



IFOAM North America  
Strategic Plan  
2017-2020

## Contents

PART ONE: Who We Are .....	1
Institutional Foundations.....	1
Purpose, Benefits, and Governance of Regional Groups.....	1
Organic 3.0.....	2
PART TWO: Our Direction .....	3
Strategic Advantages .....	3
Principles of Organic Agriculture .....	3
IFOAM Strategic Pillars.....	4
PART THREE: Strategic Areas of Focus.....	4
Strategic Focus #1 – Organizational Development — Building a Solid Foundation .....	5
Strategic Focus #2 – Organic Umbrella — Uniting the Organic Movement .....	6
Strategic Focus #3 – Organic Advocacy — Promoting Resilience/Regeneration in Agriculture.....	7
Strategic Focus #4 – Organic Programs — Assisting Organic Development.....	8
Strategic Focus #5 – Organic Value Chain- Protecting Principles, Standards, and Integrity.....	9
References .....	9

## PART ONE: Who We Are

### Institutional Foundations

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM–Organics International) was founded in 1972, with participation from all arable continents with the intent of advancing organic farming world-wide. Over the years, organic agriculture has grown, with an industry springing from the movement. The growth of organic food and farming has raised peoples' awareness of the consequences of agriculture on people's health and the environment. The industry has created economic opportunities for some and have stimulated the growth of the market for organic food. The movement and the industry have learned to co-exist, with some growing pains.

### Purpose, Benefits, and Governance of Regional Groups

IFOAM North America (IFOAM NA) is a regional body (RB) of IFOAM-Organics International that includes Canada, the United States, and the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean. IFOAM NA's Mission is to provide a forum to exchange ideas and engage in North American-specific activities to advance organic agriculture and its principles, in partnership with IFOAM-Organics International and the global organic community.

IFOAM-Organics International is a global non-governmental organization whose mission is to lead change, organically. Organizations that support the missions and goals of IFOAM and the Principles of Organic Agriculture are eligible to become affiliates of IFOAM. As of 2016, IFOAM had 57 affiliates in North America (IFOAM 2016). These affiliates are members with voting status. Individuals may be non-voting supporting members.

RBs are self-organizing structures that bridge the gap between the global and regional levels of the organic movement. RBs understand the political, social, and economic conditions of their regions, and are expected to provide vigorous and effective support for the organic movement on a regional basis.

IFOAM is governed by democratic principles where the interests of the affiliates are represented by IFOAM's decisions. Regional bodies are given a certain degree of autonomy regarding their organization and operation, but they must abide by democratic principles to reflect the interests of their affiliates. Global IFOAM strives to develop an aligned strategy by engaging representatives of the different RBs with the IFOAM Head Office (HO) and its Executive Director (ED) (IFOAM 2014).

RBs communicate directly with affiliates and other parties interested in organic agriculture within their region and may independently develop positions that are adapted to the region's interests. Global IFOAM shall not interfere with RB's independent activities, unless they contravene IFOAM's landmarks, which include the Principles of Organic Agriculture, IFOAM's Definition of Organic Agriculture, the IFOAM Family of Standards, and IFOAM's Vision.

IFOAM allocates 25% of membership income from a geographical area for regional activities. Where appropriate, the RB may implement IFOAM's regional activities. Members may be charged additional affiliation fees by the RBs, provided the fees are democratically set. RBs may also fundraise independently from other revenue sources, but any affiliate fees must be billed and collected through the IFOAM HO. An RB is held accountable to IFOAM through filing an annual activity plan, budget, and report (IFOAM 2014).

