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IFOAM EU Policy Manager Antje Kölling organized a seminar for stakeholders and policy makers to discuss the review of the seed legislation from an organic perspective (more on p. 8)
Dear readers,

This month I had the privilege as Managing Director of Ecovalia to publicly announce the IFOAM EU honorary membership at the 15th edition of “Andrés Núñez de Prado” Awards in Cordoba. The aim of the Andrés Núñez de Prado Awards for Organic Farming Research and Defence is to highlight the values and principles of organic production, as well as to express appreciation of work done for benefit of the sector. A point that clearly reflects the goals Ecovalia shares with IFOAM EU: to promote organic food and farming as the best way to achieve an environmentally, economically and socially responsible and sustainable agrifood system.

Although much has been achieved, many challenges lie ahead and we will need to continue to work for change at all levels: local, regional, national and European. For this reason, Ecovalia supports IFOAM EU through membership and as a main sponsor since 2010.

One European measure that can make a significant difference in the promotion and development of organic would be a new European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming, as the actions included in the 2004 Organic Action Plan are either completed or obsolete. The European Commission is likely to propose a draft – together with a proposal for a new organic regulation – in spring 2014. IFOAM EU has provided input including suggestions for how the emerging CAP, Horizon 2020 and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) implementation in Rural Development Programmes can be used to the benefit of sustainable food and farming.

On national level, the ministries of agriculture in many countries do not provide enough support for the sector. That is quite a paradox in times when organic demand exceeds the supply all across Europe. One way to act on regional and national level using the tools provided by the EU is to demand organic have its share of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) related funding: the guidelines developed by IFOAM EU, TP Organics and ARC 2020 can help convince national and/or regional authorities to implement the EIP for the benefit of organic farming and agroecology. The aim of the EIP is to ensure more quality production, while developing sustainability. A better life for all of us and for generations to come.

I wish you and yours a very happy, healthy and organic holidays and new year!

Sincerely,
José Luis García Melgarejo
POLITICAL HOTSPOT

PREPARING FOR A NEW EUROPEAN ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

On 21 November 2013, the Commission invited European stakeholders to the Advisory Group on Organic Farming to provide the final input for a new European Organic action. The action plan would replace the outdated action plan published in 2004 and is foreseen to be published in March 2014, together with a proposal for a new organic regulation. IFOAM EU advocates since 2009 for an ambitious action plan that links organic production with horizontal legislation. The action plan should coordinate policy support for organic production by encourage member states to use the new rural development programmes, outline organic research within the new EU framework Horizon 2020, to enhance organic public procurement and to protect the organic food chain from GMO contamination.

The Commission welcomed and noted the propositions of the stakeholders but reminded them that the proposal of an action plan will depend on the political decision made by the Commission at the beginning of 2014.

The review of the organic regulation was briefly tackled. The organic farming unit of DG Agriculture informed organic stakeholders that the report on the impact assessment carried out in 2012-13 is being discussed by the internal service of the Commission, and will be published in March 2014 along with a proposal for a new organic regulation.

IFOAM EU POSITION ON THE NEW ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

Since the European Commission is working on a draft for a new organic action plan, IFOAM EU has published a position including the specific requests of the organic sector. Propositions were made regarding many diverse subjects, from the place of organic production within the context of the new CAP reform to how the import and export of organic products can be improved, and a strategy to increase the availability of organic seed and protein feed.

Some of the specific measures proposed:

- Aligning the organic regulations with horizontal legislations, e.g., on labelling and farm input
- Supporting research on organic farming and production
- Increasing the availability of protein feed of the right quality by promoting local protein feed production and exploring alternative sources of proteins, for example
- Increasing the availability of organic seeds and propagating material by financing long term breeding programmes for locally adapted plants and organic plant varieties to enhance agro-biodiversity and maximise the yield potential of organic farming, for example
- Developing a new European promotion campaign for organic products, including to promote to the new organic logo
- Educational programmes in schools
- Supporting green public procurement
- Improving and harmonising organic data collection. Nowadays, the data is not collected by authorities in Member States in a harmonised manner. As the systems used often vary significantly from country to country, data is therefore often not usable to obtain EU-wide data and analysis.
- Improving the general legislation to protect the organic sector from GM contamination
- Facilitating and supporting the registration of traditional organic plant protection substances in the horizontal legislation

[Image]

IFOAM 10 EU Group: Connecting...
1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 REGULATION

