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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P9\_TA(2022)0136**

#### **EU action plan for organic agriculture**

##### **European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2022 on an EU action plan for organic agriculture (2021/2239(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and in particular Articles 39, 192(1) and 349 thereof,
- having regard to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- having regard to the Paris Agreement reached at the 21st Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 25 March 2021 on an action plan for the development of organic production (COM(2021)0141),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640),
- having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2021 on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 October 2021 on a farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 270, 7.7.2021, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0425.

up by Member States under the Common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013<sup>1</sup>,

- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/2117 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products, (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, (EU) No 251/2014 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of aromatised wine products and (EU) No 228/2013 laying down specific measures for agriculture in the outermost regions of the Union<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 July 2021 on the action plan for the development of organic agriculture,
  - having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2018 on a European strategy for the promotion of protein crops – encouraging the production of protein and leguminous plants in the European agriculture sector<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the farm to fork strategy,
  - having regard to the European Economic and Social Committee opinion of 22 September 2021 on the Action Plan for the development of EU organic production,
  - having regard to the European Committee of the Regions opinion of 2 December 2021 on the EU action plan for organic farming,
  - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A9-0126/2022),
- A. whereas the Commission communication on an action plan for the development of organic production (organic action plan, OAP) emphasises that the Green Deal, and the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies under its umbrella, is the key to managing the transition towards a more sustainable food system, in particular strengthening farmers’ efforts to protect the environment, preserve biodiversity and tackle climate change; whereas a key role in attaining this objective is played by agriculture in general, and organic agriculture in particular;
- B. whereas after 12 months, the list of almost all of the secondary legislation needed for the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 is now ready, although this is not the case for the delegated regulation regulating organic salt production;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 390, 18.11.2019, p. 2.

- C. whereas the delegated regulation will have to give priority to the natural processes, without additives or carbon emissions during preparation, that characterise sea salt for it to be given organic certification;
- D. whereas Europe's food system must deliver sustainably produced and nutritious food at affordable prices and ensure food security in a way that ensures a healthy society and a healthy planet, contributes to social and economic well-being, protects the health of both ecosystems and European citizens, and ensures the profitability of agricultural production and therefore a fair living for farmers; whereas it is essential to ensure that the increase in the amount of land used for organic farming matches the market's ability to absorb organic products;
- E. whereas Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products obliges farmers to comply with a conversion period during which they have to apply all rules on organic production;
- F. whereas this period may last up to three years; whereas during this period, farmers have to bear higher costs of production without benefiting from higher market prices for organic products;
- G. whereas organic agriculture offers various environmental benefits, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and has the potential to help the agricultural sector play its part in the fight against climate change, in adaptation to climate change and in addressing key challenges such as the loss of jobs in rural areas, soil fertility and biodiversity loss, as well as promoting resilience in the face of economic challenges;
- H. whereas agricultural diversity and shorter chains between farmer and consumer are important elements for a healthy and sustainable food system;
- I. whereas organic farming can contribute to striking an ambitious balance in terms of sustainability from an economic, social and environmental perspective, fostering soil, water and biodiversity protection and animal welfare, and offers young people opportunities to enter the farming profession;
- J. whereas environmental and animal welfare standards in the EU are among the highest in the world; whereas organic farmland has 30 % more biodiversity, is beneficial to pollinators and limits the use of artificial fertilisers and plant protection products;
- K. whereas organic farming can also contribute to the revitalisation of rural areas, the creation of employment, the sustainability of small farms, bringing consumers and producers closer, enhancing the connections with the local economy and stimulating positive economic multipliers; whereas the new common agricultural policy (CAP) introduces new ambitious measures to encourage sustainable production, including organic farming;
- L. whereas it is essential to ensure that consumers, who are attaching increasing importance to the quality of what they eat, and the catering sector, are in a position to make informed and conscious choices when purchasing food;
- M. whereas it is necessary to ensure that consumers are properly informed about the benefits of consuming organic products and that they are protected against deliberately misleading labels, packaging and advertising;

