

Celebrating 40 Years

Organic without Boundaries



1972 - 2012



IFOAM

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

**GLOBAL.
SUSTAINABLE.
ORGANIC.**



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

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Alnatura congratulates IFOAM on its 40th anniversary

Together for a better future



ALNATURA[®] *Sinnvoll für Mensch und Erde*

A SHORT STROLL THROUGH MEMORY LANE



IFOAM - REMEMBERED BY ANTON PINSCHOF

In the early 1970s, there was a publicity manager at a famous French weekly magazine who voyaged all over the world, visiting clients. A friend of the Organic Agriculture movement in general and of the French association Nature et Progrès in particular, Karin Mundt's favorite sport was hunting down the pioneers of Organic Agriculture. After introducing contacts all over the world to each other, discussions began about a new organization to, in the words of the then president of Nature et Progrès Roland Chevriot, "federate movements".

The basic unwritten ethical principles of this new movement drew inspiration from a variety of sources. Traditional peasant wisdom was combined with 20th century biology and ecology, including human ecology, plus a pivotal post-industrial innovation: an absolute taboo on synthetic substances. This radical refusal of synthetic chemicals caught the public's attention and triggered a movement, like a stone dropped in a pond.

The first IFOAM assembly took place in Versailles, during the 1972 congress of the

association Nature et Progrès, at which five organizations signed the founding of IFOAM and agreed to keep in touch via periodical bulletins in three languages (French, English and German).

Today, decades later, there is an ever greater need to carry on organizing production and producers, setting up a world ready to resist the monopoly that



World Board meeting in Grosseto, Italy (2001)

has polluted even the globe's remotest corners. It is our turn to reorganize life in such a way that our children can stand on firm ground – and continue the struggle.

.....
**"PEOPLE, NOT
 MONEY, BUILT THE
 FEDERATION."**

BERNWARD GEIER

IFOAM'S EARLY INCOME - OR LACK THEREOF

Anton further recalls: "In the first few years, the occasional generous check from Robert Rodale in Pennsylvania [USA] was a source of encouragement to N&P [to promote

IFOAM]. Little by little, the IFOAM bank was also fed by a modest and erratic income from membership fees and newsletter subscriptions. It was enough for postage stamps, typewriter ribbons and to feed the acting general secretary and his assistant.”

IFOAM was built up with sweat and tears, not big bucks. In the words of Bernward Geier, “People, not money, built the federation.”

It was Gunnar Videgard’s generous donation upon leaving his post as IFOAM’s General Secretary that allowed the creation of a permanent office and IFOAM’s first full-time paid staff member, Bernward Geier.



The newly elected World Board in Mar del Plata, Argentina (1999)

IFOAM’S EARLY LEADERS

Karin Mundt from France was the first informal IFOAM membership director. Through her travels for an organic gardening magazine that she founded (*Terre Vivante*, i.e. ‘Living Soil’), she was able to build up IFOAM’s membership by



Hardy Vogtmann, honorary President, hosted an Executive Board meeting at his home in Witzenhausen, Germany (2004)



IFOAM World Board in New Dehli, India (2002)

inspiring a diverse network of movements to join. Eliot Coleman, who was running a demonstration farm in the US, was largely responsible for expanding IFOAM networks in North America. Instrumental in IFOAM’s early communications were furthermore Anton Pinschof, the first editor of the IFOAM bulletin and the late Mary Langman, who had been a founding member of the Soil Association.

Hardy Vogtmann was IFOAM’s first scientific conference organizer, and his long-term involvement provided IFOAM indispensable access to research



Executive Board meeting in Torfolk, Sweden (2002)

networks. Hervé La Prairie helped IFOAM in his role of president to maintain its ‘French connection’ after the secretariat moved to Switzerland and later Germany. As a strong figurehead, he also sought effective partnerships with other international NGOs.