ORGANIC REGULATION REVIEW DISCUSSED AT THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

During the Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting of 16 and 17 December 2013 the Commission presented the results of the public consultation on organic farming carried out at the beginning of 2013. Member States welcomed the report but at the same time “urged the Commission to be cautious with the review of the legal framework on this issue announced for March 2014 on the basis of this consultation”. Member States consider that the latest review of the organic regulation framework - resulting in the establishment of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 - was quite recent and that “any review should not constitute a gap with the current provisions”.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ORGANIC FARMING MEETING

The last Standing Committee on Organic Farming was held on 28 and 29 November 2013. The major topics discussed during this meeting were the use of non-organic juveniles or seeds in organic aquaculture, the Organic Farming Innovation System (OFIS) and Annexes I and II of regulation (EC) No 889/2008.

The proposal to postpone until 31 December 2014 (1-year extension) the possibility to introduce into the operations a maximum percentage of 80% of non-organic aquaculture juveniles and seeds received a positive feedback from Member States and consequently the new implementing regulation (EU) No 1364/2013 was published on 17 December 2013.

The discussions on Annex I and II were about amendments necessary to adapt the two annexes both to the opinions (1, 2) expressed by the Expert group for technical advice on organic production (EGTOP) in 2011 and to the horizontal legislation on plant protection products Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009. An update of the annexes is expected at the beginning of 2014.
1.2 POLICY

CAP & AGRICULTURE

IFOAM EU CALLS ON COMMISSION TO ENSURE CAP DELEGATED ACTS SUPPORT ORGANIC FARMING

IFOAM EU talked with EU Commission representatives to ensure that the recognition of organic farming under Pillar 1 greening does not have a negative impact on the support provided for the development of the organic sector under Pillar 2. This regards fulfilling the legal requirements set out in the basic act of the forthcoming rural development regulation and avoidance of double funding the same measure under both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2. IFOAM EU believes that the Commission must use the CAP delegated acts to ensure that Member States take account of local circumstances and only specific greening overlaps relevant to organic farming be considered when calculating Pillar 2 or -ganic farming support. Greening recognition should be in no way used by national or regional authorities as an excuse to neglect Pillar 2 payments. In the end greening recognition must send a clear signal about the EU’s commitment to sustainability and organic farming, neglecting support in Pillar 2 would send the opposite message. For more information please contact stephen.meredith[at]ifoam-eu.org

REFORM PROPOSAL FOR THE EU INFORMATION PROVISION AND PROMOTION MEASURES PUBLISHED

Legislative proposals on the reform of EU information and promotion measures for agricultural and food products have been published by the European Commission. The proposals significantly increase funding allocated to information and promotion initiatives for EU food and farming to 200 million euro by 2020, compared to 61 million euro in 2013. Organic farming and other EU quality schemes are recognised under the proposals. A strong emphasis is also placed on activities targeted at third countries and multi-country initiatives with up to 60% co-financing rate proposed for these programmes. In the European Parliament, Spanish Christian Democratic MEP Esther Herranz Garcia will lead the legislative file as rapporteur in the Agriculture Committee, while the Greek EU Presidency is expected to steer the file in the AGRI Council from 1 January 2014.

COMMISSIONER SAYS CAP CAN SUPPORT AND SAFEGUARD FAMILY FARMING IN EUROPE

Family farmers in Europe are the backbone of EU agriculture and rural life and contribute proactively to the rural economic viability. The CAP must therefore help to support and safeguard this way of farming, according to DG Agriculture Dacian Cioloș. Mr. Cioloș was speaking at the European Commission’s conference on Family farming: A dialogue towards more sustainable and resilient farming in Europe and the world. It was held in Brussels on 29 November and attended by an IFOAM EU delegation including farming member associations from Belgium, France and the UK. The conference took place ahead of the UN International Year of Family Farming which begins on 1 January 2014.

GMOS & SEED

STOP THE AUTHORISATION OF GM MAIZE

The Member States will probably decide on the authorisation of the GM maize 1507 in a written procedure in January 2014. This GM maize has two traits: a) it produces its own pesticide and b) it is tolerant to a specific herbicide (glufosinate ammonium). Under EU law, both traits must be subject to a risk assessment. But the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has not yet carried out the required assessment linked to the herbicide tolerant trait, in clear breach of EU legal requirements. Moreover, EFSA’s risk assessment of the pesticide-producing trait highlights a number of impacts of the toxin on non-target organisms such as butterflies and moths. Tell your minister to stop the crop! More information: stopthecrop.org
A ruling from the European Court of Justice on 13 December has annulled the decision to authorise the genetically modified potato Amflora produced by BASF, because the European Commission “significantly failed to fulfil its procedural obligations.” More information

The discussion on the revised legislation on seed and plant reproductive material (S&PRM) continues with some new developments.

