

ORGANIC MOVEMENT'S MANIFESTO

AN EU WITH VIBRANT RURAL AREAS AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

This manifesto is the European organic movement and sector's vision for vibrant European rural areas where agriculture is sustainable, resilient, and just. The day-to-day work of 420,000 farmers and a sector worth €45 billion benefits the people, planet, and (rural) economy.

Organic is a food system offering a 'full package' solution to many of the complex problems we face. Beyond its environmental benefits—such as enhancing biodiversity, sequestering carbon, and fostering soil health—organic farming brings substantial socio-economic advantages such as revitalizing rural economies, creating employment, and promoting healthier lifestyles. As IFOAM Organics Europe, we propose the following priorities for the next EU political mandate to transition towards sustainable food systems and vibrant European rural areas.



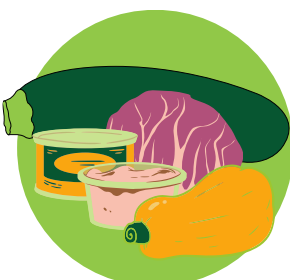
IMPROVING FARMERS' LIVES AND EMPOWERING THEM

- Agricultural subsidies should reward sustainable farmers
- Farmer-led innovation should guide agricultural development
- More economic data on organic will help organic farmers



HELPING CONSUMERS MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

- Show the true cost of food to save taxpayers money
- Ensure consumers don't buy misleading products
- Put sustainable food on everyone's menu



BENEFITING PEOPLE & PLANET'S HEALTH BY REDUCING SYNTHETIC PESTICIDES

- Ensure farmers have access to biocontrol
- Collect more & better data on pesticides use

IMPROVING FARMERS' LIVES & EMPOWERING THEM



AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES SHOULD REWARD SUSTAINABLE FARMERS



The current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) pays farmers for the total area farmed and does not adequately reward farmers' environmental contributions.



The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2027 should link payments to their environmental ambition, with organic farming positioned at the highest tier. This will encourage all farmers to farm more sustainably and will give organic farmers a fair pay for their positive contributions to soil health, water quality, biodiversity, and climate protection.

FARMER-LED INNOVATION SHOULD GUIDE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



Organic is a knowledge-intensive and innovative farming system in which farmers learn from each other.



By coupling strong national policies and funding, networks of knowledge creation and dissemination should be created and further developed – leading to more digital platforms and tools to share organic farm knowledge and innovations. The importance of knowledge exchange and innovation in maximizing the development potential of the agriculture sector through an Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) cannot be overstated. A higher budget dedicated to organic research should be part of the European innovation partnerships (EIP) and Horizon Europe. Besides this, it is also important to improve market development. This should be done by developing independent support structures for organic processing and retailing and ensuring access to organic advice networks.

MORE ECONOMIC DATA ON ORGANIC WILL HELP ORGANIC FARMERS



There is a lack of economic data about organic farms, so it is hard to assess the sector's financial needs and growth. This data would also allow institutions to evaluate the environmental impact of organic farming policies.



Include organic farming data within the national mandatory Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) collections and amend the regulation on statistics for agricultural inputs and outputs (SAIO) so it collects more data on organic crops "under-conversion" on a detailed, crop-specific basis.

HELPING CONSUMERS MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE



SHOW THE TRUE COST OF FOOD TO SAVE TAXPAYERS MONEY



The food we buy costs more than its price shows because most farming methods only consider the direct costs of producing a product. Organic products seem more expensive, but this is because they include the indirect costs to the ecosystem. For example, cleaning up ground water pollution costs €1,298 for a hectare of conventional potatoes versus €0.4 for a hectare of organic potatoes.



Develop policies to show the true price of food and include these in food prices, for example through taxation. Coupling these policies with communication campaigns will raise awareness about organic's benefits and positive impacts on our people and planet's health. Promotion policies that dedicate a budget specifically for organic are one way to achieve this.

ENSURE CONSUMERS DON'T BUY MISLEADING PRODUCTS



The EU already has a strictly regulated food and farming system with proven benefits for people and the planet since 1991 – the EU Organic Regulation. It is important to keep legal clarity and avoid confusing consumers with an overload of often misleading green claims and labels.



Consumers need heightened awareness that the EU organic logo and other organic certification represent the most sustainable food choices. Legislation against greenwashing should protect the EU's flagship label and ensure it stands out against environmental claims that are often misused, like "regenerative agriculture". Effective legislation to curb greenwashing should prioritise methodological advancements, steering agricultural policies away from further intensification, for example, the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) methodology that is too simplistic to assess agri-food products' environmental impact.

PUT SUSTAINABLE FOOD ON EVERYONE'S MENU



Procurement is a strategic market development tool to increase the demand for organic, healthy, and sustainable products. Sustainable public procurement is not more expensive and has many health benefits for people and public institutions, ranging from less but better meat consumption to reduced food waste, while fostering the growth and consumption of locally sourced and seasonal food.



Create mandatory criteria including organic products all public institutions' canteens (schools, hospitals, etc.) and translate the 'EU code of conduct on responsible food business and marketing practices' into mandatory criteria with adequate enforcement.

BENEFITING PEOPLE & PLANET'S HEALTH BY REDUCING SYNTHETIC PESTICIDES



ENSURE FARMERS HAVE ACCESS TO BIOCONTROL



There is a limited availability of biocontrol methods because they are regulated in the same legislation covering synthetic pesticides. However, biological pest control only uses what is available in nature and requires tailored legislation.



Create a legal environment that speeds up the development of biological control ('biocontrol') solutions. This includes revising legislation for swift approval and authorisation of natural substances, legally defining natural or naturally derived substances allowed in organic farming as per regulation (EU) 2021/1165. Financial incentives and technical support should be available for farmers transitioning to biocontrol methods.

COLLECT MORE & BETTER DATA ON PESTICIDES USE



There is an overall lack of data making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of Europe's pesticide reduction strategies. Moreover, the HRI-1 indicator that is supposed to measure pesticide reduction favours small quantities of toxic products over large quantities natural substances like baking soda that are applied over larger areas.



Improve overall monitoring and data collection on pesticides use in Europe and replace the current HRI-1 indicator with measures that do not unfairly discriminate against natural substances.



For a more elaborate overview of the European organic movement's priorities ahead of the EU elections 2024, read our full-length Manifesto

IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. With almost 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders, and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies.



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