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WELCOME NOTE

Dear readers,

December is the time when we usually draw conclusions and think about New Year's resolutions. If you could choose one word to describe the year 2023, which one would it be? For us at IFOAM Organics Europe, the 2023 key word is "teamwork". Teamwork with our members, specifically our Board and Council, but also our many interest and expert groups. Representing the organic movement with the EU institutions requires us to work in a complex political scene, and this type of work is best done as a team.

I would say that it is timelier than ever to have a strong and united advocate in Brussels to transform food and farming. As you might have seen in the news, there was [a disappointing vote in the European Parliament's Plenary](#) in which [MEPs voted down pesticides reduction](#). This goes against the calls of [more than 1 million EU citizens who want to save bees and farmers](#). We protested in front of the European Parliament to remind them about society's demands for [sustainable food system law](#) and joined our Belgian and Dutch members to demand a [Europe in which old and new GMOs continue to be regulated](#).

Earlier this week, many national Ministers of Agriculture highlighted the need to respect the choice of organic producers not to allow new genomic techniques (NGTs) in organic production. Several Member States' representatives also insisted that this should be practically possible through traceability, labelling and coexistence measures (including for so-called NGT of category 1). As Organics Europe, we welcome this as well as Ministers' acknowledgement of the need to protect European breeders and farmers from patents and monopolisation of genetic resources. You can read more about the recent policy process in our in-depth articles and [our political hot spot](#).

But, before you continue reading on about policies, I want to remind you that we also had times for being together and highlighting inspiring examples. In September we did so in an intense week in which there were the [EU Organic Day on 23 September](#), the [EU Organic Awards](#) ceremony on 25 September and our annual [European Organic Congress](#) 26-28 September. If you want to get inspired by the movement's activities on and around [EU Organic Day and the award winners](#), please check out the dedicated articles.

Of course, we continued these connections after September. More recently the Brussels office met old and newer, value-driven organic practitioners [during our 2-day staff excursion](#). We also welcomed many representatives throughout the supply chain at the meetings of our Interest Groups on Organic Processing (IGOP) and Certification and Integrity (IGOC) and at [IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business](#). Moments like these where we connect in-person with actors from along the value chain allow us to build lasting connections and have an impact.

So, instead of making a New Year's resolution, I want to assure you that the IFOAM Organics Europe team and I will continue to be the voice of the entire organic value chain in Brussels. We need to ensure your voice is heard in the coming months before the EU elections – in which many legislative files are being negotiated – and after the EU elections.

You can read how in our next newsletter. It will be a special edition in which we will look at the year ahead and which we will make available in a few European languages. This will enable you to carry on this knowledge to your national members, network and/or policymakers.

Don't panic, the future is organic!
Eduardo Cuoco
IFOAM Organics Europe's Director



POLITICAL HOTSPOT

With an eye on next year's elections, the EU institutions have geared up work on many important dossiers. But rushing legislative processes is not necessarily a good thing for food and farming.

This is clearly visible in the sped-up timeline on the Commission's proposal on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs). Following the proposal, two parallel political processes are ongoing: negotiations in the Council of Agriculture Ministers on the one hand and negotiations and votes in the European Parliament on the other hand.

On Monday 11 December, the Council of Ministers did not agree on the text the notoriously pro-GM Spanish Presidency proposed. So, the Council does not have a position yet. However, we know that the Presidency will keep trying to convince one country to change its position on their proposal from abstention to yes – which would allow them to come to an agreement. If Spain does not manage to convince more countries to agree with their proposal, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU will take over negotiations on the dossier. This would allow for more much-needed in-depth discussions.

Our press conference on 30 November showed that there are many issues with the NGT file still. In his address, Jan Plagge, President of IFOAM Organic Europe, urged Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and Member States to [uphold organic farmers' right not to use NGTs](#). He specifically, emphasised the need to maintain the ban of NGTs in organic production and the labelling of seed lots as laid out in the Commission's proposal. To add to this, Bernard Lignon, Board member of IFOAM Organics Europe and sector representative for processing and trade, called on policymakers [to include traceability of NGTs all along the production chain and advocated for the right of Member States to take coexistence measures](#) to protect operators who do not want to use NGTs.

Dr. Angelika Hilbeck also vocalised [the concern of many scientists that certain NGTs would be entirely exempt from risk assessments and traceability](#). Over 70 scientists underscored these concerns in an [open letter](#) to the Commission. The reductionist approach associated to breeding with genetic engineering, that focuses on specific genes and traits, neglects the broader agroecological system. The systemic approach to sustainability associated to agroecology is needed to achieve better and longer-lasting resilience of a given farm. Sustainable agricultural production, cannot hinge solely on a single plant variety or trait.

Another dossier with major impact on organic and agriculture in general was voted on 22 November when the plenary of the European Parliament [rejected the proposal of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation \(SUR\)](#), and voted against sending the proposal back to the parliamentary committee. As a consequence, the future of the pesticides reduction regulation is highly uncertain, even if it was still discussed in the December Council of the European Union. Ahead of the parliamentary vote, sceptics of pesticide reduction amongst members of the European Parliament (MEPs) had tabled a long list of amendments weakening the regulation's ambition. In the plenary sitting, a majority of MEPs voted in favour of these amendments, so that by the end of the session, not much was left of the Commission's original proposal and of the compromises reached in the Environment committee – pesticide reduction, biodiversity protection nor rules for integrated pest management. The resulting text was not ambitious enough to garner approval of MEPs who had been striving for a real change in the use of pesticides in the EU. **The SUR's fate highlights, more than ever how important organic farming is for more sustainable agriculture that does not rely on synthetic pesticides.**



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1 NEWS

1.1 Policy

Organic Regulations

Continuation organic equivalency confirmed by UK and the EU & new regulations interpretation published
UK-EU trade agreement

The [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) that entered into force on 1 May 2021 contains provisions on the necessary reassessment of organic equivalence before the end of 2023. During the past year, the UK and EU have been reviewing the existing UK and EU organic regulations. On 6 December 2023 both sides [confirmed continuation of accepting each other's organic legislation as equivalent](#). Each side has taken the necessary steps to ensure trade in organic products between UK and the EU can continue beyond 2023.

Details of the EU's recognition of UK organic exports are available on the Commission's website [agreements on trade in organic products](#). Details on the UK's recognition of the EU's organic products are available [on the British government's website](#).

It is important to note that organic products imported from the UK into the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland require a Certificate of Inspection (COI) issued in the EU's [TRACES NT system](#). Organic products exported from the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland into the UK will not require a COI until 1 February 2025. The products should originate in the country they are being exported from which means that products must be produced or processed in the UK to be exported to EU as organic, and vice versa.

All details can be found in the [the EU's official journal: Trade and Cooperation Agreement, Annex 14: Organic Products](#).

EU Commission FAQ on organic rules

The Commission regularly updates its [Frequently Asked Questions on organic rules](#). The most recent update was on 30 November 2023. It contains new interpretations on plant reproduction material and the use of Lithothamnium in organic products.

More on the EU Organic Regulation

Since March 2022, we are offering [guidelines to help practitioners interpret the EU Organic Regulation](#). These guidelines helps readers to navigate the regulation, its implementing and delegated acts and links to definitions, recitals, other EU legislation and more. We will update the guidelines in the first quarter of 2024.

For more information on the EU organic regulation and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please [visit our website](#) or contact lea.bauer@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

IFOAM Organics Europe members have early access to information on the EU Organic Regulation [through our Interest and Expert Groups](#) and our member [member extranet](#). They also have one free access to the [EU Organic Regulation guidelines](#).

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



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GMOs & seeds

Can we (gene) edit our way to sustainable agriculture?

We argue “No”. NGTs, so called New Genomic Techniques, are touted as making agriculture more sustainable by tweaking individual traits with the result of having more resilient plants. This approach is too simplistic however, disregarding the complexity of interactions in nature. A system-based approach by contrast respects nature’s complexity and diversity.

Sustainability in agriculture is a pressing concern, and the European Commission's stance on "New Genomic Techniques" (NGTs) in crop breeding has sparked significant debate. In this article, we delve into the key aspects of the European organic movement's perspective on sustainability in crop breeding, addressing the shortcomings in the European Commission's approach and highlighting the success stories of organic breeding.

Political context and alleged benefits

The European Green Deal sets out for Europe to become the first climate neutral continent. It does so by setting crucial political objectives for various aspects, including food, biodiversity, climate, digitalisation, and forests. The European Commission is proposing the use of so-called "New Genome Techniques" (NGTs) as a sustainable and innovative approach to plant breeding and sees the ongoing revision of the Plant Reproduction Material (PRM) legislation as an opportunity to align with its objectives.

However, the proposed framework on NGTs bares the mark of the agrochemical industry’s narrow view on sustainability and innovation, raising questions about its compatibility with the broader goals of the European Green Deal. Indeed the Commission alleges that critical requirements for NGTs to qualify as contributors to sustainable agrifood systems include achieving yield, tolerance or resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses, efficient resource use, and desirable nutritional characteristics.

What are the issues with NGTs?

New genomic techniques are little more than unproven promises, offering an easy solution to complex problems. However, **sustainable agricultural production cannot rely solely on a single plant variety or trait**. Agriculture is part of the wider ecosystem and should improve this in more ways than changing a single trait.

Most GMOs currently on the market have the trait of herbicide tolerance. While the current generation of GMOs had promised pesticide reductions, [the last decades of experience with these crops evidenced the opposite](#) and has adverse effects on both below-ground and above-ground biodiversity, as well as on pollinators. **NGTs repeat the empty promise of pesticide reduction.**

GMOs are often used to legitimize patents on plants and animals, a stronger form of intellectual property rights that blocks the circulation of genetic resources necessary for breeding. Patent claims are very broad, extend beyond the technological process itself and can cover multiple varieties that include a specific genetic sequence or trait described in the patent. By granting exclusive rights to their holders, patents contribute to the monopolisation and corporate control of genetic resources. The increasing number of patents on seeds granted by the European Patent Office is a threat to the innovation and economic model of breeding in Europe, based on hundreds of SMEs.

Organic breeding: The sum of all its parts

While acknowledging the need for innovation in breeding, the organic food and farming movement emphasises that genetic engineering should not be the sole focus. Drawing from decades of experience, organic agriculture advocates for a systemic approach relying on a combination of strategies and tools creating long-term resilience.

