

# 5<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN ORGANIC CONGRESS

Gödöllő - Hungary,  
May 31st – June 1st, 2011

## ORGANISERS



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Dear participants, organisers, supporters and friends of the European Organic Congress,

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the IFOAM EU Group, to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the 5th European Organic Congress. The congress could not be realized without the cooperation of Hungarian EU Presidency in collaboration with the Hungarian Ministry for Rural Development, Biokontroll Hungária and Magyar Bio-kultúra Szövetség, and the continued efforts of everyone involved. The contribution of speakers, moderators and active participants, who brought in their ideas, experiences, knowledge and also their questions, made this congress a cornerstone for ongoing policy discussions related to the future of food systems and rural development.



The Congress provided a platform to properly address the issues facing European agriculture and rural regions, as well as our ability to face future challenges including the need to raise awareness that a change of consumption patterns matter. In order to attain our goals we urgently need clear commitments from policy makers to encourage the growth and further development of sustainable food systems, with organic food and farming as a leading model. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) bears the potential to change our food and farming system, but needs a major reform to serve to public interest.

The speeches of European Policy makers on the 5th European Organic Congress exhibit the desires of the European Union to continue to encourage the growth and expansion of the organic sector. The CAP reform is an acid test for policy makers on how far they will commit to making significant steps towards a farm policy that meets the climate, biodiversity and resource scarcity challenges. I believe that a broad civil society movement will keep a sharp eye on the ongoing CAP negotiations, demanding that taxpayers' money be spent for societal and environmental benefits.

Food and farming and the related policies are not issues that affect farmers only. According to Eurostat, one fifth of those employed throughout the EU work in the food sector. Moreover, all citizens are interested in food quality and a liveable environment. Through the efforts and involvement of all European citizens in the political processes the opportunity for significant change is possible and the future of sustainable agriculture and sustainable living is achievable. Let us all make our mark on the future to ensure positive change and an organic conclusion.

In anticipation of the 6th European Organic Congress, I would like to encourage you to send us feedback on this congress and proposals for themes you want to see discussed on the congresses in the future.

With organic regards

Christopher Stopes

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i- The EU-27 food chain accounted for 48.1 million jobs in 2008, amounting to a fifth of total employment: Eurostat, Statistics in Focus 27/2011 "From farm to fork – a statistical journey along the EU's food chain"

[All congress materials can be found here](#)

Photos Courtesy of John Portelli

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## CONGRESS RECAP

The 5th European Organic Congress was a highly successful two day event organised by the Hungarian EU Presidency, IFOAM EU Group and the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development, which took place on the 31st of May and the 1st of June in Gödöllő, Hungary. The Congress attracted over 300 participants and provided numerous opportunities to debate on the future of food and farming within the European Union through various panel discussions and workshops involving many high level political speakers as well as speakers from all areas of the scientific and the organic sectors.

During the Congress **Sándor Fazekas**, host of the event and currently chairman of the Council of EU farm ministers and Hungarian Minister for Rural Development, announced that "Organic production is an environmentally sound farming system which provides opportunities for rural development and delivers income for rural inhabitants in a way that takes the diversity of the European farming landscape into account. Policy has to set clear legal frameworks and support schemes to encourage the development of this top-level sustainable sector." Fazekas also recognized the efforts of member states in creating comprehensive national organic action plans which involve the promotion of organic food in public canteens, information campaigns, training programmes and the consideration of organic farming in school and university curriculums. "Such measures", as Fazekas states, "are effective tools to push for sustainable food production and consumption."

