

Contents

WELCOME NOTE.....	2
POLITICAL HOTSPOT	2
1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS.....	4
1.1 Policy	4
1.2 Food, farming and environment	6
1.3 EU Research & Innovation Policy / TP Organics	7
2 IFOAM EU DEVELOPMENTS.....	9
3 EVENTS	10
3.1 Preview of events	10
3.2 Review of events	11
4 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM EU	15
5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS.....	15

WELCOME NOTE

In the past weeks, people all over the world took to the streets to save the climate and their future. On 15 March 2019, school kids, students and professionals of all ages raised their voices. They urged policy-makers, industries and individuals to take action.

It is clear that the organic movement is an important part of the society to make a change happen, – to make Europe more organic. And in this context, it is our duty to improve, inspire and deliver – as our IFOAM EU Vision 2030 says. On the one hand, to deliver means to reach our goal to cultivate 50 % of Europe’s agricultural land under the principles of organic principles farming by 2030. On the other hand, we have to strengthen all our activities in farming and agroforestry, processing and trade to be a climate-positive sector – in Europe and worldwide. Giving this signal to our kids will be one of the strongest messages to them: together we can save our planet, together we can save our common future.

The European Parliament elections are well-timed for a shift in policies to prepare for a greener future. In May 2019, we, citizens from every European member state will make our voices heard by voting for a new European Parliament. The elections could shift the European political landscape if the demands of the citizens asking for a better future reflect in the results.

The European elections are an important moment to exchange with incoming Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). We will inform them about the solutions that agroecological and organic production and consumption has to offer. IFOAM EU will particular continue advocating for a reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that rewards farmers who deliver environmental and socio-economic benefits.

We will discuss the CAP in-depth at the 2019 European Organic Congress. The congress is titled ‘Innovation and technology: how organic improves, inspires & delivers. Besides a plenary session on the CAP, we will focus on new technologies and their implications and benefits for organic and policies.

Ahead of the elections, the Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO) and four civil society organizations run the ‘Time for Fair’ campaign. IFOAM EU is part of this campaign that calls for fair and sustainable European consumption and production. Its success will depend on the involvement of our national members. The organic movement already has a long history of cooperation with the Fair Trade movement, so we hope that many IFOAM EU members will take this opportunity to cooperate with fair trade allies at the national level and get involved in this important European campaign.

Organic regards,
Jan Plagge

POLITICAL HOTSPOT

On 20 March, EU institutions reached a provisional agreement in the triologue on [Horizon Europe](#), the EU’s next research and innovation framework programme. The European Commission will now start preparing Horizon Europe’s implementation to have the first draft work programmes published on time for the programme’s launch in 2021.

A success for organic and agroecology

Through [TP Organics](#), the organic movement successfully advocated for the inclusion of organic and agroecological farming in the legal text (Annex I to the decision, cluster 5 “Food and Natural Resources”). However, only the other legal file, the regulation, was agreed between Parliament and Council while the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe (the Multiannual Financial Framework, [MFF](#)) may be decided within Council only. A draft text is expected to be formally agreed on 27 March.

Threats of industry deregulation

Another major concern is the so-called “Innovation Principle”, a dangerous tool created by industry lobbyists to block and delay important social, health and environmental regulations. In a joint [statement](#) issued together with 74 civil society organisations, [TP Organics](#) called for the immediate and complete removal of this principle from Horizon Europe because it threatens the Precautionary Principle by impeding and delaying product regulations.

