

PRESS RELEASE

EUROPEAN ORGANIC MOVEMENT CALLS FOR A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO CARBON FARMING RECOGNISING THE MULTIPLE BENEFITS OF ORGANIC FARMING FOR CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BRUSSELS, 27 APRIL 2022 – As carbon farming is a current priority on the EU agenda when it comes to climate change mitigation in agriculture, IFOAM Organics Europe urges in their [new position paper](#) the need for a holistic and multi-dimensional approach to carbon farming focussing not only on the amount of carbon stored in soils but also on biodiversity protection and the systemic transition of farming systems towards agroecology.

Jan Plagge, IFOAM Organics Europe's President, said: "Practices that are common in organic farming are already contributing to higher soil carbon stocks on organic farms while providing benefits for soil health, water quality and biodiversity protection. Organic farming should therefore be recognized as a carbon farming practice. It is important to make sure that the efforts of first movers, like organic farmers, are not penalised but recognized as well, so that it is not those who have failed to take action in the past who will be mostly rewarded by a carbon farming scheme."

Eric Gall, IFOAM Organics Europe's Policy Manager, added that "the adoption of beneficial management practices for carbon sequestration and biodiversity protection in the agricultural sector should be encouraged and farmers should be remunerated for their efforts. Absolute emissions reductions are needed in all sectors and the recent IPCC report made it clear that the land sector cannot compensate for delayed emissions reductions in other sectors. Organic farmers therefore doubt that carbon markets are the right policy tool to provide fair and reliable funding to farmers to enhance carbon sequestration in their soils."

Ahead of the upcoming vote of the European Parliament's ENVI Committee on their report on the revision of the LULUCF Regulation, another important piece of legislation when it comes to carbon removals, the organic movement calls on the MEPs to ensure that enhancing carbon sinks does not undermine biodiversity protection objectives and that strong safeguards are ensured. Biodiversity is not simply a "co-benefit" of carbon sequestration in soils, but well-functioning ecosystems are a necessary condition for agriculture ecosystems resilience, climate mitigation and adaptation. Furthermore, emissions reductions have to be achieved in all sectors, therefore agricultural emissions should not be hidden by forestry removals which could be the case in the AFOLU pillar as proposed by the European Commission.

Organic farming has multiple benefits for the climate and biodiversity, including increased carbon sequestration in soils, a lower energy input, 30% more biodiversity on the farm and an increased resilience of the farming system. These are highlighted in a [new document](#) published by IFOAM Organics Europe.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Changing the way we produce food can make a big difference in mitigating climate change, can help farmers to adapt and to become more resilient, and can contribute to biodiversity protection. [Organic farming offers a systemic approach](#) for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and increasing soil carbon sequestration while sustaining healthy soils and protecting biodiversity.

Organic consumes less energy and reduces GHG emissions

- Instead of being dependent on external fossil-fuel intensive fertilizer or pesticide inputs, organic farming relies on establishing closed nutrient cycles and minimizing nitrogen losses. This can reduce global agricultural GHG emissions by around 20%.
- Refraining from synthetic fertilizer use reduces nitrous oxide emissions from soil by 40% per hectare in organic systems.
- Animals in organic systems have access to free range areas, allowed to graze as much as possible and 60% of the feed has to come from the farm or the same region. The reduced number of animals and grassland-based systems reduce emissions and improve carbon stocks in soil.
- Organic agriculture often uses improved manure management such as manure composting which can reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions from manure by 50% and 70% respectively.
- Organic agriculture has a higher energy efficiency and a lower energy use per hectare. It consumes around 15% less energy per unit produced compared to conventional agriculture

Organic sequesters and stores more carbon

Many common practices in organic farming, such as crop rotations including legumes or reduced tillage, help to improve soil quality and fertility and contribute significantly to higher soil organic carbon stocks of up to additional 3.5±1.1 tonnes of carbon per hectare compared to land under conventional management.

Organic protects species and habitat diversity

The prohibition of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and biodiversity-enhancing practices, such as diverse crop rotations with legumes, landscape elements or reduced tillage, lead to on average 30% more species and 50% more individuals in organically managed areas.

Organic supports ecosystem functions

Organic farming promotes soil health and reduces soil erosion by 22%. It protects water bodies by reducing nitrate leaching by 28-39%. Organic also has a positive impact on crop pollination and it increases natural pest control.

Organic increases the resilience of farming systems

The improved soil structure in organic farming reduces erosion, supports plant health and makes organic more resilient to changing weather conditions. Organic farming does not rely on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, which makes the organic system less dependent to external inputs. The enhanced biodiversity in organic systems favours stable yields during drought periods and adaptation to future environmental conditions.

IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. With almost 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies. In 2022, IFOAM Organics Europe is turning 20, IFOAM Organics International 50 and IFOAM Asia 10. [Celebrate the Year of Organics with us!](#)