

Organic Food: Good for Farmers, Workers, Climate, and the Environment

The event “Organic Food: Good for Farmers, Workers, Climate, and the Environment” marked an inspiring moment for the organic agriculture movement, coinciding with its 100th anniversary. Hosted by the [European Economic and Social Committee](#), co-organised by [Organic Cities Network Europe](#), [ICLEI Europe](#), [IFOAM Organics Europe](#), [France urbaine](#), and [Associazione per l'Agricoltura Biodinamica](#) and attended by representatives from cities, regions, and associations across Europe, the event showcased the transformative potential of organic and biodynamic farming for farmers, consumers, and the planet and highlighted the essential role of cities, regions, and communities in transforming food systems for a more sustainable future.

Celebrating 100 Years of Organic Agriculture

Organic agriculture, which began 100 years ago as a response to the challenges of chemical fertilization and monocropping, has grown into a vital pillar of sustainable food systems. By fostering healthier soils, improving biodiversity, and reducing exposure to harmful chemicals, organic farming supports environmental sustainability, food security, and farmers' welfare. Experts such as Claudio Serafini and Carlo Triarico emphasized the need to look ahead to the next century, scaling organic practices to ensure they remain relevant and impactful.

Triarico highlighted a Royal Society review discussing the yield gap between organic and conventional agriculture, emphasizing the importance of innovation and research to close this gap while maintaining environmental benefits.

Eduardo Cuoco, Director of IFOAM Organics Europe, reminded attendees that “organic food is not a niche but a necessary choice for a better future.” This sentiment underpins the urgency of adopting sustainable agricultural practices at scale, integrating them into mainstream food systems for the benefit of people and the planet.

Biodynamic agriculture, a subset of organic farming, was presented by Clara Behr and Alessandro Piccolo as a holistic approach to farming. It prioritizes biodiversity, soil fertility, and ethical labor practices while addressing pressing challenges such as climate change. Examples of biodynamic practices—such as plastic-free banana production and sustainable livestock farming—showcase its viability and effectiveness.

Case Studies: Cities and Regions Leading the Way

Cities and regions play a pivotal role in integrating sustainable food systems. Paris, Bremen, Nuremberg, and Tartu provided inspiring examples of their efforts:

- **Paris:** Vice Mayor Audrey Pulvar outlined the city's ambitious sustainable food plan, aiming for 100% sustainable and 65% organic procurement in public catering by 2025.

Initiatives such as [“AgriParis Seine”](#) are fostering local production while tackling challenges like balancing production and consumption across regions.

- **Bremen:** Jan Kohlmüller shared [Bremen's journey to becoming an organic city](#), with a focus on school meals and public catering. Despite challenges in infrastructure and lack of training, Bremen defended that the creation of a "House of Food" for knowledge-sharing and funding support would be a way to tackle these challenges.
- **Nuremberg:** Eva-Sonja Bauhus highlighted the integration of sustainability into school nutrition strategies, using school gardens and canteen committees to educate students and engage the community.
- **Tartu County:** Katri Kuusk emphasized the region's need for greater diversity in organic production to meet local demand. The [county's food strategy](#) promotes sustainable food practices and innovation while addressing procurement challenges.

Collaboration for the Future

A resounding theme of the event was the need for collaboration across sectors and levels of governance. Peter Defranceschi, Head of ICLEI Brussels office, called for three actionable targets:

1. **Sustainable Food Procurement:** A minimum standard of 20% organic food in public procurement, as seen in Italy, where a national law has driven regional organic production and consumption.
2. **Food Education:** Comprehensive curricula in schools to foster awareness and skills around sustainable food systems, essential for generational change.
3. **Urban and Peri-Urban Organic Agriculture:** Reserving urban soil for organic farming to prevent pollution and reduce public spending on soil and water remediation.

Former Florence Mayor and MEP Dario Nardella echoed this sentiment, advocating for a pact between cities and rural areas to strengthen cohesion and sustainability. Cities provide a unique opportunity to promote organic agriculture, educate future generations, and drive demand for sustainable practices.

As Claudio Serafini noted, organic agriculture's 100th anniversary is not just a moment of reflection but a call to action. Building on this milestone, the event and its culmination in the [Brussels Declaration](#) have laid a strong foundation for future collaboration. With the commitment of several organisations, the path is set to advance sustainable food procurement and establish organic agriculture as a cornerstone of Europe's food systems, paving the way for a more inclusive and sustainable future.