- N. whereas in 2019, the EU's total agricultural area under organic farming grew to 13.8 million hectares; whereas it currently accounts for 8.5 % of the EU's total utilised agricultural area; whereas between 2010 and 2019, the value of the EU's organic market more than doubled;
- O. whereas the retail sales of organic products increased from EUR 18 billion to EUR 41 billion in the period 2009-2019; whereas the increase of organic production outpaces the development of the organic market in parts of the EU, with significant differences in organic consumption across the Member States; whereas the production of organic products is very low or non-existent in certain parts of the EU, with great disparities between the Member States, varying from 0.5 % to 26.5 % of the available area devoted to the sector;
- P. whereas the OAP includes 23 actions, providing a solid basis for developing the organic sector in a sustainable manner; whereas a mid-term review of the OAP in 2024 is envisaged and an annual 'EU Organic Day' has been established, which represents an opportunity to improve the visibility and the recognition of organic farming and raise awareness of the benefits of organic production, as organic farmers are considered 'pioneers of sustainable agriculture';
- Q. whereas Regulation (EU) 2018/848, which will apply from 1 January 2022, aims in particular to increase consumers' trust in organic products through more stringent controls and rules for imports;
- R. whereas the strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030 were published in May 2021 and will be developed in the National Strategic Plans;

### ***General comments***

1. Welcomes the Commission communication on an action plan for the development of organic production, the objective of increasing the EU's agricultural area under organic farming by 2030 through the development of supply and demand, and the Commission's recognition of organic farming as one of the main components on the EU's path towards more sustainable food systems, using more sustainable agricultural practices, more efficient use of renewable sources, ensuring higher standards for animal welfare and helping to ensure higher revenues for European farmers;
2. Calls on the Commission to carry out an impact assessment with regard to the share of the EU's agricultural area under organic farming; considers that the development of organic farming, which delivers many positive externalities and benefits for climate change mitigation, biodiversity and soil protection, and will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies; recognises, at the same time, the potential for other sustainable production models and farming methods, such as integrated production and biological control, to contribute to the Green Deal's objectives;
3. Underlines that the share of agricultural land under organic farming varies significantly among the Member States; stresses that this must be taken into account when developing policies and instruments aimed at enhancing organic production and urges the Commission to pay particular attention to supporting the Member States which are lagging behind;

4. Insists that all measures and instruments proposed in this regard should be based on thorough analyses and impact assessments; is of the opinion that legislation and the OAPs must provide sufficient room for flexibility to take into account the differences in the nature and conditions of organic agriculture in the Member States;
5. Points out that, with the introduction of the new Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production in 2022, the Commission must ensure an orderly and measured transition from the old EU organic legislation so that the organic sector can familiarise itself with the new rules quickly and reliably; calls on the Commission to carry out an impact assessment of the new regulation five years after its implementation, with a view to making any necessary adjustments;
6. Underlines that the development and growth of the organic sector and organic areas, as foreseen in the farm to fork strategy, with a key role in revitalising and maintaining vibrant rural areas, must be market-driven and accompanied by holistic supply chain developments, including processing, as well as policy measures to stimulate further supply and demand for organic food and to ensure consumer trust;
7. Emphasises that the combination of these approaches should allow balanced development, in line with the market's ability to absorb organic production, in order to safeguard the future profitability of the organic market and organic farming in the EU;
8. Underlines the need, in this context, to remove excessive administrative burdens; stresses that the environmental benefits of organic farming should not only be supported by consumers of organic products willing to pay a higher price, but the CAP budget should also properly reward organic farmers for the specific public goods that they deliver through the protection of the environment and of natural resources, through the reduction of inputs and through supporting higher animal welfare standards;
9. Highlights that stimulating the agricultural sustainability and resilience of the EU food system should be a priority, and that organic farming is a key element for achieving environmental and climate objectives; considers that sustainable innovation in practices such as organic farming and, more broadly, agroecology can lead to greater diversity within farming systems;
10. Underlines that the co-existence of different farming systems is important, as diversity is key to food system security and resilience, and benefits sustainable development; points out that there is no single farming model that fits all countries and regions, and stresses that the benefits of the different sustainable farming models should be recognised;
11. Points out the importance of continuing to increase organic yields in order to prevent an increased ecological footprint from food production in non-EU countries while more conversion to the organic farming model takes place in EU regions;
12. Points out that for an EU action plan to succeed, it must stimulate and mobilise the Member States, as well as regional and local authorities, taking into account their specificities and different starting points; believes that regional and local OAPs, where relevant, should also play a role in the development of the organic sector;
13. Expresses the view, therefore, that Member States should be encouraged to establish their own national strategies for organic farming and to develop their own national and/or

regional OAPs, in coordination with the National Strategic Plans, which should have a high level of ambition for the development of organic farming, with realistic and concrete objectives, actions, time frames and budgets, including incentives for farmers, that facilitate choice and support bottom-up initiatives;

