

# BIOECO

## ACTUAL®

 YOUR ORGANIC TRADE MAGAZINE

## Organic 2024

Innovation, resilience, consumer education, and organic principles, also from a business perspective, are key



Danila Brunner, BIOFACH & VIVANESS Executive Director, and Steffen Waris, BIOFACH Exhibition Director.

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# NATURE BIO FOODS

The Netherlands • India • Africa • The Americas

## THE FRONT PAGE GLOBAL ORGANIC FOOD INGREDIENTS.

Tracing our origins way back to more than three decades ago, we have pioneered the winds of change re-shaping a twisted food and farming system. By reviving the traditions of ancient organic farming practices we're building back communities, ecosystems and a sustainable food supply chain.

We are thankful to all the believers of the organic movement, a shared legacy we have forged encompassing the work and commitment of countless people for helping us bring better food ingredients to our tables in a fair and ethical way. Leading the organic trail across the Himalayas, leaving our footprints with trusted certifications from **Demeter** Biodynamic, **Naturland**, **Krav**, **Bio Suisse** and **Fairtrade**, we have found ourselves on new frontiers of

### Regenerative Organic Agriculture.

Our partners' continued patronage enabled us to transcend oceans and land masses from Europe to Americas, Asia to Africa, where more than 75,000 farming families and teams work together every day with joy, conviction and passion to develop infrastructure, procure raw materials and sell healthy food ingredients creating a sustainable future to inspire. Touching millions of lives every day, our supply chain connects you directly to thousands of marginal farmers where you can bring a conscious impact in improving the livelihood of these small landholding yet conscientious farmers by joining hands with us.

We invite you to visit our farms, meet our farmers, join us in the movement sowing the seeds of sustainability and nurturing with nature.

We are at the front page of global organic ingredients

### Growing The Future.

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75,000 ORGANIC  
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ORGANIC PROCESSING  
FACILITIES



150,000 MT ORGANIC  
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**CO<sub>2</sub>**

CO<sub>2</sub> TREATMENT AND CLEANING  
AT ROTTERDAM FACILITY  
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SHARE OF INDIA'S ORGANIC  
PRODUCE IS IN NBF PRODUCT  
PORTFOLIO (\*2021 Export Data)

## EDITOR'S NOTE

# Determined & optimistic

In 2023, the organic sector faced challenges amid global turmoil. Despite external pressures exploiting geopolitical events, the organic industry remains determined and optimistic. The organic movement actively combats greenwashing, exposing attempts to mislead consumers with false sustainability claims. In 2024, we need to shift our focus towards informed consumer education, emphasizing the benefits of organic production for both health and the environment. Objectives include promoting EU organic certification, addressing pricing discrepancies, and advocating for the inclusion of organic products in public procurement. The sector aims for sustainable growth, prioritizing the common good and fostering a healthier world. As participants in the industry, we all need to keep the principles of organic farming in mind, including from a business perspective, to preserve the values behind organics, succeed, and adapt to the changes in these challenging times.

This publication, the first Bio Eco Actual International Yearbook, provides a comprehensive overview of the organic landscape and delves into global organic market trends and challenges, exploring the sales channels in France, Japan, Canada, and the Middle East. It looks at the values and momentum of the EU's organic movement, insights from industry leaders, highlights must-attend events, and explores the world of natural and organic cosmetics. ■ **Oriol Urrutia**



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# Bio Eco Actual: 10 years of organic independent media

**B**io Eco Actual, the European publication specialized in organic food and cosmetics, is celebrating its tenth anniversary. Since May 2013, Bio Eco Actual has been a reference for the dissemination of **independent and free information** on organic food, natural cosmetics, and healthy lifestyle, with the aim of **promoting responsible consumption and organic production**.

Bio Eco Actual was launched with the enthusiasm and strength necessary to fill an important space for the organic sector. The publication was first distributed at BioCultura Barcelona and in specialized organic food stores, herbal and health food stores throughout Spain. Since then, it has remained committed to its readers.

Over the past ten years, the family-run publisher has been a catalyst for the organic sector, expanding to a European level with a printed and digital edition in English. **Bio Eco Actual** counts on the collaboration of journalists, biologists, pharmacists, doctors, agronomists, nutritionists, activists, chefs, lawyers and experts of the global organic movement, organic market specialists and certifiers, among others. Due to their work, the publication has gained international recognition, participating in major conferences and exhibitions in Spain and Europe.

Along its trajectory, Bio Eco Actual has added to its monthly editions, new publications and **special international** editions; executive editions, such as **Trade Yearbook**, which brings together the most relevant data, articles and interviews of the year; **Master Organic**, the showcase of



trends and developments in the organic market in Spain; **Bueno y Vegano**, information and reflection on veganism; **El Botiquín Natural**, which addresses health and disease in a holistic way from the perspective of integrative pharmacy; **Semana Bio**, **Quincena Bio** and **Mes Bio**, special features for the dissemination and promotion of the organic sector.

**Montse Mulé**, editor of Bio Eco Actual, emphasizes the importance of raising awareness of the need for a change in food production through the transition to organic farming, as well as the need to recognize certification seals and support local and organic production: "We celebrate ten years working so that in the future organic will continue to maintain its philosophy. Activism in our shopping basket. Consumption must move towards organic, local and Fairtrade products. For a cleaner, fairer and healthier world. For biodiversity, health and the environment. For a better world".

**Bio Eco Actual** acknowledges the support of all the individuals and organizations that have contributed to its increasing credibility in Spain and Europe and is also grateful for the awards and recognitions received, including those from the Vida Sana Association in 2013, the CCPAE in 2019, and Ecovalia and the Núñez de Prado Family in 2023.

Bio Eco Actual calls on readers to follow its international digital edition – [www.bioecoactual.com/en](http://www.bioecoactual.com/en) and its newsletter, free to subscribe on [www.bioecoactual.com/en/subscription](http://www.bioecoactual.com/en/subscription). ■ **Editorial**



Bio Eco Actual was awarded in the 'Media' category at the XXV International Awards for Organic Production 'Núñez de Prado', organized by Ecovalia and the Núñez de Prado Family. Picture: Ecovalia, 26th November, 2023.



# Current trends and challenges for the global organic agriculture

In February 2024, the 25th edition of “The World of Organic Agriculture” will be launched by FiBL (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture) and IFOAM – Organics International. This comprehensive report has provided valuable insights into the global organic agriculture landscape for decades, including data tables, country and continent reports, market analysis, standards, and policy support. With over 200 data and information providers contributing to this report, it is a crucial resource for stakeholders in the organic farming industry<sup>[1]</sup>.

This article explores key findings and challenges highlighted in the most recent report (2021 data) and some 2022 and 2023 trends.

## Key data and trends 2021 globally

Since the beginning of the data collection on organic

ORGANIC IMPORTS INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE USA HAVE SHOWN AN UPWARD TREND (DATA FOR BOTH TRADE BLOCS AVAILABLE SINCE 2018), AND A TOTAL IMPORT VOLUME OF 4.9 MILLION METRIC TONS WAS NOTED IN 2022

agriculture, the global organic area has increased by over 400 percent, while organic retail sales have grown by over 700 percent (2000–2021). In 2021, nearly 77 million hectares, or 1.6 percent of agricultural land, were under organic management worldwide. The global retail sales of organic food reached almost 125 billion euros in 2021.

Along with the continuous growth of organic area retail sales, organic imports into the European Union and the USA have shown an upward trend (data for both trade blocs available since 2018), and a total import volume of 4.9 million metric tons was noted in 2022.

The global organic food market has faced challenges in recent years. Geopolitical conflicts and rising food prices have had a negative impact on the sector. After a record-breaking year in 2020, market growth slowed in 2021. Many countries experienced lower growth or even decline in 2022 due to weakening consumer demand, inflation, high

food prices, and food security concerns. In the USA and Canada, however, organic retail sales increased by 4.4 and 8.7 percent, respectively.

## European trends 2022

### Farmland trends

In 2021, European organic farmland witnessed remarkable growth, surging by 8 percent, surpassing previous years' rates. At the time of writing, available data for 2022 revealed that most European countries continued to expand their organic farmland. Nevertheless, within the European Union, the growth rate was slightly lower than that

Top 5 exporting countries 2021 and 2022 compared

Source: TRACES 2023

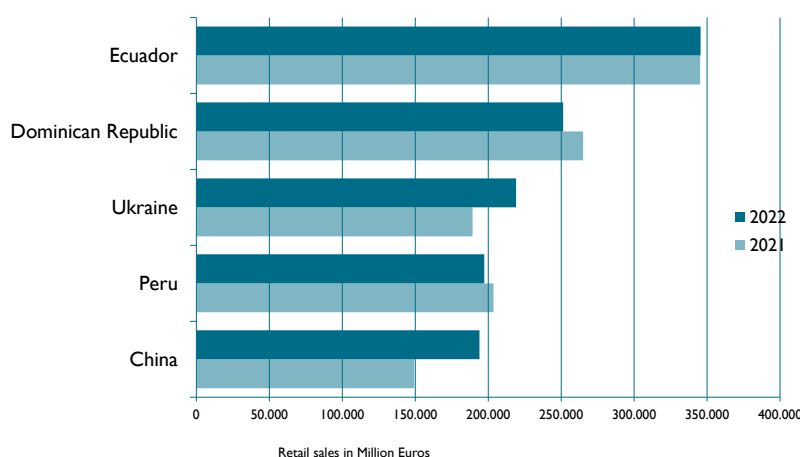


Figure 1: EU organic imports: Top exporting countries 2021 and 2022

Source: Traces, European Commission



observed in 2021; however, an organic area share of more than 10 percent was achieved (approx. 17 million hectares). Across Europe, there was a decline in organic farmland due to reduced certified farmland reported in Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. Achieving the ambitious target of reaching 25 percent organic farmland by 2030, as outlined in the European Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy, will demand sustained efforts. It is crucial to implement appropriate support measures to incentivize farmers to transition to organic agriculture. Encouragingly, some countries, like Portugal and Greece, exhibited exceptional growth in 2022, demonstrating that a significant increase by 2030 remains feasible.

### European import trends 2022

For European organic import several notable trends emerged with the 2022 data: There was an overall slight decrease in import volume in 2022, which can probably be linked to market stagnation. However, there was an increase in cereal and oilseed imports during the same period. Additionally, there was a notable increase in EU organic imports from China, which can be attributed to post-pandemic recovery in China and from Ukraine due to challenges in shipping to the USA. Moreover, there was an uptick in soybean imports from Africa (Togo) (Figure 1, Figure 3).

### Top 5 export products 2021 and 2022 compared

Source: TRACES 2023

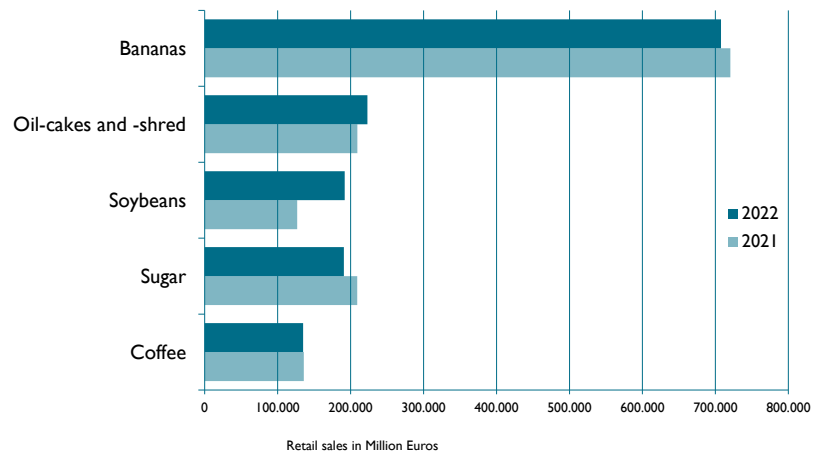


Figure 2: EU organic imports: Top crop groups 2021 and 2022

Source: Traces, European Commission 2023

### European retail sales trends 2022

In 2022, the European organic market faced several challenges. The cost of living surged in many countries, with inflation reaching unprecedented levels, causing some consumers to reduce spending on organic products. However, consumer awareness of organic, environmental, and health issues persisted. To cope with rising prices, some consumers turned to discounters, leading to continued growth in organic product sales in these outlets. While in several many countries the organic market declined in 2022 (see Figure 3), some countries, such as the Netherlands, Austria or Italy, experienced further growth.

