The 2017 General Assembly of IFOAM - Organics International passed a recommendation to ask all candidates running for the World Board the same questions regarding our strategy, policies and positions, for the voting members to know more about the people they vote for.

Bablu Kumar Ganguly, India

1. The strategic plan of IFOAM - Organics International 2025 refers to 3 key levers to promote the principles of organic agriculture: supply, demand and policy. On which lever would you like to put the emphasis in your work for IFOAM – Organics International, and why?

All are important and interrelated. I would like to focus on Supply because I have worked for 40 years with farmers and issues related to food and agriculture value chains. I believe that if the wisdom, knowledge and skills of traditional farmers are recognised and promoted, while the world views of processors, traders, retailers and other value chain actors, including consumers, agronomists, businesses and policy makers are enhanced toward our principles, organic production, trade and consumption will grow exponentially and farmers will be able to live a good life too - if something is cheap, someone is losing out somewhere.

2. Please share your thoughts on which actors in our movement could contribute to which parts to make our common vision come true.

In an organic world, farmers are the primary teachers and producers, while they are guardians and care takers of mother Earth. Other actors in the value chain support this work following the principles of fairness, care, ecology and health. They compensate the farmer the true cost of her/his work, offer the consumers (eaters) good, clean food, participate in food, health, soil, wild life, domestic animal research and innovation with farmers, doctors and other care givers, conduct trainings for the uninitiated, advocate with policy makers and industrial conglomerates to take ecologically safe decisions, campaign against any unfair and destructive actions.

3. What do you propose in order to get a real transformation in agriculture, in general, and more specifically, in your role as a WB member?

I would to reach out to as many farmers and farmer organisations as possible, following varied forms of organic and regenerative agriculture, and invite them under one umbrella. While trying to be inclusive, as is our position in Organic 3.0, I will not compromise the principles of Organic nor hesitate to take a firm stand against any issue that does. True transformation begins at home. If IFOAM-Organics International is the leader of the organic movement then we, the WB members, are the trustees and must ensure that IFOAM remains a learning organization and the movement remains true to its principles.
4. Reflecting on the development of new GM breeding techniques such as Crispr CAS: where do you see challenges and issues for the organic sector?

This almost feels like a lost battle - UN and intergovernmental organisations backing it and conglomerates pumping money in, Governments caving in because the bogey of increasing productivity to feed the world remains prevalent, and recently ‘climate adaptation’ is used. But all is not lost! To quote a friend “we must be able to dance with the elephants without getting stepped on”. There are a large number of CSO’, policy makers/analysts, researchers, agronomists and businesses who see through this bogey. We need to bring them together and build a solid evidence based public campaign to tackle this head on.

5. The SDGs of the United Nations are aiming at sustainability in all areas of life and development. How do you make the SDGs a reality in your own life?

I have been living on the land, an organic way of life, following the four principles, including solar power and low energy housing, for the past 30 years. My organisation’s work and that of the Cooperatives, we have promoted, is based on fulfilling almost all of the SDGs. We do ecorestoration work along with conservation of wildlife. We produce organic food and much of what we eat is organic, wild and natural, we produce our own vegetable oil-based soaps, dish wash, floor wash, infused hair oils, pickles, natural dyed woven cloth. We engage in promoting a circular localised economy.

6. The work of IFOAM–Organics International is partly financed by membership fee, and for a greater deal by donors and foundations. What experience and skills can you bring to support acquiring financial resources?

I have been raising money for the organizations I have been involved with for the past 40 years. One can say I am quite experienced and successful in raising both local and international, including EU, donor funds without compromising on our principles and vision. I have over the years also been quite successful at crowd sourcing for the Coops. I have observed that IFOAM – Organics International continues to raise funds using traditional methods. It may be time to look beyond and use newer techniques and sources and I am able to apply my experience to that.