

Policy 23

Policy regarding IFOAM Self-Organized Structures

I. Purpose of this policy

To define the relationship between IFOAM – Organics International and the IFOAM Self-Organized Structures.

To set the procedures for the establishment and operation of the Self-Organized Structures which are further detailed in the contract and the IFOAM SOS Manual.

Because IFOAM – Organics International recognizes the benefits of allowing IFOAM Regional Bodies and IFOAM Sector Platforms to operate with as much autonomy as possible, the contract, this policy and the IFOAM SOS manual regulating the relationship between IFOAM – Organics International and these structures are designed with the intention of reflecting a relationship predicated on cooperation through communication and common goals. On-going communication based on establishing and maintaining mutual trust is important for these relationships. More details about the relationship between IFOAM – Organics International and the SOS are described in the IFOAM SOS manual.

II. Purpose and Benefits of Self-Organized IFOAM – Organics International Structures

The SOSs represent the diverse interests of IFOAM’s membership by geographic regions and sectors or interests. IFOAM – Organics International is the collective and overarching voice of all organic movements world-wide at global level as well as in those regions and areas wherein there are no Regional Bodies established.

The self-organized structures interact with IFOAM – Organics International and other bodies of the IFOAM Network in a participatory manner to mutually promote the vision and mission of IFOAM – Organics International.

III. The Establishment & Management of IFOAM RBs and IFOAM SPs

1. Geographic Areas for IFOAM RBs

IFOAM – Organics International recognizes the RBs in Europe, Asia, Euro-Asia, Latin America, North America, Southern Africa, and the Mediterranean. The definition and constituencies represented by the RBs are subject to change. Affiliates in regions without RBs are encouraged to organize one. Overlap between regions is discouraged. All affiliates are invited to provide input related to the composition of the regions. IFOAM - Organics International can support affiliates in the establishment of RBs in regions where there are none.

Inter-regional and national organic movements are encouraged to organize independently, join IFOAM – Organics International as members, and relate to their respective RBs and SPs. IFOAM – Organics International continues to recognize national SOSs organized prior to 2011 but will not recognize any newly established national organizations as IFOAM SOSs or grant such organizations the right to use the IFOAM name.

2. Contract

IFOAM RBs / SPs are established by a mutually agreed upon contract with IFOAM – Organics International that represents the intent of both parties to form a relationship and collaborate, subject to approval of the boards of both parties.

3. Naming, Logos, and Legal Registration

IFOAM RBs and IFOAM SPs should identify their affiliation with IFOAM – Organics International when conducting activities to maintain consistency. In the case of IFOAM RBs, the acronym should also be followed by a descriptive term describing the region that the IFOAM RB represents (e.g. IFOAM Latin America). Exceptions may be allowed based on mutual understanding defined in the contract. IFOAM RBs are advised to register as non-profit organizations. However, the individual IFOAM RBs may ultimately determine the precise category of legal entity formed.

4. Common Strategic Planning

IFOAM – Organics International consults with IFOAM RBs and SPs when new strategies are developed. IFOAM RBs / SPs develop strategic plans that reflect the mandates given by the IFOAM General Assembly and help with the implementation of IFOAM—Organics International’s strategic plan. IFOAM RBs / SPs may pursue additional strategic goals and use different approaches appropriate to their regions, but shall not act counter to or interfere with the activities of IFOAM – Organics International or any other SOS.

5. Communication

a. Internal Communication

The (executive) board of IFOAM – Organics International schedules at least one (virtual) meeting per year with the respective (executive) boards of RBs and INOFO.