### Organic 3.0

Organic agriculture has evolved from a social movement based on various philosophies that incorporated the holism of farming systems with the fundamental understanding that the health of the soil, plants, animals, and humans are one and indivisible (Organic 1.0). From those diverse social movements developed standards and markets, and some in the organic community began to see organic agriculture as an industry (Organic 2.0). The next phase of development aims to bring organic into the mainstream and position organic systems as part of the solution to the many challenges faced by people and the planet (Organic 3.0). The framework of organic 3.0 has six features (IFOAM 2015):

- 1) A culture of innovation
- 2) Improvement towards best practices
- 3) Diverse ways to ensure transparency and Integrity
- 4) Inclusive of wider sustainability interests
- 5) Empowerment from farm to the final consumer
- 6) True value and cost accounting

Umbrella organizations—including RBs such as IFOAM NA—are expected to play a leading role in the transition from Organic 2.0 to Organic 3.0, particularly with respect to including wider sustainability interests and empowerment from the farm to the final consumer. The Organic 3.0 call for action asks such organizations to (IFOAM 2015):

- Create awareness and showcase willingness to transition.
- Agree with one's own stakeholders on a transition strategy that includes one's own system changes and advocacy for Organic 3.0 contents; Advise and facilitate stakeholders in implementation. Monitor progress and communicate achievements and barriers.
- Clarify the non-negotiable elements of organic standards that are central to delivering the required outcomes and create systems and a culture for continuous improvement towards best practice.
- Build and host innovation committees on national and international levels of outstanding specialists that track and critically assess emerging innovations and potential conflicts.
- Recognize, critically appraise and value the objectives and achievements of like-minded organizations and movements; be included and inclusive: create bonds, incentives and strategic alliances based on common vision and goals.
- Assure participation and empowerment of vulnerable stakeholders, respecting their rights and their power.

Global IFOAM is relying on RBs to work with the stakeholders and institutions in their regions to implement Organic 3.0.

## PART TWO: Our Direction

This draft strategic plan is presented to the membership for discussion and input before it is finalized by the IFOAM North America Board of Directors. The NA Board developed the Strategic Plan based on the strategic advantages we identified, the principles of organic agriculture, and the strategic pillars that uphold the IFOAM Global Strategic Plan.

### Strategic Advantages

Our strategic advantages are those unique things of value that we bring to the community. We will seek to leverage these to advance our mission and increase our impact:

- Potential to be an overarching umbrella
- Breadth and diversity of membership
- Unity and consensus among members
- Global presence and international goodwill
- Credibility and integrity
- IFOAM principles
- Family of Standards
- Organic 3.0
- Best Practices guidelines
- Interest and momentum
- Strong stakeholder interest and momentum
- Parent structure
- Core funding for startup

### Principles of Organic Agriculture

Our vision is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially, and economically sound systems, based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture (IFOAM 2005). We seek to maximize these four principles in everything that we do:

- *The Principle of Health* – Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal and human as one and indivisible.
- *The Principle of Ecology* – Organic agriculture should be based on living and ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.
- *The Principle of Fairness* – Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.
- *The Principle of Care* – Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

Together, these ethical principles form the foundation of organic agriculture movements worldwide. IFOAM's RBs are expected not only to conform with these principles, but are expected to strive for the adoption of these principles in public and private policy forums, and avoid any policies or activities that are contrary to them.

## IFOAM Strategic Pillars

IFOAM is supported by five strategic pillars:

- Umbrella—Uniting the Organic Movement
- Value Chain—Facilitating Production & Trade
- Advocacy—Promoting Resilience and Regeneration in Agriculture
- Programs—Assisting Organic Development
- Academy—Building Organic Leaders' Capacity

The regional group is empowered to further these strategic pillars, with the understanding that individual affiliates and coalitions of affiliates may be better suited to take the lead on these activities. An RB is expected to fill needs in the region's organic community that are not adequately met. In cases where affiliates are serving the needs of the organic community, at a minimum, the RB will not interfere with those affiliates and, if resources permit, will support those affiliates when necessary.

## PART THREE: Strategic Areas of Focus

Part 3 of the Strategic Plan presents key objectives to achieve progress on IFOAM's Strategic Pillars. This section provides an outline of specific steps for IFOAM North America to take over the next three years. We identify multiple activities across the pillars and acknowledge for success to occur we must prioritize Operational Development.

We intend for our strategic plan to be clear and focused on the future, serving as a roadmap as the organization grows and secures its position within the organic sector. We fully hope that IFOAM North America will prove adaptable and responsive in the face of new opportunity, challenges, and ever-growing membership and stakeholder base. Our strategic plan serves as a guide, focusing our energies yet allowing for growth and evolution.

