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.

Marty Mesh, USA

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?

I have intimate and extensive experience in all 3 of these areas and believe I could contribute to the work within each of them. If I had to limit my involvement, I would be drawn to Demand as well as Policy & Guarantee. I believe these two levers, orchestrated carefully and effectively, can make increasing Supply much easier. I perceive the area of emphasis of any Board should be supporting staff as appropriate to meet ongoing strategic goals and objectives.

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

Certainly any and potentially all environmental, sustainable farming, consumer, improved food system organizations and health related efforts, objective research / science organizations, climate change organizations and educational organizations could contribute in all parts. Universities can be potential allies in a number of ways. Grant makers and Foundations can help targeted efforts or programs. Individual Companies including but not limited to retailers, wholesalers, companies involved in manufacturing / handling, marketing, transportation, research, testing, media entities, can all be helpful in our success.

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?

Recognizing the planet is in danger and human activity is responsible, the way agriculture has evolved to externalize the true cost of cheap food must be reversed. A commitment to Social Justice for all in agriculture & food systems should be the rule, not the exception. I believe organic farmers should be compensated for the environmental services they provide. Private ownership of land should be evaluated to see if other models facilitate a better future. I remain active in policy on all levels and would bring my decades of work to helping IFOAM in both government and corporate levels.
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?

I believe that new technologies must be independently and carefully evaluated. Questions need to be asked including - Who wins? Who loses? At what cost? Who pays? With the introduction of herbicide resistant seeds, we have seen: BT resistance, herbicide resistant weeds, and the use of more toxic herbicide. The very fact that many millions of people actively choose to support organic farming and buy organic products because they simply do not want their families consuming GE food has to be carefully considered. How the organic community handles it could drive consumers and market to less organic and more Non GMO offerings.

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 spent almost 50 years actively doing most of the UN goals as well as forming nonprofit (NGO) organizations which serve the public interest and work on those same goals. This included growing an organic farm for 45 years that paid everyone the same & dictating prices throughout the supply chain so everyone could afford good organic food, The nonprofit I helped birth and led engaged in education of farmers, the public, and policymakers, healthy food access, and growing organic agriculture locally, throughout the US, and globally. I haven’t changed my hopes, passion, or dedication and I work with others.

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?

In my almost 50 - year professional, farming, and business life, I contributed to many millions of dollars being earned, raised, awarded, contributed and acquired. I was named one of the “25 Most Influential People Developing the Organic Industry” in a Published List in 2008 by New Hope Media’s Natural Foods Merchandiser. I led a non-profit for over 20 years, served on many nonprofit Boards that all needed money to do the important work they undertook. I have no hesitation helping in fundraising, meeting with foundations, potential donors, Companies, or participating in the process of developing and reviewing grant proposals.