Lacking a legal basis, this tool is unnecessary to support innovation for sustainable development. For innovation to work for the public good, it must not harm people or the planet. It is the role of regulators to guide innovation in the right direction for the good of society whereas the “Innovation Principle” threatens regulations on health, climate, environment, food and agriculture, and would render impossible decisions like the [REACH directive](#) on dangerous chemicals or the [ban on pesticides like neonicotinoids](#), that are disastrous for pollinators. Big business [supports](#) the “Innovation Principle” through the [European Risk Forum](#), a major lobby platform for polluting industries whose members promote chemicals, pesticides, food and agribusiness, plastics, tobacco, and fossil fuels. For these reasons, [TP Organics](#) urged the Parliament and Council to delete all references to this tool. TP Organics reached out to its National Technology Platform members to contact their responsible national ministries, to present TP Organics’ amendments on Horizon Europe and to alert them to the risks of the Innovation Principle.

Despite calls from civil society, the Innovation Principle was not removed from the legal text during trialogue. It will be the first time it appears in official EU legislation, which could set a dangerous precedent that will be difficult to undo. Even though it’s unfortunate that the principle was not removed, civil society shed a light on this effort for corporate deregulation. Close monitoring of the principle’s codification and implementation is needed to avoid possible spill over to other programmes and policies.

Missions and partnerships

An important concession made by the Council was to shift the themes for missions and partnerships from the Specific Programme to the framework programme. MEPs and member states will now vote on the same list in the coming weeks. The negotiators agreed five mission areas and eight partnership areas. The missions and partnerships themselves will be finalised by the Commission in strategic planning before being submitted to the Council for approval. One of the missions to target global challenges will be “soil health and food” (instead of “healthy sustainable and resilient agri-food systems” identified earlier by the Commission as potential mission theme). Progress on the research missions is to be overseen by advisory boards. Doubts persist on the positive societal impact of the industry partnerships.

What’s next in the process?

The preliminary political agreement that was agreed in the trialogue negotiations will be put to vote. First the Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee will vote. After that, Parliament will vote

about it in its final plenary on 15-18 April. This will be a crucial moment for a follow-up statement reacting to the outcome. The Council also has to approve this text.

The hot topics in this file surround the budget, associated countries and synergies with other programmes. However, these have been put on hold until the overall EU budget (MFF) is agreed upon. An agreement on the budget is expected in October at the earliest.

After the elections, TP Organics will continue to be at the disposal of current and new ITRE members and Commissioners, providing expertise on sustainable agriculture, organic and agroecological farming.

TP Organics is the European Technology Platform for Organic Food and Farming. TP Organics aims to strengthen research & innovation for organics and other agroecological approaches. The secretariat of TP Organics is hosted by IFOAM EU since 2008.

1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 Policy

Organic regulation

New Report of the EU Court of Auditors on organic published

On 14 March, the European Court of Auditors published a [report](#) on the organic control system. This report is a follow up to the [2012 report](#) on the same issue. According to Auditors the organic control system in the EU has improved. Namely, the Commission and the Member States addressed recommendations from the 2012 report. However, according to Auditors, some challenges still remain.

Controls on organic production and trading are stricter and more frequent than those on the non-organic counterparts. 100% of organic operators is inspected at least once a year (often more) by control bodies and authorities. A good control system is already in place and a continuous improvement process should always be part of the systems.

Among the challenges are some remaining weaknesses in the Member States' control system and reporting. Specific improvements are possible in the supervision of imports and on traceability. The report gives very clear recommendations for improvement to the Commission, with a tight deadline.

With the continued growth of the organic market at a fast pace, keeping the integrity of the organic supply chain is a challenge. IFOAM EU trusts that the Commission, the Member States, the Accreditation Bodies, the Control Bodies and Authorities and organic operators will work together to answer to this challenge.

To facilitate cooperation, IFOAM EU is establishing an internal 'Interest Group on Organic Certification and Integrity'. This group will consist of control actors and organic operators that will exchange and work together on how further improve the organic control system.

New Import Regulation published

The [new Regulation \(EU\) 2019/446](#) was published. It is the regular update of Annexes III and IV of organic import Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008.

Annex III is the list of 13 Third Countries recognised as equivalent by the EU, while Annex IV is the list of control bodies and authorities which are authorised to operate in Third Countries. Usually updates concern contact details of competent authorities, control bodies and authorities but also new recognitions, extensions of existing recognitions or withdrawals of recognitions.

