French bid for 20th Organic World Congress (OWC) and General Assembly of IFOAM - Organics International

OWC 2020
Rennes

From its roots, organic agriculture inspires life
I. France’s multi-faceted bid

French actors and movements in organic farming are ready to hold the 2020 Organic World Congress in France, the country where IFOAM - Organics International was founded on the initiative of Roland Chevriot, chairman of Nature & Progrès at the time. This congress will be an opportunity to look back at how the movement was formed and to dig over the roots of organic farming, as we work together to outline the solutions we can use to tackle future challenges.

The French bid: an opportunity spurred by community support

The goals of this event are:

• conveying a message and sharing our vision of an organic future
• showing French agriculture experiences and sharing good practices
• forging closer links by mobilizing stakeholders in support of this federative and cohesive event
• benefiting from international visibility
• boosting synergies and cross-border partnerships

The context and dynamics of the growth in organic farming in France and Brittany

In France¹, organic farming is undergoing rapid expansion on both the supply side (12% increase in the number of farmers and 16% growth in surface areas farmed using organic methods; 10% rise in the number of processors from 2015 to 2016) and in demand (20% increase in the number of organic products sold in 2016 vs. 2015), and 7 out of 10 French people regularly consume organic foods.

At the end of 2015, France was ranked 3rd among European countries in terms of UAA devoted to organic farming, and 2nd in terms of organic product sales.

Brittany is a dynamic agricultural region surrounded by the sea. It has the sixth largest organic agricultural surface area in France and the number of certified organic farms has more than doubled in five years. There are over 1,000 downstream operators (processors and distributors) and Brittany is one of France’s leading regions for the consumption of organic produce.

In addition, there is an extensive network of research and experimentation coordinated by the umbrella organization for the organic sector, Initiative Bio Bretagne.

It is in this fertile area that we are aiming to host the 20th Organic World Congress (OWC 2020).

From its roots, organic agriculture inspires life

This title reflects the main thread we have selected for the congress in France:

• IFOAM took its roots in France, and has since grown and spread to other continents;
• The roots symbolize the founding principles of organic farming, that creates a continuum of life from the roots of plants, which tap into the living soil to provide vitality for the benefit of human beings;
• An opportunity to outline solutions that put Organic 3.0 vision into action.

¹ Source: Agence Bio, 2016 survey
II. 10 compelling reasons to select France

1. A bid backed by members of IFOAM France (French members of IFOAM - Organics International), supported by the national, regional and local authorities; a multi-stakeholder grouping with experience of previous OWC/GA and firmly anchored in the European networks.

2. Very dynamic growth for organic farming in France: 12% rise in the number of farmers, 16% growth in agricultural surface area, 20% increase in organic products sold (2016 versus 2015), 7 out of 10 French people regularly consume organic foods.

3. Brittany, the host region: an agricultural area where organic farming is growing rapidly and with a vibrant technical, scientific and community network.

4. Rennes, a city within easy reach of the rest of France and Europe, just 90 minutes from Paris.

5. A congress where visitors can get around entirely on foot, contributing to the sustainable approach: the historic city of Rennes was the French capital of biodiversity in 2016 and is committed to an Agenda 21 action plan.

6. A congress centre at the heart of the city: "Le Couvent des Jacobins" is a historical (14th century) yet modern and innovative venue, unlike any other in Europe. The ideal location for an eco-responsible congress, suited to the requirements of the OWC 2020 (meeting rooms, exhibition halls, local and organic catering).

7. A comprehensive range of accommodation: over 4,000 hotel rooms, 2,100 of which are found in the city centre; guest houses also available.

8. Gastronomy: 1,129 restaurants and bars nearby, and an array of local festivities.

9. A warm welcome and strong local support: organic markets, demonstrations and feedback sessions (equipment, farms, businesses, specialist stores) and local visits.

10. For its 20th congress in 2020, an opportunity to "go back to our roots" to design the future, in the country where IFOAM - Organics International was formed at a Nature & Progrès congress in 1972.

III. Partners and supporters

In line with the latest IFOAM rules on the organization of the OWC 2020 (Policy 15, 2017), the organizing consortium comprises:

• **Local Host**: ITAB (leader) and its French partners (French members of IFOAM, Agence Bio and INRA researchers)

• **Conference organizer**: Destination Rennes and other service providers to be defined

• **oi!events gGmbH**

1. **Local Host organizations**

The organization headed by ITAB is backed by a consortium of French IFOAM members and associated partners.

