

IFOAM Organics Europe opening address 2022

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

IFOAM Organics Europe is delighted to welcome you to the 20th 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.

With the adoption of the Farm to Fork strategy in May 2020, the European Commission has set out an ambitious framework for developing a sustainable food system for the EU, including a target to reduce the use and risks of chemical pesticides by 50% by 2030. The key role of organic agriculture in this transition has been acknowledged through the specific target on 25% organic agricultural land by 2030, supported by the new Commission's Organic Action Plan (OAP).

These objectives are aspirational targets and represent for now good intentions that will need to be incorporated into legislation and to be effectively implemented at the national level by Member States. In this perspective, 2022 will be an important milestone, as the Commission is due to present in a few weeks a proposal for a revised Sustainable Use of pesticides Directive (SUD), which, according to the Farm to Fork strategy, will be one of the main tools to reach the Farm to Fork's target on pesticide reduction. IFOAM Organics Europe is working to ensure that this legislation provides sufficient provisions and means to support alternative approaches to reduce dependence on synthetic pesticides, such as organic farming.

As the Commission puts forward the intention to reduce the use of synthetic pesticides, it also recognises the need to facilitate the availability of alternatives. In 2022, revised rules on the authorisation of plant protection products containing microorganisms should be adopted, in order to facilitate their placing on the market. This is a welcome first step to facilitate the availability of plant protection products based on natural substances. The Commission now plans to start an evaluation of the authorisation rules for botanical plant protection products, again with the aim of facilitating their placing on the market. Given the importance of this issue for the organic sector, IFOAM Organics Europe will closely monitor these developments.

Alternative approaches such as organic agriculture – but also IPM, biocontrol, agroecology – can lead the way towards an agrifood system free of synthetic pesticides, provided that the entire political framework enables their development. Given the European momentum, IFOAM Organics Europe is committed to ensuring that the continuous efforts of organic fruit growers to minimise the use of inputs are properly recognised and supported within the EU policy framework. Your research on improving production systems is very important to support our advocacy at EU level. I would therefore like to thank you today for your contribution to Ecofruit.

I would like to end this note by expressing my warm thanks to the organisers. I wish you a fruitful conference. Let's Make Europe More Organic together!

Organically,

Mathilde Calmels, on behalf of the whole IFOAM Organics Europe team