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WELCOME NOTE

Dear readers,

The coming month will be one of celebrating life! Harvesting times are upon us and we are also working hard to see what the current Commission's legislative proposals will yield ahead of next year's elections in June 2024.

Celebrating EU organic

But before that, [we are celebrating EU Organic Day](#) on the autumn equinox, 23 September. Many of our members have submitted initiatives they are organising to spotlight organic nationally and locally – [get inspired on our interactive map](#) and be visible on social media using #EUOrganicDay and #EUOrganic on your social media platform of choice. Are you an IFOAM Organics Europe member? We did the work for you! Go to our [member extranet](#) > [hot topics](#) > [EU Organic Day 2023](#) for an update on the [communication package](#). Cannot access the member extranet? Check out our [extranet login guidelines](#) or contact membership@organicseurope.bio!

Rewarding organic excellence

On 25 September, the European Commission will take stock of the EU Organic Action Plan and reward excellence in organic food and farming. During the awards ceremony, 8 excellent and innovation examples in organic will be awarded in different 7 categories: organic farmer (female & male), organic city, organic region, organic bio-district, organic food processing SME, organic food retailer and organic restaurant/food service. [Find out which individuals, companies and regions got shortlisted.](#)

The ceremony will be livestreamed on the European Commission's website at [EU Organic Awards 2023 \(europa.eu\)](#). In case you would like to watch this ceremony (perhaps as a watch party with your colleagues?), you can tune in online on Monday 25 September from 10:00-12:00.

Organic innovating sustainable food systems

On 26-28 September, the organic movement reconvenes in Córdoba, Spain for the highly awaited annual [European Organic Congress](#). IFOAM Organics Europe and Ecovalia have prepared a captivating and timely agenda filled with plenary & breakout sessions and ample networking occasions.

During this three-day event, the organic movement and policymakers will discuss hot topics like:

- The importance of ensuring generational renewal and how it could play a role in finding new ways to integrate sustainability in businesses;
- Organic market trends in Europe and beyond; and
- Spreading organic through private and public procurement in our everyday life.

[Discover the comprehensive programme.](#) Registrations to the European Organic Congress have closed. Do you have any questions? Please contact congress@organicseurope.bio.

Being grateful

Before finishing, allow me to briefly reflect on the past intense months on a more personal level. We have been working hard on many ongoing legislative files – like usual, the office in Brussels together in close collaboration with our members. We are used to hard work, but the past months have been special because we have had to say goodbye to our young colleague, Anna, who tragically passed away. We will commemorate her on the EU Organic Day on 23 September in the presence of her loved ones and colleagues and are working on something to keep her dedication, enthusiasm and sparkle with us.

All the best,
Eduardo



POLITICAL HOTSPOT

The EU's State of the Union (SOTEU), a moment during which the Commission President reflects upon past achievements and lays down ambitions for the months to come, took place on 13 September. In case of this SOTEU, the months to come are only few given the EU elections foreseen in June 2024. As such, either current initiatives and laws are published prior to the EU elections, or it is not yet possible to predict what will happen to them. Indeed, it is possible that the next EU elections will shift political priorities within the Parliament.

Moreover, only days prior to the SOTEU, the European Green Deal, or the flagship initiative of the Von der Leyen Commission, lost its chief advocator Frans Timmermans. Mr Timmermans returned to national politics and has in the meantime been replaced by Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, a Slovak national who since 2019 served as Vice-President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations. While we wish Executive Vice-President Šefčovič the best in his new role, it is undeniable that the European Green Deal has lost its most committed defender with Timmermans' departure.

During her SOTEU address, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen mentioned the importance of biodiversity, rural areas, and the farming community. Her statement "biodiversity and farming can go hand in hand" is proven right every day by organic farmers. In addition, we welcome that Von der Leyen also thanked farmers for their tireless work, particularly during the Covid-pandemic and since the war in Ukraine. However, two big elephants in the room were not mentioned: the sustainable food system and animal welfare proposals. So, let us take a look at the recent political ambition displayed by the Commission when it comes to the European Green Deal and sustainable food systems more specifically.

Prior to the SOTEU, rumours had been mounting as to whether the sustainable food systems as well as the animal welfare proposals would be published after all by the Commission. As such, IFOAM Organics Europe, together with [160 NGOs for the sustainable food systems law](#) and [600+ NGOs for the animal welfare proposals](#), insisted through open letters to publish both laws.

Both foreseen in the Farm to Fork strategy, and both expected to be published still this year, it is unclear what the Commission's intentions are for these two files. A recent [Financial Times article](#) even stated that "Three EU officials with knowledge of the matter said the commission had dropped the [animal welfare] proposals completely — along with a sustainable food law designed to boost green food production across the bloc. But another official said it was reviewing the animal welfare plan and would propose a scaled-back version."

More generally, NGOs in Brussels cannot help but notice that the environmental ambition of the EU institutions has scaled back compared to 2019 and 2020. Another example is that of the Nature Restoration Law (NRL). Published as a key deliverable and centrepiece of EU's biodiversity policy, the NRL was met with fierce opposition and a [misinformation campaign](#), driven by the European People Party in the Parliament (EPP) and COPA-COGECA scaremongering that nature restoration and biodiversity protection threaten our food security. In the end, the conservative and right-wing politicians in the Parliament did not succeed in rejecting and derailing the Commission's proposal, but the MEPs in plenary adopted their position only by a narrow majority of 36 votes. This also came at a high cost, as the Parliament's position significantly weakened the Commission's approach and scrapped the proposed article on the restoration of agricultural ecosystems altogether.

