

Prioritising research areas in CORE Organic

By Camilla Mathiesen, ICROFS

The CORE Organic II project has come to an end and the call text for CORE Organic Plus will soon be published.

The main challenge for successful prioritization and selection of research topics in CORE Organic is to identify research areas that are in accordance with national research priorities and at the same time gain an added value through transnational research. The challenge in all of the call texts for CORE Organic, CORE Organic II and now for CORE Organic Plus is to formulate a call text, that balances the national priorities, new innovative approaches and transnational added value.

Thomas Alföldi works as a research dissemination officer at FiBL Switzerland. In CORE Organic II he was part of the team that coordinated the process of identifying and formulating the research areas of highest interest among the CORE Organic II partners. In the following he explains the lessons learnt from the first two

CORE Organic programs regarding the identification of research gaps and the process of formulating call texts that meet them.

Thomas Alföldi starts by pointing out, that the situation, level and development of organic research are very different in the 21 participating countries, and therefore the research gaps perceived by the partners are different. He elaborates:

-The challenge has been to bring very different approaches and expectations together without losing the interest and commitment of the funding bodies. For our team it has been important to maintain full transparency during the process, in regards to who suggested what. And also to explain if certain research needs could not be considered. My impression is, that all partners have been highly motivated, even though compromises had to be made. Although the countries have



Thomas Alföldi tells about the lessons learnt from the first two CORE Organic programs

very different research budgets and situations, and everyone has understood their role. No large contributor has dominated beyond reason and the smaller contributors have not insisted on their national priorities if not possible. Everyone has been keen on finding a common call text suitable and relevant for all countries.



The basis for the good cooperation between the partners Thomas Alföldi sees also in the very participatory approach from the coordinators in ICROFS.

-The innovation aspect has been a challenge, Thomas Alföldi says. He continues:

- I could imagine that partners from countries with well-established research sectors and sophisticated priority setting procedures might have been a bit disappointed that we had to start on a lower common ground than they are used to on the national level.

The consortium has always been very open to new ideas but it also had its limitations. In CORE Organic Plus, TP Organics with its close relationship to the stakeholders at European level, will be deeper involved in the process and that might help in this matter.

On writing the call text itself, Thomas Alföldi explains: - A critical point has been to decide how narrow or how broad we wanted to formulate the call text. If we focus too narrowly, we risked getting only a few applications, if the text is too broad, we might have too many proposals and risk losing clear focus. Between those two extreme, the consortium have had to find a balance.

Looking ahead, the lessons learned are useful in the work with CORE Organic Plus:

-We have to support dissemination even more, Thomas Alföldi says.

Research is time consuming, and dissemination run the risk of being left behind, but to justify the money put in, a certain amount of dissemination output is needed and this will be supported in CORE Organic Plus. Regarding the upcoming call, not much can be revealed yet, but we now have a clear picture of which “white spots” are still left on the research landscape and we will cover those spots in the call.

More details can be found in the full deliverable : [List of topics prioritised according to national and common criteria to be considered for transnational calls.](#)



About CORE Organic II:

The first call was launched in September 2010 and had a budget of about 9.2 million Euros divided into three thematic research areas. Projects are running from autumn 2011 to autumn 2014.

Thematic research area: Cropping: Designing robust and productive cropping systems at field, farm and landscape level.

Projects funded:

- **BICOPOLL:** Targeted bio-control and pollination enhancement. Coordinator: University of Helsinki, Department of Agricultural Sciences, Finland. Countries participating: FI, DE, EE, IT, SI, TR, BE.
- **BIO-INCROP:** Innovative cropping techniques to increase soil health in organic fruit tree crops. Coordinator: Agricultural Research Council, Italy. Countries participating: Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Turkey.
- **InterVeg:** Enhancing multifunctional benefits of cover crops – vegetables intercropping. Coordinator: Agricultural Research Council - Research centre for the soil plant system (CRA-RPS), Italy. Countries Participating: Italy, Germany, Denmark, Slovenia.
- **Softpest multitraps:** Semio-chemical traps for management of weevil and plant bug in organic strawberry and raspberry. Coordinator: Bioforsk - Organic Food and Farming Division, Norway. Countries participating: United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Latvia.
- **TILMAN-ORG:** Reduced tillage and green manures for sustainable organic cropping systems. Coordinator: FiBL Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Switzerland. Countries participating: France, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Estonia, Italy, Spain, Austria.
- **Vineman.Org:** Enhancing disease management, yield efficiency, and biodiversity in organic European vineyards. Coordinator: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy. Countries participating: IT, AT, DE, SI, ES.