## OPENING PANEL



József Ángyán, State Secretary for Parliamentary Relations, Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development (Photo: J. Portelli)



Gábor Czeller, President of Hungarian Biokultúra Federation welcome note (Photo: J. Portelli)

## POLICY LEADER PANEL



Policy Leader Panel: Left to Right: **Marek Sawicki**, Polish Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; **Sándor Fazekas**, Hungarian Minister for Rural Development; **Marco Schlüter**, Director IFOAM EU Group; **Dacian Cioloș**, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development; **Christopher Stopes**, President of the IFOAM EU Group; **Paolo de Castro**, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament (Photo: J. Portelli)

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The dedicated work of organic farmers in respect of natural resources' capacity to regenerate was acknowledged by **Dacian Cioloș**, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. He stressed that organic farmers are on average younger (only 36% of organic farmers are over 55, compared to 56% conventional farmers) and have built trusting relationships with Europeans. Regarding CAP reform, he said that measures to support the uptake and maintenance of organic farming under the second pillar will be maintained, possibly reinforced, to recognise the sustainable character of this farming method. He underlined that the Commission will provide the necessary tools to support organic farming, but that the political decision making has still a way to go on both EU and national level; he encouraged participants to be active in this political process.

**Paolo de Castro**, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament, also recognised the rapid development of the organic sector in Europe over the past 20 years, and stated that the now more than 260 000 organic producers "are pioneers in food quality and sustainability." **Marek Sawicki**, Polish Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, provided an outlook on the Polish Presidency and the upcoming CAP 2014-2020 decision making process and underlined that the new CAP should be based on fairness and solidarity, with support primarily targeted to active farmers.

## WORKSHOPS



The workshops provided an opportunity to discuss in greater detail the further developments of organic farming in new member states, the CAP reform and the consistent policy frameworks for organic farming. All documents and reports from the workshops can be [found online](#).

**Workshop 1** on "Organic farming as an engine for rural economies in new member states" came to the conclusions that organic farming must be made an important policy issue on national level, seeking cooperation with other civil society organisations. Tax systems and subsidies must clearly support farms that avoid causing external environmental costs. The diversity of farms suitable for organic farming was underlined, as well as the need to invest in social and educational projects related to organic farming and organic food in mass catering. Also non-certified organic farms should be involved in knowledge exchange about best practices, access to organic knowledge and certification should be facilitated. "Debt traps" for farmers must be addressed, to find solutions for building up ecologically and economically sustainable farms.

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## WORKSHOPS

**Workshop 2** "The future CAP – Organic farming as an instrument for quality and sustainability" came out with a demand for a CAP that clearly leads to re-directing farming to sustainability. More concrete references throughout the whole CAP should be made on organic farming as sustainable system approach. The Greening of the 1st pillar is supported but it must be made clear that this does not lead to losing value and the significance of support for environmental measures under the 2nd pillar. Higher rates of co-financing for some agro-environmental schemes providing for a high level of public goods and services as well as mandatory schemes for system approaches such as organic farming should guarantee that organic farming is supported in all member states, whereas all CAP measures should support sustainability – in order to avoid investment support in unsustainable systems. Food quality must be another focal point in the CAP, whereas clear certification schemes and the consideration of sustainability should also part of these schemes. It was underlined that a broad societal consensus is necessary to make this CAP reform a significant step towards sustainable food systems – and that we must involve a broad range of civil society by making our demands easily understandable.



**Workshop 3** "A consistent policy framework for organic food and farming on national and EU level" addressed the need for consistent policies on all levels to support the development of organic farming. The Commission works on an evaluation of the application of regulation 834/2007 on organic food and farming and evaluates the success of the European Organic Action plan. The potential of national organic actions plans were discussed in the examples of Scotland and Czech Republic, highlighting the need for involvement of different stakeholders and continuous evaluation followed by policy adjustment. The potential of EU food promotion programme to support the development of the organic food market was described, whereas a need to facilitate access to this programme for organic farmers associations especially for small structures and new member states has been brought up. The CAP will continue to play an important role in the development of organic farming, and the need to integrate support schemes and different other policies was emphasised.

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IFOAM EU Group would like to thank all who participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> European Organic Congress, as well as everyone involved in the organisation and sponsorship.

We encourage everyone to disseminate the valuable information within this newsletter to encourage the greatest impact of the congress. All materials including presentations and videos from the Congress are now available on both our Congress webpage ([www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org](http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org)) and our Congress Youtube Channel ([www.youtube.com/eoc2011](http://www.youtube.com/eoc2011))



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Photos Courtesy of John Portelli