The letter of intent, or the Commission's work programme for 2024, is expected in September-October 2023 and will give a more definite direction of which actions are to be carried out during these last months of this Commission. IFOAM Organics Europe's challenge and opportunity will be to maintain organic at the top of the political agenda and show that organic is cross-political: its principles, practices, and market are an asset for every political party.



1 NEWS

1.1 Policy

Organic Regulations

Regulatory update after Summer

During the past months, the Commission published updates related to the EU Organic Regulation. In this article, we summarise them. Our members can [read the full article on our member extranet](#). This article also contains an update on our work on organic salt.

New regulations published

- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) [2023/1686](#) of 30 June 2023 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) [2021/1698](#) as regards certain procedural requirements for the recognition of control authorities and control bodies that are competent to carry out controls on operators and groups of operators certified organic and on organic products in third countries and certain requirements on their supervision.
- [Corrigendum](#) to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) [2023/1202](#) amending Implementing Regulation (EU) [2021/2325](#) on the recognition of control authorities and control bodies for the purpose of importing organic products into the Union was published.

[More details on the regulations are available in the article on our member extranet](#). 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.

Commission FAQ on organic rules updated

The [Frequently asked questions on organic rules](#) document of the EU Commission has been further updated, and a new edition was published on 17 July. The document has been completed with new topics covering the rules on labelling and the logo, plant and animal production rules, food and wine.



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GMOs

What are new GMOs and what's at risk? Watch our new video

In July 2023, the European Commissions published its legislative proposal on “New Genomic Techniques”. We have the pleasure to announce the release of a video on new Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and so called “New Genomic Techniques” (NGTs). In our 3:30 minutes video, we explain what GMOs and new GMOs are. We also explain why it is important to regulate all these techniques at the EU level with the current legal framework as the baseline, following strict provisions on risk assessment, consumer labelling, and supply chain traceability.

The full video, as well as shorter video snippets, are available on [IFOAM Organics Europe's YouTube channel](#). A [version with German subtitles](#) has been made available by our member organisation Bioland.

Do you want to translate the subtitles in your own language? Contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio and communication@organicseurope.bio.

Our past & future work on this topic

We will continue communicating on this legislative proposal and its impact on the organic sector. We remain committed to diligently advocating for the interests of our members and the organic sector and movement, ensuring the core values of the organic sector are protected and safeguarded in all discussions.



For more information on GMOs and new GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please consult the [section on GMOs on our website](#) or reach out to helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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.

Summary of our video on new GMOs

The EU's food system is broken, with industrial agricultural practices dominating food supply chains. But with many failed promises and disastrous environmental consequences, producers continue to rely heavily on the use of dominant seed varieties, increased synthetic fertilisers and pesticides use. The latest technological fix are the promises of genetically modified seeds, which fit well into these high-input systems.

Traditionally, farmers and plant breeders got new varieties for seed production by crossing and selecting plants with desired characteristics. Over the years, science on breeding has developed, creating new techniques to modify DNA, such as CRISPR and Cas9, which do not necessitate the insertion of foreign genes. These technologies have proven to be very useful for researchers, especially for basic research and in medical domain.

However, these so called "New Genomic Techniques" are quite new and its consequences for human and ecological health are not sufficiently researched yet. So, the precautionary principle and high biosafety standards, enshrined in the current GMO legislation, should continue to apply to NGTs.

We are at a crossroads now, having to choose what kind of system we want for the future. One that takes a holistic approach to ensure sustainability, or one that uses technological fixes with false promises while continuing with business-as-usual.

The organic movement calls for a system approach in which prevention is better than quick fixes like NGTs, which are a distraction from the real solutions needed. It's crucial to keep the current legal framework for GMOs as a baseline for dealing with new techniques and ensure their risk assessment, traceability for producers and farmers, as well as a clear labelling scheme for consumers.



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Climate change

European Parliament's Agriculture Committee focusses on monetisation of carbon credits

Members of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI) voted on their opinion on carbon farming in the Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF). The European Commission presented the CRCF [proposal](#) at the end of 2022, aiming to define EU standards for the certification of carbon removals, including carbon farming.

On 30 August the Agriculture Committee concluded in their opinion that carbon farming should be incentivised through the "monetisation" of such carbon certificates. Until the Green Claims Directive is in place "the units certified under this Regulation" may be used "for voluntary climate claims". The text further suggests that carbon farming activities should be broadened to also include the reduction of farming emissions. Whereas emissions reductions are of course crucial, they are inherently different from carbon removals and should not be mixed up.



Furthermore, the Committee amended the sustainability objectives, to include aspects differing from environmental objectives, such as food security and economic viability of the farm. This comes in addition to the fact that the Commission's proposal is relatively weak on sustainability aspects as it only requires a neutral impact on objectives regarding climate and biodiversity and not a mandatory benefit on objectives like ecosystem restoration, water or soil quality.

As a next step the Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, which has the lead on the file, will vote on their report in October, after which the entire plenary will vote.

IFOAM Organics Europe will continue to advocate for a holistic approach to carbon farming which delivers also benefits for biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration and does not penalize first movers. Read our [position paper](#) to find out more.

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



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Biodiversity, soil, and water

[From a Soil Health law to a Soil Monitoring Directive](#)

On 5 July, the European Commission published its proposal concerning a [Soil Monitoring and Resilience law](#). IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes the legal recognition of the importance of soils as well as giving soil the same status as air and water, which are already well regulated in the EU.