INTERESTING TIDBITS

- IFOAM's name was just provisional and never meant to stick. Denis Bourgeois recalls how he invented the name before sending invitation letters for IFOAM's initial meeting: *"We did not spend hours brainstorming [...], we just wrote what Roland intended to do: a federation internationale des mouvements d'agriculture biologique, i.e. a gathering of people like us, working for the development of organic agriculture in their own country."* He later regretted that the name does not fully represent the professionalism and diversity of the membership.
- In the early days, seed money for IFOAM came from Rodale Press, and IFOAM initially shared a headquarters with Nature et Progrès, later on with FiBL.
- In 1976 IFOAM operated on a small budget of US\$ 6,000. By the early 80s it had only increased to US\$ 11,000.
- At IFOAM's 25th Anniversary celebration, there were no EU regulations on organic animal husbandry yet, only for crop production.
- IFOAM's founding father Roland Chevriot was an engineer and mechanic, a keen horseman, a gardener and a persuasive organizer. His dream to create an international federation of organic agriculture movements was not hampered by his day job, nor by his limited foreign language abilities. In the recollection of Anton Pinschhof, his greatest fear was that the embryonic association would turn into a *"radical agrarian movement"* that he would have difficulty leading *"whilst remaining respectable"*.
- IFOAM's first scientific conference was entitled 'Towards a Sustainable Agriculture' – in 1977, long before the Brundtland Report and the Sustainability Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
- For the early English-speaking organic movement, it was not self-evident to adopt the description 'organic'. From the early 1940s on, Rodale Press's Organic Gardening and Farming had hundreds of thousands of readers, which lent a great deal of legitimacy to the term 'organic'. But in 1954, for example, the co-founder of the Soil Association, Lady Eve Balfour, disputed this seemingly self-evident terminology: *"It would save much confusion if we all adopted the name 'biological' farming rather than 'organic' farming. We should then keep the emphasis where it belongs, on the fostering of life and on biological balance, and not on just one of the techniques for achieving this which, if narrowly interpreted, may be effective only in a certain set of circumstances."* [IFOAM Newsletter N°17, July 1976, uncovered by Anton Pinschhof].
- Only two of three legal signatories to the IFOAM statutes are known: Roland Chevriot and Claude Aubert, president and secretary of Nature et Progrès, respectively. The subprefecture in France where the first statutes were registered was flooded a few years after IFOAM's founding, and the original registration papers are presumed lost.



IFOAM publications - photo taken in 2005

A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE ORGANIC UMBRELLA

BY DENISE GODINHO*

What is today grouped under the strategic pillar 'Organic Umbrella', were once a number of independent activities: IFOAM-organized events, publications, communication and marketing, as well as membership.

EARLY METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

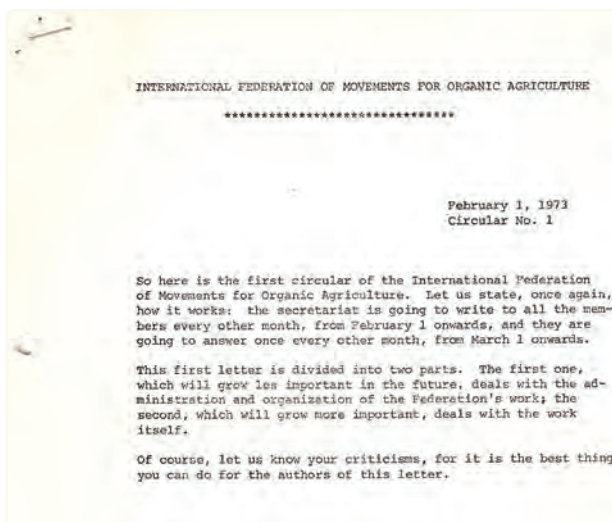
On February 1, 1973, not even three months after the founding of IFOAM, the desire to reach out and communicate to likeminded people and organizations, translated into the production of IFOAM's very first circular.

As time went by, this circular evolved into what was to become known as IFOAM's

'internal letter', the federation's (printed) communication tool with its Affiliates. The 'internal letter' in turn became 'IFOAM in Action', which was only to 'go digital' in the new millenium.



The Internal Letter (left) in 1985 and IFOAM in Action in 2003 (right)



The first IFOAM circular, published on February 1, 1973

The 'IFOAM Bulletin' (see pictures in the *Artistic Ritual* piece on page 9) was another of IFOAM's early communication tools. It was published on and off until it was revived in 1988 with the very active collaboration of Elm Farm Research Center/UK.