Socially innovative approaches to organic breeding are showcasing environmental and socio-economic benefits. Breeding systems, inclusive and community-driven, stand in stark contrast to the monopolisation of genetic resources by a handful of multinational companies. Genetic engineering promotes monopolisation by assigning intellectual property rights to traits and varieties, raising concerns about its impact on diversity and accessibility.



Two case studies illustrate the success of organic breeding in transforming production systems toward sustainability.

Nordic maize: Robust cultivation systems adapted to climatic conditions

In our first case study, we delve into the world of Nordic Maize—a dynamic and forward-thinking breeding company that operates independently on a smaller scale. Their focus lies in crafting maize varieties specifically designed to thrive amidst the evolving climate conditions of Northern European countries. Nordic Maize achieves this by seamlessly integrating elite and open-source germplasm sourced from various international breeding programs, thereby guaranteeing a rich tapestry of genetic diversity. The outcome of their meticulous efforts is nothing short of remarkable—an "ultra-early" maize variety that not only facilitates harvesting in September but also promotes efficient crop rotation practices.

Scab resistance in German apple breeding

The second case validates the claim that organic farming techniques can achieve equal or better results than their NGT-counterparts. While Germany once boasted 1,000 varieties of apples, they are now limited to 10-20 varieties that are plagued by diseases like scab, caused by a fungus. To buck this trend apfel:gut e.V. has been enhancing genetic diversity through breeding new varieties and preserving old and rare ones across 10 locations in Germany since 2019. By crossing modern varieties with ancient and resilient ones, the project aims to enrich the gene pool, with a focus on selecting seedlings based on vitality and resistance to stress. Thereby, not only fulfilling requirements for sustainability laid out by the European Commission, but also creating a more resilient and diverse apple ecosystem.

Our approach: Sustainability is more than changing a single trait

In navigating the landscape of sustainable crop breeding, it is evident that a systemic approach to plant breeding, as advocated by the organic food and farm movement, is needed. The shortcomings in the European Commission's approach to NGTs underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of sustainability in agriculture. Editing out undesirable traits or adding on desirable ones is simply a technofix that does not consider the sum of all parts. As discussions on agricultural policies continue, finding a path to agriculture innovation that respects ecosystem health remains a critical challenge.

For detailed information, read [Sustainability in organic breeding](#), visit our website pages on [seeds](#) and [new GMOs](#) or contact helene.schmutzler@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 for access rights (issues).

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Policy process new EU legislation on "New Genomic Techniques" in full motion – Organic movement needs to be on high alert

After the publication of the legislative proposal on so-called "New Genomic Techniques", the policy process in the European Union institutions is in full swing. With the Spanish presidency of the European Council calling progress on the file "a matter of life or death" and the recent reveal of the tight deadlines in the European Parliament, the organic sector must be on high alert and put its advocacy efforts in full gear.

What are these new GMOs or so-called New Genomic Techniques?



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In brief, genetic engineering is a breeding tool which deliberately alters the genetic material of plants, microorganisms, or animals to confer certain desired traits – creating genetically modified organisms (GMOs). So far, GMOs are mainly modified to either withstand the spraying of weedkillers such as glyphosate, produce their own pesticide (BT toxins), or both. A new generation of GMOs, called “New Genomic Techniques” (NGTs), which can make direct modification in the crop’s DNA itself entered the market about a decade ago. Problematically, they are not as precise as claimed, trigger unwanted effects, and their consequences remain poorly understood.

[We explain this topic in our 3:30 minutes video.](#)

Organic movement unified against old and new GMOs at EU and international level

Because of the potential risks and consequences of old and new GMOs, the use of NGTs conflicts with the precautionary principle. So, as the Commission’s draft proposal also reflects, the use of gene editing technologies is [not aligned with the principles of organic agriculture](#). Furthermore, organic producers have to fulfill consumers’ expectations that no Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are used in the organic production process.

The organic movement has been clear on its position on genetic engineering. [IFOAM – Organics International, the global organic movement, unanimously adopted a position paper](#) in 2017 at its General Assembly in New Delhi. This position paper explains the views of organic producers on so-called “new breeding techniques”. At the European level, IFOAM Organics Europe adopted a [resolution](#) at its 2023 General Assembly, in which [organic breeders, farmers, processors, certifiers, traders, and retailers demand the preservation of their freedom of choice to remain GMO-free](#). As our [briefing paper on organic breeding](#) also states, the organic movement believes that while sustainability-driven innovation in plant breeding is necessary, it is misguided and harmful to reduce it to the tweaking of the DNA of a single crop or variety. The rich experience in organic agriculture over the past decades shows that an agroecological perspective of our food systems, relying on a combination of strategies and tools and on ecosystem interactions, is what creates long-term resilience. Exemplified with two case studies, organic breeding thrives on a system-based approach with biodiversification and ecosystems’ health at its core.

The Commission’s proposal – What's in it?

The current legislative framework applies high standards for biosafety and consumer information for old and new GMOs with three key pillars:

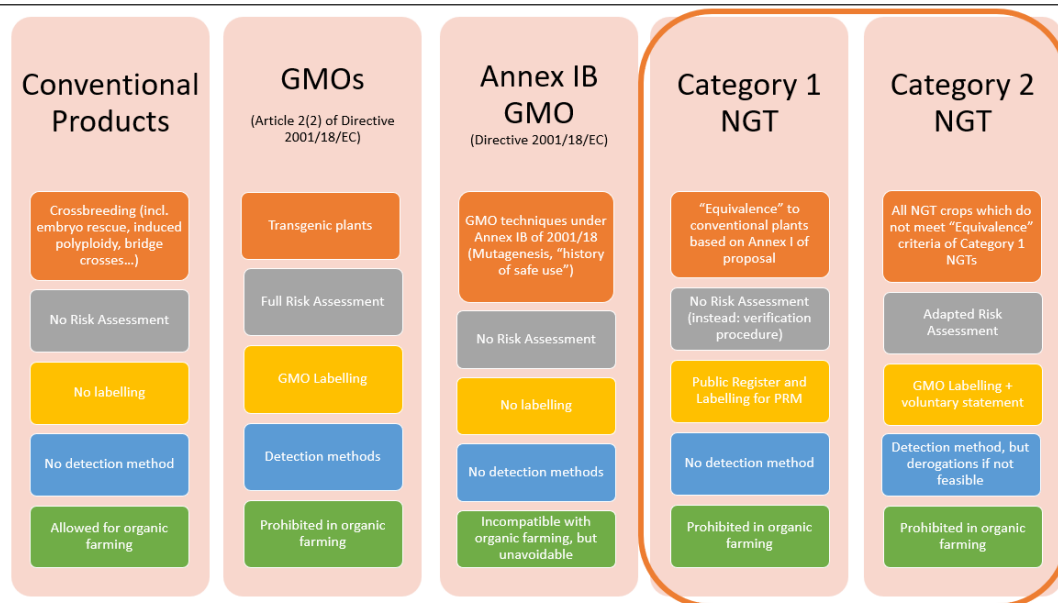
1. Traceability throughout the whole supply chain,
2. Labelling up to the consumer, and
3. Thorough risk assessment.

However, on 5 July 2023, the Commission published a [legislative proposal](#) on so-called “New Genomic Techniques” to adapt the current regulatory framework.

The draft legislative proposal adopts a differentiated approach in the regulatory framework, based on the risk profiles of the NGT crops, and categorizes NGT crops into “category 1 NGT plants” and “category 2 NGT plants” (Figure 1 below). Both Category 1 and 2 crops continue to be prohibited in organic farming. Category 1 crops are more deregulated than Category 2 crops, where the GMO legislative framework still applies except for certain rules related to risk assessment, the provision of detection methods, and additional regulatory incentives for supposedly more “sustainable” NGT crops.

For an in-depth explanation of the legislative framework, [IFOAM Organics Europe's members can access a member-only analysis](#) provided by IFOAM Organics Europe.





Overview of the current legislative framework on GMOs with addition of the two proposed regulatory categories for NGTs in orange brackets.

The organic movement's 3 key concerns

1. IFOAM Organics Europe **emphasizes the importance of the explicit ban of all NGTs for the purposes of organic production in the legislative proposal** to deliver much-needed legal clarity and establish of essential safeguards of GM-free production.
2. The ban of Category 1 and Category 2 NGT crops in organic food and farming needs to be underpinned by the appropriate legal framework and technical means, which is not currently the case in the Commission's proposal.
 - a. For Category 1 NGT crops, the proposed provisions on transparency at the seed level are necessary but not sufficient. **Traceability measures are needed throughout the whole supply chain to enable food processors and operators to avoid the accidental or unavoidable adventitious presence of NGTs in their production process.**
 - b. **The NGT proposal needs to provide a clear legal basis for Member States to take national and regional coexistence measures for both Category 1 and 2 NGTs.** Member States must have all legal means to ensure and implement adapted and crop-specific coexistence rules in their territory, including the right to ban the cultivation of NGTs in areas where coexistence is practically or economically not feasible. Another measure needed for a functioning coexistence regime is the introduction of a strict liability system and a compensation fund to compensate farmers in the event of contamination. Overall, for both Category 1 and Category 2 NGTs, it is important that any additional financial and legal burden to ensure the GMO-free status of production does not fall on farmers and operators who do not wish to use NGTs.
3. **The impact that eliminating mandatory identification and traceability of NGTs would have on the European model of innovation in breeding is highly concerning. For a further explanation of the connection between patents on traits and genetic material and NGTs, see for example, this [joint NGO letter from July 2023](#).** Beyond significant legal uncertainties and a further market concentration in the breeding sector, the increase of patents will also stifle innovation in the breeding sector and reduce choices for farmers and consumers. **The European Commission's plan to publish a market analysis of the impact of patents on the breeding sector by 2026 is clearly too late and insufficient to address this imminent problem.** Policymakers must refrain from taking any step that could facilitate the commercialisation of more patented plant varieties before the issues connected to patents on conventional traits and plant material are resolved. Since all plant reproductive material that has been

modified with genetic engineering (including NGT) can be assumed to be covered by a patent, the mandatory traceability system at least provides a minimum of information on whether a given piece of genetic material or product was genetically modified. In turn, this allows breeders and farmers to avoid using such material, and therefore be protected from legal threats related to patent infringements, or from paying royalties to patent owners.

