

Opening Address

Dear participants,

IFOAM EU is delighted to welcome you to the 19th ECOFRUIT Conference. We are glad to be the patron of this important biennial event bringing together researchers, consultants and growers to exchange and discuss the latest developments, opportunities and challenges for organic fruit growing.

Interesting times are lying ahead of us. Topics such as the climate crisis and biodiversity loss are prominently in the media and the farming sector is on the one hand one of the most effected sectors but also a sector that is contributing to the problem. Organic farming practices can be part of the solution. After a lengthy process the European Parliament approved Ursula von der Leyen's team of Commissioners end of November 2019. During the first days in office, she presented the European Green Deal which aims at becoming the worldwide first carbon-neutral continent by 2050.

Thanks to tireless efforts of IFOAM EU, organic features prominently on the political agenda. It's seen as a key contributor to the European Green Deal – “the area under organic farming will also need to increase in Europe” – and the “Farm to Fork” strategy clearly mentions organic as one of the key sectors to promote. At the EU Agricultural Outlook Conference, the new Commissioner for Agriculture Mr Wojciechowski, told the audience that he would be setting up an action plan for organic farming in 2020 and that the DG AGRI services were already working on an advanced draft and invited suggestions and proposals. Organic farming is key to “achieving the European Green Deal, making it a key element of the Farm to Fork Strategy.”

His colleague, Ms Kyriakides (DG SANTE), insisted that pesticides are “a major concern for our citizens,” and she wants to agree “ambitious targets on chemical pesticides and fertilisers to substantially reduce the risks associated with them”. In this context we are working to ensure that a clearer procedure is put in place for the registration of naturally-occurring substances, which due their existing natural background, shouldn't be treated in the same way as synthetic substances.

We are happy that the organic principles and the vision of the organic movement have found their way to the political agenda and we would like to thank our members, our board and the office staff for their hard work in doing so. We will continue the good work and open dialogue that we are having as a movement with the new Commission and their Cabinets. We want to make sure that organic agriculture is part of the solution and plays an important role in combatting the climate and biodiversity crisis we are facing.

Finally, research and innovation are still high in our agenda. IFOAM EU is coordinating Liveseed, a project that is aimed at improving the transparency and competitiveness of the organic seed and breeding sector and encouraging greater use of organic seed. We are also part of the RELACS project that is looking into minimising the use of contentious inputs in organic farming.

I would like to end this note by wishing you fruitful conference. Let's Make Europe More Organic together!

Organically,

Isabella Lang, on behalf of the whole IFOAM EU team