The proposal – which was known to be titled Soil Health Law following its leak the month prior – has been renamed the Soil Monitoring and Resilience law. This name change also reflects in the content of the proposal which fails to establish legally binding targets for Member States, which differs from the much controversial Nature Restoration Law. Rather, it takes the approach of giving guidelines on how to determine and monitor healthy soils. Furthermore, there is a requirement for Member States to establish soil districts throughout their territory. The proposal provides a definition for healthy soils as well as some indicators for categorising healthy soils.

Other key areas the proposal touches on are:

1. Monitoring soil health with proposed indicators,
2. Measurements and methodologies for calculation,
3. Sustainable soil management principles,
4. Identification, registration, investigation and assessment of contaminated sites,
5. Restoration (regeneration) of soil health and remediation of contaminated sites.

While the soil management principles mentioned in the proposal are already an integral part of organic farming and incorporated in organic production, organic and other agroecological farming practices are not mentioned. [Organic farming contributes significantly to healthy soils due to its high organic matter content](#) and plays a key role in reducing soil density and enhancing soil porosity as well as improving soil drainage, aeration and soil water-holding capacity thereby reducing soil erosion by 22%. So, organic farming should be considered a key practice to restore agricultural soils and to achieve healthy soils on agricultural land throughout the EU.

Learn how organic farming contributes to soil health in the EU in our [factsheet](#).





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1.2 Research and innovation

Research and innovation advocacy / TP Organics

Organic and agroecological farming are best guarantee for long-term food security, says new TP Organics policy brief

TP Organics, the European Technology Platform for Research & Innovation into Organics and Agroecology hosted by IFOAM Organics Europe, has published a [new policy brief "Organic and agroecological farming: Safeguarding long-term food security"](#), which summarises the latest scientific research findings and provides evidence-based arguments for the organic sector's communication around this topic.

The policy brief and the three accompanying infographics show that **sustainable food security requires system change. Organic farming proves that it is possible to produce sufficient nutritious food whilst preserving biodiversity, storing carbon in soils, and making our food production more resilient to the increasing impacts of climate change.**

The brief also puts forward five main **recommendations for EU food security**:

1. Put in place a strong SUR, Nature Restoration Law, and Soil Monitoring Law;
2. Increase support for organic to make 25% organic farmland in Europe a reality;
3. Reduce food waste and loss;
4. Consume less but better animal products;
5. Include sustainability and agency in the definition of food security, involve all actors and implement true cost accounting.

Read the [press release](#) and download the three accompanying visuals in the [library on the IFOAM Organics Europe webpage](#).

TP Organics is the European Technology Platform for Organic Food and Farming. IFOAM Organics Europe is a founding member and hosts its secretariat. Visit www.tporganics.eu for more information and follow its [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) @TPorganics.

TP Organics' work on food security has received additional support from European Climate Foundation.



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Knowledge for organic

Title article: Citizen-driven transformation of EU food systems, FoodSHIFT2030 policy conference
[Citizen-driven transformation of EU food systems](#) is the title of FoodSHIFT2030's final policy conference. As IFOAM Organics Europe, we host this event and organise it together with TP Organics as part of their annual [Organic Innovation Days](#). Join us for an inspiring event in which we will explore the path to sustainable food systems!

 26 October 2023, 9:00-18:00

 The Herman Teirlinck Building, Brussels

 [Register now](#)



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

We are planning an engaging day with presentations, four panel debates and a reception where you can the [FoodSHIFT Accelerator Labs](#) (FALs) while enjoying food, drinks and sparkling conversations.

Our panels will discuss:

- Governing the food system transition;
- Empowering the citizens, participatory methods towards food system transformation;
- More plant-based food and organic livestock production – dichotomy or harmony?;
- How can future city regions activate and implement food system transformation? – Experienced based observations.

More information is available on the [More information and the full agenda are available on the FoodSHIFT website](#).

🍽️ Lunch, snacks during the breaks and finger food during the extended reception will be provided by [SLURPS](#).

We hope to celebrate the Final Policy Conference of FoodSHIFT 2030 with you and your friends!

More information

[FoodSHIFT2030](#) has, since its inception in 2020, been working toward an ambitious, citizen-driven transition of Europe's food system to a low carbon, circular future. This Horizon 2020 project is promoting food systems innovations, starting in nine major cities across Europe and spreading out to fellow cities. Maybe there is one near you! More information about the nine FALs and their associated Enabler Labs (FELs) is available [on the FoodSHIFT2030 website](#).

IFOAM Organics Europe contributes to the conceptual framework for further development of governance strategies and food policy strategies. We also disseminated project outputs within the organic network and at our main events.

Visit the [FoodSHIFT2030 website](#) to learn more and follow the latest project's developments on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) using @foodshift2030. If you have further questions or comments, feel free to contact alba.saez@organicseurope.bio.

Picture(s) link: Upload pictures on newsletter > 2022XX > images: FoodSHIFT-visual

Picture(s) description: Conference flyer displayed on the FoodSHIFT2030 website.

Picture(s) credits: [FoodSHIFT2030 website](#)

Funding/EU Disclaimer?: EU flag + following disclaimer:

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BIOFRUITNET project promoting cross-border knowledge exchange comes to an end

Over the past 3.5 years the BIOFRUITNET project has collected and synthesized existing practical and scientific knowledge on organic fruit-growing, distributing it widely among the EU countries through easy formats like [e-learning courses](#), [podcasts](#), [videos](#) and [short articles](#). Farmers from all over the EU took part in visits to demonstration farms, exchanging knowledge and creating strong networks of organic fruit producers and other stakeholders in the sector.



