

## **Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production (COM (2021) 141)**

### **Second Progress report. July-December 2021**

On 25 March 2021, the Commission approved the Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production. DG AGRI, as leading DG in charge of implementation of the Action Plan, has committed *“to keep relevant Cabinets and services informed of the progress of the implementation of the Action Plan<sup>1</sup>”*. Further to the first progress report<sup>2</sup>, this one covers the period from July to December 2021.

The Annex provides a more detailed set of actions divided into three chapters: 1 Institutional developments, 2 Organisation of implementation of the Action Plan, 3 State of play of implementation.

The main highlights of this semester can be summarised as follows:

First, the other EU institutions and organs have explicitly reacted to the Action Plan or are about to approve their reactions. The Council has adopted conclusions last 19 July 2021 supportive of the Action Plan. The European Parliament is preparing its report, which should be available beginning of 2022. The European Economic and Social Committee has adopted its positive opinion last September. Finally, the Committee of the Regions has adopted its positive opinion in December. The supportive reaction of the other EU institutions and organs confirms the tendency of the overall very positive response of European stakeholders regarding the Action Plan.

Second, last 23 September 2021, the first EU Organic Day took place. European Parliament, Council and Commission signed an inter-institutional declaration declaring that day, from now on, as the annual EU Organic Day. That day was celebrated in a genuine “EU spirit” with an event putting together the three EU institutions, both EU Committees and the main European stakeholders. Press coverage was really good. This successful starting event will pave the way for the next EU Organic days to come.

Third, the Commission has also been busy preparing the first time ever EU Organic Awards to be delivered in 2022. For the purpose of these awards, a broad-based EU approach has been taken, in which the Commission plays the role of lead initiative taker, driver, facilitator and coordinator but in which the actual management of the awards is done by a number of partners. These partners are the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee of the Regions (CoR), IFOAM and COPA-COGECA. There will be seven awards: best EU farmer (male and female), region, city, bio-district, SME, food retailer and horeca.

Fourth, Member States have been invited by Commissioner Wojciechowski to nominate national organic ambassadors. A first meeting for the purpose of exchanging best practices is in the process of being organised for 3 February 2022.

Fifth, worth signalling is, notably, the approval last 5 July of the EU code of conduct for responsible business and marketing practice, the implementation of the new strategic guidelines of 21 May 2021 for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture and also the work in tackling fraud in organics. Please, see the annex for more details on these and other points.

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<sup>1</sup> Ares (2021) 3022355, 6 May 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Ares (2021) 4364944, 5 July 2021.

Sixth, with all of the reinforced and combined actions under Horizon Europe, the Commission is on a good track with regard to fulfilling the commitment to dedicate at least 30% of the budget for research and innovation actions in the field of agriculture, forestry and rural areas to topics specific to or relevant for the organic sector.

Finally, at the moment of writing this progress report, most Member States sent their proposed CAP Strategic Plans to Commission and the Commission is expecting the remaining plans soon. The Commission will ensure consistency between these CAP Strategic Plans and the need to provide appropriate support to the development of Organic Farming, in light of the Action Plan and other relevant texts.

## **Annex**

### **1. Institutional developments:**

#### **1.1. European Parliament:**

- 2021:
  - Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski presented the Action Plan to the European Parliament's COMAGRI Committee on 14 April 2021.<sup>3</sup>
  - The European Parliament is currently working on an Opinion on the Action Plan. Rapporteur is Member of the European Parliament MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer. The draft Opinion is highly supportive of the Action Plan. An exchange of opinions with the European Parliament's COMAGRI Committee, attended by the Commission services, took place on 9 December 2021.
  - A number of parliamentary questions touching upon the Action Plan have been replied to.
  - A number of questions on the Action Plan were replied to within the context of the structured dialogue with the COMAGRI committee.
- 2022:
  - An exchange of opinions of the COMAGRI committee with Commissioner Wojciechowski, also covering the Action Plan, will take place in January 2022.

#### **1.2. Council of the European Union:**

- 2021:
  - The Commission presented the Action Plan to the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) on 17 May 2021.<sup>4</sup>
  - Commissioner Wojciechowski presented the Action Plan at the AGRIFISH Council meeting of 26-27 May 2021.<sup>5</sup>
  - The Council adopted Council Conclusions on the Action Plan on 19 July 2021. These Conclusions are very supportive of the Action Plan.

#### **1.3. Trilogue on the Strategic Plan Regulation:**

- 2021:
  - Against the background of the Action Plan, the references to organic farming and support for it have been strengthened in the Strategic Plan Regulation.

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<sup>3</sup> European Parliament 2021 - Secretariat-General – Directorate F – The week that has passed – EP committees business review – 12-16 April 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Meeting of the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA), 17 May 2021 – Summary Record.

<sup>5</sup> Flash report AGRIFISH Council meeting – 26-27 May 2021 – Brussels.

#### **1.4. European Economic and Social Committee:**

- 2021:
  - The Commission services met the rapporteur for the EESC Opinion on the Action Plan on 21 April 2021.
  - The Commission services participated in a hearing organised by the EESC on the Action Plan on 11 June 2021.
  - The EESC adopted its Opinion on the Action Plan in September 2021. This Opinion is very supportive of the Action Plan.
  - The Commission services are preparing a position on the opinion.

#### **1.5. Committee of the Regions:**

- 2021:
  - The Commission services presented the Action Plan at the meeting of the Committee's NAT section on 20 May 2021.
  - The CoR adopted its Opinion on the Action Plan in December 2021. This Opinion is very supportive of the Action Plan.
  - The Commission services are preparing a position on the opinion.

#### **1.6. Comitology:**

- 2021:
  - The Commission presented the Action Plan at the meeting of the "Regulatory Committee on Organic Production" of 6 May 2021.<sup>6</sup>
  - The Commission presented the Action Plan at the meeting of the "Expert Group for Agricultural Markets, in particular concerning aspects falling under the single CMO Regulation – Animal Products" of 17 June 2021.<sup>7</sup>

#### **1.7. Stakeholders:**

- 2021:
  - The Commission presented the Action Plan at meetings of Civil Dialogue Groups as follows:
    - 2021 04 23: Meeting of the CDG Horticulture, Olives and Spirits - Fruits & Vegetables
    - 2021 05 05; 2021 11 08: Meeting of the CDG on Wine

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<sup>6</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/comitology-register/screen/documents/073686/1/consult?lang=en>

<sup>7</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/meetings/consult?lang=en&meetingId=26455&fromExpertGroups=true>

- 2021 05 17: Meeting of the CDG on Animal products - Poultry meat and eggs
- 2021 05 19: Meeting of the CDG Organic Farming

### **1.8. Commission:**

- 2021:
  - Cross-references to the Action Plan were introduced into various Commission initiatives:
    - Long-term Vision for Rural Areas
    - SDG2 report (Eurostat CdF)
    - EU4Health Work Programme (SANTE CdF)
    - Framework Law on Sustainable Food Systems inception impact assessment (SANTE CdF)

## **2. Organisation of Implementation of the Action Plan:**

### **2.1. Establishment of an informal DG AGRI working group:**

- The establishment of the DG AGRI working group was started immediately after the adoption of the Action Plan.<sup>8</sup>
- A first meeting was held on 31 May 2021. Purpose was to discuss and agree upon a division of labour. Subsequently, fiches with deliverables and timelines were prepared on each of the actions
- A second meeting was held on 12 November 2021. The progress of implementation was discussed.