Besides the usual updates, the new published Regulation includes an amendment to Article 13(2) to improve the functioning of TRACES electronic certification system.

The Organic Equivalence Tracker

IFOAM - Organics International has published a new tool on its website: the [Organic Equivalence Tracker](#). This free tool gives a clear picture of organic equivalency agreements around the world.

For the moment IFOAM – Organics International's [Organic Equivalence Tracker](#) includes 15 Third Countries and the European Union. It highlights that the EU recognises 13 Third Countries as equivalent and a bilateral arrangement is in force with some. Recognition by the EU means that organic products (or specific categories of) certified according the Third Country's organic standards can be imported in the EU without further certifications.

The new EU organic regulation will enter into force in 2021. By consequence, all the equivalency arrangements between the EU and Third Countries will have to be renegotiated as 'trade agreements' before 31 December 2025.

CAP

Vote on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the European Parliaments' plenary likely to be postponed until after the European elections

A crucial vote on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee was delayed to 2 April. This leaves too little time for a vote in the plenary before the European elections in May, as the two leading committees of the European Parliament (the Agriculture and Environment Committees) have diverging positions. The following Committees already gave their non-binding opinions: Development, Budgets, Budgetary Control, Regional Development and Women's rights and Gender Equality.

The new Parliament will have several potential options. One is to take the work that the current legislature has done and go directly to a plenary vote. It could also start again from the legislative proposal. A less likely option is to ask the Commission for a new CAP proposal. The decision will depend largely on political changes following the European elections. Regardless of the outcome, it is unlikely that the Council and the new European Parliament will find an agreement before the end of 2019. We therefore expect a 1-2 year transition period extending the current CAP to go beyond the planned starting date of the new CAP on January 2021.

IFOAM EU will continue to work towards a better CAP. During the parliamentary recess our focus will be on the Council's work and on supporting Member States with the design of their CAP Strategic Plans.

1.2 Food, farming and environment

Sustainable consumption and production: main message of the European Parliament election campaign

The elections for a new European Parliament will take place at the end of May of this year, opening up the door to a potentially very new European political landscape. In this context, the Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO) in Brussels together with IFOAM EU and other NGOs will spread important messages about sustainable consumption and production, hoping that the next Parliament and the next Commission will take the urgency to deal with these issues on board.

In the context of this campaign, Eduardo Cuoco, Director of IFOAM EU, says "The European Parliament elections are an important moment to raise awareness to incoming Members of the European Parliament about the urgency of promoting sustainable agroecological and organic production and consumption practices". He added that "the European organic movement particularly advocates for a reformed Common Agricultural Policy that rewards and incentivizes the environmental and socio-economic outcomes delivered by farmers". In this context, he also stressed the need for a true cost accounting framework that helps reward practices that deliver public benefits together with the previously mentioned reformed Common Agricultural Policy.

One element of this campaign is the publication of a special edition of the (fictitious) newspaper "the fair times", which focuses on all the achievements in terms of sustainable consumption and production that the EU has achieved by 2024. The success of this cooperative effort to reach out to candidate MEPs will depend on the active involvement of our national members, and the IFOAM EU office counts on your participation!

Should you want to get involved and know how you can participate at the national level, do not hesitate to contact us at [silvia.schmidt \[at\] ifoam-eu.org](mailto:silvia.schmidt@ifoam-eu.org)!

MEPs vote for fairer supply chains in plenary vote, now onto the Council!

On 12 March 2019, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) voted in favour of the directive on unfair trading practices (UTPs). This directive bans certain unfair trading practices that may be imposed on the most vulnerable actors in the food supply chain, like farmers. In a [joint press release](#), IFOAM EU and other European associations welcome the vote of the European Parliament. They consider this vote to be a first step to increase fairness in the supply chain and ensure fairer prices for farmers.

