

Bonn, 10th February 2012

IFOAM – City of Bonn Partnership for more Sustainability

As the U.N. City of Germany, the City of Bonn is engaged in the debates on “Green Economy”, and demands the international community to take bold steps to make development more sustainable. An annual partnership for 2012 with IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements with the slogan: “Global. Sustainable. Organic.” focuses on the importance of the upcoming Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Andre Leu, an Australian organic farmer and President of IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements and the Mayor of Bonn, Jürgen Nimptsch started today a symbolic virtual world journey in the Rheinaue. Together with the IFOAM Vice-Presidents Roberto Ugas (Peru) and Gabriela Soto (Costa Rica), they sent a balloon to take a symbolic virtual journey with 40 stations collecting the demands to the Earth Summit, Rio+20.

IFOAM, founded 40 years ago, has been based in Germany for the last 25 years, and has been located in Bonn for the last 8 years. “The common concern for more sustainability and IFOAM’s 40th anniversary gave us the momentum to choose IFOAM as the partner this year”, said Mr. Nimptsch. “Bonn is the ideal location for us”, added Andre Leu. “We represent the organic movement at international organizations, especially at the United Nations, and the locations which come into question are New York, Geneva, Rome, Nairobi or Bonn.” “The collaboration with the city is excellent”, added Markus Arbenz, IFOAM Executive Director, “we complement each other in different roles every now and then to make the international events in Bonn successful.”

Since 2000, the City of Bonn invites an international organization based in Bonn to be its annual partner. The organization has the opportunity to present itself and its work areas in a series of events, attracting media attention and achieving publicity. The city supports these events by providing many services to support the partner: the City of Bonn features the partner NGO on around 1.4 million official letterheads of the City Council, and, with a franking machine imprint, supports the annual partner on official correspondence. The partnership will also be mentioned in the footer of the official e-mails sent by City Council. Besides, information from the partner NGO is displayed on the infosccreens in public spaces in the city.

The journey collecting the demands to the Earth Summit Rio+20 will start from Bonn to the Netherlands, and can be tracked at www.ifoam.org. The balloon will come back to Bonn in late November 2012. An assessment of the journey will then be held at a sustainability conference, a so-called “Sustainability Camp”. “An event which is not only for international experts, but for all the citizens of Bonn”, reveals Markus Arbenz. In connection with this, SusCon, a well-known sustainability conference, shifts its venue from Nuremberg to Bonn: Another success in boosting Bonn as a location for sustainable development.

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Portrait of IFOAM (www.ifoam.org)

Sustainability in agriculture is an unsolved challenge, despite growing awareness and growing evidence of a needed paradigm shift towards new production systems that put ecological resources, rural societies' cultural expression, public social welfare and the economic viability of smallholding family farming in the foreground.

Organic Agriculture as an answer to these issues and as a solution to the environmental and social challenges of the world has evolved dramatically since its early beginnings, with a rapid increase in the number of stakeholders involved, the awareness of consumers and producers and the emerge of a global market for organic produce. However, Organic Agriculture remains a niche and is rarely considered a mainstream option among decision makers and disseminators of information.

IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements was formed in 1972 in Versailles and unites in this anniversary year 870 Organizations in 120 countries on all continents. Worldwide, in 160 countries, 1.6 million farmers cultivate 35 million hectares of organically certified land. The land under uncertified organic cultivation and wild collection is manifold. The worldwide turnover of organic products is now 50 billion Euros. IFOAM has an elected World Board with representatives from Europe(3), Africa(2), Americas(3), Asia(1) and Oceania (1). IFOAM employs 25 staff worldwide from 15 countries, of which 20 are based in Bonn.

IFOAM demands that the Rio+20 must include agreements that:

- a. Recognize agro-ecological based farming or organic farming practiced by small-scale farmers as the most effective approach in addressing climate change, food and water security, biodiversity loss, poverty eradication and sustainable development.
- b. State that the scaling up of organic agriculture through the reorientation of policies that support small-scale farmers is today's most urgent food and agricultural challenge, and that a transition to an ecologically based, resilient, fair and fully inclusive and humane agriculture is essential if the goals of sustainability and poverty eradication are to be simultaneously achieved.
- c. Recognize the important role that governments and donors have to play in the transition to socially inclusive and ecologically based farming systems. Organic farming is knowledge-intensive rather than external input intensive, making it less attractive to private companies that develop and supply agricultural products. As a consequence, the transition will require public policies that support agricultural research and the wide dissemination of outcomes and outputs, including through the development of participative extension services.
- d. Establish a working program under the auspices of FAO that implements the findings of both the 2008 IAASTD report and the 2011 UN Special Rapporteur's report on the Right to Food.
- e. Establish an 'International Multi-Stakeholder Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems', based on the IAASTD process and its objectives, that informs the transition to a green, fair, ecologically sound and humane agriculture. The panel would provide regular updates on agricultural knowledge, science and technology options that address food and water security within the context of sustainable development, complimenting the role of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) of FAO.
- f. Guarantee farmers the right to participate in all decision-making processes related to agricultural production, distribution, pricing, marketing, standard-setting and policy-making, as well as the regulation of the agricultural commodities market. They must also be empowered to exercise these rights.
- g. Ensure the removal of policies adverse to the well-being of agriculturally based communities, especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). These include, for example, perverse subsidies or restrictions on the use of plant varieties through patents on seeds, that undermine the livelihood.

The full text of the demands can be found at <http://goo.gl/RJuYh>