

## Welcome note

Dear reader,

Welcome to a very special edition of our newsletter. At the start of 2023, we are treating you with an out-of-the-box edition, in 12 different European languages. With this special edition we are presenting you an overview of our work the year ahead and opportunities for cooperation!

Whilst the global pandemic showed us many vulnerabilities in our communities, care systems and the food system, it was remarkable that European organic sales increased manifold. However, while the end of the pandemic came into sight, a war in Europe broke loose, following Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Rising fossil-fuel prices heavily impacted the food system, showing its reliance on synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. Coupled with economic speculation, this led to an economic crisis with a heavy inflation rate, increasing energy and food prices and increasingly struggling households that must prioritise their spendings. A crisis that is also impacting organic's development in Europe.

In such context it is even more important to make sure we work efficiently, and we use our resources in the best way possible, organically. For this reason, with this newsletter, we would like also to offer you an overview of some of the deliverables that we will produce in 2023 and that are available for you, your organisation, and your membership. If you are interested in one of the studies, infographics, video or other materials that we will (and have) produce(d), please contact us and we will share it, so you can translate and brand it for your use!

We also want to ensure a united and cohesive organic movement and business sector in Europe. Our role in these special times is even more relevant. While reading this newsletter (and the future issues – remember to subscribe!) you will get a glimpse of the challenges ahead, for which we need a strong representation in the European capital.

Strong policies favouring organic supply and demand, as the EU Organic Action Plan puts forward, can be a stimulus for organic producers and consumers. Unfortunately, the organic sector often faces policies doing the opposite. There is a high number of labels for products, such as HVE (High Environmental Value) in France, but also and industry-led “regenerative” schemes. Many of these labels claim to do what the EU organic label is already doing: providing a guarantee for truly sustainable practices. The EU should ensure the different initiatives are not competing and prevent greenwashing and help avoid misleading advertising using labels that favour large-scale and “efficient” processes using monocultures, synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. Labels should also set high standards for environmentally friendly products and encourage consumers to buy products that actually deliver for biodiversity, water, air & soil quality.

If policymakers will not ensure this, IFOAM Organics Europe is ready to take the lead and fight greenwashing in all possible ways, as we did for example [with our legal action against the 'EcoScore' label with our legal](#).

Another challenge for organic in the EU and globally is the Commission's initiative to write new legislation to make way to industry's new GMOs or 'new breeding techniques'. Along with many other issues, we are following this topic closely and are fighting to ensure the new legislation will protect the organic supply chain, and ensure traceability and labelling of those new GMOs.

Please, be aware that with this special edition we could only offer you an overview of highest priority topics for 2023. If you are interested in a detailed overview of our 2023 working plan, do not hesitate to contact us at [info@organicseurope.bio](mailto:info@organicseurope.bio)!

As you can tell, there are challenging times ahead. Please, rest assured that we will continue doing the work at EU-level for you, as you can read in this newsletter! If you want to learn more about these topics, make sure to [attend our side events at BIOFACH](#), visit our [European Organic Congress](#) 26-27 September 2023 in Córdoba (Spain) and/or our [Organic Food Conference](#) in May in Italy.

You may expect a regular edition of our newsletter early March.

Are you not yet subscribed to this and interested in this? And we will send you an update of our work six times a year. If you would like to receive more regular updates, visit our member extranet (for members only), our website or follow us on social media @OrganicsEurope.

Best wishes and don't panic, the future remains organic,  
Eduardo

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
SFS law	Study min. sus. criteria Policy report by FPC								Legislative proposal			
Sus. label	Principles sustainability label		Planet score		Green claims EP Plenary vote			Legislative proposal				
GMO	DG SANTE et al. (Workshop on co-existence) Internal survey European Parliament event - GMO video					Legislative proposal	PP legislative proposal European Parliament vote proposal Workshop of Members					
Seeds						Legislative proposal						
Org. Textiles	MEPs		DG Grow				European Parliament event DG Grow/ENV					
Soil			PP DG ENV			Legislative proposal: Soil Health Law						
Climate Change	Infographic & climate action plan			European Parliament IED vote EP NRL Vote		EP vote carbon certification						
SPP	DG SANTE	2 Infographics		Organic Canteens				leg. proposal				
Sust. Use of Pesticides Regulation	SUR PP EP event Toxicity study	Advocacy to MEPs & Permanent Reps		Video on substances & SUR		Amendments		EP Committee-vote		Plenary vote		
CAP	Commission derogations			IGOF in-person Meeting(Sweden)								
Animal welf.			PP on AW Advocacy towards DG SANTE				Revision of AW leg & proposal for AW labelling					
Fertilisers	INMAP PP			Publication of INMAP								