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How farmers & growers gained from knowledge exchange

Bastian Benduhn, an agricultural advisor at [Öko-Obstbau Norddeutschland](#), illustrates this knowledge exchange with the example of anchor plants. EU fruit farmers inspected these on-site and acquired valuable knowledge about the measure during the 2022 farm visit and exchange ideas with the experts. They gained insights into the positive effects that the anchor plants have on different aphid populations and their predator fauna. Subsequently, [a short video on the event](#) is available so those interested can find out more about measures to increase biodiversity in organic orchards.

As another example, the Dutch fruit grower Liesbeth van Doorn, at the [De Groene Waal](#), expressed the usefulness of all the practical material produced, compiled and translated by the BIOFRUITNET project regarding pests and diseases. “Particularly, several practice abstracts on the monitoring and control methods against the *Drasophila suzukii* fly in my cherry production, which showed to be effective as I saw a big decline of infestations this spring/summer after taking measures proposed by the BIOFRUITNET project”.

Sharing concrete knowledge and breaking down barriers

Soil management, fertilization and biodiversity promotion are important areas for which many individual organic farmers in Europe have already established solutions, and research has been carried out. However, this knowledge has not been spread widely and language and geographical barriers have often limited the exchange among EU organic farms and between science and practice.

Within the BIOFRUITNET project, farmers’ experience and their best practices were the starting point to foster knowledge flow and support European organic fruit growers. The most concerning obstacles to the organic pome, stone and citrus fruit growing systems in northern, central and southern Europe were pinpointed by data collection and analysis.

The results are gathered in a large array of materials: **30 short technical videos, 100 practice abstracts, five podcasts and three e-learning courses.** These available in different languages on the [project website](#) and [Organic Farm Knowledge platform](#).

By creating this European knowledge network, the project work will have a long-lasting effect beyond the end of the project and support the EU’s Farm to Fork Strategy target to have 25% of the EU's agricultural land managed organically by 2030.

Check the [BIOFRUITNET website](#) and follow the project on social media [Facebook](#) , [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

[BIOFRUITNET](#) was coordinated by Naturland, bringing together 16 partners from 12 European countries. It strengthened the competitiveness of European organic fruit production through strong knowledge networks. Within BIOFRUITNET, IFOAM Organics Europe lead the knowledge transfer and dissemination through easy-to-read end user materials, such as practice abstracts and videos. BIOFRUITNET was an EU Horizon 2020-funded project.



2 IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENTS

Welcoming our colleagues

Alba Saez Fernandez

Alba describes themselves as a versatile person with many interests and experiences. Besides having experience as a microbiologist and laboratory engineer, they have a MSc in Agroecology, over 3 years of experience as a project coordinator and over 10 years of experience as a singer and dancer. The projects they have managed revolve around sustainable production and consumption of food, as well as music and dance. They are joining IFOAM Organics Europe as a R&I project coordinator.

Clara Garrone

Clara is an agronomic engineer specialised in rural development and sustainable food systems. After her experience at the Municipality of Mouans-Sartoux (France) as coordinator of the EU funded project BioCanteens#2, she is now happy to join IFOAM Organics Europe. Through her work, she will take care of the business development of the company, ensuring sponsorships and partnerships to further support IFOAM Organics Europe's actions.

Gustavo Ribeiro Gonçalves

Gustavo is a Brazilian accountant who has been working in the accounting/financial field in Brazil for 8 years. At IFOAM Organics Europe, he will be working as Finance and Office Administration Assistant. Gustavo is thrilled to start his new adventure in Brussels, the European capital.

Maria Zintl

Maria is excited to start with IFOAM Organics Europe. She will be working mainly in the field of inputs, and supporting in organic textiles and regulations. For the last years, Maria has been working with Kiwa BCS Öko Garantie, as certifier for organic production and processing, and scheme manager for the implementation of the EU Organic Regulations in countries outside the EU. Before that, she worked for one year at the Julius Kühn-Institut, a German research centre on crops, where she did desktop research on alternatives to chemical crop protection.

Stefano Orsini

Stefano Orsini is an agricultural scientist with more than 10 years of research in agricultural economics and policy. After getting a PhD in Italy, he worked in the UK for two NGOs where his interest in organic farming grew. He is very happy to be the new Research & Innovation Manager at IFOAM, and very much looking forward to contributing to making European agriculture more sustainable and organic with research.



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Nidhi Kaveri

Nidhi is a master's student in Agricultural Economics at the University of Hohenheim, Germany. She has joined IFOAM Organics Europe in July thanks to the European Solidarity Corps program, which allows young people like her to dedicate her knowledge, passion and time to the field of sustainability. She is enthusiastic to gain new skills, perspectives and experiences that will benefit both her career and personal development. She describes herself as a driven individual with a never-say-die attitude who is always eager to learn and experience new things. She is happy to be part of the Projects & Partnership team as ESC volunteer at IFOAM Organics Europe and will bring a young contribution to the Organic House!



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Saying goodbye to our colleagues

Emanuele Busacca

After eleven beautiful and exciting years, Emanuele Busacca has left IFOAM Organics Europe for new adventures. Our members appreciated Emanuele's professionalism, his in-depth knowledge of the organic regulation, and particularly his hands-on approach during the long journey that was the revision of the EU organic regulation. Emanuele has been a great colleague and an approachable mentor to many – his positive attitude and dedication to organic will be particularly missed. In September 2023, Emanuele will start working for the European Commission, in the sustainability directorate of Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI). We wish him the best of luck on this new professional endeavour!

