

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Table of Contents | 1 |
| WELCOME NOTE | 2 |
| POLITICAL HOTSPOT | 2 |
| 1 NEWS | 4 |
| 1.1 Policy | 4 |
| Plant health care | 4 |
| GMOs | 6 |
| Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)..... | 12 |
| Biodiversity, soil, and water | 13 |
| Food policy | 15 |
| 1.2 Research and innovation | 17 |
| Research and innovation advocacy / TP Organics..... | 17 |
| Knowledge for organic | 18 |
| 2 IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENTS | 19 |
| 3 EVENTS | 21 |
| 3.2 Review of events | 21 |
| 5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS | 27 |

WELCOME NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the March edition of our newsletter! We are excited to share with you the latest news and updates from the organic sector and movement.

As you may recall, we sent a special, multilingual edition with an outlook on 2023 in February. Did you miss it? You can still catch it up here in [EN](#), [CZ](#), [DE](#), [ES](#), [FR](#), [HU](#), [IT](#), [LT](#), [NL](#), [PL](#), [PT](#), [RO](#).

This is why in the current edition we cover news and events from the end of 2022 and the first three months of 2023, an especially busy period for Brussels and hence for our organization.

The IFOAM Organics Europe team is closely monitoring the many legislative initiatives being launched as part of the Farm to Fork strategy. We are committed to providing political and technical input on behalf of the organic sector and movement. The feedback, the experience and knowledge of our members are key in those activities.

In this newsletter issue you will find updates on several initiatives, including the ones related to: sustainable use of pesticides, nutrient cycles, substantiating green claims, GMOs and New Genomic Techniques (NGTs), Common Agriculture Policy, deforestation, carbon farming and promotion policies.

We are also, as always, actively involved in the implementation of several EU funded projects. You can find updates on projects on intercropping ([IntercropValuES](#)) on strengthening the networks of organic fruit growers ([BIOFRUITNET](#)) as well as on promotion ([BEING ORGANIC in EU](#)).

In addition, we are excited to announce two upcoming events. The [Organic Food Conference](#) will take place in Sansepolcro, Tuscany, Italy on May 22-23, 2023, in collaboration with Aboca and the EU project "BEING ORGANIC in EU". We are also co-organising the [European Organic Congress 2023](#) in Cordoba, Spain, with Ecovalia.

Finally, we are thrilled to announce that, as of March 2023, we have officially moved to our new office! We are looking forward to this new chapter and the opportunities it brings. The new office in rue Marie-Thérèse 11 1000 - Brussels will not only be the workplace of our staff, but they will also host the new Organic House, the home of the organic movement in Brussels.

Thank you for reading and stay tuned for updates on making Europe more organic!

Best regards,

Eduardo Cuoco

IFOAM Organics Europe Director

POLITICAL HOTSPOT

After a postponement in November 2022, on 22 March 2023 the European Commission's proposal for a Directive on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims (Green Claims Directive) has been published. While we welcome the withdrawal of prevalence of the Product



Environmental Footprint (PEF) in the text, we are still calling for caution when it comes to the mention of Life Cycle Assessment.

A text originally based on the PEF

It is crucial to keep in mind that the Green Claims proposal is led by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV), the same DG that have been working for 10 years to develop the PEF methodology. Therefore, the text was written based on that methodology and aiming to make it the standard for labelling harmonization in the European Union. However, thanks to the efforts of various NGOs, trade associations and civil society which repeatedly raised concerns to the Commission, the references to the PEF have been greatly diminished in the proposal. If we welcome the improvements made by the Commission to the Green Claims proposal, the Directive still leaves space and advocates for the development of Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) methodologies such as the PEF.

Our concerns on the application of LCA methodologies for agricultural products, food and textiles

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodologies, in general, are not adequate to assess the environmental performance of agri-food products as they are unable to correctly capture the complexity of the agri-food system and its external impacts. These types of methodologies are only accounting annual flows. Positive and negative externalities of agricultural systems do not appear in LCA calculations, making it impossible to assess them in a holistic way. All “stable” positive externalities such as the value of the presence of hedges, plots of limited size, diversified crop rotations, long-term practices, etc. do not appear in a LCA evaluation. This narrow perspective on functions of agricultural systems is disregarding many aspects of the methods of production and cannot accurately distinguish between them. It is particularly striking with the example of the PEF that gives misleading results, since the more extensive the agricultural practice is, the worse it scores. For instance, eggs from hens in cages score better than free range eggs, which in turn score better than organic eggs. When it comes to agri-food products PEF is predominantly an indicator of yields, favouring the most intensive methods of production while disregarding both a number of positive elements and the negative externalities of the food production process. You can find more information on the limitations of the PEF in our [technical briefing](#).

The EU must promote methodologies that are aiming to support the transition towards more sustainable food systems

IFOAM Organics Europe supports the idea of protecting consumers from deceiving green claims on food but believes methodologies to assess the environmental value of food products should be properly discussed and aligned with the objectives of Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies. Environmental labelling schemes should be evaluated in regards of their capacity to promote the transition towards a more sustainable food systems based on an agroecological vision. Therefore, a special attention must be taken when regulating environmental labelling schemes and setting requirements for them.

What comes up and what do we do?

- The Directive will now be presented to the European Parliament and the Council. We will continue to advocate for adapted methodologies to be applied for agricultural, food and textile products towards these two institutions.

To ensure this, we believe that the upcoming [Legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems, that will include a part on sustainability labelling](#), represents a better opportunity to discuss the topic with a broad consultation of the stakeholders involved, including NGOs and civil society.



1 NEWS

1.1 Policy

Plant health care

The Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR), moving forward but slowly

The legislative process of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR) proposed by the European Commission back in June 2022 is moving forward but slowly.

On the Council side, Member States are waiting for [the complementary data to the existing impact assessment carried out by the European Commission they requested by vote](#) on 19 December. Data requested focus on quantitative aspects of food production, food and feed affordability and accessibility, competitiveness of small and medium farms, availability of alternatives to synthetic pesticides. EU Member States are still discussing the SUR in working group parties but focus on technical aspects to avoid touchy political aspects such as national pesticides reduction targets, the ban of all pesticides in sensitive areas and the Harmonized-Risk Indicator HRI-1.

On the European Commission side, there are two deadlines: end of March to answer the Member States' request for additional data and end of June to provide the requested data.

On the European Parliament side, the rapporteur Sarah Wiener (Greens/EFA group from Austria) has published her [report](#) in January 2023, and presented it in the Environment Committee on 2 March 2023. Overall, she is in favour on a 80% reduction for the most hazardous pesticides and proposes an in-between solution for sensitive areas by authorizing substances used in organic and biocontrol products. (Read our reaction to the report [here](#)) Furthermore, the Parliamentary committees for agriculture and environment (AGRI and ENVI) finally reached an agreement on the timetable. The deadline to table amendments is fixed on 30 March. Then the AGRI Committee will vote in July, followed by a vote in the ENVI Committee in September and a vote in Plenary in October. We can expect vivid debate before the votes.

What does the organic sector do?

- In January, IFOAM Organics Europe has published its [position paper](#) gathering the recommendations of the organic movement to enhance the SUR proposal. We believe, the EU needs to:
 - Elaborate a better indicator than the proposed Harmonised-Risk Indicator 1 (HRI-1) to assess pesticides use and risk. HRI-1 is a volume-based indicator which discriminates against natural substances used in large quantities because generally less harmful;
 - Better define plant protection products (PPP) to differentiate between synthetic pesticides and natural substances;
 - Authorize natural substances in agricultural sensitive areas (the proposal foresees a ban of all PPPs) to enable food production in a sustainable manner.
- In February, IFOAM Organics Europe was present during the European Parliamentary plenary session [we were present](#) to showcase organic approaches to plant health care during the [IPMWorks](#) exhibition;
- The same month, our director Eduardo Cuoco spoke at a panel at the hybrid event “The Revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive: Challenges and opportunities” organised by the European Food Forum and gathering several Members of the Parliament. He recalled how organic farming practises contribute to reducing the use of synthetic pesticides.
- In March, we organised a [policy workshop](#), as part of [BIOFRUITNET](#) to discuss the Farm to Fork Strategy, the SUR & organic fruit growing. Read the [main outcomes here](#);
- We continue meeting Members of the European Parliament, and their staff as well as officials of EU Member States’ Permanent Representations in Brussels to share our recommendations;

- We collaborate with like-minded NGOs (read the [joint letter signed by 69 organisations](#) to support Sarah Wiener's report and the [joint letter 32 organisations signed](#) calling on Ministers and Members of the Parliament to support the SUR reform).

Take a deep dive in this topic

- Press release [Scientific study shows synthetic pesticides significantly more dangerous than natural ones](#) (February 2023)
- Press release [Bold pesticide reduction plan faces attack on Saturday](#), 6 December 2022 (also available in [German](#))
- [Press briefing: EU's first legally binding pesticide reduction targets under threat](#) (also available in [German](#))
- Video recordings of our press conferences are available [on our YouTube channel](#)

Additionally, you can also learn more about:

Scientific community's demands

- **Open letter signed by more than 600 scientists** (December 2022) stressing that pesticides reduction objectives remain of utmost importance to stop and reverse the decline of biodiversity, as well as affirm the [Potsdam Statement](#) published in March 2022 is still very relevant. They stated "a food system transition is non-linear and disruptive by definition. While current modes of impact assessment may provide insights into short-term market impacts, they are incapable of projecting longer-term innovation and disruption, which the Green Deal aims for."

Civil society's demands:

- European Citizens' Initiative's Save the bees & Farmers: [1.2 million EU citizens demanding an end to pesticides and organised a hearing at the European Parliament](#)
- ECI Save the bees & farmers' [arguments against dubious claims from several MEPs](#)
- ECI Save the bees and Farmers' [letter to ask MEPs to stop blocking the SUR](#) Corporate influence on the EU's green targets & pesticides
- Corporate Europe Observatory's article on [Chemical romance, how politicians fall for BASF](#), 13 March 2022
- DeSmog article [Flagship EU Green Farming Reforms in Peril as Lobbyists Exploit Ukraine War](#) 9 December 2022
- Corporate Europe Observatory's work on [the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and its targets](#) October 2021
- GLOBAL 2000 & Pesticide Action Network's report: [Pesticide Paradise](#) September 2022
- [The new Pesticides Regulation receives cautious welcome by environmental groups](#) 22 June 2022

Organic and its approach to healthy plants:

- Get informed [about organic's approach to plant health care](#)
- Deep dive into [organic's approach to plant health care](#)
- Have a look at [all documents us and like-minded organisations have issued](#)

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



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Promoting recycled fertilizers in Europe: [IFOAM Organics Europe position paper & outcomes policy workshop on closing the nutrients' cycle](#)

On 28 February, IFOAM Organics Europe has published a new [position paper on the Commission's Integrated Nutrients Management Action Plan \(INMAP\)](#), expected to be adopted in Spring 2023.



Rue Marie-Thérèse 11 – 1000 Brussels – Belgium – Phone: +32 2 280 12 23 – Email: info@organicseurope.bio

In the paper, in addition to highlighting the benefits of organic farming regarding nutrients' cycles, IFOAM Organics Europe provides the policy-makers with 10 **recommendations** that would help the EU in reaching the Farm to Fork strategy targets on reducing nutrient losses by 50% and reducing fertilisers use by 20% by 2030.

In particular, IFOAM Organics Europe recommends:

- fostering organic farming and the use of **organic recycled fertilizers**;
- ensuring **better collection and separation of recycled fertilizers** to avoid contamination and ensure compatibility with organic production rules; and
- developing **local infrastructures** for collecting and recycling organic fertilizers.

On 29 November 2022, IFOAM Organics Europe in collaboration with other organisations had organised a policy workshop on closing nutrient cycles in European Parliament. The event on this topic was hosted by Members of the European Parliament Margrete Auken and Thomas Waitz (both Greens/EFA). Including the online broadcast, 80 people participated at the workshop.

The [report of the workshop](#), highlights five key take aways:

1. A profound **transformation of the food system** is needed that fosters long-term sustainability and self-sufficiency and steers away from short term solutions;
2. **False solutions and lock-ins need to be avoided** (i.e., the European Commission proposed action on support for fertilizer production and use). Agricultural policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should be subject to compliance with reduction of nutrient excess and pesticides dependency while maintaining good agricultural production;
3. **Ecosystem destruction is the biggest threat to food security**. Therefore, EU agricultural and food policies should be allocated to the production of public goods such as the provision of ecosystem services, the restoration of biodiversity and the ecological network that can biologically fix large amounts of nitrogen, regulate weeds, pests and diseases, support recycling of nutrients, as well as secure pollination and other vital functions in the agroecosystem;
4. **Existing policies will not be enough to achieve the Farm to Fork Strategy's 50% nutrient-loss reduction target by 2030**. Further action addressing inputs and taking a holistic approach to nutrient flows are needed to reach the indicative target of halving nutrient losses;
5. **The Integrated Nutrients Management Action Plan, expected to be adopted in Spring 2023, should adopt a food system redesign approach and include incentives for dietary changes**. There is an urgent need to rebalance protein intakes by increasing the share of legumes in European diets.

Links to download presentations are available in the [report of the workshop](#).

Our members can find information on our recommendations for the INMAP on [our member extranet](#). Interested in becoming a member? Contact membership@organicseurope.bio for more information or access rights issues.

For more information on fertilizers and the INMAP, contact amelie.steu@organicseurope.bio



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GMOs

[GMOs – An easy breakdown on common myths](#)



Rue Marie-Thérèse 11 – 1000 Brussels – Belgium – Phone: +32 2 280 12 23 – Email: info@organicseurope.bio

Global grassroots organization [Slow Food International](#) has recently published a [short myth-busting article](#) with the most common, but wrong and misleading assumptions about the promises of New Genomic Techniques (NGTs or new GMOs).

New genomic techniques should be traceable, risk-assessed & labelled!

European legislation on NGTs is planned for the second quarter of 2023, which may exempt certain new Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) from the current, strict regulatory framework – one that insists on safeguards like traceability, risk assessment, and labelling. The existing GMO legal framework guarantees food producers' choice to use or not use GMO crops, transparency and freedom of choice for consumers to eat GM-free food. This is informed by [strong vested interests](#) from large corporations and industry-linked science.

Myths Slow Food International's debunks

Myth#1: Changes brought by certain NGTs alter plants the same way as can happen naturally or through conventional breeding

Distinguishing GMOs produced by NGTs and older genetic modification techniques is merely a marketing strategy to avoid consumer skepticism. However, GMOs produced by NGTs are technically and legally GM techniques, produce genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and fall within the scope of EU GMO laws, as confirmed by the [European Court of Justice ruling of 2018](#). New GM techniques are not breeding techniques because they use artificial techniques that require direct human intervention in the genome.

Myth #2: New GMOs will help reduce the use of pesticides, including herbicides

New GMOs are likely to meet the same fate as older-style GM crops: pests and weeds can rapidly become resistant to plants genetically engineered to repel pests, rendering the GMO useless and requiring an ever-increasing use of pesticides.

Myth #3: We need GMOs for food security and population growth

Hunger is caused by poverty, inequality, food waste, not scarcity. So, new GMOs cannot solve the problem of hunger because the issue does not lie in food production but the current agri-food industry that sustains an intensive, polluting, and unfair food system.

Myth #4: New GM techniques make precise and controlled changes to the DNA, with predictable outcomes

A large and ever-growing number of scientific studies in human, animal and plant cells show that new GMOs are far less precise than what is being claimed and give rise to numerous genetic errors and researchers are highlighting the need to test for these unintended mutations.

Myth #5: New GMOs are vital to adapt agriculture to climate change

We don't need more GM supposedly "climate-ready-crops", we need climate-ready agroecological systems founded on proven methods, which also ensure farmers' sovereignty free from patents.

For more information on (new) GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please [visit our website](#) and contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio.

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New year, old narratives – Why genetic engineering is (still) not the solution to food security

The European Commission kicked off 2023 by publishing [a report on the drivers of food security](#), recognising the value of organic farming for biodiversity and supporting the transition towards less pesticides' dependency. However, in the report it also puts forward controversial statements in favour of genetic engineering techniques, including so called "New Genomic Techniques" (NGTs).

Organic's benefits

The report dissects the drivers of food security considering the war in Ukraine. In the 138-page long report, the Commission points out the various environmental benefits of organic farming, such as the improvement of "flora and fauna richness or abundance in agroecosystems by more than 50%". It further acknowledges that organic farming, albeit less intensive, can also contribute to maintenance of farm viability and quality food production with lower inputs, among other things due to more efficient use of inputs.

New genomic techniques' alleged benefits

On the other hand, the report highlights NGTs as a potential solution to various sustainability issues, for example, by providing plant varieties with durable biotic resistances at a faster pace. It states that "NGTs can bring speed to the development of improved varieties with traits that can support food security, such as increased yields, or reduced use of natural resources. This also requires a suitable legal framework as well as programmes that enable innovation to deliver on its potential." **This is a clear indication of a push for a lighter regulatory framework.**

Among others, NGTs are listed next to organic farming practices as a means to reduce the EU's dependency on pesticide inputs. **The ability of NGTs to decrease pesticide use is highly contested** among environmental and agricultural organizations and FoodWatch has recently [published a report](#) arguing that "pesticide-resistant" NGT crops are still empty promises, and their use would actually decrease seed diversity, lead to lock-in effects, and contribute to a race to the bottom.

Coming up in June: The NGT legislative proposal in legislative package

In January, the European Commission announced that it will publish the legislative proposal on 7 June within a legislative package called "Sustainable agri-food systems and use of resources". The package will include proposals for a new [Soil Health Law](#) and a revision of the food waste and textiles aspects in the [EU Waste Framework Directive](#).

New year, same industry narrative

The Commission's report is in line with the narratives used in 2022 to push NGTs, namely stressing their alleged contribution to sustainable development and food security. However, environmental and agricultural organizations have repeatedly criticised this narrative. **Hunger is caused by poverty, inequality and food waste, not scarcity.** So, NGTs (or new GMOs) cannot solve the problem of hunger because the issue does not lie in food production but the current agri-food industry that sustains an intensive, polluting, and unfair food system.

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Successful GMO petition handover to the Commission

On February 7, environmental, agricultural, and consumer rights organizations gathered in front of the European Parliament in Brussels to officially hand over a petition to the European Commission demanding to keep the new generation of genetically modified organisms 'regulated and labelled'. The petition ran from April to November 2022 and received 420.000 signatures.

A coalition of 50+ organisations successfully ran the petition in 17 EU member states. Some of our members were also involved in this initiative and have translated these petitions into their national contexts. The German organic umbrella organisation BÖLW called the petition *Nicht hinter unserem Rücken – Kein Freifahrtschein für neue Gentechnik in unserem Essen*. Austria's organic umbrella organisation Bio Austria lead a petition called *Keine neue Gentechnik durch die Hintertür*. Clara Behr, Head of Policy and Public Relations the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International, a member of IFOAM Organics Europe, successfully spearheaded the organization of the petition over the course of the past year. Clara Behr says: "Excluding new GMOs would prevent farmers, food producers, retailers, and citizens from opting for GM-free choices. We have the right to decide what we eat and grow in our fields!"

This petition comes at a crucial time for voicing citizens' concerns on the topic of new GMOs and so called 'New Genomic Techniques' (NGTs). The European Commission aims to present their new legislative proposal on NGTs in a package together with the revision of the Seed legislation on the June 7 2023 already. The new proposal might take away key pillars of GM-free conventional, and organic food production, like traceability and labelling.

Klaus Berend and Irene Sacristán Sánchez, head of Pesticides and biocides and head of unit for Biotechnology in the Directorate General Health and Food Safety of the European Commission (DG SANTE), respectively, received the petition. Several Members of European Parliament also joined the handover. Among them were Green/EFA Members of the EU Parliament (MEPs) Thomas Waitz and Martin Häusling, as well as Eric Andrieu from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and Anja Hazekamp from the Left Party (GUE/NGL), who all gave short statements in support of the petition and continued regulation of new GMOs. One focal point among their contributions was the question on who NGTs would actually benefit - namely the seed and chemical, intensive agribusinesses, rather than farmers, citizens, and the environment. Further, the MEPs cautioned that NGTs have misleading sustainability claims and that these technologies cannot replace proven agroecological practices such as organic farming.

Nina Holland, researcher at CEO added: "A few big chemical and seed corporations are pushing the EU to allow new GMOs onto the market unchecked. These companies have been lobbying the European Commission for years to exclude new GMOs from the EU-regulation, making unsubstantiated claims on the supposed benefits for sustainability. But as they also hold patents on the seeds engineered with these techniques, their true motivation remains to increase their profits."





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European Court of Justice decision on 'in vitro' mutagenesis strengthens 2018 ruling subjecting gene editing to EU GMO Directive

The recent [ruling by the European Court of Justice](#), published on 7 February, closes a 2015 case brought forward by the French small farmers' association [Confédération Paysanne](#), together with eight other environmental organizations. It clarifies the legal status of old GMO methods of mutagenesis under the EU Regulation and confirms that gene editing techniques should fall under the [EU GMO Directive 2001/18/EC](#).

2018: European Court of Justice says new genomic techniques are GMOs

The July 2018 ruling of the European Court of Justice provided clarity on new mutagenesis techniques, stating that the latter should be considered genetically modified organisms as laid out by the EU Directive, and in turn, new Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) must be regulated in the same way as old GMOs. However, the status of 'random mutagenesis' techniques, creating old GMOs, was still uncertain.

Random mutagenesis, both in vivo and in vitro exempted from GMO legislation

Random mutagenesis induces spontaneous mutations on the gene level in living organisms, by using certain mutagenic agents, such as chemicals or physical agents (e.g., radiation) that can alter the genetic composition of plant cells. Random mutagenesis can be applied 'in vitro' and 'in vivo'. 'In vitro' means that mutagenic agents are applied to plant cells and the whole plant is then reconstituted, whereas 'in vivo' processes refer to processes where mutagenic agents are applied to the whole plant or plant parts.

The Directive 2001/18/EC provides for an exemption whereby certain genetic modification techniques fall outside its very strict scope. In vivo random mutagenesis was declared exempt from the 2018 ruling, whereas In vitro mutagenesis was still contested. The ruling this February states that both random mutagenesis techniques qualify for an exemption from the EU's GMO directive. So, now, mutagenic agents applied not only to whole plants or seeds, but also to cells (in vitro) are exempted. The Court put emphasized that this judgement is supported by the dual criterion:

- I. conventional use in a number of [breeding] applications and
- II. with a long history of safe use.

A precedent to upcoming Commission proposal on new genomic techniques?

The ruling comes at a critical point in time with the upcoming legislative proposal on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) announced for publication in June 2023. While the agrochemical and big seed industry actors like Bayer and Euroseeds reacted positively to this judgement, green groups and small farming associations warned the ruling risks opening the door to a deregulation of new GMOs. Notably, the farmer's union [European Coordination Via Campesina](#) stated in their [press release](#) that "These techniques [in vitro mutagenesis] are all patentable and are therefore neither natural nor traditional. They were developed shortly before 2001 at the same time as transgenesis (even though most products arrived on the market well after 2001) and generate the same health and environmental risks that justify the current regulatory obligations of risk assessment, labelling and traceability."

However, importantly, the **Court's ruling does not strip gene editing or NGTs, such as that performed using the CRISPR/Cas method, from any regulatory safeguards for gene-edited plants, such as risk assessment, traceability, and labelling.** These plants continue to fall under the GMO regulation, as ruled by the Court of Justice in 2018. So, the outcome of the judgement confirms that there is a difference between random mutagenesis, which uses mutagenic agents (chemicals and physical agents like radiation) and directed or targeted mutagenesis, also called gene editing. According to the Court, the dual criterion mentioned above is in

fact “closely linked to the very objective of that legislation, namely, in accordance with the precautionary principle laid down by EU law, to protect human health and the environment”.

So, overall, the ruling strengthens the Court’s decision of 2018 to subject NGTs or gene editing to the current EU GMO Directive, sending a strong light towards the Commission.

For more information on (new) GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe’s work on this issue, please visit our website, consult our [living article](#), and contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio.

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EU Environmental Ministers give clear signal to Commission to maintain precautionary principle & risk assessment for NGTs

On 16 March, the Council meeting of environmental ministers sent a decisive message to the European Commission as a large majority of ministries that took a stance on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) sided with the concerns of environmental and organic NGOs.

The topic of NGTs was taken up in the agenda of the Council meeting on the basis of [a public note](#) from the Austrian environmental ministry that demanded strict authorisation rules for new GMOs and comprehensive provisions on science-based environmental risk assessment, rather than basing the proposal on unfounded assumptions. Furthermore, the Austrian environmental minister Leonore Gewessler insisted on the need for consumer labelling, saying “NGTs through the backdoor are not acceptable for us. Consumers have the right to know what ends up on their plates”. In her speech, Gewessler also proposed the creation of an ad hoc working group in the Council to enable a comprehensive discussion on new GMOs including the environment, health, and agriculture sectors.

The Austrian government was supported by other member states as well. German environmental minister Steffi Lemke highlighted the need for social acceptance of NGTs, while also upholding the precautionary principle, freedom of choice and the co-existence of different agricultural systems. The Hungarian delegation even questioned the targeted survey from 2022 that was mainly based on expectations and assumptions, mirroring the critique of various national and EU civil society organisations that assessed the survey as “fundamentally flawed” in a [letter to the Commission](#) in October 2022.

The minister of Cyprus stated: “The provisions of the proposal should be the same as those applicable to all GMOs”, thus calling for a continued strict regulation of NGTs. The Luxembourgish and Slovakian representative supported the Austrian's call for comprehensive risk assessment.

The discussion in the Council meeting comes at a crucial time where the European Commission is gearing up to draft the impact assessment and legislative proposal, which is set to be presented in June, together with three other pieces of legislation in the cadre of the legislative package called “Sustainable agri-food systems and use of resources”. The



deliberate release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), including those derived from NGTs, is an environmental and biosafety issue, so the positioning of national environmental ministers was essential to enable a more far-reaching debate beyond the agricultural and food safety discourse.

In the upcoming political talks, it is important to take into consideration a variety of viewpoints as the legislation on new GMOs will impact many sectors and areas, from the environment to agriculture, but also consumer rights, and patents. This Council meeting was an important step towards the interdisciplinary, critical discussion needed to treat such a sensitive topic.

For more information on (new) GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please visit our website, consult our [living article](#), and contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio.

IFOAM Organics Europe members can find more information on [the member extranet](#) and background materials in the [arguments database on the member extranet](#) (main messages, arguments/FAQs, visuals & videos). Contact membership@organicseurope.bio for access rights (issues).