### Market development 2022 in select countries

Source: FiBL AMI survey 2023

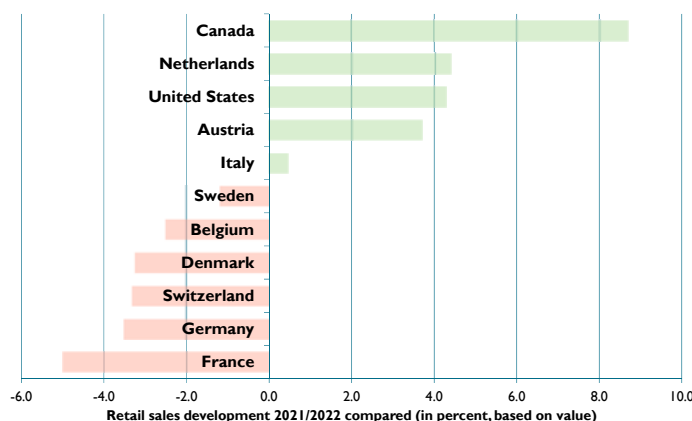


Figure 3: Change in organic retail sales 2021/2022 based on retail sales in million Euros

Source: National data sources compiled by FiBL

### 2023 retail sales trends

While many consumers adjusted their purchasing habits in response to economic pressures, 2023 brought some positive changes. Data from Germany, for example, shows an increase in sales of fresh organic food from January to September 2023 compared to the previous year (Figure 4). Discounters continued to experience the highest sales growth, but overall purchasing volume remained slightly below the previous year.

According to the presentation of Lee Holdstock at the 2023

Congress of IFOAM Organics Europe “Europe Meets Business”, many EU organic markets are seeing value improvements in 2023, but volumes are still reduced for some. He also stated that comparing performance with 2020 and 2021 is not helpful as these were exceptional years. According to Holdstock, diverse routes to market – including local sustainability-focused chains (e.g. Italian Bio Districts) could make a significant contribution.

Another notable trend is the considerably stronger growth of organic catering sales compared to retail sales in several countries during 2022. Given that 2021 was still influenced by the impact of the pandemic, it is more instructive to examine the comparison between 2019 and 2022. For instance, in Denmark, organic catering sales surged by 18 percent from 2019 to 2022, surpassing the 9.2 percent increase in retail sales during the same period (Figure 5). While data on organic catering/food service sales are limited in many countries, the trend observed in Denmark is indicative of a broader pattern observed in other countries as well, such as France.

#### Market development 2023 in Germany (Jan–September)

Source: AMI based on GfK householdpanel

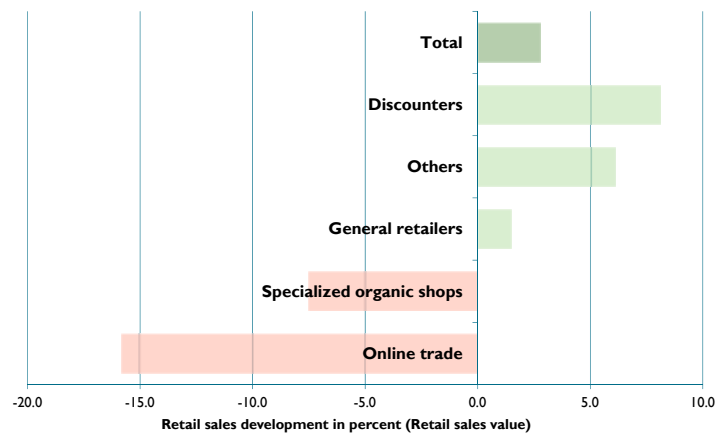


Figure 4: Market development by channel in Germany, January to September 2023 (based on retail sales value in Euros)

Source: Agricultural Market Information Company 2023

## Conclusion

In summary, the global organic agriculture sector faced various challenges in 2022, including market stagnation, rising prices, and changing consumer preferences, particularly in Europe. However, in 2023 the situation was improving. Achieving the ambitious goals of organic farming growth requires addressing current challenges. With concerted efforts and innovative strategies, the organic industry can continue to play a vital role in promoting sustainable and healthy food systems worldwide.

■ Helga Willer, Jan Trávníček and Bernhard Schlatter

#### Development of food service in Denmark (in Danish Crowns)

Source: Statistics Denmark

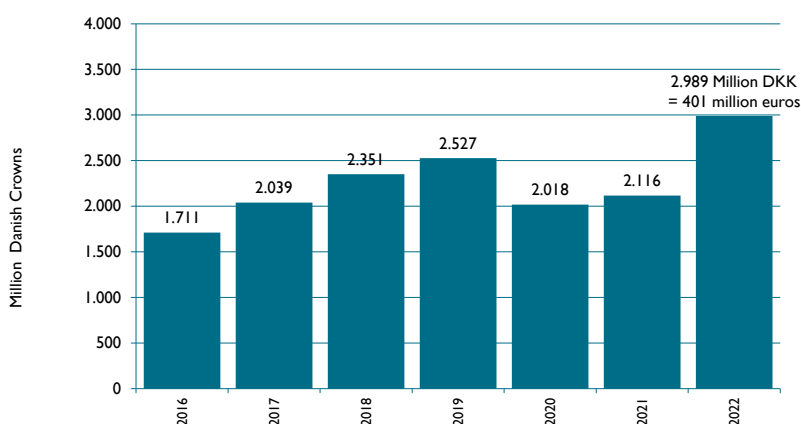


Figure 5: Denmark: Increase of organic catering sales 2016–2022

Source: Statistics Denmark

More information about the statistical Yearbook can be found on [www.organic-world.net](http://www.organic-world.net)

Interactive online databases and dashboards can be found at [statistics.fibl.org](http://statistics.fibl.org)

# FiBL





EU Organic Awards winners. ©European Union 2023.

# Organic in the EU, many practitioners carry out organic's values

In recent years, the European Union has developed a long-term strategy to become climate neutral: the EU Green Deal. Among its goals is a sustainable food system and increased protection of our environment and biodiversity. To realise this, it published two important strategies for food and farming: the Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The Farm to Fork Strategy set a target of "at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming and a significant increase in organic aquaculture by 2030". The EU Biodiversity Strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. Both strategies mention organic as a tool to reach their targets.

## Organic, truly green at heart

As European organic movement, we have tirelessly advocated to ensure organic has (its rightful) prominent

place in these green goals and we are very happy that we succeeded. Our members and many other actors along the food chain contribute to achieving the targets of these strategies in their day-to-day work. In my career, I have time-and-again witnessed organic practitioners and the strong principles they have at heart: health, ecology, fairness, and care.

As a food and farming system that looks at a systemic approach to food and farming, organic practitioners have always been at the forefront of innovation – innovation that looks beyond technologies and focuses on improving social, environmental and governance aspects. A big part of this success comes from being a united movement that shares knowledge, innovations, and best practices. I am very happy to share an overview of some European initiatives you and/or your network can use to increase the sector's and (y)our visibility.

THE FARM TO  
FORK STRATEGY SET  
A TARGET OF "AT  
LEAST 25% OF THE  
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LAND UNDER  
ORGANIC FARMING  
AND A SIGNIFICANT  
INCREASE IN ORGANIC  
AQUACULTURE  
BY 2030"

## Showcasing & sharing best practices

### Awarding organic excellence: EU Organic Awards

EU Organic Day, on 23 September, marks the annual European Organic Awards ceremony. These awards are dedicated to rewarding European actors who greatly contribute to enhancing, developing, and stimulating the organic value chain.

Aimed to reward European organic excellence along the entire supply chain, the EU organic awards scheme consists of 7 categories and 8 awards:

1. Best organic farmer (female and male);
2. Best organic city;
3. Best organic region;
4. Best organic bio-district;
5. Best organic food processing SME;
6. Best organic food retailer;
7. Best organic restaurant / food service.

Every year, applications open from mid-March until mid-May. From May until July, a jury of representatives from the EU institutions and organic supply chain analyses more than 100 applications from across the EU. Out of these applications, three nominees in each category are presented. The winners are announced during a public awards ceremony and celebration on 23 September.

Anyone in the organic supply chain can become the next EU Organics Awards winner! Have a look at the Eu-

## Meet the eight winners of the EU Organic Awards 2023



- Best organic farmer (female): Ms. Clara Benito Pacheco (Spain)
- Best organic farmer (male): Mr. Thomas Moschos (Greece)
- Best organic region: Burgenland Region (Austria)
- Best organic city: Vienna (Austria)
- Best organic bio-district: Idanha-a-Nova (Portugal)
- Best organic food processing SME: Merry Mill (Ireland)
- Best organic retailer: Gut Wulksfelde (Germany)
- Best organic restaurant/food service: Luftburg – Kolarik im Prater (Austria)

ropean Commission's website for this year's timeline at [www.organicseurope.bio](http://www.organicseurope.bio).

### Giving visibility to initiatives transforming food & farming

Whether you are active in organic or not, if you are transforming food and farming and have an inspiring initiative, you can submit it to [www.euorganic2030.bio](http://www.euorganic2030.bio). We host this platform as a place to give visibility to inspiring initiatives. We select the best initiatives and help them reach more visibility on our social media and in our newsletter.

Whether you want to get inspired or have an inspirational initiative, visit [www.euorganic2030.bio](http://www.euorganic2030.bio). Of course, you are welcome to share this with any good examples you know!

### For practitioners: The Organic Farm Knowledge platform

Organic Farm Knowledge is a platform for all types of practitioners in organic. Whether you produce crops, have

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farm animals, are interested to improve your farm management, soil quality or the overall environment and society, [www.organic-farmknowledge.org](http://www.organic-farmknowledge.org) will provide you with useful resources.

The toolbox offers over 1,000 tools in 16 European languages for farmers and farm advisors. Short, easy to read articles, fact sheets and videos are available. The mobile-friendly toolbox allows for text search and targeted searches by theme, language, organisation, project, keyword, type, country of origin and year.

If you want to share your tools or help promote the platform, please contact [ambra.desimone@organicseurope.bio](mailto:ambra.desimone@organicseurope.bio), Research & Innovation Associate Manager.

## Increasing the movement & sector's visibility

### Spotlighting European organic: EU Organic Day

On 23 September 2021, the EU institutions officially declared 23 September the official EU Organic Day. This is the perfect opportunity to widely celebrate organic and, at EU level, evaluate Europe's progress towards achieving its goal of 25% organic land by 2030.

This is a day for your organisation to highlight your own work, your staff, clients, partners and/or products. In the past years, I have seen great examples along the movement and sector that use EU Organic Day to launch new campaigns, partnerships, EU organic action plans, organise major events and/or farmers' markets and much more! Do you want to know more? Have a look at the 2023 initiatives at [www.organicseurope.bio/get-involved/european-organic-day](http://www.organicseurope.bio/get-involved/european-organic-day).

As the European umbrella organisation, we provide our members with visibility, access to information, idea sharing and a communications package ahead of EU Organic Day. Not a member yet? Or interested to become a member? Get in contact at [membership@organicseurope.bio](mailto:membership@organicseurope.bio).

### Promoting European products: EU promotion policies

Created in 2014, EU promotion policies help open new market opportunities for EU farmers and the wider food industry. The European Commission has pledged a total of €185.9 million to promote European agri-food products in 2024. Thanks to our advocacy work, there was a large share available for organic products' promotion: €40+ million.