**The institutional agenda**

The European Parliament revised its time schedule; the deadline for tabling amendments on the Commission text was been postponed to 11 December for the AGRI committee and 18 December for the ENVI committee. IFOAM EU has engaged in talks with MEPs to explain the demands of the organic sector and encourage the tabling of relevant amendments. There are rumours that about 1,000 amendments have been tabled in the AGRI committee.

Several Members of the European Parliament have announced that they will reject the EU Commission proposal on Seed and Plant Reproductive Material, which would mean the Commission could have to come up with a new proposal in the next years, and current legislation would remain in place in the meantime.

**IFOAM EU sent a letter to key MEPs** to encourage them to take responsibility for legislation and send the Commission a clear message on the improvements needed. Votes are expected for the 22–23 January in the ENVI committee, for February in the AGRI committee, for April in the plenary – but further delays can be expected seen the huge number of amendments.

The discussion on how to save agro-biodiversity and how to empower farmers and gardeners to take care of food cultures must continue. Candidates who stand for the upcoming May 2014 EU elections must be questioned on their position on seed and plant propagating material.

Discussions in the Council working group continue and a main topic is how to consider the niche market option. The Commission proposal would allow producers with an annual turnover of less than 2 million euro to market seed and plant reproductive material without variety registration, some Member States want to approach the niche differently.

Ways to take action will be spread in January via the IFOAM EU website.

**Diversity versus strict rules**

The last week of November was full of events discussing the legislative changes for seed and propagating materials, starting with an event organised by the European Seed Association (ESA) on 25 November. It highlighted that a strong seed and plant reproductive material (S&PRM) legislation is necessary to ensure good quality for farmers, and in the case of niches, they should be strictly regulated. This position was also reflected by the speakers representing COPA and ESA during the European Parliament hearing on the S&PRM legislation.
on 26 November. However, at the same hearing, the speakers from Arche Noah and an Italian research institute emphasised the need for legislation that puts no bureaucratic burden on those who maintain agrobiodiversity and farmers who are developing landraces adapted to the local environment.

A seminar for stakeholders and policy makers to discuss the review of the legislation on rules for marketing of seed and plant propagation material (SPPM) from an organic perspective was organised by IFOAM EU in cooperation with Lower Saxony Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection on the 27 November at the Representation of Lower Saxony in Brussels. Monika Messmer and Gebhard Rossmanith from the IFOAM EU seed task force presented the IFOAM EU position on the S&PRM legislation and pointed out that dealing with plant varieties means dealing with living organisms. This implies that there are not such sharp borders between varieties and populations with higher or lower uniformity features - the seed legislation needs to adapt to this reality. Cord Stoyke from the Lower Saxony Ministry presented the position of the Bundesrat (the German chamber of regions) that seed legislation must take the diversity of the sector into account. Päivi Mannerkorpi from the European Commission presented the Commission proposal. Discussions centred around the right of farmers and gardeners to save, exchange and sell seeds out of the scope of the legislation and the need for adapted rules for niche producers and plant varieties and populations with a higher genetic diversity. More information can be found on the seminar website.

NEW BREEDING TECHNIQUES

On a seminar organised by the German umbrella organisation for organic farming, BÖLW, organic farmers, breeders and stakeholders discussed which breeding techniques should be accepted in organic farming and how the availability of appropriate varieties for organic farming can be ensured. On this occasion, Florianne Koechlin presented recent research results that show how plants can react to certain treatments and even transfer new characteristics to the next generation. Prof. Dr. Michael Haring, from the University of Amsterdam explained several new breeding techniques such as protoplast fusion and highlighted that these techniques present a massive intervention into the genome. Further reading.

FOOD & ENVIRONMENT

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON FARMING

The third round of the bilateral US-EU trade deal, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, is taking place in Washington DC this month. Issues include food and farming topics. Facing the non-transparent process, as well as the risk of the TTIP becoming an entrance door for GMO contamination and food that does not comply with EU standards in other ways, a European alliance of over 50 civil society organisations has launched an Alternative Trade Mandate, a proposal to make EU trade and investment policy work for people and the planet, not just the profit interests of a few. In the meantime, multilateral trade negotiations of the Doha Round reached a milestone in Indonesia: The WTO’s Ministerial Conference in Bali agreed a package of issues related to food security and cotton in developing countries, including also subsidies in agriculture, and reducing obstacles to trade.

