

Get to know the Committees!

Plants Committee

Richard Bernard

Seeds of Change Research Manager

I have my roots in the South of France in an area of rugged mountains facing west towards the fertile and lush valleys that lead to the Atlantic Ocean and facing southeast towards the vineyards and olive groves of the Mediterranean. We have a reputation of being a rebellious people, a mindset that can be explained by a tormented history, but we are also well known for our sheep herding and our leather industry. My Grandmother's garden, my little piece of paradise for the variety of colors, of scents and of flavors, left an indelible imprint on me.



My progression towards organic has been gradual and motivated by several factors, until the right time came to make a decision. During my travels, I have seen small and local growers losing their strength and having to compete with global agri-business. Their condition is getting worse and worse and as a plant breeder, I felt that, more and more, I was instead serving the needs of large growers, produce shippers, and food processors.

Another key factor in my decision has been the frustration of seeing large biotech companies implementing a successful strategy of patenting and monopolizing the green world. This is a real threat, not only for biodiversity on Earth, but also for the agriculture and food culture that we want to hand over to the future generations.



Vanaja Ramprasad

President of the GREEN foundation and IFOAM World Board member

In the last 30 odd years I have meandered through valleys and villages in India to search and understand the mainstream development and its impact sector wise on the poor. What impacted my understanding was the largely accepted flawed analysis as the real reasons for third world poverty and hunger.

A study I was involved in south of India during the 80s gave me to understand that the cultivation practices during the green revolution pointed towards the arrival of new seeds. The loss of genetic resources at the seed level had a phenomenal impact on farmers' independence to save their seeds. In the early stages of starting this work on seed saving I was a close associate of Dr. Vandana Shiva who inspired me and subsequently felt the need to go deeper into the issue at the grass roots level in the south of India and the Genetic

Resource, Energy, Ecology and Nutrition Foundation took genesis. .With this began the uncharted course of my involvement in seed saving by different communities in different ecological niches.

To date we have reached the various states in the south of peninsular India and networked with different civil society organizations. The concept of community owned seed banks has become popular. The rich experience that I gathered has been endowed with different ideas to make it sustainable and replicable. Our work with the small and marginal farmers focused on reviving the lost genetic resources through practices of on farm conservation participatory seed selections and crop improvements. In an effort to market the diversity, certification needs have been met through participatory guarantee systems.

I would like to take the message of conserving the indigenous heirloom seeds for sustainability to the organic world.

Salvatore Ceccarelli
Research fellow of ICARDA

Salvatore Ceccarelli was a University Professor of Applied Genetics in Italy. In 1980 he joined ICARDA and in 1987 he resigned from his position in Italy. Since 1995 he has been working mostly on Participatory Plant Breeding with programs in Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria, Eritrea, Jordan, Iran, Algeria and Egypt.



Zea Sonnabend
Organic Farmer and Farm Inspector

For the past 30 years, Zea Sonnabend has been an organic farmer, gardener, inspector, educator, policy specialist, organizer, and consumer. She was a partner in a small organic farm in Tehama County, CA from 1982 - 1989. She is currently an organic farm inspector and policy specialist for California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF). She helped write the first certification handbook and materials list for organic farming in California, is a founder of the Organic Materials Review Institute, and has worked for the USDA and NOSB as a contractor to develop the National List. She coordinated the Ecological Farming Conference at Asilomar, CA from 1994 to 2008 and currently serves as a consultant for the conference. She is a lifetime member of the Seed Saver's Exchange and has taught classes in Seed Saving at the UC Davis Student Farm and at the UCSC Farm and Garden since 1986. She has a Masters of Science in Plant Breeding from Cornell University.

Animals Committee



Anet Spengler Neff
Researcher and teacher at FiBL

I am working at FiBL, which is the Swiss research institute of organic agriculture. I am involved in several projects on organic cattle breeding and -husbandry (mostly dairy cattle) and I am also teaching young trainees in organic animal husbandry and -breeding. At home I am keeping (and breeding) a small flock of an old sheep race (it is one of the rare races in Switzerland, the “Engadin Sheep”).

Juan S. Velez
Vice president of farm operations; Aurora Organic Dairy

My name is Juan S. Velez. I am originally from Colombia S.A. where my family has been raising Brahman cattle for over 45 years. I graduated from Veterinary School in 1988 in Bogota Colombia, got my Masters of Science in Physiology of Reproduction in 1991 from Texas A&M University. Then I did a residency in Food Animal Medicine at the University of Florida. I am a Board Certified Theriogenologist. I am currently the Vice president of farm operations for Aurora Organic Dairy.



Jacqueline Haessig Alleje
President Organic Farming, Training, Consultancy, Inc.
and IFOAM World Board member

I am together with my husband co-owner of Rizal Dairy Farms, which is engaged into organic vegetable and dairy production.

I have been engaged into dairy farming since 1992, but without a certified status as we simply don't have the infrastructural set up in the Philippines for certified dairy yet. But our organic vegetable production is organic certified. In our organic vegetable farm we are currently working on the integration of a small mini pig raising

module (20 piglets), which we want to develop for adoption for small scale farmers. And maybe in the future a small free range chicken production unit as well.

I am also involved in a pilot project for an organic agriculture training center in cooperation with the local government where our farm is located as to use this as a driver for the development and promotion of organic agriculture. After 2 years of discussions and negotiations we finally signed a MOA just before I left for the IFOAM world board meeting. We don't expect to be able to start construction before first quarter of next year.

Dr. D.K. Sadana

Scientist at the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources

Dr. D K Sadana is presently working as Scientist at the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources at Karnal in India. He graduated in Agriculture in 1974 and subsequently had his Masters and Ph. D. in Animal Genetic & Breeding. He has worked on genetic improvement of buffaloes and his present area of interest is characterization and conservation of Animal Genetic Resources, role of indigenous and local livestock breeds in natural, organic and sustainable farming.

