



## Media release

### Organic Research Platform Launched

(Rome/Frick, December 9, 2010) The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), together with partners, is developing the “Organic Research Centres Alliance (ORCA)” to strengthen organic farming research. The focus is on developing countries. With the launch of the ORCA-Research.org website, these efforts to promote synergies and networks in organic agricultural research are now visible. The website is maintained by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL).

Apart from informing about forthcoming ORCA activities, the website aims to provide information on current research in organic agriculture worldwide.

#### Indisputable role of research

Nadia Scialabba, one of the ORCA initiators and Senior Officer leading the FAO Organic Agriculture Programme, noted that “because organic research is scarce and often difficult to access, pooling resources and building synergies is the most efficient way ahead in creating a critical mass of knowledge.” Another ORCA initiator, FiBL’s director Urs Niggli, continued, “Research plays an indisputable role in the development of organic food and farming systems. This is especially true for developing countries as this form of agriculture was developed in the temperate zones of Europe, the United States, and Japan. It has never been completely adapted to the diversity of soils, climates, and socio-cultural contexts of the tropics, subtropics, and arid zones.” There are many institutes conducting research of relevance to organic agriculture, however, there is currently no comprehensive research programme addressing organic farming systems. Urs Niggli explained further, “Considering that organic farming research requires a systems approach, including cross-disciplinary knowledge, there is a need to establish an international research programme, based on sharing the complementary efforts of different institutions. ORCA seeks to correct an important deficit by linking relevant research worldwide.”

#### Science across disciplines and with farmers

The ORCA research paradigm draws heavily on traditional knowledge and improves it with scientific investigation. “The platform is therefore aimed at farmers, processors, extension agents and scientists seeking to deepen their knowledge and also increasing it by contributing to action research or post-graduate studies,” explained Nadia Scialabba. Niggli

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Das FiBL hat Standorte in der Schweiz, Deutschland und Österreich  
 FiBL offices located in Switzerland, Germany and Austria  
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added that, "ORCA's strengths will be a close cooperation with farmers, especially smallholder farmers that play a crucial role in making rural areas more food secure. Farmers would have an immediate benefit from the agroecosystem-based thematic centers to be established by ORCA."

### **State of the art organic research at your fingertips**

FiBL and FAO are committed to developing best practices for organic agriculture. Launching the ORCA website is a tangible step in creating a dynamic international knowledge system that takes ongoing efforts in organic research and gives these efforts a platform to thrive.

### **Further Information**

#### **Contacts**

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#### **Links**

- > [www.orca-research.org](http://www.orca-research.org)
- > [www.fao.org/organicag](http://www.fao.org/organicag)
- > [www.fibl.org](http://www.fibl.org)

#### **ORCA-Secretariat**

- > [Organic Research Centres Alliance ORCA, c/o Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations FAO, www.fao.org/organicag/oa-portal/en/?no\\_cache=1](http://www.fao.org/organicag/oa-portal/en/?no_cache=1)

#### **ORCA-Partners**

- > [FiBL – Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, www.fibl.org](http://www.fibl.org)
- > [International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems ICROFS \(ICROFS\), www.icrofs.org](http://www.icrofs.org)
- > [International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements \(IFOAM\), www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org)
- > [Internationale Gesellschaft der Forschung im Ökologischen Landbau \(ISO FAR\), www.isofar.org](http://www.isofar.org)
- > [Institute for Organic Agriculture \(IOL\), University of Bonn, www.iol.uni.bonn.de](http://www.iol.uni.bonn.de)
- > [Louis Bolk Instituut, www.louisbolk.nl](http://www.louisbolk.nl)
- > [University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences BOKU, Department of Sustainable Agricultural Systems, Division for Organic Farming IfÖL, www.nas.boku.ac.at](http://www.nas.boku.ac.at)



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- > [Vti - Heinrich von Thünen Institute vti., Institute of Organic Farming, www.vTI.bund.de](http://www.vti.bund.de)

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