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WELCOME NOTE

Dear reader,

Welcome to our last newsletter edition in 2024. An eventful year is coming to an end, setting the course for the EU's upcoming five years legislative period.

The [approval of the College of Commissioners by the European Parliament](#), paved the way for the second von der Leyen Commission to take office on 1 December. The new Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Christophe Hansen is expected to present his Vision for Agriculture and Food in the first 100 days of his mandate. The European organic movement has clear recommendations for this vision – what we want to achieve in our political hotspot.

At the same time, June's EU elections resulted in stronger right and extreme right parties and therefore new majorities in the European Parliament. The impact of this could be seen already during the vote to postpone the EU deforestation law, which was taken as an opportunity to also introduce additional amendments.

As EU organic movement, we are ready to work with the new European Commission to ensure the sustainable transformation of our food system and more vibrant and resilient rural communities. Organic agriculture is at the forefront of this transition, representing a long-term EU project that delivers significant environmental and socio-economic benefits!

Meanwhile, we had the chance to gather with the global organic movement during the 21st [IFOAM Organic World Congress](#) in Taiwan from 2-4 December, bringing 500 participants from all over the organic world together. Under the topic of "Cultivating organic solutions for true sustainability", my colleagues and I had important discussions on the future of organic.

We delved into the intersection of organic and regenerative and how to strategically position organic within the regenerative narrative to impact policy and elevate truly transformative solutions. We discussed synergies and possible opportunities from collaborations with serious regenerative actors and how to address misconceptions. Key takeaways included opportunities to learn from each other in terms of communication, enhancing the visibility of organic agriculture to secure funding, and tackling greenwashing risks associated with the term "regenerative."

Additionally, we discussed how organic can respond to emerging market developments, particularly in terms of disclosure and reporting frameworks. It is evident that the holistic benefits of organic need to be appropriately reflected in sustainability standards and measurements. Our discussion emphasised strategic positioning to influence policy and generate actionable insights.

As I look back on my time at this year's Organic World Congress, I am filled with gratitude and inspiration. The Congress provided a unique opportunity to connect with the global organic movement, exchange ideas, and witness firsthand the incredible work being done to drive organic farming forward in every corner of the world.

The beginning of next year will be decisive to shape the direction of the new political mandate in the EU. [Subscribe to our newsletter](#) and stay tuned for our upcoming 'Outlook in 2025' newsletter – which we will translate for our members.

Together, we look forward to advancing our shared vision of a more sustainable and resilient agrifood system for Europe, with organic agriculture at the forefront of this transformative journey.

Wishing you a joyful end of the year and happy holidays!

... and don't panic, the future is organic!

Eduardo Cuoco

IFOAM Organics Europe's Director



POLITICAL HOTSPOT

On December 1st, the new [College of Commissioners](#) started its work under current (and former) European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, proposing EU policies for the next five years.

Start of the new EU Commission

After intense weeks of hearings of the proposed Commissioners by the Members of the European Parliament, where some glimpses were visible on what to expect from them, the European Parliament approved the von der Leyen Commission at the end of November. The College of Commissioners therefore took office on 1 December. For the organic sector, the closest point of contact will be **Christophe Hansen**, the new Commissioner for Agriculture and Food. In his hearing, the Luxembourgish European People's Party politician expressed his ambition to be a "boots on the ground commissioner", drawing from his background in family farming. Moving to **organic**, he said that "Agriculture and the preservation of nature can go hand in hand. Organic farming is a good example for that". Asked about pesticide use, Hansen stated that "All farmers would like to reduce their pesticide use ... this is something we need to help them with". He also said he wanted to speed up the authorisation procedure for biopesticides and safer alternatives to replace more toxic agrochemicals. "Organic farming is a way forward. It is in all national (CAP) strategic plans, but some member states need more push."

New Commissioner's focus: Competitiveness & generational renewal

Even though Commissioner Hansen acknowledged fair incomes for farmers with fair prices rather than public subsidies, and the benefits of organic agriculture, the **general outlook** for future food systems was more focused on **competitiveness** than sustainability. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) "will remain the framework for delivering the vision [on agriculture] to 2027 and beyond," he said, including support for the Mercosur trade deal and advocating technical solutions rather than "blunt cuts" for livestock emissions.

Addressing the need for generational renewal in farming, the Commission organised the first edition of the [Youth Policy Dialogue](#) on 10-11 December – presided by Commissioner Hansen. IFOAM Organics Europe was present representing EU organic and, together with representatives of other youth organizations in the field of food, farming, and rural development, discussed how to attract more young people into agriculture and how to make their voices heard. Commissioner Hansen clearly identified generational renewal as a major challenge for the future of European agriculture that he intends to tackle during his mandate and highlighted that the voice of young people in this topic is especially pertinent. Among other things, the youth representatives underlined that the upcoming new CAP scheme and the recommendations outlined in the Strategic Dialogue Report offer many opportunities to support generational renewal.

Other Commissioners relevant to agriculture and the organic sector specifically are:

- Oliver Varhelyi (Hungary; Independent / affiliated to Fidesz), Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare
- Jessika Roswall (Sweden; European People's Party), Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy
- Wopke Hoekstra (Netherlands, European People's Party), Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth
- Teresa Ribera (Spain; Socialists and Democrats) Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition
- Raffaele Fitto (Italy; European Conservatives and Reformists), Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms

The EU's new vision for agriculture and food & IFOAM Organics Europe's "vision for the Vision"

Building on the [Strategic Dialogue](#), Commissioner Hansen promised to deliver a vision for agriculture and food within the first 100 days of his mandate, probably as early as mid-February. Many topics are on the table addressed in his mission letter: how to ensure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the farming and food sector within the boundaries of our planet, a look at food waste and the promotion of cutting-edge science, innovative technologies and emerging products in the agrifood sector.



On 12 December 2024, IFOAM Organics Europe published its own "[vision for the Vision](#)". In its recommendations, in line with the strategic dialogue, IFOAM Organics Europe calls *inter alia* for targeted support for organic and other sustainable practices, fair remuneration for farmers providing ecosystem services, and developing a holistic benchmarking system based on a whole-farm approach. Organic innovations and practices, leading for instance to independence from synthetic inputs, are not for the organic sector only - they can also be used by conventional farmers, to increase the number of instruments in their toolbox.

Our Policy Manager Silvia Schmidt recorded a [short explanatory video on this](#).



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NEWS

Policy

1.1.1 Organic Regulations

Compliant control bodies, factory farming & EGTOP reports

In November the Commission intensified its legislative work finalising key regulations ahead of the changes expected next year. From 1st January 2025 products imported from third countries may be sold on the EU market as organic if produced either in a country approved and listed as equivalent or produced in specific countries and certified by recognised control bodies in compliance with the EU Organic Regulation. Read our summary below. IFOAM Organics Europe's members find more and early information about the EU Organic Regulation [on our member extranet](#).

Control bodies, imports & a derogation period

In November the third list of 'third country' control bodies recognised according to compliance has been published in the Official Journal which was followed by the fourth one in December Commission [Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2024/2794 of 31 October 2024](#) amending Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1378 as regards the recognition of certain control bodies in accordance with Article 46 of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council as competent to carry out controls and issue organic certificates in third countries for the purpose of imports of organic products into the Union.

- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) [2024/3121](#) of 16 December 2024 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1378 as regards the recognition of certain control bodies in accordance with Article 46 of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council as competent to carry out controls and issue organic certificates in third countries for the purpose of imports of organic products into the Union

We started December with the publication of a new regulation related to imports on its first day [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2024/2975](#) of 25 September 2024 amending Delegated Regulations (EU) 2021/1698 and (EU) 2021/2306 as regards the import into the Union of high-risk organic and in-conversion products

The highly awaited regulation assuring a derogation period granted for newly recognised compliant control bodies and control authorities for maintaining the validity of equivalence-based operator certificates and for securing the issuance of Certificate of Inspections (COIs) under equivalence until 15 Oct 2025 has been published: [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2024/3095 of 29 July 2024 amending Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1698 as regards the certification of certain operators and groups of operators in third countries and the controls performed by control authorities and](#)

In mid-November a regulation was published which allows a new format for the visual display of the EU organic logo on product labels: [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2024/2867](#) of 2 September 2024 amending Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the presentation of the organic production logo of the European Union was published.

Revised guidance on official controls

A document that might be relevant for those who work with organic certification and controls, the revised guidance on the Official Controls Regulation was also published: [Commission Notice on the Implementation of Regulation \(EU\) 2017/625](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council (Official Controls Regulation)

Organic experts discuss factory farming & reports on insects, cleaning, and much, much more



During late November Expert Group on Organic production (GREX) meeting the Commission discussed with Member State experts the new ruling of the European Court of Justice that was published in the Official Journal related to the definition of factory farming. Specifically [Case C-228/23, AFAÏA: Judgment of the Court \(First Chamber\) of 4 October 2024 \(request for a preliminary ruling from the Conseil d'État – France\) – Association AFAÏA v Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité \(INAO\) \(Reference for a preliminary ruling – Agriculture – Organic production and labelling of organic products – Regulation \(EU\) 2018/848 – Use of certain products and substances in organic production and their listing – Derogation – Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1165 – Annex II – Concepts of factory farming and landless livestock production – Consumer confidence – Animal welfare – Respect for the environment and the climate – Criteria\)](#)

Meanwhile the Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP) finalized its [report on factory farming](#) which is now available and gives an insight into the planned revision of the regulation 2021/1165 in terms of finding a common understanding of the prohibition of animal-derived farm inputs from factory farming.

In other updates, the EGTOP held its last plenary meeting of the year on the first week of December where they discussed the possible finalization of four additional reports on:

- Insect production
- Cleaning and Disinfection
- Fertilisers (vinasses, processing technique for feathers)
- Food (E 1204 Pullulan additive, Yeast-based nutrients (as processing aid), Plant based proteins for fruit juices, Sodium hydroxide for debittering olives, Magnesium Chloride as salt substitute, Xylitol)

European Court of Justice decision on the use of the organic logo

On 4 October 2024 the European Court of Justice published a preliminary ruling in a case (C-240/23) about the use of the EU organic logo and references on imported products.

The background in brief is that a German company, Herbaria Kräuterparadies GmbH produced a food supplement made of some fruit-based ingredients with added vitamins and iron. The German competent authority ruled that they had to remove the organic logo and references from the product, as the EU organic regulation does not allow the addition of vitamins and minerals only in case it is required for the production of that specific type of foodstuff under EU or national legislation. The company disagreed and argued that they suffer from unfair treatment as the very same product could bear the EU organic logo if it were manufactured in the U.S. and sold on the EU market under the EU-U.S. equivalency agreement. (Under the U.S. NOP fortification of organic products is not prohibited.)