Next steps and outlook

The Spanish Presidency of the European Council has the clear goal to progress as much as possible under their chairmanship. With almost unprecedentedly frequent Working Group and Ministerial meetings with hopes to have a vote on parts of the proposal at the end of the year. Since many Member States base their position on hopes on the potential contribution to sustainability of these NGT crops, [we have sent a public letter to agriculture ministries in August](#). IFOAM Organics Europe's members can find the [schedule](#) and an [overview on the positions](#) of the Member States in the Council on its member extranet.

On the side of the European Parliament, the NGT proposal is in the hands of the ENVI committee (European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety), with some shared competences on some articles with the AGRI committee (European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture). The rapporteur for the file in the ENVI committee is the Swedish EPP MEP Jessica Polfjård and the Czech ECR MEP Veronika Vrecionova is writing the opinion of the AGRI committee. The plenary vote will likely take place in January 2024.

The pressure on the side of the EU institutions to deliver a lighter regulatory framework on NGTs is exceptionally high and so are the stakes for the organic movement. As national members, it is essential to reach out to your agricultural ministries with letters and meeting requests, also to the people responsible in the Working Group of the Council.

Find more resources [in our overview article](#). 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 for access rights (issues). If you are interested to [translate our video on new GMOs](#), please contact communication@organicseurope.bio and helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio.



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Parliamentary committees have started work on proposed Plant Reproductive Material regulation

The AGRI and ENVI parliamentary committees have started their work on the proposed Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) regulation, a file that is less in focus, but nevertheless important for the work of many breeders and farmers and relates to the New Genomic Techniques (NGT) regulation.

The PRM regulation will replace several Directives regulating the marketing of plant reproductive material and laying down rules for testing and registration of varieties. As IFOAM Organics Europe, we voice organic plant breeders and farmers' interests to the EU institutions and point to the needs of the sector for specific rules for organic plant reproductive material. For this, we are in constant dialogue with our members and specifically those active in our Seed Experts Group.

For detailed information, read our recent paper [Sustainability in organic breeding](#) and visit our website pages on [seeds](#) and [new GMOs](#) or contact maria.zintl@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.



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Plant health care

European Parliament rejects Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR)

On 22 November, the plenary of the European Parliament voted to reject the proposal of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR), and voted against sending the proposal back to the parliamentary committee. As a consequence, many deem the SUR to be dead, even if it will still be a topic on the agenda in the Council of the European Union in December. [As IFOAM Organics Europe, we regret the European Parliament's inability to agree on a pesticides reduction regulation.](#)

Ahead of the parliamentary vote, the sceptics of pesticide reduction amongst Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) had tabled a long list of amendments that would severely weaken the SUR's ambition. In the plenary sitting, many MEPs then voted in favour of these amendments, so by the end of the session, not much of the original SUR proposal was left – whether it was pesticide reduction, biodiversity protection, or rules for integrated pest management.

The resulting text was not ambitious enough to gain the approval of MEPs who had been striving for a real change in the EU's pesticide use. The fate of the SUR only further highlights organic farming's importance as a strong pillar for more sustainable agriculture that does not rely on synthetic pesticides.

For more information on organic's systemic approach to plant health and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue:

- Watch the 3-minute video [Organic approach to plant health care and pesticides regulation](#)
- Read our publication [Plant health care in organic farming - The role of natural substances in a biodiversity-based system approach](#)
- Read GLOBAL 2000's fact check [Pesticides in conventional and organic farming](#)
- Need more information, [visit our website](#) or contact maria.zintl@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

European Commission launches technical workshops gathering input for new CAP



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While the new CAP's first year of implementation is finishing, the European Commission is intensively working to prepare the CAP post-2027. The next months will be crucial determining the CAP's future. As IFOAM Organics Europe, we have already had informal meetings to discuss the next steps for the new CAP, but official discussions are also starting.

To involve different stakeholders on the technical topics currently discussed, the Commission launched a series of technical workshops. The first workshop took place on 11 December and focus on resilience. The next workshop will take place on 26 January and focus on food security.

The Commission also specifically requested the presence of IFOAM Organics Europe's farmer representatives. Specifically, but not limited to gather input for a breakout group on "Transformability: capacity to significantly change the business model in response to either severe shocks or enduring stress that make business as usual impossible."

It is crucial for the organic movement to be involved at the earliest stage of the discussions on the next CAP. With 31% of the EU's budget allocated to the CAP, this policy is key in shaping the agri-food system and potential promoting of organic farming. Should organic not be visible enough in the current discussion we risk that it will be forgotten in the next reform.

Within IFOAM Organics Europe, we have started discussion the CAP with our Interest Group of Organic Farmers. Together with you, we will make sure to make organic farmers' voice heard at EU level. We count on your collaboration to make the voices of organic farmers heard!

About our IGOF

IFOAM Organics Europe's Interest Group of Organic Farmers (IGOF) is one of IFOAM Organics Europe's four interest groups. [Our interest groups](#) provide direct input from the different sectors in IFOAM Organics Europe's organisation. They formulate policies and positions relevant to their sector.

IFOAM Organics Europe's members can access [a list of its current members](#) and [the terms of reference](#) on the member extranet.

Are you an IFOAM Organics Europe member who is:

- An organic farmer interested to become part of the IGOF? Contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio;
- Having issues accessing the member extranet? Contact membership@organicseurope.bio.

Are you interested in becoming part of the IGOF? You have to be a member of IFOAM Organics Europe to do so. Contact membership@organicseurope.bio for details.



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Climate change

[Parliament votes on Carbon Removal Certification Framework: Cautious welcome](#)

The European Parliament's Plenary has voted on their position on the Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF). IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes the improvements that had been made compared to the Commission's proposal.

Most importantly, the Parliament included a requirement for carbon farming to positively contribute to biodiversity and ecosystems protection and restoration. This is crucial to ensure carbon farming does not increase carbon sequestration while harming other aspects such as biodiversity – a pre-requisite for long-term climate mitigation and adaptation.



However, an addition by the Parliament compared to Commission proposal is the possibility to certify emission reductions. These reductions would be measured based on activities and not at farm level. A farm-level approach, however, would consider the entire picture of a farm's climate impact.

It is crucial to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture overall. Any certification of emission reductions should keep the focus on the farm system and not lead to an efficiency focussed approach. Otherwise, this would be to the detriment of animal welfare and soil and water quality.

Currently, the Council and the Parliament are negotiating a final agreement on the text in the trilogues. As IFOAM Organics Europe we are closely following this topic to ensure organic farmers' voices are heard and avoid greenwashing through carbon certification.

For more information on organic and climate and IFOAM Organics Europe's work related to this issue:

Get a visual overview of [organic's many benefits for climate and biodiversity in our infographic](#),

Read our [document on organic's benefits for climate and biodiversity](#),

Check out our [infographics on soil](#) and [biodiversity & climate change](#), and

[Visit our website](#) or contact hanna.winkler@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.



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Biodiversity, soil, and water

Agreement on nature restoration law: Important signal to transform farming

Negotiators from the European Parliament and Council reached a final agreement on the Nature Restoration Law (NRL). As European organic movement, we welcome this milestone for nature and biodiversity. The agreement covers all ecosystems originally foreseen, returning restoration of agricultural ecosystems to the text.

Even though the Parliament and Council weakened [the law's targets set out in the Commission's proposal](#), we are pleased to see it recognises the importance of restoring pollinator populations and protecting biodiversity on farmland for resilient food production.

Contrary to the Parliament's position, the final agreement includes targets for agricultural land again. Given the [preceding aggressive campaign against the Nature Restoration Law](#), and in particular against the targets for agriculture, its approval sends an important signal about the importance of healthy ecosystems for sustainable and resilient agricultural systems.

However, the text includes a new addition, the so called 'emergency brake'. This gives Member States the possibility to suspend the law's implementation related to agricultural ecosystems in the event of unforeseeable and exceptional events outside of the EU's control and with severe EU-wide consequences for food security.

The agreement was voted and approved by the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (COMENVI). As final step, the Plenary of the European Parliament will vote on the law and the Council has to approve it.

Afterwards, each Member State has to restore nature on agricultural land by implementing systemic solutions to achieve the law's targets, for example using and promoting organic farming and other agroecological practices.



For more information on our work on the NRL, please contact hanna.winkler@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.



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Protecting our soils across the EU

In July, the European Commission published its proposal on a [Soil Monitoring and Resilience law](#). As IFOAM Organics Europe, [we welcomed the proposal](#) since healthy soils form the corner stone of organic farming. The proposal is the legal recognition of the importance of soils in Europe, giving soil the same status as air and water, already well-regulated in EU legislation.

Organic farming builds soil fertility while protecting biodiversity, ensures water quality, prevents pollution as it does not use synthetic pesticides and fertilizers and stores carbon in soils. We elaborate on these benefits in our recent [factsheet](#). The organic movement therefore highlights the need to **recognise organic farming as a farming system that protects and improves soil health**.

The proposal is an important step into the right direction, but there are a few aspects that should be strengthened. Synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are not addressed explicitly in the proposal, even though these substances are having a major impact on soil health. Synthetic pesticides are causing soil contamination and pose a threat to soil biodiversity, as do synthetic fertilizers, which negatively impact soil structure too. The importance of soil biodiversity should be better reflected in the legislation by making the consideration of soil biodiversity an essential and mandatory aspect when assessing soil health.

These aspects and others, we have addressed in our [feedback to the ensuing public consultation](#) which was opened by the European Commission after the publication of the proposal.

The European Parliament Committees' votes are scheduled for February 2024 (Agriculture and Rural Development Committee), and later in spring 2024 (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee).

For more information on organic and soil and IFOAM Organics Europe's work related to this issue:

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Read [our factsheet on organic's benefits for agricultural soils](#),

Check out our [infographics on soil](#) and [biodiversity & climate change](#), and

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Food policy

Commission President, ensure a framework for Sustainable Food Systems

The current EU Commission promised to transition to more sustainable, healthier, and affordable diets. This is both their commitment to EU citizens and critical to combat climate change. So, together with 25 scientists, academics, and NGOs, IFOAM Organics Europe signed an open letter by the Food Policy Coalition.