The directive was first published by the European Commission in April 2018. After almost a year of negotiations, it gained support in the plenary of the European Parliament. Next, the Council must adopt the directive on UTPs. After that, national governments will have to make the directive into national legislation, implement it and enforce its rules. Quoting the press release: "the European Commission, Member States and Members of the European Parliament should now renew their efforts to ensure that the provisions of the Directive are transposed as soon as possible and in the spirit of the Directive".

Farmer Field Schools, peer-to-peer learning to reduce the use of antibiotics – Read the RELACS project's first Practice Abstract

In March 2019, the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), IFOAM EU and the French Research Institute for Organic Farming (ITAB) published the first [RELACS Practice Abstract](#). A Practice Abstract contains practical guidelines for different actors of the food and farming system to solve a given problem, in this case farmers and farm advisors.

In the abstract, readers can learn how peer-to-peer learning reduces antibiotic inputs and improves animal health and welfare in organic farming. Sometimes advisory services do not lead to an improvement in animal health. This can be due to a lack of ownership of arguments and recommendations. In Farmer Field Schools farmers advise each other. This results in recommendations that are implementable and convincing. This in turn leads to a reduced use of antibiotics and incidences of mastitis and allows farmers to move from static to more dynamic health plans.

Read the full [Practice Abstract](#) and follow the RELACS project's development on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). [RELACS](#) seeks to promote the development and adoption of environmentally safe and economically viable tools and technologies to reduce the use of external 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.

1.3 EU Research & Innovation Policy / TP Organics

TP Organics' Science Day 2019: Research, innovation and knowledge exchange – Challenges of the organic sector

On 15 February, TP Organics' [Science Day](#) took place at BIOFACH 2019 – the world's leading trade fair for organic. The event collected input for the new edition of TP Organics' Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda. Participants gave feedback on the first work done by experts. This input feeds into an online consultation for all TP Organics' members and stakeholders and runs from mid-March to mid-April. The final version of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda will launch at the Organic Innovation Days in November 2019.

The second half of Science Day saw the relaunch of the [Organic Farm Knowledge Platform](#). This platform contains practical knowledge and tools for organic farmers and advisers that improve farming practices. This includes practice-oriented materials from recent and ongoing projects. Factsheets, videos, decision-support tools, guidelines, and reports are available on the platform. Read the [press release](#) on the launch of the Organic Farm Knowledge platform.

Science Day ended with a policy debate with Magdalena Mach (Policy Officer, Research & Innovation Unit, DG Agriculture, European Commission), Hanns-Christoph Eiden (President, Federal Office for Agriculture and Food, BLE, Germany) and Marco Schlüter (Projects, International development, Naturland, Germany). Marco Schlüter stated that the European Commission should be ambitious. He called on them to dedicate 1 billion euro to organic food and farming under [Horizon Europe](#), the EU's Research & Innovation Programme for the period 2021-2027. The audience welcomed the efforts by the European Commission. It asked to continue to involve farmers in research through the EIP-AGRI

and to incentive farmers more. Possible incentives are funding international exchange visits for farmers and providing a budget for farmers to participate in the preparation of project applications.

[All presentations of Science Day 2019 are available on TP Organics' website.](#)

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EIP-AGRI Update

On 7 March, the Operational Groups (OGs) assessment 2018 was presented at the EIP-Agri subgroup meeting. This is an assessment of OGs approved and running under the European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability ([EIP-Agri](#)). According to the definition of the European Commission, OGs bring together multiple actors such as farmers, researchers, advisers, businesses, environmental groups, consumer interest groups and other NGOs with the aim to advance innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors.

