



Principles of Organic Agriculture

IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity.

Our goal is the Worldwide Adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture.

Principle of health



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

Principle of ecology

Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.



Principle of fairness



Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities

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.



Principles next steps

Revision of the Organic Guarantee System

IFOAM Basic Standards are based on the POA

- Each section in every chapter of IBS starts with "principles applied", which are based on the POA
- _ Next come "objectives" which state the outcomes that are expected in order to meet the principles.
- _ The requirements that follow are linked to the objectives and principles.

Principles next steps

Definition of Organic Agriculture

Motion from the IFOAM General Assembly *‘IFOAM shall succinctly define ‘Organic Agriculture’ based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture*

- Purpose and audience?: entry point
- All 4 Principles equal mention?
- Forbidden inputs vs positive mandate?

Principles next steps

Definition of Organic Agriculture

First internal round was held, now Task Force to revise and full membership and external stakeholders to participate

Note: the revised EU regulation does NOT define Organic Agriculture

Principles next steps

Advocacy towards revision of the EU regulation

Includes values as a base for the regulation

Values greatly overlap with the IFOAM principles

Note: translation of values in legislative text is difficult!

Principles next steps

Regional standard setting process in East Africa

Stakeholders, including government officials, expressed their wish to base the East African regional standards on the Principles of Organic Agriculture, incorporating local practices and at the same time aiming at international acceptance.

Principles next steps

Participatory Guarantee Systems:

Systems wherein the verification of the production method is done locally, through community involvement.

Principles of Organic Agriculture as a base for local contracts / agreements between producers and consumers

Principles next steps

Translations of POA

More than 10 languages

Discussions within one language group (e.g. Spanish spoken in Latin America and Europe)

Discussion within a country (like Denmark)

Process of the discussion is valuable as such, as it concerns ethical principles, shared values

Challenges to Organic Agriculture

Globalization of trade, with (negative) externalities

‘Conventionalization’, practices conflicting with POA

→ tension between ‘ethical principles’ and ‘stricter standards’

Ethical principles to address challenges?

More freedom to producers and processors

Flexible

Room for innovation

Justice to local context of Organic Agriculture

However:

Risk of being too loose and not clear enough

Stricter Standards to address challenges?

Externalities could be included

Easier to draw the line

However:

Prescriptive in stead of goal oriented

Higher hurdle to convert

Does not do justice to principle of Fairness

Note: Because of Standards globalized trade in organic products is possible; harmonization, equity

Balance needed

To address the challenges of the growing organic sector ('conventionalization' and globalization) a balance should be created between Principles and Standards.

All practitioners (from producers to consumers) ideally share the same values, that are 'translated' in standards that take local conditions into account. This includes the possibility of flexibility to a certain extend.