Bram Moeskops

After more than eleven years, Bram Moeskops, Research & Innovation Manager at IFOAM Organics Europe and Senior Scientific Coordinator at TP Organics (the European Technology Platform (ETP) for Research and Innovation into Organics and Agroecology) is leaving us to become the new Director of FiBL Europe. We wish Bram the best of luck for this future challenge and will continue on his achievements of building the Research & Innovation Unit at IFOAM Organics Europe and being a major driving force behind TP Organics. Thanks to Bram's effort, the organic movement successfully influenced the EU's R&I policy to include organic sector priorities, and acquiring and implementing large EU research projects that helped develop the organic sector and facilitate knowledge exchange. Bram was a member of different advisory groups on EU R&I policy for food and farming and will continue to serve in the TP Organics Steering Committee. We wish him all the best and are sure our paths will still cross!



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Julie Goeseels

After three years at IFOAM Organics Europe as Office Coordinator, our colleague Julie Goeseels left the organization to pursue new challenges. During her time with us, Julie has been in charge of office management, including the implementation of health safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, and HR and financial support. Julie has played a crucial role in the moving from our previous office to the Organic House in rue Marie-Thérèse 11. IFOAM Organics Europe's staff, and especially the FLOEE Unit, wish Julie all the best in her future endeavours and thank her for her kindness, dedication and hard work.



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Our ESC volunteers leaving: Erica & Mar

Mar Segarra Valenzuela, ESC volunteer in the Research & Innovation Unit from Spain, left IFOAM Organics Europe at the end of July to dedicate her full time to practical farm work on organic farms in Belgium. We thank her for her contributions to the work of TP Organics, the European Technology Platform for Research and Innovation in Organics and Agroecology (hosted by IFOAM Organics Europe) and wish her all the best for her future!

Erica Conversano has finished her ESC project at IFOAM Organics Europe at the end of August to dedicate herself to finalising her university degree in Global Change Ecology and Sustainable Development Goals. She joined us in April with a challenging role as a volunteer in administration and optimisation of workflows, then joined the Communication unit. We are happy to having had her in our teams and wish her a bright and successful future!



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Our ESC volunteer reports back about her farm stay

In this article, our European Solidarity Corps (ESC) volunteer, Erica Conversana, elaborates on her farm stay. This is part of the ESC experience at IFOAM Organics Europe. Let's hear about her experience!

As ESC volunteer, this July, I got the chance to spend almost two weeks at PlukPlek (Ternat, Belgium) with Dorothea and her sister Reyne – I couldn't possibly have made a better choice for my farm stay. The reason why I chose this place is because I have always supported the concept of “self-picking”, a practice where costumers are allowed to pick their own fresh produce directly from the fields, and after experiencing it first-hand I can confirm it is awesome and a winning choice in all respects. It is a great way for people to get a deliciously fresh fruit and vegetables and at the same time spend some time in the nature, learning about where the food comes from and the real value of it. Moreover, it is a wonderful opportunity for people to be in contact with the food that they eat, even though they are not farmers themselves. Finally, it helps avoid a lot of packaging thanks to a little organisation with washable containers or personal containers.

Dorothea is extremely patient and warm with (new) customers, always happy to explain what can be picked and where the goodies are. She is very active and is always busy planting, weeding, picking what is ripe, working the cash register, ... So, when you cannot find her you should look for Luna, her trustworthy dog following her everywhere. Her sister Reyne is always helping out Dorothea with whatever is needed on top of preparing delicious meals and snacks we shared at the farm. Without taking away Reyne's cooking skills (which are amazing) I must say the high quality of the fresh vegetables does already half of the job, we ate amazing meals.

At night I was hosted at the parents' house and got to spend some time with the family which I really appreciated as well. Not only did I get to see a very special organic farm, I was also part of an enriching cultural exchange. I feel extremely grateful for having been included so easily in the daily routine of Dorothea and her family. I left the place hopeful about the future: growing good food in respect with the ecosystem is possible and PlukPlek is proof that this is possible.



The volunteering project is funded by the European Solidarity Corps programme of the European Union. The sole responsibility of the content lies with the author and communication reflects only the author's view. The National Agency and the European Commission are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.

3 EVENTS

3.1 Preview of events

We're counting down to the European Organic Congress

26-28 September 2023 Cordoba, Spain

The countdown has begun! In less than a week we will have our 17th European Organic Congress – it will take place on 26-28 September in Córdoba, Spain.

This year's congress is organized in the context of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, making it a significant event. Organized by IFOAM Organics Europe and Ecovalia, this event will include numerous panels and breakout sessions covering a wide range of topics. From including market trends and challenges, strategies to increase organic consumption to generational shifts in organic, the new CAP 2023-2027, EU Organic Regulation updates but also innovations in certification, and the hot topic of new genomic techniques (NGTs).

Our annual European Organic Congress isn't just about discussions, it's also about building lasting relationships! So, we are organizing a memorable networking dinner on 26 September at [Palacio de Congresos y Exposiciones de Córdoba](#), the same location where we will hold all sessions. Additionally, for those lucky individuals who secured their tickets, the post-congress excursion will offer an enriching experience exploring the innovation and challenges of organic oil production in the beautiful south of the Iberian Peninsula.



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Let's Discuss Organic – Youth in Sustainable Food Systems

10 October 2023, online

The future of food and farming is in the hands of youth – younger generations eager to move to a more sustainable agrifood sector. As IFOAM Organics Europe, we recognize and appreciate the vital role they play in shaping the sustainable food systems of tomorrow, particularly within the organic sector.