While the decision of the EU Court of Justice acknowledges the fact that – within the framework of an equivalency agreement - the national regulation of another country is not necessarily equal in each point to the one of the EU but still can be considered as equivalent (if the same objectives and principles are fulfilled). However, in case of food products with added vitamins and minerals the EU organic logo and the EU organic references cannot be used neither on imported products, only the original organic logo and relevant terms used in respective third country because they do not fully comply with the EU organic requirements.

Detailed documentation is available [here](#).

Since the ruling was published its interpretation and consequences are the subject of keen interest by all stakeholders. Compared to the first reading when many were believing in a possible “narrow” interpretation concerning how the EU organic regulation foresees the fortification of processed organic food products, now it has become clear that the ruling may have more severe and extended impact questioning the justification of equivalence agreements. The Commission informed us that they are seeking for a solution minimising this impact however clear instructions on execution are not expected until the New Year. The status of imported products sold in the EU organic market under the existing equivalence-based third country recognitions or bilateral trade agreements, their possible incorporation in EU-manufactured organic food and the situation with reciprocal measures has to be clarified.

IFOAM Organics Europe addressed the issue in several letters and personal exchanges requesting a pragmatic solution on the short and the long term as well. The umbrella is committed to advocate for and provide recommendations towards reaching a solution which maintains the concept of equivalence-based trade agreements and safeguards continuous trade while securing consumer trust in the EU organic logo.



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

IFOAM Organics Europe members have early access to information on the EU Organic Regulation [through our Interest and Expert Groups](#) and our member [member extranet](#). They also have one free access to the [EU Organic Regulation guidelines](#).

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



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Sponsor our sector project: Assessing the EU Organic Regulation's fairness

We are assessing whether the current EU Organic Regulation is fair towards operators and if it adequately supports the sector in achieving the EU's 25% organic target. Does this sound interesting? Consider contributing to the second fundraising campaign [for our new sector project](#), successfully started in 2024 thanks to the commitment of our eight 'Seed Sponsors'. We are seeking additional funding to ensure maximum impact.

In collaboration with FiBL, we are conducting quantitatively and qualitatively analyses of the costs organic operators face under the current regulatory framework. We will use the data to evaluate whether the regulation is truly supporting the sector and to make a case for increased budget allocation for organic agriculture in the upcoming Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) negotiations.

What's in for you if you sponsor this project?

You will be involved in the strategic direction of the project and can feature your story as a case study in our research. Your support will directly make it possible for us to advocate the EU for a fairer and more supportive regulatory framework for organic farming.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we have been working on various aspects on this issue for years in our ['Developing Organic' projects](#). Thanks to the incredible support of pioneering organic companies, our "seed sponsors", this new project became a reality. Their commitment to the cause is a win for the entire organic sector.

If you are interested in supporting this project and would like to learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please contact clara.garrone@organicseurope.bio.



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1.1.2 GMOs and seeds

The legislative file on so-called “New Genomic Techniques” (new GMOs) – Where are we at?

The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU is in the last weeks of its chairpersonship – so, let’s reflect on what has happened on the hot and controversial topic of “New Genomic Techniques” under their leadership.

Where do we come from?

The Commission published a [legislative proposal](#) on “New Genomic Techniques” (so-called NGTs) to adapt the current regulatory framework on genetic engineering on 5 July 2023 (see here [our past newsletter item](#) explaining the content of the proposal). This proposal came after significant political pressure, where [misleading narratives](#) were repeatedly pushed for by pro-NGT stakeholders, and following a [2021 study](#) from the European Commission.

From that moment onwards, both the European Parliament and the Council have hurried to reach positions on the file. The [European Parliament has reached a position](#) and finalised its official ‘first reading’ of the file. The text of the Parliament’s position remains close to the Commission’s proposal but introduces some additional provisions on traceability and labelling for Category 1 NGT crops, which should be, according to the proposal, “considered equivalent to conventional plants”.

Yet, the EuCouncil of the EU is still struggling to reach a compromise (there were two failed attempts by the European Council to reach a “general approach”, once in December 2023 and then again in February 2024). Under the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies, EU agricultural ministers were put under enormous pressure to reach a position, with intense frequency of exchanges between the EU Member States and a rushed process that omitted a thorough discussion on many topics including biosafety and consumer information. Instead, discussions in the Council were centred exclusively around solving the patent issue to protect the European breeding sector (this [infographic](#) and [open letter](#) explain the issue). A blocking minority of countries so far has prevented a general approach.

The Hungarian presidency: An unsuccessful attempt to open comprehensive discussions

The current Hungarian Council presidency published a non-paper beginning of July, delineating 9 outstanding issues with the NGT proposal, and asked Member States to send in their input on the non-paper.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we welcomed this approach opening comprehensive discussions, stating that there are many crucial unresolved issues. The rushed legislative process on NGTs goes against the interests and freedom of choice of European breeders, farmers and citizens. As voice of the European organic movement, we are urging policymakers for thorough discussions to address the concerns raised by Member States and, at a minimum, to keep essential safeguards for biosafety and freedom of choice for producers and consumers.

The reactions of EU Member States to this non-paper were mixed: While some Member States submitted constructive feedback, most countries supported the compromise proposal from February 2024 and asked for the presidency to take it as a starting point. Some Member States misleadingly stated that many of the issues raised in the Hungarian non-paper were already resolved in the previous working group.

The ban of all NGTs for the organic sector has large support in the Council. However, most countries stated that seed labelling is sufficient to ensure the freedom of choice, thus not extending the system of full supply chain traceability, which is important to give farmers and food producers the tools to remain NGT-free.

On the topic of labelling, in an impressive joint action, organic and conventional companies from all over Europe have united behind [Food Industry for Freedom of Choice](#). 376 companies from 16 EU countries are calling for rigorous labelling, co-existence measures and detection methods of NGTs in Europe to safeguard their freedom of choice. In September, [István Nagy, the Hungarian Minister of Agriculture and current EU Council President for Agriculture and Fisheries received the industry’s concerns in person](#).



All eyes on Poland

While the Hungarian presidency did not manage to make significant progress on the NGT file, the legislative proposal is far from being forgotten by EU policymakers. A lot of uncertainty surrounds the potential timeline of the legislative process, but what is certain is that all eyes will be on the Polish government which will preside over the Council from January 2025 onwards.

To learn more about the topic of new GMOs access to a lot of informative material, feel free to check:

- Our [living resources](#) page;
- [Myths about organic & NGTs](#);
- Read the paper [Sustainability in organic breeding](#);
- Watch [our video explaining what new GMOs are and why we need to keep them labelled and regulated](#);
- Find out about analytical detection methods the [DARWIN project](#) is developing;
- Visit our website page on [\(new\) GMOs](#)

Did not find the information you need? Contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio for more information. Please do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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1.1.3 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Shaping EU agrifood's future: Organic's vision for the future CAP

Transforming to sustainable agrifood systems requires a [Common Agricultural Policy](#) (CAP) fit for the future with solutions that work for farmers, nature and society.

After more than a year of in-depth discussions, starting with interest group of farmers or IGOF), the European organic movement published its Vision on the future CAP. In brief,

- Supports all farmers who want to transform their farms sustainably using a whole-farm approach;
- Adequately rewards farmers engaged in sustainability systems, such as organic farmers, for the benefits they already deliver to the environment and society.

The agrifood sector is facing multiple challenges, so the CAP must undergo an ambitious reform to stay relevant and deliver environmental and socioeconomic sustainability. The CAP post-2027 should support both farmers who want to be and those who already are more environmentally ambitious. It is important to encourage those ready to re-designs their farms to be more sustainable and set high environmental ambitions. Moreover, the future CAP should also adequately reward farmers already working with nature and provide benefits for ecosystems functions – this needs to be based on a whole-farm approach.



More specifically, IFOAM Organics Europe's vision proposes a three-stage approach to ensure proportionality between a farm's level of environmental ambition and the funding it receives, based on four key areas: soil protection, impact on water, climate, and biodiversity. This would allow for high environmental ambitions, a coherent approach at farm level, while easing administration for farmers and national authorities.

Furthermore, the CAP should also play an important role in market regulation to strengthen farmers' role in the agrifood supply chain, increase their resilience to economic crises and ensure a decent income. Targeted measures should support farmers based on socio-economic criteria. Possibilities for adequate measures that are suitable for the organic sector are currently explored within our organic farmers' group.

This vision was launched and discussed during the 2024 European Organic Congress in Budapest. High-level panellists exchanged on it, Catherine Geslain Lanéelle Director Strategy & Policy Analysis, DG AGRI, European Commission, Peter Meendorp President, European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA), Jan Plagge President, IFOAM Organics Europe / President, Bioland, Christiane Lambert President, Copa-Cogeca, Eric Gall Deputy Director, IFOAM Organics Europe).

IFOAM Organics Europe is continuing the work of presenting its vision and representing the needs and demands of organic farmers to the different agrifood stakeholders in Brussels and the EU institutions.

Read our [position paper](#) to find out more about the vision of the organic movement for the future of the CAP. For more information on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please [visit our website](#) or contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests. For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact membership@organicseurope.bio.

IFOAM Organics Europe's Interest Group of Organic Farmers (IGOF) is one of IFOAM Organics Europe's four interest groups. [Our interest groups](#) provide direct input from the different sectors in IFOAM Organics Europe's organisation. They formulate policies and positions relevant to their sector.



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Brussels bubbles with activities on post-2027 CAP

From the European Commission

Work and discussions on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2027 are intensifying in Brussels.

On the European Commission's side: Informal discussions & the budget

As early as 2023, the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development AGRI of the European Commission already started informal consultations with relevant agrifood stakeholders and launched official working groups to discuss the future of the CAP (5 technical workshops spread in 2023 and beginning of 2024).

The Directorate-General for Budget (DG BUDG) of the European Commission is also discussing a key topic for the CAP: the future of the multiannual financial framework (MFF or the EU's budget). This policy will determine the budget of the EU for the period 2027-2032 and will contain decisive guidelines for the next CAP in terms of funding allocation and subsidies. In a confidential first draft, DG BUDG proposed a new approach for the future of the EU budget aiming at simplifying its allocation.



Instead of several sector fundings, DG BUDG proposed to have a “Single National Plan” for each Member State. This would leave the decision with Member States on how to use and decide the budget allocation for each sector, agriculture being one of them. This proposal received strong backlash from the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, the configuration of the Council of the European Union composed of the agricultural ministers, because of concerns that this would divert resources away from farmers. It seems therefore unlikely that this approach would go further as it is. However, this gives an indication of the Commission’s direction on the MFF’s future and the trend to give more flexibility to Member States.

