



## A LOOK AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF IFOAM IN ITS FIRST 25 YEARS

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Building up on the vivid memories of Mary Langman and Denis Bourgeois, our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and this publication give us a good opportunity to reflect on the development of our federation.

Definitely a lot has changed in the last 25 years for the organic agriculture movement. Back in 1972 "organic" people were not only radical in its best sense really going to the "roots", but also were seen by many as marginal and eccentric. Part of the success story of the organic agriculture movement is the fact that these attitudes have changed dramatically. Yet looking at the early history of IFOAM one cannot deny that the spirit of the late sixties is reflected in the way how the federation started to develop its structure. A hierarchical way was not at all favoured to develop the structure of the federation. Therefore, it was decided that "the federation has no president but responsible people (nominated or elected by each group or committee) for each mission or action". But to be registered under French law as a non-profit organisation there was the demand to name a president or at least three responsible persons. Obviously IFOAM opted for the second possibility and named Claude Aubert as Secretary General, Roland Chevriot as Treasurer and Denis Bourgeois (all from France) as Administrator of the General Secretariat. Three more persons were named in what was then the predecessor of what we call nowadays World Board of Directors. Besides Jerome Goldstein (USA) there was Lady Eve Balfour (UK) and Pauline Raphaely (South Africa). The two women in responsible positions of the early IFOAM reflect the fact that women indeed played already an important role in the early development of IFOAM. Besides Lady Balfour and Pauline Raphaely, Karin Mundt and Mary Langman have to be named in this context.

### THE SEVENTIES...

One of the main aims of the federation, to exchange information, started to become reality with the first circular letter, which was published in February 1973. Already in 1974 at the General Assembly in Paris the young federation expressed itself ready to support a full time secretariat. Yet this was to remain a wish and dream for another 13 years! But as Mary Langman has described, there were people with great dedication, willing to carry out the administrative function and coordination in their spare time thus keeping FOAM alive and going.

Building up on the 5 founding member organisations, the federation was already grown by 1975 to 50 member organisations from 17 nations.

At the third General Assembly in 1976 in Seengen/Switzerland it was decided to elect a "Comité Directeur Provisoire" (provisional Board of Directors), which brought together in addition to the already mentioned responsible persons of the early years Elliot Coleman, Anthony Deaven, Winnifred Felderer, Mary Langman, Karin Mundt Georg Siebeneicher, Hans Staub und Hardy Vogtmann. The latter accepted the responsibility as General Secretary and in addition to the Board of Directors, a coordination committee with representatives from the various working groups was established. This coordinating committee became actually the responsible structure for IFOAM. We learn from the proceedings of the IFOAM conference in 1977 that the federation was active in four working groups: agricultural techniques/third world, education, communication and research. The members of each working group elected two representatives, who formed the coordination committee of IFOAM. The responsibility for the secretariat had to be taken over by one of the member organisations for a minimum time of two years. The General Secretary was elected by the General Assembly every two years and was also member of the committee making it up to a group of 9 persons being the IFOAM leadership. By the way, the budget for

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1976 was only 6,000 US Dollars - so it was people and not money who built up the Federation.

As IFOAM grew constantly and time changed, it was at the General Assembly in 1978 in Montreal/Canada that it was decided to give the federation a new structure. Now the federation had an executive bureau. Hardy Vogtmann continued to function as General Secretary assisted by Elliot Coleman, by Sam Smith as Treasurer and by Denis Bourgeois. The coordinating committee was composed of the meanwhile six existing working groups. IFOAM had developed beyond the borders of Europe and North America and among the many people in the various working groups there were now persons coming from Bolivia, South America, Togo, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

Since 1978 there was a change in regard to IFOAM's publication. Bulletins were now published in the USA and Germany and the Internal Letter was edited separately. It became necessary to exclude internal matters of the federation from the bulletins because their readership was far wider than IFOAM membership. The IFOAM secretariat moved to Topsfield/ Mass. in the USA with Elliot Coleman taking over the responsibility as General Secretary from Hardy Vogtmann. IFOAM had united meanwhile more than 80 member organisations from 30 nations. During this time, the important Standards Committee started to develop the IFOAM Basic Standards.