14. Calls on the Commission to ensure that these conditions are fully respected when approving the National Strategic Plans submitted by the Member States and to ensure that sufficient financial resources, together with the most effective tools, are made available to achieve the relevant objectives in terms of the development of the sector; highlights the need to exchange know-how and best practices, as some Member States have more experience in designing and implementing ambitious national plans;
15. Calls on the Commission to include such exchanges in the framework of the planned public follow-up meetings; highlights that the national OAPs should create predictability and clarity for farmers and industry, thereby encouraging the development of the organic sector and the commercialisation of organic products;
16. Welcomes the extension of the scope of the organic farming regulation to include certain products closely linked to agriculture, which are not listed in Annex I of the TFEU, such as salt; expresses its concern, however, about the report on organic salt published on 6 August 2021 by the Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP), as it is in favour of extending the EU organic label to production methods that do not comply with the principles of Regulation (EU) 2018/848; therefore calls on the Commission not to follow the advice of EGTOP;
17. Stresses that Member States should engage all stakeholders, especially organic farmers and associations, cooperatives, local and regional authorities, the agri-food industry along the value chain, agri-food wholesalers, consumer and private sector representatives and the hospitality industry, including large-scale caterers and food education associations, as well as citizens, in a consultative process when designing, adopting, reviewing and implementing their national and/or regional OAPs in order to achieve the best possible synergies and to reach the objective of increased area under organic farming as determined in their National Strategic Plan;
18. Acknowledges that organic production offers better economic returns for farmers, but often involves higher production costs and, therefore, requires market prices and direct support to be sufficient to recover those costs in order to allow fair earnings for farmers;
19. Points out that higher consumer prices may represent a barrier to expansion, but that they are currently needed to sustain the organic sector; recalls that in some cases there is no market for organic agricultural products, forcing farmers to sell them as conventional agricultural products at a lower price;
20. Recalls that organic farming involves very high production standards; stresses the need to address the affordability and thus accessibility of organic products; strongly emphasises that producers must be supported in the process of conversion to organic production and must benefit from the added value of organic farming; notes that, as is the case for conventional products, a better distribution of the value between the actors in the organic food chain would benefit both farmers and consumers;

21. Recognises that the development of the organic sector will allow economies of scale in processing and logistics that will increase efficiency and lead to lower costs; stresses the importance of the Unfair Trading Practices Directive for the development of the sector and to ensure that retailers do not have excessively high profit margins on organic products; considers also that organic products could be included in the programmes within the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, as long as a sufficient supply is available;
22. Welcomes the fact that the Commission is working on improving overall animal welfare and points out that the 2020 Eurobarometer survey on agriculture and the CAP found that 80 % of EU citizens associate organic farming with higher respect for animal welfare; underlines, in this context, the importance of supporting organic livestock farming;
23. Underlines the importance of speeding up the development of organic aquaculture and its market in the EU, as well as strengthening consumers' demand for and trust in these products; highlights that one in four fishery products comes from aquaculture; points out, however, that as most of the consumption of these products is supplied by imports, representing 60 % of total supply, there is huge growth potential that we must take advantage of in order to develop European aquaculture in general and organic aquaculture in particular;
24. Underlines the need to coordinate the measures on organic aquaculture with the new strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030 and the development of the sector in the Member States and the regions;

