

## 21st Organic World Congress: Cultivating Organic Solutions for True Sustainability Nanhua University, Taiwan, 30 November-6 December, 2024



The Organic World Congress (OWC) is a globally renowned event that unites leaders, experts, practitioners, and enthusiasts in the field of organic agriculture. The aim is to foster a sustainable and resilient food system through collaboration, innovation, and shared learning. Dr. Mahesh Chander attended the 21st Organic World Congress and presents a detailed account of his experiences and observations.

### CONTEXT

Since its founding in 1972, IFOAM - Organics International has worked tirelessly to promote true sustainability in agriculture worldwide. Among its key initiatives, the Organic World Congress (OWC) has played a pivotal role in gathering stakeholders to discuss the future of organic farming. Initiated in 1977, this triennial event is held alongside the General Assembly of IFOAM members, drawing thousands of organic farmers, producers, researchers, advocates, and policymakers from across the globe.



The 21st OWC, hosted by Nanhua University in Taiwan, revolved around the theme *Cultivating Organic Solutions for True Sustainability*. This event not only served as a platform for knowledge exchange but also brought global recognition to Taiwan as a champion of organic agriculture.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### December 1: Pre-conference Events

The pre-conference side event titled *Organic and Regenerative: Together Towards the Future and Beyond?* explored the intersection of organic agriculture and regenerative practices. It emphasized the need for strategic policy influence, investment attraction, and guidance to promote truly sustainable agricultural practices worldwide.

### December 2: Opening Ceremony

The conference officially commenced with inspiring speeches by Taiwan's Minister of Agriculture, the President of IFOAM, and other distinguished speakers. They highlighted the growing importance of organic agriculture both in Taiwan and globally.



#### Plenary Highlights:

- **"Reflections on Taiwan's Organic Endeavor"** by You Si-Kun, former Premier of Executive Yuan, emphasized Taiwan's commitment to advancing organic farming.
- **"Accelerating Transformation Through Shared Purpose"**: This session explored how partnerships, diversity, and shared objectives can catalyze transformation in the organic sector. Esteemed speakers included Karen Mapusua (IFOAM President), Gretta Carney (Founder, Hapi Eatery), and Amber Sciligo (Director of Science Programs, The Organic Center, USA).

#### Parallel Sessions:

1. **Technology Innovation Platform of IFOAM (TIPI):**
  - This session reviewed ecological organic action research findings across continents. Case studies from Africa, Asia, the USA, and Latin America highlighted diverse approaches to innovation in organic farming.
2. **Change Makers for Organic Agriculture:**
  - Participants discussed strategies to empower individuals and organizations, focusing on policy advocacy, market inclusivity, and knowledge-sharing networks to advance organic farming globally.
3. **Cultural Practices to Enhance Productivity:**
  - Presentations explored innovative techniques like intercropping, eco-friendly tea farming, and pruning practices, showcasing their potential to boost organic productivity sustainably.

#### 4. IFOAM Strategy 2023-2034:

- This session unveiled a comprehensive strategy for positioning organic agriculture as a solution to pressing global issues, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity.



#### December 3: Key Discussions

**Plenary: Harvesting Knowledge** A dynamic session where farmers and scientists came together to exchange expertise on organic farming innovations. This collaboration fostered a rich dialogue that set the tone for subsequent sessions.

#### Workshops and Sessions:

- **"Invertebrate Allies for Nutrient Recycling"**: Explored sustainable waste management through Black Soldier Fly larvae and vermicomposting, emphasizing their role in nutrient recycling and soil health improvement.
- **"National Organic Policies for Climate Change"**: Showcased exemplary policies from Taiwan and Nepal, illustrating how governments can integrate organic practices into climate resilience strategies.
- **"Organic and Agroecology Growing Together"**: Highlighted collaborative strategies that bridge organic and agroecological approaches to enhance sustainable agriculture globally.

#### December 4: Final Day

##### Plenary Highlights:

- **"Multiple Pathways to Market Success"**: This session focused on practical strategies to enhance market access through retail innovations, Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), and public procurement initiatives.
- **"Regional and National Organic Policies"**: Speakers shared global breakthroughs in organic policy advocacy, offering valuable lessons for scaling organic practices.





#### Sessions:

1. **Organic Livestock Integration:**
  - Discussed innovative livestock management practices that enhance sustainability, soil health, and farm resilience.
2. **Consumer Trust Drives Growth:**
  - Examined strategies to strengthen consumer confidence in organic products and their impact on market growth.
3. **Compost, Manure, and Microorganisms:**
  - Explored the vital roles of organic fertilizers in boosting plant health, productivity, and ecological balance.
4. **Publishing in Organic Agriculture**
  - The workshop titled '**Publish or Perish**' dealt with publication opportunities in Springer's journal *Organic Agriculture*.





## OBSERVATIONS

The OWC underscored the significance of policies, market strategies, and regenerative practices in advancing organic agriculture. The exchange of knowledge and experiences among participants fostered collaboration and inspired actionable ideas for stakeholders worldwide.

### Key Takeaways:

- Collaborative strategies to expand organic markets through policy support, retail innovations, and community engagement.
- The integration of regenerative agroecological principles into diverse agricultural systems, including mountain regions and arid zones.
- Promoting biodiversity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and strengthening seed sovereignty through organic practices.

## CONCLUSION AND FINAL REMARKS

Since my first OWC participation in 1996, I have witnessed its growth into a leading platform for shaping the future of organic agriculture. The 21st OWC in Taiwan, despite being organized on short notice, was remarkable for its seamless execution and innovative content. Nanhua University deserves praise for its professionalism and vision.



IFOAM's commitment to promoting organic farming as a sustainable alternative continues to inspire stakeholders worldwide. The knowledge and networks built during this congress reaffirm the transformative potential of organic agriculture in creating a healthier planet.

Taiwan's rich culture, stunning landscapes, and dedication to sustainability made it a perfect host for the congress. The OWC provided a unique platform for global cooperation, enabling participants to return home with actionable ideas to advance organic agriculture in their regions.

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