



MEDIA RELEASE

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15th IFOAM CONGRESS UNITES ORGANIC WORLD

The international organic community converged on Adelaide, Australia from September 20 – 23 for the 15th International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Organic World Congress with the theme of *Shaping Sustainable Systems*.

The Congress was hosted by the National Association of Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA), and attended by more than 1000 delegates from 72 countries.

360 individual papers, workshops and presentations from ten keynote speakers were all well received by the delegates who voted the 15th IFOAM Congress an outstanding success.

One major outcome of the gathering of the World's organic community was the Congress Declaration, calling on governments worldwide to increase investment in organic agriculture.

The Congress Declaration calls upon governments worldwide to actively endorse and practically support organic agriculture. It also calls on individual governments to allocate budgetary funds for investment into organic agriculture, proportionate to the organic sector's production in their countries, and to internalize social and environmental costs in the prices of agricultural products and remunerate organic farmers for ecosystem services they provide.

"Australia is the world leader when it comes to total certified organic acreage. My own home country, Sweden, has a target that 20 percent of the land should be organically farmed by year 2005, and I can happily announce that it is almost accomplished – the latest figures state 19 percent," Gunnar Rundgren, outgoing IFOAM President reported in his opening speech.

"Research shows that organic is a more productive system if all relevant aspects are taken into account, such as the external costs and the maintenance and production of eco system services, recently demonstrated through a 22-year farming trial study from Cornell University," Gunnar Rundgren said.

In his keynote speech, Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, emphasized "In line with international trends, the organic movement is experiencing unprecedented interest in Australia and rapidly gaining mainstream consumer and producer acceptance."

"With local demand for organic produce substantially outstripping supply, there is enormous scope for expanding the range and volume of organic product offered to Australian and international consumers," Senator Colbeck said.

Chair of the Organic Federation of Australia Andre Leu noted that there weren't too many good news stories in agriculture.

"It is in crisis on every continent with farmers struggling to survive. In Australia we have lost over 20,000 farmers in the last decade and it is similar in most countries. However the number of organic farmers continues to increase and we have proven that can provide the most important of commodities, healthy food. We are truly one of the good news stories, a wonderful ray of hope for our world," Andre Leu said.

The IFOAM Organic World Congress serves to facilitate the gathering and exchange of knowledge about the latest trends in organic agriculture between people from all over the world. It's a forum for discussing both common viewpoints and diverging perspectives, thus shaping the future of the international organic movement.

"IFOAM has held our most important event in Australia, and with over 11,300,00 hectares and 2,170 farms under organic management, accounting for 42.7% of the global total, Australia was a well-deserved location. Organic Agriculture, specifically in regard to its positive impact on the improvement of soils - to only name one of the many benefits, holds a lot of promise here, and we hope that the Australian organic movement benefits and grows as a result of this event," newly elected IFOAM President Gerald Herrmann said.

"The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA), the IFOAM Congress host organisation has done a wonderful job bringing the program and participants together and setting the stage for a successful event.

"Jan Denham, the Congress Director, and her committed team deserve our special appreciation. IFOAM would also like to express its gratitude to the many donors and supporters of this conference," IFOAM Executive Director Angela B. Caudle said.

The 8th International IFOAM Organic Viticulture and Wine Conference also brought together the world's experts on organic wine from all over the planet to facilitate the further development of markets and products, and discussed challenges and opportunities for moving forward and conquering mainstream markets.

The International Scientific Conference on Organic Agriculture delved into the latest research and technical advances in organic agriculture. Organized by ISOFAR, the newly established global scientific research authority for organic agriculture, the conference has helped to take global cooperation in research, methodological development, education and knowledge exchange another step forward.

The IFOAM General Assembly, the democratic decision making forum for IFOAM, met from September 25-27. Important decisions that affect the future of the organic industry were made, including the adoption of the revised Principles of Organic Agriculture, the election of the IFOAM World Board of Directors and the consideration of wide-ranging motions from the IFOAM membership, all monumental decisions for the booming \$26 billion market for organic products.

From a field of 19 candidates, the General Assembly elected ten World Board members, including four current members.

The new World Board elected Gerald A. Herrmann from Germany, as its President and Mette Meldgaard from Denmark, and Alberto (Pipo) Lernoud from Argentina, as Vice Presidents.

Members from more than 70 countries represented the broad constituency of the federation and established the quorum of the IFOAM General Assembly. The new World Board will serve a term of three years until the next General Assembly at the 16th IFOAM World Congress in Modena in Italy in 2008.

“This board, representing our full membership, is committed to not only the success and future of IFOAM, but the organic sector in its entirety,” Angela B. Caudle, Executive Director of IFOAM said.

“I am delighted with our new and returning board members and know that they will provide strong leadership and vision to IFOAM.” Angela B. Caudle said.

“Throughout my involvement in the movement, I’ve been passionate about working with all the dedicated people from around the world,” Gerald Herrmann said.

“Their support and knowledge are a tremendous strength for moving organic food and farming forward as they are reflecting the interests and great diversity of the organic sector.”

Brief information about IFOAM President Gerald Herrmann:

Gerald A. Herrmann, Germany – Gerald A. Herrmann has been involved in the organic sector since 1985 and first began working with farmers assisting their conversion to organic. He was the President and Executive of Naturland, an IFOAM Accredited Certifier, for more than a decade, and has authored many publications and spoken widely about organic agriculture. He has been serving as the IFOAM Executive Director for the last year. He was member of the Board since 1995, the Treasurer of the World Board from 1998-2000, and its Vice President from 2000-2005. He currently is the Director of Organic Services GmbH, Vice President of Ecoland and board member of the Nature & More Foundation.

For more information, please visit the IFOAM Website: <http://www.ifoam.org>. For press inquiries or to schedule an interview, please contact Gerald A. Herrmann, IFOAM President, at: +49- 177-5521460 (mobile), or the IFOAM Head Office: +49-228-92650-10.

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