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**Local host: ITAB (IFOAM member)**

Founded 35 years ago, ITAB is the French technical institute of organic farming. It is a key actor in organic research and experimentation and its members include national and regional entities fully or partially dedicated to organic agriculture. ITAB brings together farmers, experts from the field and researchers to expand technical knowledge of organic farming, for use by both organic and conventional farmers. ITAB promotes the values of consultation, co-construction and sharing as it pursues its role as national coordinator. With strong experience in events organization (more than 50 scientific and technical congresses and conferences organized over the past 20 years) and heavy involvement in the European research networks and projects.
**Co-organizers, IFOAM members**

**ABioDoc** is the national centre for organic farming resources, a department of VetAgro Sup, the organization that manages the French-language document database specialized in organic farming (Biobase).

**Ecocert** is France’s leading certification agency specialized in organic farming. Ecocert has contributed to the growth of organic agriculture by helping to draft the French and European regulations.

**FNAB** (national organic farming federation) : since 1978, France’s only professional farming network specialized in organic agriculture. Operating as a local skills networks, it comprises a national federation and regional or departmental groups across the country.

**GRAB** (organic farming research group) is a centre for testing and expertise, recognized at national and European level. GRAB carries out organic trials for and with farmers in three regions of southeast France.

**IBB** (Initiative Bio Bretagne) is a network of businesses and stakeholders involved in organic farming in Brittany. IBB develops and promotes organic farming and the food processing sector, supporting and boosting its growth while coordinating regional research and innovation.

**MABD** (biodynamic farming movement) is the federation of regional, national and French-speaking organizations involved in biodynamic agriculture.

**Nature & Progrès** is a federation of local groups. Founded in 1964, it brings together civilians and professional members that have received its endorsement to promote and develop organic farming. It advocates Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS).

**SYNABIO** is a French network bringing together over 160 companies from the specialist organic processing and distribution sector.

**Formabio** is an agricultural training network formed to help agricultural training establishments implement initiatives to develop organic farming.

**Other co-organizers**

**Agence Bio** (French agency for the development and promotion of organic farming) is the national platform for information and action and contributes to the drive to develop, promote and structure organic farming in France.

**INRA** is the French national institute for agricultural research, the leading agricultural research in Europe and second largest institution in the world for the number of publications in the fields of agricultural sciences.

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**2. Conference organizer : Destination Rennes**

Destination Rennes is an SPL - or local public company - whose shares are held by Rennes Métropole and Ville de Rennes. Its task is to make the greater Rennes area more attractive to the urban tourism and conference markets. Destination Rennes also runs "Le Couvent des Jacobins" congress centre and provides certain logistics services (help and assistance for the organizing committee, an interface with local institutional stakeholders, a guaranteed list of service providers who have all been checked, provision of dedicated areas at stations and airports to greet congress attendees, and so on).

**3. oilevents gGmbH**

Representatives from ITAB (local host) went to meet IFOAM - Organics International and oilevents gGmbH in Bonn on 14 March 2017, to present the French bid and discuss ways of working together.

**4. Conference supporters**

The Ministry of agriculture, food industry and the forest, the Ministry of foreign affairs and international development, Brittany regional council and the Ville de Rennes municipality all enthusiastically back this project. All their letters of support can be found in the appendices.

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**IV. Content**

**From past to future**

OWC 2020 in Rennes, held amidst the city’s historical heritage, will be seeking to move organic agriculture towards the future, drawing strength from its ethical, historical and scientific roots. Organic farming began to organize itself in western France in the late 1950s and gained momentum thanks to the pioneers and movements that have promoted the organic sector, helping its founding values earn political recognition and giving it an international dimension. The organizations that then emerged and came together within IFOAM France were present at the major historical IFOAM milestones : from the basic standards, to the guarantee systems and the need for a "link to the soil". These men and women, with links to the organic sector, are still involved today and are naturally part of the OWC 2020 organizing team for Rennes.

**From roots to human life**

In line with Organic 3.0 vision, the organic future promoted by OWC 2020 in Rennes will remain centered on living processes and diversity. It will be boosted by knowledge renewed by synergy between
the practitioners and researchers, and by men and women, their values and their solidarity organizations. OWC 2020 will be advocating for these values to be reintroduced at every level of the food system, from the scientific aspect to its social and economic organization.

OWC 2020 will be a forum for pooling and expanding on knowledge on the health of the planet and of living species. The pioneers’ observations affirmed that there was a vital link between soil health and the health of plants, animals and humans. Through Organic 3.0, our ambition is to enhance the pioneers’ intuitions with the diverse range of organic farming practices found across the world, and to back them up with new scientific knowledge.

