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## WELCOME NOTE

Dear members,

In 2018 many climatic and political events have increased the global awareness of the urgent need to make organic agriculture part of the solution to prevent climate change and to halt the degradation of our natural resources. IFOAM EU has been actively providing input to improve and transform agriculture across Europe.

In our Vision for the future, we have set [three strategic goals](#) to transform agriculture. One of these is [‘Organic on every table’](#). To make this goal a reality, the legislative framework should take organic into account. This is why we have been actively providing input to key political dossiers for organic: the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the organic regulation. Our work on the CAP and on the implementation of the organic regulation was reflected in various sessions at our annual [12<sup>th</sup> European Organic Congress](#) entitled ‘Organic on every table: Added value for farmers, consumers and society’.

A great success for this year was the European Court of Justice’s decision that new gene editing techniques are indeed techniques of genetic engineering, that should be regulated as such, and that products therefrom should be considered Genetically Modified Organisms. IFOAM EU [welcomes the decision](#) and will keep on actively fight for transparency and consumers information on GMOs.

EU has also been actively working on [‘Fair play – Fair pay’](#), namely by closely following the legislative process on Unfair Trading Practices in the supply chain with the purpose of further strengthening it. Through our coordinated efforts – meetings and discussions with national ministries and MEPs – together with members and allies, we worked on the development of a fair and well-functioning system to tackle unfair trading practices.

Of course we also worked on research and innovation in organic – in line with our strategic goal [‘Improve – Inspire – Deliver’](#). This reflected in the end of one of IFOAM EU’s projects, the [SOLMACC project](#), that demonstrated that farming can be climate-friendly. The outcome of this LIFE-funded project has been captured in [several publications](#) that were developed to inspire other practitioners throughout the six years through which the project ran.

Looking forward, IFOAM EU will continue working collaboratively with its members, with EU institutions, Member States, like-minded movements and local actors to promote the values and principles of organic production, as well as to protect the interest of future generations by moving agriculture towards sustainability. I have always been convinced that organic agriculture is one of the best tools to achieve an environmentally, economically and socially responsible agri-food system. Therefore, we need to keep on pushing for better policies supportive of the fight against global challenges of food security and environmental destruction. And this is a promise that we make for the coming year.

Wishing you happy, healthy and organic holidays!

Sincerely,  
Eduardo Cuoco

## POLITICAL HOTSPOT

On 27 November the European Commission decided that the active substance copper will be re-approved as a plant protection agent for a period of seven years. A maximum of 28 kg of pure copper per hectare can be used for crop protection purposes during this period. This corresponds to a maximum of 4 kg of copper per hectare per year with a smoothing mechanism over 7 years. This smoothing mechanism means that the annual dose of 4 kg can be surpassed in a year with difficult growing conditions, when duly justified. The average dose over 7 years cannot be more than 4 kg. However, Member States will have the possibility to set annual maximum limits if they don't want to make use of a smoothing mechanism.

Currently copper is approved as an active substance in plant protection products in the Central and Southern zones<sup>1</sup>. It is effective against more than 50 different diseases in conventional and organic viticulture, horticulture, hops, market garden and arable crops. In particular, it is used in vineyards to control downy mildew (*Plasmopara viticola*), on arable crops to protect potato against late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*), in apple orchards to prevent the spread of scab (*Venturia inaequalis*) but also in other crops.

Practitioners and researchers are working intensively on finding innovative alternative strategies to further reduce the use of copper in organic agriculture. The copper minimisation is well reflected in the development of the organic regulation. The organic movement was the first to put a limit to the use of copper in plant protection in the year 2000 and has been minimising from 8 kg to 4 kg / ha / year.

Once a year, during the European copper conference, this work is presented and discussed by a wider audience. IFOAM EU co-organised the [3<sup>rd</sup> European conference on copper](#) in plant protection together with the German federal research centre Julius-Kühn-Institut (JKI) and the Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (BÖLW), the German umbrella of organic food and farming. Almost 100 stakeholders including scientists, regulatory bodies, practitioners, advisors and farming associations from eight different countries discussed on the current and future role of copper in plant protection strategies in organic farming.

The first part of the conference looked into the question of adequate risk assessment concerning natural substances like copper for which IFOAM EU was advocating throughout 2018. The organic community welcomed the EU Commission's move to mandate the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to draft a special Guidance document for the appropriate risk assessment of minerals to better understand the effects of copper on humans and the environment. According to the scientific community, the sound assessment of minerals needs to be a priority.

