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### **IFOAM Round Table**

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It is a great honor to open you this round table

Research in organic food and farming is crucial for the sector's development, and therefore I warmly welcome the initiative of the organic technology platform, TP Organics.

The European Union emphasises the importance of generating innovation in the context of meeting future challenges such as achieving sustainability, stable food security and safety systems, environmental criteria, socio-economic changes in rural communities etc. These challenges require new, innovative solutions for agriculture as well as efficient transfer of this knowledge to the actors – farmers, advisory services, and policy makers.

Innovation is needed to increase the efficiency of resource use at the farm level and along supply chains and distributions systems, in supporting the food sector in meeting consumer demand for healthy quality, to increase the transparency of the food system in terms of origin, and to improve the contribution of agriculture and food businesses to rural development.

Innovation in agriculture therefore relates not only to technology, economies of scale and specialisation but also diversification, reduced use of external inputs, added value and practises based on agro-ecological knowledge leading to a greater empowerment of rural population.

The organic sector provides many examples for different types of innovations as described in your Action Plan.

The document in fact presents innovative research ideas and concepts which will strengthen the competitiveness of organic production in the EU and increase its sustainability benefits for the whole society.

The organic sector, characterized mainly by SMEs, can combine strong economic dynamics with sustainable food production, they represent a strong pioneering way to deliver innovation in agriculture. This is part of the integrated system approach that this sector always had to food production.

The mechanisms to involve SME in research in order to deliver innovation should be simplified.

Organic farmers, organic processors, etc, represent an important resource of knowledge and experience that with the help of research can strengthen the market and the trust of the consumers.

The EU Commission should strongly support organic research projects and should recognize organic production under relevant cross cutting research themes within current and future EU Research Framework Programmes.