If you want to promote your organisation's activities on the EU and international market or raise awareness on the EU organic logo, consider applying for the promotion

policies. The European Research Executive Agency website will soon issue information on eligibility, how to apply and deadlines. We will also organise moments for our members to get informed in webinars and via mailings.

### Global social visibility: #IGrowYourFood Day

Since 2019, the online action #IGrowYourFood gives those growing our globe's food a platform to address citizens, consumers, and policymakers – and connect with other farmers around the world. Organic and agroecological farmers are invited to share videos, articles, or photo stories explaining why they #IGrowYourFood and #LuvOrganic on social media. Policymakers, organisations, advocates and citizens then amplify their messages, re-post their videos, and join the conversation on how organic can be a pathway to true sustainability.

Would you like to raise your voice together with the global organic movement, every year in September? Have a look at [www.igrowyourfood.bio](http://www.igrowyourfood.bio) or search for #IGrowYourFood on your social media of choice.



## Closing words

As you might have experienced, over the past months, organic has been facing headwinds from those who want to maintain the status quo in agriculture and food. As an organic believer, I am convinced that it is important for us as an organic movement and sector to stay in close contact, share ideas, continue inspiring and speak with one voice. I hope the opportunities I shared with you inspire you to act and continue (y)our work of transforming food and farming. As I like to say, don't panic, the future is organic!

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we are the united voice of organic with the EU institutions. Every day, our team works hard to ensure the voice of everyone in the organic supply chain is heard – to ensure your voice is heard. With and for organic farmers, retailers, processors, traders, certifiers, and researchers, we advocate for a transformation of food and farming based on organic's principles: health, ecology, fairness & care. To learn more, visit [www.organicseurope.bio](http://www.organicseurope.bio).

■ **Eduardo Cuoco**





# Aurora Abad

“OPTA Europe strongly supports the efforts to fight greenwashing”

**A**urora Abad is the Secretary General of the **Organic Processing and Trade Association (OPTA)**. She has been living in Brussels for 20 years working in European Public Affairs, has developed the greater part of her career in the European trade association representing wine companies and is an expert in food safety, consumer issues and environmental sustainability.

## Are the European policies being developed consistent with the goals set for 2030?

The share of organics in the EU is steadily increasing, but not sufficiently to meet the 25% target by 2030. One of the main breaks to the growth of organics is that the different EU policies are not aligned to favour food products with better environmental credentials in terms of soil and water pollution or biodiversity. Which is the way forward? Many relevant measures have been identified in the EU organic action plan to boost demand, such as integrating organic products into school meals and workplace canteens through public procurement, communication campaigns to explain their beneficial attributes to consumers or support to companies exporting organics to third country markets. In our views, these are the keys to increase the share of organics.

## How does OPTA Europe address the ethical and environmental concerns associated with new genomic techniques?

We stand firmly against gene edition in organics, in line with the principles underlying organics and with consumer's expectations. But this has to come along with the necessary tools for organic operators to fulfil it, namely mandatory traceability and labelling of all products obtained from NGTs, so that each actor at every step of the supply chain is duly informed if NGT material is involved. For organic companies, the worst-case scenario is a ban of NGTs in organics without the means to effectively accomplish it.

## What should be considered for an adequate approach to coexistence?

Drawing lessons from the unfortunate precedent of pesticides contamination, we request fair coexistence measures from a supply chain perspective. Namely, NGT manufacturers to share the economic burden of additional measures to prevent and monitor NGTs in the organic supply chain as well as a compensation to organic operators in case of unintentional presence.

## Which elements of labelling and green claims should be reviewed?

As a starting point, OPTA Europe strongly supports the efforts to fight greenwashing and to empower consumers to choose truly sustainable products. For the Green Claims proposal to be sound and workable for organic companies, we need simple and coherent rules and a fair access for small operators. This is: consistency with related rules (for example the recently adopted Directive Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition) as well as minimal red-tape and cost procedures. Without these elements, organic companies will see reduced their capacity to participate in the 'sustainable' food market in favour of players with higher resources for regulatory screening and administrative activities.

## OPTA Europe advocates for a more supportive regulatory environment. On what grounds should it be established?

The environmental, social and economic benefits of organics are well substantiated. OPTA Europe advocates that the myriad of policy developments taking on the challenges of climate change and sustainable food (Green Taxonomy, Green Claims, Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, Sustainable Food Systems, etc.) should better embrace organic. While sustainability is a much larger conversation than organic, organic should definitely be a cornerstone of the sustainability equation in all EU policies.

## How to get policymakers more involved?

There are around 90,000 organic processing and trading companies in the EU. They are the backbone of the organic system, as they buy some 70% of all agricultural produce and allow to translate the increase of organic agricultural land into an increase of organic foodstuffs. By conveying their voices and putting their faces and stories to the policy discussions in Brussels, OPTA Europe works to get policymakers closer to the reality of those entrepreneurs who walk the talk when it comes to sustainable food system. ■ **Oriol Urrutia**



# The current picture for the specialized organic retail channel in France

**T**he big surprise of the last three years was the sudden reversal of fortune for the organic market, which saw double-digit growth turn into an overall sales decline of 12% in 2022. The end of a golden age of organic trade in France seems to be confirmed by a majority of specialized grocery stores reporting falling customer enthusiasm in 2022. However, look a little closer and areas of genuine positivity can be seen.

**At the end of 2022 there were 3,086 specialized organic stores in France**, down from 3,258 units in 2021 (a drop of 5.3%). But this slight fall can be put into perspective when it is remembered that the total number of specialist stores was 2,826 in 2017. Against a national market decline of 12% in 2022, **Biocoop**, the leading specialist organic retailer in France, has been fighting back, delivering a turnover of 1.495 billion euros in 2022, down 5.6% on the previous year.

The organic market in France has been declining since 2021, but this economic situation should be put into perspective. While Biocoop announced 35 closures in 2022, it opened 41 new stores during the year. As of December 31, 2022, Biocoop thus had 765 points of sale (741 in July 2023). Safeguard and receivership procedures are multiplying within the brand, as specialized organic retail encounters a period of strong market turbulence. An activist brand for 35 years, Biocoop has recently doubled down on its values and positioning: "Continue to offer a demanding organic, fair,

**AT THE END OF 2022 THERE WERE 3,086 SPECIALIZED ORGANIC STORES IN FRANCE, DOWN FROM 3,258 UNITS IN 2021 (A DROP OF 5.3%)**

and rooted in the seasons," **Pierrick De Ronne**, President of **Biocoop**, has commented.

**Naturalia** (part of the Casino Group) is the second largest network of specialized stores in France. With 245 points of sale, its turnover of 355 million euros in 2022 was down 7.8%. After months of preparation, the retailer's first concept store outlet called "the Parisian farm" opened its doors in March 2023 in Paris 12th. A second pilot store opened in Saint-Ouen (93), north of Paris on August 4. The development represents an important brand repositioning and a new direction in shopper experience, drawing inspiration from iconic US natural grocery retailer Trader Joe's (with more than 550 stores across the USA, and owned by the founding family of Aldi). Naturalia says it wants to introduce more "pleasure and playfulness" into the organic retail space and move away from the sector's image of worthiness. The retailer believes the new store format will appeal both to existing loyal organic consumers and those who are looking for a more enjoyable and celebratory retail environment – and who may have abandoned organic in 2022.

**La Vie Claire**, France's leading organic franchise operator, with a network of 400 stores (franchise & integrated), saw its turnover fall by 8.7% to around 325 million euros at the end of 2022. More encouragingly, the management at La Vie Claire report that "the first figures for 2023 show a return to growth".

**Bio c' Bon** and **So.bio**, both owned by the Carrefour group, operate more than 150 specialized organic stores across the two brands: Bio C Bon with 77 stores including 53 in Paris and the Paris region,



and So Bio with 74 points of sale. Carrefour remains very discreet about its turnover.

**NaturéO** (60 stores in 2019, 36 in 2023) produced a turnover in 2022 of less than 100 million euros, compared to 120 million euros the previous year. Last spring, the brand announced to its suppliers that it was placing its stores and its Compagnie Bio & Nature headquarters in the safeguard procedure (the safeguard procedure is a legal remedy open to companies encountering financial difficulties).

In June 2022 **L'Eau Vive** also announced the opening of a safeguard procedure (a period during which the assets of 23 stores are frozen, out of the 27 of its integrated portfolio). The franchise stores are not affected with the exception of one store in receivership.

**Centrale Bio**, the logistics operator for l'Eau Vive, is ceasing its activity due to the "decline in the market" for organic products.

**Biomonde** operates 150 stores in 2023, compared to 170 in 2020.

**Les Comptoirs de la Bio**, with 81 stores (July 2023) became 100% owned by the group in 2022, and recorded a turnover of 140 million euros from 98 points of sale in 2022. A year earlier, the network reported a performance of 311 million euros from a portfolio of 151 stores (including network sites, but not necessarily under the Les Comptoirs de la bio banner)!

**Marcel & Fils** currently operates 62 stores. The acquisition of the 16 La Vie health stores in 2022 will enable it to reach around 140 million euros in turnover.

A level of stability can be seen in the "small networks", including **Satoriz** with 39 stores (one closure in 2022), **Leopold market**, 27 stores, **Le Grand Panier Bio**, 19 stores, and **My Bio Shop** with 23 stores.

To ease the decline in consumption of organic products, specialized retailers are trying to work on their price image. They are able to use several levers, including product mix, and borrowing tools from general retail, such as promotions in partnership with processors. "Price is not a barrier. The key is education", says **Laure Verdeau**, director of **Agence BIO**. Out of six organic outlets, three are in decline, three others are growing (outside the home: public and commercial catering). The win-win solution since 2022 seems to be the effective marrying of organic and local. Biocoop executives are betting on a return to growth no later than 2024, and many traders have already announced a restart of sales in their stores in the first quarter of 2023. ■ **Gerard Gontier**

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the date

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# The distribution of organic products in Japan

**T**he archipelago is populated with over 123 million inhabitants, while the European Union has **448.4 million inhabitants**. With a GDP of 4,941 trillion dollars, **Japan is the world's third-largest economy**.

The country's self-sufficiency rate stands at only 38% in terms of calories, the lowest among the Group of Seven (G7) countries (Germany, Canada, the United States, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom).

In 2022, half of the food imports by value came from **four trading partners: the United States, the European Union, China, and Australia**.

The signing of the **Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)** between the European Union and Japan, which came into effect on February 1, 2019, had a positive impact on our trade with the archipelago, especially on wine and dairy exports.

In the first half of 2023, **France is the 10th supplier to Japan and the leading European supplier**, surpassing Italy and Spain. Over 12 months, French exports reached a record level of €1.46 billion (+12% year-on-year) according to French and Japanese customs.

**French exports of agricultural and agri-food products to Japan grew by +5% in the first half of 2023**, despite an economically challenging context, according to the Agriculture and Food Department of the regional economic service in Tokyo (SER: Ministry of Economy / Directorate General of the Treasury in France).

WITH A GDP OF  
**4,941**  
TRILLION DOLLARS,  
JAPAN IS THE WORLD'S  
THIRD-LARGEST  
ECONOMY

"French beverage exports increased by 10% in value year-on-year in the first six months of the year, driven by champagnes (+28% in value, +14% in volume); still wines remained stable in value over the period and declined by 9% in volume. Dairy products also experienced an 18% increase in value, as did milling

products (an industrial facility that processes cereals, especially wheat, into flour)."

The Japanese market for **cosmetic products**, valued at JPY 2,290 billion (approximately €15.6 billion) in 2021, ranks as the **third-largest global market** behind the United States and China. Despite slight growth, it remains one of the most dynamic markets globally, with consumers always eager for new products. This trade continues to thrive, serving as a reference and even a springboard for the rest of Asia, both for large international corporations and smaller enterprises seeking to export.