The open [letter](#) to the President Von der Leyen on the EU legislative framework for sustainable food systems and the strategic dialogue on the future of food also reminds the Commission that the strategic dialogue on the future of EU agriculture should stay on course to transition to sustainable food systems – adapted to and mitigating climate change and biodiversity loss.

To ensure this strategic dialogue will enable food system transformation and identify pathways for a just transition it should follow 3 priorities:

1. **Take a food systems approach:** The strategic dialogue must take a holistic food system approach and look at the entire food system, from production to consumption, involving all actors from farmers to food processors and retailers.
2. **Inclusivity and equal representation:** The strategic dialogue should involve civil society at large, businesses from ‘the middle of the chain’, food services, scientists, think tanks, regional and local governments, as well as the public. It should also adhere to the principle of equal representation, to make sure that all stakeholders are listened, including civil society representatives.
3. **Co-leadership: a cross DG-approach:** to establish a unified EU vision for the future of food and food systems, a range of issues must be addressed that extend far beyond the realm of agriculture, including matters related to health, climate, environment, fisheries, and trade. Therefore, collaboration between the different of the Commissions’ Directorate Generals is necessary to ensure policy coherence.

For more information on sustainable food systems, the strategic dialogue and IFOAM Organics Europe’s work on this issue, please [visit our website](#) or contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members’ requests.

IFOAM Organics Europe members can find more information on [the member extranet](#) Contact membership@organicseurope.bio for access rights (issues) and to learn what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact membership@organicseurope.bio.



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1.2 Research and innovation

Research and innovation advocacy / TP Organics

[Organic research & innovation to deliver sustainable food & farming systems – TP Organics position paper](#)

TP Organics’ new position paper puts forward [priorities for the third and final Work Programme of Horizon Europe](#) (2025-2027) – both for the general work programme and those of the Missions. These research priorities reflect the organic and agroecological sector’s knowledge and innovation needs. They were identified in the 2019 [Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda](#) and the position paper updates these to include the practical and political challenges following the current crises.

Proposed priority topics for research and innovation under Cluster 6 of the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025-2027 are:

1. Improve collection of statistics on inputs and outputs in organic agriculture
2. Set up demonstration sites of agroecological management of organic horticulture
3. Improve methods to assess the sustainability of organic farming
4. Reduce the climate impact of organic livestock production
5. Deepen the circular economy design of organic livestock production
6. Transform European diets by looking for solutions for organic food plant-based meat substitutes
7. Defining “organic diets” for highest health and sustainability outcomes
8. Investigate the impact of organic production methods on the soil, plant, animal, and



human microbiome

Research priorities for EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe” identified are:

1. Set up a network of organic regenerative living labs
2. Establish a demonstration network of on-farm soil biodiversity protection
3. Improve sustainable nutrient management in organic farming

Organic and agroecological farming offers multiple benefits for climate and biodiversity, guaranteeing the health of both people and the planet. This makes them the best option to guarantee long-term food security considering the food system in its entirety.

Of course, it is important to continue improving what is already good. So, organic and other agroecological farming methods should receive proper funding under Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025-2027. This Work Programme will be key to reach the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Organic Action Plan’s targets, including reaching 25% organic farmland in Europe by 2030.

TP Organics is the European Technology Platform for Research & Innovation into Organics and Agroecology. IFOAM Organics Europe is a founding member and hosts its secretariat. Visit www.tporganics.eu for more information and follow @TPOrganics on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/TPOrganics) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/tporganics).

Horizon Europe

[Horizon Europe](#) is the EU’s key funding programme for research and innovation. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU’s competitiveness and growth. The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports the creation and better diffusion of excellent knowledge and technologies.

[EU Missions](#) are a new way to bring concrete solutions and put research and innovation into a new role, combined with new forms of governance and collaboration, as well as by engaging citizens. The EU Commission coordinates the EU Missions which support priorities such as the European Green Deal and the Soil Mission is a flagship initiative of the Long-term Vision for the EU’s Rural Areas.



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Knowledge for organic

Online platform for practitioners launching on 8 February 2024

Exciting news! As proud partner of the Horizon Europe project [EU-FarmBook](#), we are excited to announce the launch of the open-access online platform on 8 February 2024. Designed to revolutionise the accessibility of agriculture and forestry project outcomes, making them readily available to practitioners.

Join us for an online event, highlighting the platform’s features, its usage and how it can contribute to transforming food and farming.

We are extending a special invitation to all coordinators of and participants to Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects, the key providers of practical materials. This event will be the starting point connecting knowledge generation and practitioners in agriculture.

[Register on the EU-FarmBook website](#) and save the date!

Need more details? Please contact claire.morelle@organicseurope.bio



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Follow the [project's website](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#) for developments.

Within EU-FarmBook, IFOAM Organics Europe ensures the information on the platform suits the needs of organic actors. We will also promote the FarmBook platform and link it up to the already existing knowledge platform for the organic sector: [Organic Farm Knowledge](#).

Additionally, IFOAM Organics Europe will be involved in the creation of Education and Training material, such as practice abstracts and communication materials such as webcasts, farm cafes and knowledge exchange seminars. Ghent University coordinates the EU-FarmBook project which will run until the end of 2029, consisting of a consortium of 29 participating organizations.



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New digital tool for breeders, seed producers & traders

LiveSeeding is an EU-funded project promoting growth of organic seed and plant breeding to transition to more sustainable food systems. To realise this, project partner AEDIT srl is developing a new digital tool, "OHMTrack". This will assist breeders, seed producers, traders and authorities to keep track and ensure traceability of Organic Heterogeneous Material (OHM).

OHMTrack is more than just a tool. It will work with other digital tools that support different aspects of OHM such as:

SHiNeMaS: A digital tool recording seed lots' history, phenotyping, and cultural practices. This will be adapted to support participatory breeding programs, including the constitution and development of OHM;

[SeedLinked](#): A user-friendly platform enabling simple, decentralized cultivar evaluation designs and incorporating real-time multi-actor feedback (from farmer to consumer). It also allows for extensive and heterogeneous data inputs through smartphone;

[European router database](#): A database with up-to-date information on organic seeds' availability, linking to national databases.

So, what does OHMTrack do for those working with organic seeds and organic heterogeneous materials?

Help breeders, seed producers, traders and authorities tracking OHM easily;

Trace the exchange of seed lots between different organisations;

Streamline OHM notification.

OHMTrack is being developed at the time of writing. An alpha-version was released in October 2023 to project partners to be tested during 2024. The feedback received from these project partners will help make improvements for the final version of the tool. The progress of OHMTrack development was presented during "OHM traceability workshops" between July and September 2023.

LiveSeeding is a 4-year Innovation Action on organic seed and plant breeding to accelerate sustainable and diverse food systems in Europe, which started in October 2022. It provides science-based evidence and best practice solutions to help achieve 100 % organic seed. The project has a budget of 6.6 million Euro, funded by the European Union, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). To deliver on such an ambitious goal, LiveSeeding brings together 37 organisations from a wide range of sectors operating in 16 European countries.

Learn more about and follow the project on www.liveseeding.eu, [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) and [Facebook](#).

For more information on:



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Organic seeds, organic plant breeding and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, read [our paper on sustainability in organic breeding](#), watch the [LIVSEED project's video on organic plant breeding](#) or [visit our website](#) and contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio; LiveSeeding and IFOAM Organics Europe's role, contact ilsa.philips@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 for access rights (issues).

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UK Research and Innovation

2 IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 Updates for members

Exclusive (free) webinars on organic continue!

We are excited to announce the continuation of our successful Let's Discuss Organic webinar series in 2024. Join 2024's first members-only webinar "[Fighting greenwashing with the Green Claims Directive, where does organic fit?](#)" on 9 January, 10:00-13:00 CET .

This webinar will focus on the Green Claims Directive, published by the European Commission on 22 March 2022. This directive wants to combat greenwashing and fostering transparency and reliability in environmental claims.

As organic movement, we have been a steadfast advocate against greenwashing, leading the way informing consumers about products' environmental excellence. The webinar on 9 January will focus on where organic practices and the Green Claims Directive intersect. While we as organic movement support the Commission's efforts, we are concerned about certain aspects of the current proposal.

Leading the discussion is Laura Sauques, our Policy Coordinator on CAP and Sustainable Food Systems. Laura will explore the Green Claims proposal's content, present our position and advocacy. She will also update our members on the political state of play and zoom in on the European Commission, Parliament, and Member States' positions.

Join the webinar and engage in discussions, gain valuable insights and contribute to shaping environmental labelling in Europe. [Register, save the date and join us on 9 January.](#)

For more information on environmental labelling and our work on this issue, please read [our position papers on the PEF & on sustainability labelling & the Planet-score](#), [visit our website](#) or contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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Updates from the Civil Dialogue Group on Organic farming



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IFOAM Organics Europe and its members regularly participate in Civil Dialogue Groups (CDGs) touching on organic food and farming. On 24 October 2023, we participated to the online CDG on organic farming. Highlights of the meeting:

- Market trends in Europe,
- Activities of the expert group for technical advice on organic production (EGTOP),
- The Action Plan for the development of organic production,
- The state of play on organic broiler production in the different Member States,
- Updates on import-export within the EU,
- International trade issues,
- Ongoing research projects relevant for organic production,
- Case studies on atmospheric transport of synthetic pesticides.

Our members can read the full version of this article on [our member extranet](#).

What are CDGs and how can you get involved?

Following a short and easy application process, interested Organics Europe members are assigned a two-years mandate by our board. This spring, our members received a call to represent the EU organic movement at CDGs for the next period. A [list of members](#) is available on the member extranet.

To facilitate our interaction with our members in CDGs and share information with all of our members alike, we have a [space on the extranet](#). It gives you easy access to agendas, presentations and minutes of these meetings, shows upcoming CDGs and provides you with useful links.

Should you have any questions regarding Civil Dialogue Groups, please write to civildialoguegroups@organicseurope.bio. Are you an IFOAM Organics Europe member who does not have access to our member extranet yet? Contact membership@organicseurope.bio.