***Stimulating demand and ensuring consumer trust***

25. Supports the Commission in further promoting and sharing information about the EU organic logo among consumers, including through school schemes, which should give a larger share to organic products when the school schemes are revised, as well as in other institutions such as nursing homes; supports the promotion of the local organic logos that exist in several Member States and which offer at least the same guarantees as the EU organic logo and are used together with it; notes that school schemes should be the basis for a pedagogical discussion on nutrition and sustainable food and be accompanied by measures aimed at informing and educating children about better diets;
26. Emphasises that it is of paramount importance that consumer surveys on organics are followed by actions to further raise awareness of the benefits of organic farming for health, well-being and a high quality of life, while ensuring that consumer trust in the safety and sustainability of conventional farming methods in the Union is not undermined; stresses the need to provide accurate information to ensure that the new initiatives which are being developed on sustainable food labelling do not weaken the EU organic logo or create confusion for the consumer regarding their respective scope and meaning;
27. Expresses its concern about misleading labels, packaging and advertising that makes it difficult for consumers to distinguish conventional products from organic products; notes that Regulation (EU) 2018/848 and frequent independent controls are the basis for consumers' trust in organic products and calls on the Member States to communicate clearly on the EU organic logo;

28. Emphasises the role to be played by supermarkets and the various food supply chains in promoting and supporting the EU organic logo; awaits the Commission's future initiatives aimed at better guiding consumers in their choice of food through labelling, promotion and information campaigns, based on sound, independent and operational scientific foundations and complete and coherent methodologies; notes that mandatory labelling indicating the origin of all EU food products has the potential to significantly increase transparency and traceability, thereby combating fraud and illegal production methods, as well as improving consumer confidence;
29. Recalls that the requirements of professional kitchens differ from those of households; stresses the importance of creating added value for the supply chain and increasing the processing level of organic products to respond to the needs of professional kitchens;
30. Believes that the green public procurement (GPP) review of 2019 should be better publicised in the Member States in order to improve awareness and serve as a strong stimulus for action aimed at the promotion of organic production and to support a healthier, more environmentally friendly diet in institutions such as schools, hospitals, retirement homes and prisons, and can also reduce the amount of waste of organic products in the Member States with surpluses; believes that the EU institutions should lead by example in their own facilities; considers that in order to increase the use of GPP, it is essential to coordinate with the sector through its representative organisations with a view to ensuring that procurement runs smoothly;
31. Calls on the Commission to continue its investigations into the current structural and logistical barriers and to promote the use of GPP criteria in the Member States, as well as actions to improve information, education and the promotion of organics in order to make this measure more effective; points out that the increase in the use of GPP should be decided at national level in accordance with national demand and the targets set in national OAPs; believes that GPP must place strong emphasis on EU organic products, which would stimulate production and help the EU in reaching its climate targets;
32. Stresses that organic production and processing must be developed in an appropriate way at regional and local levels, involving local organic farmers; supports the development of regional sustainable food systems based on cooperation involving all food stakeholders; regrets the lack of verified data about the uptake of organic products in public canteens and restaurants;
33. Points out that local, regional and national authorities, together with farmers' associations and agri-food wholesalers play an important role in supporting the structuring of the organic sector in terms of production, collective processing, logistics and trade, easing access to land for organic farmers, facilitating cooperation between producers themselves, between producers and consumers and with food services;
34. Highlights, furthermore, the role to be played by local, regional and national authorities in raising public awareness about all types of sustainable farming methods, in supplying organic products in canteens and when developing educational programmes for preschools and schools;
35. Points out, in this context, that farmers' markets at local and regional level are an effective tool in bridging the gap between producers and consumers and should be promoted; recalls also that highly valuable technical assistance is provided by local and regional

authorities and farmers' associations to organic farmers and those in the process of converting, which is crucial for the implementation of these practices, and which require adequate funding from the CAP and other sources;

