

Nürnberg, Germany 13.– 16.2.2019

# BIOFACH2019

into organic



PRESS RELEASE

September 2018

## **BIOFACH 2019: Interview with new IFOAM Executive Director Louise Luttikholt**

- **Focus on UN sustainable development goals**
- **Organic agriculture as a source of inspiration and driving force for greater sustainability throughout the agricultural sector**

The international organic sector will gather for the 30<sup>th</sup> time at its world leading trade fair, BIOFACH, in Nuremberg from 13 to 16 February 2019. The international patron of the entire BIOFACH family, “BIOFACH World”, representing a total of seven events around the globe, is IFOAM – Organics International. As of summer 2018, the international umbrella association for the organic movement has a new Executive Director, Louise Luttikholt. We spoke with her about what motivates her about the field of organics, and which goals for organic agriculture and the sector as a whole she will focus on in her new position.

**Louise Luttikholt, you grew up in a small agricultural operation in the Netherlands. Could you tell us a little about your career in the organic sector so far?**

I became involved in the organic sector before I even knew it existed. I studied biology and philosophy, and my focus was – and still is – on how we as humans perceive ourselves as part of nature, and how we relate to it. I was able to relate the theoretical natural philosophy debate to my own experiences in agriculture – as a “farm girl”, you might say. I quickly understood that conventional agriculture was literally in a dead-end street, since it was undermining its own foundations and thus its ability to survive for the long term. The message I took home was not necessarily a nice one, since my parents, of course, were engaged in conventional agriculture. That was when I drew the logical conclusion, to switch over to organic at a personal and professional level.

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**You have extensive experience in organic agriculture, fair trade, and international development cooperation. Your career has included work for Fairtrade International and the Swiss development organisation Helvetas. What is it that motivates you most?**

In the organic sector we readily talk about agronomic and food technology methods. But despite all the necessary changes that we want to put in place, we must not lose sight of the fact that these affect people. People with histories, character, wishes and expectations. And if we try to change methods, we change people along with them. Health, for example, could be a good starting point for some people; after all, we all want to live a healthy life. In my development work I dealt with what is known as “nutrition-sensitive agriculture”. Using diversified farming, and in combination with advice on preparation and diet, this method seeks to improve the level of nutrition of the local population. The fact that this actually means practising organic agriculture is not so important for the women and children involved. The result is what counts! We can see the same thing in various countries in Europe: where the focus is on genuine benefits, you will find organic products in the pot and on the table.

**What are your main objectives in your new position?**

The sustainable development goals of the UN are the “higher-level” goals that IFOAM – Organics International takes as its guideline. They look at organic agriculture in a new light and ask, “What contributions can this make toward saving the planet? And how can we make these contributions still greater?” Organic agriculture is not a goal in itself. But that doesn’t mean it hasn’t an important role to play – quite the contrary! Organic agriculture should be a source of inspiration and a driving force for greater sustainability throughout the agricultural sector. And another task for organic agriculture is to make continuous improvements. That means the agricultural sector may ultimately no longer be perceived as a problem, but as part of the solution!

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**At BIOFACH 2019, the organic sector will gather in Nuremberg to discuss the concept of health in combination with organics. Health in the sense of healthy systems. IFOAM also talks about “positive health”: to what extent is organic a healthy system that contributes to health as an overall concept?**

“Positive health” means much more than just the absence of disease. A good comparison for this comprehensive approach is the systematic consideration of an organic farming production system. In the broadest sense it is about our well-being, whether I am living in a healthy environment, in other words one without pesticide residues, and whether there is healthy drinking water available, whether I have a sense of belonging, whether I participate and feel that there is a meaning to what I do. The good thing is that organics can help these aspects, in community-supported agriculture projects, for example, and in developing a positive experience of belonging within an organics company. The fact that organic products also contain fewer pesticide residues and are sometimes made from better ingredients is, of course, an added bonus!

**To come back to BIOFACH, in closing: what is the important thing about this industry meeting for you, and what are you looking forward to in particular at the next occasion in February 2019?**

BIOFACH is where the organic sector “comes home”. Its professional and, at the same time, relaxed atmosphere highlights what’s good about the industry, and I am already looking forward to the many new developments, at the Novelty Stand, for example! The information provided at the Congress helps me to keep up with the latest developments, and following the intensive formal and informal discussion during the exhibition days, I am back up to speed and fully charged!

**Louise Luttkholt, thank you for talking with us today.**

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## BIOFACH World

NürnbergMesse has proven expertise in the field of organic foodstuffs. In February every year, the international organic sector gathers in Nuremberg at BIOFACH, the world's leading fair for organic food products. The comprehensive range of certified organic products on display shows their diversity – from fresh products like dairy and cheese, fruit, vegetables, dry products like grains and pulses, nuts and confectionery to beverages. The international patron of BIOFACH is IFOAM – Organics International, while the national honorary sponsor is the German Federation of Organic Food Producers (BÖLW). An integral part of this world-leading fair is the BIOFACH Congress, a knowledge-sharing platform that is unique worldwide. With another six BIOFACH events in Japan, the USA, South America, China, India and Thailand, BIOFACH World has a global presence and year for year brings together more than 3,000 exhibitors and 100,000 trade visitors.

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