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 level would you like to put the emphasis in your work for IFOAM – Organics International, and why?

The three levers are so interlinked that it’s difficult to choose either of them. But as a Researcher and now an Organic farmer, I would like to advocate at policy level with real farmer experience and the knowledge collected from the organic farmer organisations globally. Additionally, it would be beneficial to bring the small scale farmers and their farmer organisations into the mainstream governing local production and consumption through appropriate short supply chains.

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

Farmers as the primary actors of the movement and Farmer organisations as the repositories of farmer’s traditional knowledge, could be involved since the very beginning from designing till execution of either a Project or a Policy Dialogue and not in the end as beneficiaries. We need farmer stories being recorded and analysed by researchers who pass it on to lobbyist who change policy to enable farmers to be supported in the whole process. Understanding the roles of each stakeholder of the organic value chain with effective communication between them and building synergies would catalyze us towards achieving our common vision.

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?

Aggregating farmer organisations into the movement of INOFO in order that we can record, analyse and articulate what the reality is for farmers working for biodiversity, health and nutrition, in different ways designing regenerative systems today that will enjoy continuity through the 7th generation systems.

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?

Though the new GM breeding techniques such as Crispr CAS are claimed to be more precise in the DNA insertion than the normal Genetic Engineering, it is still un-controllable and un-natural. All the issues that existed in the past will continue with increased challenges. The push from big agriculture MNCs to ensure that there is further uptake of their technologies means that the traditional farmer technologies are further under threat. We need to document and highlight the benefit of traditional farmer technologies with inclusion
of the pillars - environment, people and profit in our narratives. This way we will demonstrate the inequalities of the GM breeding techniques by demonstrating the efficiency of scale and not focusing on the economies of scale to push profit.

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?

Being a nature driven organic farmer, the SDG’s have always been part of our daily farm practice. We have an agriculture system based on local and renewable resources, which integrates animal and crop production including crop rotation and a better recycling of biomass and nutrients. We do not use of artificial fertilizers and chemical pesticides and in this regard, we are not contributing to the pollution of our water systems and hence saving animals under water. Same applies to the soil and land animals (SDG 6, SDG 14, SDG 15). Since we also build healthy soils that take up CO2 and we do not use any chemicals that produce CO2, we are part of the solution (SDG 13). This and more examples show that we as organic farmers have a positive impact on around 7-8 of the 17 goals aiming at regeneration and hence sustainability.

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?

This is a tough question indeed, as acquiring financial resources is always a challenge when the end results are often not aligned between grant funders and grant applicants. As the President of INOFO (current), INOFO farmer organisations are embarking on equipping themselves with the ability to scope their needs and then look for organisations that can assist them in the regeneration of their systems, in a holistic manner. By bringing the farmer organisations more into the project design phase of projects, stakeholder alignment prior to project onset, will result in better impact of projects, with communities being able to continue with the work after project completion without being totally dependent on the replenishment cycles of grant funds. This is addressing constraints within a system from a holistic perspective and not from a single view point. Again working with the aggregation of farmer organisations, I hope that the collective will be able to raise additional interest in funders wanting to support farmer organisations in their work – growing food for all.