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The Commission's first Farm to Fork conference – Review & highlights – 15-16 October 2020, online

The European Commission's first Farm to Fork conference took place on 15-16 October 2020 and focused on how to build sustainable food systems together. This is to be the first of similar annual conferences.

Speakers included Vice-President of the European Commission Timmermans, the Commissioners on Health and Food Safety, Kyriakides, on Agriculture, Wojciechowski, German Agriculture Minister, Klöckner, representative of the European Council, the European Consumers organisation (BEUC), Members of the European Parliament Hazekamp and Dorfmann, Copa-Cogeca, WWF, Arla and the Danish government, to name but a few. The organic movement was represented by Enrico Amico from the cooperative Amico Bio in Italy, Bram Moeskops, IFOAM Organics Europe's Research and Innovation Manager, Salvatore Basile, President of the International Network of Eco Regions and Jostein Hertwig, head of BERAS International Foundation.

The Commission Vice-Presidents Timmermans and Commissioners Kyriakides and Wojciechowski all shared their concern for the current food system not being sustainable and underlined that change is needed urgently. Frans Timmermans insisted that "if we continue with the erosion of top soil, erratic weather and the killing of pollinators there are going to be huge problems. Farming

has to change globally. We have to show that you can feed the world without depleting natural resources, without harming the environment”.

Ms Kyriakides underlined that business as usual is not an option anymore, and Mr Wojciechowski highlighted the importance of strengthening the relations between farmers and the local food market. Mr Wojciechowski has the difficult task of convincing farmers and Member States to play their role in the implementation of the Farm to Fork strategy but is hopeful in having constructive conversations in this respect.

Mr Amico intervened in the session “economic opportunities for farmers” where he stated that economy should always be in line with environmental and social aspects and that the agricultural model needs to change. It is not organic that is too expensive; conventional is too cheap. He added that low prices mean we are moving costs somewhere else.

Mr Moeskops intervened on a session discussing research and innovation, clarifying that, to implement the knowledge produced by ‘on the ground’ Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects, such as LIVESEED or RELACS, strong knowledge networks are needed. Their success is key to fostering exchange between all actors – also online as Covid-19 has shown.

As was to be expected, some participants were more convinced than others regarding the urgency of the actions needed to transform the current food system, as well as the ways in which to get there. For its part, IFOAM Organics Europe is eager to engage with the EU institutions and

other stakeholders to transform the current food system towards a more sustainable one and to reach the 25% organic land target by 2030! The recorded videos of the event will be available **on the events' webpage**.