



Technology Innovation Platform of IFOAM

A Global Vision and Strategy for Organic Farming Research of TIPI



Concept Note

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TIPI is currently drafting a global vision for organic farming research. A first draft will be presented at [Science Day at BioFach 2014](#), when the discussion on the vision will be started. At the IFOAM Organic World Congress in Istanbul, the draft of the vision will be discussed and shaped during the TIPI Science Day with input from as many stakeholders as possible.

Organic agriculture originated as a scientific paradigm separate from conventional agriculture in the temperate zones of Europe, with early adoption in the USA and Japan. As the market for organic food has grown with globalization, the technical, ecological and cultural features of its production practices have become adopted world-wide without being always fully adapted to the respective regional contexts.

Hotspots of applied science in organic agriculture

The hotspots of applied science in organic agriculture have been Western Europe and the USA[1]. Later, Canada, Brazil (and other South American countries), China, South Korea and India started to catch up. Meanwhile, organic agriculture research has raised global interest, although still marginal in its size and quantity. As a rough estimate, less than one per cent of the annual spending of 49 billion US dollars of public and private donors is used for specific solutions and specific contexts for organic farming (“organic finish”)[2],[3]. The gradient from the leading countries to those where organic farming research is not a priority is huge. Mutual learning and information exchange has great potential.

European vision for organic food and farming research

European organic stakeholders created a vision for organic food and farming research, followed by a research strategy and an action plan for implementing the strategy([2],[4],[5]). The main target of this process was the European Commission, as funding for multinational research projects in the field of agriculture is important in the European Union (EU). This way, scientific groups from the member states could become involved in organic farming research, even if the priority given to organic farming research was not so high in their country. This has helped very much in equalizing organic agriculture research among European scientists. Oftentimes, scientists that were involved in EU projects consecutively became pacemakers of organic farming research in their countries.

Successful work of the European Technology Platform for organic food and farming research (TP Organics)

European work on organic research (vision, strategy, action plan) has been facilitated by a stakeholder-owned platform, TP Organics (www.tporganics.eu ). TP stands for Technology Platform and is a common scheme of the European Commission to let stakeholders participate in the research agenda setting. Work done so far has significantly raised the profile of organic farming and its research community. The outcomes of TP Organics have attracted scientists to organic agriculture who were not previously involved and has multiplied the number of relevant topics in the five open calls of the 7th Research Framework of the European Union (<http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7>).

Not global organic agriculture research agenda so far

A system-based organic agriculture research agenda has not yet been raised globally. The 15 international research centres of the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR) have not addressed organic agriculture. In the process of redefining research priorities and transforming research institutions, the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) has so far disregarded topics that would benefit organic farmers[6]. The work done so far by TP Organics cannot be automatically extrapolated to other parts of the world.

TIPI to develop a global vision for research, a global strategic research agenda and action plan

It is, therefore, one of the most important tasks of the Technology Innovation Platform of IFOAM (TIPI) to develop a global vision for research, a global strategic research agenda, and a global action plan. While pursuing this goal, TIPI activities will omit the research area of the European Union and concentrate on aspects of international organic farming research that have not been raised so far, such as those pertaining to developing and emerging countries, the Asian Tiger States, and other technologically fast growing countries, as well as on promoting co-operation between important research communities in the USA, Canada, Europe, and Australia.

Work on the global vision, strategic research agenda and action plan: State of the art

The work on a global vision, a strategic research agenda, and an action plan will be a participatory process of all organic stakeholders and related communities such as fair trade, small holder farmers, environmentalists, as well as different traditional farming communities like pastoralists or other indigenous movements. Scientists will be one stakeholder group of many, as they have other organizations such as ISOFAR (International Society of Organic Agriculture Research, www.isofar.org) to advocate for their specific interests.

TIPI document global vision, strategic research agenda and action plan for organic farming research

This introduction of the TIPI document on the global vision, strategic research agenda and action plan proposes to frame the work on the chapters on vision, strategic research agenda, and action plan drafted by TIPI council members. The document prepared by the council will be further developed through consultations among IFOAM member organizations and related external groups. It should be ready for a presentation and workshop at the IFOAM Congress in Istanbul in October 2014 (<http://www.owc2014.org>). The Istanbul workshop should build the momentum for subsequent global implementation of the action plan with the goal of boosting organic agriculture research in all regions and all international co-operations and organizations.

TIPI's objectives

TIPI's objectives are to:

1. Engage organic stakeholders, primarily IFOAM members from different sectors and regions, in a process that will develop a shared vision for research, development, technology, and innovation.
2. Draft a strategic plan to present research priorities identified by organic stakeholders as both global and regional challenges.
3. Establish an action plan to set and implement a global and regional research agenda.

The process

Parts i) and ii) of the TIPI vision for global organic farming research will be finished by October 2014 (Organic World Congress in Istanbul). Part iii) will be discussed and shaped during the TIPI Science Day in Istanbul with input from as many people as possible.

References

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