The Japanese primarily consume organic vegetables and rice. These two products account for 85% of organic production and consumption, followed by fresh fruits and tea.

**Several supermarkets in Japan**, particularly in Tokyo, have started offering organic foods.

**Seijo Ishii**, for example, is a high-end grocery store chain focused on foreign imports and organic products with over 170 stores.

Many Seijo Ishii products from abroad are directly imported by **Tokyo Europe Trading Co., Ltd**, an affiliated company, and do not source from other trading companies.

Some major supermarkets like **AEON** offer sections of organic vegetables. AEON: A Japanese retail company founded in 1970 with 11,917 employees.

Mr. Okada, president of the AEON group, had anticipated the development of organic products in Japan and initially created a 50/50 *joint venture* with Bio C Bon. (Since then, Bio C Bon has been acquired by the Carrefour group for French stores).

In December 2016, **the first 100% organic store opened in Japan**—Azabu Juban, Minato ward in Tokyo, with the idea that Japanese consumption would change in the years to come.

On the theme of "organic in daily life," with **17 stores in Tokyo and 7 in Kanagawa**, as well as an online store delivering nationwide.

There are some small networks in Japan, such as **F&F**, which has expanded in re-

JAPAN IS THE  
**11<sup>TH</sup>**  
GLOBAL ORGANIC  
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PRODUCT SALES  
WORLDWIDE

cent years. Their **27 locations** extend outside Tokyo (Kanagawa, Chiba, Saitama), and **Natural House** with 12 directly managed stores and 1 franchised store.

There are independent brands like **Crayon House**, **Horizon Farms**, **OHSAWA JAPAN**, and **GAIA Net** with its 2 stores.

**Online sales:** The extensive distribution capabilities of refrigerated transport have allowed the distribution of organic vegetables and other products throughout the country with **Amazon Fresh** and also the delivery service of **Bio Marché** (<https://biomarche.jp/>), which is a membership-based company that mainly delivers organic vegetables and ingredients (1,500 references) to homes once a week.

Bio Marché is a company of the **KEIHAN GROUP**: composed of four main segments—transportation, real estate, a distribution business targeting department stores, shopping malls, and other commercial properties. Finally, the leisure and service business, targeting hotel customers, offering, among other things, tourist circuits and cruises.

The aging population and the "**metabo**" law (short for metabolism) of 2008, which fights against obesity (being overweight in Japan has become "completely illegal"), have made the Japanese increasingly sensitive to health issues. However, organic products are generally perceived as premium by consumers, as in many countries.

**A healthy diet has always been the primary consumption factor for residents.** ■ Gerard Gontier



Natural House employs 249 people and has 12 directly managed stores and 1 franchise store.





# Angelo Ferrara

"The majority of Holle products are already climate-neutral"



**A**ngelo Ferrara was born in Basel in 1976. With a background and professional experience in finance, he joined **Holle** in 2007 as the Sales Manager responsible for Switzerland and international market development. Since 2019, he has been the Managing Director of **Holle baby food AG**, the pioneering company in biodynamic baby products since 1934, offering the highest quality organic baby food. They are the first **Demeter** manufacturer of baby and infant food, with a holistic and responsible approach to people, nature, and future generations.

**Holle has a rich history dating back to 1934. How has the company's mission and values evolved over the years, and how do they align with the current trends and demands of the consumers?**

Since the beginning, Holle has been standing for baby food of the highest biodynamic quality. The purpose was always to offer the most natural possible products, with a clean and simple ingredient list. Trends and demands are changing over the years, so we need to adapt our product range and introduce new lines, but always keeping in mind our values, which are, for example, only organic products, wherever possible with biodynamic ingredients, a clean and simple ingredient list and the best quality.

**Can you share some specific initiatives that Holle employs to ensure the highest quality and sustainability standards in the production of its baby food products?**

Holle is one of the first organic baby food manufacturers to use milk formulas made from goat's milk and is therefore a pioneer. Our own production facility provides baby food-quality organic milk powder raw ingredients. As part of our goat's milk initiative, we work closely with goat farms and provide both financial and organisational support for their conversion to Demeter. Demeter goat farming not only supports regional breeds, but also offers many advantages in terms of biodiversity. For example, the goats' grazing behaviour promotes the conservation of biodiversity. Thanks to our efforts, since the beginning of 2023 we have been able to convert our entire organic goat's milk formula to Demeter quality.

We were finalist for the German Sustainability Award 2023 for our efforts in the biodynamic agriculture and especially with our goat milk initiative.

**How does Holle integrate biodynamic principles into its sourcing of ingredients, and how does this influence**

**the overall quality and nutritional value of your baby food products?**

We have been working biodynamically since 1934, making us a Demeter pioneer. Today, we offer a comprehensive range of over 90 products for babies and toddlers in top organic quality. As a Demeter manufacturer, we are shaping the future ecologically – for people and nature, while protecting animals, soil and the environment. The majority of Holle products are already climate-neutral. The change-over to climate-positive milk formulas and other products is a logical step towards securing a future worth living for our grandchildren.

**Can you tell us about Holle's efforts to maintain transparency in its supply chain and product labeling?**

The transparency in supply chain is very important for us. We have an internal team dedicated on the supply chain from the farmer to the final product. In the field of the biodynamic milk we are sourcing, we have a direct cooperation with the farmers of Demeter Cow and Demeter Goat milk. Same for the cereals, fruits and vegetables, where we are in direct and intensive contact with farmers, suppliers and producers.

**Parental concerns about the nutritional needs of babies are always a priority. How does Holle collaborate with experts in child nutrition to develop and improve your product range, ensuring that they meet the evolving dietary requirements of infants and toddlers?**

Holle has nutritionists in its team who are very familiar with milk formula, regularly attend training courses and participate in congresses in order to always be informed when new scientific findings emerge that are relevant. Holle is also involved in various associations such as SINA (Swiss Infant Nutrition Association) in order to be professionally informed quickly. ■ Oriol Urrutia



# Patrick Woods

"We are passionate about producing healthy and nutritious foods that are easy to incorporate into the diet"

**T**he **Linwoods** story began more than 50 years ago with a small local store owned by the Woods family. After suffering a health setback in 1994, **John Woods**, former Managing Director of Linwoods, became fascinated by the benefits that foods could bring to health and wellness. It was then that he discovered the nutritional potential of flax and **Linwoods Health Foods** was born. What started as an idea in rural Ireland quickly exploded across the globe with its range now sold in over 20 countries. **Patrick Woods** is the newly appointed Managing Director of Linwoods Health Foods.

**Linwoods is now led by the third generation of the founding family. How has the company developed?**

Over the years, Linwoods business has expanded to include the development of innovative new products to meet our consumers changing needs. A growing part of the business strategy is to bring organic, healthy and more nutritious products to consumers, thereby satisfying the growing demand that exists for these types of products in the market place. Today Linwoods produce a range of healthy super food combinations, many of which contain Milled Organic Flaxseed, and they are a convenient, easy and quick way to gain a wide range of essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals in your diet.

**1996 was a key year, how did it mark the company's path?**

In 1996 when John had a health setback, he became fascinated by the benefits of food for health and wellbeing and in 2003 Linwoods launched its 'Health Foods' range. From the initial Organic Milled Flaxseed, the product portfolio has now extended to include the core flaxseed range, a hemp seed range and a functional range. Over the last 10 years the company has become fully focused in the production of health foods and has ceased trading in any other previous business interests, eg dairy or bakery goods. The team has expanded to include many experts in food manufacturing, quality standards and safety in addition to branding including sales and marketing.

**What sparked John Linwoods' interest in seeds?**

It was in 2003 that Linwoods first initiated their interest in Flaxseed and healthy super food product. John Woods, Managing Director of Linwoods, grew up on a farm and remembered as a young boy how healthy their farm animals were when being fed on a meal of Flaxseed and how glossy the animal's coats were. Years later whilst attending a Natural and Organic fair in the United States, John once

again came across Flaxseed and recalled this memory, and it occurred to him that if it made the farm animals so healthy, then it must be good for humans also. His intrigue led him to research the benefits of Flaxseed to which he discovered the many healthy attributes it could deliver, such as: Omega 3 (ALA) which supports normal cholesterol level, Fibre which is recommended for a balanced diet, Plant-based Protein supporting muscles and bones, Magnesium to support energy levels and Phosphorus to maintain bones and teeth.

**How have eating habits changed?**

During and in the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic we have seen more people taking an increased interest in their Health and leading healthier lives. People are more aware of how important it is to look after their Health and an increased focus on Immune support in particular. At Linwoods we are absolutely passionate about producing healthy and nutritious foods, that are convenient and are an easy and quick way to include a wide range of essential nutrients and functional benefits through your diet, we live by this mantra when providing solutions for consumers.

**Innovation is one of your strategic pillars at Linwoods. What are the keys to success?**

Innovation is difficult to get right. We have a dedicated team within the business who develops new products but we also have innovation in terms of branding, packaging and processes. For new concepts we use internal idea generation and then follow a stage gate process where we assess demand, viability and then actual development. It is an intense process and can take time to get to launch. Our interests at present are around organic, function and breakfast. At present we have 3 projects going through our stage gate process but for now I am keeping them under wraps. This summer we hope to launch a new range into the Spanish market so keep your eyes peeled! ■ **Oriol Urrutia**





©NuernbergMesse / Thomas Geiger.

# BIOFACH & VIVANESS 2024

From a diverse range of international products to the future of food

Nuremberg will become the focal point for organic products, sustainability, and innovation in the sector, when representatives from the entire value chain gather at **BIOFACH**, the world's leading fair for organic food, from **13 to 16 February 2024**. The event is co-located with **VIVANESS**, the international trade for natural and organic cosmetics and personal care. Visitors to **BIOFACH 2024** are set to enjoy knowledge-sharing and networking, discover new products, and drive the organic sector forward. The necessary scope is provided among other things by the themed special display areas and the **BIOFACH CONGRESS** with its wide-ranging programme. In 2024, the congress theme will be: "Food for the future: Women's impact on sustainable food systems."

"The preparations for the trade fair duo are in full swing. In 2024, we expect around 2,800 exhibitors from all around the world, 200 of them at **VIVANESS**. We are already looking forward to welcoming all participants to Nuremberg and creating a framework

with plenty of scope to explore the trends relevant to the future of the organic food industry," explains **Danila Brunner**, Executive Director **BIOFACH & VIVANESS**. "We are also expanding the supporting programme and creating additional features that encourage focused exchanges, provide direction, and bring like-minded professionals together. Examples include our new pavilion for international start-ups or the **HoReCa – GV & Gastro** hub for the hospitality and out-of-home catering sector," Brunner continues.

## Innovations and trends

**HORECA – GV  
& GASTRO HUB  
OFFERS DEDICATED  
PROGRAMME FOR  
REPRESENTATIVES  
OF THE OUT-OF-  
HOME CATERING  
AND HOSPITALITY  
SEGMENT**

The collective power of innovation can be discovered by visiting the international exhibitors in the halls and at the **BIOFACH Novelty Stand**, where the spotlight is on new products from exhibitors. Over the three-day event, visitors will get the opportunity to vote for their favourite products in seven categories in the **BIOFACH Best New Product Award**. The official awards ceremony will take place on Friday 16

February 2024, the last day of the fair, and all visitors, exhibitors and media representatives are cordially invited to attend.

Newcomers to the organic food industry also bring innovation, creative ideas and trends to the table. For the first time, BIOFACH is organising a dedicated area for international start-ups, the **"International Newcomers & Start-ups" pavilion**. In addition, the **"Young Innovators" pavilion** subsidised by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) provides a platform for 30 German start-ups. The supporting programme also offers a host of new features and innovations. In February, the **Trend Tour** – which was still exclusively for media representatives and content creators in 2023 – will also take visitors to see selected exhibitors and their trending products for the first time. On the tour, information will be provided about the trade fair trends highlighted by BIOFACH and industry experts.