36. Highlights that all authorities must ensure that the regulatory framework continues to enable and stimulate the sector's development, while keeping administrative burdens at a minimum; recalls that local and regional authorities in many Member States have long been involved in supporting the development of organic farming, in particular through the management and implementation of rural development programmes;
37. Emphasises that, when involving local and regional authorities, a place-sensitive approach is required, in line with the precepts of the Territorial Agenda 2030, to address the differing needs of rural, peri-urban and urban areas across Europe;
38. Highlights that the success of the OAP will depend on stronger involvement of the private sector to stimulate demand and deliver fair incomes for farmers, especially in countries with less developed organic markets and production; calls on the Commission to identify a set of instruments to enable the Member States to encourage retail chains to actively help to promote and provide information on the importance of organic consumption, and to create local organic supply chains; underlines that an increase in organic production must primarily come from higher private demand and not exclusively from political incentives;
39. Highlights the importance of improving transparency in the organic food supply chain and of better traceability in all production and distribution processes in line with the demands from European consumers to have more information on the origin and production methods of the foodstuffs they consume; welcomes the voluntary initiatives by retailers to buy conversion products at a higher price and believes such initiatives should be promoted;
40. Takes due note of the difficulties retailers are facing in marketing these conversion products to consumers owing to the lack of harmonised marketing rules and calls on the Commission to assess measures to facilitate their marketing, such as through harmonised labelling;
41. Underlines that it is essential for the Commission, the Member States and stakeholders to engage actively in identifying ways in which the existing certification and control mechanisms can be made more robust to prevent fraud in organic production and trade;
42. Believes that the certification and control mechanisms must be more suited to the reality on the ground for organic farmers and the process must be simplified, including through IT solutions;
43. Emphasises that special attention must be paid to the procedures for authorising certification bodies; stresses that the certification process in the conversion to organic farming continues to be cumbersome and difficult to implement and should be facilitated, especially for small farmers; considers that farmers should be supported in covering certification costs;
44. Highlights the need for harmonised European systems for the certification of inputs for organic farming in order to prevent the proliferation of private certifications with different requirements and control systems; calls on the Commission to accelerate its EU-wide harmonisation through the OAP;

45. Urges the Commission to strengthen customs checks by means of direct, unified control mechanisms in coordination with the Member States and in full compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, in order to prevent food fraud, adulteration and imports of products which do not comply with EU organic production standards, as well as to avoid the risk of putting the EU organic sector at a competitive disadvantage owing to a lack of global convergence of standards and increased costs for consumers; highlights, in this context, the need for greater involvement of the relevant customs authorities in order to guarantee the quality and safety of organic products and ensure fair competition between producers inside and outside the EU;
46. Regrets the absence in the organic action plan of any reference to the difficulties and heavy costs created for the sector by the necessity of putting in place suitable measures during cultivation, harvest, transport, storage and processing to keep non-authorised products such as, for example, GMOs out of the organic production chain;
47. Stresses that agricultural products of EU origin are internationally recognised for their high quality; considers that positive and trade-promoting actions are needed to further promote EU organic products internationally; acknowledges, in this regard, the potential role to be played by the EU's promotion policy for organic production; underlines that it should recognise the wide range of sustainable production methods, practices and products in the EU;
48. Points out that geographical indications, which are supported by the EU's promotion policy, strongly contribute to economic growth in many rural areas and are a flagship of European agriculture; requests that the Commission inform Parliament about the potential for expansion of the organic market and that it speed up the ongoing negotiations to achieve the shift from equivalence to compliance with EU standards for imports of organic products;
49. Supports the global transition to sustainable food systems; takes the view that action at EU level, including in particular the Green Deal strategy, should aim to regularly raise environmental awareness on a global scale; regrets the fact that free trade agreements sometimes do not pay sufficient attention to major differences in agricultural production standards between the EU and third countries with regard to environmental protection and animal welfare, which discourages EU farmers from further environmental investments, including in organic production;

#### ***Stimulating conversion and reinforcing the entire value chain***

50. Considers that, in order to fulfil the ambitions of the National Strategic Plans, an adequate CAP budget, as well as compatibility with other European funds or programmes, is essential to create incentives to encourage farmers to convert to and maintain organic farming practices, through adequately resourced rural development measures or financially attractive eco-schemes, or a combination of the two;
51. Calls for eco-schemes to be accessible for both conventional and organic farmers and to be designed in a manner that renders them compatible with and complementary to agri-environment-climate measures (AECMs); recalls the importance of supporting organic farmers beyond the conversion phase; calls on the Member States to support generational renewal in organic farming through the relevant public policies, to promote farming

entrepreneurship among women and to support the development of viable small and medium-sized organic farms;