The clusters of the types of agriculture covered by the OGs identified in the study '[Operational Groups Assessment 2018 Final Report](#)' (PDF) highlight the interest in increasing sustainability in agriculture. While conventional farming represents the largest category of agriculture in OG projects with 28%, it is closely followed by alternative types of farming such as organic farming, conservation and circular agriculture, agroecology and bio-based production. Together they make up the majority of innovative projects with 53% of the OG projects. With 121 OGs (20%, see p.11), organic farming represents the second most important type of agricultural activities among the OGs. This is proof of the innovative strength of the organic sector. The organic OGs range from agroecological soil management and compost systems optimising soil fertility to cultivation strategies and electrical weed control as concrete, locally adapted innovation. They cover pilot projects and best practices that boost the performance, resource efficiency, environmental sustainability and resilience of organic agriculture while also accounting for the economic viability of the farmers and improving animal health and welfare. Case studies 3,5 and 7 in the report explicitly deal with (the transition to) organic farming.

The [database with the projects involved](#) and [presentation](#) are available on the EIP-AGRI website.

Unlike the EIP-Agri database, TP Organics exclusively features organic OGs that are continuously updated in the [Innovation Arena](#) on the [TP Organics website](#).

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Interested in feeding pigs and poultry with organic and regional feed? Read OK-Net EcoFeed's brand new knowledge synthesis

Are you working with pigs and poultry? Are you interested in learning about feeding monogastrics with 100% organic and regionally produced feed? Have a look at the [OK-Net EcoFeed knowledge synthesis](#). In 72 pages, the document covers:

- the protein needs of organic monogastric animals (pigs, layers and broilers), including different breeds and rearing conditions;

- different resources of protein feed, focussing on new or uncommon protein sources, their nutrient content, production prerequisites, and their potential feeding value;
- small-scale, on-farm equipment for feed processing;
- different feeding strategies.

Feeding pigs and poultry with 100% organic and regionally produced feed can be a challenge. Especially getting enough protein and specific amino acids. Luckily there are two main ways to overcome this challenge.

The first solution is to use by-products like waste from various productions. Exploring new protein sources like marine products or refining the use of known products like grass are also possible. Another solution is to feed animals less intensively. For this feeding strategy slow-growing breeds are a better fit. Some slow-growing breeds are already known, some are rediscovered old breeds. Slow-growing breed pose the challenge of a smaller yield and/or less income for the farmer leading to an increase in the prices of eggs and meat. However, there are many options to combine feeding strategies of regionally grown feed and low-yielding breeds that need to be further explored.

Read the [knowledge synthesis](#).

2 IFOAM EU DEVELOPMENTS

Ensuring access to land in Eastern Europe

Agricultural land is a key resource. Yet, it is under threat of land grabs, land concentration, and ever-increasing rates of urbanisation. These factors deprive communities of access to land and food and jeopardise biodiversity.

To learn about innovative land strategies to strengthen organic farming and agroecology, NGOs joined forces. IFOAM EU, Terre de Liens, the European Coordination Via Campesina, Urgenci, Eco Ruralis, the Transnational Institute, and the Real Farming Trust have launched an Erasmus partnership.

The partners' first meeting focused on land access in Eastern European countries. Participants explored the current struggles and common strategies. They also talked about a common vision to reform and transform access to land in Eastern Europe.

In the course of the project there will be more events. If you want to get involved and/or you want more information, contact [isabella.lang \[at\] ifoam-eu.org](mailto:isabella.lang@ifoam-eu.org).



3 EVENTS

3.1 Preview of events

Best Economy Forum - Global economy with responsibility

9 April 2019, Bolzano, Italy

On April 9, 2019, the first edition of the 'Best Economy Forum' (BEF) will open its doors, in EURAC, Bolzano, Italy. The founders and partners of the forum are hosting an international discussion platform for companies who have been successful in implementing sustainability strategies. The event aims to discuss and develop genuine and realistic models of sustainability, and to create a vision for fair worldwide trade and a sustainable global economy by 2030.

