

PRESS RELEASE

NATURE RESTORATION, CRUCIAL FOR RESILIENT FOOD & FARMING SYSTEMS

BRUSSELS, 22 MAY 2023 – Biodiversity protection and well-functioning ecosystems are essential for food production. But the Commission’s proposal on a nature restoration law has faced unjustified opposition when it comes to setting restoration targets for agricultural ecosystems. The organic movement calls on MEPs to support ambitious nature restoration on agriculture land as well preserved natural resources are essential for sustainable agricultural production.

Biodiversity in the EU has decreased drastically, pollinators are declining, birds are disappearing, and soil health is deteriorating. Intensive agriculture is one of the main drivers for biodiversity loss. Biodiversity, however, is an important basis for the functioning of many ecosystem processes and functions. It is crucial for natural pest control, pollination, and it is necessary to succeed in climate protection and adaptation to environmental stressors.

Eric Gall, IFOAM Organics Europe’s Policy Manager, said: “Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems are essential for the productivity of farming systems. It is urgently necessary to reverse the accelerating biodiversity loss and start restoring nature. Organic farming shows that it is possible to produce nutritious and sufficient food while preserving biodiversity, storing carbon in soils and making our food production more resilient to the increasing impacts of climate change.”

Organic farmers refrain from using synthetic pesticides and fertilizers and they have on average 30% more biodiversity on the farm. Longer and diverse crop rotations with leguminous are an essential element of the organic farming system to ensure soil fertility and contribute to soil health. Together with other beneficial management practices such as cover crops and manure application, crop rotations contribute to increased soil organic carbon sequestration on organic farms. Intercropping is another powerful technique to bring nitrogen to the soil and to protect it from erosion, which in turns improve soil water retention capacity, essential as droughts and floods both become more frequent because of climate change. Land-based livestock systems with grazing and lower stocking rates also support biodiversity in grassland.

Supporting organic farming and moving towards the target of 25% agricultural land under organic management by 2030 can therefore make an important contribution to bringing back nature on the fields.

To ensure long-term food security in Europe and beyond, policymakers have a duty to help farmers to preserve the natural capital on which we depend to produce food and should not be lured by misguided calls to weaken environmental legislation. IFOAM Organics Europe therefore calls on MEPs to support a Nature Restoration Law with ambitious targets for agricultural ecosystems.

Ends.

Contact details

Eric Gall, Policy Manager, +32 491 07 25 37, eric.gall@organicseurope.bio

Hanna Winkler, Policy Officer on Climate Change and Biodiversity, hanna.winkler@organicseurope.bio

Eva Berckmans, Communications Manager, +32 2 416 52 32, eva.berckmans@organicseurope.bio