Benchmarking, a potential solution for measuring the CAP’s sustainability?

In addition, DG AGRI held a Civil Dialogue Group on the CAP on 7 November, focusing on the benchmarking system, a recommendation of the [final report](#) of the Strategic Dialogue for the Future of Agriculture.

IFOAM Organics Europe and three other organisations that were part of the Strategic Dialogue presented their take on the benchmarking system and their reflections on the principles and design of such system. From our side, we stressed that benchmarking needs to:

- Take a comprehensive approach, going beyond just measuring carbon emissions,
- Build on existing regulated systems, such as organic farming,
- Overcome the [shortcomings](#) of Life Cycle Assessments and Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) methodologies.

Agrifish Council conclusions: “Farmer-focused post-2027 CAP”

On 23 October, the Agrifish Council presented its [conclusions](#) on the future of the CAP, supported or not objected by 26 delegations and 1 opposition.

These conclusions remind the European Commission the serious concerns raised by the farming community due to the adoption of the new requirements of the current CAP and they quote, amongst other things, the of the European Council on the EU's contribution to food security, the adopted on the 27th of June 2024 that sets the EU’s political priorities for 2024-2029 and previous [conclusions](#) from the Agrifish Council on a Long-Term Vision for the EU’s Rural Areas and on the future of agriculture in the EU. The conclusions are also taking note of the report from the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in the EU.

The Agrifish Council emphasizes the importance of having a strong, independent CAP containing two pillars that should primarily reward farmers' efforts and ensure a fair distribution of CAP support. The Council highlights the fact that direct payments are a sensitive issue for Member States, asking for working on an “adequate solution”. They stress the need to increase competitiveness in the agricultural sector, a better crisis management and mechanisms and further incentivizing farmers towards green transition mainly through voluntary measures like eco-schemes and agri-environmental-climate measures.

Civil society: Good Food Good Farming campaign actions

On 14 November, the GFGF campaign launched the "[European Recipes for Change](#)" video - a flashback video from the European Days of Action with the aim of mobilising people to join the GoodFoodGoodFarming movement. The video highlights the stories of grassroot voices from across the EU, all united under the broader demand for a just agroecological transition. Featuring events in Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Portugal, Poland, Spain, and Sweden, this video seeks to mobilise people and organisations to join the Good Food Good Farming movement. [Join the civil movement and use ready-made communication materials.](#)

For more information on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and IFOAM Organics Europe’s work on this issue, please [visit our website](#) or contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members’ requests.



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1.1.4 Plant health care

50% pesticide reduction - Mission accomplished or time for a reliable indicator?

30 September 2024, online

In a well-attended webinar GLOBAL2000 and IFOAM Organics Europe presented [an alternative](#) to the much-contested pesticides measurement tool, the Harmonized Risk Indicator 1 (HRI-1).

Martin Dermine from [PAN Europe](#) and Maria Zintl from IFOAM Organics Europe, explained the HRI-1 indicator's shortcomings measuring pesticide use and risk, and how it is particularly inadequate when applied to natural substances used in organic farming.

Dr. Helmut Burtscher-Schaden, biochemist at [GLOBAL 2000](#), presented an alternative tool, the PURI, an indicator that considers the treatable crop area and negative effects on human health and our environment for each individual active substance (the components of pesticides).

The new model thus corrects two major simplifications in the HRI-1 indicator which only looks at total pesticide mass used, regardless of the surface area of crop treated, and also groups active substances very roughly into four groups which do not reflect in detail on health and environment effects.

Is the new indicator, PURI, a more realistic way of looking at pesticide use and risk in Europe? Watch the [webinar recordings](#) and read the press release [IFOAM Organics Europe and European Citizens' Initiative condemn "fake pesticide reduction"](#) to find out.

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

IFOAM Organics Europe members can find more information on the task force in [its terms of reference](#) and background materials on the topic 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.

Documents:

- Policy Brief: [Correcting the F2F Indicator - A prerequisite for pesticide reduction in the EU](#)
- Fact check: [Pesticides in conventional and organic farming](#)
- Paper: [The HRI-1 systematically overestimates the risk of natural substances used in organic farming compared to synthetic substances](#)
- Paper: [Plant health care in organic farming - The role of natural substances in a biodiversity-based system approach](#)
- NGO letter: [The EU must make pesticide reduction a reality](#)



Videos:

- [Explaining the flawed pesticides indicator](#)
- [Organic's approach to plant health care and pesticides regulation](#)



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1.1.5 Biodiversity, soil, and water

Soil Monitoring Law moving forward

The Council and the European Parliament have entered trilogues on [the Soil Monitoring Law](#) in October 2024. The first EU legislation on soils is crucial for promoting healthy soils, the foundation of sustainable agriculture.

Embracing sustainable soil management practices, like organic farming, would help the EU achieve its goal of restoring soil health in the EU by 2050.

Organic farming and healthy soils go hand in hand. Organic farmers build soil fertility while protecting biodiversity, ensuring water quality and preventing pollution. How? Organic farmers do not use synthetic pesticides and fertilisers which contaminate our soils and water bodies (and are bad for our health). On top of that, organic farming stores carbon in soils. We elaborate on these benefits in our [factsheet](#).

As EU organic movement, we highlight the need to recognise and support organic farming as a farming system that protects and improves soil health.

For more information on soil 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. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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1.1.6 Food policy

Promotion policies: Dedicated budget for promotion organic in 2025

Good news! Like the previous years the European Commission has a dedicated budget to promote EU organic.

The Commission has recently confirmed that MULTI programmes will continue to be financed under the EU promotion policy budget. Specifically, 40 million euros will be dedicated to MULTI programmes, which fund proposals to which European organisations or organisations based in two or more Member States apply to. At



the same time, 92 million euros will be devoted to SIMPLE programmes, which funds proposals written by an organisation based in one Member State.

While the budget for organic was decreased in 2025 compared to 2024, there is still a ring-fenced budget for organic both under SIMPLE and under MULTI programmes.

Save the date: Info days & IFOAM Organics Europe's webinar

In terms of next important dates, the 2025 annual work programme (AWP) will be published mid-December, and the call for proposals will be published in January. As during every year, the European Commission will hold the ["info days" end of January](#), during which stakeholders will be able to find out more about this year's call for proposals, and which mistakes to avoid should they wish to apply for this budget.

IFOAM Organics Europe members will be able to follow our 'Let's Discuss Organic' webinar on this topic on 21 January – please see the update for members in our December 2024 newsletter or [our member extranet](#).

For more information on promotion policies and IFOAM Organics Europe's work on this issue, please contact silvia.schmidt@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

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1.1.7 Fairness and transparency

EU Agri-food Chain Observatory meets: Lack of agrifood data

On 15 October, the EU Agri-food Chain Observatory met for the second time in Brussels and online. Launched this summer, the observatory is in charge of looking at prices, margins and trading practices, [a key demand of some farmers' organisation](#).

The second meeting of the observatory looked at the state of play of the EU agri-food chain. The presentation of Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development I emphasized the lack of data when it comes to industry and trade parts of the chain. Representatives of France and Germany also presented their work on data collection on prices and margins.

The second part of the meeting focused on the organic sector and the trends of the European organic market. The presenters highlighted the need to nuance the comparison of the current state of the market with the period during the COVID-19 crisis which was marked by a strong increase in demand of organic products, not being representative of the long-term trend. The presenters also highlighted the problems with organic data which are less available and often collected at the same time as conventional. The different structures of the German and French organic market were also discussed. Germany experiences a shift to organic food being increasingly moved into discount and food retail, while France experienced an increase in specialized shops. All presenters reminded the need to protect the organic label against competing less-strict labels on the markets.

Together with our members, we will continue bringing the organic market's specificities to the Observatory and represent the organic food value chain to the European Commission and the group.



About the EU Agri-food Chain Observatory

Established in 2024, the EU Agri-food Chain Observatory is a direct action of the European Commission in reply to the farmers' protests of 2023 and 2024. These protests key demands were decent incomes and fair prices for farmers. In its non-paper on strengthening the position of farmers in the agri-food chain, the Commission committed to an European Observatory in charge of looking at prices, margins and trading practices a key demand o. The EU Agri-food Chain Observatory is composed of representatives from Member States, and key stakeholders from the agri-food sector in Brussels (farmers' organizations, representatives from the industries and other parts of the value chain, consumers' organizations, etc).

If you want to contribute to the discussions on the agri-food chain observatory and/or the European organic market, contact silvia.schmidt@organicseurope.bio or laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio.



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Research and innovation

1.1.8 Research and innovation advocacy / TP Organics

Funding opportunities for sustainable food systems: FutureFoodS & AGROECOLOGY Partnership

Are you working on innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture and food systems? Don't miss these two exciting opportunities to fund your innovative projects.

FutureFoodS partnership – 1st Call for proposals

The FutureFoodS Partnership is now accepting proposals for its [1st transnational co-funded Call](#) "Transforming Food Systems - reshaping food system interactions, fostering food innovations and empowering sustainable food choices."

It focuses on pioneering ideas in sustainable food production and innovation. Interested? Here is more information:

- Submission platform: Access all relevant documents and initiate your proposal at futurefoods.ptj.de.
- Deadline for pre-proposals: 15 January 2025 (two-step submission process).

This call offers a unique chance to collaborate across disciplines and drive impactful change in food systems. Find out more on how to apply for the call on the FutureFoodS [website](#).

AGROECOLOGY partnership pre-announcement: 2nd co-funded call on agroecology

Get ready for the launch of the [AGROECOLOGY Partnership](#)'s second co-funded call, "Integrating environmental, economic, and social perspectives in assessing the performance of agroecology."

This call will fund projects that:

Topic 1: Assess agroecology's benefits, impacts, and trade-offs, identifying best practices.

Topic 2: Transform value chains and business models to support agroecological transitions.

Eligible applicants include universities, research institutions, civil society, private companies, and more. Consortia must have at least three eligible partners from different countries. According to the tentative deadline, the call should be launched by the end of 2024.

For submission criteria, timelines, and eligibility details, visit the AGROECOLOGY Partnership [website](#) or contact the call office at ptj-agroecology-call-office@fz-juelich.de.

These calls are a unique opportunity to advance research and innovation in sustainable food systems. Start preparing your proposals today!