Copper minimisation strategies from Austria, France and Germany were presented and it was made clear that time and money, especially for research into organic plant breeding, is urgently needed to further minimise the use of copper in plant protection. One important step in this direction is the Horizon 2020 project 'Replacement of Contentious Inputs in Organic Farming Systems' ([RELACS](#)) which is researching alternative inputs, in which IFOAM EU is participating together with 11 of our member organisations.

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1 Not approved in the Northern zone (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden)

# 1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

## 1.1 Policy

### CAP

#### **Post-2020 CAP reform – Work in the European Parliament intensifies as the elections loom**

With the European election coming up next spring, the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is gathering pace, but the timeline remains unclear.

Following the Commission's proposal for the post-2020 CAP revision of last June, national governments and the European Parliament started working on amending the proposal. In the Council, the Austrian presidency has organised meetings at the technical level and among agricultural Ministers.

In the European Parliament the two leading committees have already prepared their draft reports on the proposals. Members of the Agriculture and Environment parliamentary committees will have both submitted amendments by early December. The full list of amendments is expected to be public by mid-January, and from early next year on, the lead MEPs from the parliamentary groups will be seeking to forge compromises.

It is possible that there will be votes in both committees by late February or March but is less clear whether there will be time for a plenary vote in the European Parliament before the May 2018 elections. The next Parliament and its committees will have to be formed before negotiations can begin with the Council in the second half of 2019.

IFOAM EU has actively been representing the organic movement and providing recommendations along the CAP revision process, together with its members, in particular the Farmers interest groups. This file will continue to be a top priority in 2019.

## 1.2 Food, farming and environment

#### **Non-GMO food and feed industry demands safeguarding GMO-free production**

On 28 November, 75 non-GMO food and feed companies from ten European countries sent [an open letter to Commission President Juncker and Health Commissioner Andriukaitis](#), asking them to swiftly implement the measures required as a result of the ruling of the European Court of Justice on new genetic engineering techniques, to safeguard GMO-free production in Europe.

The signatory companies – including the retailers Edeka, Rewe and SPAR – generated sales of 144.2 billion EUR in 2017 and employ 833,000 people. They call on the European Commission to ensure the protection of the European internal market against products manufactured outside Europe using new genetic engineering methods.

The companies believe that the Commission should ensure that detection methods are available for products manufactured using the processes of new genetic engineering. The Commission has to guarantee labelling, traceability and effective controls for the import of agricultural goods from the countries where plants produced with new genetic engineering methods are cultivated. In addition, a global transparency register is proposed, which would cover all GMOs worldwide, both old and new. The companies also call the Commission to resist current lobby attempts to soften the existing EU GMO legislation.

IFOAM EU welcomes this initiative from the non-GMO conventional sector, which clearly shows that concerns about a potential lack of traceability of new GM products are shared beyond the organic sector.

For more information, [read the letter on Ohne Gentechnik's website](#), and [read about IFOAM EU's work on GMO's](#).

### **IFOAM EU urges to better implement the regulation on plant protection product authorisation: Final study supporting REFIT published**

Last month, Ecorys, a Brussels based consultant, published its [final report](#) about the functioning of the EU legislation (REFIT) on plant protection products and pesticides residues (Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 and Reg. (EC) No 396/2005). IFOAM EU welcomes the fact that the main points of the organic movement have been taken into account in the study and urges the European Commission to take further steps in improving the implementation of the existing regulation.

The final report acknowledges that there is a problem with the availability of alternatives to conventional plant protection products, namely naturally-occurring substances, and that the current data requirements and procedures are not appropriate nor proportional to the potential risk they pose. It was concluded that the implementation and performance of Reg. 1107/2009 is challenging and doesn't always reflect the objectives of human and animal health and environmental protection.

The study has been commissioned by the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and presents the basis of the decision about the next steps of the REFIT evaluation.

IFOAM EU continues its efforts to create a better regulatory framework for natural substances. The REFIT evaluation will be concluded in the first half of 2019.

### **New European Fertiliser Regulation by 2022**

After almost two years of negotiations, the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament have agreed on a new Fertiliser Regulation on 20 November 2018.

