

***Collaborative Roadmap
for IBMA and IFOAM EU
for Organic Farming
2019-2024***



IBMA members produce biological plant protection solutions from natural origin. These biological plant protection solutions are usually suitable for use in organic agriculture.

Therefore, this collaboration aims at:

- Advocating for a proportionate regulatory framework for the registration of biological plant protection solutions of natural origin.
- Promoting research and development of biological plant protection solutions of natural origin which fit best into organic **plant protection** management strategies.
- Increasing knowledge sharing and cooperation among farmers, SMEs, policy makers and stakeholders about current gaps and needs in the organic plant protection management strategy.

IFOAM EU (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements – EU Regional group) is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming, representing 200 member organisations across Europe.

As a system approach to sustainable agriculture, organic farming aims to effectively manage ecological processes whilst lowering dependence on off-farm inputs. Plant health in organic production is managed mainly by preventive and indirect measures within the agroecosystem. When needed, such measures may be complemented by external inputs such as plant protection products from natural origin. With some crops, particularly speciality crops, traditional or new, innovative biological plant protection products may be used.

Organic farming considers as unacceptable the unpredictable risks coming from the release of artificially designed molecules (e.g. synthetic pesticides) and genetically modified substances and organisms (from genetic engineering) into the environment. In organic farming only natural substances, and in case the natural substance is not available on the market, also nature-identical substances are used:

- Simple mineral substances (e.g. kaolin, ferric phosphate, quartz sand)
- Substances of plant origin (botanicals e.g. neem, orange oil)
- Substances of animal origin (e.g. whey, pheromones)
- Microorganisms (e.g. bacillus thuringiensis)

The organic regulation allows the use of specific plant protection products only when duly justified and when preventive measures are not enough.

IBMA (International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association) is the association representing manufacturers of biocontrol solutions. The biological solutions produced by its 250 + member companies have their origins in nature or are nature-identical when synthesised. There are currently four groups of biocontrol solutions supplied by IBMA members, namely:

- Macrobial biocontrol solutions: predatory, parasitic, invertebrate agents of pests and diseases
- Microbial biocontrol solutions
- Semiochemicals: Natural or nature identical pheromones, kairomones and allomones used to attract, repel, aggregate pests and predators to monitor, trap or control pest populations
- Natural substances: Natural or nature identical substances of plant, mineral, animal or microbial origin used to manage pest or disease populations

IBMA believes that biocontrol solutions offer key advantages and attributes which enable them to be seen as priority solutions for plant protection. As these substances are derived from nature:

- the environment has established pathways or mechanisms for breaking down these biological plant protection solutions of natural origin;
- cultural and scientific knowledge is greater for solutions which are known;
- potential adverse effects are likely to have already been reported.

As a consequence, there is a different starting point for the evaluation of biological plant protection products of natural origin compared to newly designed chemical synthetic substances, and greater confidence that an unforeseen consequence of their usage is highly unlikely. There can be confidence that such tools can be adopted and used safely in the best interest of agriculture, the environment and human health.

Several areas for potential collaboration between IFOAM EU and the European National Groups of IBMA are envisaged.

The priorities are:

Platform 1:

Bringing biocontrol solutions of natural origin to the market via dedicated proportionate regulation

IFOAM EU and IBMA will advocate for proportional and appropriate procedures for the registration of biological plant protection products of natural origin. The criteria to qualify the origin of a substance as natural should be based on the substance's occurrence in nature, which accounts for already existing background exposure. The chances that natural substances give rise to unpredictable risks are therefore lower. Moreover, several substances used in organic plant health care are "multi-functional", meaning they perform a number of roles e.g. plant strengthening, fertilizing and direct plant protection.

The efficacy of biological plant protection products of natural origin may not always be comparable to the efficacy of synthetic substances. However, thanks to their multiple properties, the intelligent use of natural substances in combination with preventive and indirect management measures can make the organic plant health care strategy highly effective.

Platform 2

Supporting the registration of substances with a small market segment

For many biological plant protection products of natural origin, it may not be possible to have intellectual property protection, and the market segment is often too small to justify the investment in the registration process. Therefore, it is currently not attractive for companies to bring these useful solutions to the market. IFOAM EU and IBMA will advocate for special public support for bringing onto the market substances of public interest and value.

Platform 3:

Ensuring the timely addition onto the list of approved organic inputs by the Commission of substances suitable for and needed in organic farming

The current process of including a substance in Annex II of the organic regulation is very time-consuming and complex and is therefore a barrier for making innovations available to farmers. A facilitated process of approval, that involves the organic sector on decisions for what is or is not compatible with organic production, should be designed. A coordinated dialogue with DG AGRI and the EGTOP (Expert Group for Technical advice on Organic Production) should be established.

Platform 4:

Building specialised competence for natural substances in plant protection products in registration authorities

IFOAM EU and IBMA will advocate that European and national authorities build up specialised competence in biological plant protection products of natural origin among their staff to improve the registration process. Such specialised staff shall also give valuable input in working groups to further adapt the registration processes of biological plant protection products of natural origin (see platform 1).

Platform 5:

Encouraging bioprotection manufacturers to consider organic farming principles and certification within their development programmes and to design formulations in line with organic standards

IFOAM EU and IBMA will cooperate to promote participatory research involving SMEs, organic farmers and research organisations to develop solutions based on best practice use of biological plant protection products of natural origin in organic agriculture. Participatory research and the involvement of farmers and farming organisations from the first phase of developing a product will lead to a higher acceptability and faster uptake by farmers in practice. IFOAM EU members will work on a 'list of needs' to identify gaps and needs for alternative crop protection solutions. A dialogue will be established between the two organisations to encourage that the compatibility of new technologies (e.g. for extraction) with organic principles is discussed and agreed where possible.

Climate change (extreme weather events) and globalisation (introduction of new pests and diseases) increase existing and create new challenges in plant protection. To face this situation, a sufficient number of solutions are needed, including products specific enough to reduce infestations without compromising the whole resilience of the system. Specific research and development is needed to support the development of new solutions for existing and future gaps in plant protection, and should optimize pathways to make them available to organic farmers. The overall goal and general principle of organic farming systems, to reduce external inputs to a minimum and to have closed nutrient cycles, is leading the way in this development

Platform 6:

Supporting the EPPO positive list of microbial plant protection agents as the basis for the evaluation of their use within organic agriculture

EPPO is an intergovernmental organization responsible for cooperation in plant health within the Euro-Mediterranean region. It sets a number of standards including a positive list for macrobials which is currently used by competent authorities as a basis to evaluate macrobials and their suitability for use in farming.

**IFOAM EU and IBMA will work together on these actions
as agreed until 2024 (5 years).**