The bulletin encompassed a variety of content, from scientific to philosophical, that was presented in an almost academic manner, well-substantiated and well-referenced. It heralded the advent of the Ecology & Farming magazine, which ended up replacing the bulletin.

*With special thanks to Anton Pinschof and Bernward Geier for their input

AN ARTISTIC RITUAL

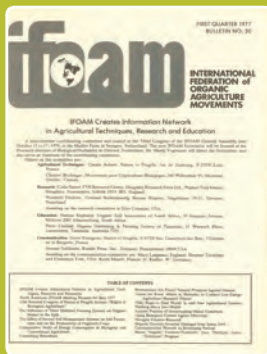
Anton Pinschof, one of the veterans in the 40-year history of IFOAM, reminisces, not without humor, about the production of IFOAM's early newsletters:



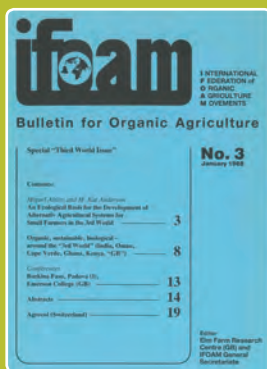
Anton Pinschof

"It was nearer to steering a ship than it was to printing." He elaborates: "After all the over-inking and under-inking of the stencils, there was the walking round the table, collecting single pages in the right order, detecting blanks and half blanks, ending up with as few as possible orphaned odd pages, composing a last complete copy from pages printed on only one side [... before] finally struggling against a westerly Atlantic gale to the Post Office."

Yet, despite the years that have gone by, some descriptions still keep, for all those working on our publications, a surprisingly familiar tone: *"The editing of the newsletter involved seeking and sifting all sorts of printed, typed and handwritten material [...]. It was an artistic ritual resulting in a complex mosaic of themes and authors and titles and dates and sources, all collated and typed at the last minute with little leeway for correction of errors."*



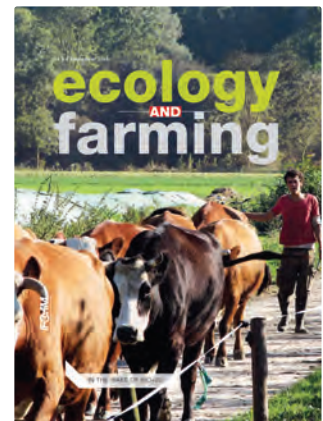
The IFOAM Bulletin (1977)



The Bulletin for Organic Agriculture (1988)

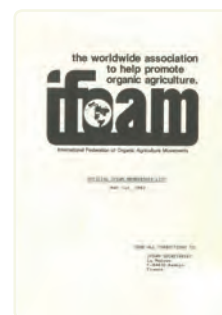
all collated and typed at the last minute with little leeway for correction of errors."

Over the years the magazine suffered some ups and downs, going from a printed publication to a digital publication until its discontinuation in 2010. In 2011 the solution to bring back the magazine came from the movement itself when Peter Brul, Ecology & Farming's current editor-in-chief, and the Dutch publisher van



Ecology & Farming in 1995 (left) and in 2012 (right)

Westering Groep entered into a cooperation with IFOAM in order to ensure the continued publication of the magazine.



Official Membership List (1983)

Accompanying the gradual increase in membership, in the eighties, IFOAM, *"the worldwide association to help promote organic agriculture"*, first published the official listing of all its affiliates.

For many years, this

publication

was a best-selling item, a reference document that allowed to 'map' the organic movement around the globe. Meanwhile re-branded 'IFOAM Directory of Affiliates' and made

available as a free, downloadable e-publication, this listing exists to this day and is published annually.

Over the years, and as a reflection of IFOAM's increased activity, widening thematic range and need for a broader outreach, it expanded its publication output to include diverse manuals (e.g. seed saving, inspection and training manuals), proceedings, guides, studies, dossiers, position papers, declarations, policy briefs and guidelines. Although English remains IFOAM's main language of communication, many publications were translated into multiple languages. A few core documents like the 'Principles of Organic Agriculture' have systematically been made available, so that members of the movement can translate and use them in their local advocacy activities.