Around half of the fertilizers on the EU market are not yet covered by the existing legislation. The revised text, which will replace [the 2003 Fertilisers Regulation](#), will include all types of fertilizers – mineral, organic, bio stimulants, growing matters, industry by-products, etc.

Besides widening the scope of the Regulation, important changes include a limit of 60 mg/kg on the cadmium content in phosphorus fertilizers, which will be set and implemented immediately after the application of the Regulation by 2022. This limit is higher than the Commission originally proposed but there is a review clause which may introduce further reductions.

The new Fertiliser Regulation offers optional harmonisation. A fertiliser has to meet the requirements of the new regulation in order to be CE marked (exported within the EU). Member States still have the possibility to set specific rules for their internal market. Furthermore, mutual recognition of products is also still possible. As there are several references to the Fertiliser Regulation 2003/2003 in the Annex I of the 889/2008 Organic Regulation, it is likely that there will be changes for the organic sector.

The draft regulation still has to be formally adapted and IFOAM EU is currently looking into it and its relevance for the organic sector.

### **Civil society acknowledges potential of the EU Plant Protein Plan**

On 22-23 November, the Conference on the Development of Plant Proteins brought together around 200 experts from agricultural supply chains, researchers, advisors and other key stakeholders in an open discussion about the challenges and opportunities on the current plant protein production in the EU.

In preparation of this, IFOAM EU and seven other civil society organisations wrote a set of recommendations aimed at improving the recently published strategy.

The signees acknowledge the plan's potential and agree that it represents an important development opportunity for the European agricultural system. The letter, addressed to Gerfried Gruber, the Head of Department for the Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism, Agriculture of Austria, stressed the necessity of introducing new measures to reduce production and consumption of animal products.

Another concern brought up by the signees is the importance of promoting agroecological farming, mainly by assisting farmers in the transition from intensive animal farming towards the more sustainable alternatives. Lastly, the letter encouraged the adoption of an EU Action Plan on deforestation and forest degradation.

### **Small and medium enterprises are making Europe more organic**

For the past two years SME ORGANICS has worked towards the promotion of organic farming in eight regions from seven different countries across Europe. [Have a look at the project video](#) describing the project's successes and next steps!

SME ORGANICS is focused on the implementation of strong policies and the identification of funding instruments aimed to support the development of organic market in a sustainable matter.

The projects' success is built upon the involvement of stakeholders from key areas, such as production, processing, commercialization, marketing, training and governance. Together they have developed Regional Actions Plans with customized procedures and funding methods. To learn about using organic actions plans to develop organics, read the second edition of '[Organic Action Plans – Development, implementation and evaluation](#)', and get inspired about [what best practices the participating regions are using to develop the organic sector](#).

For the second phase of the project, which will end in 2020, SME Organics is committed to implement their Organic Action Plans and to continue sharing experience and knowledge among the regions. Find out more about [SME ORGANICS on the project's website](#).



## Join us at the Climate Conference COP24

IFOAM – Organics International is organising and attending several events at the COP24 and beyond to speak out on behalf of the organic food and farming community and to raise awareness of the urgent need to make organic agriculture part of a climate change solution.

The Paris Agreement was agreed in 2015 and parties committed on a three-year work program to be finished this year, at COP 24 in Katowice. While the Agreement states basic obligations for all countries – a milestone of climate negotiations – it also introduces new procedures called “Paris Agreement implementation guidelines” or “Paris Rulebook”, which will be decided over the next two weeks.

Beside the finalization of the Paris Rulebook, the Talanoa Dialogue will also come to a conclusion and its results should be endorsed by an official position. The dialogue allows countries, as well as non-Party stakeholders, to share stories and showcase best practices in order to urgently raise ambition – including pre-2020 action – in nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

There will also be discussions on the implementation of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, a landmark decision adopted at COP23 recognising the vital role of food and farming in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Thus, COP24 is expected to be the most pivotal moment in the international climate effort since the Paris summit in 2015.

### 1.3 EU Research & Innovation Policy / TP Organics

#### **IFOAM EU participates to new project that aims at accelerating the digital transformation of the European food and farming sector**

1 November 2018 marked the start of the SmartAgriHubs project. This project aims to enable a broad digital transformation of the European agri-food sector by building an extensive pan-European network of Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs).

More than 2 million farms throughout Europe are expected to be involved through 4,000 experiments, bringing the process of digitization closer to the specific needs of the farmers. Through this project IFOAM EU aims to showcase digital innovations in organic farming as well as get inspired from the other partners of the project.

