



Newsletter 01, December 2018

A big welcome and Season's Greetings from Project Manager Judith and Project Coordinator Ulrich. It has been an exciting start for us, with all deliverables submitted on time!

Our research is well under way including, the mapping of contentious inputs and their alternatives, consumer research, an ongoing [livestock survey](#) and we are also preparing for next year's field experiment season. At [ICOAS 2018](#) we held a joint workshop with our sister project [RELACS](#) who we continue to work with on research and dissemination. Thank you for all your input and support in 2018, Judith and Ulrich.



[See our videos on YouTube](#)

[Organic-PLUS website](#)

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Background to Organic-PLUS

Organic-PLUS is a European Horizon 2020 project comprising 25 partner organisations (universities, NGOs and other research institutions) from 9 EU and 3 non-EU countries. Whilst recognising the multiple benefits of certified organic agriculture, we are working to find alternatives to some of the contentious inputs that are currently permitted, with a view to minimising and phasing out their use. The project began in May 2018 and will continue until April 2022, during which time we will issue this newsletter every six months to update you on our progress, or for news as it happens, see the [News page](#) of our website.

Padova kick-off meeting



Organic-PLUS participants getting together at our Padova kick-off meeting

In June, after many months of working together remotely to devise Organic-PLUS, we were finally able to get together face to face at our 3 day kick-off meeting in Padova, Italy. 45 participants from our partner organisations and International Advisory Board came together to put the project into action, meeting as a group and also in smaller clusters for more specific discussion. At the meeting, we made a number of videos to explain our research and the objectives of Organic-PLUS; these can be viewed on our [YouTube channel](#).

We were lucky to be in a region which is home to several organic producers and our colleagues from the [University of Padova](#) organised farm visits including an organic dairy farm producing Parmigiano cheese and a vegan organic winery. Below is a key to those who attended the kick-off meeting; we will soon have a directory of all Organic-PLUS participants on our [website](#).



1.Tove Serup, 2.Ralf Pecenka, 3.Gunnar Vittersø, 4.Nikolaos Katsoulas, 5.Giulio Grandi, 6.Geetha Neelakantan, 7.Federico Righi, 8.Sara Burbi, 9.Ben Raskin, 10.Sang Mok Sohn, 11.Francis Rayns, 12.Rafaela Caceres, 13.M. Reza Ardakani, 14Margi Lennartson, 15.Claus Grøn Sørensen, 16.Jagdees Pabla, 17.Adrian Evans, 18.Ulrich Schmutz, 19.Frank Oudshoorn, 20.Mahesh Chander, 21.Anne-Kristin Løes, 22.Massimo De Marchi, 23.Florence Val, 24.Assumpció Antón, 25.Sophie Valleix, 26.Didier Andrivon, 27.Miguel De Cara, 28.Jens Grønbech, Hansen 29.Faye Brown, 30.Krystyna Malińska, 31.Uygun Aksoy, 32.Gabriella Cirvilleri, 33.Laura Didymus (nee Grenville-Briggs), 34.Özge Çiçekli, 35.Lucas Knebl, 36.Alev Kir, 37.Glòria Colom i Puigbò, 38.Martine Dorais, 39.Joana Amador, 40.Małgorzata Kacprzak

Introducing the Organic-PLUS work packages

Organic-PLUS is organised into six work packages (WPs) and many of our partners work in more than one: the work packages **PLANT**, **LIVESTOCK** and **SOIL** encompass the research and physical trials required to assess alternatives to contentious inputs in these aspects of agriculture. **MODEL** will evaluate the practical and economic consequences of phasing out contentious inputs and introducing alternative inputs or practices. **IMPACT** is concerned with the vital dialogue between scientists, farmers, stakeholders and the public; we want to share our research with as wide an audience as possible by providing multiple dissemination activities and feedback mechanisms. **LEAD** manages and coordinates the project, ensuring transparency across and beyond Organic-PLUS.

WP1, LEAD

It has been a busy start for WP1, beginning with

June's [kick-off meeting in Padova](#), Italy, organised with the support of the LIVESTOCK team who are mostly based in Italy. Project manager, Judith Conroy was recruited and is now fully operational and we have been working with our IMPACT colleagues, to set up communication tools such as our [website](#), [Twitter](#) feed and [YouTube channel](#) which features interviews with all WP leaders and presentations from the experts on our international advisory board.

A new UK livestock partner, the [Organic Research Centre](#) joined the consortium after a lengthy amendment process and we made contact with our sister project, the [FIBL](#) led [RELACS](#). We have discussed how the projects can work together, particularly in our dissemination activities, for example, a joint workshop we delivered at [ICOAS 2018](#) in Eisenstadt, Austria.