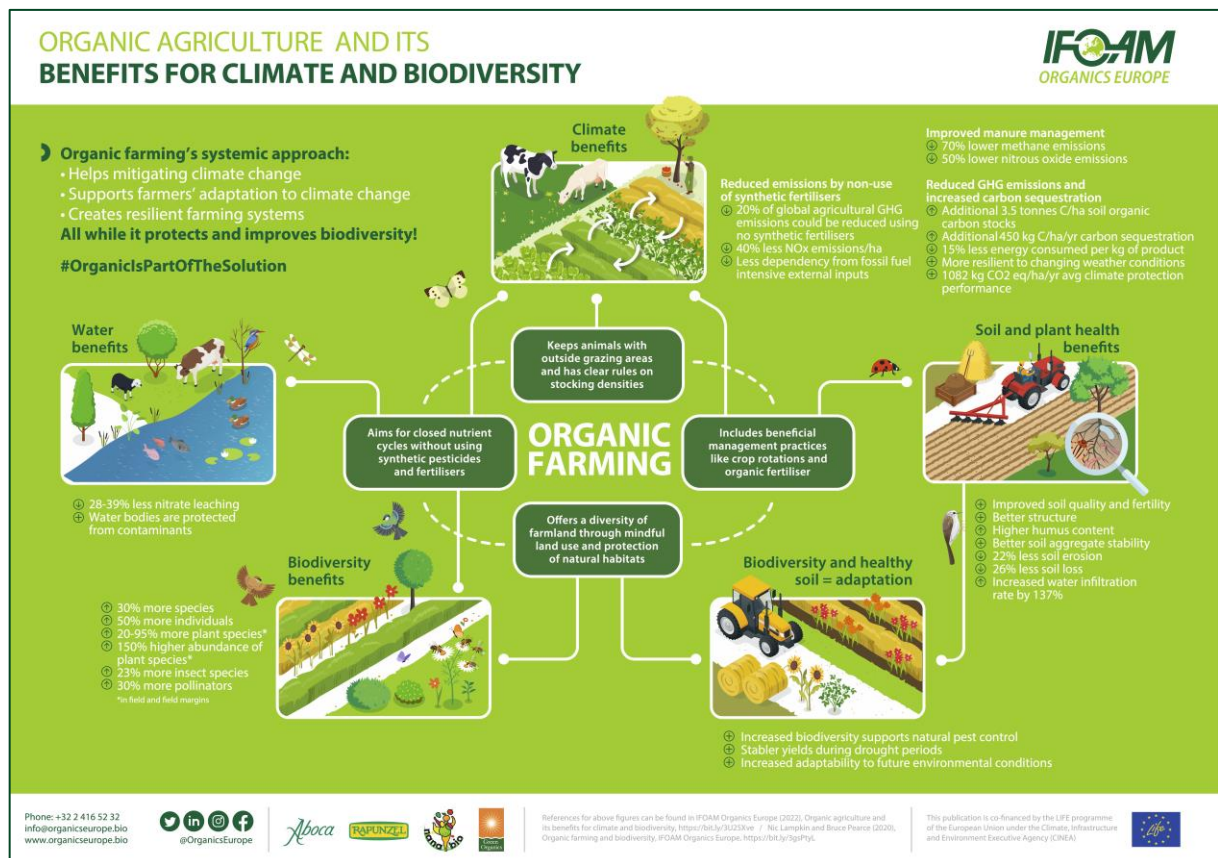
or visit www.organicseurope.bio

Background information

About this topic

Organic farming delivers multiple benefits for the climate and biodiversity, including increased carbon sequestration in soils, lower energy input, 30% more on-farm biodiversity and increased resilience of the farming system. These are highlighted in a [document on the benefits of organic farming](#) published by IFOAM Organics Europe.

Transforming how we produce food can make a big difference in mitigating climate change, help farmers to adapt and to become more resilient, and to contribute to biodiversity protection. [Organic farming offers a systemic approach](#) for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and increasing soil carbon sequestration while sustaining healthy soils and protecting biodiversity.



Organic consumes less energy and reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions

- Instead of being dependent on external fossil-fuel intensive fertilizer or pesticide inputs, organic farming relies on establishing closed nutrient cycles and minimizing nitrogen losses. This can reduce global agricultural GHG emissions by around 20%;
- Refraining from synthetic fertilizer use reduces nitrous oxide emissions from soil by 40% per hectare in organic systems;
- Animals in organic systems have access to free range areas, allowed to graze as much as possible and 60% of the feed has to come from the farm or the same region. The reduced number of animals and grassland-based systems reduce emissions and improve carbon stocks in soil;
- Organic agriculture often uses improved manure management such as manure composting which can reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions from manure by 50% and 70% respectively;
- Organic agriculture has a higher energy efficiency and a lower energy use per hectare. It consumes around 15% less energy per unit produced compared to conventional agriculture.

Organic sequesters and stores more carbon

Many common practices in organic farming, such as crop rotations including legumes or reduced tillage, help to improve soil quality and fertility and contribute significantly to increased carbon sequestration of additional 450 kg C/ha per year compared to land under conventional management.

Organic protects species and habitat diversity

By prohibiting synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and using biodiversity-enhancing practices, such as diverse crop rotations with legumes, landscape elements or reduced tillage, lead to on average 30% more species and 50% more individuals in organically managed areas.

Organic supports ecosystem functions

Organic farming promotes soil health and reduces soil erosion by 22%. It protects water bodies by reducing nitrate leaching by 28-39%. Organic also has a positive impact on crop pollination and it increases natural pest control.

Organic increases the resilience of farming systems

The improved soil structure in organic farming reduces erosion, supports plant health and makes organic more resilient to changing weather conditions. Organic farming does not rely on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, which makes the organic system less dependent to external inputs. The enhanced biodiversity in organic systems favours stable yields during drought periods and adaptation to future environmental conditions.

Useful links

- [Organic agriculture and its benefits for climate and biodiversity](#)
- [Organic farming and biodiversity](#)
- [Plant health care in organic farming](#)
- [What we do on biodiversity, soil & water](#) and [climate change](#)

IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. With almost 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders, and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies.