

Nürnberg, Germany 13.-16.2.2024

# BIOFACH

into organic



PRESS RELEASE

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## BIOFACH Congress 2024: Gender equality as a driver of lasting transformation

- Focus on the transformational power of women to create a more sustainable future for the food system.

**At the trade fair in February 2024, the BIOFACH Congress will illustrate the role of women in the food sector in creating a more sustainable future. Organic farmer Laura Kulow and Farm-to-Table initiator Alice Waters are shining examples of the kind of influence women can have on achieving a lasting transformation of the food system.**

The Congress theme for BIOFACH 2024 focuses on the transformational power of women in the food sector and their role in creating a more sustainable future for the organic food system. In making this choice, international patron IFOAM – Organics International and national supporting organization Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (German Federation of the Organic Food Industry, BÖLW) are breaking new ground by providing more encouragement for gender equality. And highlighting what women are achieving in this seemingly male-dominated sector. “We are seeing an increasing number of women who are developing strategic, end-to-end, practical solutions all along the organic value chain,” says Tina Andres, Chair of national organic association BÖLW. “These women are making lasting changes to the future of food and agriculture.” The choice of Congress theme is aimed at improving their visibility.

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## **Organic is not enough for her: Kulow wants to make her business even healthier for the planet**

Laura Kulow runs a 500-hectare agricultural organic grain farm in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany. Together with nine other businesses, she is among the pioneers who joined Bohlsener Mühle in performing a regional value/performance calculation, a means of working out the monetary value of the public services performed by farmers at a social, environmental and regional economic level. Kulow is convinced: "This calculation makes our contribution to more sustainable agriculture visible. That enables greater appreciation and, in particular, a process of continuous improvement." She is therefore one of the first to have drawn specific conclusions from the results, and is now planning to plant a new agroforest in order to improve her contribution in the area of "habitat creation" on a lasting basis.

## **Alice Waters' philosophy: an inspiration for an entire movement**

Alice Waters was one of the first cooks to highlight the importance of seasonal, local and organically grown foodstuffs. In the early 1970s she opened the restaurant "Chez Panisse" in Berkeley, California, which was one of the first Farm-to-Table restaurants in the US. Today she is celebrated as an activist and founder of this global movement. "I realized that the people who take care of the land are precious and need to be paid for the hard work they do. I didn't think that was radical," Waters asserts. "To me it seemed natural: We take care of the land; we celebrate the harvest; we use seasonal, local ingredients to cook together; and we sit down at the table to eat.<sup>1</sup> Her philosophy has inspired many people to be more conscious of how and what they eat, and to appreciate the quality of their foodstuffs.

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<sup>1</sup> Beard, A. (2017, May). *Life's Work: An Interview with Alice Waters*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2017/05/alice-waters>

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## True sustainability is possible only with gender equality

The Congress theme is not only intended to highlight positive examples. The numbers show that there is still a lot to do in the area of gender equality. In the OECD countries, male owners still predominate in businesses in the agricultural sector.<sup>2</sup> In this connection, 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>2</sup>

The BIOFACH Congress will be held in Nuremberg in parallel with the Trade Fair, from 13 to 16 February 2024. In-depth interaction along the entire value chain in various forums will pave the path to the future: Toward more organics, more sustainability, and more gender equality.

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<sup>2</sup> Giner, C., Hobeika, M. & Fischetti, C. (2022) Gender and food systems: Overcoming evidence gaps. *OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers*, No. 184, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/355ba4ee-en>.

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