## **THE EIGHTIES...**

The documents from 1981 show that IFOAM was clearly in a crisis. Hardy Vogtmann, Denis Bourgeois and Karin Mundt had again to continue to carry the main workload of the federation. The budget situation was very serious with having only about 11,000 Dollars available. The calculation showed that some 50,000 Dollars were needed to establish the urgently needed full time General Secretariat. The members were asked to increase their contribution significantly, otherwise it was foreseen that IFOAM would come to an end after its first decade. Again it was felt that besides the professional services of a paid General Secretary, a new structure was also needed.

IFOAM continued to feel the increasing need for a full time and paid General Secretary, while finances still did not allow such a step. Fortunately, Gunnar Videgard, then director of Naturstiftelsen in Sweden, accepted the responsibility to become General Secretary on a voluntary basis. He was, together with the very appreciated assistance of his wife Airi, for 5 years "in charge" of IFOAM. He also functioned as Treasurer of the federation and because of his good financial management it was finally possible in 1987 to install and finance a professional General Secretariat.

In 1982 in Boston/USA Hardy Vogtmann became a honorary president "in the chair". New names and activists got involved in the coordination committee with William Lockeretz, Immo Lünzer, Troels Ostergaard, Richard Widdowson, Cherif Zaouch and Lawrence Woodward.

Then the leadership structure of IFOAM was named Board of Directors and with Manuel Mondejar and Dick Harwood new people were involved. Lawrence Woodward accepted the role as Chairman of the Board.

Quite a change in the leadership of IFOAM took place with the election of the new Board during the 1984 General Assembly in Witzenhausen/Germany, where the following 7 persons were elected: Engelhard Boehncke, Troels Ostergaard, Lawrence Woodward, Terry Gips, Victoria Padilla, Dagmar Kieffer and Philippe Desbrosses. IFOAM networked meanwhile more than 100 member organisations in 50 countries and it was estimated that these organisations represented a total of about 100,000 individuals. Engelhard Boehncke took over the role as Chairman of the Board from Lawrence Woodward for the four years to come. The possibility of electing members to the Board was used to its fullest potential by co-opting

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Gloria Da Gruz, Nancy Nickum-Bailey, Immo Lünzer and Otto Schmid. In November 1985, an announcement seeking a full time manager for IFOAM was finally published. Yet it was a very long process and took almost a year and a half until this task was finally entrusted to me in February 1987. It seems that the federation was once more facing in the mid eighties turbulences and there was for a while a stagnation and even a slight reduction in the membership development. But one also could say it was only a short period of getting ready for a "stormy" development of IFOAM during its next five years. In this period, IFOAM grew from 100 member organisations to around 500 (!) members and associates in 75 countries. With clearer structures for the federation, the professional secretariat and a very active Board, IFOAM's period of great expansion was well prepared. Some factors for this incredible development were definitely the increasing importance of organic agricultural methods and thus the growing interest for this approach in countries of the so-called third world and in countries considered to be behind the "iron curtain". Part of this fast network development was also due to the fact that the membership of IFOAM overcame a bit what could be described as "mercantophobia". Processors and traders representing the organic industry and their respective organisations found increasing interest to join IFOAM and use it as a platform for cooperation with all the people involved in the organic food chain, from producer to consumer.

A real opening up to the countries of the so-called third world can be dated back to the IFOAM scientific conference in Santa Cruz/California in 1986. Many participants, especially from Latin America, gave inspirations and the mood of the time was reflected with the decision to hold the next IFOAM conference for the first time ever in the southern hemisphere in Ouagadougou/Burkina Faso.

At the turn from 1986 to 1987 the General Secretariat was handed over from Gunnar Videgard to me and Karin Rauber. IFOAM's headquarters moved from near Cannes in France to Tholey-Theley in Germany and for the first time in the history of IFOAM the federation had its own office spaces. I remember taking over some 12 boxes in Cannes with the only equipment owned by IFOAM being an old mechanical French typewriter. A fundraising appeal to the membership was quite successful and we soon had some 25,000 DM available to buy necessary equipment like a copy machine, computer, electrical typewriter and soon a fax to really be able to communicate and network the organic movement around the world.