### **2.2. Establishment of an inter-service steering group:**

- The establishment of the inter-service steering group was started immediately after the adoption of the Action Plan.<sup>9</sup>
- A first meeting was held on 31 May 2021. Purpose was to discuss and agree upon a division of labour. Subsequently, fiches with deliverables and timelines were prepared on each of the actions
- A second meeting was held on 16 November 2021. The progress of implementation was discussed.

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<sup>8</sup> Ares(2021)2994247

<sup>9</sup> Ares(2021)3022355

### **3. State of Play of Implementation:**

#### **3.1. Cross-cutting initiatives:**

##### **Progress reports:**

- 2021:
  - A first progress report, covering the period 25 March 2021 - 30 June 2021, was delivered on 5 July 2021 (Ares(2021)4364944).
  - This is the second progress report, covering the period 1 July 2021 – 31 December 2021.

##### **Celebration of the EU Organic Day:**

- 2021:
  - On 23 September 2021, the first 'EU Organic Day' was celebrated. An organic breakfast was hosted by Commissioner Wojciechowski. The breakfast was followed by a formal event, at which an inter-institutional declaration was signed by the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council declaring 23 September from now on the date of the annual 'EU Organic Day'. This signature of the declaration was witnessed by representatives of the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, IFOAM, COPA-COGECA, CEJA, Eurocommerce, FoodDrinkEurope and BEUC. The event was followed by a press conference attended by the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. Substantial social media activity and media coverage ensued.

##### **Creation of a network of national organic ambassadors:**

- 2021:
  - On 18 June 2021, as a follow-up to the presentation of the Action Plan at the AGRIFISH Council meeting, Commissioner Wojciechowski addressed a letter on the Action Plan to national agriculture ministers.<sup>10</sup> In that letter, the Commissioner called attention to actions in the plan for which there is scope for action at national level, called for national organic action plans (complementary to CAP NSPs), and called for the appointment of organic ambassadors (for the purpose of national coordination, contact point for exchange best practices). Replies have been received and analysed. A first meeting of national organic ambassadors is being organised for 3 February 2022. It will focus on procedural issues, green public procurement, bio-districts and group certification.

#### **3.2. Action by Action:**

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<sup>10</sup> ARES(2021)3987665.

## **AXIS 1. ORGANIC FOOD AND PRODUCTS FOR ALL: STIMULATE DEMAND AND ENSURE CONSUMER TRUST:**

### **1. Promoting organic farming and the EU logo. As regards information and communication, the Commission will:**

#### **1.1. Starting in 2021, give a greater focus to organics among the themes covered by the annual call for proposals on information measures on the CAP:**

- 2022:
  - The annual “Information Measures on the CAP” (IMCAP) calls do not have different topics or sub-topics. However, the scope of the information measures that will be co-funded is described in section “Themes and priorities” (in page 6 of the Call Text). The information measures highlighting how the CAP contributes to reaching the goals of the organic action plan are listed as a priority.

#### **1.2. Starting in 2022, collect continuously data about the environmental, economic and social benefits of organic farming and inform citizens, including farmers, about these benefits by enhancing the use of social media:**

- 2021:
  - On 17 December 2021, the kick-off meeting took place of the project "Introduction of organic farming into the CAPRI supply model" (CAPRI Organic Farming). The general objective of this specific contract is to extend the potential of CAPRI for agricultural policy impact analysis to include organic farming as a sustainable production practice. The specific objectives are:
    - 1. Developing the approach most suitable for the successful implementation of organic farming (OF) into the current model framework and for diverse scenario analysis with regard to OF and general agricultural policy impacts.
    - 2. Implementing this approach into the model accompanied by the relevant update of the CAPRI database, the required parameters and expert knowledge, according to good modelling practice.
    - 3. Generating a CAPRI baseline that includes OF and a scenario for testing the model performance.
  - The “Commission Staff Working Document, Annex, Accompanying the Document “Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Implementation of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Including an Assessment of the Performance of the Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020” was drafted. It stated: “Organic farming has a positive effect on several environmental and climate impacts per unit of agricultural land compared to conventional farming. The positive effects are on

biodiversity, carbon sequestration, energy use, eutrophication, nutrient loss, greenhouse gas emissions and pest and disease control. For example, organic farming systems increased biodiversity by 34% in both biotic abundance and biotic richness of the species studies in Smith et al. (2018). It also increased by 23.5% soil carbon stocks in arable crops, orchards and horticulture (Aguilera et al, 2013)."

- The 2021 Agricultural Outlook Spring Workshop took place online on 7-8 June 2021. Session 2 organised on 7 June 2021 (15:10-16:20) was titled "Supply: how to produce in 2030 in line with the Green Deal targets?", was chaired by Kerstin Rosenow, DG AGRI, and included presentations on (1) sustainable feeding for a sustainable livestock production (Sabine VAN CAUWENBERGHE, DSM), (2) the transition towards a pesticide-free agriculture (Christian HUYGHE, INRAE), and (3) stimulating organic farming (Pieter DEVUYST, IHS Markit), followed by a Q&A.
- The 2021 Agricultural Outlook Autumn Workshop "Medium-term outlook for EU agricultural markets, income and environment" took place online on 20-21 October 2021. Session 3 organised on 20 October 2021 (12:00-13:00) was titled "Land use and organic farming", was chaired by Elena Panichi, DG AGRI, and included presentations on "EU agricultural outlook on land use and assumptions on organic farming" by Vincent Cordonnier, DG AGRI, and presentations by Nicholas Lampkin, Thunen Institute, and Gino Baudry, EUCalc project, followed by an open discussion.
- The 2021 EU Agricultural Outlook Conference "Fit for 2030 - Resilient EU agri-food systems and rural areas" took place online on 9-10 December. Session 5 organised on 9 December (14:30-16:15) included a parallel session on "Organics" with moderator Brian Maguire, speaker Jörn Sanders, Head of the Socio-Economic Department, FiBL, speaker Nathalie Sauze-Vandevyver, Director at the European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, speaker Kurt Sannen, Farmer and Chair of IFOAM Organics Europe's Interest Group of Organic Farmers, and speaker Peter Giørtz-Carlsen, Executive Vice President & CCO Europe, ARLA Foods.

**1.3. Starting in 2022, measure consumers' awareness of the EU organic logo to monitor progress since the 2020 Eurobarometer. Continue conducting Eurobarometer surveys as a valuable tool to measure the effectiveness of the Commission's actions to promote the organic logo:**

- 2022:
  - Another regular Eurobarometer survey will be organised. As concerns organics, the same questions as in the 2020 survey will be maintained. The idea is for the fieldwork to be carried out in April-May 2022 and for the results/report to be available in summer/early autumn 2022.