NEW LABELLING RULES FOR ORIGIN OF MEAT

From December 2016, new labelling rules will be mandatory for fresh meat from pigs, sheep, goats and poultry. The country where the animal was reared and slaughtered will have to be included in the label. In case of unprocessed meat, food operators will have to provide the Member State or third country, where the animal was born, reared and slaughtered. The animal’s place of birth is not compulsory information.
**REPORT ON LABELLING TO PROMOTE LOCAL FOOD CHAINS**

The Commission has published a local farming and direct sales report which discusses options for a local farming and direct sales labelling scheme. Despite most stakeholders consulted in the preceding process, including IFOAM EU, being rather sceptical about the creation of an additional label, the European Commission still considers different label options as a way to support local and direct sales. However, the text also acknowledges the limited added value of a labelling scheme, as direct sales anyway imply a close relation between producer and consumer and highlights other means of support for the development of short food chains, especially measures under the rural development programmes such as:

- Advice and information support
- Investment in physical assets
- Farm and business development
- Support for participation in quality schemes and information and promotional actions

**CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT “SOLMACC” IN SEARCH OF FARMER PARTNERS**

Strategies for Organic- and Low-input-farming to Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change will be explored in the SOLMACC project in the upcoming five years. The project will set up a demonstration farm network of organic farms in Sweden, Italy and Germany and the respective farmers will be trained to integrate four optimised climate-friendly practices into their farming management.

These practices are:

- Optimised on-farm nutrient recycling;
- Crop rotations with legume-grass leys;
- Optimized tillage systems and
- Agroforestry.

The impact of these practices on climate change mitigation and adaptation, economic viability and technical feasibility will be monitored. All project achievements will be disseminated to the farming community as well as to policy makers and are meant to generate an intensified uptake of these climate-friendly farming practices by both organic and conventional farmers and to contribute to policy changes of relevant EU policies.

IFOAM EU, coordinator of the trans-European SOLMACC project, hosted the kick-off meeting of the project in its office on December 10 and 11 in Brussels. Representatives of FiBL, Ekolanbruk, Bioland Beratung GmbH and AIAB as well as the project management team from IFOAM EU used the meeting to discuss on all aspects of the project implementation. The first points on the agenda are to find organic farmers who are interested in participating in the project and to get the dissemination tools ready that are needed to promote the ongoing activities and outcomes. For more information, email the project coordinator: lena.wietheger[at]ifoam-eu.org
1.3 AWARDS FOR ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH AND DEFENCE

IFOAM EU MADE AN HONORARY MEMBER OF ECOVALIA

IFOAM EU was awarded honorary membership of Valor Ecológico Association (Ecovalia) at the annual “Andrés Núñez de Prado” Awards for Organic Farming Research and Defence in Cordoba. On that occasion, on behalf of the Ecovalia Board, Managing Director Mr. José Luis García Melgarejo expressed thankfulness to IFOAM EU Director Marco Schlüter for the committed work on organic food and farming advocacy.

Director Schlüter also visited the company Campina Verde which delivers the organic fruit and vegetables from Andalusia to REWE, one major German supermarket chain. He met managing director Gfrörer and got informed about the current situation on the organic market and in production. IFOAM EU is very pleased to welcome Campina Verde as a new member from 2014 onwards!
1.4 EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION POLICY/TP ORGANICS

FINAL HORIZON 2020 WORK PROGRAMMES PUBLISHED

The Horizon 2020 work programmes for 2014 and 2015 were adopted by the Commission on 10 December 2013. Horizon 2020 consists of three main parts:

1. Excellent Science
2. Industrial Leadership
3. Societal Challenges

The Excellent Science programme aims at supporting world leading scientists and developing future and emerging technologies. Biotechnology research will be funded under the Industrial Leadership programme, as well as a public-private partnership for the bio-based industries (bio-fuels, bio-plastics technology, etc.). It is a sub-programme of Societal Challenges, in particular part of the Societal Challenge 2 (“Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and bio-economy”) that funds research for the food and farming sector.

Several calls for proposals in the work programme 2014/2015 make explicit reference to organic farming, for example those targeting soil quality and function, traditional genetic resources, EU-China cooperation on integrated pest management, parasitic diseases of farmed fish, biological contamination in the food chain, public policies for sustainable food chains, and sustainable use of agricultural waste.

