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.

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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?

They are inseparable, but policy is my strength. Policy needs to be driven from the ground up. Pacific and EU experience demonstrates that drive from farmers, their organisations and consumers can be instrumental in focusing policy. Thinking about the millions of farmers in Asia, Africa and the Americas, there is huge power. My focus would be working with Regional Bodies on tools for farmers and consumers to engage impactfully in policy dialogue, including ensuring policies support supply (farmers, research, conversion, value chain development etc) as well as demand -raising awareness amongst consumers and likeminded movements of the value of organic.

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

Farmers could endeavour towards best practice. Share knowledge widely, be active in networks raising farmers voices to policy makers. Keep the movement focused on core issues- organic food production and livelihoods – and please continue to feed us! Value chain actors could develop fair business models and work to expand markets. Researchers work WITH farmers strengthening participatory research. Advocates could ensure messages are aligned to the Principles. There is a Samoan expression “Our destiny is insight when we paddle our canoe together”, the IFOAM Organics International governance structures should ensure united action through actively engaging members in policy and strategy discussions.

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?

Organic 3.0 needs concrete implementation with strong positioning of organic. We need clear messaging of organics points of difference and solutions and to provide strong evidence, examples and tools for others. We must equally reflect on our own standards and positions and ensure we are staying true to the Principles, setting a benchmark for best agricultural, social and environmental practice. As a WB member I will be a guardian of this, supporter of the farmers role, and ensure IFOAM Organics Internationals plans and strategies are developed participatorily, are aspirational, clear, and measurable so we continue to build evidence based influence.
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?

The challenge is that already we see weakening of regulations in some places and that can trigger the domino effect, we also see key influencers of policy promoting these technologies and using issues such as nutrition and climate adaptation as justification. At the same time public knowledge and understanding of the new technologies is weak and there is a relatively low level of public discourse on issues and risks. We need to ACTIVELY galvanize and lead the key sectors – environment, health, agriculture, scientists – and governments that are standing firm- to work together raise public awareness and push the precautionary principle.

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’m fortunate that my work everyday involves collaborating with Pacific peoples and Governments on achieving the SDG’s and transforming the food system. I am grateful for this opportunity where I can strongly promote organic as a solution. I continue to advocate in daily life and endeavor to walk the talk – buying organic food and textiles wherever possible, growing a small organic garden, supporting local community farmers and food makers, and reducing plastic use by making my own cleaning and bath products. I also work to support young people and women into leadership roles, which are essential to achieve the SDG’s.

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 extensive experience in developing donor funded projects, mobilizing resources directly benefitting farmers and including cost structures that enable retention of higher levels of project funds for core organisational purposes. I’m most familiar with donors in the Oceania region but have had success accessing global programs like Green Climate Fund. However, we should balance project income with other sources, to have more flexible funding to respond to members priorities and achieve objectives. We need sponsors, donations and partnerships – while practicing strong due diligence to ensure we aren’t coopted for greenwashing. I am able to work on building those relationships.