From here to there
OWC 2020 will be an opportunity to meet actors in organic farming and organizations in the local food chains, involved in their national, European or broader networks including like-minded movements. Within their networks, they promote local production and share know-how and scientific knowledge in order to promote sustainable development and the harmonious enrichment of cultures.

V. Programme

The Organic World Congress, General Assembly and all the related events will be held from 21 to 27 September 2020.

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<tr>
<th>What ?</th>
<th>When ?</th>
<th>How ?</th>
<th>Where ?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-conference events</td>
<td>21 and 22 September</td>
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<td>Opening ceremony</td>
<td>23 September, in the morning</td>
<td>Large audience (possible involvement of civil society : 3,200 seats) ; cultural event (concert, show, play, etc,)</td>
<td>Rennes, Le Liberté hall</td>
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<td>Conferences</td>
<td>23 - 25 September</td>
<td>Main Track : From historical roots to a culture based on life</td>
<td>Rennes conference centre, &quot;Le Couvent des Jacobins&quot;</td>
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<td>Farmers’ Track : From organic pioneers to embedded innovations</td>
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<td>Scientific Track : The living continuum from roots to food for health</td>
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<td>Sustainable food systems track</td>
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<td>Workshops : Any interested party can apply to host a workshop</td>
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<td>Professional trade show / organic market / festival</td>
<td>23 - 25 September</td>
<td>A BioFach type professional trade show in the exhibition hall. A festive, welcoming congress open to the city and its citizens : organic markets in the areas surrounding the congress, cultural events, special initiatives for schoolchildren, students and teachers to raise awareness about organic farming and sustainable practices.</td>
<td>Rennes conference centre, &quot;Le Couvent des Jacobins&quot;</td>
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<td>Gala dinner</td>
<td>24 September, in the evening</td>
<td>A typically French cultural evening : a show and French organic and local cuisine.</td>
<td>Rennes conference centre, &quot;Le Couvent des Jacobins&quot;</td>
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<td>IFOAM General Assembly : Motion bazaar</td>
<td>25 September, in the evening</td>
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<td>Rennes</td>
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<td>IFOAM General Assembly</td>
<td>26 - 27 September, in the morning</td>
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<td>Rennes</td>
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Alongside the congress, there will be a number of tours:

- **Tours of Brittany's organic farms and businesses** for a more tangible view of the various forms of agriculture found in the area, and especially organic farming initiatives involved in the many participatory research projects, such as the H2020 European projects.
- **Cultural tours** of Rennes (its historic centre, contemporary Rennes, street art, gastronomic Rennes, etc.), the Brittany region (Saint-Malo, Mont Saint-Michel, the gateway to Brittany) or other parts of France.
**Rennes, Brittany’s capital**

Rennes is a large French city and is very keen to host OWC 2020. Rennes and its region support an array of initiatives advocating good quality food and a new agricultural models. Rennes’ commitments are real assets when it comes to supporting such developments: for example, the city is firmly committed to biodiversity and was named French capital of biodiversity in 2016. From the wider angle of local food governance, Rennes works with several other urban communities to devise strategies that connect agriculture with the local food chain, most notably within the framework of the Milan food policy pact signed in 2017, and the implementation of its Sustainable Food Plan. These programmes stimulate cross-cutting approaches that take on-board various aspects of public policy (nutrition, employment, social inclusion, health, education, urbanism, etc.). Rennes supports the “positive food family challenge”, and an original local development project encompassing environmental protection, agriculture and tourism in the Vilaine valley.

*Rennes tops the sustainable city rankings in France*  
*Rennes, committed to an Agenda 21 action plan*  
*Rennes committed to a sustainable food plan*

**A congress in the city centre, at the "Le Couvent des Jacobins" Centre**

This convention centre is unique in Europe: it is located in a 14th-century building and is thus steeped in seven centuries of history. It is an innovative, smart building, combining heritage and modernity. It is opening in January 2018 and will provides a wide range of spaces the congress requires:

- Fully accessible to persons with reduced mobility
- 1 main auditorium seating up to 1,000 people (up to 1,200 on request)
- The Room 500 up to 500 seated people in theater configuration (600 m²)
- 1,400 seat auditorium inside the convent’s former church
- 4,000 m² of modular space to house the exhibition (including posters) and catering services
- 25 meeting rooms available at the same time
- Up to 6,000 people altogether

The convention centre can be reached on foot (or via public transport) from all the city’s hotels and from the station, which is just **90 minutes from Paris**. Another hall, able to accommodate 3,200 people (seated) is available in the city centre for the event's opening sessions and to welcome the public.

