Improving inputs in organic farming - new Horizon 2020 project 'RELACS' started

LEUVEN, 28 May 2018 – The partners of the 'Replacement of Contentious Inputs in Organic Farming Systems' (RELACS) project gathered to kick-off the RELACS project in Leuven, Belgium. At the kick-off meeting, Project Coordinator Dr. Lucius Tamm said: "RELACS provides a unique opportunity for farmer organisations, advisory services and researchers to work together and contribute to even higher environmental standards in organic farming".

Organic farmers adhere to high standards in producing quality food while protecting the environment. However, organic farming needs to improve continuously to keep meeting its ambitious objectives. RELACS will foster the development and adoption of cost-efficient and environmentally safe tools and technologies to:

- Reduce the use of copper and mineral oil in plant protection,
- Identify sustainable sources for plant nutrition, and
- Provide solutions to support livestock health and welfare.

As a system approach to sustainable agriculture, organic farming aims to effectively manage ecological processes whilst lowering dependence on off-farm inputs. The RELACS partners will evaluate solutions to further reduce the use of inputs across Europe as well as in countries on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean. The project partners will provide scientific support to develop fair and implementable EU rules to improve current practices in organic farming. Farm advisory networks in 11 European countries will reach out to farmers to ensure effective dissemination and adoption of the tools and techniques.

RELACS builds on results of previous research projects and takes far-advanced solutions forward. The project was developed by involving actors from research, farming, advisory services and industry from the very start hence implementing a truly multi-actor approach. RELACS has 28 partners from 11 countries.

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The project partners are: the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) Switzerland (coordinator), **Fondazione Edmund Mach (Italy), Università degli studi di Trento (Italy)**, Julius Kühn-Institut Bundesforschungsinstitut für Kulturpflanzen (Germany), IFOAM EU (Belgium), the Soil Association (the United Kingdom), Asociación Valor Ecológico, CAAE - Ecovalia (Spain), Federazione Italiana Agricoltura Biologica e Biodinamica (Italy), Öko-Obstbau Norddeutschland : Versuchs- und Beratungsring e.V. (Germany), Foundation for organic Agriculture Bioselena (Bulgaria), Eesti Mahepollumajanduse Sihtasutus (Estonia), Bioforum Vlaanderen (Belgium), Naturland - Verband für ökologischen Landbau e. V. (Germany), Økologisk Landsforening (Denmark), Scotland's Rural College (the United Kingdom), Københavns Universitet (Denmark), Universitaet Hohenheim (Germany), Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (Italy), Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique (France), Fédération des Eleveurs Et Vétérinaires En Convention (FEVEC, France), Institut de l'Élevage (France), Institut Technique Interprofessionnel des Plantes à Parfum Médicinales et Aromatiques (France), Adage35 (France), Thünen-Institut (Germany), NIBIO - Norsk Instituti for Biookonomi (Norway), Okologiai Mezogazdasagi Kutatointezet (Hungary), Trifolio-M GmbH (Germany), SubstainTec GmbH (Switzerland), BiPA NV (Belgium).

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