The forum focusses on concrete, successful strategies and approaches by businesses for businesses, with the emphasis on the exchange of ideas and bundling of strengths. By incorporating young entrepreneurs and businesses, the exchange of experience is inter-generational. This enables all involved to learn from each other's best practices.

The main topics will be discussed in seven focus groups. IFOAM EU Director, Eduardo Cuoco, will moderate the 'Real prices for fair markets' focus group. Jan Plagge, IFOAM EU President, will be expert speaker at the 'Imagining the circular economy' focus group. The forum is co-founded by Bioland and supported by and in partnership with IFOAM EU.

The participants of the 'Best Economy Forum' are entrepreneurs, policy-makers and representatives of the civil society. They are working towards solutions for a new sustainable economy. The event aims to bring CEOs and top executives together with managers from medium-sized, small and start-up companies. The event will result in a manifesto created by the participants, in which concrete demands will be made to the relevant parties in economy and politics regarding the SDG goals.

For more info on the event, please [visit the event website](#).

Advanced Technologies in Sustainable Agriculture (ANTARES) Annual Workshop – Digital transformation of agriculture

4 April 2019, Novi Sad, Serbia

On 4 April 2019, the [ANTARES](#) Annual Workshop will take place in Novi Sad, Serbia.

The workshop consists of two parts and focuses on the digital transformation of agriculture. It gathers high-level European Commission and Serbian Government officials, Provincial Government officials, diplomatic corps, representatives of big agri-food and IT companies, eminent scientists from all over Europe, farmers and end-users.

During the opening ceremony, attendees and media representatives will learn about the innovative design of the [BioSense Institute's](#) offices and activities. This includes an experimental green roof and a collaborative ground sentinel station. They will also hear about plans for the launch of the BioSense Accelerator, the region's first "agri-food" accelerator. It will help the domestic IT sector to develop its own products and services in the field of agriculture by providing access to different funding schemes and training programs.

The panel discussion “Organic Food and Farming in Serbia, Developments and Future Outlook” will start after the opening ceremony. The most prominent experts in the field will discuss the prospects of organic production in Serbia and Europe. IFOAM EU Director Eduardo Cuoco will hold a speech on the Vision of the organic movement to 2030 and the work of IFOAM EU.

[ANTARES](#) is a project funded under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It aims to develop the Serbian [BioSense Institute](#) into a European Centre of Excellence (CoE) for advanced technologies in sustainable agriculture. The project receives institutional, legislative and financial support from the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

For more info on the event, please contact office@biosense.rs.

3.2 Review of events

GMOs, how to avoid contaminations? Practical solutions for food and feed processors and farmers

13 February 2019, Nuremberg, Germany

To remain GMO-free, the organic food chain needs to implement suitable measures to limit the risk of contamination. It is important to take action to prevent contamination to avoid economic loss and loss of credibility towards clients and consumers.

IFOAM EU presented practical recommendations for farmers and processors to limit the risk of GMO-contamination at Biofach. These recommendations come from a publication about guidelines on how to avoid GMOs contaminations.

The launch event and publication are a collaboration between the Organic Research Center, BÖLW and FNAB. Dr. Friedhelm von Mering from BÖLW, Fiona Marty from FNAB and Pauline Verrière from IFOAM EU were present.

New developments and use cases of the Internet of Food and Farm 2020 at Biofach

14 February 2019, Nuremberg, Germany

Technology and agriculture are closely linked. Tech-lovers present at Biofach gathered at the ‘[Internet of Food and Farming 2020](#)’ (IoF2020) project’s meeting ‘Next generation technologies in organic food and farming - New developments and use cases of the Internet of Food and Farm 2020’ to receive an update of two cases of the IoF2020 project.

IFOAM EU represents the organic movement in this project and its Director, Eduardo Cuoco, opened the session highlighting the opportunities the Internet of Things (IoT) has to tracking and tracing products, the spread of direct farmer-to-consumer markets and to integrate knowledge on the climate, soil, plant and animal needs.