To encourage collaboration for joint activities, SOSs are required to submit a plan, a budget, and a report to IFOAM – Organics International annually that is to be shared with other SOSs. IFOAM – Organics International and RB staff communicate matters of governance and operation to all SOSs. SOSs are encouraged to communicate with each other through the Network Council and bilaterally.

b. External Communication

SOSs and IFOAM – Organics International shall follow a common strategy for communications outside the Network. The SOSs may communicate independently within their respective regions/sectors and independently develop positions adapted to regional/sector interests, provided they are aligned with IFOAM – Organics International’s Vision, Mission, Principles of Organic Agriculture, strategy, and other Landmarks.

c. Common Corporate Identity

A common corporate identity includes:

- Use of a common logo.
- Establishment and maintenance of common communication materials, methods, or channels.
- Ensuring any official positions avoid contravening the Principles of Organic Agriculture and other Landmarks set by IFOAM – Organics International.
- Linked and coordinated internet presence.
- Shared member databases that can be used for communications and organizational purposes.
- Publication of a consolidated annual report.

6. Affiliation & Voting Rights

From January 2022 onwards, membership in the IFOAM RBs requires IFOAM – Organics International affiliation. Membership to IFOAM – Organics International automatically confers membership to the appropriate IFOAM RB and, in the case of farmers’ organizations, membership to INOFO. A common invoicing process, lead by IFOAM – Organics International is established.

IFOAM RBs and INOFO each shall have one (1) vote at the IFOAM General Assembly. Vice versa, IFOAM – Organics International has a vote at the GAs of its SoSs.

7. Termination/Withdrawal

SOSs that become inactive or do not account for their activities may have their status revoked and may no longer be recognized. The contract memorializing the establishment of an IFOAM RB or IFOAM SP may be terminated for any reason by either party with a notice period of six months to the end of any calendar year. Such a contract may be terminated immediately by either party upon a showing of good cause. After termination of the contract, the IFOAM RB or IFOAM SP forfeits the right to use the name, logos, database, website of IFOAM – Organics International, and all other rights conferred by the contract.

8. Mediation of Dispute

SOSs have the right to appeal a termination decision. If an SOS disputes termination, it has the right to enter mediation with IFOAM – Organics International and will remain as an SOS until mediation is resolved. If the SOS is still terminated after mediation, the mediation team shall give the SOS a reasonable grace period to end operations.

IV: Network Council

The Network Council integrates IFOAM – Organics International’s strategies and activities with the RBs and SPs, facilitates the exchange of information, improves collaboration, and facilitates synergies within the Network. The Council operates on a management level. The Network Council shall reflect the different mandates of the RBs and SPs. The Board of IFOAM - Organics International approves the ToRs of the Network Council, based on recommendation of its members.

Annex 1: Standard Contract for self-organized structures

Approved by the World Board 2012-04,

Amended version proposed by the Network Committee and approved by WB 202011

From the IFOAM – Organics International statutes, as approved in Korea, October 2011:

“11. Self-Organized Structures.

Self-organized and self-governed organizations sharing the visions, principles and positions of IFOAM – Organics International can get the right of being a self-organized IFOAM – Organics International body, carrying the name of IFOAM – Organics International based on a World Board decision. Those organizations focus their activities regionally (IFOAM Regional Bodies), thematically (IFOAM Sector Platforms) or they are owned by IFOAM – Organics International (IFOAM – Organics International daughter organizations).”

I: Definition – IFOAM Self-Organized Structures

As component parts of the broader IFOAM Network, Self-Organized IFOAM Structures (SOS) are organized by IFOAM – Organics International affiliates. These Structures fall into three categories, which are generally named and described as follows:

- **IFOAM Regional Bodies (RBs)** are regional initiatives based on IFOAM – Organics International affiliates in specific regions and connected to IFOAM – Organics International through a franchise system.
- **IFOAM Sector Platforms (SPs)** are thematic initiatives organized by IFOAM – Organics International affiliates from specific sectors within the organic movement. The Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations (INOFO) is recognized as an integral part of the IFOAM Network for its representation of organic farmers organizations in all IFOAM RBs.
- **IFOAM Daughter Organizations** are organizations that IFOAM has founded or has shares in (IOAS and bioC).