**1.4. Identify main events to inform about organics, in particular in Member States where demand is below the average EU level, in cooperation with the European**



**Parliament and other bodies such as the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, and Commission Representations in Member States:**

- Joint events are being identified.
- 2. Promoting organic farming and the EU logo. As regards promotion, the Commission will continue to secure an ambitious budget in the EU promotion policy for boosting the consumption of organic products that are aligned with the ambition, policy and actions of the Farm to Fork strategy and Europe's beating cancer plan. The Commission will, starting in 2021:**
- 2.1. Allocate an enhanced budget in the framework of the annual work programmes of the agricultural promotion policy, with a view to raising consumer awareness of, and stimulating the demand for, organic products:**
- 2021:
    - The agricultural promotion budget for 2021 included 27% (49 million) for the promotion of organic products.
  - 2022:
    - The agricultural promotion budget for 2022 includes 50 million for the promotion of organic products.
- 2.2. Step up the promotion of EU organic products in targeted third country growth markets through, for instance, the participation in fairs in cooperation with Member States:**
- 2022:
    - Organic production is the subject of an increased focus under own initiatives in the period 2022-2024, as indicated in note Ares(2021)3911513, approved by Commissioner Wojciechowski on 2 August 2021 through note Ares(2021)4914195. Extract: *"DG AGRI will therefore put an increased focus on the promotion of organic EU agri-food products, including, for instance, through the participation in fairs in cooperation with Member States or specific focus in promotion and information campaigns, in particular in third country with a market for organics with whom the EU has an equivalence arrangement on organics."*
- 2.3. Raise awareness of export opportunities for EU organic producers, to take advantage of our network of Free Trade Agreements and equivalency agreements:**
- 2021:
    - Multilateral discussions:
      - Organics is mentioned in each presentation on the Farm to Fork strategy.

- In May 2021, the EU and the FAO agreed to increase joint efforts to transform agri-food systems, in order to make them more inclusive, efficient, resilient and sustainable during the 2021 Strategic Dialogue. The Strategic Dialogue focused on five priority areas, including “the sustainable agri-food value chain investments and policies”. In this context, EU and FAO identified priority areas for cooperation, which included the enhancement of actors’ capacities to access resources and promote and respond to sustainable production and market opportunities, particularly in terms of organic food production and use of instruments such as geographical indications.
- In the WTO, the Farm to Fork strategy and organics have already been raised several times in the Committee on Agriculture (CoA). The Farm to Fork strategy and organics have also been presented in the WTO Committee on environment in September 2021. Negotiations for WTO Ministerial Conference 12 are ongoing (postponed to March 2022). There are no agreed texts at this stage and all outcomes are uncertain. A non-binding plurilateral statement on environmental sustainability, where the EU is in the lead, has a specific reference to sustainable agriculture and is likely to be agreed.
- Bilateral discussions:
  - Americas:
    - Organics was mentioned during the bilateral dialogue with Canada on 15 November. In the frame of the EU-Canada CETA Agriculture Dialogue 2021-2022 (sustainability, environmental stewardship and climate action in agriculture), there will be a workshop on organics in the following months.
    - The Organic Action plan was presented to Central America in June, and an Outreach conference on the Farm to Fork strategy was organised by Costa Rica on 27 October. Exchanges with Latin America (Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico) on further negotiations for possible equivalence are on-going.
  - Africa:
    - In the framework of our political dialogue with the African Union and in country specific dialogues (e.g. Nigeria), organic farming has been touched upon and will be raised in the future.
  - Asia:
    - In relation to Australia, there are on-going discussions to convert the current third country arrangements into a full-fledged bilateral agreement.
    - Organics has been discussed with India in the context of the contaminated sesame seeds issue.
    - New Zealand is keen on including in the FTA a clause relating to organics that would underline the interest of both Parties to

engage into negotiations of an agreement on organics as soon as it will be possible. Organic farming is often raised also during the annual EU – New Zealand Agricultural Trade Talks.

- For Japan, discussions are on-going to amend the organic equivalence agreement with Japan, aiming to include livestock (reciprocal) and potentially products made of imported ingredients (in Japan). The last meeting was held in October. Within the framework of a dedicated seminar on the Farm to Fork strategy with Japan (green diplomacy), organic farming was a matter of attention.
- Exports seminars in China, Vietnam, China (the latter postponed to spring 2022) contained a dedicated session on organics with presentations provided by B4. In addition, organic farming is systematically raised through these export seminars including during the round table debate with business and other private stakeholders as well as in the briefings and speeches by the DG AGRI DG and EU Ambassadors. In addition, organic labelling is a matter of attention at these export seminars, at the “exhibition” of agri-food products (promotion event).
- Neighbourhood countries:
  - Organics was on the agenda of the EU-UK TBT Committee, held on 15 October 2021. A first meeting of a working party on organics (reporting to the TBT Committee) is envisaged for the beginning of 2022.
  - Organic was discussed within the Joint Committee on Agriculture with Switzerland.
  - There is an ongoing issue concerning the incorporation of the new legislation on organic production (Reg (EU) 2018/848) into the EEA Agreement (ISC/2020/14951).
  - A meeting was held with Russian Agriculture Counsellor in Brussels (10.11.2021) to clarify the procedure for the recognition of a Control Body authorised to certify organic products exported to the EU (RU would like to have a Russian body that would be recognised).
  - Organics was discussed at a technical meeting by DG TRADE with the ministry of Trade and integration (14.04.21) Kazakhstan.
  - Organics was on the agenda of the agricultural dialogue with Ukraine (6 December 2021).
  - Organics will be part of discussions on the Farm to Fork Strategy in the High Level Dialogue on Agriculture with Turkey (date tbc).
  - Organics was on the agenda of the sub-committee on agriculture with Turkey on 19 October 2021.

- Organic farming was mentioned in the virtual meeting between the Commissioner and the Egyptian Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (26 October 2021).
- For the Western Balkans, organics was discussed as follows:
  - During 2021, the annual Agriculture and Fisheries sub-committee, which took place with the individual countries, included F2F (and organics) as a point on the agenda (in collaboration with DG SANTE colleagues). North Macedonia -18 May/Kosovo - 20 May/Bosnia and Herzegovina - 17 June/Montenegro -7 Oct/Albania - 2 Dec.
  - In July 2021, DG AGRI participated to a regional event for the Western Balkans organised by USAID/Delegation of North Macedonia on Organics and gave a detailed presentation on the new Organic Action Plan.
  - In November 2020, the Western Balkan countries endorsed a Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, which will be financially supported by the EU. During 2021, under the stewardship of the Regional Cooperation Council, an Action Plan and roadmaps were developed to guide its implementation with responsibility for implementation resting mainly at the level of national authorities. AGRI has contributed to developing the roadmap for the pillar on Sustainable Agriculture, which includes an action on 'promoting organic farming'.

#### **2.4. Stimulate the sector's visibility through awards recognising excellence in the organic food chain in the EU:**

- 2021:
  - The Action Plan includes Action 2.4, which reads as follows: "stimulate the sector's visibility through awards recognising excellence in the organic food chain in the EU". These non-financial awards need to be organised for the first time for 2022. While several Member States organise national organic awards, this will be the first time that EU awards are organised. For the purpose of these awards, a broad-based EU approach has been taken, in which the Commission plays the role of lead initiative taker, driver, facilitator and coordinator but in which the actual management of the awards is done by a number of partners. These partners are the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee of the Regions (CoR), IFOAM and COPA-COGECA. The great advantage of this EU approach is that it mobilises these organisations in a very concrete manner in accordance with the supportive commitments they have made at the occasion of the signature of the inter-institutional declaration on the EU Organic Day on 23 September 2021. It thus ensures a broad basis for and legitimisation of these awards, and it enables a broader mobilisation of organisational resources and a broader stakeholder outreach. Substantial progress has already been made.