The following persons were from 1986 on, responsible for the fate of the federation:

Engelhard Boehncke (President), Lawrence Woodward (Vice President), Matthias Zimmermann, Immo Lünzer, Jan Diek van Mansvelt, Philippe Desbrosses, Warren Sahs and Bernd Neugebauer. Wanda Schmidt and Emmanuel Nikiema were coopted to the Board. Gunnar Videgard was not officially on the Board, but continued to function as Treasurer. Among the increasing activities of this Board, a major revision of the IFOAM statutes was drafted with the assistance of our new legal consultant Hanspeter Schmidt and finally accepted at the General Assembly in Ouagadougou.

During this time, IFOAM got also quite involved in lobbying activities to assure that the planned regulation for organic food production in the European Community became really an acceptable contribution for the further development of organic agriculture. A so-called EC Delegation and later the EC Committee took over this responsibility. At the same time the Technical Committee worked on a major revision of the IFOAM Basic Standards, but already considerations were started to restructure IFOAM's activities in this field. Initiated in Santa Cruz, the federation had started to develop an evaluation programme for certification members and during the process it became obvious that there must be a separation of powers within IFOAM's activities, which eventually led to the creation of a Standards Committee, Programme Evaluation Committee and Accreditation Committee.

One can say that after 15 years the foundation was laid 1986 in Santa Cruz to really develop IFOAM into a global network of the organic movement and many new activities were started. Special topic oriented

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conferences like the international conferences on non-chemical weed control and organic trade conferences were organised. Many workshops and scientific meetings contributed to the further development of the movement. In 1988 Franz Frey started to build up at the General Secretariat the meanwhile very impressive information and documentation archive and we managed to revive in cooperation with Elm Farm Research Center/UK the English Bulletin, which was not published for a long time. The Bulletin meanwhile developed to the IFOAM magazine "Ecology and Farming" with Sue Stolton as editor in chief and there was a steady increase of IFOAM publications like proceedings, the Inspection Guide and our best selling Membership Directory. IFOAM got also more and more involved in promoting and lobbying for the organic cause on international level. IFOAM was granted an official status with the United Nations Department of Information and cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) started. The World Health Organisation (WHO), UNCTAD; World Bank, The World Trade Organisation (WTO), Greenpeace, WWF, Via Campesina and many other international institutions and non-governmental organisations have become at least dialogue partners or even allies.

At the General Assembly in Ouagadougou 1989, the new Statutes and the new Basic Standards were approved and the following Board of Directors elected: Jan Diek van Mansvelt (President), Bernd Neugebauer (Vice President), Carl Haest (Treasurer), Angela Escosteguy Aurvalle, Wanda Schmidt, Bob Crowder, Matthias Zimmermann, Emmanuel Nikiema and Ferenc Frühwald. Thomas Harding was co-opted to the Board.

## **THE NINETIES...**

When it was decided in Ouagadougou to hold the next IFOAM scientific conference in Budapest, nobody could foresee the dramatic changes coming up soon in eastern and central Europe. But once more, IFOAM was at the right time at the right location. The conference in 1990 brought together some 700 participants coming from at least 60 countries all over the world. Starting already in Ouagadougou and continuing up to now, major efforts have been made to assure through sponsoring programmes, participation from countries of the so-called second and third world at such IFOAM events.

Again a new Board of Directors was elected at the General Assembly in Budapest Jan Diek van Mansvelt, Rainer Bächli, Tadeu Caldas, Bob Crowder, Carl Haest, Thomas Harding, Jan von Ledebur and Pierre Ott. Following a motion of the General Assembly, Elena Regpala was co-opted. An Executive Board was presented and confirmed by the General Assembly with Jan Diek van Mansvelt as President, Thomas Harding as Vice President and Pierre Ott as Treasurer. The establishment of various new committees and the "Third World" Task Force took a lot of energy and with a two year project and employment of Gerd Schnepel at the General Secretariat, IFOAM could start to develop the potential of networking in Latin America resulting in an increase of IFOAM members in this part of the world from 7 member organisations within 3 years to 85 members. The first serious steps were made towards a decentralisation of IFOAM on continental levels, building up on regional cooperation. By establishing rules of procedure for the Board of Directors, as well as policy documents and with the set up of an IFOAM Court of Arbitration, the federation was getting the needed structure to function on a global scale with the necessary transparency and reliability. In 1991 Laurence Leduc from France joined IFOAM's staff, replacing Karin Rauber who expected a baby and went on maternity..