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Knowledge for organic

1.1.9 Spotlighted project

20 years CORE Organic: Celebrating 44 partners and 62 projects worth €62M

On 1 October 2024, OrganicTargets4EU and the [CORE Organic network](#) celebrated a milestone: CORE Organic's 20th anniversary! Over the past two decades, this network has been instrumental in advancing organic food and farming research across Europe, directly supporting these ambitious targets and fostering sustainable agricultural practices.



Since its inception, the CORE Organic network has funded 62 research projects with a total investment of €61.9 million. These projects address critical areas, including the circular bioeconomy, animal health and welfare (spanning pigs, cattle, and chickens), fruit and vegetable production, plant breeding, biodiversity, and human health. Acting as a cornerstone of the OrganicTargets4EU project, the network's CORE Organic Pleiades platform serves as a policy-exchange hub, delivering evidence-based insights to inform policy development and drive innovation in organic farming.

Beyond research, CORE Organic has fortified policy frameworks and enhanced international cooperation, uniting 44 partners from 28 European countries and regions, as well as extending collaboration beyond Europe. This partnership aligns with the EU's ambitious organic agriculture objectives, emphasizing the importance of collective effort in achieving these goals.

This 20th-anniversary celebration highlights two decades of impactful research and collaboration, which continue to shape the future of organic farming in Europe and support the overarching mission of OrganicTargets4EU.

About OrganicTargets4EU

The Horizon Europe project OrganicTargets4EU (2022-2026) aims to help reach 25% of agricultural land under organic farming and a significant increase in organic aquaculture by 2030. IFOAM Organics Europe leads this project which is working on outcomes that will drive the growth and development of the organic sector focussing on policy implementation, evidence-based decision making, increased and coordinated Research & Innovation and increased knowledge sharing. The project results will be discussed in a multi-actor policy dialogue and it will make recommendations for the CAP strategic plans and EU/national organic action plans from 2025-2027 and from 2028 onwards.

Visit [the project website](#) for more information and follow its hashtag #OrganicTargets4EU on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#) or contact ambra.desimone@organicseurope.bio.

About the CORE Organic network

CORE Organic is the acronym for "Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems". As an ERA-NET action, it intends to increase cooperation between national research activities. European public research and development in organic food and farming happens in small research communities, often scattered and geographically and institutionally fragmented. CORE Organic will enhance quality, relevance and resources use in European research in organic food and farming and establish a joint pool for financing transnational research in organic food and farming.



Funded by
the European Union

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Organic advisors, meet with peers during European cross-visit

Are you an organic advisor? Are you interested in becoming one? Or are you an advisor interested in gaining organic competences? Most importantly, are you interested in exchanging with your peers? This article is for you!

The [OrganicAdviceNetwork](#) project will build a strong network of advisors with organic competences. To realise this, the project is 30 organising cross-visits for agricultural advisors to meet, exchange and share their innovative organic farming practices.



The first round of visits starts in 2025. All advisors with or willing to gain organic advice expertise are welcome to join these in-person meetings providing unique network and learning opportunities!

About the cross-visits

The visits will consist of 2 to 3 days of in-person meetings for advisors from the same agricultural sector (i.e., arable, ruminant, vegetable, fruit or viticulture). Each visit will have a specific learning objective related to organic practices and advisory approaches.

In total, 30 cross visits will be organized, with the first round starting in 2025.

All advisors with or willing to gain organic advice expertise are welcome to join these in-person meetings providing unique network and learning opportunities!

Registrations are set to open in March 2025. [Register to the OrganicAdviceNetwork's newsletter](#) to receive updates on the first programmes, registration and other information.

About OrganicAdviceNetwork

The [OrganicAdviceNetwork project](#) will create and animate a network of advisors and advisory services for the organic sector across Europe. It will do so via in-person and online trainings and courses on a wide variety of agricultural topics to help conventional advisors or young graduates interested in becoming organic advisors. Organic advisors with different levels of experience will exchange with their peers. The project will also research the finance and business-side of establishing a European network of organic advisory services.

Advisory services from 14 European countries are involved in the project but **all types of organic advisors and advisory services willing to join the network and/or attend the trainings are very welcome!**

As IFOAM Organics Europe we lead on this project. For more information, please contact claire.morelle@organicseurope.bio.



OrganicAdviceNetwork is funded by the European Union (Grant no. 101134850) and by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) (Grant no. tbd). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, European Research Executive Agency (REA) or Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). Neither the European Union nor any other the granting authority can be held responsible for them.”

Seeking stakeholders to strengthen soil health in Europe

The [SOILL Startup project](#) is inviting stakeholders to [join its community and contribute to healthy soils in Europe](#).

If you [join the SOILL Community](#), you will:

- Engage in knowledge exchange and collaboration opportunities,
- Gain access to matchmaking tools, policy support documents, and capacity-building programmes,
- Get informed about Soil Mission Living Labs (SHLL) and Lighthouses (LHs),
- Benefit from regular updates on the project's progress and achievements.

Complete [the form on SSOIL-Startup's website](#) and get in the know.

About SOILL-Startup

is the first 2-year phase of the larger SOILL Framework Partnership. The project will work with the first wave of Soil Health Living Labs and Lighthouses to create a central support structure to help current living labs and potential applicants. The European Network of Living Labs ([ENoLL](#)) coordinates the partnership

Together with our members [FiBL Europe](#) and the Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture ([ÖMKi](#)), IFOAM Organics Europe is a project partner. As one of 28 European partners we contribute, among others, to an engagement campaign for applicant living labs, a helpdesk and info points, coaching and training, and developing a methodological framework for monitoring and evaluation.



If you or your organisation want to learn more about becoming (part of) a Soil Health Living Lab, keep following our newsletter and check out the [SOILL-Startup website](#) (coming soon), [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).



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IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE DEVELOPMENTS

Updates for members

Upcoming member-only webinars: Funding & promotion opportunities for organic

In 2025, we restart our regular member-exclusive sessions "Let's Discuss Organic". These online live events help our members gain an edge and engage with organic sector experts.

Our first "Let's Discuss Organic" session of 2025 is scheduled for 21 January, where we will examine the EU promotion policy budget. We will discuss what the budget entails, how to apply for it, and what changes have been made compared to last year. Additionally, we will hear from the team behind a successful project funded through this budget: "Nudging Organic to Drive Sustainable Consumption."

More information and registration info is [available on our member extranet](#). Save these dates:

- 21 January: [Promoting & nudging organic](#)
- 17 February: [Food security & pesticides narratives](#)
- 13 March: [New innovations in organic agriculture: Inspiring examples](#)
- 17 April: [Political developments in the New Genomic Techniques \(NGTs or new GMOs\) legislative proposal](#)
- 15 May: [Sustainable public procurement: Opportunities for organic](#)
- 5 June: [The future of the CAP beyond 2027](#)

About the Let's Discuss Organic series

Let's Discuss Organic is more than just a webinar series exclusive to IFOAM Organics Europe's members. It is a community of passionate individuals dedicated to promoting organic food and farming's active role in the transformation to a sustainable food system.

These webinars are an opportunity for our members to access first-hand information about EU-related policies and activities from Brussels-based experts.

Does this sound interesting to you? Consider joining these sessions and gain valuable insights to your work, engage in meaningful discussions, and ask the expert(s). Information about and registration links for these sessions are made available on our member extranet's [news page](#) and [calendar](#).

Were you unable to attend or missed a previous session? All presentations and recordings are accessible on our [member extranet](#) > [hot topics](#) > [member-only updates](#) > [Let's Discuss Organic](#) so you can re-watch the webinars and review the content at your convenience.

Does this sound interesting to you but you aren't an IFOAM Organics Europe member? Contact membership@organicseurope.bio. They are available for your membership-related questions and extranet access rights (issues).



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Save the date: Council meeting on 18 March

IFOAM Organics Europe's next Council meeting is scheduled for an online meeting on 18 March, 9:30-13:00 CET.

All relevant documents regarding the Council meeting are available on the [member extranet platform](#), including the Council agenda and previous Council meeting minutes. We invite you to review all relevant documents before the meeting.



Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via membership@organicseurope.bio.

About our Council

IFOAM Organics Europe's second chamber, the Council, is one of the driving forces behind the democratic functioning of our organisation as it creates a vital link between each countries' members and IFOAM Organics Europe. [Learn more about our democratic governance structure.](#)



Like the visuals and infographics on our website?
As our member, you are welcome to translate them into your own language
Contact communication@organicseurope.bio

Use our member extranet

Did you know that, as IFOAM Organics Europe member, you can receive push notifications when we upload member-only news on the extranet? Follow these simple steps:

- Download the SharePoint app to your mobile device (& allow notifications)
- Visit our [member extranet](#) on the same device
- Open the menu in the top right corner & click on 'Follow'

Are you an IFOAM Organics Europe member and you do not have access to the member extranet yet? Or do the steps above not work? Please check that you are not using the extranet in a browser that is already logged in to another SharePoint environment (or use a private browser to login). If that's not the case, check [our extranet login guidelines](#), including an overview of possible problems and solutions or contact membership@organicseurope.bio or biomembership@organicseurope.bio

Updates about the organisation

Saying goodbye to our colleagues

Stefano Orsini

In September, IFOAM Organics Europe said goodbye to Stefano. During his year as Manager of the Research & Innovation unit, Stefano was a dedicated advocate for organic, sharing his extensive knowledge widely and fostering connections across the sector. His enthusiasm and support have been invaluable to our team and colleagues, and his commitment to strengthening our network has ensured that organics is well represented in numerous R&I projects and proposals. We thank Stefano for his contributions and wish him all the best!

Lucia Canonero

We bid a fond farewell to Lucia Canonero, who left IFOAM Organics Europe in September. During her year with us, Lucia made a lasting impact on the staff with her dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit. Known for her commitment and sense of humour, she has been an invaluable part of our team and contributed greatly to our shared successes. While we're sad to see her go, we are excited for what lies ahead in her career. We have no doubt that Lucia will continue to achieve remarkable things, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavours.



EVENTS

Preview of events

Get ready for BIOFACH 2025

11-14 February 2025, Nuremberg, Germany

From 11–14 of February 2025, the Nuremberg Exhibition Centre will host the world's leading trade fair for organic food. Make sure to visit our booth at the trade fair in hall 1 at stand 351 (we've moved!) or attend one of the many sessions we are involved in [in the side-programme](#).

By bringing together regional, national, and international stakeholders, **BIOFACH** unites exhibitors and visitors from the organic and natural cosmetics sector for a dynamic and influential gathering. We plan to host several engaging sessions that will provide insights into timely topics on the organic agenda. In line with our tradition, we will also have a dedicated booth.



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Save the date for next year's Council meetings

We are pleased to invite (y)our [national representatives to the European organic umbrella organization](#) to meet with their European counterparts for **next year's Council meetings**.