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



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Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

All CAP Strategic Plans approved and Parliament's report on long-term vision for rural areas adopted

On 13 December, the European Commission approved the last national Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) Strategic Plan and the European Parliament approved its own initiative report on the Commission's long-term vision for rural areas.

Commission approves 28 national CAP Strategic Plans

On 13 December, the European Commission approved the Dutch national [CAP Strategic Plan, as last](#) of the 28 plans. Their implementation has started on 1 January 2023 and will run until 31 December 2027.

As we already mentioned in our [last assessment](#) (March 2022), **most of the CAP national Strategic Plans have set insufficient national targets of organic farmland** to contribute to the EU's overall target of 25% agricultural organic land by 2030. Moreover, **the budget is too low to boost organic farming** and incentivize conventional farmers to convert to organic. Information about which targets and budgets should have been set up at Member State level to reach the EU's 25% target in 2030 is available in our study [Prospects & developments for organic in national CAP Strategic Plans](#) (June 2021).

A thorough assessment of the final 28 CAP Strategic Plans will be released in April 2023, as part of the Horizon Europe project [OrganicTargets4EU that IFOAM Organics Europe is coordinating](#).



Our members can find more information on our work on the CAP on [our extranet](#). Interested in being a member? Contact membership@organicseurope.bio

Parliament adopted own report on rural areas

On 13 December, the European Parliament approved its own initiative [report](#) (2021/2254(INI)) on the European Commission's [long-term vision for rural areas: Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040](#). 465 Members of the European Parliament voted in favour, 29 were against and 131 abstained.

IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes the own-initiative report as it "*recognises the central role of agriculture (...), including agroecology and organic farming, in providing fair income to farmers*", which is crucial for the vitality of these territories. It also emphasises "*the potential of bio-districts (...) for rural economy diversification*". To know more about the contribution of organic farming to dynamise rural areas, read [our paper](#) (November 2020).

To know more about our work on the CAP and rural development, contact amelie.steu@organicseurope.bio



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Biodiversity, soil, and water

Agreement on new deforestation law

EU consumption is responsible for around 10% of global deforestation. In the beginning of December 2022, the Council and European Parliament reached a provisional deal on a new law on deforestation-free products, which should ensure that no products are sold from land subject to deforestation or forest degradation in the EU. Contrary to the proposal of the European Parliament, the scope will not immediately be extended to other wooded land such as savannahs.

To sell their products on the EU market, companies will be required to verify and issue a so-called "due diligence" statement guaranteeing the production of the goods has not led to deforestation or forest degradation. Operators will have to trace products back to the land where production took place. Three risk categories (low, standard, or high) will define specific obligation to the respective countries.

Companies need to show they comply with relevant national production legislation, including human rights and rights of Indigenous Peoples involved. However, they do not have to comply with international human rights laws and respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights as the European Parliament had proposed in their report.

Cattle, cocoa, coffee, palm-oil, soya, wood, rubber, charcoal, and printed paper products are covered by the new rules. Also goods containing or made with those products, such as leather and chocolate, will be under the scope of the new legislation.



Within two years after the legislation came into force, the Commission must review the law and evaluate if the scope should be extended to other commodities and to other ecosystems, such as land with a value for biodiversity.



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What the Global Biodiversity Framework means for agriculture

Two years later than initially planned, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, world leaders adopted the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF). It was agreed upon at the UN Biodiversity conference held in Montreal, Canada from 7-19 December, chaired by China. The framework includes four goals and 23 targets and commits the world to halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030.

The key targets for 2030 of the GBF are:

- Effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's land, freshwater and oceans;
- Effective restoration on at least 30% of degraded terrestrial, inland waters, and coastal and marine ecosystems;
- Reduce the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, to near zero, while respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Agriculture in the biodiversity agreement

Even though many targets directly or indirectly concern agriculture, Target 10 specifically addresses agriculture and reads the following: "Ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, including through a substantial increase of the application of biodiversity friendly practices, such as sustainable intensification, agroecological and other innovative approaches contributing to the resilience and long-term efficiency and productivity of these production systems and to food security, conserving and restoring biodiversity and maintaining nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services."

Another key aspect is the target on the **reduction by half of excess nutrients**, through more efficient nutrient cycling and use and reducing the overall risk posed by **pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by half** as well, including through integrated pest management.

Furthermore, the framework addresses the need to ensure that people are enabled to make sustainable consumption choices. It includes a target to **cut global food waste in half** and significantly reduce over consumption and waste generation.

It also includes a target on **the implementation of biosafety measures** in all countries to regulate, manage or control risks associated with the use and release of GMOs with likely adverse environmental impacts.

What does the future hold for the EU?

It is essential that countries now translate these goals into national actions and update their national plans and biodiversity strategies to deliver on the Kunming-Montreal Agreement. Only this way we can achieve the global targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. This is also especially important given that [EU Member States are trying to delay the urgently needed EU Pesticide Regulation \(SUR\)](#) which aims to reduce the use of pesticides in the EU. EU and national policies need to deliver on the agreed global goals.



For more information on biodiversity and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please [visit our website](#) and contact hanna.winkler@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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Food policy

EU Organic Awards 2023: Apply before 14 May!

We are excited to announce that the EU Organic Awards are back for the second time after a successful debut last year.

Organic operators can apply for eight awards within seven categories, including best organic farmer female, best organic farmer male, best organic region, best organic city, best organic "bio-district", best organic food retailer, best organic food processing SME, and best organic restaurant/food service, which has been renamed to allow for more participants to apply. The winners will be announced at an award ceremony on the annual EU Organic Day on September 25, 2023.

Jan Plagge, IFOAM Organics Europe's President, stated that "We are proud to launch the second edition of EU Organic Awards. They are great way to showcase the innovative potential in the EU organic sector and how the sector contributes to the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies' goals."

Eduardo Cuoco, IFOAM Organics Europe's Director, added that "We are thrilled to announce the second edition of the EU Organic Awards, and we are incredibly proud to be part of these awards for the second year in a row. These awards will once again inspire and recognize those who are working to create a sustainable food and farming system using organic methods. The awards' criteria are based on the fundamental principles of organic farming, including care, health, ecology, and fairness. The organic approach to food and farming provides an excellent framework for reimagining our food production system, making it more self-sufficient, less reliant on external inputs, and more resilient. We hope that these awards will encourage many practitioners to transition to organic farming and become part of the solution to the many crises we face, including food security, biodiversity loss, and climate change. "

Starting from March 25, 2023, interested parties can submit their applications until May 14, 2023. After the application period, a panel of judges comprising one representative from each organizer, as well as a representative from the European Parliament and the Council, will select the most outstanding candidates. For additional information, please visit the [EU Commission's website](#).



Promotion policies 2023: How can the organic sector make the most of this opportunity? – Member-only webinar

Our member-only sessions 'Let's Discuss Organic' are back! Take part in our monthly online live sessions in which you, our members, can actively engage with experts, deepen your knowledge or exchange on specifically chosen topics.