**Strategic Focus #1 – Organizational Development – Building a Solid Foundation**

To implement the strategic plan, it is necessary to address the practical nuts and bolts of getting a new organization up and off the ground. This work may be mundane, but is critical for our organization to succeed and meet the other four strategic focuses.

Strategy 1.1	Explanation	Goals
<b>Become a legal entity</b>	Form the legal organization to allow for operations within North America.	Incorporate as a non-profit Identify place of business File with IRS
		<b>Desired outcomes</b> Have the legal status necessary to carry out our other goals.
Strategy 1.2	Explanation	Goals
<b>Expand capacity</b>	Hire staff and or contractors to support the organization.	Draft and disseminate an RFP for a Membership/Communications Coordinator. Draft and disseminate an RFP for a Fundraiser / Development Director. Create committees of member representatives to support our work (i.e. bylaws, membership, etc)
		<b>Desired Outcomes</b> Increased funding to support our action plan. Expand our network and Umbrella.
Strategy 1.3	Explanation	Goals
<b>Develop finance systems + goals</b>	As a new organization, we must develop systems and strategies to support financial viability.	Create a strategy for fundraising. Finalize an IFOAM NA fee schedule.
		<b>Desired Outcomes</b> Increased funding to support our action plan.
Strategy 1.4	Explanation	Goals
<b>Expand and increase our membership</b>	Recruit diverse membership across whole organic spectrum and beyond. Review and re-assess membership categories and levels to increase fit for all types of members.	Develop an outreach and communication strategy. Invite potential partners to annual General Assembly. Create a web presence and website.
		<b>Desired Outcomes</b> Increased members. Increased number of followers and views.

### Strategic Focus #2 – Organic Umbrella — Uniting the Organic Movement

The purpose of this strategic focus is to bring together the diverse organic movement through better communication, collaboration on an international level, and education about the importance of the organic principles and the efforts to extend the organic movement through Organic 3.0. Uniting the agricultural movement will require a peer-to-peer approach that relies on grassroots efforts. IFOAM NA seeks to empower its members rather than direct them. As such, it is more of a partnership approach.

Strategy 2.1	Explanation	Goals
<b>Foster communication amongst members + partners</b>	Engage all organic stakeholders in communication about the fundamental underlying principles and values of organic production methods	Create online forums/social media for engagement. Build alliances among the membership and through strategic partnerships. Provide a forum to engage the organic community on relevant topics. Provide platform for discussion/Host motion bazaars at General Assemblies.
		<b>Desired Outcomes</b>
		Increased engagement of members with IFOAM and each other. Increased partnerships. A united ‘organic voice’ in North America.
Strategy 2.2	Explanation	Goals
<b>Connect North America with IFOAM International</b>	Serve as liaison to support information exchange from IFOAM international to members and vice versa.	Establish clear communications between IFOAM International and IFOAM NA. Create online forums/social media for engagement. Develop IFOAM NA newsletter. (I.e. what happened at NOSB through IFOAM lens) Host an annual General Assembly to provide updates.
		<b>Desired Outcomes</b>
		More informed membership. IFOAM Organics International is well known and respected, and members have a renewed sense of belonging and having access/input on international issues. Linking international organic issues with local organic issues, building bridges and linking synergistic actions.

Strategy 2.3	Explanation	Goals
<p align="center"><b>Expand understanding of IFOAM Organic Principles + 3.0</b></p>	<p>In the context of organic movements worldwide, North America can better find its place and deepen our understanding while becoming a more active participant in shaping the international organic agenda.</p>	<p>Develop an outreach and communication strategy.                      Create workshops at regional sustainable agriculture conferences.                      Create webinars in partnership with members and existing webinar series.                      Develop education and white papers in accordance with IFOAM principles + Organic 3.0</p>
		<p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p>
		<p>Connect North America organic movement with international organic movements and engage members in organic principles and new directions (3.0)</p>

**Strategic Focus #3 – Organic Advocacy — Promoting Resilience, Economic Viability, and Regeneration in Agriculture**

Success in establishing a more resilient, regenerative, and economically viable agricultural system will require changes in policies that are shaped by the principles of organic agriculture. As part of a global non-governmental organization, IFOAM and its North American Regional Body is in a unique position to advocate at the international level. IFOAM NA has a responsibility to its members and the public to be a voice for those who are often excluded from international policy forums. Because of its global and long-term mission, IFOAM NA serves a broader interest than a farmers’ organization, a trade association, or a watchdog group. IFOAM NA is a broader platform that holds a strategic position in shaping policies that support and grow the organic community.