### Networking and focused knowledge-sharing

"BIOFACH is all about seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling and handling organic products. But it has a whole lot more to offer. We want to bring together the industry and facilitate networking, while encouraging communication and a future-driven discussion," says **Steffen Waris**, Director of **BIOFACH & VIVANESS**.

Key issues for the future, best practice examples and networking are reflected in a variety of ways over the four days of the fair. At the special display areas, for example, which connect like-minded participants, encourage professional dialogue and define solutions and trends for the sector. These include the "worlds of experience". Following a break in 2023, the **World of OLIVE OIL** will be back in February, as will the **Olive Oil Award**, which will be presented during BIOFACH 2024. The **World of VEGAN**, whose vibrant content was developed in conjunction with AöL and VegOrganic, will be the main port of call for topics relating to plant-based alternatives and vegan products.

The various forums and network hubs, like the Fachhandelsstreiff for specialist retailers or the Initiatives and NGOs hub, encourage dialogue on specific topics. A new feature at BIOFACH 2024 will be the **HoReCa – GV & Gastro hub**, a communicative space geared towards interested parties and representatives of the out-of-home catering and hospitality segment. It gathers experts from the catering in-

# BIOFACH

into organic

dustry to experience best practice examples and get ideas and inspiration. "With this new area, we are creating an interactive networking space, offering plenty of opportunities to enhance knowledge and share experiences. Participants will also gain valuable insights to help them optimise their own business processes. The format is geared towards communication and includes pitch sessions, working spaces and communication areas that encourage mutual exchanges. The digital guide to out-of-home catering rounds out the programme nicely," explains Waris.

### BIOFACH Congress

"Food for the Future: Women's Impact on Sustainable Food Systems" is the main theme of the **BIOFACH Congress**. It was chosen in collaboration with our international patron IFOAM – Organics International and national supporting institution BÖLW, the German Federation of Organic Food Producers. It puts the spotlight on the transformative power of women in the food sector and explores their role for a more sustainable food system in the future. The individual presentations address many other sector-specific and future-oriented topics. As a result, the BIOFACH Congress provides a comprehensive platform for knowledge-sharing and acquisition, networking and transformation. It is designed for representatives of the entire value chain of the organic food sector. For more information, go to: [www.biofach.de/kongress](http://www.biofach.de/kongress)

### BIOFACH digital

For information on the supporting programme, exhibitors and their products, trade fair and industry news, and a whole lot more, visit the BIOFACH website. The website has had a fresh look since summer 2023. Not only does it offer more orientation, but it is also the first port of call for trending topics and industry news. The "Knowledge & Inspiration" section provides interesting articles about the issues driving the organic food sector.

**BIOFACH 2024** is set to take place on site in Nuremberg and online on the digital event platform (BIOFACH digital). Parts of the congress and supporting programme will be streamed live and will be available as on-demand videos for several months afterwards. These items are marked accordingly in the programme. BIOFACH digital helps participants to plan their visit efficiently, and the networking tools and onboarding function will be enabled shortly before the event. ■ **Editorial**

# VIVANESS

into natural beauty



# Must-attend events for the international organic sector

## BIOFACH & VIVANESS: February 13-16

From 13-16 February 2024, BIOFACH & VIVANESS will once again open their doors at Exhibition Centre Nuremberg - **NürnbergMesse**. The latest edition of the world's leading fairs in organic food and organic and natural cosmetics will bring together exhibitors and visitors from the entire organic sector, with regional, national and international stakeholders. A diverse trade fair program and a wide range of products will invite visitors to use all their senses to explore the world of organic food and cosmetics. Parallel to the exhibition, the **BIOFACH Congress** also offers a venue for discussion, networking, and shaping the sector. This time around, presentations, seminars, panels, discussions, and conferences will focus on the transformative and creative power of women in the food sector and their role in achieving a more sustainable future for our food system. The BIOFACH Congress is developed in partnership with BÖLW and IFOAM - Organics International.

More information about BIOFACH available here:

**BIOFACH**  
into organic



More information about VIVANESS available here:

**VIVANESS**  
into natural beauty



## Free From Food & Health Ingredients is back in Amsterdam

On **November 5th and 6th**, **Free From Food & Health Ingredients** will once again take place at the **RAI Amsterdam**.

More information about Free From Food & Health Ingredients available here:

**FREE FROM**  
FOOD • INGREDIENTS  
NATURAL & HEALTHY FOOD PRODUCTS



## Natural & Organic Products Expo: April 14-15 in London

**Natural & Organic Products Expo**, the leading event in the UK for professionals in the natural and organic sector returns on **April 14 and 15**, 2024. Taking place at **ExCeL London**, the trade show is set to have a major refresh to reflect the changing expectations and evolving retail landscape in this increasingly important sector. The brand will divide into three separate 'shows', each with their own identity, but co-located under Natural & Organic Products Expo. The separate events will be marketed as **Natural Food Expo**, **Natural Beauty Expo** and **Natural & Organic Products Expo**, each with their own contemporary branding and marketing campaigns. Over the past three decades, Natural & Organic Products Expo has remained at the forefront of the natural products industry, serving as a platform for new businesses and thousands of pioneering organic, sustainable, ingredient-free, and healthy products.

More information about Natural & Organic Products Expo available here:

**natural  
& organic**  
PRODUCTS EXPO

INCLUDING  
**natural food EXPO**  
**natural beauty EXPO**



## Middle East Organic & Natural Products Expo Dubai: November 18-20

From the **18th to the 20th of November**, producers, retailers, wholesalers, and distributors from around the world will gather for a new edition of the **Middle East Organic & Natural Products Expo Dubai**. With a focus on the five natural market segments - Food & Beverages, Health, Beauty, Living and Environment- the expo stands as the Middle East's exclusive business event dedicated to organic and natural products.

More information about Middle East Organic & Natural Products Expo available here:

**MIDDLE EAST**  
**Organic & Natural**  
PRODUCTS EXPO DUBAI



## Natexpo: September 23-24 in Lyon

In France, **Natexpo** is celebrating a new edition in **Lyon**. After the last edition in Paris, the **Eurexpo** exhibition centre will once again host the main trends in the organic sector **on September 23 and 24**. "Our teams are already focused on the Lyon edition to provide increasingly more support to the entire sector," says the organization. As usual, the exhibition will feature a complete offering in the areas of food, cosmetics and hygiene, dietary supplements, products and services, ingredients and raw materials, services and equipment for retail and brands, e-Commerce solutions, and textiles, among other sectors. Seminars, business meetings, and panel discussions focusing on trends such as sustainability, local production, or environmental responsibility will complement the calendar of activities throughout the two-day event.

More information about Natexpo  
available here:



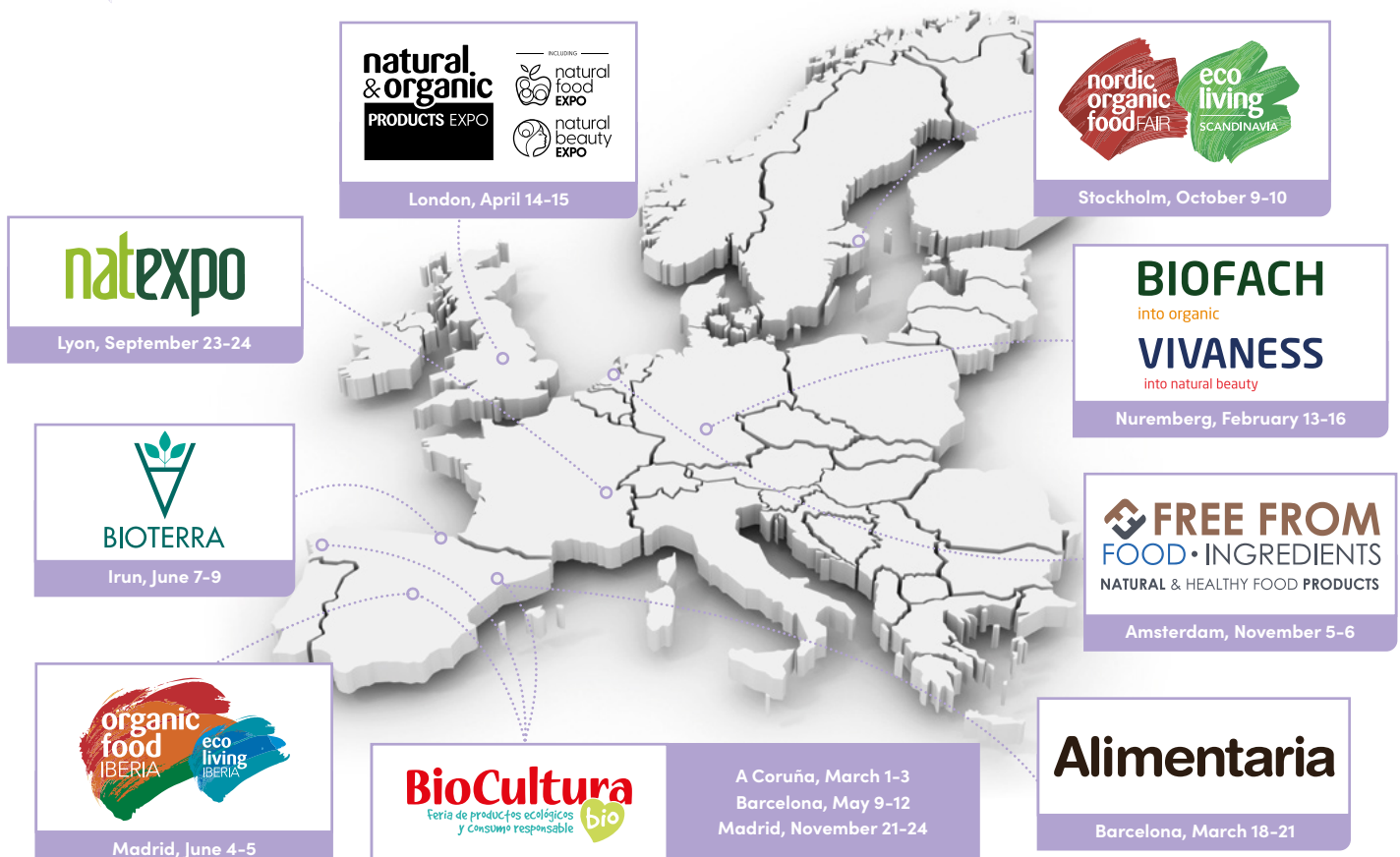
## Nordic Organic Food Fair moves to Stockholm

**Nordic Organic Food Fair** and **Eco Living Scandinavia**, the leading Scandinavian event for natural, organic, and sustainable products, returns in 2024 with new dates and a new location. The new edition of the trade show will take place on **October 9 and 10** at the **KistaMässan** venue in **Stockholm**. The move follows feedback from exhibitors and visitors, who feel the event will benefit from being closer to the larger retail groups in Sweden, who are mostly based in Stockholm, as well as offering easy access from Copenhagen, Oslo, Helsinki and the other major Nordic cities, and for buyers and exhibitors from further afield. "We have listened hard to our partners, who have encouraged us to bring the show to a new audience by moving to Stockholm and keeping the event fresh, with a new focus", explains the event director, Melina Viking.

More information about Nordic Organic Food Fair is  
available here:



## Organic trade shows map in Europe - 2024







©IFOAM Organics Europe. Session on generational renewal in organic companies.

# “Action is needed now”

## European Organic Congress 2023 round-up

The 17th edition of the **European Organic Congress**, organised by **IFOAM Organics Europe** and **Ecovalia**, ended with a great success of participation from 26 to 28 September in Cordoba, coinciding with the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Congress has received institutional support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of the Spanish Government; the Andalusian Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, and the Cordoba Provincial Council, among other private collaborators. The location was an added value.