The first session took place on **23 February** on ['Promotion Policies and how to make the most of it'](#).

The EU has set up promotion policy to open new market opportunities for EU farmers and the wider food industry. In particular, the European Commission is prioritising promotion of sustainable practices in EU agriculture. As the most advanced sustainable method, organic should make good use of these promotion policies. This webinar provided guidance and concrete tips on how to submit successful applications.

Among the speakers there were representatives from the European Commission to present the new annual work program, its priorities and provide us with insights to submit a successful application. Some of our members that are currently running a promotion programme also shared their experiences!

The second session took place on 21 March and was about carbon farming and carbon certification. Our colleague Hanna Winkler explained what is the latest proposal of the European Commission and what it is needed for a holistic approach.

Stay tuned for more information on upcoming sessions! Have a specific topic you would like to learn about more or discuss it with other IFOAM Organics Europe members? Let us know via membership@organicseurope.bio.



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Large share of EU funds available to promote sustainable agriculture in 2023

On 16 December 2022, the European Commission has adopted the 2023 Annual Work Programme on the promotion of agricultural products. To help realise the European Green Deal's shift to more sustainable food systems, the European Commission earmarked a big share of the 2023's EU promotion budget to sustainable agriculture.

28 million EUR for campaigns targeted towards promoting organic farming

The European Commission wishes to focus on sustainable agriculture, including organic production, to increase awareness and recognition of sustainable production methods. To achieve this, 48 million EUR are dedicated to the promotion of sustainable production, EU quality schemes and organic production.

Of these 48 million EUR, 28 million EUR are explicitly targeted towards promoting organic production and products.

Using the opportunity promotion policies offer is crucial

The budget allocation has changed over the years: in 2021, 49 million EUR were explicitly targeted toward promotion organic production and products. During the previous years, the budget allocated for organic



promotion has not been fully used because of a lack of high-quality proposals, which explains this decrease. Therefore, the European Commission has allocated less funding.

The organic movement will play a role in shaping the budget allocation for promotion policies in the following years by deciding on whether or not to apply and get mobilised on this issue. The call for proposals have opened on 19 January, have a look at the [indicative timeline](#).

Additional information for IFOAM Organics Europe members

The [Annual Work Programme for 2023](#) in the framework of promotion policies is available on the Commission's website. We will keep you updated in the following months of our actions to provide you support on the programmes. Information on this topic will appear [on our member extranet](#).

For more information, you can already have a look at [the Commission's infographic about the life cycle of promotion programmes](#), discover the [European Commission's presentation](#) on promotion policies, and the [REA's website](#) dedicated to promotion policies.

What are promotion policies?

Promotion policies were implemented in 2008 to:

- Enhance the competitiveness of the EU agricultural sector;
- Raise awareness among consumers of EU agricultural products and their methods of production;
- Increase market opportunities for EU companies.

These campaigns are either run directly by the European Commission, e.g., to develop trade relations or by proposing organisations such as European trade or inter-trade associations or producers' organisations. There is a budget of 185.9 million EUR for 2023, split between promotion in the EU internal market with 83.3 million EUR and in third countries with 83.1 million EUR.

If you want to know more, check our members only webinar out - [Promotion policies 2023: How can the organic sector make the most of this opportunity?](#)

Do not hesitate to contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio with any questions you may have.

Please do note that we prioritise our members' requests.



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1.2 Research and innovation

Research and innovation advocacy / TP Organics

New project on intercropping for agrifood value chains & ecosystem services: [IntercropValueES](#)

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we are taking part in the new Horizon Europe project, [IntercropValuES](#). With 7.4 million EUR funding, the project will promote intercropping for diversified, resilient, and environmentally-friendly cropping systems, sustainable for the entire the agri-food chain.



IntercropValuES will develop both scientific research action for better understanding and modelling intimate intercrop functioning, as well as a detailed analysis of lock-ins and levers at the value chain level to identify credible solutions that farmers and value chain actors can adopt.

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

The projects' main objectives:

- Support the design of local and innovative agri-food chains, through 13 co-innovation case studies;
- Understand the functioning and different types of interactions in intercropping allowing selection of ideal varieties and optimization of machinery and management strategies;
- Develop and assess improved methods and tools for intercrop management;
- Unravel intercropping performance by modelling;
- Analyse grain and sanitary quality of cereal-legume intercrops, functional qualities for food processing and new products;
- Uncover key barriers and levers at value chain level to boost development and identify new market avenues.

IntercropValuES is a multi-disciplinary and multi-actor project, bringing together scientists and local actor of the agri-food chain. 27 participants, 15 countries and 3 continents from a wide diversity of organisations and stakeholders. IFOAM Organics Europe will play a key role in coordinating the research and disseminate the findings of IntercropValuES. We will communicate the project findings to actors of the value chain and consumers. We will also identify the exploitation routes for the results, to generate impact beyond the project. Follow the project on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) & [LinkedIn](#) (@IntercropValuES). Its website will be launched soon.



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Knowledge for organic

BIOFRUITNET project ending: Stronger networks in organic fruit growers

Knowledge sharing is the key for bringing together organic actors, share innovative ideas and identify the best practices in organic farming. Over the past 3 years [BIOFRUITNET](#) strengthened organic fruit grower networks and evaluated and selected locally known strategies and best practices from organic farmers over 18 European countries making them easily accessible across Europe.

Topics include strategies and solutions in pest and disease control, varieties and rootstocks, biodiversity and organic orchard management in pome, stone and citrus fruits. The projects will produce 100 practice abstracts in English and 9 different languages, 25 videos, 5 podcasts and [3 e-learning courses](#) to give easy-to-implement practical recommendations. Many of the materials are already available free of charge on the [Organic Farm Knowledge](#) platform and project website.

The project's final conference "Innovative solutions in organic fruit production", took place online on the 2nd of March 2023. Project partners and international experts shared experience on how to strengthen networks in organic fruit growing production and efficiently disseminate the best practices to farmers and advisers. Recordings and materials are available on the [project website](#).

For any question contact ambra.desimone@organicseurope.bio





**Funded by
the European Union**

BIOFRUITNET has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 862850. This communication only reflects the author's view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.

2 IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENTS

Saying goodbye to our colleagues

Hannah Gläser



Hannah played a huge role in our fundraising efforts towards private foundations, and she even helped develop two new proposals. Along with Marie, our R&I volunteer, she also put together a document outlining the key arguments we want to use with foundations. Plus, she led some great workshops to help us work better as a team and to disseminate the internal strategy to make sure that our work is aligned with it!

We're sad to see Hannah go, but we know she's going to do great things wherever she ends up next. We're so grateful for all the hard work she put in and the positive impact she had on our organization. Hannah, thank you for being such an awesome part of our team. We'll miss you and wish you all the

best in your future endeavours!