The World looked at Brasil in summer 1992, where the United Nations Conference on Environment Development (UNCED) took place in Rio. There, IFOAM had scheduled a meeting of its World Board and was very active to position organic agriculture. It was in Rio where our first serious dialogue with FAO began (but it should take another five years until we were officially recognised as liaison to the FAO). It was IFOAM who organised the first major international conference on environmental issues after the events in Rio with the 9<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference taking place in Sao Paulo in

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November. This was also the place to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary-“regionally correct” with a fantastic percussion orchestra. The celebration was the right frame to present our new IFOAM Recognition Award to many people who have served our movement so actively. Impressive and heart moving was also the first public performance of the IFOAM Anthem presented on stage by the ad hoc founded “UNO”-choir (United Nations of Organic).

### IFOAM ANTHEM

In all the world the need is felt  
To make a drastic change  
A choice for life, a choice for health  
Ever wider is the range  
So let us sing to living soil  
Organic farmers' pride  
IFOAM brings us all together  
To reach this goal worldwide  
they herd the cows, they plant the seeds  
Not only humans do they feed  
Also water, soil and air  
So let us sing to living soil  
Organic farmers' pride  
IFOAM brings us together  
To reach this goal worldwide  
May all our children and their children  
Live on a greener earth  
For their inherit all our deeds  
That is what makes it worth  
So let us sing to living soil  
Organic farmers' pride  
Join hands and may the work be blessed  
To reach this goal worldwide

(melody: Auld Land Syne)

The General Assembly elected its new World Board of Directors with Thomas Harding as President, Sue Millner as Vice-President, Coen van Beuningen as Treasurer and Rainer Bächli, Tadeu Caldas, Enrique Kolmans, Jan van Ledebur and Hervé La Prairie. John Njoroge was co-opted. It was at the Sao Paulo GA that the IFOAM Accreditation Programme was approved and subsequently could be implemented (For more details about the Accreditation Programme, reference is made to the report on page ...). We had also very engaged debates on the question whether we should continue to distinguish (many felt to “discriminate”) between profit and non-profit making organisations in regard to voting rights at the GA. A motion in this context introduced by the Board was defeated a solution was worked out with a night long debate lasting until 2 o'clock in the morning. The compromise offered IFOAM corporate associates (categorised as profit making) to jointly cast one vote with three written endorsement. This voting procedure was only valid for the next GA to get experience and find hopefully a better solution.

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We started 1993 well off with a kind of local celebration of our anniversary featuring as keynote speaker Germany's Environmental Minister Prof. Töpfer, who gave a very encouraging speech. Our guests celebrated the anniversary also with a fine example of organic dining and eating culture, sitting together until the early hours of the morning. Another little jubilee was the publication of Internal Letter No. 50 (starting to come with the first International Letter in 1978). It was this year when one could really say that IFOAM finally has been able to follow one of its most important mandates: to represent the organic movement in the international arena. We had something like an outreach boom receiving the highest possible observer and liaison status at the United Nations in the follow-up of the UNCED conference. We also started to work together with UNCTAD and joint the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which is still the only international network to which IFOAM is affiliated. Thanks to the inspirations of the new editor in chief for our Ecology and Farming magazine, Sue Stolton we could present a new modern and appealing design of our magazine.

After three years of preparation, we could publish IFOAM's project proposal "Organic Agriculture until 1999", consisting of seven interactive projects to donors. Yet, it should take another three years until we really could start to implement this ambitious programme.

The Standards Committee started to work out social guidelines and continued his never ending work of revising and improving the standards. We had three highlight events in that year with the 1<sup>st</sup> IFOAM Organic Cotton Conference to take place in Cairo/Egypt, the 3<sup>rd</sup> IFOAM Trade Conference in Baltimore/USA and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Central and Eastern European IFOAM Regional Conference in Rudolec/Czech Republic which brought also thirteen Ministers and Vice-ministers of Agriculture and Environment together for the policy maker symposium. Their meeting and the public were addressed with a challenging declaration (see also page ...).

