

Opening Adress

Dear Participants,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to Ecofruit - the 16th International Conference on Organic Fruit Growing. IFOAM EU is delighted to be the patron of this biennial event for the fifth consecutive period. Ecofruit is an important date in the calendar for the organic researchers, consultants and growers to address problems and exchange solutions for organic fruit production now and into the future.

Your conference comes at a crucial time for organic production in Europe: The European Commission is preparing to launch a legal proposal for a new organic legislation to replace the current EC 834/07 within the next three years. European Agriculture Commissioner Dacian Ciolos wants to ensure that “organic doesn’t become a victim of its own success”. IFOAM EU welcomes the intention to develop organic based on its principles, and believes in dynamic and steady progress of the organic system.

However we believe the draft proposals as they stand would result in major barriers for the sustainable development of the sector. Instead of steady and viable progress the proposal puts forward radical cuts and a system with significant changes. Most crucial for organic fruit growing would be the obligation to use 100% organic propagating material immediately with coming into force of the new legislation in 2016/17. This might be possible for apples but not for pears, stone fruit or berries in such a short period. IFOAM EU shares the objective towards 100% organic input use but ask for at least a 10-year transitional rule and an ambitious European action plan including investments in the sector regards above.

Another major issue is the approval process of plant protection products. IFOAM EU has been intensively engaged with key officials in order to stimulate a constructive debate with the European Commission on this critical issue. For instance we are now an active participant in a Commission working group for low risk substances as part of the implementation of Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 and have submitted applications for the approval of Quassia and Calciumhydroxide as basic substances. As part of this process we have ensured that the use of both substances will continue to be permitted under the Organic Regulation.

Finally, I am glad to report that the European technology platform TP Organics was officially recognised by the Commission in 2013 and has strengthened its position as a leading advocate for organic solutions under European research and innovation programmes. The new EU framework programme Horizon 2020 and the European Innovations Partnership provides significant opportunities for organic fruit growing. IFOAM EU calls on you to join us in confronting these challenges and opportunities head on over the coming years!



Marco Schlüter
Director IFOAM EU