Alongside of sporadically produced publications (e.g. proceedings that are linked to an event or are



Directory of IFOAM Affiliates (2012)

thematic publications), IFOAM continues, today, to have its 'regulars'. Apart from the aforementioned newsletters (which have multiplied to account for the specificities of different work areas, i.e. Africa, Organic Guratantee System, Participatory Guarantee System), the membership directory, Ecology & Farming and the annual report, IFOAM began addressing in the year 2000, together with its longstanding partners FiBL and SÖL, the need for access to empirical data around organic production and retail. Published every year, the World of Organic Agriculture, offers invaluable statistical insights into the world of organic. When looking at the body of knowledge produced by IFOAM, often in collaboration with equally passionate organic partners, it is evident that the desire to share information, empower through knowledge and further the vision of an organic world has never subsided.



IFOAM's 12th General Assembly in Mar del Plata, Argentina (1998)

This was a clear enough sign of the gap that existed in terms of international organic exchange fora. IFOAM did not wait long to act upon this and one year later, in 1977, it is in Sissach, Switzerland, that the

“A Busload of Pilgrims”

.....
“In the evening after the 1974 General Assembly, a 50-seater bus left Paris for a 10-day tour of Europe, visiting farms and institutes in several countries. (A couple of penniless students had also hitched a lift: one was Otto Schmid, today of FiBL, the other was heard of years later in South America, organizing peasants). [...]

This busload of pilgrims from five continents visited a wild boar breeder, the Basel cantonal Agriculture school (which had been converted to Organic) and a famous factory near the Lake of Constance making delicious lacto-fermented vegetable juices. In Innsbruck we met agronomist Josef Willy, who had decided to convert the farm advisory service he directed to Organic methods.”

Anton Pinschof

.....

IFOAM'S EARLY EVENTS

As strong as the need to communicate, was the need to assemble. In IFOAM's young years, the General Assemblies (GAs) were the IFOAM events *par excellence*. Not only were they an essential part of the organization's identity-building, they provided a unique opportunity for organic stakeholders to exchange ideas and experiences, technical or otherwise.

The surprising turnout at IFOAM's 3rd GA in Seengen, Switzerland, in 1976 - only 30 participants were expected but 70 turned up - highlighted the demand for and relevance of these gatherings.

federation organizes its first non-GA event: The 1st IFOAM International Scientific Conference 'Towards



14th Organic World Congress in Victoria, Canada (2002)

a Sustainable Agriculture' is organized in conjunction with its 4th GA, initiating a structure of GA + event(s) that has survived to the present day. Furthermore, it is significant that 35 years after first putting this topic on the agenda, discussions around sustainability are more relevant than ever.

After that, the regular organization of events became part of IFOAM's core activities. Conferences ensued, often in collaboration with local partners, covering a host of topics from soil fertility, resource-conservation, nutritional self-sufficiency, or marketing, to animal husbandry.



IFOAM booth at BioFach 1997



Breeding Diversity Conference in Santa Fe, USA (2009)

The facilitation of a hands-on exchange of ideas has always stood in the foreground and even the earliest IFOAM scientific conferences were paired with extensive visits to the field, even across multiple countries.

Beyond its own events, IFOAM also sought other platforms, regularly attending relevant events to disseminate its messages and reach potential Affiliates. In 1997, the signing of the contract to become patron of the BioFach was the start of a lasting relationship. Founded in 1990, the German BioFach was to become, within a decade, the world's leading professional organic fair. IFOAM accompanied BioFachs international growth and marks its presence at all BioFach Globally fairs.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership lies at the core of IFOAM. Since its foundation, it has been the initiative of embers - inside and outside of the GA - that has driven our agenda and activities. Over the years, membership expanded gradually to include a broader variety of organizations, from all fields of activity, and from a broader geographical spectrum.

From the 50 Affiliates from 17 countries in 1975, membership had a first big jump to 500 in the mid 80ies. By the end of 2011, membership had gone up to 863 in a total of 120 countries. Of those 120 countries, regional representation was 43% in Europe, 32% in Asia, 8% in Latin America and Africa (each), 6% in North America and 3% in Oceania.



Ballot counters for the World Board election at the GA in Modena, Italy (2008)

