic agriculture contributes to food systems' resilience. Firstly, organic agriculture is less dependent on external inputs. Secondly, soil health is a cornerstone of organic farming and organically managed soils have a higher carbon content. Thirdly, organic agriculture fosters genetic diversity. And, finally, organic animal production has lower stocking densities than conventional.

Furthermore, Eric Gall stressed that the organic sector is worried that carbon farming will only focus on carbon and carbon metrics instead of having a multi-dimensional approach. The organic movement is sceptical that farmers can benefit from carbon farming based on a market approach. Instead, **farmers should be rewarded by public funding for favourable management approaches that increase carbon sequestration.**

Read the full report of the public policy workshop [on the ClieNFarms website](#) and [watch the workshop's recording](#).

The Horizon 2020 project [ClieNFarms](#) tests solutions for climate-neutral farms. IFOAM Organics Europe is a project partner. It is responsible for the organisation of a series of public policy workshops to stimulate a dialogue between scientists and policy makers and raise awareness about the outcomes of ClieNFarms.

You can follow ClieNFarms on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).





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**Title article: Sustainability labels, "sustainable or not? That's the question!"**

In the current food environment, labels are crucial to provide consumers with information to help them make the sustainable choice. So, a sustainability label should be based on a methodology reflecting the complexities of the agrifood system. For bio-sourced products such as agri-food products and textiles, it should cover 'external' costs like pesticide use, impact on biodiversity and climate, animal welfare and more.

On 30 November, the European Commission will reveal their proposal for a [Regulation on Substantiating Green Claims based on the Product Environmental Footprint \(PEF\)](#). By the end of 2023, it will also release a sustainable food systems law, including principles underpinning a sustainability label.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, [we already raised concerns about the Product Environmental Footprint \(PEF\)](#), the methodology developed by the European Commission, in our [position paper](#) on sustainability labelling and the Planet-Score. The latter is an alternative currently being developed by [ITAB, the French Organic Institute](#), which reflects in a more accurate way the complexities and externalities of the agrifood system.

To understand better what is at stake behind these labels and their methodology, we co-organized events on 26 Wednesday October, including a webinar [Green Claims & PEF: how can metrics foster or destroy sustainability?](#)

During this webinar, various actors from economic, political and research background explored the implications of the methodological choices around the environmental labelling of food and textiles products. Some of the event's takeaways:

- Methodologies based on the Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) only, such as the PEF, are unable to reflect the planetary boundaries in their scoring of bio-sourced products. Therefore, the PEF cannot be considered a tool to nudge consumers towards products from sustainable methods of production;
- Because of its inadequacy to consider externalities (positive and negative), the PEF cannot assess methods of production, only individual products which makes it more an indicator of yields. Thus, it will automatically favour intensive systems of production;
- Consumers want more information on the sustainability of their products. Crucial topics such as pesticides, biodiversity, animal welfare, are increasingly important for them. So, retailers and producers want to be able to show their commitments with environmental labelling. While this is currently not possible with the PEF, it is with the Planet-Score;
- Methodological choices are not neutral. Choosing to give weights to some elements rather than others or using certain methods of calculation is a political choice. The speakers insisted that the methodology should be openly discussed, to be in line with the transition towards

sustainable food systems the EU needs. Environmental labelling can be a helpful tool to drive changes in consumers' behaviours if it is thought and designed in coherence with transition towards more sustainable food systems, rather than further increasing intensification.

Watch the full recording [of the webinar 'Green claims & PEF: how can metrics foster or destroy sustainability?' on our YouTube channel](#). Please note that the recording is floor audio, so a mix of French and English.

To learn more about IFOAM Organics Europe's work on sustainability labelling, can check [our website](#).

For more information on sustainability labelling and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please contact [laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio](mailto:laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio).



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### Representing organic at Bucharest Leaders' Summit – The role of organic in the EU Green Deal

On 10 November 2022, our Director Eduardo Cuoco joined the [Bucharest Leaders' Summit](#) via livestream. During a session on sustainable agriculture – digitalization, technology and food security, Eduardo talked about the role of organic farming in the EU Green Deal.

He introduced the risks the current agrifood system poses, such as biodiversity loss, land degradation and the socioeconomic challenges they entail. He then presented the European Commission's reply to these challenges: [The European Green Deal](#) and the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) realising the Green Deal's food system's pillar. In his speech, Eduardo focused on goal of 25% organic land by 2030 put forward in the Farm to Fork Strategy, explaining organic's crucial role in making the agrifood system more resilient and sustainable and less dependent on external inputs. This is a timely notion because the war in Ukraine is showing us our agrifood system's fragility.

Our Director concluded his speech by remarking that Romania has a great potential to deliver on the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy. He underlined the benefits of organic from both an environmental and a socioeconomic point of view and encouraged the audience to ask for national governments' support in developing of national organic action plans.

The Bucharest Leaders' Summit is organised by the Press Group MediaUno together with the Romanian Institute of Statistics with the support of the Department for Sustainable Development of the Romanian Government.

### 'Way forward in organic plant health care strategies' Conference 17-18 November 2022, online

On 17 & 18 November, IFOAM Organics Europe, BÖLW and JKI Institute organised an [online conference on the 'Way forward in organic plant health care strategies'](#).



On the first day, 150 participants focused on strategies to minimize the use of copper while ensuring plant health care. In 2018, copper was reauthorized in organic farming for 7 years. Its reauthorization process will resume in 2025 and this natural substance might change of category to not be considered as a candidate for substitution anymore. The presentations of the conference highlighted the strategies to minimise the use of copper in organic farming, but no other alternative had been found yet.

On the second day, 100 participants discussed boarder perspectives such as initiatives to increase on-farm biodiversity on organic farms. A panel discussion discussed organic plant health care strategies and their role in biodiversity conservation and the SUR. The panellist consisted of Member of the European Parliament Sarah Wiener (Greens/EFA's rapporteur on the [SUR](#)), Dr. Helmut Burtscher-Baden (GLOBAL2000 & Save the Bees and Farmers), Marian Blom (Board member of IFOAM Organics Europe) and Karl Kempkens (German Ministry of Agriculture's Organic Unit). **As the SUR is under attack, panellists mentioned the need to support it if we want to achieve pesticides use reduction, while [highlighting issues linked to the indicator HRI-1 indicator](#).**

For more information on this topics and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on them, please contact [amelie.steu@organicseurope.bio](mailto:amelie.steu@organicseurope.bio). Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

IFOAM Organics Europe members can find more information on [the member extranet](#) and background materials in the [arguments database on the member extranet](#) (main messages, arguments/FAQs, visuals & videos). Contact [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio) for access rights (issues).

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## 4 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

27 November 2022

[XXIV Premios Internacionales a la Investigación y Defensa en Producción Ecológica “Andrés Núñez de Prado”](#)

Córdoba. Spain

29 November 2022

[Closing nutrient's cycles: Reshaping EU agri-food system for greater autonomy and sustainability?](#)

Brussels, Belgium

30 November 2022

[IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business 2022](#)

Brussels, Belgium

21 January 2023

[We are fed up!](#)

Berlin, Germany

2022

[10-year anniversary of IFOAM Asia](#)

[20-year anniversary of IFOAM Organics Europe](#)

[50-year anniversary of IFOAM Organics International-](#)

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

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For further information contact your national board member or the office in Brussels.

Editors IFOAM Organics Europe newsletter: Eva Berckmans, Silvia Schmidt & Eric Gall. With the contribution of Elena Fazio.



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