The city of **Cordoba**, in Andalusia, was the chosen location for an excellent organisation of the event, which took care of the details and showed its efficiency in the different aspects that make the difference. It managed to meet the timings without pressuring the participants, who turned

the patio of the Palacio de Congresos into an open forum on the main topics of discussion. In the meantime, energies were restored with carefully selected, carefully prepared and well presented products from Spain.

**There was an attendance of more than 350 participants from 24 countries.** They came from the European Union, the United States, South America and Africa, representing all the links in the organic food chain: production, industry, marketing, certification, consumption, research, services and specialised press.

**350  
PARTICIPANTS  
FROM  
24  
COUNTRIES  
ATTENDED**

Looking towards the ever-approaching 2030, the presentations of the more than 50 speakers focused on presenting and assessing the challenges facing organic production. Topics such as the **new environmental policies**, how **legislation** can be influenced, marketing and its derivatives, **international markets** with unique needs, the contribution of organic farming to **carbon sequestration** and its relationship with

climate change and the necessary **promotion of organic products** through the dissemination of knowledge were discussed. It has also discussed **generational renewal** in organic pioneering companies.

An important step towards boosting organic consumption is the request that a percentage of food purchases for hospitals, the army, public canteens, etc., by the administration, be organic. This is a pending duty to promote this system, which protects and benefits soil and water and ends up having an impact on the common good and a considerable reduction in the costs involved in decontaminating water or regenerating soil, for example.

At the Congress, participants agreed to highlight the **recognised value of the EU Organic Logo**, the European label that identifies true sustainability as opposed to the greenwashing of new labels and terms that can dilute and confuse producers and consumers; the need to **maintain the environmental policy commitment** even in turbulent times and to **improve information to the public** on the advantages of organic products for their health and that of the environment and how to recognise them.

**Álvaro Barrera**, President of **Ecovalia**, emphasised that “the organic production congress held in Córdoba was a great success. We have put on the table the main topics that concern the sector and we have collected the analysis of the main protagonists, speakers of high international reputation. There is no going back on the environmental ambition and organic production is the solution. We are a professional, innovative and responsible sector with a common goal, for our food and for agricultural production, a future centred on organic production, which is more necessary and useful than ever”.

**Jan Plagge**, President of **IFOAM Organics Europe**, added: “Despite facing increasing headwinds, in the European organic movement we have clear objectives: we want to leave the planet in good shape for the future and for generations to come. It is clear that we need to transform the system as many organic operators are already doing. Less pesticides, more biodiversity, better soils and better water storage. Organic is part of the solution.

### Encouraging feedback from congress attendees

“From the Inter-American Commission for Organic Agriculture we see the relationship we are strengthening with the countries of the European Union and especially those of

CIAO COUNTRIES  
REPRESENT  
**16%**  
OF THE WORLD'S  
ORGANIC FOOD  
PRODUCTION

the Iberian Peninsula, Spain and Portugal, which are member states of our commission, as very positive. Being in this 17th edition of the Congress and being able to exchange ideas and discuss challenges and opportunities, opens a window for us to strengthen this relationship and build these bridges that are so important to us. The most urgent challenges to be addressed are, for example, the additional measures that the EU has imposed. We do not understand the basis for some of the matrices of the products exported by certain markets. We understand that there is no defined criteria. We are taking control measures in the countries to detect the error and we must act on that margin of error, but not with additional measures that could mean high costs for producers. For example, 10% of shipments must have a new inspection, traceability, laboratory analysis costs, among others,” says **CIAO President Rommel Betancourt**.

“At the Congress, it became clear which are the main issues that we need to be concerned about in the coming months. First of all, we must ask for political recognition that organic farming is the highest category in terms of sustainability. We have talked about the European Action Plan, which has the objective of 25% of the agricultural surface area being organic by 2030 in the whole of the Union, and we emphasise that in order to achieve this, it is essential to encourage consumption. This means promoting awareness of organic farming and public funds in large amounts to raise public awareness of the advantages of organic products. On the other hand, it has been reported that the new genomic techniques, whose legalisation is now under discussion during the Spanish presidency, are not detectable and represent a very serious danger of contaminating organic farming,” says **Joan Picazos**, of **ASOBIO**.

“A very interesting and necessary Congress where the institutions and public administrations and the most relevant actors in the sector are represented. It is important because we all share the vision and the importance of the development and greater presence of organic production and consumption. I believe that the greatest need lies in the divergence between the percentage achieved in organic production to date and the very low consumption. We must be able to focus our efforts on drawing up an action plan to boost this consumption, which in turn will generate the supply of organic products on the market. We know that the driving force behind people's decision to go organic is their health and that of their families and, secondly, environmental awareness. We need to be able to highlight, with data, and share information on the importance for people's health, with an emphasis on this,” says **Sophie Pagnon**, Head of Communication at **Veritas**. ■ **Montse Mulé**





123rfLimited@marcbruxelle. Jean-Talon Market (Montreal), the largest outdoor public market in North America.

# The distribution of organic products in Canada

**T**he market turnover was **6.936 billion Canadian dollars (CAD) in 2020**, an increase from 5.4 billion in 2017. 66% of Canadians buy organic products every week: **Generation Z** (those born between 1996 and 2010) and **Generation Y** (millennials, born between the early 1980s and late 1990s) are the ones buying the most organic products.

In 2020, organic products accounted for 46% of weekly purchases for Generation Z and 32% for Generation Y.

## How is the import of organic products regulated in Canada?

Canada has entered into equivalence agreements regarding organic products with several countries. This means that Canada has evaluated the regulatory systems of these countries and concluded that they comply with its own regulations.

**The European Union (EU) and Canada** accept that their production rules and control systems for organic agricultural products are equivalent under their respective rules.

This type of acceptance is also known as an “equivalence agreement.”

When the logo of the other country is used, exported products must meet all applicable labeling requirements in the importing country.

The **Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)** ensures that Canadian labeling laws are adhered to, ensuring that the labels of all foods are complete and adequate (nutritional information, allergens, etc.).

Large-scale distribution is the main sales channel for organic products in Canada. In 2020, **82% of organic product consumers regularly bought them in supermarkets (hypermarkets and supermarkets).**

**Loblaws** is the Canadian leader in food (and pharmacy), being one of the largest retailers in Canada. With over 2,400 establishments, including **1,050 grocery stores**. In 2022, Loblaws is expanding its organic range with “PCMD Organic-MC” products, including more than **650 food and non-food products**.

## LARGE-SCALE DISTRIBUTION IS THE MAIN SALES CHANNEL FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTS IN CANADA

**Metro:** The group operates 1620 grocery stores (975 units) and pharmacies (645 drugstores) under the brands Metro, Metro Pharmacy, Super C, Marché Adonis, Food Basics, Jean Coutu, and Brunet, with a turnover of **19 billion CAD in 2022**.

**Sobeys (Empire Company)** is a Canadian supermarket chain headquartered in Stellarton, Nova Scotia. Sobeys owns **1600 supermarkets** in all ten provinces of Canada. With its brands: IGA, IGA Extra, IGA Coop, IGA Express, Bonichoix, Farm Boy, Marché Tradition, Voisin, and Rachelle-Béry in Quebec. Sobeys reports a turnover of **30.5 billion CAD with 131,000 employees**.

**Farm Boy Inc.** (Sobeys) is a Canadian retailer of specialty foods, offering a wide range of gluten-free, organic, and natural choices, operating in the province of Ontario **with 47 outlets**.

**Rachelle Béry** (Acquired by Sobeys in 2005) presents itself as a **"health grocery store"** throughout Quebec, with 10 stores and more than 80 health spaces located inside IGA supermarkets.

**Avril Health Supermarket:** The company, headquartered in Granby, employs over 1,000 people, has 11 branches in Quebec, a transactional website, a house brand, and a logistics and distribution center with its central kitchen.

The American brand **Whole Foods Markets** (WFM, owned by Amazon: Currently, Amazon Fresh operates 38 stores, none of which are located in Canada, and owns 530

WFM stores in the USA and the UK) is also present in Canada (in English-speaking provinces) with **14 stores**.

There are also several chains that have developed in a single province, such as **Marché Branche d'olivier**, which has been in existence for over 29 years with 6 stores (ethnic, natural, and organic) in Quebec, **Organic Garage** with its 4 stores in the Toronto area, **Ambrosia** with 4 outlets in Ontario, etc.

Many **independent stores** also sell organic products, such as **Allons Vert**, a natural foods and dietary supplements store in Griffintown and **PA Nature**, in Montreal.

**Online sales** accounted for 8% of organic food purchases in 2020 (compared to 4% in 2016) with numerous online retailers in Canada: **Well.ca** with over 40,000 products and the largest assortment of organic and natural brands in Canada, and **iHerb**, founded in 1996 in the United States, as well as generalists like Costco, Walmart, etc.

## Many wholesalers are active in Canada

**UNFI Canada:** (UNFI was established in the USA in 1976) Canadian distributor of natural and organic foods. Over 10,000 organic, natural, and specialty products with 850 suppliers.

**Béland Organic Foods** is a brokerage and promotion company for organic foods. In the organic industry since 1992, a wholesaler, and producer. Offices in Vancouver (British Columbia), Toronto (Ontario), and Quebec (Quebec).

**Horizon Grocery + Wellness Facility:** Distributor of organic and natural products in western Canada in dry, refrigerated, and frozen categories.

Approaching the Canadian market requires collaboration with professionals who know it well, mastering its bilingual and bicultural nature. ■ **Gerard Gontier**



Montreal city skyline.





Waitrose, the biggest supermarket in Dubai.

# The distribution of organic products in the Middle East

**C**lose to 9/10th of the global consumption of organic products occurs in North America and Europe. However, there are other countries to explore for brands, processors, etc.

The **Middle East countries** include: Cyprus, **Lebanon**, Syria, Iraq, Iran, **Israel**, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, **United Arab Emirates**, Oman, Yemen.

**Population of the Middle East:** The region covers an area of over 7 million km<sup>2</sup> with a population of **470 million inhabitants (2021)**. In comparison, the European population is over 746 million people (2018).

## Israel

It is the primary organic market in the Middle East with over **8,900,000 inhabitants (2021)**, for comparison, Belgium had 11,697,557 inhabitants as of January 1, 2023. The Israeli organic market was estimated at **€68 million in 2019** (Agence BIO in France). In 2019, organic foods accounted for 13% of fresh product sales. Similar to other countries, major retailers have introduced private label organic brands.

The Israeli retail market is largely dominated by two major chains, **Rami Levy** and **Shufersal**.

**Rami Levy** is seeking to collaborate with an international supermarket chain, likely the French group **Auchan**. This announcement comes as Israeli supermarkets face increased competition with the entry of the French supermarket chain **Carrefour** and **7-Eleven** into Israel.

**Shufersal:** By the end of 2021, Shufersal had over 300 stores in total and 90 branches of Be Drugstores Ltd. The company employs 17,000 people. Shufersal's private label is the largest and most diversified in Israel, and it includes an organic range under its **"green"** brand.

## Specialized distribution in Israel

**Nizat Haduvdevan:** The largest chain of organic and dietetic supermarkets in Israel, with over **50 stores** nationwide.

**Anise Teva:** Anis chain offers healthy alternatives, vitamins, minerals, organic products, health, and quality of life.

The natural corner, Maggie's garden, Zmora organic are independent organic brands.

## Lebanon

Specialized stores in Lebanon include the French franchise **La Vie Claire (3 stores)**, independents like **Bio verdi**, **A new earth organic store**, **Vivre organique**, found in all regions.

## Saudi Arabia

The organic market in Saudi Arabia has developed well in recent years, reaching €52 million in 2018. According to Business France, the market for organic and "natural" foods is expected to grow by an average of 14.8% per year between 2019 and 2026. **Over 80% of organic foods consumed in Saudi Arabia are imported.** More than two-thirds of the population is under 30 years old and highly connected. This new generation seeks qualitative and healthy products (Agence BIO in France).