Yet, there was a shadow over all these successes and new activities, which can only be described as financial crisis. Unexpected, we were confronted with the fact of significant reduction and worse no payment of membership fees. Toward the end of the year, it became clear that we had a gap of around 50.000 DM of unpaid fees. This was about 20% of the total budget and required painful emergency measures. We had actually started the hiring procedure in the beginning of this year for a new full time staff. Now we had not only to stop this activity, but actually to reduce staff. This led to the situation that at the end of this year, we were back to only two persons in the General Secretariat. Cash flow was not enough to pay salaries in December! In this difficult situation it paid off that we had with our new Treasurer also a good economist, who was instrumental to steer IFOAM through the "stormy seas".

Another highlight of that year was the fact that Hervé La Prairie and myself were received by Icelandics very popular President Ms. Finbogadottir. Not only did she interrupt her holiday to meet us in Reykjavik - she was also well informed about Rudolf Steiner, the biodynamic and organic movement and expressed full support for our cause. I think it was the first time that an IFOAM delegation was received by a Head of State, setting the stage for meetings with the Presidents of Kenya and Costa Rica in the next year.

The year 1994 did not only bring high level meetings with Presidents, but for our movement much more important was the "conversion" from the Third World Task Force to an IFOAM Working Group, which has a higher status in our organisational structure and gave a long term perspective to this important group. After the rising up of the indigenous people in the coffee growing region of Chiappas in Mexico, it was once more the right time and place to get the organic movement together for the 1<sup>st</sup> International Organic Coffee Conference precisely in Chiappas. It was the most appropriate place in the world to show the unity between organic agriculture and fair trade, being able to offer not only hope but concrete perspectives of the living conditions of indigenous people and farm labourers.

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This year we worked on an official IFOAM mission statement with a lots of drafts and proposals balancing every word that should make up our mission statement. Regionalisation started to become a reality for our movement in Africa with a first Workshop in Kenya.

A lot of preparation went into the highlight event of 1994 with the 10<sup>th</sup> IFOAM Scientific Conference to take place in New Zealand. An amazing 800 people from 60 countries came together to this successful event way “down-under” (see also Bob Crowder’s contribution on page ...).

A new motion proposal to come to a more appropriate membership structure was in the centre of discussion at the GA. A great step forward was the decision to distinguish in the future not between profit and non-profit, but rather whether a member group is meanwhile predominantly (more than 50%) active in the field of organic farming. This motion has been successfully implemented and guarantees that the democratic “control” of our federation is with the organic movement. Once more, a new World Board was elected bringing us with Hervé La Prairie a new President and with Linda Bullard a new Vice-president. Coen van Beuningen continued to be our Treasurer and Rainer Bächli, Bob Crowder, Ranjith de Silva, John Njoroge and Ursula Soltysiak were additionally elected to the World Board. To guarantee a world-wide representation of our movement, it was decided to co-opt Roni Brunner, Miguel Nunez and Gerald Herrmann. The new composition of our World Board was not only a significant improvement in gender representation with now three women on board. For the first time in the history of the federation, the World Board was composed with representatives from all continents (including North and South America). Laurence Leduc was happy to become Administrator instead of Secretary as recognition of her ever growing tasks and responsibilities.

The year 1995 had a busy start with the 4<sup>th</sup> IFOAM Organic Trade Conference to take place in Frankfurt/Germany in conjunction with the Biofach Fair, for which IFOAM also functions since this year as Patron. The world largest and most serious organic trade fair is ever since a great platform for our movement, and with the patronage of our federation, we are very closely linked to this event, which is such an excellent showcase for our organic holistic lifestyle approach, which was probably the strongest message from the previous conference in New Zealand.

With the Internal Letter No. 55, we changed to a new A4 format concentrating really only on internal information of the federation. This was possible because a lot of more general information was now integrated in the magazine “Ecology and Farming” which got better and more attractive with every issue. The new and more compact format of the Internal Letter allowed us also soon to translate and print a Spanish version improving significantly our communication. We were able to get Lothar Spohn to our team being funded by an employment programme of the German government with the task to do a survey and publish a directory on training and educational opportunities in organic farming in moderate climate zones. This directory complemented the publication, focusing on training in tropical climate zones, giving now a world-wide overview about education possibilities for organic agriculture.