The project has the potential to be a real game changer in the adoption of digital solutions by the farming sector and the organic sector wants to be part of this change. The project has a budget of 20 million EUR and is co-funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727987.



This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 818182

## Horizon Europe: European Parliament supports research for organic agriculture

TP Organics is pleased that on 21 November the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) of the European Parliament voted that Horizon Europe should “accelerate the transition towards sustainable approaches in all forms of agriculture, including conventional and organic agriculture”. Horizon Europe is the EU Research & Innovation Framework Programme for 2021-2027

In the same vote, the ITRE Committee stated that civil society organisations and European Technology Platforms – such as TP Organics – should be consulted when it comes to the actual implementation of Horizon Europe. This is indeed crucial to ensure Horizon Europe delivers benefits for EU citizens. The positions of the ITRE Committee will be formally approved by the plenary of the European Parliament in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of December.

Meanwhile, the Council has adopted a partial general approach on the regulation of Horizon Europe, one of the two legislative files involved, on 30 November. The position of Member States is less ambitious, stating that “views of stakeholders should be taken into account”, with no reference to organic agriculture. In 2019, TP Organics will keep working so that the final legal texts will ensure that Horizon Europe delivers societal impact, including a transition of food and farming systems based on organic principles.



This communication is co-financed by the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility for this communication lies with IFOAM EU. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.

## LIVESEED farmers survey: Share your experience and opinion on using organic seed

As an organic farmer, you are invited to respond to the [online survey](#) on your experience and opinion on organic seed / propagation material use and plant breeding.

The survey is available in English, Bulgarian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, and Spanish, and will take you 15 minutes to complete.

By completing this survey, you get to have a say on the research and policy needs in this field, as the results will serve as a basis to conduct further research on organic plant breeding and seed production.

The results of this survey will feed into the [LIVESEED project](#), coordinated by IFOAM EU and consisting of 35 partners and 14 third linked parties from 18 countries. The goal of the project is to boost organic seed and plant breeding.



LIVESEED received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement LIVESEED (No 72723).



## New factsheet on protein crops available on the EIP-AGRI website

EIP-AGRI has published a [Factsheet on protein crops](#) in November 2018. It highlights the Focus Group results on how to improve the competitiveness of protein crops in the EU at yield, breeding and supply chain level. The factsheet also includes ideas for Operational Groups, research needs from practice and inspirational ideas.

EIP-AGRI Service Point has also a [brochure on Competitive protein crops](#) (2015), the brochure highlights the current challenges in 2015 and provides examples of cooperation between the key players.

The Focus group on 'Protein Crops' has addressed the question: How can the competitiveness of protein crops in the EU be improved? The Focus group had 20 experts from different countries through Europe, including farmers, people working in the feed industry, researchers and advisers. You can find here their final report from 2014.

## 2 IFOAM EU DEVELOPMENTS

**Have an initiative that helps transforming food and farming in Europe? Visit [www.euorganic2030.bio](http://www.euorganic2030.bio) and submit it to inspire other actors**

The organic movement is a front-runner when it comes to setting the stage for fair, environmentally conscious, healthy and caring food and farming systems across the globe. To achieve its ambitious vision by 2030, IFOAM EU is collecting successful initiatives and projects that are [transforming food and farming in Europe](#).

The initiatives should be projects and programmes that are not older than four years and that address one of the following aspects:

1. Organic on every table: initiatives and examples that make organic widely available and recognised
2. Improve – inspire – deliver: initiatives and examples that develop organic further and inspire others
3. Fair play – fair pay: initiatives and examples to achieve more transparency and fairness in the value chain

Need inspiration? Go to [euorganic2030.bio](http://euorganic2030.bio) and find many – new – initiatives! You're invited to submit your own initiative too! Relevant submissions will be profiled on [EUorganic2030.bio](http://EUorganic2030.bio) and [on social media using #EUOrganic2030](#).



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**Join the Organic Academy Community and be part of the solution!**

Are you interested in broadening your knowledge of and develop your leadership within organic? Then sign up for the Organic Leadership Course to be held in Trakai, Lithuania on 22-29 June 2019.



You will acquire up-to-date understanding of the organic value chain and organic services in a diverse group of organic professionals. Except from building a strong network, you will also learn to develop your organizational development, project management and communication skills. The course is open to both experienced practitioners and those who are new to the organic sector.