## United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The organic market in the UAE was valued at €113 million in 2015 (Agence BIO in France).

"Consumers in the United Arab Emirates are increasingly interested in organic products, especially those belonging to Generation Y as they attach great importance to the consumption of healthy foods. The consumption of organic products is mainly concentrated in large cities."

The UAE is the first country in the world to appoint a Minister of State for Food and Water Security to streamline all efforts to ensure adequate, safe, affordable, and nutritious food for all. The UAE has developed a comprehensive national food security strategy with the intention of being ranked number one in the global food security index by 2051.

This is the result of growing demand for more transparency, availability, and education on organic products from local consumers.

## Large retailers in this region

**Carrefour:** Majid Al Futtaim introduced Carrefour to the region in 1995 and holds operating rights for the brand in more than

MIDDLE EAST  
COVERS AN AREA  
OF OVER  
**7** MILLION KM<sup>2</sup>  
WITH A POPULATION OF  
**470** MILLION  
INHABITANTS

30 countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Today, Majid Al Futtaim operates over 375 Carrefour stores in 17 countries, serving over 750,000 customers daily and employing more than 37,000 people. **The brand opened its first Carrefour BIO store in February 2022 in the United Arab Emirates.**

**Union Coop:** In general, multiple stores are needed to find everything needed in Dubai. One must also keep an eye on the budget because, as everyone knows, life is expensive in the UAE. The offer is affordable and varied, with a beautiful section of fruits & vegetables from the Middle East and Europe.

**Spinneys and Waitrose**, the more Anglo-Saxon, share a higher-end market, and it must be acknowledged that shopping there is very enjoyable. It's expensive, yes, but quality products that are not found elsewhere are available, including a "pork" section for non-Muslims, which many appreciate finding in Dubai. These stores, distributed in often residential areas of Dubai, particularly delight the English, who find international products there.

**Spinneys (Albwar dy Investment, 100% owner of the franchise)** is an Emirati chain of supermarkets and hypermarkets operating in the Middle East, founded in 1924 in Alexandria, Egypt. Spinneys Dubai operates more than 65 stores in the United Arab Emirates and also operates **7 stores in Oman.**

**Waitrose** (Albwardy Investment) Waitrose & Partners has **17 licensed stores** in the United Arab Emirates and the Middle East. ■ **Gerard Gontier**



Mall of the Emirates is a shopping center located in the Al Barsha district of Dubai.





# Hannah Crum

“We unite all the producers to work together”



**H**annah Crum is President and Co-Founder of **Kombucha Brewers International (KBI)**, the non-profit trade association for kombucha producers around the world. KBI strives to promote, protect and enhance the overall well-being of the industry by creating an open line of communication between brewers and advancing this industry through advocacy, education, research, and modern legislation. **Kombucha Brewers International European Salon 2023** took place from October 19 to 21 in Caldes de Montbui (Barcelona).

## What is Kombucha Brewers International?

Kombucha Brewers International is a trade association for commercial kombucha producers around the world. It's an outgrowth of our mission at Kombucha Kamp of «changing the world, one gut at a time.» I started Kombucha Kamp in 2004 in my home in Los Angeles as a way to teach people about kombucha. I had fallen in love with her. My thirst outgrew my budget, and that's how I knew I had to start making it at home. When I started researching kombucha, I found a lot of misinformation, a lot of information that didn't add up with my experience of kombucha, and I wanted to put authentic information in the world.

So, I decided to teach workshops that grew into a website, a blog, that then grew into an online store in 2010. When I had been blogging in 2007, I started collecting all the brands that were brewing kombucha because I love it so much. And I started by drinking a commercial brand. I wanted to know everybody who was brewing kombucha.

## Who is part of the organization?

Kombucha Brewers International consists of over 100 commercial kombucha brands from around the world. We started our organization in 2014. We're almost ten years old, and we started by bringing people together.

There are trace amounts of alcohol produced in the kombucha fermentation process and because there's different alcohol taxation thresholds in different parts of the world, in the U.S., it's only 0.5%, so, when it was discovered that there might be a little bit more than that in the bottle, it became an issue in the US. We were formed in a crisis. The crisis took place in 2010, but it took us a few years to actually come together. Since we formed, we've then tackled this issue head on. So, for example, we've as we worked with an international standards setting organization (AOAC) to research authentic methods for testing ethanol in kombucha.

We discovered that some of the methods used for beer and wine, while they're very good for high alcohol beverages, they didn't apply to kombucha, which is naturally lower in alcohol. So, it could have been at the time when they were testing those kombuchas that maybe they had inaccurate results that were skewing too high. But that was one of the things we started to put in place.

Another thing that we did was to bring all the producers together to work together. We initiated a legislation in the United States to change the taxation threshold for alcohol in kombucha alone, not for all beverages, to 1.25%, which is very close to the 1.2% here in Europe.

**In Europe there is a lack of legislation regarding what is kombucha and what it is not. So, what is kombucha?**

It's fermented tea. We know wine is fermented grapes. Sauerkraut is fermented lettuce or cabbage, and kombucha is a fermentation of tea and sugar.

However, unlike sauerkraut, where you're just letting the salt on the leaves and the natural wild yeast fermenting, with kombucha, we use what we call a mother or SCOBY, and that's our sort of our starter culture, it looks very similar to a mother of vinegar.

For kombucha, it must be fermented. But we have three seal designations: not from concentrate, from concentrate and pasteurized.

From concentrate are those brands that are using a kombucha beverage base. So, these are manufacturers that are creating a long fermentation to the point where it's vinegar and then you have to dilute it with water and add flavour and sweetness.

And then we also have kombucha in the market that are pasteurized. However, our term pasteurized also includes



things like sterile filtration or adding chemical pasteurizers (chemicals that will kill the microbes). So really, it's any process that's going to stop the culture from being able to reproduce and therefore make a shelf stable product.

**Does a kombucha business need any kind of control or regulation?**

We advocate for self-regulation from within the sector. And so not everybody's going to agree with that right away. We know it's going to take time. But as we educate consumers and the public about kombucha and why you want to find that seal, we then expect that those brands that maybe don't want to be so transparent right now will start to come into a line.

**What three certification seals do you propose?**

Basically, we use the same terms of art we see for juice: not from concentrate, from concentrate and pasteurized. When a consumer goes into a store and they see juice and they see these labels, they instantly understand. Not from concentrate might be more expensive because it's raw, and it has a shorter shelf life, so I might pay more and I have to drink it quickly. However, there may be more of a nutritional benefit.

A pasteurized kombucha: I can put this in my backpack. It's not going to spoil. It's not going to get gross. I can take it on a trip. I can do all these different things with it. It's very portable. And from concentrate, same thing, except maybe you're not going to pay as much because it's been through another type of process.

**Kombucha Brewers International is open for all. And kombucha has no need to be organic.**

That is correct. However, we know that most brands that are wanting to produce kombucha is because they care about their customers. They care about the world. And you know, we live in a world that's a little upside down where we have to pay extra to prove we're not poisoning people. It makes no sense. And a lot of brands might use organic ingredients, but to go that extra step and get the certification sometimes might take some time for them to do that. But I truly believe most kombucha producers now, I can't speak for all of them, especially when they get larger and they want to save money and cut corners, they might not use organic ingredients. But there's a very strong contingency that are dedicated to organic ingredients.

**Kombucha Brewers International European Salon 2023: What is being cooked here?**

I would say we have about ten countries and we real-

ly have about 20 people. And while it's small and intimate, these are passionate people who care about making a difference. And there is a saying that goes "never underestimate a small group of dedicated people, the type of change they can create". And so that's who's here, these are change-makers.

**What other events do you organize?**

KombuchaKon is our flagship event we hold in the United States. And we do that every year. It's been in California for the last ten years because that's where we're based, though we are looking to start to move it to different cities in the United States, different parts of the U.S. But California is the state that produces the most amount of kombucha in the world by volume.

**And also, is where the modern pioneers of kombucha are placed.**

Exactly. It's where the industry was started. GT Dave was the first person who put it in a bottle to sell it in 1995, and he still has the largest market share and he's the largest brand, and all of his kombuchas are made in Southern California. He's a founding member of the association and he's been a member the entire time.

The pandemic has changed business models, it's changed what capital is available, how consumers purchase products. So, we're in a massive amount of transformation. And when people are worried about the bottom line, they lose sight of the big picture. We're just like anyone else trying to survive in these challenging times.

**If I'm an entrepreneur and I want to start selling my own kombucha, is a good choice to approach you?**

We have a very rich member library because we've been doing this for ten years. We have a whole library of webinars, PDFs... So, while we don't teach you how to brew kombucha, because there's so many different ways, we have a lot of information on the processes on how you get set up, on how to navigate challenges when they arise.

Even if your company is not open, we have what we call a «brewer in process» membership. So, let's say you're just exploring, and you want to understand better. That's a great way to dive into the information, get a lot of details and start your business plan from there.

**When are you coming back to Europe?**

We don't have a new date yet, but I hope to return every year. ■ **Oriol Urrutia**





# The European Natural Beauty Awards

Unveil 2023 finest natural skincare and beauty products in Europe

As the year is about to end, **European Natural Beauty Awards** unveiled the awarded products listed for 2023. "This 2023 Edition reflects the dynamism of the natural cosmetic market; the number of new brands is impressive, and where before, only a few categories of products were addressed by natural brands, it's now possible to find a natural product for the most niche need. This momentum demonstrates the rising consumer preference for products crafted with natural ingredients and the increasing demand for ethical and environmentally-friendly beauty solutions." said **Satu Mäkinen**, Founder of the Awards.

The 2023 awards were assessed by a panel of 50 European stars, reflecting consumers across the continent, to find and reward the most exceptional products in the natural cosmetics industry. These products, made with a **minimum of 99% natural ingredients**, stand out for their effectiveness and dedication to excellence.

- The best Oil-Based Cleanser 2023: AYU Organics (Finland) – Seabuck & Baobab Oil To Milk Cleanser
- The best Water-Based Cleanser 2023: Beauty For Ashes (Finland) – Luxury Cleansing Foam
- The best Toner 2023: Purodoré Natural Skincare (Finland) – Smoothing Silk Toner
- The best Moisturizer 2023: Wai Aila (Slovenia) – Moisturizing Firming Cream
- The best Moisturizer with SPF 2023: Silmachy Cosmetics (Latvia) – Face Moisturiser with Raspberry Seed Oil SPF 30
- The best Eye Contour Product 2023: Taramar (Iceland) – Arctic Flower Treatment
- The best Serum 2023: Rosental Organics (Germany) – Hyaluron Serum | Slow-Aging Concentrate
- The Best Facial Oil 2023: LIV Botanics (The Netherlands) – The Bakuchiol – Renewal Facial Oil
- The Best Face Balm 2023: Innosenta (Latvia) – Face Balm
- The Best Overnight Hydration 2023: LUMI (Estonia) – Iconic Overnight Peptide Treatment
- The Best Multipurpose Oil 2023: Moi Forest (Finland) – Forest Dust® Microbiome Magic Oil

THE 2023 AWARDS WERE ASSESSED BY A PANEL OF 50 EUROPEAN STARS, REFLECTING CONSUMERS ACROSS THE CONTINENT, TO FIND AND REWARD THE MOST EXCEPTIONAL PRODUCTS IN THE NATURAL COSMETICS INDUSTRY

