

Concept for BIOFACH 2023 Conference **Organic. Food Sovereignty. True Prices**

For the next iteration of the world's leading trade fair for organic food, from 14 to 17 February 2023, the BIOFACH Conference will be focussing on

“Organic. Food Sovereignty. True Prices.”

The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the impact of the war on Ukraine, the energy crisis, the consequences of the climate crisis and species extinction – these are ratchetting up social and economic tensions around the globe. But organic products make the food supply more secure, thanks to their closed-loop economy, lower dependence on external inputs, and strong regional value chains. By operating in a way that conserves resources, organic practices reinforce biodiversity, enhance soil fertility, and protect the climate, yielding resilient cropping systems and food sovereignty.

To expand these supportive factors for sustainability further, and so that the transformation of the food industry as a whole can succeed, the market's failed use of environmental resources must be put to an end at last. Only “true prices” will make it possible to do business within the bounds our planet can support, leading to the success of a food and agriculture industry that is truly fit to serve our grandchildren. International organisations and government must make the most of organics' potential.

The conference will focus on how organic products contribute to food security and sovereignty, and will show how “true prices” – meaning prices that include ecological after-costs – can pave the way for the necessary transformation of the food and grocery industry.

Food: Sovereign and secure

The rising prices of energy and food show how fatal it is to depend on fossil fuel-based fertilisers. Meat production in the global north is not tailored to available grazing area, and also contributes to the rise of hunger in the south – which is why we must begin raising livestock on the basis of the space that's available. Planting coffee or cacao in agroforestry systems demonstrates how much potential organic techniques have to offer in actively protecting the climate. What's more, supply chains that are over-long, and thus especially vulnerable to disruption in times of crisis, prove how important it is to have stable, regional value chains. Here organics show off their ability to provide solutions and ensure a secure, sovereign food supply, because this sustainable way of doing business reinforces farmers' autonomy and ensures added value on a regional basis.

The conference will also discuss how the organic system helps strengthen a secure, sovereign food supply in all regions of the world in light of the current crises.

True prices can remedy market failures and facilitate transformation

Ninety billion euros a year* – agriculture in Germany causes that much damage to the general good that is not reflected in the price of food. The cost is many times the sector's value added.

The organic food industry can avoid doing most of this damage because it does business in a way that protects resources. Yet current food pricing takes the “polluter pays” principle and turns it upside down, making environmentally harmful products look “cheaper” than they really are. So organic foods that present more honest costing are at a disadvantage. Which means that thus far, you can make a profit by doing business conventionally – even though it undermines the foundations of life for coming generations.

The great market failure in food must be remedied with new systems for accounting, taxation and support. The conference will discuss just how that might be done.

(*according to a BCG study and the concluding report of Friends of the Earth Germany's Commission on the Future of Agriculture (ZKL))