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 so that voting members know more about the people they vote for.

Jacques Caplat, France

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?

During my career, I have acquired experience in accompanying farmers towards organic, whose needs I know well, and in the elaboration and negotiation of public policies. This is why I have a lot to contribute to the "policy" lever, especially since the evolution of agriculture cannot be achieved only by the addition of individual actions but requires changes in the framework that constrains farmers (externalities, charges, subsidies, recognition...). My ease at popularising may also help to convince institutional partners. I will also be able to get involved in the development of the supply, which was my first job.

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

IFOAM – Organics International must remain a pooling of distinct collective histories with their own legitimacies. Each member organisation must have direct access to the debates and decisions. However, it is essential to create a collective dynamic. Economic organisations that have human and financial resources cannot be content with defending their specific interests, but must pool them with the farmers' movements. Facing the agrochemical lobbies, the promotion of organic technical alternatives to the farming world and political decision-makers is a duty for all. This collective vision must be linked to local realities, by favouring national consultations rather than administrative regional bodies.

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?

The transformation of agriculture first demands awareness, next, a collective determination, and then technical and economical resources. For the past ten years, I have devoted myself mainly to the first (books, conferences, expert missions), and I intend to continue to do so on a global scale within the Board. Building a collective will requires intense partnerships with civil society movements. This is one area where I can play a valuable role, through my contacts with peasant agroecology and peasant rights organizations, and my involvement in the environmental movement. Technical and economical means require adapted policies (see first question).
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?

These techniques are of course contradictory to the principles of organic agriculture. There is no point in getting caught up in a debate about molecular genetics, when the stakes are agronomical and social. By definition, GM techniques are centralized and result from a human will: they are nonsensical in the context of climate change. Farmers need plants that can continuously adapt to local evolutions, through in situ farmer selection - and not a headlong rush into off-ground selection. Moreover, these techniques deny farmers' knowledge and cannot be locally appropriated; they are a negation of the basic principles of development.

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?

This question has many dimensions. The fact that I dedicate my life to the development of organic farming, to the protection of the environment and to human rights is already a dynamic and constant application of these principles! From the point of view of my private life, being from a rich country, it implies first of all to detach myself from certain habits, and then to try to put myself in the shoes of the disadvantaged. As an anthropologist, I am very attached to the fact that development is driven by the people concerned and not by external authorities.

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?

My experience as a member of the board of a French environmental NGO teaches me that it is possible to mobilize the financial support of citizens (Agir Pour l'Environnement is entirely financed by individual donations, without any corporate funding). This implies a work of pedagogy to convince of the importance of the actions carried out and to morally involve the public. This same work can mobilize foundations; we need to be convinced, enthusiastic... and persistent.