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.

Simone Tully, 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?

Two levers: 1. Supply – my experience can assist other nations and regions in building supply chains; and 3. Policy – for a region that represents 50% of the world land area certified to organic production, we have a huge deficit in institutional and academic support/contribution. Farmers are investing in their sustainable landscape, planning for succession, and well prepared for dry seasons through ground cover, regenerative practices and lower stocking rates. The triple bottom line really works! Now the goal is to link the organic supply expansion to the lagging policy development and inclusion for the contribution that the organic sector can make for future generations.

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

There are two sectors where the organic movement underperforms, particularly in the Oceania region. We need to bring in academia and institutions as we have limited technical and peer reviewed support for organics. This takes a significant lobbying and networking effort, which will lead into stronger policy development. The successful outcome would be the evolution of a virtuous circle of R&D funding, supported by maturing policy platforms.

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?

To change the world, one farm at time. I can offer to lead by example and will work hard to move the organic sector to the centre of the debate on agriculture, carbon, and environmental stewardship. I propose to find methods to strengthen the conversation linking organic farming as a solution to carbon sequestration outcomes. I also propose to bring the regenerative farming trend closer to the organic sector as a pathway to successful triple bottom line outcomes. I also note that ACIAR – Australia’s aid programs – has never had a single export organic aid program. It is more than overdue.
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 strongly maintain my position against GM and support the existing IFOAM policy. The world movement is one of the strongest proponents to hold in check the forceful expansion of GM products. Without restraint, it is a category that can be tempted to advantage of weaker trading partners, farmers, and enforce burdensome royalty agreements. Many are given approval with little long term peer reviewed research into the long-term impacts on sensitive ecosystems and human, animal, and plant health.

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?

The 17 Sustainability Development Goals – these goals must remain central to the development of everything we do in a policy context. As a fourth-generation Australian farmer I actively live by a number of those goals. I have a strong sense of social justice and this is reflected in my dedication to building sustainable projects in the Pacific Islands to ensure additional income flows back to the farmers. Bringing consumers closer to the land and understanding the power that consumer choices have brings me hope that we can make a real difference.

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?

Currently I am actively encouraging the formation of an Oceania Regional Body. I can offer my networks and lobbying experience within the Oceania region. In addition to actively lifting the membership representation from the region, it is important to consider targeted philanthropic and government funding support for projects that further strengthen the movement. Australia is well below contributing a fair share, despite having the 12th highest GDP/capita in the world.