The necessary steps were taken to establish the Asia IFOAM Region at the 2<sup>nd</sup> IFOAM Asia Regional Conference in South Korea, which was the first one to be approved in 1996.

In this year, we received finally major funding from the Dutch Ministry of Cooperation and NOVIB to implement the “Organic Agriculture 1999” project. It was another historical step for our federation and movement to get involved in project implementation. The grant totalled almost 3 million DM to be spent over a period of three years and was instrumental in developing further the organic movement in the Southern continents Asia, Africa and Latin America. More than 200 projects have been carried out meanwhile with the most challenging project being probably the one on data collection and comparison study, which is now looking for subsequent funding in the range of 2 million DM.

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In the preparatory phase of our 11<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference in Copenhagen/Denmark, we installed our IFOAM homepage after we had already established our email communication link in the previous years. A new record was set with 1.000 participants from 92 countries coming to the conference in Denmark. The official recognition of the organic agriculture movement and the advanced development of organic farming and trade in Denmark was reflected by the fact that three different Ministers (of Agriculture, Environment and Commerce) addressed the conference and the 1<sup>st</sup> Organic World Exhibition, which was another highlight of that year. Staged for the first time, it was an immediate success with 300 exhibitors from all over the world and 25.000 visitors being able to celebrate organic lifestyles with good food, fashion shows and exhibits.

Since the conference 1989 in Ouagadougou, we were continuously able to raise great amounts of money to guarantee the participation of people coming from the Third World at our IFOAM conferences and General Assemblies. So, it was once more possible to have a fair representation of our membership together for the General Assembly in Copenhagen. That year the debate focused on the revision of the standards, and especially, on the presented social guidelines which were proposed to become part of the standards. Observers were pleased with the fair (and sometimes emotional) debates and the constructive struggle to improve and develop further our IFOAM basic standards. Certainly inspired by the regionalisation process, but obviously also because it is attractive to serve on the World Board, we could present fourteen candidates for election. The Executive Board with Hervé La Prairie as President, Linda Bullard as Vice-president and Coen van Beuningen as Treasurer was re-elected with an impressive vote of confidence. John Njoroge, Ursula Soltysiak, Gerald Herrmann and Bob Crowder continued to serve on the Board with Alexander Daniel being newly elected. With the co-optation of Pedro Gomez, again a real world-wide representation was secured in the World Board.

As second region, the German Speaking Region (D-A-CH-LUX) could be officially approved. Another highlight followed Denmark with the 2<sup>nd</sup> IFOAM Organic Textiles Conference in Bingen/Germany.

Some changes in IFOAM statutes had the consequence that we had not any more a General Secretariat, calling our home in Tholey-Theley Head Office. I was not anymore General Secretary of IFOAM. I do not care about status, but I was certainly pleased as conscientious objector not to have such a militaristic sounding phrase in my title. IFOAM had now not only one new Executive Director, because with the hiring of Thomas Cierpka, we could restructure IFOAM's administration and improve the staff situation enormously. The task are clearly divided between Thomas being in charge of internal management including finances and project, and me, being in charge of outreach, public relation, events and World Board. Our new Executive Director brought the desperately needed expertise and patience for our computer programmes, bookkeeping needs and electronic communication tools.

After quite some lobby efforts, we were successful in having at the IUCN World Congress in Canada a motion on organic agriculture approved. We also joint forces with the Green Party in the European Parliament and Vandana Shiva to challenge a patent at the European Patent Court granted for neem products to a US company.

The resolution from the Copenhagen conference was a good starting point for IFOAM's lobbying activities in the context of the World Food Summit which took place at the FAO Headquarters in Rome/Italy. Once more, we had scheduled a World Board meeting in conjunction with this event and active lobbying in the preparatory phase of this summit led to the fact that at least some (rhetoric?) reference to organic farming is made in the main document calling for action.

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Our silver jubilee year 1997 started with the meanwhile good tradition with the Biofach fair. Without doubt was the highlight the summit of Agriculture Ministers from the Nordic countries which gave a lot of attention to the fascinating and breath taking progress of organic farming in this region. The diplomatic wires were hot, preparing a joint declaration of the Nordic Ministers of Agriculture, concluding among others that *“Organic farming can play an important role in the development of a sustainable society. We will therefore promote a further positive development of organic farming and food production in the Nordic countries.”* The odds are good that we will hear such favourable statements from many more ministers in the future. A step forward in our public relation activities was the publication of our promotional brochure *“Organic Farming is Sustainable Agriculture put into Practice”*.