Rafael Angel Ferrer, R&D Manager at Hispatec, presented the first findings of using the IoT in olive growing and olive oil production.

Continuing along the Mediterranean line, Gianni Trioli, founder and President of VINIDEA, shared the benefits of using the IoT in the different steps of organic wine growing. A few of his positive experiences using different types of sensors showed that the IoT helped them to make wine growing

more efficient by monitoring growth, the number of insects, estimations of vigour and yields and more. Moreover, scanning wine with a spectrometer allows for sending real time wine content parameters to the farmer, while the quality of wine during shipping can be monitored daily using the IoT.

If you would like to know more about the IoF2020 project, [visit the IoF2020 website](#) where you can subscribe to its newsletter and follow it on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) at @IoF2020.



IoF2020 has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 731884.

Regulatory Aspects of the Organic International Trade

14 February 2019, Nuremberg, Germany

The session on the regulatory aspects of organic international trade took place in a very crowded room on 14 February.

Nicolas Verlet, Head of the European Commission's organics unit presented the state of play of organic trade agreements. Mr. Verlet talked about the progress in the talks with Third Countries. He also elaborated on the possibility of a global multilateral agreement. Such agreement would allow the recognition of each other's organic certified products by a number of countries - including the EU, the US, Switzerland, Canada and others - instead of having many bilateral agreements.

Michel Reynaud, IFOAM EU Board member and Ecocert Vice-President presented the organic movement and sector's vision on the future of international trade. He stressed the importance of the major involvement of the sector in the initial phase of international organic negotiations. Beate Huber, Deputy Director of the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), highlighted the importance of the impact that certain areas of the new organic regulation will have on millions of organic farmers outside the European Union. An example was the change in the rules for group certification. Tobias Fischer, Secretary General of the European Organic Certifiers Council, presented the points of the new organic regulation requiring clarification from certifiers' point of view. The panel was moderated by Emanuele Busacca, IFOAM EU Regulation Manager.

Seed in the new organic regulation (EU) 2018/848

14 February 2019, Nuremberg, Germany

Seeds are the foundation of farming and organic farming should start with organic seeds. Yet untreated conventional seeds are still used as many derogations are granted all over the EU.

Furthermore, the new organic regulation (EU) 2018/848 opens up new possibilities, which could improve the availability of organic seeds, depending on how the new provisions will be implemented.

To raise awareness about this issue, Eric Gall from IFOAM EU hosted a session at Biofach on 14 February. Pauline Verrière, Policy Officer for GMOs, new genetic engineering techniques, patent and seeds at IFOAM EU, presented the position of the organic sector on seeds and the new organic regulation. Moreover, Pauline elaborated on how to advocate to reach the use of 100% of organic seeds in the future.

The new organic regulation created a new category of seeds called 'Organic Heterogeneous Material'. Charlotte Bickler from the Organic Research Center, presented the work within the LIVESEED project on this new category of materials. Gebhard Rossmann from Bingenheimer Saatgut closed the session with a presentation on guaranteeing better market for organic varieties.

Policy Day

14 February 2019, Nuremberg, Germany

A lively debate on the CAP took place at Biofach's Policy Day titled: 'A new CAP for healthy farms, people and a healthy planet'. Focussing on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2021-2027, high-level speakers discussed key elements of the future green architecture of the CAP

The panel represented a wide range of views, including public officials from the European Commission, the Romanian Presidency and a German Regional Agricultural Minister. The other panellists represented the farming community, the President of IFOAM EU, the Vice-President of the young farmers' federation (CEJA), as well as a representative from academia of the Thünen institute.

The discussions centred on the need for environmental ambition and the role of organic farming in the future in the revision of the CAP 2021-27. Speakers spoke openly of the new opportunities in this CAP reform. They also touched on the serious challenges that this revision faces with a strained budget, a possible renationalisation of Europe's farming sector and race to the bottom in terms of environmental ambition.

