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.

Robert Blakemore, UK/Australia

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?

Supply follows Demand, Demand requires proven benefit/legislation. 100% organic food grows when people realize improvements in health, environment, and tax savings on agrichemical-subsidies or medical/pollution costs. Unfortunately, the chemical lobby heavily influences media, academia and politics. Remedy is verifiable scientific data with proven benefits: Organics has both truth & proof on its side. My emphasis is this scientific fulcrum levering all three IFOAM departments because organic foods taste better whilst preserving healthy soils and biota (all demonstrable). Promotion is by relentlessly presenting this honest information to policy makers and public also explaining true costs/hazards of chemicals while offering better alternatives.

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

Soil provides >99% human food and supports >95% biodiversity. Despite this, organic is <1.5% total farming with <0.15% research funding. Around 50-80% global food comes from smallholdings, mainly in poorer countries. Many farmers are aging and suffer ill-health. Only with organic food is soil, health and environment preserved. Based on these facts, my vision is directing a new generation of fit young farmer “actors” to focus towards the future as teacher-leaders of organic Permaculture. I concur with Bill Mollison: “We must turn all our resources to repairing the natural world, and train all our young people to help...”:

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 farming condenses to healthy soils. Powerful opponents with much false propaganda claim it is primitive, “anti-science” with lower yields thus requiring more land. True facts are available and soil renaissance is overdue. Unlike many other agronomists, I actually grew up living and working on mixed farms. Unlike most other academics, I am unconstrained by threats of grant cuts or job-loss if I openly advocate organic. Rather than faith-based, my role as WB member is verifiable fact-based and if any of my soil research is disproven I will gladly retract or correct as all reputable Scientists should (but rarely do).

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?

My considered view is GMO = OMG! At first GMs seem credible, offering promise and potential. Reality is simply an extension of reductionist models but more dangerous as, unlike chemicals, biological entities replicate & spread irretrievably in global experiments that all inevitably fail. The precautionary challenge is for organics to offer better, safer and proven alternatives based upon solid ecological data for any claims made by GMO marketeers. This way their true need/cost/benefits are undone. E.g., since 1843 wheat yields are as consistently sustainable (www.era.rothamsted.ac.uk/dataset/rbk1/01-OAWWYields), soil organic C double, and earthworms 5.7 times higher in Rothamsted’s organic FYM plots:

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?
UN’s SDGs are commendable but overlook soil as an essential foundation for achievement; e.g., Goal 15 ([https://www.globalgoals.org/15-life-on-land “Life On Land” not “in” soils!]) mentions “soil” just once with many 2020 deadline fails.

Economy is subordinate to Ecology having Society in-between and food linking all Goals ([www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2016-06-14-how-food-connects-all-the-sdgs.html](http://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2016-06-14-how-food-connects-all-the-sdgs.html)); however, this too omits organics and the key healthy Soil foundation (as in my graphic):

How I make SDGs a reality is by promoting soil restoration via organic husbandry and, from 1988, Permaculture advocacy. Living modestly with Nature, since 1983 I quit red-meat (as did Lady Eve Balfour at age of just eight).

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?

Soil ecology, that I have researched over 40 years, is key to fix global challenges of topsoil loss, biodiversity and climate. IPCC are unequivocal that excess CO₂ is due to: “Fossil fuel burning and land-use change.” with soils the greatest carbon source & store. Such realization will redirect current funding for overhyped and ineffective Marine, BECCS or fantasy DAC schemes to refocus on soils. Thus, rather than “decarbonization”, the greater need is to “recarbonize” soils, as only organic farming can, with vermicompost & humus. Latest 2020 Drawdown Review (page 13) confirms soils offer largest practical CO₂ carbon sink (~98.5%):
Support Sinks

TOTAL: MIN 242.3 | MAX 397.8

Land Sinks
- Shift Agriculture Practices: 116.0 / 193.3
- Use Degraded Land: 43.0 / 77.6
- Protect & Restore Ecosystems: 78.1 / 120.1

Coastal & Ocean Sinks
- Protect & Restore Ecosystems: 1.1 / 1.5

Engineered Sinks
- Remove and Store Carbon: 3.2 / 4.4