Did you know that, as IFOAM Organics Europe member, you can receive push notifications when we upload member-only news on the extranet? Follow these simple steps:

- 1) Download the SharePoint app to your mobile device (& allow notifications)
- 2) Visit our [member extranet](#) on the same device
- 3) Open the menu in the top right corner & click on 'Follow'

Are you an IFOAM Organics Europe member and you do not have access to the member extranet yet? Or do the steps above not work? Please [check our FAQ](#) or contact membership@organicseurope.bio.

Like the visuals and infographics on our website?

As our member, you are welcome to translate them into your own language

Contact communication@organicseurope.bio

2.2 Updates about the organisation

Welcoming our new colleagues

Kseniia Kliuiko

Born in the Eastern part of Ukraine, Kseniia realised early in life that making a change requires concerted actions and genuine will. Through her voluntary work in the European Youth Parliament of Ukraine, she promoted European Union values to the Ukrainian youth. From the first social media campaign about UN Sustainability Goals to national events she organised with Luxembourg Climate Pact Ambassadors, Kseniia has been passionate about exploring communication tools that could spark positive changes in society. We are happy to have Kseniia reinforce our communications team as Communications Assistant.

Riccardo Zanetti

Riccardo is a 26-year-old from a small town in north-eastern Italy. He is a dedicated professional with a Bachelor's degree in PPE from the University of Venice and a master's degree in international relations from the University of Sussex. Driven by his passion for communication, Riccardo honed his skills during a one-year traineeship in communications and stakeholder relations at the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), the EU authority managing plant variety rights. Excitedly joining IFOAM Organics Europe as Communications Assistant, Riccardo looks forward to contributing to content generation, media, events-related communications, and managing communication tools. Eager to make a mark, he is enthusiastic about being part of the team and shaping the narrative of organic's sustainability.

Maximilian Engel

Max, a versatile individual with a diverse skill set, has seamlessly navigated various professional roles, ranging from sustainability and communications consulting to translation and co-founding a business centred around agroforestry foods sourced from the Amazon. His unwavering commitment to addressing rainforest-related challenges is evident in his involvement with impactful initiatives, such as spearheading solar projects in indigenous territories and fostering the growth of Amazon-based start-ups. Max, armed with an MSc in Environmental Management and Policy from Lund University, now brings his expertise and passion to the forefront as he joyfully takes on the role of Political Communications Officer at IFOAM Organics. In this capacity, he eagerly contributes to amplifying the diverse voice of Europe's organic movement within the policy team.

3 EVENTS

3.1 Preview of events

Entrepreneurship in the organic seeds and breeding sector

13-14 December 2023

Are you an organic farmers or SME managers who is involved in:

- The production and/or marketing of organic seeds and seedlings,
- The development of organic breeding?

Join the webinar "Entrepreneurship in the organic seeds and breeding sector". [Register now if you are interested to join us on 13-14 December 2023, between 9h30-13h00 CET.](#)

This webinar targets existing initiatives wishing to improve their strategy and those wanting to become entrepreneurs in organic seed and plant breeding. This first session will set the stage and following webinars will address specific elements in more detail. Read the [full programme on the LiveSeeding website.](#)

The webinar will contribute to initiatives working on different crop types, in particular arable crops, and vegetables. At variety level, it will pay special attention to organic heterogenous material (OHM), open-pollinated and local/traditional varieties, as well as participatory plant breeding.

The webinar is organised in context of the [LiveSeeding](#) project and will be held in English. Interpretation in a



European language will be available – determined according to the possibilities and needs of a larger number of registered participants.

Can you not make it to the webinar? Recordings will be available on LiveSeeding's [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) and [Facebook](#). Subtitles will be enabled in different languages and all participants will receive translated into their language.

LiveSeeding is a 4-year Innovation Action on organic seed and plant breeding to accelerate sustainable and diverse food systems in Europe, which started in October 2022. It provides science-based evidence and best practice solutions to help achieve 100 % organic seed. The project has a budget of 6.6 million Euro, funded by the European Union, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). To deliver on such an ambitious goal, LiveSeeding brings together 37 organisations from a wide range of sectors operating in 16 European countries.

Learn more about and follow the project on www.liveseeding.eu, [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) and [Facebook](#).



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and Innovation

Online platform for practitioners launching on 8 February 2024

8 February 2024

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Join us for an online event, highlighting the platform's features, its usage and how it can contribute to transforming food and farming.

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Save the date for BIOFACH 2024!

13-16 January 2024, Nürnberg, Germany

If you haven't done so yet, mark 13-16 February 2024, when the organic community will gather in Nuremberg for BIOFACH 2024, the World's Leading Trade Fair for Organic Food. Participants from regional, national, and international sectors of the value chain will come together, uniting individuals who share common values and collaborate to shape a more sustainable future.

Like usual, IFOAM Organics Europe will actively participate in BIOFACH's congress program this year and host multiple sessions focused on policy, regulations, and research. Once the programme is online, we will publish details about our and IFOAM – Organics International's sessions at BIOFACH 2024 [on our webpage about BIOFACH](#).



3.2 Review of events

Six-fold increase in organic seeds needed in the next ten years in Europe

Second European Organic Seed Policy Conference shows pathways to make organic seeds a reality

29 September 2023, Poznań, Poland

European and national policymakers, experts, and leading organisations of the organic seed sector gathered in Poznań (Poland) to discuss the roadmap to 100 % organic seed of adjusted cultivars in Poland and the European Union. This conference was organized by the European Union co-funded project LiveSeeding and its partners from Poland. The LiveSeeding project promotes the growth of organic seed and plant breeding for the transition to more sustainable local food systems.

The 2nd **European Organic Seed Policy Conference** took place on 29 September 2023 in Poznań, Poland. It provided an opportunity to share experiences among participants and discuss how to boost the organic seed and plant breeding sector in Poland and throughout Europe. While European legislation requires the use of organic seeds in organic agriculture, the lack of availability of organic seeds leads to the continued use of derogations for non-organic ones, slowing down progress in meeting this legislative goal. The European Commission has set the ambitious objective to completely phase out derogations by 2035.

“To reach 100 % organic seed use in organic farming, we need a six-fold increase in the production of organic seeds in the next 10 years. Such a massive increase will only be possible by joining forces,” says **Dr. Monika Messmer, plant breeding expert at FiBL Switzerland**. *“Leading organisations across the sector are working together under the EU co-funded innovation project LiveSeeding to help overcome the practice of derogations and make organic seeds a reality everywhere in Europe”*, she added.

Also, the European Commission has proposed a reform of the seed marketing legislation to harmonize and merge the various legislations and rules on seed production into one regulation. LiveSeeding project partners are working intensely on organic breeding and organic variety testing. On the basis of their scientific and market



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experience, LiveSeeding Consortium members welcome the draft seed legislation because 1) it provides testing of organic varieties under organic conditions in all Member States as well as room for flexibility for organic varieties registration; 2) it sets a broader definition of new and traditional conservation varieties, which will allow more genetic diversity on farms; 3) it allows in-kind exchange of seeds among farmers and; 4) it allows the commercialisation of heterogeneous material by simple notification.

Yet, the LiveSeeding Consortium is concerned about the fact that the introduction of vegetable and fruit VSCU (value for sustainable cultivation and use) testing could restrict and slow down market access of organic seeds. Under current legislation, VCU testing is compulsory only for arable crops. The current draft proposal would extend these additional tests to fruits and vegetables. This would result in additional costs, further delays in registration and slower uptake of organic seeds, which would hold back the organic sector.

Organic agriculture has been at the forefront of transitioning our agricultural systems to sustainable practices, which are resilient to adverse climate conditions, foster biodiversity and are beneficial for human and planetary health. The respect of the precautionary principle is paramount to maintaining consumers' confidence.

While the European Commission's proposal explicitly prohibits New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) from organic production, it does not provide a clear basis to protect GMO-free and organic production with co-existence measures nor to ensure a fair distribution of risks and burdens.

"The Commission's proposal to deregulate New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) does not support an evidence-based and systematic approach to agriculture and innovation. It is a distraction from the agroecological solutions needed to move agriculture towards sustainability," according to **Eric Gall, IFOAM Organics Europe deputy director**. Also, *"exempting certain NGTs from risk assessment, traceability and labelling would be a step backwards for biosafety and consumer information, and is unlikely to bring any benefit for sustainability. Therefore, we urge Member States and the European Parliament to maintain traceability for NGTs all along the production chain and to provide organic breeders, farmers, and processors with the means to avoid the presence of NGTs in organic production"*.

"The Seed Policy Conference provided a great opportunity for different stakeholders to define together the roadmap to 100 % organic seed in Poland," says **Dr Edward Gacek, honorary Director of COBORU, the Polish National Variety Office**, adding, *"We want to encourage organic farmers to buy high-quality seed of locally adapted varieties as this strengthens the organic sector in Poland"*.

The 2nd European Organic Seed Policy Conference took place after the LiveSeeding annual meeting. Sixty delegates from 37 partners convened in Poznań from 26 to 28 September 2023 to plan their future work. LiveSeeding is a 4-year innovation action co-funded by the Horizon Europe programme, Switzerland, and the UK. With a budget of 6.6 million euros, the project aims to boost the organic sector by delivering high-quality seeds of a broad range of cultivars for a wide range of crops across Europe.



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UK Research and Innovation

Advocating for transformative minimum standards in public canteens

10 October 2023, Brussels, Belgium

On 10 October, representatives of local and national governments attended 'Promoting Social Innovation through public canteens' where a class from the British Junior Academy handed the [manifesto for establishing minimum standards for public canteens across the EU](#) to Members of the European Parliament.

This manifesto advocates for healthy and sustainable school meals, and specifically wants to set a goal to reach 20% organic in public procurement. The signing organisations also advocate for food education in schools, so



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every child in Europe can re-connect with the origin of the food they eat and understand the importance of sustainable food systems.

The organisations also advocated to implement food education in schools, so that every child in Europe can re-connect with the origin of the food they eat and understand the importance of sustainable food systems.

Mrs. Joke Schauvliege, rapporteur on the Legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) for the Natural Committee of the European Committee of Regions emphasized the central role of regions in the establishment of sustainable food systems. Tunç Soyer, Mayor of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Türkiye & ICLEI Global Executive Committee Member presented Izmir's agriculture and food program. By applying biogeography-based product planning, Izmir Agriculture identifies and promotes selected products identified as high market demand and economic value, but also produced through biodiversity friendly methods which makes them more drought resilient. Silvia Schmidt, policy manager at IFOAM Organics Europe concluded these introductory remarks by reminding the benefits of sustainable public procurement, including more organically sourced products, that are working for environmental sustainability but also from a social and economic point of view.