We kindly ask Council members to save the date for:

- **18 March 2025, 09:30-13:30 CEST**
- **18 November 2025, 09:30-13:30 CET**

We will share more information on the meetings directly with Council members in due time.

IFOAM Organics Europe's second chamber, the Council, is one of the driving forces behind the democratic functioning of our organisation as it creates a vital link between each countries' members and IFOAM Organics Europe. [Learn more about our democratic governance structure](#).



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Mark your calendars for the 2025 European Organic Congress

18-19 August 2025, Copenhagen, Denmark

We are excited to announce that the 2025 edition of our [European Organic Congress](#) will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark on 18-19 August 2025. Hosted in the context of [Organic Summit 2025](#), key politicians, researchers, farmers, business representatives, and leading voices from around the world will meet to highlight the importance of organic farming in the future global food supply.

More information and registration will follow soon. Stay tuned for updates by visiting [our website](#) and following @OrganicsEurope on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

EOC 2025 golden sponsor: Naturland





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Review of events

50% pesticide reduction - Mission accomplished or time for a reliable indicator?

30 September 2024, online

In a well-attended webinar GLOBAL2000 and IFOAM Organics Europe presented [an alternative](#) to the much-contested pesticides measurement tool, the Harmonized Risk Indicator 1 (HRI-1).

Martin Dermine from [Pesticides Action Network Europe](#) and Maria Zintl from IFOAM Organics Europe, explained the HRI-1 indicator's shortcomings measuring pesticide use and risk, and how it is particularly inadequate when applied to natural substances used in organic farming. .

Dr. Helmut Burtscher-Schaden, biochemist at [GLOBAL 2000](#), presented an alternative tool, the PURI, an indicator that considers the treatable crop area and negative effects on human health and our environment for each individual active substance (the components of pesticides).

The new model thus corrects two major simplifications in the HRI-1 indicator which only looks at total pesticide mass used, regardless of the surface area of crop treated, and also groups active substances very roughly into four groups which do not reflect in detail on health and environment effects.

Is the new indicator, [PURI](#), a more realistic way of looking at pesticide use and risk in Europe? Watch the [webinar recordings](#) and read the press release [IFOAM Organics Europe and European Citizens' Initiative condemn "fake pesticide reduction"](#) to find out.

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

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Documents:

- Policy Brief: [Correcting the F2F Indicator - A prerequisite for pesticide reduction in the EU](#)
- Fact check: [Pesticides in conventional and organic farming](#)
- Paper: [The HRI-1 systematically overestimates the risk of natural substances used in organic farming compared to synthetic substances](#)
- Paper: [Plant health care in organic farming - The role of natural substances in a biodiversity-based system approach](#)
- NGO letter: [The EU must make pesticide reduction a reality](#)



Videos:

- [Explaining the flawed pesticides indicator](#)
- [Organic's approach to plant health care and pesticides regulation](#)



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To sustainable and healthy school meals: SchoolFood4Change

8-11 October 2024, Prague (CZ)

From 8-11 October, enthusiastic and inspired changemakers worked to make school meals healthier and better at the third partner meeting of the [SchoolFood4Change](#) project.

Charlotte Long shared her insights into the work of [Food for Life](#) & the [Soil Association](#) while Monika Dobrovodská from the Czech Ministry of Rural Development explained the national Public Procurement Strategy, highlighting its review and changes regarding minimum standards for example for organic. Following these inspirational examples, the participants focussed on:

- Impact and awareness: How can we make the rollout of the SchoolFood4Change Triple Approach tangible for society and policy makers?
- Health Impact Assessment: What insights does our research provide on the health impact of the food served at school going into children's stomachs?
- Environmental Impact Calculator: How can we fine tune our calculator, which helps schools and cities measure the environmental impacts of their school catering?
- Whole School Food Approach - food education: How can we help schools and cities with their challenges in implementing the WSFA?

Going into the last year of the project, as part of the consortium, we are inspired and motivated to further work on these very important tasks. We see the essential need for the Sustainable Food Vision from the EU and national strategies must include (healthy and sustainable) school meals and food education – these are key ingredients!

What's next? SchoolFood4Change is partnering with us, IFOAM Organics Europe, to deliver a powerful session at the BIOFACH 2025 fair, the world's leading trade fair for organic. We will publish [details on our website in January](#).

SchoolFood4Change (SF4C)

The SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) project started in January 2022 and includes 43 partners (including affiliates), contributing to the ambitious target of reaching at least two million EU citizens, by directly impacting over 3,000 schools and 600,000 young people in 12 EU countries. Focussing on children, SchoolFood4Change strives for a long-lasting impact on the whole food system that will benefit both the people and the planet.

Interested parties can contact amalia.ochoa@iclei.org, Project Coordinator at ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, for further information or in case of questions. Additional information on the project and a detailed overview of all project partners is available on [the EU Community Research and Development Information Service \(CORDIS\)](#).

IFOAM Organics Europe's work on sustainable public procurement

For more information on this issue, have a look at:

- The EU Food Policy Coalition's [Sustainable Public Procurement of food: A goal within reach](#),
- Our leaflet [Making organic products in sustainable public procurement happen](#),
- Our infographics (available in multiple languages):



- Overall benefits: [Benefits of Sustainable Public Procurement](#),
- [Why policymakers should consider investing in sustainable public procurement](#),
- The work of the [Buy Better Food coalition](#), campaigning for sustainable food on the public plate, and
- The [SchoolFood4Change](#) project that will provide innovative solutions and tailored, locally adaptable good practices for schools, school meal providers, public authorities, and policymakers, in line with the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy.

Could not find what you were looking for? Visit our [food policy webpage](#) and scroll down to "Food policy: Sustainable Public Procurement" or contact silvia.schmidt@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

We invite our members to translate the infographics we have created. The source materials for this are available on our member extranet > [hot topics](#) > Sustainable Food Systems > [Sustainable Public Procurement](#). For information about what you can gain from being a member, read [our membership page](#) and contact membership@organicseurope.bio.

LiveSeeding partners discuss project activities on organic seeds & breeding

17-20 September, Novara

From 17-20 September, the LiveSeeding project discussed organic heterogeneous materials and variety development and business models.

Planning and in-depth discussions

During its third general project meeting in Novara, Italy partners planned the project's third year, bolstered team spirit among partners, and cultivated synergies for a strong project impact.

The meeting opened with a welcome and an overview of the annual objectives, followed by reflections on year two's successes, particularly in on-farm screenings, Organic Heterogeneous Material (OHM) and Organic Variety (OV) development, and case studies and workshops. A cross-cutting session explored complexities around OHM and OVs, including notification, traceability, and breeding guidelines, alongside discussions on training activities and a seed production manual.

EU policy updates

The final day focused on fostering entrepreneurship, business models, marketing, food policies and organic breeding benefits, as well as EU policy developments. Mr. Flevaris from Directorate-general for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), Plant Health Unit, presented the revision of the legislation on the production and marketing of [Plant Reproductive Material \(PRM\)](#) in the EU. Derogations, variety registrations and other issues were discussed and concerns from the consortium were shared.

In June 2024, a [progress report](#) on the file was presented at the Council of EU Agriculture Ministers, under the Belgium Presidency. Particular emphasis should be paid to the safeguarding of Organic Heterogeneous Materials (OHM), and on the importance of not making stricter rules for VCU testing for variety registration. Additional elements, such as a very limited scope exemptions for conservation & farmers' exchange and number of regulated species are identified as worrying. This progress report only covers part of the Commission's proposal, meaning that not all articles in the proposal have been discussed yet by the Council of the EU. This process is still ongoing and will likely continue for a while, within the AGRIFISH Council and the Working Party on Genetic Resources & Innovation. Only until the Council of the EU reaches a 'General Approach', trilogue negotiations are expected to commence.

About LiveSeeding

The [LiveSeeding project](#) is a four-year Innovation Action on organic seed and plant breeding to accelerate sustainable and diverse food systems in Europe, which started in October 2022 and will run until September 2026. It provides science-based evidence and best practice solutions to help achieve 100 % organic seed. To



deliver on its ambitious goal, LiveSeeding brings together 37 organisations from a wide range of sectors operating in 16 European countries and can build on the knowledge developed in [the LIVESEED project](#) (2017-2021).

The project has a budget of €6.6 million, funded by the European Union, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). FiBL Europe coordinates this Horizon Europe-funded project and its 37 partners. IFOAM Organics Europe is responsible for stakeholder management.

Learn more about and follow the project on www.liveseeding.eu, [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) and [Facebook](#).



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UK Research and Innovation

Shaping the future of organic businesses: Organic Food Forum

14 November, online

On 14 November we held the successful launch of our new event the [Organic Food Forum](#), through a pilot event.

Our exclusive [Towards Organic Food Forum](#) webinar drew organic business leaders from across Europe to provide feedback, share insights, and help shape the future structure and focus of the Organic Food Forum. The event featured a dynamic agenda, including key updates on policy, sustainable diets, packaging legislation, EU organic regulation, and an interactive brainstorming session.

Towards Organic Food Forum in brief

The webinar kicked off with insights on recent political developments and the positioning of organic within the current EU political landscape by Silvia Schmidt, IFOAM Organics Europe's Policy Manager. Participants then enjoyed a session on sustainable diets led by Regulations and Organic Product Quality Project Lead Bernard Lignon, focusing on promoting holistic approaches to food systems and consumption patterns.

The core of the event was an interactive brainstorming session in small breakout groups, where attendees exchanged ideas and visions for future editions of the Organic Food Forum. A key takeaway from these discussions was the consensus on the need for closer collaboration and knowledge sharing within the organic movement and alignment with broader social movements working toward a sustainable future for agriculture.

The day concluded with important updates on new EU regulations for imports, introduced by IFOAM Organics Europe's Regulation Consultant Lea Bauer and an insightful presentation on future packaging legislation by Government Relations and Public Affairs Expert Dr. Sabine von Wirén-Lehr, addressing upcoming challenges and opportunities for the sector.

The event recording and speaker presentations will be available for IFOAM Organics Europe's members on our member extranet shortly.

Full-scale Organic Food Forum in 2025, 27 November 2025

We're thrilled by the positive energy and valuable contributions made by participants and speakers during the webinar. It has set a strong foundation for the future event editions, and we're looking forward to building on this success with the first full-scale Organic Food Forum on 27 November 2025 at the Organic House in Brussels.

Stay tuned for by [subscribing to our newsletter](#) or our social media channels [@OrganicsEurope](#) and mark your calendars for what promises to be an essential gathering for Europe's organic business leaders!

Exclusive event sponsor



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into organic



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Organic food: Good for farmers, workers, climate, and the environment

15 November, Brussels

On Friday, 15 November civil society, local governments and EU institutions highlighted the positive impact of organic farming and its potential for creating resilient and sustainable food systems in Europe at [Organic food: good for farmers, workers, climate, and the environment](#)

The event brought together representatives from European cities, national governments, and institutions to discuss organic territorial strategies, with a special focus on public procurement—a driver for increasing demand for organic products and strengthening local food systems. It was also an occasion to celebrate the 100th anniversary of organic farming, which is being marked this year.

Highlights: Minimum criteria, a manifesto and petition with +100,000 signees

Three important initiatives were presented at the event:

- The EU Food Policy Coalition's [Initiative](#) advocating for mandatory minimum criteria for school canteens, already endorsed by 30 European local governments.
- The [Freeing Up Public Procurement Manifesto](#) – signed by over 80 cities and facilities – calling for greater flexibility and sustainability in public food procurement policies.
- A [petition for healthy school meals across Europe](#), with over 100,000 signatures, underscoring the strong public demand for better nutrition in schools and more sustainable practices.

Organic meals, an easy win

Our Director, Eduardo Cuoco, addressed the audience with a speech emphasizing the socio-economic benefits of organic farming, alongside its well-documented environmental advantages. Eduardo highlighted how sustainable public procurement can transform rural areas by fostering connections between citizens, public institutions, and farmers. He presented bio-districts—where farmers, local authorities, and the private sector collaborate—as a model for revitalizing farming communities and promoting local economies.

“Meals can be powerful agents of change,” Eduardo Cuoco noted. “By starting with schools, we can nurture responsible, sustainable citizens while reinvigorating rural communities.”

If you're interested in the event, [recordings of Organic Food: Good for Farmers, Workers, Climate, and the Environment are available](#).

The event took place at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels. It was organised by IFOAM Organics Europe with the Organic Cities Network Europe, the EESC, and the Associazione per l'Agricoltura Biodinamica, in partnership with Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), Buy Better Food, and France Urbaine,

About Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP)

For more information on this issue, have a look at:

- The EU Food Policy Coalition's [Sustainable Public Procurement of food: A goal within reach](#),
- Our leaflet [Making organic products in sustainable public procurement happen](#),



- Our infographics (available in multiple languages):
 - Overall benefits: [Benefits of Sustainable Public Procurement](#),
 - [Why policymakers should consider investing in sustainable public procurement](#),
- The work of the [Buy Better Food coalition](#), campaigning for sustainable food on the public plate, and
- The [SchoolFood4Change](#) project that will provide innovative solutions and tailored, locally adaptable good practices for schools, school meal providers, public authorities, and policymakers, in line with the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy.

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Research in organic farming helps tackle global challenges – Organic Innovation Days 2024

22-23 October, Brussels

On 22-23 October the [Organic Innovation Days 2024](#) gathered more than 70 researchers, policymakers, and organic experts to shape policy recommendations, foster collaboration and celebrate 20 years of transnational organic research funded under [CORE Organic](#).

In the Organic House in Brussels, participants discuss getting organic Research & Innovation ready for the new political mandate, held interactive workshops, expert panels, and thought-provoking presentations addressing how research in organic farming can tackle critical global challenges.

Highlights included Member of the European Parliament and European Parliament Vice-President Nicolae Ștefănuță's keynote speech on Research & Innovation priorities and opportunities in the new European political mandate, and four collaborative workshops shaping the Strategic Research and Innovation [Agenda](#) for organic food and farming.

[Read the full event review on TP Organics' website.](#)

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.



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How can EU agriculture contribute to climate neutrality?

28 October 2024, Brussels

On 28 October IFOAM Organics Europe hosted ClieNFarms' second public policy workshop How can the EU agricultural sector contribute to [climate neutrality](#)?

in the context of the recent farmers' protests, the EU elections and the Strategic Dialogue [report](#) the workshop brought together experts from around the world, farmers, policy makers, umbrella organisations and an audience of 40 to contextualise the importance of having a common climate goal that EU agriculture contributes to, with measures taken at the farm level and beyond.

After a welcoming word by Alba Saez, Research and Innovation Consultant at IFOAM Organics Europe, two keynote speeches kick-off discussions. Jacques-Eric Bergez, senior researcher at National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRAE) and ClieNFarms project coordinator, introduced the workshop and ClieNFarms. Julia Bogner, Head of Programme for the Land Use & Climate team at the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) spoke about climate mitigation efforts in EU agriculture towards 2030 and the current pathway.

Climate neutrality is still on the political agenda

Jacques-Eric quoted European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen in the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture to stress that recommendations show support for and encourage promotion of sustainable farming practices. He was also the first one to say that agricultural emissions have been stagnant since 2005 and more efforts are needed to drive them down, an admonition that was echoed by all the speakers throughout the workshop.

The ClieNFarms project aims at tackling this issue by demonstrating that innovative systemic solutions have the potential to generate positive impacts by 2030 and preparing roadmaps to climate neutrality to be adopted by farms and farming systems. This is done through the development of an Innovative System Solution Space (ISS) Network based on a demonstration and upscaling approach.

2030 emission trends and targets

Julia pointed out the wide variability of emission trends between Member States (MS), with emissions decreasing in 13, but increasing in 14. Some countries such as Denmark, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg or Austria need to put special attention to reducing their agricultural emissions because agriculture makes up a large share of their total emissions.

Julia also pointed out that the predicted trajectory with additional measures of the Effort Sharing sectors' emissions and the Land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF), both of which cover some agricultural emissions, will fall short of meeting the 2030 target. Very few MS have a concrete pathway to reach the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) or the LULUCF targets. She expressed concern for countries such as Czechia, Estonia, Finland and France where the declining trend of net removals until 2025 may impact the achievement of the 2030 targets but brought up some positive progress in other MS such as Lithuania, Germany, the Netherlands or Spain with measures to rewet/restore peatlands or reduce livestock emission.

More efforts needed across the value chain

Julia emphasised the need for a clear roadmap for emission reductions at a sectoral level, so not just farmers, but all actors across the value chain, based on the adoption of agroecological practices. This needs to be accompanied by consumer behavior changes, food waste reduction measures along the value chain, large-scale financing for farmers and a strategy to internalize the true cost of food.



EU agriculture's contribution to climate neutrality – ClieNFarm's first policy brief

Alba Saez presented the first policy brief developed by ClieNFarms, detailing the differences between the terms carbon neutrality, Greenhouse gas GHG neutrality and climate neutrality, emphasising that the climate neutrality should include the former two alongside terrestrial ecosystems and planetary boundaries. She claimed that taking a reductive approach that focuses only on one or few of these elements risks worsening the climate crisis by means of trade-offs and carbon leakage, and that on-farm solutions should be based on the presented holistic approach.

ClieNFarms' recommendations:

- EU Member States need to improve their climate monitoring, reporting and verification systems
- Tackle biodiversity and climate together to improve system resilience; and
- A Carbon Removal Certification Framework is needed to recognise the efforts of first movers, such as organic farmers.

Policy debate

The last part of the workshop was a policy debate with Peter Fröhlich, CEO and founder of AgriCircle, deputy leader of ClieNFarms' Work Package 2; Valeria Forlin, Unit Land Economy and Carbon Removals, DG Clima; Mark Howden, International Advisory Board of ClieNFarms, Director of the Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions at The Australian National University; Nicola Di Virgilio, Unit Env Sustainability, DG Agri; and Alba Saez, R&I Coordinator Consultant at IFOAM Organics Europe.

The speakers discussed the term 'holistic approach' and the challenges associated with making policies that have multiple purposes. For example, Valeria mentioned that the Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) has a mandatory requirement for carbon farming practises to benefit biodiversity but a biodiversity indicator is lacking.

Alba added the EU organic movement's position that there is an unfair advantage in rewarding single climate measures. This practice creates more rewards for farmers who deliver fewer environmental benefits compared to those farmers who use a whole-farm approach that creates more benefits to the environment. Mark explained that research can contribute to seeing agrifood systems in a more holistic way by collaborating with farmers in projects like ClieNFarms, which are co-designed to address farmers' actual questions. He emphasized the importance of farmers understanding trade-offs and co-benefits from a systems perspective to help them make informed decisions.

If you are interested in the topics of this policy workshop and you would like to find out more about it, check out the [full recording on ClieNFarms YouTube channel](#).

About ClieNFarms

The Horizon 2020 project [ClieNFarms](#) tests solutions for climate-neutral farms. Between 2022 and 2025 the project will set up 20 cases studies where systemic solutions will be tested and evaluated using up-to date modelling approaches and multicriteria assessment tools. IFOAM Organics Europe is a project partner and ensures the project's results feed into EU policies.

You can follow ClieNFarms on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



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ClieNFarms has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101036822. 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.



IFOAM Organics Europe at Mission Soil Week

12-13 November 2024, Brussels

IFOAM Organics Europe and TP Organics participated in the Mission Soil Week “Leading the transition to healthy soils” 12-13 November 2024. The annual event held by the [Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”](#) (Mission Soil) aimed to discuss challenges, opportunities and solutions for healthy soils.

Mission Soil: Create 100 living labs & lighthouse farms for healthy soils

The main goal of the Soil Mission is to establish 100 living labs and lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030. At the Mission Soil Week, living labs were presented, as well as the results of Mission Soil projects during a project trail. Likewise, the Mission project [SOILL Startup](#), in which IFOAM Organics Europe is a partner, was presented by coordinator ENOLL. The project is creating a support structure for both applicants and new living labs and developing a monitoring framework for (potential) soil-health living labs and lighthouses. Moreover, some Soil Ambassadors, who advocate for soil protection in their communities, shared insights from their work. In breakout sessions and field visits, the participants could actively contribute on different soil topics and deepen their knowledge.

Climate Farm Demo at Mission Soil Week

On 12 November, IFOAM Organics Europe and Consulai represented [Climate Farm Demo](#), a research project to strengthen European farmers’ capacities to implement, demonstrate and uptake Climate Smart Farming practices to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

“Soil health and biodiversity” is one of the adaptation and mitigation areas the project is working on. At the booth, we talked with inspiring projects and exchanged ideas on how to collaborate on the topic soil, like a framework on measuring soil health and on how to train advisors on sustainable soil management.

About SOILL-Startup

[SOILL-Startup](#) is the first 2-year phase of the larger SOILL Framework Partnership. The project will work with the first wave of Soil Health Living Labs and Lighthouses to create a central support structure to help current living labs and potential applicants. The European Network of Living Labs ([ENOLL](#)) coordinates the partnership

Together with our members [FiBL Europe](#) and the Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture ([ÖMKi](#)), IFOAM Organics Europe is a project partner. As one of 28 European partners we contribute, among others, to an engagement campaign for applicant living labs, a helpdesk and info points, coaching and training, and developing a methodological framework for monitoring and evaluation.