Strategy 3.1	Explanation	Goals
<p align="center"><b>Influence organic policy through the lens of IFOAM’s Principles of Organic Agriculture</b></p>	<p>We have an opportunity to set a new tone for organic advocacy work in North America. We aim to do this through a clear focus on principles, education, and the context of international organic agriculture.</p>	<p>Engage NA membership and organic movement in a deep look and discussion of the underlying principles of organic agriculture, through various venues like in-person meetings, webinars, online presence, and publications.</p>
		<p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p>
		<p>Provide clear resources for members to engage meaningfully in their own advocacy work and for developing and justifying their own positions.</p>

Strategy 3.2	Explanation	Goals
<p><b>Influence organic policy with direct advocacy</b></p>	<p>After having developed deeper understanding of principles and the context of international organic agriculture, members may still want IFOAM NA to engage in direct advocacy on select issues. This could be direct comments on issues, petitioning, or promoting certain outcomes.</p>	<p>Establish criteria and procedure for developing IFOAM NA positions. Respond to and follow through with motions from members.</p>
		<p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p>
		<p>Clear understanding by membership when and how to put forward advocacy-related motions for the NA regional body to consider.</p>

**Strategic Focus #4 – Organic Programs — Assisting Organic Development – Leading change organically**

Conducting programs is a way to build capacity, increase collaboration, and develop the organic sector. Training and mentoring future leaders in organic agriculture is a particularly important gap that IFOAM fulfills. Through collaboration and coordination with existing like-minded organizations, IFOAM NA can help to build a strong network that spreads knowledge farmer-to-farmer.

Strategy 4.1	Explanation	Goals
<p><b>Expand the reach of organic research, development, and technology transfer</b></p>	<p>Increase the dissemination of organic agriculture research and development. Encourage farmer innovation and technology transfer.</p>	<p>Organize the Organic Agriculture Research Symposium annually. Publish proceedings. Sponsor a training in Participatory Guarantee Systems in NA</p>
		<p><b>Desired Outcomes</b></p>
		<p>Greater dissemination of organic agriculture research. Farmer-researcher partnerships and farmer-to-farmer technology transfer.</p>

Strategy 4.2	Explanation	Goals
<b>Develop programs and partnerships, as needed</b>	Significant efforts are already underway across the region to support IFOAM's Organic Principles. We strive to avoid redundancy and competition for limited resources while meeting the needs of our members and goals of Organic 3.0.	Environmental scan across region to understand gaps and opportunities.  Create a speakers' bureau of people who are knowledgeable and articulate about organic agriculture.  Develop a network of mentors to recruit and train the next generation of leaders in organic agriculture.

### Strategic Focus #5 – Organic Value Chain — Protecting Principles, Standards, and Integrity

IFOAM has long been a leader in the development and harmonization of organic standards. Setting organic standards and regulation of the organic market has moved from the public to the private sector. Continuous improvement will lead to differences in standards and guarantee systems that requires innovation with integrity. IFOAM has a role to play with the creation of alternative guarantee systems and being a voice for the organic principles when developing and harmonizing various standards.

Strategy 5.1	Explanation	Goals
<b>Coordinate initiatives for alternative guarantee systems and for global harmonization of standards</b>	Facilitate access to the organic market for organic producers who are currently excluded while maintaining the integrity of the organic claim.  Work within the IFOAM family of standards to resolve differences consistent with the principles of organic agriculture.	Develop equivalency position papers as needed. Explore partnership opportunities.
		<b>Desired Outcome</b>
		More and a greater diversity of organic farmers without compromising integrity.  Outreach to and collaboration with historically disadvantaged farmers practicing organic agriculture—particularly farmers of color and women—and the organizations that represent them.  Greater equivalency within the family of standards.

## References

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