Opening Address

Dear participants,

Welcome to the 18th ECOFRUIT Conference!

IFOAM EU is delighted to be the patron of this important biannual event bringing together researchers, consultants and growers to exchange and discuss the latest developments, opportunities and challenges for organic fruit growing.

During the last years, the organic sector invested significant time on the revision of the EU Organic Regulation. The final draft – preliminarily agreed on in November 2017 – is far from perfect. However, thanks to our work the text that has improvements compared to the initial proposal and brings some novelties. For example, the definitions of ‘organic variety suitable for organic production’ and ‘organic heterogenous material’ are steps forward for organic farmers, who will have the possibility to use more adapted plant reproductive material. The challenge is not over yet, as we will need to continue working on the second phase: the development of around 50 delegated and implementing acts which will add details and can help fixing the existing flaws of the agreed text.

Yet, IFOAM EU is active on the re-fit process of the EU pesticide legislation trying to ensure more protection for organic operators who are affected by pesticide contamination associated with long distance drift. We are also working to ensure that a clearer procedure is put in place for the registration of naturally-occurring substances, which due their existing natural background, should be not treated in the same way as synthetic substances.

Research and innovation are still high in our agenda. TP Organics is preparing to start its advocacy campaign on the next European Research and Innovation Framework programme. IFOAM EU is directly investing in innovative projects such 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.

Finally, the revision of the Common Agriculture Policy has started. It represents both a challenge and an opportunity: the challenge to maintain high EU budget for agriculture and the opportunity for a fundamentally new approach, for a new CAP that is capable of supporting sustainable development and delivers public goods for public money.

I would like to end this note by wishing you fruitful conference and by informing you about the European Road Map to “Transform Food and Farming” launched by IFOAM EU last September. The road map – and the living website www.euorganic2030.bio - contain a set of strategies and examples to inspire us all in getting 50% of Europe’s agricultural land managed according to organic principles of health, ecology, fairness and care.

Let’s Make Europe More Organic together!

Organically

Eduardo Cuoco