WP2, IMPACT



The main goal of WP2 is to aid the dialogue

between scientists, farmers, stakeholders and members of the public about contentious inputs in organic agriculture. To share our research findings, we have set up a website containing useful information about the project's goals and expected impacts. We have also created a library on [Organic e-prints](#), where we plan to upload the project's results and we have a YouTube channel, which showcases short videos by the WP leads and members of the advisory board. More regular updates and news can be found on our Twitter feed, [@OrgPLUSresearch](#).

Preparation has also begun for a comprehensive questionnaire survey of public concerns and expectations about organic food. This research is led by our project partners 'Consumption Research Norway' ([SIFO](#)) and will seek the views of 14,000 consumers across France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain and the UK.

WP3, PLANT

Participants of WP3 have been working to map the use of contentious plant inputs in 10 project partners' countries; this was done in conjunction with WP5 which had a similar task for soil inputs. We asked farmers and advisors about the production of four main crops: olives, citrus, tomatoes and potatoes, but also included other significant organic crops like strawberries and apples.

The results of this initial mapping task are now informing further work on the project. For example, some farmers who completed the mapping task gave interesting information on alternatives they are using to reduce the need for copper and

mineral oils. These initial findings were discussed at the [**IFOAM 3rd European Conference on Copper in Plant Protection**](#) in Berlin, 15th-16th November 2018.



WP4, LIVESTOCK

WP4 is reviewing alternatives to the use of antibiotics, antiparisitics, synthetic vitamins and conventional bedding material in organic livestock farming. Work began with an overview of organic livestock research from 1993 to the present day, with a deeper literature review on alternatives to antibiotics and antiparasitics. This revealed that a number of plant materials have antimicrobial effects, including: plant-derived compounds, plant by-products (peels, seeds, husk and kernels), essential oils, and plant extracts (EG, oregano [carvacrol], thyme [thymol], clove [eugenol] and garlic [allicin]). A further review of alternatives to synthetic vitamins has also begun. Based on these reviews, products/molecules are being selected for testing both in the laboratory and on farms, to characterise their chemical composition, concentration and effectiveness against health problems.



Livestock survey

WP4 has also launched a multilingual [livestock survey](#) to map the extent of the use of contentious inputs in organic livestock farming across Europe. This includes synthetic vitamins, antibiotics, antiparasitics and bedding materials. The questionnaire responses and literature review will help us choose which plant products to study in terms of their effectiveness against health problems and impact on production. The survey will be available until late February and we would appreciate it being shared as widely as possible.

WP5, SOIL

Work on WP5 began by mapping the use of peat, plastic mulch material and commercial fertilisers across Europe. Working with WP3, we asked experienced agricultural advisors about contentious inputs used in the production of a number of crops, then used this information to complete a comprehensive report. Work has also begun on tasks relating to phasing out peat, using agroforestry products to create mulch materials and field trials of alternative bio-economy

fertilisers.

We have already been able to share some of our research, including a conference presentation at [ICA2018 \(12th International Conference on Agrophysics\)](#). As with the other workpackages, we will be uploading our research to [Organic E-prints](#), where the Organic-PLUS project has its own library.



WP6, MODEL

WP6 is working to assess the practical and economic consequences of phasing out contentious inputs and introducing alternative inputs or changes in practice. We are currently designing user-centric scenarios which build on the mapping work of the SOIL, PLANT and LIVESTOCK workpackages as well as taking into account expert knowledge.

The environmental assessment of reference crops and livestock is one method that will be used to compare potential alternative inputs or practices. This will help identify any gaps in life cycle analysis methodology when applied to organic production systems and, therefore, opportunities to improve the methodology. New researcher

Erik Fløjgaard Kristensen has joined the project at [Aarhus University](#) to advance this work.

Conferences and dissemination



Over the past six months, researchers working on Organic-PLUS have attended a range of academic and other organic-movement conferences across Europe. Some have given presentations about the work of the project, including the preliminary findings of our mapping tasks and related research. For more information, click on the highlighted links below:

[Organic Innovation Days](#) - Brussels, Belgium - Nov 2018

[XIII Congress of the Spanish Society of Organic Agriculture](#) (SEAE) - Logroño, Spain – Nov 2018

[2018 UK Organic Congress](#) - Rugby, UK - Nov 2018

[3rd European Conference on Copper in Plant](#)

[Protection](#) – Berlin, Germany – Nov 2018

[ICOAS 2018, the 6th International Conference on Organic Agriculture Sciences](#) – Eisenstadt, Austria - Nov 2018

[ICA 2018, the 12th International Conference on Agrophysics](#) – Lublin, Poland - Sept 2018

[30th International Horticulture Congress](#) – Istanbul, Turkey – Aug 2018



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