[Register on the IFOAM – Organics International website by 9 March 2019.](#)

Saying goodbye to our colleagues:

#### **Alexandra Fuss**

Organic seeds are Alexandra's passion, so it was not a difficult choice to employ her as LIVESEED project coordinator. Since she started at IFOAM EU in April 2017, Alexandra was fully committed to the project. In addition, she was actively involved in the IFOAM EU Seed Expert Group. Alexandra decided to move to the German countryside and spend more time outside with her hands in the soil rather than behind the computer. She has plans to start a small-scale organic farm. We would like to thank Alexandra for the enormous work she has done to get the LIVESEED project going, make all partners feel involved, and set up a successful communication campaign. We are sure that Alexandra will stay engaged in the organic movement, and that there will be many opportunities to meet again. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

#### **Magdalena Wawrzonkowska**

IFOAM EU says goodbye to the team's Communications Manager, Magdalena Wawrzonkowska, who decided to head off towards a new professional challenge. Magda was a great asset to the Communications Unit. Her cheer, good humour, dedication and hard work contributed to the work of all her colleagues, and the IFOAM EU communications unit in general. We would like to wish her all the best in her future endeavours, through which she will contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

## **3 EVENTS**

### **3.1 Preview of events**

#### **Visit IFOAM EU at Europe's biggest trade fair for organic**

Biofach 2019 is just around the corner! From 13-16 February 2019 the organic movement will meet again in Nuremberg, Germany, to discuss important topics, learn from each other and pass on knowledge at the trade fair.

The next edition, under the motto "The organic system: healthy in a holistic approach", will focus on the relationship between organic and health, stressing the link between healthy business operating in a healthy environment, producing healthy food.

IFOAM EU will be welcoming you at Hall 1, booth 1-451. Come visit us at our booth or attend one of the events we're organising.

Our main event is Policy Day, taking place on 13 February at 16:00-18:00 in Room Istanbul, NCC Ost. With its high-level panel involving decision-makers and key stakeholders, the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Policy Day will focus on "The new Common Agricultural Policy for healthy farms, healthy people and a healthy planet".



Other events will orbit around the topics of GMOs, market growth, opportunities and challenges for organic retailers, new technologies and the Internet of Food (IoF2020), organic seeds in the new organic regulation, organic international trade, plant health and natural inputs, and much more.

Also take the time to attend TP ORGANICS' Science Day, an event dedicated to research in organics. It will strive to identify research gaps in organic food and farming systems in the context of international cooperation and will help shape a strategic research agenda and an action plan for its implementation. Science day is organised by TIPI, the Technology Innovation Platform of IFOAM - Organics International, and TP Organics, the European Technology Platform for Organic Food and Farming.

Further information regarding the sessions will be made available [on our website](#), in our [next newsletter](#) and our social media channels ([Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)). Stay tuned for more details and see you at Biofach 2019!



### 3.2 Review of events

#### IFOAM EU meets business

30 October 2018

“IFOAM EU meets business” was a first of its kind as it brought both organic pioneers and newcomers together. This event took place on 30 October in Brussels and attracted about 50 companies for a day of exchange of information and best practices, getting to know each other, and finding ways to reach the goal “[organic on every table](#)” of [the organic movement’s vision](#).

This meeting was specifically an opportunity for IFOAM EU, its Interest Group of Organic Processors and Traders (IGOP) and interested food companies who work with organic products to discuss relevant topics in the organic sector.

After a welcome note from moderator and IFOAM EU Board member Michel Reynaud (Ecocert), IFOAM EU Director Eduardo Cuoco stressed that this meeting should be a first step in cooperating among different actors involved in organic. Presentations of the day included an overview of the organic regulation with a focus on residues and contaminants, a presentation on the development of the organic market, and finally a snapshot of the potential impacts of Brexit on the organic sector. Participants also tried to reply to the question “*how can the private sector contribute to a well-functioning organic supply chain and its integrity?*” in a World Café setting.

At the end of a fruitful day of interesting presentations, World Café talks and information exchange, participants were enthusiastic and eager to look into future opportunities to cooperate. Are you interested in what was discussed during the meeting? [Read the programme](#).