Following this, Peter Defranceschi, Head of ICLEI Brussels Office & Global CityFood Program presented the [Manifesto's 7](#) and the petition [A healthy school meal for every child in every school](#) signed by more than 50,000 Europeans, calling on policymakers to ensure that every child, in every EU school, has access to a healthy, sustainably produced school lunch and that all pupils are taught about what constitutes a balanced diet to the Members of Parliament (MEPs) present: MEP [Michaela Šojdrová](#) and MEP [Manuela Ripa](#).

For more information on sustainable public procurement and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please:

- Have a look at our [infographics showing the benefits of sustainable public procurement](#) (our members can contact us at communication@organicseurope.bio if they want to translate these),
- [Visit our website](#), or
- Contact laura.sauques@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.

Buy Better Food

This event was co-organised by members of the [Buy Better Food campaign](#). IFOAM Organics Europe co-leads the [Buy Better Food – Sustainable food on the public plate](#) campaign, which aims to raise awareness on sustainable public procurement of food in Europe. This campaign's main objective is including mandatory criteria for public food procurement in the Sustainable food systems framework initiative, that will be published in 2023. To achieve its goal, this advocacy campaign will amplify good practices and challenges in public food procurement, demonstrating how it can contribute to sustainable, healthy and fair food systems the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and UN Sustainable Development Goals put forward.

Visit www.buybetterfood.eu to learn more and follow the coalition's activities on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) using [@buy_betterfood](#).



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First CORE Organic translational call to increase collaboration & funding
17-18 October 2023, Brussels, Belgium

With ambitious targets set for organic in the EU Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy's targets, it is crucial to build strong networks. Creating an environment in which research and innovation contribute to organic's development,



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increasing and improving the coordination of translational funding is key. So, in the frame of the Horizon Europe project [OrganicTargets4EU](#) the CORE Organic Pleiades meeting took place 17-18 October in Brussels.

The project will expand the well-established Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems ([CORE Organic](#)) network, inviting European public and private funding bodies from all Member States to join CORE Organic Pleiades' network.

Painting the bigger picture of RnI networks

With around 30 participants, the first annual meeting of CORE Organic Pleiades provided an opportunity for old and new network partners to meet and discuss the objectives of the networks. Together, they made the first steps to develop a 2030 roadmap and towards the EU's organic targets. This was a preparation for the first translational call of the CORE Organic Pleiades network – which will be launched after the end of the project.

Project Manager and organiser Ivana Trkulja, from International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS), presented the transnational network, its history and the successor to CORE Organic Pleiades. They did all this linking to the new [Agroecology Partnership](#) of which its Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda strongly references organic.

Results of national Organic Action Plans assessment

Nic Lampkin from the Thünen Institute presented his work within OrganicTarget4EU and first results on of his Organic Action Plans (OAPs) assessment. He explained that the OAPs have the potential to unite different policies but need to integrate both supply-push and demand-pull measures – stressing that organic delivers both public goods and market potential.

Nic also stated the need for CAP funding and institutional changes to support conversion to and maintenance of organic farming, just like research, innovation, data, and the integration of external costs (True Cost Accounting). The full assessment report of agricultural and aquaculture policy responses to the organic targets in the F2F targets will be published soon on the [project website](#).

Panel debate & workshops

Henri Delanghe and Susana Gaona Saez from the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) joined the annual meeting online for the panel debate. According to Susana Goana Saez, the Agroecology Partnership will be an important tool to achieve the EU Farm to Fork targets. Nic Lampkin recalled the [organic principles](#), including system redesign, and stressed that they should remain at the heart of what comes next.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in workshops on national organic action plans (OAPs), mapping and clustering research priorities to identify overlaps, research gaps and temporalities. Among the common themes in the national OAPs were: knowledge transfer/exchange and capacity building, along with cross-cutting thematic research areas and the importance of partnership (among research institutions and private-public partnerships).

The workshop's results will feed into the CORE Organic Roadmap 2030, which will guide the future activities of the CORE Organic Pleiades network.

Ivana Trkulja closed the meeting, announcing that the network will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2024. It will hold its next annual meeting at TP Organics' annual Organic Innovation Days on 22-23 October 2024 at the "Organic House" in Brussels (IFOAM Organics Europe, Rue Marie-Thérèse 11). Save the date!

Presentations and pictures of the workshop outcomes are available on [CORE Organic Pleiades' website](#).

CORE Organic

CORE Organic is the acronym for "Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems". As an ERA-NET action, it intends to increase cooperation between national research activities. European public research and development in organic food and farming happens in small research communities,



often scattered and geographically and institutionally fragmented. CORE Organic will enhance quality, relevance and resources use in European research in organic food and farming and establish a joint pool for financing transnational research in organic food and farming.

OrganicTargets4EU

The Horizon Europe project OrganicTargets4EU (2022-2026) aims to help reach 25% of agricultural land under organic farming and a significant increase in organic aquaculture by 2030. IFOAM Organics Europe leads this project which is working on outcomes that will drive the growth and development of the organic sector focussing on policy implementation, evidence-based decision making, increased and coordinated Research & Innovation and increased knowledge sharing. The project results will be discussed in a multi-actor policy dialogue and it will make recommendations for the CAP strategic plans and EU/national organic action plans from 2025-2027 and from 2028 onwards.

Visit [the project website](#) for more information and follow its hashtag #OrganicTargets4EU on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#) or contact ambra.desimone@organicseurope.bio.



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Organic Innovation Days 2023: Citizen-driven transformation of European food systems 25-26 October 2023, Brussels, Belgium

TP Organics' annual Organic Innovation Days – the only EU event on organic and agroecological research and innovation – took place in Brussels 25-26 October titled 'Citizen-driven transformation of European food systems'. For the 2023 edition, TP Organics partnered with [FoodSHIFT 2030](#), a Horizon 2020 project focused on transforming the European food system towards a low-carbon, circular future, including a shift to less meat and more plant-based diets.

Day 1: Safeguarding long-term food security

Day 1 of the Organic Innovation Days 2023 focused on research and innovation (R&I) to guarantee **long-term food security** in Europe and globally, which depends on healthy soils and ecosystems. IFOAM Organics Europe Director and TP Organics Head of Secretariat Eduardo Cuoco kicked off the event by introducing TP Organics: the European Technology Platform is advocating for organic and agroecological R&I, providing brokerage services for members as well as information about funding opportunities, and promoting knowledge exchange. Still this year, TP Organics will start a Strategic R&I Agenda (SRIA) process. The first official workshop to identify future R&I needs and priorities will take place at the TP Organics Science Day at BIOFACH 2024. Get involved, contact info@tporganics.eu!

First key-note speaker, longstanding expert John Ingram, Food Systems Programme Leader, Environmental Change Institute, Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow, Somerville College, and Visiting Scholar, University of Oxford presented the complex, dire and unequal situation of food security. He recalled the environmental, social and health costs of the current system and the need to also consider ethics and moral aspects. Extending the current food system's technologies is not a solution; we need a real transformation of the food system's outcomes (socioeconomic, food security and environmental). A dynamic food system responds to different external signals and needs to constantly assess policies.

Next, Kirsten Arp, Project Lead at BÖLW presented the model project [HumusKlimaNetz](#), coordinated by German Association of Organic Farmers, Processors and Traders (BÖLW) and German Farmers' Association and scientifically supported by TP Organics Member Thünen Institute. This first large-scale project setting ambitious climate targets for agriculture and a collaboration between organic and conventional farmers aims to build up and maintain humus to sequester carbon and ensure climate-resilient agriculture. For this, the project has set up



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a network of 150 farmers to transfer knowledge, generate recommendations for agriculture and climate policy development. Building up soil organic matter, as pioneered by organic farmers, is key for climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as food security.

High-level policy debate

During the high-level policy debate, Orsolya Frizon-Somogyi, Deputy Head of Unit, Research & Innovation at DG AGRI, European Commission highlighted that the Commission links R&I with the EU Organic Action Plan and also builds bridges between Horizon Europe, specifically the Soil Mission with an important budget dedicated to soil health, and the CAP. Farmers are in the centre of Soil Mission and supported R&I and sustainable practices, which relate to organic and agroecology. Citizen engagement, regions, education, and training are key. Living labs are at the heart of the mission and the new Agroecology Partnership. [Sign the Soil Mission Manifesto](#) uniting policymakers, stakeholders and citizens in a community caring for soil health as citizen or organisation!

Jorge Molina Villanueva, Policy Officer at DG RTD, European Commission pointed out that research & innovation funded under Horizon Europe Cluster 6 is key to develop solutions for the food systems transition. The Food 2030 priorities and pathways for action take a systemic approach generating co-benefits.

Nicole Pita, Project Manager at IPES-Food pointed out that the problem is not a lack of knowledge about agroecology as a systemic innovation and solution but a lack of policy support and funding! The prevailing short-term, narrow, and misleading “feed the world” narrative and corporate concentration prevent holistic change. Agroecology is well defined by the 10 FAO elements and the 13 principles of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE), contrary to regenerative agriculture for example. Yet, it is sidelined in the policy debate because there is no common understanding across different countries and because it threatens the current agro-industrial model. IPES-Food recommends focussing R&I on systemic solutions, longer-term research projects helping farmers to transition to agroecology, and shifting to bottom-up knowledge exchange. The [Agroecology Coalition](#) already has lots of country and organisation members and will hopefully take up the task of a communication campaign.

Luca Colombo, Secretary General, FIRAB and TP Organics Advisory Board Member highlighted the completely different condition and situation we are in today, whereas the public discourse is still 50 years back. With the HLPE Committee on World Food Security (CFS), sustainability and agency entered the discussion about food security. Food system actors should have a say in governments and decision-making processes at all policy levels. This is crucial to ensure a long-term perspective, especially on old and new GMOs, and an inclusive transition.

Conclusions of Day 1

- Food security is more than production,
- It is urgent to transform food and farming, both bottom up and top down,
- Funding for R&I for organic and other agroecological practices is crucial.