On 10 October, we will have a special edition of our webinar sessions 'Let's Discuss Organics' themed Youth in Sustainable Food System. In company of those under 40, we will delve into the significance of organic youth groups and their potential to catalyze the creation of sustainable food systems. It will be a unique opportunity to encourage active participation by the younger generation in organic youth groups and foster the exchange of innovative ideas among these groups.

Normally, these are member-only webinars, but to encourage participation, we open this session to all young minds under 40. [Are you under 40 and interested to attend? Do you have a friend or colleague who is? Register now!](#)

During the webinar, we will show the pivotal role played by youth organizations in sustainable food systems and their impact on the political landscape. Together, we can create a brighter and more sustainable future for agriculture!

This online event will be completely free, nevertheless, a previous registration is required. [Register now!](#)



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Promoting social innovation through public canteens! Join us at the EU Week of Regions and Cities

10 October 2023, Brussels, Belgium

On 10 October, we are organising a high-level workshop Promoting Social Innovation through public canteens to advocate for the implementation of healthy and sustainable school meals, specifically for a 20% organic goal in public procurement, and food education for every child in every school in Europe.

Among the speakers:

- Joke Schauvliege, CoRNat rapporteur on the Legislative Framework for Sustainable Food Systems framework who will give a welcome note;
- Tunç Soyer, Mayor of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey;
- A representative from the global network Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) Global Executive Comm Member; and
- Silvia Schmidt, Policy Manager at IFOAM Organics Europe.

During the workshop, there will be an official handover ceremony of the [Manifesto for establishing minimum standards in public canteens](#) and the [Petition calling for sustainable meals for children in schools to Members of the European Parliament](#).

This session will take place on **10 October, 9:30-10:30, at SQUARE Brussels Conference Centre, Mont des Arts**. <https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/programme/2023/sessions/2827> Are you keen to join us? Register now on the Committee of Regions' website and find more details in the [agenda](#).

We are organising this event together with [ICLEI Europe](#) (the network of Local Governments for Sustainability), the [Commission for Natural Resources of the European Committee of the Regions](#) and [SODEM](#) (the Association of Social Democratic Municipalities).

This event takes place in the framework of the European Committee of the Regions's 21st edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities – 9-12 of October. During this annual four-day event cities and regions showcase how they create growth and jobs, implement European Union cohesion policy, and prove the importance of the local and regional level for good European governance.



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Join the Action Days and call for Good Food Good Farming

1-31 October, Europe & 8 November, Brussels

During its annual European Days of Action, a group of NGOs calls on everyone to organize an event in your city, town or village between 1-31 October. It can be small or big, bringing together citizens, farmers, food producers and many more. These action days are a unique opportunity to both call attention to your cause locally and be part of a broad European movement!

Let's make organic visible as part of the solution

As the European organic movement, it is a good opportunity for us to be visible and promote organic farming as a sustainable alternative to industrial farming that should be given the priority. If you have the capacity to organize an event or if an event planned already is fitting this description, you can [register it on Good Food Good Farming's website](#). There you will also find more information and communication resources.



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Join us in Brussels for the final protest

Moreover, you can join us on 8 November in Brussels for the final protest where the alliance will gather to present their demands to EU decisionmakers. It will be possible to join in person or participate in a postcard action during an event.

Let's position the organic movement as the defender of the EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy it is!

Should you have any questions or need support, you can [find your national contact for the Good Food Good Farming alliance](#).

The alliance Good Food Good Farming (GFGF) which is campaigning for sustainable food and farming across Europe is coming back strong in 2023 with a focus on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation and the Sustainable Food Systems law. The campaign is coordinating its "European Days of Action" between the 1st and the 31st of October.



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IFOAM Organics Europe partners with NATEXPO for a fairer and more transparent EU food system

22–24 October 2023, Paris, France

IFOAM Organics Europe is glad to represent the European perspective at NATEXPO for another year. NATEXPO is the leading international trade show for organic products, taking place on 22-24 October in Paris, France. The fair expects more than 1,400 exhibitors and brands, including a significant international participation, and will be the occasion to combine the respective unique strengths and resources to advance sustainable development in the organic sector.

In the framework of this partnership, our Director Eduardo Cuoco has released [a short interview, presenting some of the most pressing issues on the political agenda urged to be considered by the organic movement](#). In particular, he focused on Green Claims, the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF), and greenwashing when it comes to sustainability labelling. Interested? [Have a look at the video](#).

Do you wish to visit NATEXPO on 22–24 October? Get your [free visitor pass here and plan](#) your journey to Paris!

Background information

On 22 March 2023, the Commission proposed a Directive on substantiating green claims, originally based on the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF), a methodology that is not accurate for the environmental assessment of agri-food products and would ultimately lead to greenwashing. Our advocacy work has greatly contributed to the adjustment of the Directive, namely by giving [the biased PEF methodology](#) a far less prominent place in it. The Green Claims Directive is echoing with another piece of legislation expected for 2023: the legislative framework for Sustainable Food Systems. As part of this framework, the Commission intends to create a sustainable labelling framework, therefore, these two Commission proposals could be heavily intertwined. This is why the organic sector needs to remain mobilized to give accurate information to consumers regarding their food choices and prevent the PEF from becoming the default methodology for the European food market.