Concretely, there will be 7 award categories, comprising 8 awards, managed by each of the partners as follows:

- Category 1: Best organic agricultural producer (male and female) – IFOAM and COPA-COGECA
- Category 2: Best organic region - CoR
- Category 3: Best organic city - CoR
- Category 4: Best organic bio-district - CoR
- Category 5: Best organic SME - EESC
- Category 6: Best organic food retailer - EESC
- Category 7: Best organic horeca establishment - EESC

**3. Promoting organic canteens and increasing the use of green public procurement. To stimulate a greater uptake of organics in public canteens, the Commission will, together with stakeholders and Member States:**

**3.1. Boost the awareness of the criteria for GPP issued in 2019, of the work on Public Procurement of Food for Health, and of the Joint Action BestREMAP:**

- 2021:
  - GPP was presented to a Latin American association by DG ENV.
  - DG ENV is currently working with DG SANTE on the definition of mandatory requirements for sustainable food.
  - DG ENV is in contact with BestREMAP, no specific action.
- 2022:
  - GPP is on the agenda of the first meeting of the national organic ambassadors scheduled for 3 February 2022 (see above).

**3.2. Integrate organic products into the minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food public procurement to be developed as part of the legislative framework for sustainable food systems by 2023:**

- 2021:
  - JRC will conduct an Impact assessment study on mandatory requirements for sustainable food systems.

**3.3. Analyse the current situation as regards the application of EU GPP. The Commission will use the national action plans on organic farming to monitor the application of GPP and call on Member States for an increase in the use of GPP by public authorities. It will also invite Member States to fix ambitious national targets for organics in GPP:**

- 2021:
  - Ongoing process according to DG ENV.

**3.4. Prepare, in close cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the Covenant of Mayors, specific events for public administrations in charge of public catering, to raise awareness of EU GPP by linking these initiatives to the European Climate Pact, starting in 2022:**

- 2021:
  - Ongoing according to DG ENV, no specific event.

**4. Reinforcing organic school schemes**

**As part of the review of the EU school scheme framework planned for 2023 under the Farm to Fork strategy, and in accordance with the Europe's beating cancer plan, the Commission will:**

**4.1. Engage with Member States to identify ways to increase further the distribution of organic products in the school schemes. The Commission will call on Member States to continue increasing this share, and those further behind will need to make extra efforts:**

- 2021:
  - The Commission's initial analysis of the problems, objectives and possible solutions as well as their likely impacts was set out in an inception impact assessment, combined with the roadmap for the evaluation of the EU school scheme, which was published for stakeholders' feedback from 29 June to 27 July 2021 (Review of the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme (europa.eu))
  - The evaluation support study on the EU School scheme is ongoing. This external study, with other data resources (e.g. the public consultation planned in Spring 2022) will be the basis for the Commission staff working document concluding the evaluation of the scheme. The evaluation will feed into the impact assessment that will present and analyse the policy options for the reform of the scheme.

**4.2. Carry out a study on real price of food, including the role of taxation, with a view to developing recommendations:**

- 2021:
  - The focus and modalities of the study are being discussed.

**5. Preventing food fraud and strengthening consumer trust. The Commission will, starting in 2021, strengthen the fight against fraudulent practices and in particular:**

**5.1. Ensure a robust supervision of control systems in Member States and third countries; increase cooperation with Member State administrations and third countries recognised as equivalent, relying – inter alia - on their means and results of previous audits:**

- 2021:
  - Follow-up of earlier audits (BG, FR).
  - Analysis of annual reports from Member State competent authorities and third country control bodies, control authorities and equivalent country competent authorities.
  - Development of a new surveillance system, under discussion.

**5.2. Assist Member States in developing and implementing an organic fraud prevention policy, through targeted workshops to share lessons learnt and best practices:**

- 2021:
  - The organisation of such workshops is under consideration.

**5.3. Cooperate with the EU Food Fraud Network and Europol in analysing the sector to prevent fraud and coordinate investigations; increase cooperation with competent authorities and law enforcement bodies in third countries to exchange information on the organic trade and fraud:**

- 2021:
  - OFIS and whistle-blower cases in which fraud is suspected are systematically shared with the EU Food Fraud Network.
  - In collaboration with the relevant Commission services, relevant cases are forwarded to Europol, which has also established a working group on organics.

**5.4. Support Member States with guidance on reinforced imports control at the border:**

- 2021:
  - A Working Group on Non-Compliances has been established as a sub-group of the Committee on Organic Production to discuss particular non-compliances and fraud cases, exchange best practices and provide guidance. This Working Group meets every few months.
  - Every 4 months, an analysis is carried out of all international notifications opened in the Organic Farming Information System. This overview lists the most risky products in terms of number of notifications, volume of goods involved or contaminations at levels above MRL and also, per country and per product, the substances found. This overview is shared with the Member States. Follow-up

with individual third country control bodies and control authorities is also ensured.

- The guidelines on additional official controls 2021 agreed with the Member States have been implemented.
- The guidelines on additional official controls 2022 are being discussed with the Member States.

**5.5. Promote stronger measures to tackle fraudulent practices through the sanctions catalogues:**

- Secondary legislation containing common provisions on the catalogue of measures has been adopted.<sup>11</sup>

**5.6. Put in place measures to inform consumers and/or to recall from the market products where fraud is identified:**

- 2021:
  - Such measures are being explored.

**5.7. Develop early warning systems, using artificial intelligence for data mining in EU (e.g. the Information Management System for Official Controls - IMSOC) and Member State databases:**

- 2021:
  - Such warning systems are being explored.

**6. Improving traceability. The Commission will, as of 2021:**

**6.1. Develop a database of certificates of all EU operators, and later also relevant third country operators, building on the analysis already started under the 2014 action plan, and as a follow-up to European Court of Auditors recommendations:**

- 2021:
  - As of 1 January 2022, the database of certificates for EU operators (TRACES) will be available to be used by relevant control authorities or control bodies to issue certificates in an electronic way on a voluntary basis. However, as of 1 January 2023, the certification of organic operators in TRACES will become mandatory.

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<sup>11</sup> COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2021/1698 of 13 July 2021 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council with procedural requirements for the recognition of control authorities and control bodies that are competent to carry out controls on operators and groups of operators certified organic and on organic products in third countries and with rules on their supervision and the controls and other actions to be performed by those control authorities and control bodies (Text with EEA relevance).



**6.2. Promote the enrolment of competent authorities and control bodies sign certificates of inspection in TRACES digitally. This paperless process will reduce the administrative burden and the risk of forgery of documents:**

- 2021:
  - The process of enrolment into the E-seal is ongoing. The Commission included the legal obligation to use the E-seal to sign the Certificate of Inspection (COI) as from 1 July 2022 in a new Commission delegated act expected to be published by end 2021. The Commission is promoting the enrolment to activate the E-seal for Member States Competent authorities, Control authorities and Control Bodies and Competent authorities of the third countries under the equivalent regime for organics. The progress and updates are regularly discussed with Member States delegates in the framework of the COP meetings.