52. Regrets the decline in the CAP budget over the past two decades at the same time as the requirements imposed on the agricultural sector have grown; notes that under the current CAP, only 1.8 % of the budget is being spent on measures to support organic farming and welcomes the fact that the new CAP, in particular through eco-schemes and rural development measures, allows the Member States more flexibility to increase the amounts devoted to the organic sector;
53. Notes the potential of short, local and seasonal, and smart food supply chains and direct marketing opportunities, including farmers' markets, for organic producers and rural economies to deliver environmental and animal welfare benefits, while also securing incomes, preserving and creating employment, ensuring the vitality of rural areas and bridging the gap between EU producers and consumers; points out that market development is essential for the sustainable development of the organic sector;
54. Calls on the Member States to allocate sufficient resources to investments easing the development of short food chains, such as through increasing the number of mobile slaughterhouses or on-farm processing facilities; considers that the use of local supply chains should be promoted in public procurement procedures; emphasises that the focus on local production and short chains should not lead to additional barriers in the EU internal market;
55. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to play an active role in improving the structure of organic supply chains and building the capacity of organic producers' organisations; urges the Member States to use 'sectoral interventions' and all available measures to improve the organisation of organic producers in all relevant sectors and to assist them in the event of temporary overproduction;
56. Points out that organic farms, whose production is smaller in terms of volume and thus more costly, may have less bargaining power in commercial contracts and may therefore be particularly vulnerable to unfair commercial practices, especially in the form of delayed payments for perishable goods, last-minute cancellations or forcing suppliers to pay for unsold and wasted products; underlines the need for clear contractual conditions and fair recognition of the work of organic agricultural producers and believes that tools such as supply chain contracts should be promoted;
57. Welcomes the Commission's support for the development of bio-districts, also referred to as eco-regions, within Member States, as they are multifunctional in nature, promote short supply chains and create synergies, inter alia, between farmers, consumers, processing companies, retailers, the hospitality industry and catering, and cultural enterprises; calls on the Commission to provide the Member States with information on the instruments they could use to promote the development of bio-districts, paying special attention to urbanised areas; notes that their success depends on strong regional integration and the involvement of local and regional authorities;
58. Stresses the fundamental importance of expanding the structured exchange of knowledge and best practices on organic farming among Member States and farmers; highlights the benefits of intensifying collaboration between scientists, agricultural science universities and the wider education sector, advisory services or consultants, farmers and their

associations and organisations, and society; highlights the important role to be played in the development of organic production by the independent farm advisory services that Member States must include in their CAP Strategic Plans and emphasises the need to allocate sufficient financial resources to them;

59. Notes that the Joint Research Centre's report entitled 'Modelling environmental and climate ambition in the agricultural sector with the CAPRI model'<sup>1</sup> has indicated that there is a need for productivity gains with respect to organic farming and nutrient management, which can be enhanced, inter alia, by precision farming, new digital technologies and other innovative techniques;
60. Notes that innovative digital tools have the potential to significantly increase transparency and traceability, thereby combating fraud and illegal production methods, as well as improving consumer confidence; therefore encourages the Commission, including through the CAP Strategic Plans, to ensure greater deployment of digital technologies, such as precision farming and blockchain in organic farming; stresses, however, that these technologies complement the systemic sustainability approach of organic farming and that the privacy, profitability and independence of farmers when it comes to data must be ensured;

### ***Improving the contribution of organic farming to sustainability***

61. Reiterates the importance of research and innovation for the sustainability of the organic farming sector and in meeting societal expectations on biodiversity, climate change and climate adaptation, animal welfare and efficient resource use, and welcomes the Commission's intention to earmark Horizon Europe funding to support these aims; stresses, in this context, the need for research and innovation to encourage the conversion to organic agriculture, including livestock production, to find alternatives for certain inputs both in farming and processing so as to increase yields and to ensure the availability of the necessary protein feed, vitamins, plant protection products, in particular biocontrol solutions, fertilisers and genetic resources to further develop robust farming systems and increase tolerance to drought, pests and disease; calls on the Commission to stimulate and foster cooperation between research communities working on organic and conventional food and farming, in particular through the agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI);
62. Encourages a science-based approach regarding soil fertility and the need to develop, accept and incentivise innovations in novel plant nutrient sources in organic farming, including increased nutrient recycling through adequate processing and nutrient separation and, where suitable and appropriate, fertilising products produced from renewable sources, such as biomass waste and animal manure to avoid long-term nutrient deficits; recalls the importance of livestock manure as an organic fertiliser and encourages its sustainable use in the cultivation cycle; calls on the Commission to assess new recycled materials containing essential plant nutrients (phosphorus, potassium and nitrogen) for