BIOFACH was the exclusive sponsor of this event



## Farmers Interest Group meeting in Logrono, La Rioja (Spain)

15 November 2018

The autumn edition of the Farmers Interest Group meeting took place in the heart of the Spanish wine growing region La Rioja. IFOAM EU's farmers group discussed, among other things, about the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) proposal, the implementing acts of the new organic regulation, and internal capacity building.

The meeting took place alongside [the Spanish Organic Congress](#) organised by the Spanish Organic Farming Association (SEAE - La Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica/Agroecología). Following the meeting, the farmers visited an organically managed vegetable and educational farm and the municipal olive oil processing facilities of La Rioja.



This event is co-financed by the European Union, under the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The sole responsibility for this communication lies with IFOAM EU. The EASME is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.

## Adequate risk assessment and copper minimisation strategies remain the most important topics: 3<sup>rd</sup> European conference on copper in plant protection

15-16 November 2018

Almost 100 stakeholders including scientists, regulatory bodies, practitioners, advisors and farming associations from eight different countries discussed the current and future role of copper in plant protection strategies in organic farming.

The first part of the conference looked into the question of adequate risk assessment concerning natural substances like copper. The scientific community welcomed the EU Commission's move to mandate the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to draft a special guidance document for the appropriate risk assessment of minerals, which is needed to better understand the effects of copper on humans and the environment. According to the scientific community, the sound assessment of minerals needs to be a priority.

Copper minimisation strategies from Austria, France and Germany were presented and it was made clear that time and money, especially for research into organic plant breeding, is urgently needed to further minimise the use of copper in plant protection.

IFOAM EU co-organised the conference together with the German federal research centre Julius Kuhn-Institut and BÖLW, the German Federation of Organic Food Industries.

## European citizens demand a fair, green and healthy CAP for good food and good farming

19 November 2018

The final event of the [Good Food Good Farming](#) (GFGF) European Days of Action took place in Brussels on 19 November. This event came after more than 60 events and actions that raised the alarm to stop industrial agriculture and brought together thousands of people across 19 European countries.

During the [Disco Soup](#) culinary and musical act of protest in front of the Council of the European Union, the demands of hundreds of thousands of European citizens were taken to the meeting of the EU agriculture ministers. A [letter and petition](#), signed by more than 100,000 EU citizens, were handed over to the Austrian Council Presidency as urgent call upon EU decision-makers to serve up a better future for farming, and to deliver a socially and environmentally ambitious CAP. The Presidency was also given good, clean and fair products from European countries, and a booklet with ingredients for a better CAP, illustrated with [pictures of Europeans](#) and their concrete demands to achieve good food and good farming.

The manifestation celebrated the diversity of sustainable agriculture and rose the collective voice of civil society in support of a fair, green and healthy CAP reform that enables the transition to a new, improved agri-food system that respects people, animals and the planet. IFOAM EU is part of the GFGF campaign, that consists of over 80 civil society groups, representing farmers, food activists and environmental organisations.

### **Organic & Origin**

27 November 2018

IFOAM EU Vice-President Jiří Lehejček spoke at the High-level Conference 'Organic & Origin' hosted by Croatian Member of the EU Parliament Ivan Jakovčić on 27 November 2018. Other Members of the EU Parliament and the EU Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan were present as well.

The conference acknowledged the importance of organic products and of regional products for the European environment, society and economy, in particular for European regions that would be otherwise be depopulated.

The speeches made it clear that the speakers see the synergies between organic and origin as the way forward. IFOAM EU closed the conference by sharing an ambitious vision: in the future, step by step, all the origin-labelled products should also be organic.

### **Continuously innovating to improve inputs – First annual meeting of the RELACS project**

27-28 November 2018, Bari, Italy

[Partners of the 'Replacement of Contentious Inputs in Organic Farming Systems' \(RELACS\) project](#) met for the first annual project meeting. They discussed the progress that was made during first months of the project, exchanged knowledge on how to improve inputs used in organic farming, and planned the work that will be performed in the different work packages. Each different work package will analyse the use of certain inputs, and research and develop alternatives to these.

Among the activities that were started during the first months of the project was the development of different questionnaires researching the inputs used in organic farming, and the set-start of field trials at more than ten different locations in various European countries.

The results of the research performed by farmers and researchers will be communicated throughout the project through workshops, field days, university courses, practice abstracts and videos. These will serve as tools that can be used by other farmers to benefit from the research performed in this project.

