

Opening address

Dear Participants,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 14th Ecofruit conference. The IFOAM EU Group is very pleased to be the patron for the third time experiencing the progress of the conference. Twenty years ago, in 1990, when this Conference took place the first time, organic fruit growing was a very young discipline. Few growers tried to find a way to cultivate their orchards following the organic principles. They experienced losses and took risks that nowadays are difficult to imagine. Scientists dealing with organic fruit growing were even less.

Since then, a lot of work has been done to solve the most pressing problems in organic fruit growing. One of these, the control of the rosy apple aphid, was solved in the nineties by a collaborative project between a small company, fruit growers and the University of Hohenheim.

Nowadays, the growers have better equipment, more effective materials for crop protection and more knowledge on managing pests and diseases. Organic fruit growing is "flourishing" as Pieterjans Jansonius said at the last Ecofruit Conference two years ago. However, he also felt that the implementation of the organic principles within the production system of organic fruit growing was not yet perfect.

Organic agriculture is strongly and explicitly based on ethical values based on the underlying principles of health, ecology, fairness and care as defined by IFOAM and which are also reflected in the Council Regulation (EC) 834/2007 on organic production. Organic production systems must continuously try to improve their orientation towards these principles. This has to be emphasized in times where integrated production systems are improving its performance within their systems and the question of credibility of organic production becomes more and more important in a continuously growing (anonymous) organic market.

You as a scientist are not supposed to look into solutions for today, you are supposed to find solutions for tomorrow. Therefore the setting of your research priorities are like taking a strategic direction and consequently, science has a huge responsibility for the further development of the sector. Therefore organic research should not get into a trap of limitation of one problem - one solution approach. Singular technical aspects should always be considered against the background of improvement of the whole production system and should always aim to increase system resilience.

With the relatively well functioning systems of organic fruit growing that have been developed in the past years, with the high number of growers that have undertaken the adventure of organic production, you now have the opportunity, resources and ideas to take this new step. Take it!



Marco Schlüter
Director IFOAM EU Group

