International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems
- aiming for the organic principles as the global norm for sustainability

The International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS) was founded in 2008. The centre is an expansion of the former Danish Agricultural Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF), which the Danish Government gave an international mandate and an international board.

The main purpose of ICROFS is to provide research results that may contribute to the promotion of organic food systems, including agriculture, aquaculture, processing and consumption of organic food.

The vision of ICROFS or the ‘Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG)’ is that ‘organic principles will become the global norm for sustainability in farming and food systems due to evidence based on research and innovation’
About ICROFS

The International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS) is a “centre without walls” where the research is performed in interdisciplinary collaboration between research groups in different institutions and universities.

The Centre will contribute to the coordination, management and performance of strategic and user oriented, high quality research at the national as well as the international level, on the basis of the organic philosophy and organic principles and issues.

Organisation

ICROFS is headed by a Board of directors consisting of research leaders and stakeholders from Asia, Africa, America, Europe, and Denmark. The board will develop and evaluate the Centre’s vision and strategy for enhancing international research in organic food systems. Further, to oversee and advise on the Centre’s national research and development activities in Denmark, a Danish programme committee has been appointed with representatives from universities, farmers associations and NGOs affiliated with organic farming.

Activities

The secretariat of ICROFS initiates, coordinates, and participates in national and international research activities in organic farming and food systems. It is also very active in disseminating organic research results and knowledge on the importance of organic food systems to the environment, nature and biodiversity, animal welfare, health, food safety and quality, economy, structural and market development as well as social significance. The Centre, furthermore, promotes understanding of the characteristics of organic food systems and contributes to a knowledge based development of organic food systems nationally and internationally.

Research facilities and infrastructure

Over time several organic research facilities have been set up, which allow close cooperation between different research environments. Since 1996 long-term organic crop rotation trials have been performed on four locations in Denmark. The crop rotations have different proportions of legumes, cereals, and catch crops and are carried out on different soil types and with different levels of manure. The aim is to investigate how type of rotation affects yields, nutrient balances, weed and disease problems, soil fertility and emission of greenhouse gasses.

European cooperation

ICROFS participates in the EU research Framework Programmes and has coordinated several projects. ICROFS is active partner in ISOFAR (International Society of Organic Agriculture Research) and FQH (Organic Food Quality and Health research network). Moreover, ICROFS has participated in the development of the European vision for an Organic Food and Farming Research Agenda 2025: “Organic knowledge for the future” and is active partner in the technology platform TPOrganics.
CORE Organic II

ICROFS coordinated the FP6 ERA-net, CORE Organic (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming) in which public funding bodies of 11 European countries worked together and funded eight transnational research projects (www.coreorganic.org).

The successor of CORE Organic, the ERA-net named CORE Organic II, consists of a network of 26 partners from 21 European countries imposed under FP7. The main aim of CORE Organic II is to agree on common research priorities and to select transnational research projects to be funded by the partners (www.coreorganic2.org).

Research programmes

ICROFS currently manages 11 projects launched under the Danish GUDP Programme, Organic RDD (2011-2013). The Organic Research, Development and Demonstration programme has three main themes: Growth, Integrity and Robust Systems.

Compared to previous Danish organic research (DARCOF I-III), the 11 new projects have greater focus on practical application through the links between research, development and demonstration, and direct involvement of stakeholders (advisory service, companies and farmers) as partners in projects.

Organic RDD

- is partly based on a Knowledge Synthesis (2008) regarding challenges and opportunities for the Danish organic sector
- is carried out in synergy with the European collaboration with CORE Organic II and continues the international outlook established in DARCOF III as a natural consequence of the international perspective and mandate of ICROFS
- is intended to ensure that research, innovation and demonstration targeting the organic subsector will benefit the entire food sector – both the conventional part and the organic part – and that results from general research and development will be incorporated in the organic research
- consists of three cross-cutting themes; growth, integrity and robust systems
- www.icrofs.org/organicrdd

92 million DKK Organic RDD programme is funded by the Danish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and coordinated by ICROFS (www.icrofs.org/organicrdd).

ICROFS’ current programme, Organic RDD

The programme is a combination of projects that in the short term integrate product development and on the long term also knowledge building and dissemination in both primary production, processing and marketing. A number of the projects contain elements of commercialization of products and have market-oriented initiatives. Others are directed more towards primary production.

Former programmes

ICROFS has managed the third consecutive Danish research programme in Organic Food and Farming, DARCOF III (2006-2010). The research programme consisted of 15 projects with a budget of approx. 23 million DKK.

DARCOF III was preceded in 1996-2000 by DARCOF I consisting of 33 research projects, carried out by 15 institutes and about 100 researchers. This research effort was followed up by DARCOF II in 2001-2005. This initiative consisted of 42 major research projects, involving 140 researchers from 19 different research institutes. All these research projects are described on www.icrofs.org.
Expertise in dissemination

Dissemination of research results is a central activity in ICROFS. Dissemination is achieved mainly through web-based media, such as public homepages, newsletters, video presentations from field activities, platforms for corporate work and web portals. Presently, there are more than 3,000 subscribers to the electronic newsletters that ICROFS issues as part of the dissemination activities.

Also, for corporate project management, internal newsletters are issued and intranet sites are provided based on specific project management software.

All newsletters and platforms provided by ICROFS can be accessed from the main homepage www.icrofs.org.

Organic Eprints

ICROFS hosts and administers Organic Eprints (www.orgprints.org), the Open Source archive for publications and information materials in organic research. Here, researchers can deposit and share their information with colleagues, students and stakeholders worldwide. As by medio 2011, the archive has 10,000 deposited papers and more than 15,000 registered users. There are more than 175,000 visits each month to the archive from countries all around the world.

Contact

The secretariat of ICROFS welcomes contacts from colleagues, stakeholders and others with interest in organic food and farming systems. Please contact us at icrofs@djf.au.dk. Contacts can also be directed to Director Niels Halberg at niels.halberg@djf.au.dk.

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The main purpose of ICROFS is to coordinate and monitor international research in organic food and farming systems in order to achieve optimum benefit from the allocated resources. Further, the aim of ICROFS is to initiate research and create impact of the research results through support and dissemination of high quality research of international standard.

More information at www.icrofs.org