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<sup>1</sup> Barreiro Hurlé, J., Bogonos, M., Himics, M., Hristov, J., Perez Dominguez, I., Sahoo, A., Salputra, G., Weiss, F., Baldoni, E. and Elleby, C., *Modelling environmental and climate ambition in the agricultural sector with the CAPRI model*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021.

their future addition to the list of input materials in Regulation (EU) 2018/848, in line with the principles of organic farming and ensuring quality, safety and consumer confidence;

63. Calls for more research into and information on the potential benefits of using plant biostimulants and bio-based soil improvers in organic farming systems and how they contribute to nutrient absorption and better performance in this production model, in order to allow their wider uptake and help reduce the gap between organic and conventional yields; points out that the promotion of the use of an adequate farm-specific combination of different external nutrients, on top of biological nitrogen fixation, could address the challenge of the imbalances in nutrient budgets in organic farming systems;
64. Highlights the urgent need for the production of organic plant proteins to be developed and the production of organic legumes, including in forage systems, to be stimulated in the European Union, in order to decrease the dependency of the organic sector on imports; urges the Commission to draw up a dedicated strategic plan in this regard;
65. Welcomes the contribution of organic farming to the reduction of the use of synthetic pesticides and calls on the Commission, when drafting the new legislation on the sustainable use of pesticides, to define biocontrol products and to increase the availability of biocontrol solutions and natural substances, which have scope for much wider use, by improving and speeding up the evaluation and authorisation process;
66. Reminds the Commission and the Member States of Parliament's resolution of 15 February 2017 on low-risk pesticides of biological origin<sup>1</sup> and stresses the need to support the development of safe, effective and affordable alternative plant protection products, and to encourage their wider use, in particular by easing both the authorisation procedure for basic substances and the extension of their use, as an important component in the development of organic production; highlights the need to create the conditions for equal access to organic plant protection products and fertilisers in the Member States; stresses that pesticide residues, which are present in the environment, may potentially affect organic products as well;
67. Points out that organic farmers, who guarantee high environmental standards in production, must not be held responsible for risks outside of their control and calls on the Commission to further promote harmonisation in the handling of pesticide residue findings;
68. Highlights the importance of sufficiently available, high-quality organic seeds, heterogeneous material and high-yielding plant varieties, native varieties and locally adapted varieties; points out their potential in strengthening resilience against plant diseases and the impact of climate change; encourages the Commission and the Member States to step up efforts, including through specific actions, to improve the functioning of the organic seed market and believes that transitional periods would be helpful in achieving this; calls on the Commission to ensure that sufficient financial resources are allocated to research into organic seeds and animal breeding;
69. Highlights the importance of supporting programmes for the preservation and selection of local breeds which, given their robustness, are particularly suited to organic farming; stresses the need to support traditional crop breeding for the development of healthy and

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, p. 184.

resilient varieties and also the need for modern, sustainable and innovative methods when developing new organic seeds and agricultural practices, maintaining a high level of protection of human health and the environment;

70. Highlights, in this context, the role that scientific innovations in plant breeding can play, in particular in improving the resistance of varieties, in fostering the diversity of genetic resources and in strengthening food production systems, while recalling that the use of genetically modified (GMO) seeds is not permitted in organic agriculture;
  71. Supports the Commission's intention to extend the EU Market Observatories' analysis to organic products; stresses the importance of intensifying the collection and improving the availability of accurate and timely data, including at regional level, on the organic sector so as to better appreciate its environmental, economic and social effects;
  72. Believes that this should include data on the sector's contribution to environmental sustainability, together with data on production, processing, consumption, including in the hospitality sector and in public canteens, on trade within the EU and with non-EU countries and on farm gate and retail prices, consumer preferences, supply chain structures, added value and farmers' share in supply chains; is convinced that this data is essential in order to shape and monitor EU policy on organic production and take action to remedy supply and demand imbalances, evaluate consumption and production trends and increase transparency and confidence in the sector;
  73. Recognises the potential of a common European agriculture data space to increase consumer knowledge and trust, as well as to improve traceability in the organic supply chain; emphasises that in order to stimulate demand, it is essential to identify consumer needs through relevant assessments; calls on the Member States to better communicate on the organic sector's economic results; calls on the Commission to conduct comprehensive studies and analyses of the impact that an increase in organic farming would have in terms of both climate change and food security in the European Union;
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74. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.