

Nürnberg, Germany 13.-16.2.2024

# BIOFACH2024

into organic



PRESS RELEASE

August 2023

## Food for the Future: Women's Impact on Sustainable Food Systems

- Congress theme for BIOFACH 2024 focuses on the transformative power of women

From 13–16 February 2024, the next round of BIOFACH, the World's Leading Trade Fair for Organic Food, will take place at Exhibition Centre Nuremberg. Parallel to the exhibition, the BIOFACH Congress also offers a venue for discussion, networking, and shaping the sector. Every year, the event's international patron IFOAM – Organics International, and national supporting organization, the German Federation of Organic Food Producers (BÖLW) decide on one topic that will be the focus of the congress. This time around, it is the transformative and creative power of women in the food sector and their role in achieving a more sustainable future for our food system.

**Tina Andres**, the chair of peak organic body BÖLW: "When it comes to shaping the future of foodstuffs, the organic system plays a pioneering role. However, in many agricultural sectors it is still "business as usual", which impairs our ability to feed future generations. Organic farming has turned the tide. And the same holds for women. We are seeing more and more women who are developing strategic, integrated, cost-effective solutions along the ecological supply chain to tackle the social, political and intergenerational change that is urgently necessary. We want to make women in the food and farming industry visible. Women who are independent and indispensable as change agents, key players and role models."

**Veranstalter  
Organizer**

NürnbergMesse GmbH  
Messezentrum  
90471 Nürnberg  
Germany  
T +49 9 11 86 06-0  
F +49 9 11 86 06-82 28  
info@biofach.de  
www.biofach.de  
www.biofach.com

**Vorsitzender des Aufsichtsrates  
Chairman of the Supervisory Board**

Marcus König  
Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Nürnberg  
Lord Mayor of the City of Nuremberg

**Geschäftsführer  
CEOs**

Prof. Dr. Roland Fleck  
Peter Ottmann

**Registergericht  
Registration Number**

HRB 761 Nürnberg

**Internationaler Schirmherr  
International patron**



**Nationaler Ideeller Träger  
National supporting organization**

**BÖLW**  
Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft

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“The future is female,” **Tina Andres** is convinced. “Highly motivated and creative women are permanently changing the future of food and agriculture. All over the world, women are breaking through glass ceilings with courage and resolve and are developing sustainable innovations to improve agriculture from field to plate. Women are building integrative teams that contribute a wide range of standpoints to the decision-making process, which ultimately increases our chances for success for humans and the planet. In this way, the organic sector will attract the talent it needs for its future viability.”

**Steffen Waris**, Exhibition Director BIOFACH and VIVANESS: “This year’s congress theme is specifically about inviting a change of perspective. Through this topic, the industry is highlighting the power and positive impact of gender equality on a sustainable future for this planet. In this context, women are a driving force, and in the spirit of gender equality, which is also one of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (SDG No. 5), it is important for all of us, regardless of gender, to work together to create diversity, inclusion and equity!”

## **Re-imagining agriculture and re-evaluating the economy**

Kate Raworth has questioned conventional economic theories with her doughnut model. The “renegade economist” has extended the concept of satisfying the necessities of life within planetary boundaries to include human well-being. The “doughnut economy” encourages us to move away from the concept of endless growth and embrace an economic model that is regenerative and distributive. The aim is to create a safe and socially just space for everyone. As Kate Raworth writes: “A study of all 50 US federal states revealed that those states with significant power imbalances in respect of income and ethnicity have weaker environmental policies and do greater harm to the environment.” Moreover, a study in over 50 countries showed that the greater inequality in a country, the more likely it is that the biodiversity of its landscape will be under threat.



As the agri-food industry is a major employer of both men and women, its sustainable transformation would have far-reaching consequences. It would allow communities not just to survive, but also to thrive in the future. To achieve this, women need to be involved in the decision-making processes, so that the sector can benefit from their insights and specialist expertise. In this context, the organic system can be ahead of its times by exhausting the full potential of women – whether they are preserving seeds, safeguarding traditional agricultural knowledge, or running companies – while at the same time striving for fairness for everyone.

**Karen Mapusua, President IFOAM – Organics International:** “Equality of opportunity is not enough!” People have different starting points, therefore genuine inclusion and belonging call for equitable measures. Equality recognises that everyone has different circumstances and allocates the right resources and opportunities that are needed for an equal outcome. Equality means giving everyone the same ladder to pick mangoes from the top of a tree. Equity means that we recognise that we cannot all use the same ladder and that we need to give everyone different resources to reach the top in their own way.”

The OECD points out that “fostering gender inclusion can have positive impacts on the food systems’ triple challenge of ensuring food security and nutrition for a growing population, supporting the livelihoods of millions of people working in the food supply chain, and doing so in an environmentally sustainable way”.<sup>1</sup> This means that measures have to be taken to offset the historical, cultural and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from working under the same conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/publications/gender-and-food-systems-355ba4ee-en.htm>



The US State Department points out how the future could look with more diversity and integration: “Studies have shown that companies with more gender-balanced leadership have stronger commitments to sustainable business practices. One such study surveying more than 11,700 companies found that having at least 30% women on companies’ boards improved climate governance and reduced emissions growth rates.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Women in the organic sector – what do the data say?**

“Although it is known that there are more than 3.7 million organic producers in 191 countries on more than 76 million hectares of land, we do not have any data broken down by gender. This information would allow decision-makers to develop equitable political measures to improve the living conditions of male and female organic farmers everywhere,” says **Tina Andres** from **BÖLW**. “Business also has a role to play here, by creating and maintaining an integrative corporate culture to attract the next generation of talents and ensure that organic farming remains one of the fastest growing sectors in agriculture.”

**Karen Mapusua, IFOAM:** “Organic farming plays a key role in shaping sustainable food systems. It can also play a leading role in ensuring that agriculture becomes more integrative and recognises and appreciates all forms of diversity. In this way, we can make sure that we can feed and employ future generations sustainably, and finally put an end to ‘business as usual’.”

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.state.gov/the-power-of-women-and-girls-in-the-global-economy-womens-entrepreneurship-day-2022/#:~:text=Studies%20have%20shown%20that%20companies,and%20reduced%20emissions%20growth%20rates.>

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## **Submit your ideas and help shape the 2024 congress!**

From mid-August you can submit your proposals for the BIOFACH Congress on the BIOFACH website at [www.biofach.de/congress](http://www.biofach.de/congress). The Call for Ideas will then begin. In the various forums, including on the topics of sustainability, politics and science, the way forward will be paved through lively exchanges between all players along the supply chain. For more organic products, more sustainability, and more gender equality.

## **Contact for press and media**

Barbara Böck, Saskia Viedts

T. +49 911 86 06-83 29

M. [press@biofach.de](mailto:press@biofach.de)

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[www.biofach.de/en/press](http://www.biofach.de/en/press) and [www.vivaness.de/press](http://www.vivaness.de/press)