Nordic leaders will debate 'Future of organic' in Malmö

15-16 November 2023, Malmö, Sweden

The 'industry festival' for organic and sustainable food and drink is back in Malmö, Sweden. With the very best choice of products, talks, inspiration and insight for the organic foodservice and retail industry, the Nordic Organic Food Fair returns to MalmöMässan on 15-16 November 2023.

The Big Nordic Organic Debate
Alongside the exhibition, the Main Stage will host an important panel titled [The BIG Nordic Organic Debate](#) where Nordic leaders will share their insight into the Nordic markets, emerging trends and how a Nordic collaboration is key to growing organic market share. Moderated by Joanna Wierzbicka, Deputy Director, IFOAM Organics Europe, the unmissable panel will feature Helle Borup Friberg, CEO of Organic Denmark; Charlotte Bladh André, CEO of Organic Sweden; Aura Lamminparras, Executive Director of ProLuomu; Markus Lohne Hustad, CEO of Okologisk Norge, and Eygló Björk Ólafsdóttir, Chairman of Organic Iceland.

Joanna Wierzbicka, Deputy Director of IFOAM Organics Europe says: "IFOAM Organics Europe is pleased to cooperate with Nordic Organic Food Fair. Our partnership combines expertise, resources and passion to promote and support the growth of the organic sector in the Nordic region, and beyond. Gathering at the Nordic Organic Food Fair for the Big Organic Debate, we are discussing success stories and challenges in the Nordic region's organic industry. IFOAM Organics Europe proudly joins this debate, committed to supporting and strengthening our organic community."

The industry coming together to support organic

Key decision makers from Axfod, Coop Denmark, Dagrofa Foodservice, Grøn fokus, ICA Sverige, Life Europe AB, Magasin DU Nord, Medica Nord, Menigo, Netto DK, Nomeco, Nordic Premium Group, Norgesgruppen, Orkla, Planet Organic, Salling Group, Sunkost – and many more– regularly attend the fair. These retailers, buyers, wholesalers, distributors, importers and foodservice professionals come to discover the next bestselling sustainable and organic products for their customers.

"This event is essential, to see the latest products, hear about upcoming trends and research." – Aldi Denmark. Over 500 brands will be showcasing the best of certified organic ingredients, fresh produce, frozen foods, packaged goods, confectionery, snacks, and more. Exhibitors already confirmed include Pukka Herbs, Midsona Foodservice, Balkan Berries, Nutland B.V, English Tea Shop, Horizon Natuurvoeding BV, Sonnentor, Biofood, Stockfiller, Voelkel, Tradin Organic, Dava Foods, Ghee Easy and Landgarten. As well as Pavilions from Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Austria, Poland and Ecuador.

Register for a free trade ticket today!

The Nordic Organic Food Fair (co-located with Eco Living Scandinavia) will return to MalmöMässan on 15-16 November. [Read more and register for a free trade ticket.](#)

Save the date for IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business

30 November 2023, Brussels, Belgium

We're excited to announce that our annual IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business event will take place on 30 November at L42 Business Centre & Workspaces, Brussels, Belgium. This event is the go-to place for the organic sector where organic pioneers exchange with those (relatively) new to organic and those interested in organic.

Mark 30 November in your calendar to IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business share ideas, foster collaboration, and drive innovation across the organic supply chain. You will have the chance to engage in discussions revolving around the most relevant topics and trends shaping the organic industry.



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Interested? [Keep an eye on our website](#). We are working hard on putting together the programme and will post updates in the coming weeks!



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Discuss citizen-driven transformation of European food systems at the [Organic Innovation Days](#)
25-26 October, Brussels, Belgium

On 25-26 October the annual [Organic Innovation Days 2023](#) are taking place in Brussels themed 'Citizen-driven transformation of European food systems'.

What's on the menu?

Day 1, 25 October, 10:00-15:00 at BluePoint Brussels, will focus on **research & innovation to guarantee long-term food security**. During a key-note, longstanding expert John Ingram will set the scene. Followingly, participants will discuss a **demonstration project** on building and maintaining humus to sequester carbon and ensure climate-resilient agriculture. Afterwards, there will be a high-level panel debate with representatives from the European Commission's Directorates General for Agriculture and Rural Development, and Research and Innovation (DG AGRI and RTD) and a discussion with the audience. This will focus on the research and innovation needs and priorities the European Commission should take up in its Work Programme 2025-2027. [Download the agenda](#).

Day 2, 26 October, 9:00-17:00 at Herman Teirlinck Building Brussels, marks the **FoodSHIFT 2030 Final Policy Conference** (hosted by IFOAM Organics Europe). [FoodSHIFT2030](#) will present the project's results through the lenses of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the FOOD 2030 Policy Framework. A series of debates with guest panellists will explore the "The path to sustainable food systems" departing in the newly completed EU FOOD 2030 Project Family Policy Brief. [Download the agenda](#).

[Register for the only EU event on organic research and innovation to secure your spot!](#)

More information

TP Organics is the European Technology Platform for Research & Innovation into Organics and Agroecology. IFOAM Organics Europe is a founding member and hosts its secretariat. Visit www.tporganics.eu for more information and follow its [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) @TPorganics.

The Organic Innovations Days are [TP Organics'](#) flagship event. For this year's edition, TP Organics is partnering with [FoodSHIFT 2030](#), a Horizon 2020 project focused on transforming the European food system towards a low-carbon, circular future, including a shift to less meat and more plant-based diets, in which IFOAM Organics Europe is a partner.