[Read TP Organics' policy brief on organic and sustainable food security.](#)

Day 2: FoodSHIFT 2030 Final Policy Conference

Day 2 of the Organic Innovation Days 2023 was dedicated to the [FoodSHIFT 2030 Final Policy Conference](#). Eduardo Cuoco, in his role as Director of IFOAM Organics Europe, partner in this project on citizen-driven transformation of the European food system, welcomed the participants and project partners. FoodSHIFT 2030 is working “from farm to citizen”: The EU Farm to Fork strategy is telling us that our food system must change. All actors are needed. Policymakers should engage the people. Citizen empowerment, urban-rural cohesion, lasting positive impact on food system sustainability beyond the project are achieved through a framework for organising living labs, mechanisms for accelerating innovation, and a methodology for knowledge sharing. Driven by food accelerator labs (FALs) based in 9 cities that acted as multipliers and established Food Enabler Labs (FELs) in neighbouring cities, the project also published a [Food Manifesto](#) for establishing minimum standards for public canteens in the EU.

Karen Fabbri, Deputy Head of Unit, Bioeconomy & Food Systems, DG RTD, European Commission introduced the Food 2030 pathways deployed in Horizon Europe and now being updated with a new pathway on zero pollution.



Project coordinator Christian B. Henriksen presented key project achievements. FoodSHIFT 2030 took a truly systemic, multi-actor approach to food systems transformation and developed a scoring system for city regions based on the SDGs, as well as guidelines for food policy councils. Organic is central to the Farm to Fork strategy. We need to bring forward the systemic approach of FoodSHIFT 2030 involving all stakeholders. FoodSHIFT is part of the Food 2030 network. The living labs address all Food 2030 pathways and need long-term support (see FoodSHIFT policy brief). Dirk Wascher added that FoodSHIFT 2030 living labs all increased their “innovation readiness level”, going beyond technology readiness levels (TRL). The policy brief also includes recommendations and guidelines. Sustainable food systems must be integrated in CAP reforms. We need circular economic models.

Panel discussions

Silvia Schmidt, Policy Manager at IFOAM Organics Europe, moderated the first, female panel on transition governance: we need to understand the different powers, from local to global level as well as from citizens to companies and connect with places people can identify with. Alexandra Nikolakopoulou from DG SANTE pointed out that cities have a very important role to play and we need to keep in mind the long-term aspect of solutions. To reach significant progress, we need to do things differently and challenge the status quo. There is polarisation in some of the proposals of the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy. We need to be vocal and show the benefits of the proposals as enablers of the transformation.

The second panel highlighted the need to connect policies and practices. The basis of citizen engagement is collective thinking. People need space and time to be a proactive part of the transition. Localised approaches with the community and showcases like maker spaces and fab labs are key, is a paradigm shift from consumers to food citizens, reinvigorating the public sphere. Food connects. Thinking collectively about public concerns like shifting to plant-based diets can be empowering.

The next panel was dedicated to organic versus plant-based food. Kurt Sannen, organic farmer, researcher, and chair of the IFOAM Organics Europe Farmers Interest Group pointed out that animals have their role in the agroecological systems we need to transition to, calling for less and better meat to stay within the planetary boundaries. “It’s not the cow but the how!” Farmers need a fair price, but powerful multinationals push costs to future generations. Kurt called for true cost accounting and “public money for public goods” instead of direct payments, which is also a key demand from IFOAM Organics Europe. Government has a major role in changing the organisation of our food system. Elena Walden from Good Food Institute called for public policy support, especially R&I funding for agroecology, and pointed out the negative global impacts generated by our industrial European food system. We are offshoring the problems and externalities of our food systems to other countries! Christian B. Henriksen stressed the need for a holistic approach and for plant-based advocacy (NGOs, movements etc.) to commit to and emphasise organic to be truly sustainable.

The last panel on linking city regions and living labs to policies and moving from low-hanging fruits to long-term food system transformation. Daniela Lueth from DG RTD highlighted the Horizon Europe Partnerships like the Sustainable Food Systems Partnership FutureFoods which are intended to scale and speed up deployment of solutions. Christian B. Henriksen concluded:

- We must overcome the polarisation between sustainable food and farming and food security.
- We need to talk to the hearts and emotions of people to ensure inclusivity of the transformation.
- Food policy debates at city region level are key.

Save the date for the next Organic Innovation Days 22-23 October 2024 (TBC) at the "Organic House" (IFOAM Organics Europe office, Rue Marie-Thérèse 11).

Find the full review on the [event webpage](#).



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Three-day journey through organic – Report about European Organic Congress 2023

26-28 October 2023, Córdoba, Spain

Co-organised by IFOAM Organics Europe and [Ecovalia](#), the 2023 European Organic Congress brought together key EU and Spanish policymakers in organic. At this year's edition of our annual Congress, more than 350 participants from all over Europe and beyond gathered in the picturesque city of Córdoba, a city in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia.

During this year's sunny congress in Córdoba participants learned from and discussed this year's Congress' theme: Organic innovating sustainable food systems – Challenges for organic: producers, market, consumption & innovation.

Day 1: Zooming out for Bigger Vision

The first day of the Congress focused on the challenges and opportunities facing organic production – supply chain fairness, empowerment of new generations, and organic farming promotion at EU and national level. Speakers exchanged on how to transition to sustainable food systems, prioritised in the.

Recent (geo)political circumstances showed the flaws of our food system, such as high dependency on costly and energy-intensive inputs like synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. Many speakers concluded that strong policy and political support are key to ensure the transition and the opportunities organic offers for this.

“Member States & regions are those best placed to implement support for organic. Bringing them together with stakeholders along the supply chain will help develop the sector and promote and protect the organic logo”.

Joanna Stawowy, Member of Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Agriculture

New geopolitical circumstances have revealed the flaws of the food system, and it was concluded that **strong policy and political support are key to ensuring the transition and the prominent role of organic therein.**

Day 2: “To-do” list for ever-approaching 2030

Raffaele Zanolì, Professor of Agro-Food Marketing, opened the second day of our Congress with findings from the [OrganicTargets4EU project](#). Raffaele presented four scenarios to reach 25% organic, stressing that **organic is a system solution to cover the climate and biodiversity crises** and that the **25% organic land target should not be reached by lowering organic principles.**

Following the, the Congress participants discussed a variety of topics in different break-out sessions. Based on their professional background and interests, they discussed topics from trends in international organic markets to research and innovation opportunities and from challenges in organic certification and to carbon farming.

The final session of day two zoomed in on [one of the pillars to achieve our vision for 2020: organic on every table](#). Speakers from many different practical backgrounds shared their projects, innovations and experiences. Their shared feeling was that it is crucial to recognize the importance of restaurants, collective catering, and public procurement, like school meals, for securing new markets for organic producers.

[Speakers' presentations of both days](#) are available on the European Organic Congress' website.

Day 3: Excursion to experience an organic olive farm

On the last day, participants who wished to see a local farm visited [Cortijo el Puerto](#), an organic olive grove and an organic mill in Sevilla, where they saw the entire organic oil production chain. The farm stands out as it invested a lot in biodiversity and ICT use. There is a bioclimatic building on the farm and it practices water management carried both on the farm and in the processing facilities, ensuring efficient wate use, an extremely important resource, especially in semi-arid zones.

Stay up to date about the next edition of our Congress on www.europeanorganiccongress.bio and/or social media using #EOC2024.





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Let's Liberate Diversity Forum promotes more diverse food systems

26-28 October 2023, Dublin, Ireland

The annual [Let's Liberate Diversity Forum](#) has established itself as an important event for those passionate about seeds and agrobiodiversity. At this year's edition, knowledge, experience, and expertise converged and was added by the [LiveSeeding project partners](#). The project was on the Forum's agenda and LiveSeeding partners engage with a diverse audience through a series of workshops, such as a "Training of Trainers" workshop, building targeted capacity on at seed legislation, particularly the implications of seed law marketing reform on the organic sector, organized by Kybele Consultancy and IFOAM Organics Europe. Participants' inputs the Forum's contributed to various work packages of the project.

The Forum programme was rich and diverse, featuring 15 workshops and plenary sessions covering a wide array of topics, ranging from key issues on policy and legislations, including New Breeding Techniques (NBTs), the critical aspects of Seed Marketing Reform, and Farmers' Rights, to sessions dedicated to Culinary Breeding and Seed Quality. It was another significant step towards cultivating a more diverse and resilient food system, empowering a wide variety of stakeholders and we look forward to the continued efforts and progress in this vital field.

The [European Coordination Let's Liberate Diversity!](#) (EC-LLD!) organises the Forum every year. Its 12th edition was hosted by Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, in collaboration with the Irish Seed Savers Association (ISSA).

LiveSeeding is a 4-year Innovation Action on organic seed and plant breeding to accelerate sustainable and diverse food systems in Europe, which started in October 2022. It provides science-based evidence and best practice solutions to help achieve 100 % organic seed. The project has a budget of 6.6 million Euro, funded by the European Union, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). To deliver on such an ambitious goal, LiveSeeding brings together 37 organisations from a wide range of sectors operating in 16 European countries.



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UK Research and Innovation

Analysing one year of activities on intercropping – IntercropVALUES second annual meeting

October, Bonn, Germany

More than 60 participants, representing research teams from national or regional universities and technology institutes, development agencies, cooperatives, SMEs, and rural networks, met at the premises of the University of Bonn for the second annual meeting of [IntercropVALUES](#).

The IntercropVALUES project aims to exploit the advantages of intercropping to design and manage productive, diversified, resilient, profitable, and environmentally friendly cropping systems that are acceptable to farmers and agri-food chain actors. This ambitious objective involves the development of 13 co-innovation case studies from the EU (9), UK (1), Serbia (1), Switzerland (1) and Mozambique (1). The members of the so-called CICS, representing both conventional and organic farming, as well as short and long value chains, have set their own objectives and agenda during this first year.

After the participatory project's first year of activities, participants shared their first results and the planned activities for the coming year.



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On their agenda were topics such as:

- Identifying the blockages to intercropping,
- Describing, and measuring the ecosystem services of intercropping,
- Integrating modelling tasks into the overall research project to address partners' research questions, and
- A workshop on writing strong policy briefs.

All participants agreed that, nowadays, researchers are asked to explain society and policymakers the knowledge derived from their experiments in a comprehensive way – which is key if project members are to have a real impact.