**6.3. Coordinate regular traceability exercises on organic products in cooperation with Member States, their control bodies and third countries, especially in cases of food fraud suspicion:**

- 2021:
  - New traceability exercises are being considered.

**7. Improving traceability. The Commission will, as of 2021, in synergy with the work on digital product passports, assess to what extent the traceability of organic products could benefit from blockchain or other digital technologies and envisage, in a second step, a pilot project with stakeholders. These steps will be supplemented by actions under Horizon Europe on the use of blockchain technologies in the agri-food sector as well as other targeted research & innovation actions aimed at developing innovative solutions to trace organic food:**

- 2021:
  - The topic 'Research & innovation roadmap for blockchain technologies in the agri-food sector' was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). Organics falls within the scope of this topic.
  - The topic 'Innovative solutions to prevent adulteration of food bearing quality labels: focus on organic food and geographical indications' was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022).
  - The AGRI organics unit is involved in a Commission pilot on traceability (non-Horizon Europe action).

**8. The contribution of the private sector. With the objective of reinforcing the role of retailers, wholesalers, catering services, restaurants and other businesses, the Commission will, starting in 2021:**

**8.1. Aim at obtaining clear commitments from relevant stakeholders to support and increase the distribution and sale of organic products, in the context of the Farm to Fork strategy's code of conduct for responsible business and marketing practices, and disseminate best practices in relevant platforms like the Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform:**

- 2021:
  - The EU Code of conduct for responsible business and marketing practice was launched on 5 July 2021 and currently has 96 signatories. The Code is an essential part of the Farm to Fork strategy and of the efforts to increase the availability and affordability of healthy, sustainable food options that help reduce our overall environmental footprint. EU associations, companies, international organisations, NGOs, trade unions, and trade associations all willingly took part in the process of developing the Code, which only took 4 months. The Code consists of two parts: a document with a set of seven aspirational objectives, with specific targets and a list of indicative actions, and a framework for pledges with ambitious concrete commitments by individual companies. DG GROW works on supporting companies in the implementation of the Code and mobilizing more signatories, mainly SMEs. This is done through the use of existing instruments and networks, such as the Enterprise Europe Network, which will establish 'sustainability advisers' in each Member State from January onwards. In addition, DG GROW is working on disseminating best practices, by extending the case studies on the website of the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Center, which is hosted by the European Cluster Collaboration Platform. One of the Code's indicative actions focuses on improved food consumption patterns in the EU, mentioning that one of the aims is to provide/promote more sustainably-produced food products/meals, e.g. sustainably-produced organic food. Moreover, signatories can make individual commitments – Carrefour has committed itself to having 15% of fresh food sales from organic farming or agroecology by 2025, for example. The Code takes a value chain approach, as it includes actors from the whole chain and stimulates a transition towards sustainability amongst all of them, which is crucial when it comes to organic production. An opportunity to present the Action Plan to the signatories is being explored.

**8.2. Establish partnerships with businesses willing to promote the use of organic products as part of their corporate sustainability policy. These measures will be further discussed in the platform for Business and Biodiversity:**

- 2021:
  - The steps to be taken under this action are being considered.

**AXIS 2. ON THE WAY TO 2030: STIMULATING CONVERSION AND REINFORCING THE ENTIRE VALUE CHAIN**

**9. Encouraging conversion, investment and exchange of best practices. In the framework of the new CAP and CFP, the Commission will:**

**9.1. Starting in 2023, assess the specific circumstances and needs of Member States regarding the growth of the organic sector, and ensure Member States make the best use of the possibilities offered by the new CAP to support their national organic sector. This support will include technical assistance, the exchange of best practices and innovations in organics, and the full use of relevant CAP instruments such as eco-schemes and rural development environmental management commitments, which include organic farming. Farm advisory services on specific topics will be strengthened, notably as part of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), to promote relevant knowledge exchange:**

- 2021:
  - A dedicated tool has been developed to analyse the National Strategic Plans for the next common Agricultural Policy from the angle of organics.
  - 7 draft National Strategic Plans for the next common Agricultural Policy have already been analysed and comments have been provided.
  - The topic ‘Innovative tools and methods to evaluate the design and support, monitoring and implementation of effective CAP strategic plans’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). Expected outcomes include innovative governance and sound decision making in agricultural policies for the green transition. Organics is not explicitly mentioned, but can be addressed too within the topic.
  - **AKIS:** The integration of farm advisors within the AKIS: The outcomes from the Operational Groups, from Horizon Europe multi-actor projects, from thematic networks, from farm demonstrations, from advisory networks, from exchanges of best practices, etc., will systematically feed advice and advisors. The topic “Supporting knowledge exchange between all AKIS actors in the Member States by means of an EU-wide interactive knowledge reservoir” included in the Work Programme 2021-2022 will help make Member States’ knowledge databases for practice (if any) interoperable with the EU knowledge reservoir and provide an important contribution to that end (2023-2027).
  - **EIP:** European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI): B2 has proposed organics as a priority topic under the 2022 EIP-AGRI annual work programme. This will entail communication and networking activity of the EU CAP network aimed at exchanging good practices, promoting knowledge exchange and disseminating innovation projects results relevant for organics among the EIP stakeholders (farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors etc.). As a concrete first deliverable, B2 is planning an EIP-AGRI workshop in May-June 2022. The theme is currently being discussed with B4.
  - The topic ‘Reaching the Farm to Fork target: R&I scenarios for boosting organic farming and organic aquaculture in Europe’ was included in first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). Activities will contribute to assessing MS needs regarding the growth of the organic sector. Expected outcomes include

improved knowledge exchange and best practices and increased availability of advisory services and capacity building.

- Horizon 2020 projects BRESOV, LIVESEED, ECOBREED are yielding knowledge that will help increasing the competitiveness of the organic crop breeding sector. End dates are April 2023, September 2021 and April 2023, respectively.
- Under Horizon 2020, the Commission has funded various thematic networks specifically addressing the needs of the organic sector, on aspects such as on animal feed, fruit production and productivity of arable crops. All this material will feed into the MS' AKIS, their knowledge reservoirs and to the advisors, which will now be integrated in the AKIS (various end dates (2018 – 2022)).
- The topic 'Fostering organic crop breeding' was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). It includes demonstration activities.
- The topic 'Demonstration network on climate-smart farming – linking pilot farms' was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). The organic sector can be addressed too within the topic.
- The topic 'Demonstration network on climate-smart farming – boosting the role of advisory services' was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). The organic sector can be addressed too within the topic.
- The topic 'Agroecological approaches for sustainable weed management' (two stage) was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). It includes demonstration activities.
- The topic 'Developing sustainable and competitive land-based protein crop systems and value chains' was included in first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). It includes the organic sector, as well as knowledge and best practice exchange activities.
- The topic 'Boosting breeding for a sustainable, resilient and competitive European legume sector' (two stage) was included in first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). It includes the organic sector and demonstration activities.
- The Commission has proposed a topic to develop EU advisory networks on organic agriculture for inclusion in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024. The topic will be co-created with Commission DGs and the MS and AC.
- **Soil mission:** Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe': the Mission's implementation plan was published in September 2021. The Commission intends to publish, by the end of 2021, the update to the Mission's first Work programme. It is focussing on setting up the structures for the roll-out of the mission including the network of living labs and lighthouses. It is expected that R&I actions tapping on the potential of organic and agroecological approaches for improving soil health will be programmed in future Mission's work programmes.
- **Agroecology partnership:** Partnership "Accelerating farming systems transition: Agroecology living labs and research infrastructures": The draft proposal for this candidate co-funded Horizon Europe partnership has been finalised under the coordination of the Strategic Working Group on Agroecology of the Standing

Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), and is currently being evaluated by RTD. In January-February 2022, the Commission plans to ask Member States and Associated Countries' financial commitments to support the partnership. If successful, this partnership will leverage unprecedented financial investments in R&I focusing on agroecological approaches, including organic farming (expected financial contributions: EU EUR 150 mio; MS/AC EUR 350 mio).