Kalle Köster

Kalle Köster has been part of IFOAM Organics Europe's policy unit from September to December 2022 as trainee through the Leonardo programme. Thanks to his background in agroecology, he contributed to drafting our positions papers on regenerative agriculture and integrated nutrients management action plan. He also undertook research on the EU taxonomy and managed our contribution to the Civil Dialogue Groups. Kalle decided to finish his Master's degree in Psychology. We wish him luck and success for his future professional endeavours. He will be missed!



Marie Filippovits



Since September 2022, Marie Filippovits has supported the Research & Innovation unit at IFOAM Organics Europe ([TP Organics](#) and the [Organic Farm Knowledge](#) platform), as well as some policy and projects-related tasks. She has shown particular interest in further developing linkages with citizens and civil society organisations, which are crucial in the food systems transformation we are working for. We are thankful for her contributions and provocative thoughts and wish her all the best on her future path!

Bérénice Cau

IFOAM Organics Europe says goodbye to Bérénice, our great team member. Bérénice coordinated our flagship project on pesticide contamination, our capacity building program, and enthusiastically supported the efforts in building relations with our partners and sponsors. Bérénice brought major contributions in keeping our project partners and sponsors engaged, structuring our new work areas, and improving collaboration ways with other teams – thanks to that we worked smarter! She was also a book lover and one of the last carnivores in our team. Bérénice, we are going to miss seeing you around in the office. We wish you success in your new job and have no doubt you will excel in your new role!



Martin Sommer



We also say goodbye to our colleague Martin. With his educational background in both international relations and biology, he was the perfect fit to join the policy team. He worked on two very challenging topics: the GMOs & New Genomic Techniques file and the Plant Reproductive Material file. He coordinated internal groups of experts, collected feedback from the sector and built positions that then were put forward to the policy makers. With his work, he contributed significantly to our advocacy activities and made it with his good sense of humour. His work was very appreciated by all our members. We wish him the best for the next step in his career.

Exciting news: We have moved to a new office, the Organic House!

We are thrilled to share with you that IFOAM Organics Europe's office has moved to a new location early March. Don't worry, we haven't moved far away from our current location. After 20 years we said goodbye to Rue du Commerce 124, and we usher in a era of the Organic House at Rue Marie-Thérèse 11.

This relocation is a testament to our commitment to working more efficient and providing more impactful services to our members.

We will not be moving alone. [Ecovalia](#), [Agrobio](#), [European Organic Certifiers Council](#), [Cosmos](#), [Organic Cities Network](#) and [Eccocert](#) be moving in with us – making it a true bustling organic hub!

Rest assured that our services will continue like usual during the transition. Our team remains steadfast in our mission to making Europe more organic, and we will continue to strive towards our [Vision 2030](#).

Of course, we will invite those of you we work closely with to inaugurate the Organic House and we are happy to have our members who are in Brussels over!



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3 EVENTS

3.2 Review of events

“Being Organic in EU” project events in Biofach

The BEING ORGANIC in EU project is a promotion campaign proposed by FederBio in cooperation with Naturland co-financed by the European Union under EU Regulation No. 1144/2014., which aims to increase and strengthen



the consideration of European organic farming in the Italian and German markets by raising awareness and recognition of EU organic farming practices and the EU organic logo.

IFOAM Organics Europe was happy to take part in the project organising 2 sessions and 1 networking reception in Biofach, the biggest and most prestigious international fair for organic, happening yearly in Nuremberg, Germany.

- European organic market developments (analyses) - 14 February 2023. We discussed EU organic market developments with Marco Santori (AssoBio/Alcenero) and Steffen Reese (Naturland). Steffen Reese mentioned the current crisis the organic market is facing, explaining that we should put it into perspective: we must use the pre-COVID-19 year as baseline (less organic demand than the Covid years) & increase information flow to consumers, so they can make informed choices and buy organic more. Marco Santori inspired the audience encouraging everyone to be and do better, just like organic producers. He also highlighted the crucial role of simple & aggregate communication between organic operators & consumers. All the session's speakers agreed on and stressed the importance of sharing international experiences across borders, which is made possible by EU promotional projects, like Being Organic in EU.
- We organised the project Networking Reception in Biofach - 14 February 2023. It was a great occasion to learn more about the Being Organic in EU campaign & mingle with organic stakeholders, all while tasting some delicious organic food & drinks. IFOAM Organics Europe Director Eduardo Cuoco, along with Paolo Carnemolla (Federbio) & Marco Schlüter (Naturland), gave an introduction to the project. Jorge Pinto Antunes, Deputy Head of Cabinet of DG AGRI Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski, was present at the reception and highlighted the importance of EU promotional campaigns for organic stakeholders and for the future of the organic sector.
- Lastly, we discussed the topic of Sustainability Labelling - 16 February 2023, high at the moment on the EU political agenda, crucial to understand for organic stakeholders and with high potential impact on organic demand. Our Deputy Director and Policy Manager Eric Gall, informed the audience that the current LCA-based methodology (the Product Environmental Footprint – PEF) envisaged by policymakers to inform the next sustainability labels, is not fit to assess the environmental impact of agri-food products and might favour intensive production systems rather than sustainable farming methods, such as organic practices. Sabine Bonnot (ITAB) explained that alternatives exist, such as the PlanetScore. This sustainability label used in France also uses PEF as basis but considers other externalities not sufficiently considered in the LCA methodology (pesticides, climate, biodiversity&animal welfare) through a bonus/malus system. Judith Faller-Moog, President of BioPlanète, also endorsed the PlanetScore as a more encompassing label, which would contribute to reaching the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy objectives.

We also talked at the press conference “Organic Farming in Europe and market scenario in Italy” organised under the project. We highlighted that in the context of the global economic slowdown, more powerful and impactful consumer communication will be essential to revitalize the organic market. The policies, such as EU promotion schemes can play a role here. More organic associations, producers and distributors should make use of this funding.



Funded by the project Being Organic in EU of the European Union, coordinated by Federbio and Naturland. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Businesses discuss organic market, regenerative and more

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, business active in and interested in organic met again in person at IFOAM Organics Europe. During a day full of inspiring sessions and networking opportunities, the European organic sector exchanged on market developments, the role of regenerative, regulatory affairs and pesticide residues in organic.