The IntercropVALUES project aims to exploit the advantages of intercropping to design and manage productive, diversified, resilient, profitable, and environmentally friendly cropping systems that are acceptable to farmers and agri-food chain actors. This ambitious objective involves the development of 13 co-innovation case studies from the EU (9), UK (1), Serbia (1), Switzerland (1) and Mozambique (1). The members of the so-called CICS, representing both conventional and organic farming, as well as short and long value chains, have set their own objectives and agenda during this first year.

IntercropValuES is a multi-disciplinary and multi-actor project, bringing together scientists and local actor of the agri-food chain. 27 participants, 15 countries and 3 continents from a wide diversity of organisations and stakeholders. IFOAM Organics Europe represents the organic movement.

Follow the project on www.intercropvalues.eu, [X](#), [Facebook](#) & [LinkedIn](#) and learn about [intercropping and the IntercropVALUES project](#).



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We can't eat promises! Good Food Good Farming protest

8 November 2023, Brussels, Belgium

On 8th November, our staff members took part to [Good Food Good Farming's protest](#) in front of the EU Parliament. When the Commission published its EU Farm to Fork Strategy, civil society and NGOs had high hopes for a transformation of our food and farming systems. But the EU is not living up to its promises.

Under the slogan “We can’t eat promises”, protesters called on EU decision makers to step up their ambition after the 2024 elections and stops its support to the pesticides industry. It is urgent for decisionmakers to deliver ambitious policies to fix our broken food system.

The Good Food Good Farming movement also called on people across Europe to [write their demands for better food systems on postcards](#). They handed over more than 600 post cards to Member of the European Parliament during the protest action, conveying people’s messages to act now for a real change toward agroecological systems, give up the focus on industrial foods produced with pesticides, GMOs, etc.

Following their protest in front of the European Parliament, protesters continued on to BASF’s offices, show that citizens and farmers are fed up with pesticides and want another system.

The alliance Good Food Good Farming (GFGF) campaigns for sustainable food and farming across Europe. Since 2023 it focuses on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR) and the Sustainable Food Systems law (SFS). The campaign organises annual European Days of Action 1-31 October. Are you interested to learn more or take part? [Subscribe to the GFGF newsletter](#) or [find your national contact for the Good Food Good Farming alliance](#).



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IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business 2023: Connecting the organic industry

30 November 2023, Brussels, Belgium

Held on 30 November, in Brussels, Belgium, the IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business proved to be a key gathering for stakeholders in the organic supply chain. Organized by IFOAM Organics Europe, the event aimed to foster collaboration and exchange ideas among industry players, offering a platform to delve into past trends and issues in the organic sector.

Participants had the chance to connect with fellow industry professionals, exchange ideas, and build collaborations that could propel the organic supply chain forward. Beyond looking at the current political agenda and several regulatory topics, the audience received an update and saw that many organic markets within the EU have experienced growth in the past year in value. We saw challenges through the eyes of two engaged and dedicated companies with different profiles to target consumers, but we learned that there are several reasons why to choose organic - buyers are more concerned than ever about their choices regarding health, environmental and climate aspects for which they find organic as the right answer.

Whether you were a member of IFOAM Organics Europe, a representative of a company involved in organic products, or someone with a keen interest in the organic industry, IFOAM Meets Business provided the perfect setting to expand your network.

To enhance the overall experience, attendees were invited to join the event-related networking dinner on 29 November, at the charming Les Filles restaurant. This rustic setting offered a delightful backdrop for further discussions and relationship-building.

IFOAM Meets Business 2023 was a chance to be a part of the organic movement, connect with industry leaders, and contribute to the growth and sustainability of the organic supply chain.

Event Exclusive sponsor:

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Fostering EU-international cooperation in research & innovation to transform agri-food systems

6 December 2023, Brussels, Belgium

Right before the EU's annual Agricultural Outlook conference, TP Organics held its event [EU-international cooperation in research & innovation to transform agri-food systems](#) showing why more research funding is needed for agricultural research and innovation.

This event showed that organic and other agroecological practices should be high on the EU's agenda as they represent a key path to improving livelihoods, soil health, and climate adaptation. Investing in research and innovation (R&I) that benefits farmers in developing countries is key to the EU's response to global challenges affecting it.

The event featured presentations of the findings of two ongoing Horizon 2020-funded agroecological R&I cooperation projects in Europe and the Mediterranean-African region.

[UPSCALE](#) wants to realise the transformative potential of push-pull technology in the sub-Saharan region of East Africa by fostering the design, adaptation, and adoption of strategies for integrated agroecological management. Leibniz University Hannover coordinates this project.

The other project, [IntercropVALUES](#), explores the benefits of intercropping to design and manage productive, diversified, resilient, profitable, environmentally friendly cropping systems acceptable to farmers and actors in the agri-food chain. As a multi-disciplinary and multi-actor project, it brings together scientists and local actors representing the food value chain. It includes 27 participants from 15 countries (3 continents) from a wide diversity of organisations and stakeholders, and case studies also outside of Europe, such as in Mozambique and La Reunion.

Besides the project findings, the event also included a high-level panel debate on the policy framework and priorities for R&I cooperation in agriculture. The debate focused on Africa-EU cooperation, bringing together representatives from the European Commission, the [Africa-EU Partnership](#) and [PRIMA](#), the Partnership for R&I in the Mediterranean Area, and TP Organics. During the debate, the panel exchanged on priorities for EU R&I investments to help meet the partnership's objectives and to enable the EU to respond to global challenges of climate change and long-term food security (including agricultural productivity) which are affecting both Africa and the EU.

The event took place in the framework of the [Food 2030 Conference](#) (organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation) and the [EU Agri-Food Days](#) (organised by Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development). It received support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to show why more research funding is needed for agricultural R&D in both Europe and Africa and to provide input for the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025-27 (Cluster 6 and Soil Mission).

TP Organics is the European Technology Platform for Research & Innovation into Organics and Agroecology. IFOAM Organics Europe is a founding member and hosts its secretariat. Visit www.tporganics.eu for more information and follow its [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) @TPorganics.



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Weed control in organic arable farms

7 December 2023, online

On 7 December, more than 88 participants attended our webinar [Weed control in organic farming – value and risks of different no-till and mechanical weeding techniques](#). Are you a farmer, an organic (farming) enthusiast or this webinar simply sounds interesting to you? We recorded it and will make the links available in the coming weeks. Keep an eye on www.organicseurope.bio and www.ipmworks.net.

The first speaker presented different mechanical techniques such as interrow hoeing, weed harrowing, flame-weeding and beach cleaner, as well as some more advanced automated AI-based weeding options. Bo Melander is a Professor at Aarhus University in Denmark experienced in physical, preventive, and cultural weed management in organic and conventional cropping systems. He referred to his research and showed participants the benefits of different treatment combinations when applied to different crops.

Our second speaker, a passionate organic farmer, gave a masterclass of do's and don'ts when using high precision weed control treatments. As founder of the Organic Centre in central Poland Bart Piskorski aims to support both organic and sustainable farms with knowledge and practice.

This webinar was part of the EU-funded project [IPMWORKS](#). It promotes the adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies, based on a EU-wide network of farmers, who will both progress further in the adoption of IPM – through peer-to-peer learning and joint efforts – and demonstrate to other farmers holistic IPM approaches. IFOAM Organics Europe is a partner in the project.

You can follow @H2020IPMWorks on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) & [YouTube](#) to stay tuned.



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4 INSPIRING EXAMPLES

Where tradition meets new technologies – Farmers who won EU Organic Awards 2023

From GPS-systems to digital maps to humidity sensors, the winners of the EU Organic Awards for “Best Organic Farmer” shown how organic is a forerunner in innovation beyond technology. Thanks to innovative tools, the award winners farm organically, contribute to food security and while contributing to better animal welfare and soil health. In this article we have gathered best practices from the winners of the [Best Organic \(female\) Farmer](#), Mrs. Clara Benito Pacheco, and [Best Organic \(male\) Farmer](#), Mr. Thomas Moschos.

Restoring soil biodiversity through grazing

Clara Benito Pacheco runs the [organic goat farm Entrelobas](#) in the northern Sierra de Madrid. As a farmer, she contributes to restore soil biodiversity through optimal grazing. Thanks to the GPS system her goats are wearing, Clara can locate the herd and programme virtual fences from her phone. This allows to plan grazing and gives vegetation time to regrow and allows soil to regenerate, retain its moisture and capture more CO₂.

Besides having a positive impact on the region's biodiversity, Entrelobas also participates in fire prevention in the Community of Madrid by maintaining firebreak strips, and collaborates with universities interested in the evolution of soil regeneration through cattle management.

Fertilising efficiently using manure and an app

Thomas Moschos is the 5th generation farmer from Kastoria, Greece's northwestern region. Together with his brother, they runs their [organic sheep farm](#) by the principle “better quality, less input, less stress”. Using a the



digital map on his phone, Thomas can have the herd spread manure effectively, allowing richer fields without using harmful fertilisers. A humidity sensor helps him measure the amount of water the soil needs.

The Moschos farm lies also near a milk processing facility, which helps keep the milk's freshness and a proper temperature for processing – avoiding extra energy consumption for reheating the milk. The Moschos brothers' farm sells 85% of its production locally, so customers enjoy the finest quality of local and organic dairy products.

The EU Organic Awards

The annual [European Organic Awards](#) reward excellent and innovative actors in the organic value chain. Jointly organized by the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, IFOAM Organics Europe and COPA-COGECA. Find more information about the other winners of EU Organic Awards 2023 in our [dedicated article](#) and a YouTube playlist [#EUOrganic Awards 2023](#).



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5 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE

IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE'S MAIN SPONSOR 2023

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



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OUR PRESENCE AT BIOFACH IS MADE POSSIBLE BY



6 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

9 January 2024

[Let's discuss organic: Fighting greenwashing](#)

Online [for IFOAM Organics Europe members only]

13-16 February 2024

[BIOFACH 2024](#)

Nürnberg, Germany

8 February 2024

[Pre-launch open-source knowledge platform for farmers](#)

Online

23 September 2024

[EU Organic Day](#)

Europe

19-21 February 2024

[Ecofruit](#)

Filderstadt, Germany

22-23 October 2024

[Organic Innovation Days](#)

Brussels, Belgium



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