**9.2. Starting in 2022, promote the exchange of best practices (education and training curricula, courses, materials, etc.) at EU and national level allowing education providers (e.g. technical schools, universities) to develop courses on organic farming as part of the general curriculum and present innovative solutions targeting the organic sector (production, processing, retailing and consumption). EU demonstration farm networks will be set up on specific topics to promote a participatory approach (dissemination). Best practices and synergies with the EIP-AGRI projects will be promoted via the future CAP network:**

- 2021:
  - **EIP:** European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI): B2 has proposed organics as a priority topic under the 2022 EIP-AGRI annual work programme. This will entail communication and networking activity of the EU CAP network aimed at exchanging good practices, promoting knowledge exchange and disseminating innovation projects results relevant for organics among the EIP stakeholders (farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors etc.). As a concrete first deliverable, B2 is planning an EIP-AGRI workshop in May-June 2022. The theme is currently being discussed with B4.

**9.3. Encourage Member States to include the increase of organic aquaculture in their reviewed Multi-annual National Strategic plans for aquaculture, and to make the best use of possibilities offered by the EMFAF 2021-2027 for achieving this purpose. The Commission will also facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovation on organic aquaculture in the context of the Open Method of Coordination:**

- 2021:
  - Multi-annual National Strategic Plans for Aquaculture (NSPA): Revisions are on-going. MARE is revising the draft NSPAs and ensuring that the F2F target to "significantly increase organic aquaculture by 2030" is included.
  - Operational Programmes (OPs) EMFAF 2021-2027: This is ongoing. MARE is revising the draft OPs and ensuring that the F2F target to "significantly increase organic aquaculture by 2030" is included. MS are expected to adopt the OPs in the course of 2021 and 2022.
  - Technical seminars (TS) with Member States' experts on aquaculture. Organic aquaculture will be on the agenda at least once a year to exchange best practices and monitor progress on the F2F Strategy target to increase organic aquaculture:

- TS on 30/9/2021 - 1/10/2021: MARE gave a presentation on aquaculture in the EU organic AP (5 actions); MARE requested input on “obstacles to the growth of EU org. aquaculture” (see action 17.2).
- Assistance Mechanism on EU aquaculture (AM): This will also gather information relevant for organic aquaculture. The website could have a dedicated page on organic aquaculture (under consideration). The Call for Tender for the AM has been launched. The contract to establish the AM will be signed in April 2022. The website with a dedicated page on organic aquaculture could be ready by end of 2022.

**10. Developing sector analysis to increase market transparency. To provide a comprehensive overview on the sector the Commission will, starting in 2021:**

**10.1. Publish regular reports on organic production in the EU based on Eurostat data, containing, in particular, information on surfaces, holdings involved in organic production, and the main production sector:**

- 2021:
  - Eurostat has refreshed its organic farming statistics in January 2021.
  - A range of meetings have taken place with Eurostat on a framework regulation on statistics on agricultural input and output (SAIO) and the presence of organic statistics therein.

**10.2. Publish a yearly report on imports from third countries:**

- 2021:
  - Market brief 18 “EU imports of organic agri-food products” has been published on 9 June 2021:
    - [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/agri-market-brief-18-organic-imports\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/agri-market-brief-18-organic-imports_en.pdf)

**11. Developing sector analysis to increase market transparency. The Commission will, starting in 2022: intensify the collection of market data in collaboration with Member States and extend the EU Market Observatories’ analysis to organic products:**

- 2021:
  - The consolidation of new notification requirements for price/production of relevant organic products, as introduced by COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2019/1746 has been achieved as all relevant forms and IT tools have been made available to Member States, and they have been systematically informed in the CMO Committees.

- As far as dairy is concerned, data on organic milk production and prices have been integrated into the Milk Market Observatory reports, for instance:
  - Milk prices:
    - [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/eu-raw-milk-prices\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/eu-raw-milk-prices_en.pdf)
  - Factsheet:
    - [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/milk-market-situation-presentation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/milk-market-situation-presentation_en.pdf)
- Also for eggs prices, data on organics are being published:
  - <https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/d/18f7766e-e9a9-46a4-bbec-94d4c181183f/0%20Circa%20%20egg%20no%20links.pdf>
- Also for laying hens:
  - [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/laying-hens-by-way-of-keeping-2011-2020\\_en.xlsx](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/laying-hens-by-way-of-keeping-2011-2020_en.xlsx)
- The agri data portal app for milk now also includes data on prices and production of organic raw milk:
  - Prices: app:
    - <https://agridata.ec.europa.eu/extensions/DashboardRawMilk/RawMilkPrices.html>
  - Production: app:
    - <https://agridata.ec.europa.eu/extensions/DashboardDairy/DairyProduction.html>

## **12. Supporting the organisation of the food chain. The Commission will, starting in 2021:**

### **12.1. Carry out an analysis of the degree of organisation in organic sector supply chains and identify ways to improve it in consultation with producer organisation representatives and other concerned stakeholders:**

- 2022:
  - A session will be organised at the Commission's new "Forum for Best Practices in the Agri-Food Supply Chain" on the degree of organisation in organic sector supply chains and how to support organic producers through producer organisations and financial support from Member States or discussion on a similar platform.

### **12.2. Investigate the legal possibility of forming or joining specific organic producer organisations and, where possible, encourage Member States to allocate funds for this purpose. Producer organisations have greater market power and can generally help**

**strengthen the position of organic farmers in the agri-food supply chain, particularly when faced with unfair trading practices. If there is sufficient evidence that unfair trading practices penalising organic producers occur, the Commission shall address them by using all the tools at its disposal:**

- 2021:
  - The deliverable for 2021 was the inclusion of “organic or integrated production” in Articles 41b(1) and 52(1) of the new CAP Strategic Plans Regulation, i.e. Member States can choose in their CAP Strategic Plans to intervene in organic production to pursue objectives in line with the Regulation. This has been delivered:
    - Paragraph 41b.1.d: “organic or integrated production”
    - Paragraph 52.1.ia.ii and iii: “(ii) converting to organic production, (iii) introducing integrated production techniques”
  - Regarding the implementation of the UTPs Directive, the follow up and monitoring is currently ongoing.

**13. Supporting the organisation of the food chain. The Commission will, starting in 2022: raise awareness and provide better information about ‘group certification’, allowing small holding farmers to share the cost and administrative burden of certification, in line with Regulation 2018/848 on organic production:**

- 2022:
  - Group certification is on the agenda of the first meeting of the national organic ambassadors scheduled for 3 February 2022 (see above).