The role of organic farming took the centre stage as the audience commented the functioning of the new green architecture - including how the novel eco-schemes could be implemented.

Policy Day was organized by IFOAM EU and Biofach. We look forward to seeing you and discussing EU policies at next year's edition of the Biofach Policy day.

Opportunities and challenges for specialized organic retailers

14 February 2019, Nuremberg, Germany

At Biofach 2019, IFOAM EU organised a session tailored to specialised organic retailers. The speakers of the session "Opportunities and challenges of specialized organic retailers in a rapidly evolving market" are members of the newly formed interest group of organic retailers (IGOR) within IFOAM EU. This group provides a platform for exchange and potential action for organic specialized retailers in Europe.

Speakers spoke about the situation for specialised retailers in their home country. Growth is generally still increasing, but at a slower pace compared to previous years. This is due to the entry of bigger conventional players in the organic market. The speakers also emphasized the advantages of specialized organic retailers, which include the larger choice of organic products, the closeness with the staff and the story behind each product.

The largest part of the session was dedicated to exchange with the audience, and they did not disappoint! Participants were passionate and curious about the evolution of the market. This time for

exchange reinforced the idea that a specialized organic retailer should point towards transparency and open communication with consumers.

The three speakers were Evelyne Alcazar Marin, International Manager at Ecovalia (Spain), Alexis Descampe, Managing Director at Färm (Belgium) and Lukas Nossol, Marketing Manager at Dennree (Germany). The session was moderated by Silvia Schmidt from IFOAM EU.

Natural inputs in organic farming

15 February 2019, Nuremberg, Germany

Representatives of processing, plant protection, and organic standards discussed the use and need for inputs in organic at Biofach 2019.

What surfaced during the discussion is that organic food and farming faces challenges regarding the availability of natural substances traditionally used in organic farming. This is also true for processing aids, plant protection, food and feed additives or fertilizers.

Speakers noted that the current regulatory system for inputs is made for synthetic substances. More complex natural substances are often disadvantaged under the current regulations. A first step towards a better regulation would be to come up with a common definition on naturalness. This should take into account criteria on how to check inputs on their compliance with organic standards.

Read more about [IFOAM EU's work on plant protection](#) and on the homepage of the [RELACS](#) research project. 'Replacement of Contentious Inputs in Organic Farming Systems' (RELACS) will foster the development and facilitate the adoption of cost-efficient and environmentally safe tools and technologies, to phase out the dependency on and use of inputs considered contentious in organic farming systems.



Replacement 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.

"Farming without agrochemicals" - Can we grow without using herbicides, fungicides and insecticides?

06 March 2019, Bruxelles, Belgium

IFOAM EU participated in a workshop on the future of plant protection products. The European Parliament's Research Service, Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA) organised the workshop.

Isabella Lang, Policy Analyst at IFOAM EU used this opportunity to explain that plant protection in organic farming is ensured by a holistic strategy. Organic farming is more than just an input replacement from a chemical to a natural substance. Management practices, technological developments and organic plant breeding are the cornerstones of this strategy.

Isabella Lang also drew attention to the need to reconcile productivity growth with other concerns to feed a growing population. Higher yields are not the only answer. To feed the world without further harming the planet we need a shift towards diversified agroecological and organic farming systems.

Read more about [IFOAM EU's work on plant protection](#) and on the homepage of the [RELACS](#) research project which is working on lowering the use of contentious plant protection products in organic farming.

4 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM EU

IFOAM EU KEY SUPPORTERS 2019

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.



5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

9-11 April 2019

[Best Economy Forum - Global economy with responsibility](#)

EURAC Bolzano, Italy

4 April 2019

[Advanced Technologies in Sustainable Agriculture \(ANTARES\) Annual Workshop – Digital transformation of agriculture](#)

Novi Sad, Serbia

20-21 June 2019

[European Organic Congress](#)

Bucharest, Romania



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