

# The Vital Role of Research to Advance Organic Agriculture Worldwide

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## **Abstract**

Organic agriculture offers the promise of a future to produce and distribute food and other farm products in a healthy, ecologically sound, truly sustainable and fair way. The benefits of organic agriculture—from ecosystem services to the provision of healthier food - are now being realized. However, to reach its full potential organic farming needs to address many challenges. As organic agriculture has grown in strength it still does not have adequate resources to continue its expansion. Market conditions, government policies and international institutional support show organic to be on the right side of history, but fulfilling its goals and meeting demand will require research, development, innovation, and technology transfer.

Organic International / IFOAM members have organized the Technology Innovation Platform of IFOAM (TIPI), which has developed a vision and an agenda to advance organic agriculture through research, development, innovation and technology transfer. TIPI's vision recognizes that current technologies based on heavy use of external inputs that are toxic, pollute the environment and are very energy-intensive come at a price. Investments in ecosystem services and the development of technologies that are productive, stable, adaptable, resilient, and fairly shared are much more likely to sustain the world's population in a rapidly changing environment. Sustainable pathways to innovation will require engagement of all stakeholders in a science-driven multi-disciplinary approach. Such an approach seeks to:

- (1) Empower rural areas;
- (2) Provide eco-functional intensification that produces food, while harnessing and re-generating eco-system services as well as strengthening resilience to climate change; and
- (3) Provide food for the health and well-being available to all.

Organic agriculture must build the capacity to fulfill the world's quantitatively, qualitatively and structurally adequate food needs for the entire population if it is to fulfill its mission. Farmers and scientists need to work together on solutions to overcome the challenges that organic farming systems face.

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