If you or your organisation want to learn more about becoming (part of) a Soil Health Living Lab, keep following our newsletter and check out the [SOILL-Startup website](#) (coming soon), [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).



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About Climate Farm Demo

[Climate Farm Demo](#) is a pan-European network of Pilot Demo Farmers (PDFs) covering 28 countries and all pedo-climatic areas. From 2022-2029, the project will increase, speed-up and disseminate climate smart farming practices and tools through a network of 1,500 pilot farms across Europe and all actors of the Climate Smart Agriculture Knowledge & Innovation Systems (AKIS).

IFOAM Organics Europe will facilitate knowledge sharing and developing synergies between Climate Farm Demo and other EU projects, policymakers, and flagship initiatives. IFOAM Organics Europe is the organic sector’s thematic leader. IDELE coordinates Climate Farm Demo which will run until the end of September 2029. The



Climate Farm Demo project will benefit from the Farm Demo toolkits and tutorials developed in the [NEFERTITI project](#) (2018-2022).

Visit the [project's website](#) to learn more and follow the latest project's developments on [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#) using [@climatefarmdemo](#).



Climate FarmDemo has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727388 (PLAID), No 728061 (AgriDemo-F2F) and No 772705 (NEFERTITI). 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.

Webinar: Unlocking free knowledge and best practices for organic

19 November 2024, online

On 19 November, the organic farming community came together for an engaging webinar, [Unlocking the Organic Farm Knowledge Platform](#), a hotspot for knowledge exchange in organic food and farming.

Drawing more than 120 participants from across 18 EU countries and attracting attendees from across the globe, the webinar showed organic tools and practices. Farmers, advisors, researchers, and organic enthusiasts explored the platform's practical solutions and best practices and provided valuable feedback.

The [Organic Farm Knowledge Platform](#) provides easy access to a wealth of practice-oriented materials and resources to help improve organic production. This is more than just a platform – it's a dynamic hub for **cross-border collaboration**, where stakeholders from across Europe connect and share valuable insights.

About the Organic Farm Knowledge Platform

The Organic Farm Knowledge platform has been collecting best-practices, tools, and resources on aspects related to organic farming since 2015. They are easily searchable and available in multiple languages at www.organic-farmknowledge.org.

Within the [OrganicTargets4EU](#) project, Organic Farm Knowledge is expanding the organic knowledge reservoir even further to continue encouraging online knowledge exchange between organic actors. In the coming months, 30 new tools will be made available on new topics. For example, organic certification and regulation and organic aquaculture.

[Subscribe](#) to the newsletter to receive periodic updates, and do not forget to follow the Organic Farm knowledge platform on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for news and events. For more information contact ambra.desimone@organicseuroe.bio

Organic Farm Knowledge was set up by in the framework of [OK-Net Arable](#) project and [OK-Net EcoFeed](#) developed it further. Both projects were coordinated by [IFOAM Organics Europe](#) and funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. Core partners of the Organic Farm Knowledge platform are IFOAM Organics Europe, [FiBL](#) (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture) and [ICROFS](#) (International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems).



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Free online workshop about soft skills for organic advisors

29 January, online

On 29 January 2025, organic advisors are invited to the Joint workshop on soft skills, organised by the OrganicAdviceNetwork and its sister projects, AdvisoryNetPest and Stratus.

This workshop will offer an invaluable opportunity for advisors in the organic sector to enhance key interpersonal skills critical to effectively supporting organic producers.

Designed to empower advisors, the workshop focuses on developing essential soft skills -such as active listening, empathy, and effective communication- that are fundamental to building trust and fostering strong relationships with producers. These skills are especially valuable within the diverse contexts and unique challenges of organic farming across Europe.

The online workshop on 29 January is structured in two parts:

- Participants from the projects will present and discuss best practices in soft skills, creating a foundational understanding for all;
- Participants of the Stratus project in-person training in Brussels, join the workshop, providing an opportunity to address specific advisory needs and explore tailored support methods.

[Interested participants can register on the OrganicAdviceNetwork website](#), where additional information on the workshop agenda and specific sessions will soon be available.

Stay tuned for updates as we work together to equip advisors with the skills needed to foster resilient, sustainable, and productive organic systems across Europe.

For more information, contact ecovalia.projects@ecovalia.org or claire.morelle@organicseurope.bio

About the OrganicAdviceNetwork (OAN)

The [OrganicAdviceNetwork project](#) will create and animate a network of advisors and advisory services for the organic sector across Europe. It will do so via in-person and online trainings and courses on a wide variety of agricultural topics to help conventional advisors or young graduates interested in becoming organic advisors. Organic advisors with different levels of experience will exchange with their peers. The project will also research the finance and business-side of establishing a European network of organic advisory services.

Advisory services from 14 European countries are involved in the project but **all types of organic advisors and advisory services willing to join the network and/or attend the trainings are very welcome!**

As IFOAM Organics Europe we lead on this project. For more information, please contact claire.morelle@organicseurope.bio.



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Science-policy seminar on new detection methods for new genomic techniques (new GMOs)

19 November, Brussels

IFOAM Organics Europe organised and hosted an event titled “Science-policy seminar on detection methods for NGT products and relevance for biosafety and supply chain transparency” that brought together scientific experts on new genomic techniques (NGTs) with EU policymakers, specifically national experts from EU Member States, including members of the Working Party of Genetic Resources and Innovation in Agriculture and relevant staff in the Permanent Representations. The private event was held at the Organic House in Brussels on 19 November 2024. It was well-attended with around 20 in-person participants and a few more joining online.

DARWIN’s main objective is to develop analytical methods capable of detecting the genomic changes introduced by NGTs such as CRISPR/Cas, and thus underpin traceability throughout the supply chain. [Watch the DARWIN project’s explainer video for more information.](#)

The purpose of the Science-Policy Seminar was to communicate to policymakers that the development of detection methods is possible, and already underway in the DARWIN project, and to enable ample room for questions and exchange to get close insights on the latest scientific progress.

Some argue that gene edited crops differ from old GMO crops in terms of level of intervention, the absence of the introduction of foreign DNA, and their undetectability with current GMO detection methods and thus need to be regulated differently.

First, Dr. Odd-Gunnar Wikmark, Research Director of the Gene Technology, Environment and Society research group at the Norwegian Research Centre (NORCE) and coordinator of the project, gave an overview of DARWIN and continued with a scientific presentation on “Promising pathways for *untargeted* detection methods”. He presented the work of DARWIN partner [Sciensano](#) showing that, using a combination of whole-genome-sequencing methods, a single DNA base pair change could be detected in trace amounts (0.1%) in both pure products and in mixtures (find the publication [here](#)). He then went on to explain how this sequencing and analysis approach, combined with machine learning and bioinformatics tools, could be used to create a unique genetic fingerprint for a specific NGT line. In his conclusions, Dr. Wikmark stressed that this approach requires information on full genome sequences. He also emphasized that the funding for research on novel detection methods has so far been limited, highlighting the importance and urgency of projects like DARWIN.

Dr. Philomena Chu, Senior Researcher in the same research group at NORCE, complemented the first scientific presentation by informing participants about promising detection methods based on a *targeted* approach. This means searching for a specific genomic sequence that is known in advance. Why are new targeted approaches needed? Philomena explained that current detection methods fail to meet the “minimum performance requirements” for the sometimes-subtle genetic changes introduced using NGTs. Prior work has shown that using a method called Real-Time PCR gives sufficient sensitivity and robustness when tested using pure DNA of a gene-edited product, but that specificity and robustness fall short when applied to real-life scenarios such as presence in food, feed, and seeds ([publication](#)). DARWIN will continue the work of optimizing the Real-Time (quantitative) PCR methods using a combination of new computational and laboratory techniques. The most promising method will be put to the test in a full validation study involving multiple independent laboratories.

Alexander Hissting, Managing Director of Germany’s Verband Lebensmittel ohne Gentechnik / Association Food without Genetic Engineering (VLOG), was the third distinguished speaker. In his presentation titled “Relevance of detection methods from a food supply chain perspective” he showed that the market and the consumer demand for certified non-GMO products in Germany as a case study has only been increasing since VLOG’s founding in 2010 and continues to do so (over € 17 billion in sales in 2023). Recent consumer surveys also showed that more than 80% of people expect non-GMO-labelled products to also be free of NGTs. As one of his key messages, Mr. Hissting concluded that, “Analytical detection methods are highly relevant in order to keep non-GMO chains of custody NGT-free.



Participants showed a clear interest in the work being undertaken in the DARWIN project and its policy implications.

Eric Gall, Deputy Director of IFOAM Organics Europe, moderated the meeting. Reflecting on the seminar, he said: “Political discussions on a potential new regulatory framework on NGTs need to be aligned with scientific progress. Policymakers need to take into account that the development of analytical detection methods for NGTs are in full gear, with significant implications on the regulation thereof. A key takeaway of the session is that a priori knowledge on the genetic sequence information of the modified plant and its parental lines are indispensable for the development of adequate detection methods. This points to the importance of disclosing more information by NGT developers rather than less, which is currently the case in the Commissions’ legislative proposal. Also, we must not forget about the role of traceability in the absence of analytical detection methods, which is essential to provide reliable information on whether a product was genetically modified through NGTs.”

To keep up with the DARWIN project you can [subscribe](#) to the newsletter and follow on [LinkedIn](#) and [Bluesky](#). As an IFOAM member, you can access the PowerPoints used by the speakers, which can be found in the [member extranet](#).

About the DARWIN project

The [DARWIN project](#) is a highly technological project aiming to develop, test, and validate 9 new detection methods for new GMO crops obtained through NGTs from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2027. In full, this Horizon Europe-funded project wants to “Transition to safe & sustainable food systems through new & innovative detection methods & digital solutions for plant-based products derived from new genomic techniques, under a co-creation approach” between 2024 and 2027.

This is a crucial project for food and farming systems that want to remain GMO-free. So, as IFOAM Organics Europe we are part of the work package ‘Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) Collaborative Stakeholder Ecosystem’. Together with our partners, we will bring together a diverse stakeholder group in a regulatory and policy roundtable. This will result in policy recommendations in 2025 (based on the roundtable’s results) and a workshop with key stakeholders in 2026.

To find out more about the DARWIN research project [visit its website](#) and follow it on [LinkedIn](#) and [Bluesky](#).