**14. Reinforcing local and small-volume processing and fostering short trade circuit. The Commission will, starting in 2023:**

**14.1. Engage with Member States and stakeholders to foster local and small-scale processing, in line with the objective of Regulation 2018/848 on organic production to move towards ‘shorter organic supply chains, providing environmental and social benefits’ as part of its efforts to support trade for organic products within the EU single market. This action will be reinforced by targeted research & innovation under Horizon Europe, including support for the use of digital technologies:**

- 2021:
  - Horizon 2020 projects FOX, SHEALTHY, COCREADO, COACH, FAIRCHAIN, SMARTCHAIN, COFRESH, SKIN (thematic network) are yielding relevant results in this area (Various end dates).
  - The topic “Developing EU advisory networks on consumer-producer chains” was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). Research projects funded under this topic will contribute to facilitate the upscaling of short



supply chains. The results of these projects will also be relevant for the organic sector.

- The Commission has proposed a topic on minimal and on-farm processing focusing on organics for inclusion in the first draft of the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024. The topic will be co-created with Commission DGs and the MS and AC.

#### **14.2. Encourage Member States to support the development and the implementation of 'Bio districts':**

- 2022:
  - Bio-districts are on the agenda of the first meeting of the national organic ambassadors scheduled for 3 February 2022 (see above).

#### **15. Reinforcing local and small-volume processing and fostering short trade circuit. As organic farming can enhance social inclusion in rural areas while promoting decent working and living conditions, the Commission will, starting in 2022: assist Member States in designing measures for organic farming in rural areas that promote gender equality and youth farmers/employment which could include the sharing of best practices:**

- 2021:
  - When assessing Member States' CAP Plans, measures for organic farming will be encouraged, proposing that this offers an opportunity to include aspects with gender and social focus.

#### **16. Improving animal nutrition in accordance with organic rules. The Commission intends to:**

##### **16.1. Support research and innovation under Horizon Europe on alternative sources of organic vitamins and other substances that might turn out to be necessary, and on alternative sources of protein keeping in mind their technical and economic feasibility:**

- 2021:
  - Horizon 2020 projects (e.g., SUSINCHAIN, Ok-Net Ecofeed, Feed-a-Gene), RELACS and Organic PLUS, and the EIP Focus Group 'New feed for pigs and poultry' have yielded/are yielding relevant results in this area (various end dates (2019-2022)).
  - The topic 'Developing sustainable and competitive land-based protein crop systems and value chains' was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). Activities will contribute to the identification of the most suitable regional and local transition paths for stimulating sustainable, resilient and economically viable protein crop production for food and feed. It covers the organic sector among others.

- The topic ‘Resilient livestock farming systems under climate change’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). Partially related (scope includes feeding, organic).
- The ERA-NET Core Organic Plus call 2021 selected projects under sub-topic 1: Robust and resilient mixed animal farming systems; subtopic 3: Eco-efficient production and use of animal feed at local level. Selection of projects due in July 2021.
- The Commission has proposed a topic on animal nutritional requirements and nutritional value of feed under different management conditions, including organics, for inclusion in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024. The topic will be co-created with Commission DGs and the MS and AC.

**16.2. Explore means to support the application for feed additives produced without GMM, feed based on insects as well as marine feed stocks:**

**16.3. Adopt an algae initiative in 2022 to support EU algae production and support the EU algae industry to ensure the supply of algae as alternative feed material for organic animal farming:**

- 2021:
  - EU Algae Initiative: Work on the EU algae initiative continues. The adoption of the EU Algae Initiative is foreseen in 2022.

**17. Reinforcing organic aquaculture. Starting in 2022, the Commission intends to:**

**17.1. Support research and innovation on alternative sources of nutrients, breeding and animal welfare in aquaculture; the promotion of investments on adapted polyculture and multi-trophic aquaculture systems; and the promotion of hatcheries and nurseries activities for juveniles:**

- 2021:
  - Horizon 2020:
    - Deliverables are ready from the following projects: FutureEUAqua, MedAid, PerformFISH, IMPAQT.
    - RTD promised to prepare an “Aquaculture Portfolio analysis H2020” by June 2022. From that we can extract conclusions on organic aquaculture.
  - Horizon Europe:
    - Work Programme 2021-2022: The evaluation of proposals for the topic ‘Reaching the farm to fork target: R&I scenarios for boosting organic farming and organic aquaculture in Europe’ is finalised. .

- Work Programme 2022-2023: Co-creation process: Organic aquaculture is not always a specific topic, but it is addressed in other topics. Organic will be included as a key word in topic descriptions.

## **17.2. Identify and address as appropriate any specific obstacles to the growth of EU organic aquaculture:**

- 2021:
  - A report will be prepared after: (1) Discussions with Member States and the Aquaculture Advisory Council, (2) consolidation of outcomes of relevant EU funded projects (e.g. ORAQUA, VIVAQUA) and (3) collection of information from other sources (update of the 2017 EUMOFA study on organic aquaculture, possible input from EGTOP).
  - As for (1): Technical Seminar with MS on 30/9-1/10 where input from MS was asked. Nothing received yet:
    - The Federation of EU Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) produced a “Position paper on obstacles for EU organic aquaculture”.
    - Meeting with FEAP on 16/11 to discuss the inconsistencies and issues not clear in the EU organic rules for aquaculture (together with AGRI).
  - As for (3): EUMOFA study on organic aquaculture will be finalised by March 2022.

## **AXIS 3. ORGANICS LEADING BY EXAMPLE: IMPROVING THE CONTRIBUTION OF ORGANIC FARMING TO SUSTAINABILITY**

### **18. Reducing climate and environmental footprint. The Commission will, starting in 2022: take steps, to set up, in cooperation with stakeholders, a pilot network of climate positive organic holdings, to share best practices. A proposed mission in the area of Soil Health and Food could contribute to the pilot network in particular through the deployment of living labs and lighthouses and other activities supporting carbon farming:**

- 2021:
  - The topic ‘Demonstration network on climate-smart farming – linking pilot farms’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). The organic sector can be addressed within the topic.
  - The topic ‘Demonstration network on climate-smart farming – boosting the role of advisory services’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). The organic sector can be addressed within the topic.
  - The topic ‘Resilient livestock farming systems under climate change’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). Partially related (scope includes feeding, organic).

- The Commission has proposed a topic to set up a pilot network of climate-positive organic farms, for inclusion in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024. The topic will be co-created with Commission DGs and the MS and AC.
- **Soil mission:** Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe': the Mission's implementation plan was published in September 2021. The Commission intends to publish, by the end of 2021, the update to the Mission's first Work programme. It is focussing on setting up the structures for the roll-out of the mission including the network of living labs and lighthouses. It is expected that R&I actions tapping on the potential of organic and agroecological approaches for improving soil health and on carbon farming will be programmed in future Mission's work programmes.
- **Agroecology partnership:** Partnership "Accelerating farming systems transition: Agroecology living labs and research infrastructures": The draft proposal for this candidate co-funded Horizon Europe partnership has been finalised under the coordination of the Strategic Working Group on Agroecology of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), and is currently being evaluated by RTD. In January-February 2022, the Commission plans to ask Member States and Associated Countries' financial commitments to support the partnership. If successful, this partnership will leverage unprecedented financial investments in R&I focusing on agroecological approaches, including organic farming (expected financial contributions: EU EUR 150 mio; MS/AC EUR 350 mio). The partnership will unlock the potential of agroecology to make agri-food systems environment-friendly, climate-neutral, inclusive, competitive and resilient.