Political developments & the role of organic

In the morning, Pasquale di Rubbo, Policy Analyst at the European Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture (DG AGRI) and Eric Gall, Deputy Director at IFOAM Organics Europe, provided the European frame by painting a bigger picture on political developments and market development

Pasquale di Rubbo, elaborated that by 2030, Europe wants to be carbon neutral. There is a lot of work ahead of us still, and agriculture can play its part! He reminded participants about the EU Farm to Fork Strategy's goals – 50% less pesticides, 25% of the agricultural under organic. Di Rubbo added that the sustainable Food Systems Framework Law (expected late 2024) will help realise this in systemic way, stressing that Europe is moving to a knowledge-driven agriculture, producing more food while being sustainable

Eric Gall stated that the organic market, similar to the conventional market, is impacted by inflation and speculation. However, in certain countries the organic sector seems less affected than the conventional one but there are decreases in the market compared to 2021. Still, it is important to keep in mind that the EU Commission defined organic as the way forward to reach EU Farm to Fork's targets. [The French Court of Auditors similarly concluded that organic contributes after thorough research..](#)

Organic and regenerative

Sarah Compson, Associate Director, Standards Innovation at the Soil Association, opened the highly anticipated session on organic and regenerative agriculture. She reminded us that organic is regenerative at heart. The regenerative movement is not new, but it is upcoming. Within "regenerative agriculture" there are opportunities, like elevating organic farming, as well as risks, for example, greenwashing, confusion and distraction and delay to transform food and farming. Sarah ended by challenging the audience to consider that regenerative agriculture could be a steppingstone on the journey in the conversion to organic agriculture.

Following, Dorothy Shaver, Sustainability Director for Nutrition and IC at Unilever, clarified that Unilever launched regenerative agriculture principles on top of their sustainable agriculture and as an ecosystem approach – elaborating on some of Unilever's sustainability practices. During her presentation, Dorothy stressed that Unilever would be willing to collaborate with the organic movement to achieve environmental targets.



Rue Marie-Thérèse 11 – 1000 Brussels – Belgium – Phone: +32 2 280 12 23 – Email: info@organicseurope.bio

Providing an activist contrast, Ronald van Marlen, Extinction Rebel and founder of NanaBio, followed up with critical remarks. According to Ronald, there are three types of regenerative: those of the social movement, organic & corporate. He urged the organic movement and sector to lead on regenerative agriculture and to join with social movements to strive for sustainable food systems. The last speaker, Paul Holmbeck, Director of Holmbeck EcoConsult, tried to identify a common ground stating:

- Regenerative agriculture does not have a transformative agenda and is rather a set of practices but there is a clear lack of definitions;
- There are many false claims that regenerative agriculture is going beyond organic. Serious actors can be allies to the organic movement while the practices are no issue;
- Regenerative goals and practices are already at organic agriculture's heart. Regenerative should not only be about single practices but have organic's principles at heart and change the system.

A lively debate between panellist and the audience took place after the speaker's presentations. Concluding the first sessions, speakers agreed that it is necessary to have a clear definition of regenerative agriculture and that the organic movement needs to listen to new ideas regenerative brings. But it is important to act now and take the lead as organic movement – which is also the basis of regenerative.

Regulatory affairs & pesticide residues

The second half of the day was an in-depth session on regulatory affairs, including an update on the EU Organic Regulation and its many implementing acts that still need to be finished. Bernard Lignon, Quality and Regulatory Project Manager, Synabio and Jan Wicher Krol, Policy Advisor, SKAL Bio Controle provided their expertise to this.

On a related topic, pesticide residues, Marian Blom, Board Member of IFOAM Organics Europe & Project Leader at Bionext presented the very important project IFOAM Organics Europe is running, collecting [data on pesticide use and contamination in Europe](#).

Michel Reynaud, Board Member of IFOAM Organics Europe and Vice-President of Ecocert and Alexander Beck, Managing Board Member of AöL shared their insights on pesticides residue handling in case of contamination. The workshop ended with a 45-minute workshop on new GMOs where working groups discussed new genetic engineering and questions arising for the organic sector in case of a deregulation at EU level regarding so called 'New Genomic Techniques' like CRISPR/Cas9. The results reflect a broad spectrum of opinions on the topic of co-existence and arising challenges. For more information on the GMO workshop, reach out to helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio.

[Presentation of IFOAM Organics Europe meets business 2022 are available on our website](#), you can also check [#IFOAMOMeetsBusiness2022](#). Stay tuned for next year's event updates by following [@OrganicsEurope](#) on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [subscribe to our newsletter](#)!

Should you have any questions, please contact events@organicseurope.bio.



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[IFOAM Organics Europe at carbon farming panel discussion](#)

IFOAM Organics Europe has been invited to participate to the event **“Carbon farming - New potential for farmers or Greenwashing?”**. The conference was organised by the MEPs Benoit Biteau, Bas Eickhout and Martin Häusling.



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The context for this event was the [proposal for a framework on carbon removal certification](#) published by the European Commission at the end of November 2022. This legislation aims to define rules and consequently also methodologies for carbon certificates from carbon farming, such as soil organic carbon sequestration or agroforestry. The proposal is currently in the co-decision process and being discussed in the European Parliament.

The conference on 7 February 2023 brought together policymakers, researchers, NGOs and farmers' representatives to discuss risks and opportunities of carbon farming. The event provided an overview of the Commission's proposal, presented local initiatives and highlighted the role that regions could play in the process. It also gave a scientific perspective on soil carbon and management practices and an analysis of carbon markets.

Hanna Winkler, Policy Officer for Climate Change and Biodiversity, represented IFOAM Organics Europe in the debate. She stressed the importance of a holistic approach and the need to look beyond carbon into biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. Hanna furthermore highlighted that systemic approaches like organic farming and agroecology need to be promoted and incentivized in order to achieve all targets of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy.

You can watch the full recording of the event in English [here](#) and also in German [here](#).

If you are interested in IFOAM Organics Europe's work with regard to carbon farming, take a look at our [position paper](#) and at our [reaction to the Commission's proposal](#).

Speakers of the event were:

- Laure Bamière, INRAE
- Axel Don, Thünen Institut
- Ana Karen Zapata, Climate Trade
- Ben Lilliston, IATP
- Martin Häusling, MEP for Greens/EFA
- Christian Holzleitner, Head of Unit for Land Economy and Carbon Removals, DG CLIMA
- Loïg Chesnais Girard, President of the Region Brittany, France
- Aurélie Mézière, Mayor of the French municipality Plessé
- Morgan Ody, La Via Campesina
- Hanna Winkler, IFOAM Organics Europe
- Benoit Biteau, MEP for Greens/EFA
- Bas Eickhout, MEP for Greens/EFA



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5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

16-17 April 2023

Natural & Organic Products Europe
London, UK

<https://eventdata.uk/Forms/Default.aspx?FormRef=NOP43Visitor&TrackingCode=web>

18 April 2023

[Let's Discuss Organic - Members only webinar](#)

Online

22-23 May 2023

Organic Food Conference

<https://organicfoodconference.bio/>

7-8 June 2023

Organic Food Iberia
IFEMA, Madrid, Spain

<https://eventdata.uk/Forms/Default.aspx?FormRef=OFI63esVisitor&TrackingCode=OFI119>



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15-16 June 2023

[Sustainable Foods Summit](#)

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

21 June 2023

[IFOAM Organics Europe General Assembly \(member-only governing event\)](#)

Brussels, Belgium



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