Following the Biofach fair, an historic joint meeting of the IFOAM Standards Committee, the International Organic Accreditation Services, the Third World Working Group and the World Board took place. This gathering brought indeed the leadership of the international organic movement together and helped enormously to meet the ever growing challenge to bring and keep the rapidly increasing IFOAM activities together. The World Board worked out a lot of policy documents and installed a Working Group on Trade and another one on genetic engineering.

Progress has been also made with the approval of the Francophone African and the Mediterranean IFOAM Regions. A Task Force was installed to inspire this process now also in North America. The liaison activities continue to increase with Greenpeace, the organic movement in the USA and IFOAM joining together to challenge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the USA for granting permission of the use of *Basilus thuringienisis* (B.t.) resistant corn and cotton seeds. This action has not only brought a lot of media attention, but puts IFOAM on the forefront of opposing the madness of genetic engineering in agriculture.

Highlight of the year was the 5<sup>th</sup> IFOAM International Trade Conference in the beautiful and historic setting of Oxford/UK. Certainly, a mirror of the fact that the organic movement is leaving its niche existence was the fact that the audience of 500 participants was addressed by video messages from Prince Charles and EU Commissioner Fischler as well as by presentations of the British Minister of Agriculture Mr. Cunningham, the Director of Greenpeace International Mr. Thilo Bode and speakers from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the FAO.

After another “regional” anniversary celebration in Tholey-Theley in March, the IFOAM anniversary festivities culminated in the celebrations in Oxford’s City Hall (see also page ...).

A first major activity of the year 1998 is the editorial work on this Anniversary Publication. Additionally we work parallel on three more publications: the next Internal Letter, the next draft proposal of our standards revision and a very important and long awaited publication on setting up certification systems. Therefore, we keep not only our printer happy, but fulfil also one of the prime task of IFOAM: dissemination of information.

Laurence Leduc is now about to go for maternity and this brings us with Ulla Dahl Hansen from Denmark and Angelo Bouritsas from Greece new colleagues to the Head Office team. We have taken over from the Netherlands the administration of “Organic Agriculture 1999” projects, which is coordinated by our new Global Project Coordinator Ilse Hoffmann. This new and urgently needed growth of our team will allow us even more “networking” and serving our international organic movement.

Right now we are preparing the next Biofach fair and getting increasingly busy to get our “acts” together for the 12<sup>th</sup> IFOAM International Scientific Conference in November in Mar del Plata/Argentina, we are

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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS  
FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES MOUVEMENTS D'AGRICULTURE BIOLOGIQUE  
FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE MOVIMIENTOS DE AGRICULTURA BIOLÓGICA  
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG BIOLOGISCHER LANDBAUBEWEGUNGEN

also already preparing for the step into the next millennium with major decisions already made for the 13<sup>th</sup> IFOAM International Scientific Conference in the year 2000 in Basel/Switzerland.

As IFOAM is moving now from its silver jubilee to the golden one in 2022, it is comforting to know that IFOAM seems to be in good shape and condition to meet the challenges and grasp the paramount opportunities for the rapid expansion of organic agriculture and sustainable lifestyles all over the world.

## **CONCLUSION**

It's only possible to maintain the activities and the speed of development in our IFOAM movement because so many people contribute their time, energy and resources to our common cause. Looking through the documents in our archive so many names appear that despite the impressive list of persons mentioned here not all who contributed so much to our global federation can be named here. I apologise to those, who have not been acknowledged for their great service to the organic movement worldwide in this article, but I hope that they see the prospering of our federation also as a reward to their contribution.

I myself feel extremely privileged to be entrusted and supported by IFOAM's members and the World Board already for so long to work for IFOAM and our international organic movement. It is not an exaggeration that although in my twelfth year at IFOAM, I have more inspiration, motivation and joy than ever to be part of the movement that brings about a fundamental "change" for the sake of humankind and our Mother Earth.

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