- The Best Lip Balm 2023: L:A Bruket (Sweden) – 017 Lip Balm
- The Best Facial Scrub 2023: Viking Beauty Secrets (Estonia) – Exfoliating Face Scrub
- The Best Soap 2023: Rimita Green (Finland) – RimitaOats Hand & Body Soap
- The Best Deodorant 2023: Kaurilan Sauna (Finland) – Lemongrass Deo Cream
- The Best Body Care Product 2023: Karma Mama (The Netherlands) – Beautiful Body Oil
- The Best Care Balm 2023: Frantsila Herbfarm (Finland) – 11 Herb Salve
- The Best Scalp Treatment 2023: Frantsila Herbfarm (Finland) – Nettle & Peat Scalp Treatment Oil
- The Best Solid Conditioner 2023: ARONA (Ireland) – Solid Conditioning Bar
- The Best Hair Styling 2023: Green Monkey Club (Germany) – MATT Spray
- The Best Booster 2023: NOBE Nordic Beauty (Finland) – Forest Drops™ Microbiome Booster
- The Best Lash Care 2023: Finlash (Finland) – Eyelash Serum
- The Best Perfume 2023: Nahélie Sweden (Sweden) – Parfym W
- 99% Natural Cleanser: Norrskin (Sweden) – Face Oil Cleanser 3in1
- 99% Natural Moisturizer: Melvita (France) – Source de Roses Hydra-Plumping Cream
- 99% Natural Serum: L:A Bruket (Sweden) – 279 Replenishing Serum

- Natural Eye Contour Product: Cosmetics Herbera (Spain) – Eye Contour Hyaluronic Acid & Ginkgo
- 99% Natural Care Product: Frantsila Herbfarm (Finland) – Revitalising Foot Cream
- 99% Natural Peeling Product: L:A Bruket (Sweden) – 246 Restorative Algae Hand Peel
- 99% Natural Hair Care Product: Lu&Me (Austria) – Hyaluronic Hair Serum
- The Best Cosmetics Tool 2023: Norrskin (Sweden) – Premium Reusable Cotton Pads 100% Natural

### Special prizes

- Package Design: A TIE: Eliah Sahil (Austria) – Organic Face Balm Moringa & Shea butter & MyGreen Cosmetics (Spain) – Youth Dream – Antioxidant Revitalizing Beauty Flash Cream
- Innovation of the Year: HeLhem (France) – Cléopatre – Milky Foaming Powder
- Favourite of the Jury: AYU Organics (Finland) – Seabuck & Baobab Oil To Milk Cleanser
- Audience Choice Award: Rosental Organics (Germany) – Hyaluronic Serum | Slow-Aging Concentrate ■ Editorial

Further information at  
[www.europeannaturalbeautyawards.com](http://www.europeannaturalbeautyawards.com)



Irene Atance, the founder of Go Cirkulär, one of the awarded brands in 2023. © Surr Studio.



# Spanish econatural cosmetics, a commitment to quality

In Spain we have a tendency to believe that everything that comes from abroad is better. And 40 years ago, in the case of econatural cosmetics, it was really like that. Most of the quality cosmetics came from Germany or France. But, at the same time, there has always been a not insignificant number of companies and entrepreneurs within this sector that have been learning and evolving, giving rise to the current panorama with its very wide and varied offer of high-quality eco-natural cosmetics.

## Examples of success

To give an example, we can visualize a bioclimatic building where the laboratory of a well-known Spanish cosmetics company is housed. The building is surrounded by organically grown marigold fields. When the time comes, the flowers are collected and go directly to the laboratory. Can it be more sustainable? Can a laboratory obtain a fresher and better-quality raw material?

Another example of success tells us about an entrepreneur who started her project as a form of self-employment and today employs 10 people in a rural area. And there are

many other examples, each one with a story that tells us about environmental and social sustainability to which rigor and quality are added.

In addition, you can find very interesting formulations. From the most traditional in natural cosmetics such as artisan soaps or balms, to the new, very sophisticated ones offered by some brands. These new natural cosmetics products are normally achieved after a long development time, up to two years in some cases, and countless tests that are undertaken until the desired formula is achieved, and can be approved according to the **econatural cosmetics certification criteria**.

This is another of the pillars of the peak moment in which the sector finds itself. Many of these companies and initiatives are committed to rigorous certification, among the three currently offered in the country: **Cosmos**, **Nattrue** and **BioVidaSana**.

## BioVidaSana Certification, safe guarantee

The **BioVidaSana certification** was launched in 2010

THE BIOVIDASANA CERTIFICATION  
WAS LAUNCHED IN 2010 OFFERING  
FACILITIES TO A SECTOR WITH  
ABUNDANT SMALL AND MEDIUM-  
SIZED COMPANIES

with the aim of offering, on the one hand, quality and, on the other, facilities to a sector with abundant small and medium-sized companies at a time when there was no national company offering this service. As for a guarantee, it was provided by the Swiss certifier bio.inspecta, with a long history and recognition for the certification process and by the Spanish company Biocertificación, for its knowledge and experience in certifying organic products. Added to this is the prestige of the Vida Sana Association, as an entity that has championed responsible consumption in this country for more than 40 years.

**BioVidaSana** has a hundred certified companies. Like other certifications, it offers a category for natural products and another for organic products. The novelty is the Ecoplus category that is only granted to companies that exclusively manufacture econatural cosmetics and where at least 80% of a company's products are in the ecological category. In this category we find many pioneering companies with a long history in the sector. It also offers a vegan category but only for products that already have the BioVidaSana certification, which with this seal guarantees that the products are vegan and natural at the same time.

BioVidaSana certified brands are exceptional from all points of view: for the personal stories of entrepreneurship behind many of them, for meeting the criteria of the **strict BioVidaSana Standard** and for exhaustively complying with the legal requirements for cosmetic production **using Good Manufacturing Practices**, including requirements on having adequate facilities, preparation of the cosmetic product information file, and production of a safety report following completion of corresponding tests on the effectiveness of preservatives and product registration on the European CPNP portal. In addition, all claims that can be found on the label such as "for sensitive skin", "dermatologically tested", the sun protection index in sun creams and any other claims have been properly tested to make sure they can be made.

Therefore, **BioVidaSana certified products have it all:** they are "living" cosmetics; that is, they have not been mass produced by a large industry, but are the product and vision of each of their creators. They are **econatural cosmetics**, thoroughly verified, and fully compliant with legal requirements. ■ **Núria Alonso**

# BIOVIDASANA COSMETIC STANDARD

The certification that guarantees  
the highest quality of your cosmetics



Category I: products with  
90% of organic ingredients;  
Category II products with  
15-89% organic ingredients



For companies with 75% of  
their products in Category I  
and do not produce  
conventional cosmetics



For products containing  
less than 15%  
organic ingredients  
(natural cosmetics)



For BioVidaSana certified  
products that do not contain  
ingredients of animal origin



BioVidaSana cosmetics  
are certified by bio.inspecta

Guaranteed by the  
Association VidaSana



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# The NATRUE label

Ensuring quality and trust for natural cosmetics

In today's world, where consumers are becoming more conscious about the cosmetic products they use, the cosmetics industry has responded with a proliferation of products claiming to be "natural" or "organic". This trend is evident: the natural and organic cosmetics sector is one of the fastest growing sectors of the global personal care products market having grown from less than \$1 billion in the 1990s to \$12.6 billion in 2021. This surge of interest in naturals can be seen as an opportunity to increase sustainability as well as sales, but sometimes at the expense of authenticity and transparency since some brands may focus their marketing on a few natural ingredients in an otherwise conventional formula; unfairly labelling their products as "natural" when, in fact, they contain synthetic substances derived from petrochemicals. This commercial malpractice is called greenwashing.

Greenwashing has become a prevalent concern in various industries, including cosmetics. Companies using often vague or misleading language, imagery, and packaging can create the illusion that the entire product has qualified 'green' characteristics such as low environmental impact or naturalness in order to catch shoppers' attention. An EU

Commission study of company websites from all types of industries across the Union revealed that in 42% of cases the claims were exaggerated, false or deceptive and could potentially qualify as unfair commercial practices under existing EU law. Moreover, in more than 50% of cases, the trader did not provide sufficient information for consumers to judge the claim's accuracy. This misleading information leads consumer to buy products with expectations of naturalness and sustainability that might not be met.

Within existing regulatory frameworks for cosmetics, the internationally applicable NATRUE label is an established tool to tackle *greenwashing* by offering clear criteria for ingredients and products, and supporting trust through third-party certification to ensure cosmetic products are genuinely natural and organic whilst empowering consumer choice and informed decision-making through the presence of an indicative seal on-pack.

## Understanding the NATRUE label

Pending a strict regulatory definition for natural and organic cosmetic products, **NATRUE's** founding members, the

pioneers and largest producers of authentic natural and organic cosmetic products in Europe, acknowledged the need for an international and independently certified standard setting rigorous and transparent label criteria to reassure consumers and assist producers. This led to the creation of the NATRUE Label in 2008, a globally recognized certification that guarantees the authenticity of natural and organic cosmetics. The NATRUE certification scheme is based on three essential pillars:

- **Authenticity of Ingredients:** All NATRUE certified products are made up only of 100% natural, derived natural and nature-identical substances. The label criteria ensures that products are formulated with truly natural and organic ingredients; therefore, avoiding ingredients from genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and substances such as synthetic fragrances, silicones, parabens, microplastics, and mineral oils.
- **Product Integrity:** A third-party certification scheme evaluates the entire production process to ensure that the products maintain the verifiable elements from the label criteria including that the integrity of the natural or organic product claims are maintained. Across the life cycle of the product verifiable aspects assessed include sourcing, processing, end-of-life, and formulation to prevent any adulteration or contamination by non-compliant substances.
- **Transparency:** Besides the mandatory on-pack presence of the label, all certified products with the NATRUE label can be easily found on the NATRUE website database. This enables consumers to make informed choices based on accurate ingredient lists and product descriptions.

## Certification Process

The NATRUE Standard is interpreted and developed by the NATRUE Scientific Committee, an expert group who constantly evaluate latest regulatory updates and state-of-the-art practices to apply these changes so the standard's label criteria remain dynamic, rigorous and transparent.

The criteria apply to finished cosmetic products, raw materials and formulas. A prospective brand can use the NATRUE Label provided they comply with the label criteria as guaranteed by independent third-party certification, a process which provides transparency and reliability for their customers and ultimately consumers. For consumers the NATRUE label helps to easily identify true natural and organic cosmetics at a glance, contributing to keeping greenwashing off the shelves.

The **NATRUE certification process** involves a rigorous evaluation of each product seeking the label. To obtain the

NATRUE label, companies must adhere to the following key steps:

**Self-evaluate the Criteria:** producers, third-party manufacturers and brand owners must read the **NATRUE Label criteria** carefully to assess the requirements ingredients and products have to meet.

**Undergo Third-party Verification and Ingredient Assessment:** Choose and contact a NATRUE Approved Certifier (NAC) to guide you through the whole certification process. NATRUE is the Standard owner, not a certifier, this is the reason why NATRUE does not certify or approve directly in order to make the whole process more independent and transparent. Certification is only carried out by independent and accredited third parties (NACs), whose are responsible for checking if the product/raw material meets the requirements set in the NATRUE Standard.

**Product Evaluation:** Once the NAC has reviewed the submitted documentation to ensure compliance with NATRUE's strict standards and made the audit (when needed), the product, formula or raw material is issued with a certificate. Certified or approved products, formulas or raw materials will be then added to **NATRUE's online database**, which is publicly accessible.

## Reassurance for Consumers

The NATRUE label provides several benefits to reassure consumers about the quality of natural cosmetics they choose:

- Guaranteeing independent certification
- Supporting sustainable innovation and responsible consumption
- Ensuring natural and organic ingredient clarity and Product Transparency
- Protecting the environment and promoting waste reduction
- Standing-up for animal welfare

In an era where consumers care about their choices, the NATRUE label stands as a symbol of quality, authenticity, and trust in the realm of natural cosmetics. By adhering to rigorous criteria and a transparent certification process, NATRUE empowers consumers to make informed choices that align with their values and preferences.

When consumers are shopping, they need verifiable and reliable tools to assist their informed decision-making. This is what NATRUE provides. As the demand for natural and organic cosmetics grows, the NATRUE label remains a cornerstone of assurance for both consumers and the cosmetics industry. ■ **Mark Smith**



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