**Abbreviations**

- AW – Animal Welfare
- EP - European Parliament
- FPC - Food Policy Coalition
- IED - Industrial Emissions Directive
- INMAP – Integrated Nutrients Management Action Plan
- NRL - Nature Restoration Law
- PP - Position Paper
- SFS - Sustainable Food Systems
- SPP - Sustainable Public Procurement
- SUR - Sustainable Use of Pesticide Regulations
- FPC - Food Policy Coalition (NGO coalition)

**Legend**

- Legislative proposal
- Communications
- Organics Europe advocacy
- Others

**IFOAM**  
ORGANICS EUROPE

IFOAM Organics Europe Policy Outline for 2023



## An outlook on making Europe more organic in 2023

IFOAM Organics Europe has been defending the interests of organic farmers, operators, and businesses at EU level for more than 20 years. As united voice of the European organic movement towards EU institutions, we can pride ourselves to successfully contributing to organic's impressive growth by ensuring that European policies and research programmes support the development and improvement of organic agriculture.

Faithful [to the Vision 2030 and strategy](#) we developed as European organic movement, we have been advocating for transforming the food system based on the principles of organic agriculture – health, ecology, fairness and care. This demands hard work, expertise, good connections, close collaboration with organic operators on the ground, and persistence against powerful vested interests defending the status quo.

The [EU Green Deal](#), and specifically the Farm [to Fork Strategy](#)'s publication in May 2020 put organic agriculture at the heart of a transition towards sustainable food systems. By setting a target of 25% organic land by 2030, this was a historic recognition of the benefits of organic practices for the environment, farmers, and society.

An ambitious new EU Action Plan on organic farming followed, listing 23 actions to develop both production of and demand for organic products. Reaching the Farm to Fork Strategy's ambitious goal demands balanced upscaling of both production and consumption, implying a huge transformation in farm structures and value chains. So, as IFOAM Organics Europe we set up and coordinate the research project [OrganicTargets4EU](#). The project will analyse the socio-economic impacts of the aspired increases in primary production and markets. It will also support advisory services and knowledge exchange to stimulate conversion to organic farming.

### Sustainable Food Systems Law & labelling

In 2023, in times of global turmoil and of crisis on the organic market, a strong and united representation of the organic movement towards the European institutions remains more important than ever. It may not always be visible, but many European policies that will be adopted this year will have a crucial impact on the future of organic agriculture.

The “**legal framework on sustainable food systems**” encompasses many relevant pieces of legislation for organic. First, the European Commission will establish principles for the **labelling of the sustainability of food products**, including organic products, and adopt another proposal to assess “**green claims**” in the food sector. Criteria and methodologies to assess food products' environmental impact must consider the positive externalities organic practices provide. Think about biodiversity protection and the absence of synthetic chemicals and fertilisers. As this is not the case for now, us and our members are mobilized. We want to avoid new labels misleading consumers. Many try to buy environmentally friendly products but could end up buying products from the most intensive and destructive farming models because the label on it uses a biased methodology.

In parallel, the Commission is also working on **horizontal labelling for animal welfare**, a topic which organic performs well in and which consumers recognise.

The legal framework on sustainable food systems will also provide opportunities to make a share of organic products in all public procurements across Europe mandatory. This could provide access to organic food to millions of children in schools, patients in hospitals or nursing homes and civil servants. Procuring organic food in public institutions requires actions by many. The research project [SchoolFood4Change](#) unites these actors and we partner in it.

IFOAM Organics Europe wants to protect the organic sector:

- Against wrong use of the terms ‘eco’ and ‘bio’ by non-organic industries, and
- Prevent [the biased PEF methodology](#) in the sustainability labelling framework.



So, we launch a call to collect funding for this work! To realize the project, we need around €120,000 from the sector. If we have fundraised €90,000, we can secure the project. **Interested? Support our work on sustainability labelling!**

Are you active on this topic? We will do the work for you! We are working on visuals on sustainability labelling in 2023. Contact [communication@organicseurope.bio](mailto:communication@organicseurope.bio) if you want to translate/re-use some of our material at national or regional level!

### Inputs, from GMOs and pesticides to seeds

Another strategic issue is a Commission proposal (expected in April) to deregulate some **new genetic engineering techniques**. We are mobilising with our members, NGOs, and likeminded organisation. We call on the Commission to maintain transparency for consumers and the mandatory traceability system – the condition for organic operators guaranteeing no **GMOs** have been used in production. At a time when consumers are already confronted with contradictory claims about food products, it is key to maintain the integrity and trust in organic products.

