



International Federation of
Organic Agriculture Movements –
EU Regional Group

President: Francis Blake

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JANEZ POTOČNIK
Commissioner for Research
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

11th October 2006

Dear Commissioner,

We, a coalition of organisations, are writing to express our grave concern about **the Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology work programme of the 7th Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities (FP7)**. From the draft Content of Calls in 2007 and the Indicative Topics of the 2008 Work Programme, we fear that there will be a **massive decrease in the support for Organic Farming research**. This would not only contradict the different EU policy strategies relating to organic farming, but would also hamper the further development of a dynamic organic food and farming sector and market.

As you know, EU-supported organic (and low input) farming research has increased significantly in successive EU research funding frameworks, from approximately €5 million under FP3 up to approximately €35 million under FP6. This was in line with constantly increasing organically farmed land and consumer demand for organic foods over the last 15 years. As I am sure you know, this has accelerated again over the last two years in many European countries, including the new member states.

Supporting Organic Farming research would clearly contribute to several EU policy strategies:

- the European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming (action 7: Strengthen research on organic agriculture and production methods),
- the European Parliament Report on agricultural research (A5-0018/2004), and
- other EU policy strategies (Biodiversity Communication, 6th Environment Action Programme, European Action Plan on Animal Welfare).

Taking these into account, a consequent increase of organic and low input food and farming research within FP7 could be expected.

However, under FP7 the current draft list of topics for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd call indicates a tendency that the funding for Organic Farming will for the first time decrease significantly, probably even below the levels of funding that were made available under FP5! Even more disappointing, none of the current topics will allow a continuation of the "whole system" development, an approach that was so successfully used in organic and low input farming projects under FP5 (e.g. Blight MOP) and FP6 (in particular IP QualityLowInputFood). These projects were also highlighted several times by the Commission as a positive example of innovative research.

With its huge innovative potential, its possibilities to create new jobs especially in rural areas, and additionally giving profitable opportunities to crafts and small and medium enterprises in the food sector, organic agriculture can help to achieve the aims of the Lisbon strategy. Furthermore, the multiplication effect of Organic Farming research for the whole agricultural sector is considerable, as it is the prototype for a sustainable food system.

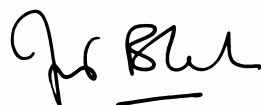
General basic and applied agricultural research cannot cover all the research needs of organic food and farming systems. The need for interdisciplinary approaches and complex models is a distinctive and vital feature for this field of research.

We appreciate the fact that your member of cabinet, Mr Malgaj, at a meeting with the IFOAM EU group on September 20, confirmed your commitment to the importance of research into organic farming. Clearly, you acknowledge the enormous potential that organic food and farming offers to society. Therefore, we ask you urgently to ensure that Organic Farming research is strengthened from the beginning within FP7, which can then help to realise that potential.

We trust you will understand how vital this is and we offer to meet with you to discuss these issues with the aim of identifying ways to move forward.

We look forward to hearing from you.

On behalf of the organisations named below,
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis Blake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Francis Blake
President



Signatory organisations:

IFOAM EU Group - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements – EU Regional Group

ISO FAR - International Society of Organic Agriculture Research

EFFAT European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism trade unions

EURO COOP - European community of consumer cooperatives

EEB - European Environmental Bureau

PS Please find a more detailed briefing note attached.

Copy to:

DG Research: Mr Rodriguez, Mr Patermann, Mr Hall, Mr DI GIULIO, Mrs Tissot, Mr Burioni, Mr Lutzeyer

Commissioner Fischer Boel, DG Agriculture:, Mr Ahner, Mrs Peutz

DG Environment: Mr Hamell, Mrs Barnett, Mr Nicolia

European Parliament: Agricultural and Environmental Committee