

Contentious Inputs in Farming



Copper - although copper occurs naturally in soil, when sprayed onto crops as a fungicide it can build up to levels which are toxic to earthworms and other soil life. Organic-PLUS is exploring alternatives including biological controls agents and plant defence stimulators (e.g. plant extras)



Mineral oils - substances derived from crude oil such as paraffin are used to control insects, primarily in Mediterranean countries on crops like citrus fruits. Organic-PLUS is reviewing potential alternatives.



Synthetic vitamins – Animal diets are often supplemented with synthetic vitamins. Organic-PLUS is trialling the use of naturally occurring plant sources containing vitamins.



Antibiotics and synthetic anti-parasitic drugs - antibiotic resistance and anti-parasitic treatments are growing public health concerns. Organic-PLUS is exploring anti-infective and immuno-stimulatory molecules which occur naturally in plants.



Conventional bedding - straw from non-organic farms (with pesticide contamination) is often used as bedding material for organic livestock. Organic-PLUS is looking at novel alternative materials which may also have additional health benefits, for example, shredded olive prunings.

Conventional manure - manure from non-organic farms (with pesticide contamination) is used to fertilise soil. In addition, all manure raises issues for those wishing to exclude animal products. Organic-PLUS is investigating novel bio-economy fertilisers such as sediments from fish farming as well as vegan-organic alternatives like bean meal.



Peat – many crops are sown in growing media containing peat before being transplanted into the field as young plants. Peat extraction damages habitats which are important for biodiversity, in flood prevention and as sites of carbon sequestration. Organic-PLUS is researching alternatives such as composted wood waste.



Plastic mulch - fossil fuel derived plastic films are used to suppress weeds, giving rise to concerns about pollution and plastic waste. Organic-PLUS is investigating bio-degradable alternatives made from plant materials.



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