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.

Marco Schlüter, Germany

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?

Any World board member needs to embrace IFOAM OI strategy including all three levers and to continuously develop it further. If asked about my specific contribution I can bring in my experience of almost 13 years of lobbying EU institutions and influence policy as well as experience in my current assignment to improve livelihoods of smallholders around the world within capacity building projects. The latter I consider as extremely important as we don’t have time anymore to wait for policy to make the change alone – we must implement it in the region, worldwide.

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

We possibly witness a momentum in policy for a more sustainable future. With the US re-joining the Paris climate agreement and the EU calling for a new Green deal with 25 percent organic change has become a possibility. The organic movement needs to be one main driver building powerful alliances. Here is where the IFOAM Action Group comes in to shape this transformation, from regional to global, from farmer to scientist. Our membership will play a key role at national level. IFOAM OI’s mandate is to empower the movement to be effective each part at its level.

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 global challenges have become more real than ever thought. The world needs a functioning organic movement bringing in its capacity to build bridges, to showcase alternatives to the current self-destruction system and as living example that self-initiative at local level can make a difference.
The organic movement is strong if its regional, global and sector level act hand in hand. Here, I am committed to contribute to a good functioning and governed IFOAM Action Group as I was involved in 2011 when the current IFOAM Action Group was initiated.
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 biggest challenge will be to maintain organic value chains GM free as industry tries to bypass government legislations claiming the new breeding techniques as “non GM”. Thus, we must keep the worldwide pressure high to ensure that policy ensures a proper detection and labeling regime of such techniques. In the COVID crises the world has witnessed biotechnology to help developing effective vaccines. Whilst this might lead to bigger acceptance in world societies the organic sector must highlight the risks of the green biotechnology that cannot be controlled acting in an open environment versus a laboratory environment of red biotechnology.

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?

We can only preach what we are willing to be ourselves. I give importance to treat my environment with respect, fairness, and humor. I believe that we - as human beings - are all struggling with the same contradictions. Thus, I believe we should seek to make small steps towards true sustainability every day instead of expecting the perfect immediately. For me, this starts from reducing flights to long-distance and essential only, support financially poor families during COVID lockdowns in South East Asia as well as ensure that any financial savings are not used for unsustainable projects.

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?

Securing finance has been a central part of my professional path. This includes acquisition as well as the strategic and governance dimension. As IFOAM EU director I was successfully setting up the funding strategy enabling the organization to grow from a zero to over a million EURO budget organization. This included two membership fee reforms, sponsor and diverse project acquisition. At Naturland I oversee our project acquisition and strategic partnership management. Acquiring successfully financial resources is key. However, as perquisite you need to have a strategic vision about the organization’s value proposition translating it to an accordingly fitting funding model.