At the same time, the Commission will also present its long-awaited **review of the European seed legislation**. For this, it will be necessary to maintain the advances for cultivated biodiversity of the new organic regulation, especially on organic plant breeding. Besides advocacy work, we also partner in the research project [LIVESEEDing](#) and contribute to upscaling organic seed production and the organic seed market.

Another hot topic for organic is the 50% reduction target in pesticide risks and use. This is proposed in the Biodiversity Strategy and the **Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation**, currently fiercely debated in the Council and the Parliament. Defenders of industrial agriculture have not hesitated to use the invasion of Ukraine to argue that food security would be at stake if we tried to reduce toxic pesticides.

As organic movement, we support the pesticides reduction as these are largely responsible for the disappearance of pollinators, other insects and birds, not to mention their detrimental impacts on farmers' and people's health. There is a fundamental difference between synthetic pesticides and the natural substances organic farmers use complementing good agronomic practices. We have alerted policy makers that indicators to measure pesticides reduction should not discriminate against natural substances which are used in higher volumes. However, natural substances are rarely as toxic as most synthetic pesticides. We take part in the research project "IPMWorks", promoting the adoption of strategies for pesticide reduction.

Are you active on this topic? We will do the work for you! We are working on a video on the importance of keeping GMOs regulated and a video on organic's approach to plant health and the importance of good indicators for measuring pesticides reduction. Contact [communication@organicseurope.bio](mailto:communication@organicseurope.bio) if you want to translate/re-use some of our material at national or regional level!

### Climate & biodiversity

In 2023, we will also continue highlighting organic's contribution to preventing **climate change**, protect **biodiversity** at the same time, and make our farming systems more resilient. We will do so during the negotiations on the certification of carbon stocks in soils (**carbon farming**) and by releasing an **action plan** of the organic movement to further improve its performance.

Carbon farming is also a hot issue in the research projects [ClieNFarms](#) and "ClimateFarmDemo" that are testing and demonstrating practical solutions for climate-neutral farms. We have a leading role in interacting with policymakers in these projects so we can ensure organic's voice is heard.



Are you active on this topic? We will do the work for you! We are working on an infographic on the benefits of organic for the climate and biodiversity in 2023. Contact [communication@organicseurope.bio](mailto:communication@organicseurope.bio) if you want to translate/re-use some of our material at national or regional level!

## Developing organic

### Supply & demand

Policies can also play a role in helping to better communicate the benefits of organic farming to consumers. This is the case for the **EU promotion policies**. For the third consecutive year there will be an earmarked budget (of EUR 86 million) for promoting organic products on the internal market and abroad. More powerful and impactful consumer communication will be essential to revitalize the organic market, and our members should make full use of this scheme.

In the last three years, IFOAM Organics Europe has also been very active to support our members to ensure that the new national **CAP Strategic Plans** be as ambitious as possible for the development of organic agriculture. We will also start preparing for the next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Of course, work on the new EU organic regulation's implementation is ongoing. Our current focus is on the handling of pesticides residues, which should not penalize unfairly organic operators, and on the requirements for group of operators. But 2023 will also see the start of negotiations on new equivalency agreements between the EU and several third countries.

Are you active on this topic? We will do the work for you! We are working on infographics showing the benefits of sustainable public procurement in 2023. Contact [communication@organicseurope.bio](mailto:communication@organicseurope.bio) if you want to translate/re-use some of our material at national or regional level!

### Knowledge for organic

Beyond a suitable policy framework, farmers and other operators in the organic sector need access to sound knowledge enabling them to continue improving their practices. We coordinate and take part in a range of research projects key for developing organic. Some examples of projects are already listed above. Two others are worth mentioning: [BIOFRUITNET](#) and [InterCropValuES](#). BIOFRUITNET has created a range of materials and guidelines for organic fruit producers, and InterCropValuES promotes intercropping and developing associated value chains. Many tools and materials produced by the research projects are available on the knowledge platform for organic: [Organic Farm Knowledge](#). There, practitioners can find practice-oriented material like factsheets, calculation tools, and videos on organic farming, helping them to become even more innovative.

**If you are active in organic, you can see that we do much of the work for you! You can consider supporting us and [become a member](#) or [support our work](#).**

**If you are a policymaker and would like to learn more about the work we do, visit the topic you would like to know more about on our website and contact the person listed there.**

Want to learn more about what is in this outlook? Visit our website at [www.organicseurope.bio](http://www.organicseurope.bio) and [learn about the projects we are involved in](#).

Do you want to know even more?

- [Join one of our events](#)
- [Subscribe to our newsletter](#), we send this six time per year
- [Submit your initiative transforming food and farming](#)
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