[Keep an eye on the RELACS website](#), and RELACS [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts for updates about the project.

The first annual meeting was hosted by the Institute for Mediterranean studies (CIHEAM Bari). 'Replacement of Contentious Inputs in Organic Farming Systems' (RELACS) will foster development and facilitate adoption of cost-efficient and environmentally safe tools and technologies, to phase out the dependency on and use of contentious inputs in organic farming systems.



RELACS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773431. The information contained in this communication only reflects the author's view.

### **Organic plant breeding in Europe: seed for future food systems**

29 November 2018

Developing organic plant breeding in Europe is a priority for the organic movement, but it is urgent to find funding models for breeders. At the conference organised on 29 November by Demeter, in partnership with IFOAM EU, several participants rang the alarm about the dire situation of many organic breeders in Europe, who struggle to fund their work or to find a successor for their pioneering breeding activities.

At the same time, promising initiatives were presented, that aim at ensuring that the whole organic production chain would contribute to funding organic breeding. For example, the Dutch retailer Odin has been very active in supporting the work of breeder De Beersche Hoeve in the Netherlands. Farmers, consumers, traders and retailers should all play a role to support organic plant breeding.

On the policy side, concerns were expressed about the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety's (DG SANTE) upcoming delegated acts on heterogenous material, which may display a narrow view of what would be allowed for use in organic agriculture. IFOAM EU stated that it is time to put an end to the "one size fits all" approach of the EU seed legislation, and that the Commission should not close the door opened by the new provisions on seeds of the new organic regulation.

Concerning organic varieties, the new temporary experiment that will be launched by the Commission may seek to determine how the DUS (Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability) criteria for seed registration should be adapted to fit the needs of organic breeders and farmers.

### **Organic Innovation Days 2018: Insights from the policy debate**

27-29 November 2018

The 4th edition of the Organic Innovation Days gathered a broad range of actors from the organic sector and beyond: from companies and researchers, to farmers and farmer organisations to policy makers across Europe. The policy debate focused on the opportunities for organic actors in [Horizon Europe](#), the EU's research and innovation framework programme for the period 2021-2027. The speakers shone light on the political priorities for Horizon Europe in the coming years, in particular on how Horizon Europe can strengthen research for organic farming and agroecology.

The invited policy makers from the European Commission, France and Germany showed themselves very open to and supportive of organic food and farming. Nathalie Sauze-Vandevyver, Director Quality, Research and Innovation, and Outreach at DG Agriculture, stressed that Horizon Europe should focus on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and organic farming has a role to play in this regard. Dr. Hanns-Christoph Eiden from the German Federal Office for Agriculture and Food acknowledged that organic is a very well defined, sustainable and competitive food and farming system that already demonstrates the multi-actor approach in action. He added that value chains need to be developed to bring sustainable and organic products to the consumer. Also, France has recognised the innovation potential of organic. Philippe Vinçon, Director General for Education and Research at the French ministry for Agriculture and Food announced that France wants to double its production of organic food. Finally, Hans-Joerg Lutzeyer from DG Research and Innovation spoke about the contribution the organic sector can make to the [Food2030 policy initiative](#), while Urs Niggli, director of FiBL, said the organic sector should have courage to address its weaknesses too, such as the use of plant protection products in horticulture.

### **IFOAM EU expert group to build the capacity of the movement in Central and Eastern Europe meets to find the ways of local market development**

6 December 2018

Low consumption of organic products is one of the main problems faced by the markets in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The main challenges are the lack of organic processing infrastructure as well as poor consumer awareness about organic food and farming.

The IFOAM EU CEE expert group met to find possible ways to help local markets to develop. The main conclusion is that engaging conventional processors into organic could be a great opportunity for the sector, as they have good infrastructure in place and possess financial capacity to invest in opening organic lines. At the same time, research needs to be translated into language adapted to consumers, so that they can get reliable, scientifically proven facts about organic food. This message has been conveyed during the International Conference on Organic Agriculture Sciences (ICOAS), where researchers from the CEE region met to present their research results. This also means that IFOAM EU members need to intensify their communication work at local level.



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## 4 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM EU

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



Wessanen



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## 5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

30-31 January 2019

[ProTerra 4<sup>th</sup> International non-GMO soy Conference](#)

Bremen, Germany

13-16 February 2019

[Biofach 2019](#)

Nürnberg, Germany



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