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100% organic school meals program in Dordogne

27-29 November, France

France's Dordogne department hosted a delegation of some 25 people from several European countries for two days from 27-29 November, as part of the SchoolFood4Change project. The delegation members came to learn about the model developed by the department, which offers 100% organic, local, home-made and seasonal meals in secondary school canteens.

Eight years ago, a clear policy choice was made in Dordogne with a firm vision: healthy food in schools must also be sustainable, 100% organic and as local as possible. This vision is supported on different policy levels and by all stakeholders. The approach that the department took was to work step by step and kitchen per kitchen, to assess practically what was necessary to make the change, in terms of staff capacity, infrastructure and procurement processes. The program has implemented this approach for 100% organic in half of the 35 middle schools and aims to implement it in all in the coming years. An important detail: the total food cost did not increase while



making this shift! For instance, they also buy entire animals or half carcasses, from which they then make their own broth or sausages. This is all done in their own kitchen.

The SchoolFood4Change project helped the department of Dordogne in knowledge exchange with partners from all over Europe on how to advance sustainable public procurement, but also how to design healthy menus, train chefs, engage the wider school community and teach students about food related subjects. Project partners from Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Slovakia, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Czech Republic, Spain, Austria and France, from local governments, research institutes and NGO's, with different food cultures and school food approaches agreed that the Dordogne model was very inspiring and a great opportunity to learn (and taste)!

SchoolFood4Change (SF4C)

The SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) project started in January 2022 and includes 43 partners (including affiliates), contributing to the ambitious target of reaching at least two million EU citizens, by directly impacting over 3,000 schools and 600,000 young people in 12 EU countries. Focussing on children, SchoolFood4Change strives for a long-lasting impact on the whole food system that will benefit both the people and the planet.

Interested parties can contact amalia.choa@iclei.org, Project Coordinator at ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, for further information or in case of questions. Additional information on the project and a detailed overview of all project partners is available on [the EU Community Research and Development Information Service \(CORDIS\)](#).

Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP)

For more information on this issue, have a look at:

- The EU Food Policy Coalition's [Sustainable Public Procurement of food: A goal within reach](#),
- Our leaflet [Making organic products in sustainable public procurement happen](#),
- Our infographics (available in multiple languages):
- Overall benefits: [Benefits of Sustainable Public Procurement](#),
- [Why policymakers should consider investing in sustainable public procurement](#),
- The work of the [Buy Better Food coalition](#), campaigning for sustainable food on the public plate, and
- The [SchoolFood4Change](#) project that will provide innovative solutions and tailored, locally adaptable good practices for schools, school meal providers, public authorities, and policymakers, in line with the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy.



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INSPIRING EXAMPLES

Celebrating EU Organic Day and rewarding excellent examples

23 September 2024, Brussels, Belgium

On 23 September, EU Organic Day, Europe celebrate its organic sector and operators. Locally and nationally, the movement was extra visible at a [diversity of events giving a face to #EUorganic](#). At European level, the Commission unveiled the winners of this year's EU Organic Awards and took stock of the European organic action plan.

EU Organic Awards

Outgoing EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Janusz Wojciechowski opening the ceremony summarising what happened in organic in the last five years, using the following three words to describe organic:



1. **Cooperation** is at the heart of organic – across the supply chain, between different organisations. Thanks to this the EU organic action plan came to be and celebrates EU Organic Day, which was essential to increase resilience across the past years
2. **Progress.** EU OAP stimulates demand, procurement & awareness. Policy instruments realising this are the CAP and Horizon Europe
3. **Inspiration.** Create the future, inspire other farmers showing they are profitable, more resilient and economical. Open more connections

Closing his last keynote address of the EU Organic Awards ceremony, the Commissioner thanked all organic operators for their day-to-day work.

Jan Plagge, IFOAM Organics Europe's President, stressed the importance of the collaborative efforts of the past years – with the EU institutions on the EU Organic Action Plan and with agrifood stakeholders on the Strategic Dialogue.

And the award goes to...

Best organic farmer (female): [Ms Reinhilde Frech-Emmelmann](#), who founded [ReinSaat GmbH](#) (Austria) together with Demeter and organic farmers and gardeners in St. Leonhard am Hornerwald in 1998. Her farm and over 30 propagation companies produce varieties for commercial horticulture and domestic gardens adapted to different climatic zones and organic farming's requirements.

Best organic farmer (male): [Mr Benny Schöpf](#), chief vegetable grower at [Kartoffelkombinat](#) (Germany), the largest community-supported farm in Germany. Every year, the cooperative provides more than 2,500 households (or "shareholders") in München with a total of 600 tonnes of organic vegetables. Mr Schöpf and his team want to inspire similar projects to strengthen the existing social network with respect to the environment.

Best organic region: [South Savo](#) (Finland) built a strong organic farming culture through 40 years of collaboration between farmers, researchers, and local authorities. Work on the organic region in the forested [South Savo](#) started in the late 70's and led to its current network with over 200 small organic farmers and more than 40 organic canteens and restaurants.

Best organic city: [BioStadt Bremen](#) (Germany) encompasses more than 100 certified organic farms (over 30% of the region's farms). The project started as a grassroot civil movement and was taken up by the city. It promotes sustainable public procurement in schools and other public canteens and encourages sustainable food systems through community projects, innovative farming initiatives and empowering citizens to drive local change.

Best organic biodistrict: [Sörmland Biodistrict](#) (Sweden) has been pioneering organic farming since the 1940s, bringing together farms, food processors, restaurants, and an eco-hotel and eco-bank. The [biodistrict](#) makes organic food available to public infrastructures and canteens, bringing local organic products to local consumers. The biodistricts also meets with and brings together farmers and gardeners to enhance landscape diversity by local diversifying production in line with the organic principles.

Best organic food processing Small and Medium Enterprise (SME): [Gino Girolomoni Cooperativa Agricola](#) (Italy), a family-owned cooperative specialised in organic pasta production, continuing the mission of its founder, [Gino Girolomoni](#). The family's lifestyle and production process are organic, from seed to table. They help revitalise and repopulate the local rural area, collaborating fairly with 400 farmers.

Best organic food retailer: [SAiFRESC](#) (Spain), founded by [three farmers](#) in 2011, the company transitioned to organic farming. Using local and short supply chains, they boost agriculture in the Huerta de Valencia, selling 50



types of vegetables, 10 types of herbs and 10 types of fruits and citrus. Thanks to this EU Organic Award, recognition from local institutions to further develop the sector and put good food on the public plate.

Best organic restaurant/food service: [Kalf & Hansen](#) (Sweden), founded in 2014 by [Rune and Fabian Kalf-Hansen](#), is a restaurant chain offering 100% organic, affordable, seasonal Nordic cuisine for more than 10 years. Kalf & Hansen operates two restaurants, provides catering services, and serves organic meals on Swedish trains. They prioritize local sourcing, sustainability, and affordability, forging strong partnerships with local producers to offer fresh, organic meals while maintaining a focus on environmental responsibility.

Read more about the [which other organic practitioners were shortlisted as inspirational examples for food and farming](#).

Panel discussion: Taking stock of the EU Organic Action plan

Following the awards ceremony, representatives the EU institutions, Presidency and agriculture organisations took stock of the EU Organic Action Plan – aimed at improving the supply and demand for organic. Among the plan’s achievements, panellists listed:

- Bringing stakeholders together on the EU Organic Day and through the EU Organic Awards,
- Giving organic the opportunity to position itself as political tool to achieve the EU’s goals,
- Provide a clear frame for Member States and set ambitious national goals for organic.

While the Organic Action Plan supports EU initiatives to increase the market and demand for organic, there is still work ahead. [A recent report by the European Court of Auditors highlights the need for a long-term strategy for organic and support from the Common Agricultural Policy \(CAP\) that strengthens farmers’ position in the value chain in its post-2027 funds](#). The Auditors specifically recommend the European Commission to better integrate environmental and market objectives into the CAP’s support and better target post-2027 funds to develop the organic sector – as [the OrganicTargets4EU project research](#) shows.

The court’s vision is in line with [the strategic dialogue’s recommendations](#) asking both to ensure that farmers who provide more environmental and social benefits are rewarded and calling on the Commission to improve the EU’s strategic approach for the organic sector by defining a long-term vision for the sector beyond 2030.

Panel discussion: Challenges to start an organic business

In the following panels, the winners joined the stage and shared their practical experience, listing some challenges and opportunities they faced in their day-to-day businesses. While these vary, among the shared ones:

- Finances can be a hurdle to set-up and start a business;
- For food businesses it is challenging to keep food products affordable. While local and seasonal products can lower the price, consumers are not always aware about food and how it is grown;
- Consumers’ awareness about the food we eat is still lacking, so awareness campaigns are crucial;
- Generational renewal in farming is challenging, so it is crucial to make farming a more attractive profession;
- Access to land for organic farming is often an issue, governments can make this easier for potential (organic) farmers.

Relive the event:

- Watch the recordings on the [European Commission’s YouTube channel](#),
- On social media using #EUorganic,
- Read the [Commission’s press release announcing the EU Organic Awards winners](#) and our [press release](#).



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

11-14 February 2025
[BIOFACH 2025](#)
Nuremberg, Germany

18 March 2025
[Council Meeting](#)
Online

18-19 August 2025
[European Organic Congress 2025](#)
Copenhagen, Denmark

23 September 2025
[EU Organic Day](#)
Europe

23 September 2025
[EU Organic Awards](#)

2-4 October 2025
[BioExpo](#)
Warsaw, Poland

November 2025 (dates soon)
[Organic Innovation Days](#)
Brussels, Belgium

12-13 November 2025
[Nordic Organic Food Fair](#)
Stockholm, Sweden

18 November 2025
[Council Meeting](#)
Online

27 November 2025
[Organic Food Forum](#)
Organics Europe office, Brussels, Belgium

30 Nov – 2 Dec 2025
[Natexpo](#)
Paris, France

Stay in the know!

- On our website's [event page](#) for a month-by-month overview
- On our [events calendar 2025](#) for all info at a glance

IFOAM Organics Europe's members have **early access** to information and **member-only events**! Go to our [member extranet calendar](#) or read the news on the landing page. If the direct link does not work, scroll down on the landing page until you see 'Network: Events and meetings'.

If you have trouble accessing our member extranet, please:

1. Check that you are not using the extranet in a browser that is already logged in to another SharePoint environment (or use a private browser to login);
2. Check [our extranet login guidelines](#), including an overview of possible problems and solutions.

If that does not work, please reach out to membership@organicseurope.bio, including the email address you are using to login and a screenshot of the error message.



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