

"Stronger together: Researchers from Wallonia and Flanders join hands for organic farming"



**Tuesday 25 March 2025
Gembloux**

Introduction of the day by An Jamart, Bioforum

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

On behalf of the organisers of this day CCBT, Bioforum and the ILVO Living Lab Agroecology and Organic farming better known as the Flemish organic knowledge network (FORK) and the CRA-W, we welcome you to this special exchange day between Flemish and Walloon researchers. My name is An Jamart and I work for BioForum and also coordinate the Organic farmers' networks in Flanders and am an active member of the Fork network. As such, I am delighted to greet you all today. Our focus today is on celebrating the richness and potential of organic agriculture, but, more importantly, on the power of collaboration. Today is designed not only to bridge the gap between our regions, but also to deepen our understanding of each other's research and expertise, so that we may work more closely together. The strength of our field lies in the diversity and complexity of the systems in which we work. That is why we are emphasizing system research—a holistic approach that goes beyond analysing individual components to understanding the interconnections within the whole.

In Flanders, the Flemish Organic Research and Knowledge Network has laid a solid foundation, as detailed in our strategic plan for 2023-2027. The ambition is to strengthen demand-driven research, optimize knowledge exchange, and bridge the gap between practical experience and scientific inquiry. It is this spirit of co-creation, trust, and reciprocity that we wish to extend to our colleagues from Wallonia today. A key element in our collaborative approach is the invaluable knowledge of the farmers. We believe that true innovation starts at the grassroots, by building on the insights and experiences of those who work the land. Therefore, we are committed to engaging closely with farmers and the practical field. By integrating their hands-on expertise with academic research, we can develop solutions that are not only innovative but also directly applicable to real-world challenges. This joint effort will enable us to create a more robust, resilient, and sustainable organic agriculture system.

Innovation blossoms when different perspectives come together. By sharing knowledge and working collectively on integrated system research, we can deepen our understanding of the fundamentals of organic agriculture. This in turn offers us the opportunity to develop new, sustainable strategies. It is essential that we create knowledge bridges, connecting researchers, policymakers, advisors, and, of course, farmers. By pooling our strengths, we can achieve concrete and impactful results. Today, I invite you to look beyond your own familiar boundaries and to embrace the potential of regional collaboration. Let's work together to push the limits of our research and uncover insights that will help us build a robust and resilient system for organic agriculture—a system that is sustainable and capable of withstanding tomorrow's challenges.

Our program today is rich with inspiring sessions and interactive moments, providing ample opportunities to engage with colleagues from both Flanders and Wallonia. Please take the time to network, exchange experiences, and collaboratively explore practical solutions that benefit the agricultural sector as a whole. Every conversation, every presentation, and every interaction contributes to a larger goal: a shared path toward systematic, holistic research that directly supports the growth and resilience of organic agriculture. I encourage you to not only listen today but also to actively share your ideas and insights. This is the day to build bridges, to combine knowledge and experience—from the research field to the practical wisdom of the farmers—and to explore together how, as researchers across regional borders, we can address our common challenges. Finally, my sincere thanks to everyone who helped organize this event. Your commitment and enthusiasm provide the foundation for what I hope will be a productive day filled with new collaborations and innovative ideas. Let's embrace the challenge together—to make organic agriculture a robust, sustainable system that benefits us all.