

## END PIECE

### IFOAM Program 2011—Cultivating the Future

By Katherine DiMatteo

Climate change, biodiversity, crops for fuel, food security, poverty reduction, rural development, gender equality, social justice, desertification, eutrophication, and food sovereignty and globalization are critical issues that today, more than ever before, are finding their way into the discussions among those in agriculture, trade and government.

Those of us in the organic agriculture community are also affected by these changing agricultural, environmental, economic and social crises, and by policies and decisions made in the private and public sector in answer to these challenges. What has not changed is the dominance of reductionism—the oversimplification of these complex issues and their inter-relationship. The holistic approach of organic agriculture has the potential to provide true, long-term solutions, but still struggles for its place as the sense of crisis escalates the demand for quick, short-term solutions based on the prominent agriculture system.

The role ahead for organic advocates at all levels and around the world will be to promote with objective, realistic and convincing evidence that organic agriculture systems must be included not only as regulatory requirements and standards but also as principles upon which agricultural framework policies are constructed. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is ready to advance its advocacy agenda to ensure that there is a voice for organic in international forums. IFOAM also will compile and develop documentation and



information so that individuals and organizations at the local, regional and national levels have the tools to effectively articulate sustainable organic solutions.

Through years of effort, IFOAM has positioned itself for this advocacy role.

IFOAM has observer status or is otherwise accredited by the following international institutions:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- Codex Alimentarius Commission (FAO and WHO)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
- The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and
- International Labor Organization of the United Nations (ILO).

IFOAM has already developed numerous positions papers on these critical issues, often in collaboration with other organizations that provide a substantial resource of background material and off-the-shelf literature for distribution.

However, there is more to do, and the commitment is best expressed in the introduction of Program 2011—the IFOAM strategic plan: “The IFOAM World Board is inspired to move IFOAM forward, unleashing the full potential of the organic movement based on the achievements of the past. Advocacy is the foundation of this vision and the primary means to accomplish the IFOAM mission. Institutional development is at the core of IFOAM work and underpins

#### DEFINITION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.

#### PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Organic agriculture is based on:

**The principle of health**—Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.

**The principle of ecology**—Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

**The principle of fairness**—Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.

**The principle of care**—Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

the strategic plan. It is understood that the work of IFOAM and the strategic program are based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture and the definition of Organic Agriculture as well as established positions and norms.”

Two excellent foundation

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documents developed and approved by IFOAM members—Principles of Organic Agriculture and Definition of Organic Agriculture—not only provide the baseline for IFOAM's work but it is our hope and expectation that these statements, if adopted worldwide, will serve to unify and harmonize the organic community in ways that standards, certification and accreditation have thus far failed to do.

This is not to say that IFOAM will abandon its efforts to harmonize the normative aspects of organic agriculture. But, given the reality of numerous government regulations, private sector standards, and conformity assessment and accreditation systems, the focus is shifting to equivalence. Since 2003, IFOAM has successfully joined forces with UNCTAD and FAO in a Task Force on Harmonization. The Task Force will complete its work in October 2008. It has developed two tools: international requirements for certification bodies, and a 'tool of equivalence' to evaluate existing systems of standards. As tools, they can be used for government-to-government negotiations and private sector multi-lateral recognition, and will be considered for inclusion in

the IFOAM Organic Guarantee System.

IFOAM has traditionally provided models, such as the IFOAM Basic Standard and Accreditation Criteria, upon which organic certification systems and standards have been built. However, the scope of organic agriculture that IFOAM envisions extends beyond certification. The full diversity of organic agriculture includes any farmer using the methods of organic agriculture and all systems based on the principles of organic agriculture. Both as a response to members' needs and interests and to encourage worldwide adoption of organic agriculture, IFOAM will continue to develop and promote the Participatory Guarantee System, embracing organic production practices within a quality assurance system based on community involvement and direct markets without the framework of certification. In addition, work on models of best practices, standards for emerging sectors, and collaboration with complementary values-based initiatives (such as social accountability, fair trade and fair labor) will be supported.

The fundamental strength of IFOAM is its democratic global network of members, sector specific

and regional groups, and strategic partnerships. Involvement and action are stimulated and encouraged from the bottom up and the top down. The General Assembly in June exemplified the engagement of members with a record 192 members in attendance and with 60 percent of the total membership casting votes on positions, programs and the selection of the World Board. IFOAM activities that provide member empowerment and assurance of adequate sector and regional representation in the governance structure will continue to foster this vitality.

The World Board has taken up its role as stewards of Program 2011 with the conviction that IFOAM can succeed in cultivating innovation and creativity to bring about healthy environmental, economic and societal change. These are exciting times for organic agriculture, and IFOAM intends to play an important role in its future direction. □

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## CLASSIFIED ADS

### INGREDIENTS & PRODUCTS

**ORGANIC NUTS FARM-DIRECT:** Purchase heart-healthy certified organic almonds and pistachios from Braga Organic Farms at [www.buyorganicnuts.com](http://www.buyorganicnuts.com).

**NEPTUNE'S HARVEST HYDROLYZED FISH FERTILIZER:** Cold processed. Menhaden free. 165 mesh screened. OMRI listed. Free samples/catalogs. 800-259-4769, or [www.neptunesharvest.com](http://www.neptunesharvest.com).

### AVAILABLE FOR EMPLOYMENT

**DEDICATED, ACCOMPLISHED, MOTIVATED, SALES/MARKETING PROFESSIONAL SEEKS FULL-TIME POSITION.** Strong track record of achievement and new business development. Results-oriented. Client relationship leadership success, industry

loyalty and dedication to providing highest level of customer satisfaction. Proven ability to assess client needs, establish rapport, build trust and close the sale. Background organizing health weekend workshops/dinner-lectures. Best asset: Creating new revenue streams to help your company prosper. Infectious good attitude. B.A. degree. Seeks growth-oriented, organic/green company, salary + commission. Will re-locate at own expense for right opportunity. Request resume: [judy@judygrill.com](mailto:judy@judygrill.com), 703-989-1584.

### SPECIAL SERVICES

**SOCIAL(K):** OTA members can align their retirement assets with corporate and employee beliefs through OTA's partnership with Social(k). Included are over 150 socially responsible funds, low

cost paperless platform, integrated payroll processing, and a dedicated account management team to assist OTA members with their plan needs. To learn more, contact OTA member Rob Thomas at 866-929-2525.

**BENEFITS INSURANCE:** Under an OTA partnership with HUB International of California Insurance Services, OTA members have access to a comprehensive insurance program that addresses the special exposures and risks of many organic business community sectors. For more information, log-in to the members-only pages of the OTA web site and visit the "Member Benefits" area. Contact Lou Albertini for Property, Liability and Worker's Compensation Insurance or Dave Velez for Employee Benefits at 925-609-6500.