## **19. Enhancing genetic biodiversity and increasing yields. In order to enhance biodiversity and increase yields, the Commission intends to:**

### **19.1. Starting in 2022, earmark funding under Horizon Europe to support the preservation and use of genetic resources, pre-breeding and breeding activities, and the availability of organic seeds, and to contribute to the development of organic heterogeneous plant reproductive material and plant varieties suitable for organic production:**

- 2021:
  - Horizon 2020 projects BRESOV, LIVESEED, ECOBREED are yielding knowledge that will help increasing the competitiveness of the organic crop breeding sector. End dates are April 2023, September 2021 and April 2023, respectively. The projects GenTORE and SMARTER are addressing animal genetic resources and resilience in various production systems including organics (End dates 2022, May & October).
  - The topic 'Fostering organic crop breeding' was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). It includes demonstration activities.

- The topic ‘Resilient livestock farming systems under climate change’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). It addressed local breeds.
- The Commission has proposed a topic to set up organic farming thematic networks to compile and share knowledge ready for practice in the theme chosen by applicants, for inclusion in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024. The topic will be co-created with Commission DGs and the MS and AC.

**19.2. Set up EU demonstration farms networks to promote a participatory approach (dissemination). Best practices and synergies with the EIP-AGRI projects will be promoted via the future CAP network:**

- 2021:
  - The Horizon 2020 project “IPM Decisions” is working to step up IPM decision support for crop protection, building an EU platform for exchanging decision support systems for IPM. Its results will feed into the Horizon 2020 project “IPMWorks”, which is working to develop an EU-wide farm network to demonstrate and promote cost-effective IPM strategies. Its results will be relevant for the organic sector;
  - **EIP:** European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI): B2 has proposed organics as a priority topic under the 2022 EIP-AGRI annual work programme. This will entail communication and networking activity of the EU CAP network aimed at exchanging good practices, promoting knowledge exchange and disseminating innovation projects results relevant for organics among the EIP stakeholders (farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors etc.). As a concrete first deliverable, B2 is planning an EIP-AGRI workshop in May-June 2022. The theme is currently being discussed with B4.

**19.3. Strengthen farm advisory services, notably as part of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), to promote knowledge exchange of material suitable for the organic farming:**

- 2021:
  - The topic ‘Broaden EIP Operational Group outcomes across borders by means of Thematic networks, compiling and sharing knowledge ready for practice’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). The organic sector can be addressed within the topic.
  - The topic ‘Thematic networks to compile and share knowledge ready for practice’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). The organic sector can be addressed within the topic.
  - **AKIS:** Integration of farm advisors within the AKIS: Outcomes from Operational Groups, Horizon Europe Multi-actor projects and Thematic networks, farm demonstrations, advisory networks and exchange of best practices, etc., will systematically feed advice and advisors. Topic “Supporting knowledge exchange

between all AKIS actors in the Member States by means of an EU-wide interactive knowledge reservoir” in Work Programme 2021-2022, which will help to make the Member States’ knowledge databases for practice (if any) interoperable with the EU knowledge reservoir, will provide an important contribution to that end.

- A topic to set up an advisory network on organics is to be co-created with Commission DGs, MS experts and stakeholders for eventual inclusion in Work Programme 2023-2024.

#### **19.4. Support research and innovation on improving organic yields:**

- 2021:
  - The Commission has proposed a topic aimed at improving yields in organic crop systems for inclusion in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024. The topic will be co-created with Commission DGs and the MS and AC.

#### **20. Alternatives to contentious inputs and other plant protection products. The Commission:**

##### **20.1. Starting in 2023, intends to earmark funding under Horizon Europe for research and innovation projects on alternative approaches to contentious inputs, paying particular attention to copper and other substances as assessed by the European Food Safety Authority:**

- 2021:
  - Horizon 2020 projects RELACS and Organic PLUS are yielding results relevant for this area (End dates April and October 2022 respectively).
  - The topic ‘Risk assessment of new low risk pesticides’ was included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). The topic focused on newly proposed or specifically adapted low-risk pesticides such as new species/strains of microorganisms, ds-RNA-based pesticides, pheromones, plant extracts, and/or microbiome solutions.
  - The Commission has proposed a topic aimed at increasing the availability and use of harmless inputs in organic farming for inclusion in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024. The topic will be co-created with Commission DGs and the MS and AC.

##### **20.2. Starting in 2022, will, building on the forthcoming regulation on biopesticides, and via the strengthened farm advisory services, notably AKIS, foster where appropriate the use of alternative plant protection products, such as those containing biological active substances:**

- 2021:

- The Commission will strengthen farm advice, notably as part of AKIS, to promote knowledge exchange of material suitable for the organic farming. This will be explored through various means, e.g., EIP AGRI Operational Groups and networking activities, and Horizon Europe AKIS-related projects.
- The proposed topic (above) for the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024 aimed at increasing the availability and use of harmless inputs in organic farming will include activities aimed at promoting advice and the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

**21. Enhancing animal welfare. In the context of the Animal Welfare Platform, the Commission will: continue working with Member States and civil society to find concrete and operational ways to further improve animal welfare in organic production:**

- 2021:
  - The Horizon 2020 project PPILOW is addressing specifically the improvement of the welfare of poultry and pigs reared in organic and low-input outdoor farming systems (End date August 2024).
  - The topic 'Animal welfare 2.0' was included in first Work Programme of Horizon Europe (2021-2022). It will contribute to monitor and improve animal welfare in intensive and extensive systems.
  - The candidate European R&I partnership 'Animal Health and Welfare' could contribute to this objective (partnership objectives and activities under discussion - Tentative launch: 2023-2024).

**22. Making more efficient use of resources. The Commission intends to: adopt a Framework on bio-based, compostable and biodegradable plastic, which will include principles and criteria under which the use of sustainable bio-based materials that are easily bio-degradable in natural conditions is beneficial to the environment. The Framework will cover all plastics, including for uses in all types of agriculture, and will therefore also be highly relevant for organic farming leading the way in terms of sustainability:**

- 2021:
  - As for the policy framework on biobased and biodegradable plastics:
    - A roadmap was published and comments received.
    - A contract is started to prepare a targeted public consultation.

**23. Making more efficient use of resources. The Commission will promote the more efficient and sustainable use of water, the increased use of renewable energy and clean transport, and the reduction of nutrient release, in all types of farming, with organic farming leading the way, and with the involvement of the Member States**

**through their CAP Strategic Plans, as well as with the new Strategic Guidelines for aquaculture and EMFAF.**

- 2021:
  - “Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive aquaculture in the EU for the period 2021-2030” (COM(2021)236 final, adopted on 12th May 2021
  - Guidance document on environmental performance (as part of the actions proposed by the abovementioned Strategic Guidelines): The Assistance Mechanism to support the implementation of the Strategic guidelines for EU aquaculture will start working on the guidance document for environmental performance in 2022. Document will be ready in 2023.