**VII. Event communication**

Communication and information flows will be managed by the promoting committee, who will coordinate the communication plan. All the local, national and international networks of every partner in the organizing consortium will be used to make sure information on the event is circulated as widely as possible. Agence Bio (co-organizer) will lead efforts to reach the goal of **50% French participation**. To ensure Europe-wide awareness, we will call on IFOAM-EU and TP Organics, organizations of which we are members. International promotion will involve our contacts in the French-speaking world and international organizations such as IFOAM - Organics International, TIPi and ISOFAR.

The main targets identified are farmers, the scientific community, extension services, value system actors, teachers and trainers, pupils and students, civil society, NGOs, policy makers and journalists.

The main channels being considered to reach these targets are the **OWC 2020 website, social media, newsletters, newsfeeds, targeted emails, conferences and press releases, and flyers and promotional leaflets**. In addition, there will be extensive **media coverage** (radio, TV and press) of the event before, during and afterwards. Locally, communication may make use of the facilities provided by Destination Rennes: visibility at airports, in stations and in public transport, urban signage, and information in local authority publications.
VIII. Logistics

The organizing committee will call on the expertise of Destination Rennes and oil!events gGmbH for all the congress’s logistics requirements.

A. Accommodation

There are more than 4,000 hotels in the Rennes urban area, including 2,100 in the city centre, ranging from small, friendly establishments to prestigious 5-star hotels. Destination Rennes guarantees hotel allotments in every range and at guaranteed preferential ‘early-bird’ rates if booked more than 30 days ahead. Destination Rennes will provide a free web platform which all congress attendees can use to book a room online. Farming families will be called on to accommodate the organizations’ delegates and congress attendees, and shuttle services to the congress venue will be available for people who opt to stay in rural accommodation.

B. Interpreting

A professional simultaneous interpreting service will be provided at the event. Professional interpreters will translate into several languages (at least, English, French and Spanish).

C. Environmental protection and organic farming

There is a sustainable development requirement applicable to the entire hosting/accommodation chain. The French events industry performance calculator will be used to provide social (jobs), economic, environmental, scientific and media indicators.

Transports : whether you plan to come by train or plane, Rennes is within easy reach of the rest of France (90 mins from Paris) and Europe, and is close to the big French and Europe cities. The station, the congress centre, the gala dinner venue, and hotels and restaurants are all located in the pedestrian heart of old Rennes. Visitors will thus be able to get around entirely on foot, another plus point for our sustainable approach. There is also a fleet of 900 self-service bicycles and a park-and-ride system linked to the city centre via the metro network. Congress attendees can also use the very efficient public transport system, fully accessible to people with reduced mobility.

Meals : All meals and drinks served as part of this event will come from fair, organic farms, and will be locally sourced as far as possible.

CO₂ emissions : The organizers formally undertake to establish an environmentally-friendly strategy designed to reduce the event’s environmental impact. In this respect, there will be a “zero CO₂ emissions” action plan.

Waste management : Waste will be sorted and composting and recycling initiatives will be run throughout the event.

Documents : All paper documents used during the congress will be recycled and will be chlorine-free. As far as possible, documents used during the congress will be distributed in digital form (e.g. on a memory stick).

D. Assistance with administrative formalities and welcoming attendees

France makes ongoing efforts to improve the welcome reserved for foreign visitors (e.g. "Visa in 48 hours" scheme, foreign-language signage at airports and stations, priority stream for congress attendees, etc.). The special focus put on congress attendees and business travellers has been formalized in a national "business gatherings and events" sector contract ensuring a high level of service.

At Rennes, congress attendees will be greeted at the station and/or airport in areas set aside for the event. The destination provides a multilingual telephone service which participants can use to make enquiries throughout their stay. Attendees will also be provided with a map on arrival. A public transport pass can be provided on request.

IX. Participants

The budget has been established for a provisional number of 2,400 participants:

- 800 French or European participants who only attend one day
- 400 French participants for the full duration of the congress
- 400 participants from developing countries for the full duration of the congress
- 800 participants from other countries for the full duration of the congress

We can host up to 3,200 people for the opening ceremony and we undertake to ensure a high level of interest among the audience by presenting a relevant programme that is international and stimulating. Our communication strategy is designed to attain this number of visitors.

Appendix list

Appendix I : Provisional budget (income / expenditure)
Appendix II : Compliance with the "Requirements for the bidding consortiums"

The endorsement letters from:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Agro-Food and Forestry
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Brittany regional council
- Rennes Métropole
- Ville de Rennes