SOLINSA AND FARMPATH PROJECTS: INNOVATION FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The Solinsa and FarmPath research project were looking for answers to the question “How can innovation and learning be supported to contribute to more sustainable agriculture?” at their joint final conference on 3 December. The conclusion was that researchers need to stop seeing themselves as the only legitimate source of knowledge, and instead become facilitators of the innovation processes, and that advisors must learn to act as innovation brokers. Meanwhile, support should be given to farmers to help them become active partners in multi-actor innovation processes, rather than passive recipients waiting for knowledge – a situation encouraged for a long time by the traditional top-down approach to innovation.

Linking research and practice

At the end of the conference, the 2nd report of the Working Group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (the “SCAR-AKIS working group”) was presented. The report likewise concluded that special efforts should be made to encourage the responsiveness of research to the needs of practitioners. Firstly, to stimulate interdisciplinary and interactive research, appropriate evaluation criteria should be applied. Practitioners should also be included in the funding and evaluation processes for research. At the same time, sources of funding should be channelled to projects that specifically involve science and practice on an equal footing.
2 EVENTS

2.1 PREVIEW OF EVENTS

“WIR HABEN ES SATT”
(“WE’VE HAD ENOUGH”) DEMONSTRATION
19 January (Berlin, Germany)

The Good Food Good Farming campaign invites you to the Wir haben es satt – We’ve had enough demonstration in Berlin. If you want to see a green and fair implementation of the CAP reform as well as seed legislation that favour biodiversity, good taste and farmers instead of multinationals, come to Berlin to join an international demonstration. It will take place on 19 January, before the EU Parliament’s Agriculture Committee votes on the seed legislation reform.

SUSTAINABLE BIOGAS: JOIN WEBINARS AND WORKSHOPS

If you are interested in learning more about organic biogas or the current trends and developments on sustainability criteria, technical and economic requirements and best practice, register now and don’t miss the last SUSTAINGAS webinars and workshops.

The free training sessions are targeted at organic farmers, biogas consultants and associations, green energy companies, and interested consumers. Live webinars and workshops give an overview of produce sustainable biogas on organic farms, and the current market situation.

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This year we are celebrating 10 years of IFOAM EU’s presence in Brussels with major achievements for organic food and farming in Europe. IFOAM EU’s lobbying work improves and sustains the framework organic stakeholders need to operate successfully in Europe.

The political and legal framework for organic farming in the EU is set by the European Institutions, and the uniting power of IFOAM EU gives the European organic movement the possibility of bringing its needs to the political decision makers and enables the movement to achieve so much.

Help to make organic’s impact in Europe stronger – donate today

Everyone who donates this year will have their (organisation) name and amount published. Top donors first!

Contact us:
laura.ullmann [at] ifoam-eu.org
Tel: +32 2 808 79 91

ARIZA, Ecovalia, Wessanen
ARIZA, Ecovalia and Wessanen show their support for the work of IFOAM EU by a financial cooperation with IFOAM EU throughout 2013. Their money will be used to co-finance IFOAM EU events, projects and publications and is a highly valued contribution to our work.

Although IFOAM EU has been in existence since 1990, first as an internal working group and later as a regional group of IFOAM, the Brussels-based liaison and coordination-office was only established in 2003.

Over these 10 years, IFOAM EU Group has been ensuring organic presence at the heart of the EU, helping more than 160 member organisations to sound their unified voice at all levels of the European Institutions.
IFOAM EU WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THOSE WHO HAVE GRACIOUSLY CONTRIBUTED TO OUR “BIRTHDAY LIST” IN 2013

**GOLD DONORS**
- Ecovalia
- Naturland
- Bioland

**SILVER DONORS**
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- Stiftung Ökologie & Landbau (SöL)

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- Estonian Organic Farming Foundation
- MaBio
- Association of Latvian Organic Agriculture
- Rabeler Fruchtchips
4 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

18 January
**Good Food March**
Berlin, Germany

12–15 February
**BioFach**
Nuremberg, Germany

This newsletter exists to inform IFOAM EU members about the work of the IFOAM EU Group and its liaison and coordination office in Brussels. The IFOAM EU Group is the European Regional Group of the worldwide umbrella organisation IFOAM and is responsible for all matters related to organic farming with a Europe-wide scope.


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Please send any comments or contributions to the newsletter to communication [at] ifoam-eu.org.

For further information contact your national board member or the office in Brussels.

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