This year's edition of the Organic Innovation Days is part of TP Organics' communication and dissemination activities around the political topic of food security supported by European Climate Foundation with the aim of strengthening a more holistic narrative of sustainable food security and advancing the needed transformation of the European agri-food system towards organic and agroecological practices that are beneficial for both the climate and biodiversity. These activities also include the [new TP Organics Policy Brief](#) announced above.



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3.2 Review of events

GMO-free Europe conference

7 September 2023

On 7 September, the 10th [GMO free Europe conference](#) gathered policymakers, scientists, farmers, and representatives of the organic and the GMO-free movement. Green Members of the European Parliament Martin Häusling, Tilly Metz and Sarah Wiener hosted the event with the aim of examining and discussing the potential impact of the Commission proposal on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) on environmental protection, agricultural practices, food markets, farmers and consumers rights.

After keynote speeches from national, regional, municipal and grassroots levels across Europe, there were 3 thematic panels:

1. The new GMO proposal of the Commission and its scientific and practical foundations,
2. Traceability and labelling of new GMOs ,
3. Potential impact on food systems and agricultural practices including patents

Speakers raised several concerns regarding the Commission’s proposal, including the issue of consumer choice and traceability, and warned against the dangers of ignoring the precautionary principle.

We noted below highlights:

- **MEP Sarah Wiener** opened the conference by reminding participants that citizens want safe food and environmental action. She added that it is now clear that NGTs do not lead to less pesticide use, on the contrary it increases it. Deregulation is being forced on Europeans and will probably lead to distrust from citizens in EU institutions.
- **Leonore Gewessler**, Austrian Environment Minister stated that farmers and consumers must have the freedom of choice, which cannot be guaranteed without traceability and labelling. She added that the Commission’s proposal in its current form is simply not acceptable.
- **Erika Olsson**, organic farmer, stated that as a farmer she sees the past, the present, and can have a say about the future. She knows that the decisions that she takes, or does not take, today will impact the future. Therefore, she chooses not to use NGTs, and that, should they be used, traceability is key. She added that farmers are currently protected from legal threats related to patents. Taking away traceability exposes all actors of the supply chain to significant legal uncertainty, which is an evident threat to the EU model of breeding sector's innovation.
- **Bernard Lignon** of Synabio, and IFOAM Organics Europe Board member, stated that the lack of an opt-out option is a hit on sovereignty. He added that there is also a pressing need for financial and technical support for farmers to ensure GMO-free production who should not be held accountable for the contamination from neighbouring farms.
- **Margret Engelhard** of the German Federal Agency for Nature Protection said that most NGTs are not developed with characteristics that mitigate climate change, but rather have traits that intend food products to look nicer on shelves - e.g. mushrooms that don't brown after cut. Only a small percentage is modified to address biotic stress tolerance and therefore be more resistant to droughts or floods.
- **Corinne Lepage**, former French environment minister and former MEP, reminded participants once again about the importance of the precautionary principle and the responsibility that policymakers today have with respect to future generations: once NGTs are allowed, it is impossible to go back.

For more information on new and old GMOs and IFOAM Organics Europe’s work on this issue, please [visit our website](#) contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members’ requests.

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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IFOAM Organics Europe at SANA exhibition 7-8 September 2023, Bologna, Italy

On 7-8 September, IFOAM Organics Europe's Director Eduardo Cuoco was present at the 35th International exhibition of organic and natural products, SANA 2023, in Bologna, Italy. He participated to the workshop "Italian animal husbandry: because the future can only be organic", organized by Federbio in the framework of the promotional project [Being Organic in the EU](#).

Participants of the workshop debated on the latest developments of and opportunities for the livestock sector, especially within the Italian organic sector which registered growth in the production of organic cattle, sheep and swine. Our Director outlined the challenges and strategies for the development of organic livestock production in Europe. He highlighted the growing expectations at the citizen level in Europe, that initiated 3 European Citizens Initiatives related to animal welfare with over a million signatures. The European Commission committed to evaluating and revising the existing legislation on animal welfare and to publishing a proposal on animal welfare labelling. Eduardo explained that organic practices already have a positive impact on animal welfare and that, as IFOAM Organics Europe, we are advocating for a mandatory animal welfare labelling, where practices like those employed in organic animal husbandry are recognised as being the most beneficial to animal welfare.

Our Director also used the opportunity to meet our Italian members and exchange on the latest policy developments at EU and national level.



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4 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE

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



Aboca



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DEVELOPING ORGANIC: PESTICIDE USE AND CONTAMINATION



5 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

23 September 2023

[EU Organic Day](#)

Across Europe

25 September 2023

[EU Organic Awards ceremony](#)

Brussels, Belgium

26-28 September 2023

[European Organic Congress](#)

Córdoba, Spain

29 September 2023

[2nd Organic Seed Policy Conference](#)

Hybrid & Poland

1-31 October

[European Days of Action for good food and farming](#)

Across Europe

10 October 2023

[Promoting social innovation through public canteens](#)

Brussels, Belgium

10 October 2023

[Let's Discuss Organic - Youth in Sustainable Food Systems](#)

Online

22-24 October 2023

[NATEXPO](#)

Paris, France

25-26 October 2023

[Organic Innovation Days](#)

Brussels, Belgium

26 October 2023

[FoodSHIFT2030 final policy conference](#)

Brussels, Belgium

15-16 November 2023

[Nordic Organic Fair](#)

Malmö, Sweden

30 November 2023

[IFOAM Organics Europe Meets Business](#)

Brussels, Belgium

13-16 February 2024

[BIOFACH 2024](#)

Nürnberg, Germany

19-21 February 2024

[ecofruit](#)

Filderstadt, Germany



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