



# CULTIVATING SUSTAINABILITY:

Empowering farmers with  
**Organic-Based Fertilisers (OBFs)**  
through EU policy

A message from the ECOFI President, **Chiara Manoli**



In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic, soaring energy costs and geopolitical tensions have taken a heavy toll on farmers, the agri-input industry, consumers, and the rest of the global food system. With changes in both the European Parliament and the European Commission imminent, now is the time to review and reinvigorate our approach to Europe's agriculture and food sectors: a fresh vision is urgent! We must have a European Union that supports its farmers and works tirelessly to give them unhindered access to innovative products, such as organic-based fertilisers, that can help them achieve food security and profitability while continuing to work towards a more sustainable Europe.

*Chiara Manoli*





# In its manifesto, ECOFI is calling for:

1. EU institutions to put agricultural innovation at the centre of their new legislative term. We need an EU willing to support those industries that are part of the circular bioeconomy, reinforce Europe's open strategic autonomy, and help farmers achieve the transition to sustainable food systems while increasing their competitiveness
2. the European Parliament and European Commission to put innovation in circularity at the heart of their ambitions for 2024-2029 and prioritise policy coherence to support the circular economy
3. an EU that strives to guarantee products like organic-based fertilisers (OBFs) are given equal access to the European market, giving EU farmers unfettered access to the organic-based products their crops and soils need to compete on the global market
4. EU policymakers determined to provide farmers with an enabling framework and concrete policy incentives to ensure access to and uptake of OBFs, alongside the education, advice, and training needed to implement these complementary and sustainable solutions.



## OBFs and ECOFI explained

Organic-based fertilisers (OBFs) combine traditional wisdom with modern innovation. Boasting a long and rich history in Europe, they are a prime example of the circular economy in action, with producers working to close the loop on nutrient cycles while minimising waste and maximising resource efficiency. OBFs include processed organic fertilisers, organo-mineral fertilisers and organic soil improvers providing plants with nutrients and soils with organic matter. The term 'organic' can be confusing, but it is worth noting that most 'fertilisers approved for use in organic farming' are often 'organic-based fertilisers', but not all 'organic-based fertilisers' are approved for use in organic farming.

The European Consortium of the Organic-Based Fertilizer Industry (ECOFI) represents OBF producers in a research-based, knowledge-intensive, and innovation-driven sector providing pioneering solutions to many challenges facing our farmers, such as soil health, food security, the circular economy, and strategic autonomy.

Active in most European countries, ECOFI members export to or operate in many other countries, including the Mediterranean and Middle East. ECOFI membership is open to any OBF producer currently active, or intending to be active, on the European market, whose production ensures the upstream traceability and origin of their raw material components.



# 1

## OBFs: the circular economy in action



OBF producers prevent unnecessary nutrient losses by transforming by-products from various industries – including farming, food production, tanning and leather, textiles, and cosmetics – into **innovative, high-performing fertilisers** to help farmers enhance yields by providing the right nutrient content, at the right time, as and when the plants require. OBFs are **vital for ensuring food security** while staying within the planetary boundaries for nutrients and restoring soil health.

However, current regulatory barriers – such as those restricting the use of materials like animal by-products for organic fertilisers – are preventing the true realisation of a European circular economy in this sector.

- ECOFI calls on the European Parliament and European Commission to **place innovation in circularity at the heart of their 2024-2029 workplan**;
- European policymakers must **ensure policy coherence** to enable innovative companies, such as ECOFI members, to help achieve the EU's own political vision of a circular economy, including enabling and incentivising the widespread use and application of OBFs.

# 2

## OBFs improve soil health: vital to sustainable agriculture and resilience to climate change



As part of the EU's fight against climate change, promoting biodiversity and ensuring food security, greater emphasis must be placed on the importance of soil health. OBFs help achieve **healthy soils** by improving their physical, chemical, and biological condition while enhancing their carbon levels. By boosting soil organic matter content, OBFs improve soil structure, water retention, and nutrient cycling, thereby mitigating the effects of climate change and **enhancing agricultural productivity**.

OBFs can improve the capacity of soil to store and supply essential nutrients by influencing its structure and organic matter content. This has a positive impact on soil life and health while mitigating erosion and improving fertility, thereby helping farmers manage nutrients and **reducing nutrient losses into the environment**.

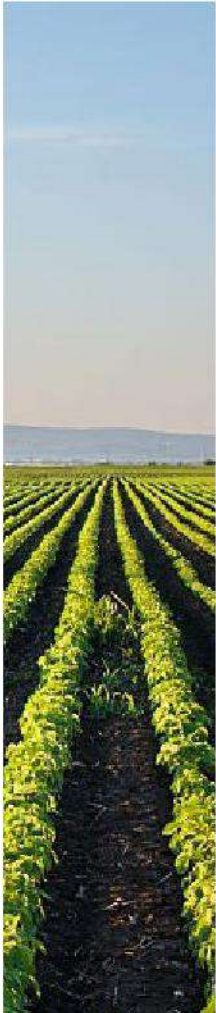
Although OBFs have the potential to help improve soil characteristics across Europe, to benefit our plants, biodiversity, and farmers, **gaps in the EU Fertilising Products Regulation** are preventing a level playing field across the EU for OBF products and users.

- ECOFI calls on European policymakers to **guarantee that circular products like OBFs have equal access to the market across the EU**;
- ECOFI calls for concrete policy incentives for the uptake of OBFs to **empower farmers to improve the health of their soils** while increasing their competitiveness.



# 3

## OBFs: vital for building sustainable food systems



EU policy must empower the farming community to **strengthen food security and sustainability**. To ensure access to an expanding toolbox, it must provide a progressive regulatory context open to innovative and circular agricultural inputs, such as OBFs.

Recycling materials within the EU reduces our dependence on third-country imports while staying within our planetary boundaries for nutrients by **reusing nutrients** rather than losing them to the environment and extracting new ones. Promoting farmers' use of recycled nutrients in the form of OBFs can also **support thriving rural communities** where OBF production plants are often established and source their raw materials, helping to secure skilled rural jobs across the EU.

Farmers must be able to select from a wide range of products and services those that best suit their soils, agronomic practices, climatic conditions, and consumer preferences. OBFs are important for farmers, but issues around access to the single market restrict their availability and awareness of their benefits.

- ECOFI urges EU policymakers to **address the problems around the functioning of the single market for OBFs** and work towards giving all EU farmers equal access to innovative, organic-based fertilising products
- EU policy must **focus on incentivising farmers' use of these innovative and sustainable fertilising products** through policies focusing on accelerating their uptake, recognising their benefits, as well as providing education, advice and opportunities for upskilling on the optimal application of such complementary and sustainable solutions.

As policymakers chart the future course for Europe's agricultural sector, we must **embrace the transformative potential of OBFs** to create a more resilient, fair and prosperous food system for all.




European Consortium  
of the Organic-Based Fertilizer  
Industry

ECOFI, the European Consortium of the Organic-Based Fertilizer Industry, represents producers active, or who intend to be active, in the European market of organic fertilisers, organo-mineral fertilisers, and organic soil improvers.

For more information about the ECOFI manifesto 2024, contact:

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