

PRESS RELEASE - Organic Innovations to contribute to societal challenges 🇪🇺

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Friday, 04 December 2015 12:32

Brussels, 3 December 2015 – On 1-2 December organic sector leaders and policy makers met to discuss the innovation potential of organic food and farming system and the opportunities and potential risks that could arise from innovations developed outside the organic sector. The occasion was the “Organic Innovation Days” organised by the European Technology Platform for Organic Food and Farming Research and Innovation (TP Organics).

“Innovation is essential for the development of the entire European agri-food system: organic food and farming is a proven pioneer and providing innovative solutions to increase the sustainability of production,” said Eduardo Cuoco, Head of the TP Organics secretariat. “Organic already offers concrete contributions to societal challenges such as climate change, food nutrition and resource efficiency. TP Organics demands that the next Horizon 2020 working programme for 2018-2020 fully takes organic’s contribution into account. It is crucial that not only farming, but also organic processing receives adequate research funding which is not currently the case. Organic has the potential to meet the increasing consumer demand for sustainable and healthy food, and a fair share of public money should be allocated to its development at all stages of the chain.”

“We want to double organic land in Emilia Romagna by 2020. In order to achieve this objective we gave to organic farming highest priority in all the measures of our rural development plan. At the same time, we think that is crucial to work on innovation - said Simona Caselli, Minister of Agriculture of Emilia Romagna Region - We allocated fifty million euro to the creation of operational groups within the European Innovation Partnership. The first is going to be launched soon and organic farmers have the advantage that their projects can be financed to 90% of total costs. Importantly Horta srl, a spin-off from of Piacenza University, won the TP Organics competition on Innovative technologies for pest management in organic cropping systems.”

Background information

On 1-2 December, the Organic Innovation Days were organised by the European Technology Platform of Organic Food and Farming Research and Innovation (TP Organics) in cooperation with the Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network (MOAN) and Union Camere Lombardia.

The first session of the event aimed to demonstrate the Innovation potential of the organic food and farming sector. Over 30 innovative proposals were submitted to the TP Organics call for Innovations launched in July 2015. The winners of the open call presented their solutions addressing the challenges of pest management, food processing and business models of value addition at the local levels. The winning solutions included a decision support system, Vite.net®, for the sustainable management of vineyards, the reduction of nitrates in organic cold meats and a crowdfunding campaign for a small-scale dairy farm. All short-listed submissions will be freely available on the TP Organics website.

The second session explored the opportunities and potential risks of innovations such as bio-plastics, the Internet-of-Things, proteins derived from insects or algae, and the recycling of urban and human waste. The third session brought together stakeholders and policy makers to discuss how to increase and improve spending for organic food and farming research. The speakers and participants of the Innovation Days agreed that organic farming has a huge potential to be driving a change in the agri-food systems in Europe. The support of policy-makers on all levels, from regional to European, is crucial for making this change happen