



**Organic World  
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AT THE COUVEN DES JACOBINS • RENNES MÉTROPOLE CONFERENCE CENTRE

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## OWC 2020 - Stakeholder Forum

*Topic 1 - Inspire people to take action toward sustainability and best practices*

OWC2020-STA-1302

**THE FLEMISH ORGANIC RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE (FORK)- NETWORK IN PRACTICE**

**FARMERS AT THE HEART OF THE FLEMISH ORGANIC RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE (FORK)- NETWORK**

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**Your are contributing for:** An oral presentation

**Targeted audience:** Farmers, Advisors, extension services (including transition support), Consumers (and citizens), Teachers, trainers, Students, Researchers, Policy makers (including institutions, local authorities and territories), NGO representatives

**Are you able to make an oral presentation in English?:** Yes

**Preferred language for oral presentation:** English

**Summary:** Exchange of experiences and tacit knowledge between farmers is at the heart of the Flemish Organic Research & Knowledge Network (FORK-network). The FORK-network consists of 3 different networks (BBN, CCBT & NOBL), closely working together to create a better coordination, cooperation and management of research and knowledge exchange for the organic food and farming sector in Flanders.

During the years, joint activities are organised, guided by the principle of co-creation: participatory research, research based on needs in the organic sector and knowledge exchange and dissemination of knowledge tailored to farmers. We present the lessons learned and challenges which can inspire starting farmers' networks and research institutes towards more co-creation

**Background:** To create a better coordination, cooperation and management of research and knowledge exchange for the organic food and farming sector, the Government of Flanders finances the different networks in Flanders.

Successively, NOBL (Network for Organic Food and Farming Research, 2008), and CCBT (Coordination centre for applied research and extension on organic agriculture, 2010) were initiated bottom down. BBN, de Biobedrijfsnetwerken (Organic Farmers' Networks, 2009) are initiated from within the organic farmers sector.

Each of the networks organises activities oriented to specific target groups (fundamental and practice-oriented researchers, policymakers, farmers).

Central to each of the networks are how exchange of knowledge and experiences, interaction with stakeholders as well as the development of new knowledge for the organic sector can be optimised and put into practice. In 2012 the FORK network, as informal network to strengthen the different network's activities was formed.

**Core messages and conclusions:** The Flemish FORK network can inspire because of our co-creation approach assessing knowledge needs of & dissemination for the organic farmers.

**FORK network: Lessons learned and Challenges**

**1.Co- creation of knowledge and research:** needs and goals must be understood by all actors and they work together (each with their competences) to reach the goals, a facilitator/multiplier can connect the different actors and make sure the **role of each actor is clear**

BBN: In 11 different farmers' networks (dairy cattle, dairy goats, poultry, pigs, meat cattle, vegetables short chain, vegetables open air long chain, arable crops, berries, pome fruit, cut flowers) BioForum facilitates the Flemish organic farmers to get together and share their tacit knowledge, dreams, challenges and know-how. BioForum gathers farmers knowledge needs and translates towards researchers (CCBT and NOBL) and within Europe through TP Organics.

CCBT: Umbrella organisation of the organic practical research institutes in Flanders. Knowledge needs are taken up by the members and the members act as experts in the BBN. Biopraktijk.be disseminates tailor-made about this research.

NOBL: Network of organic research institutes advises the Flemish government, shares research opportunities and publishes a booklet on organic research

Flemish Government: funding body

2. *Multi actor involvement*: all stakeholders have an **equal status** in terms of knowledge sharing

3. *Farmers at the drivers seat*: the knowledge needs of the farmers are the starting point, the facilitator in the BBN makes sure the right questions are asked and the right experts are invited to get to results. Within the Fork network this is reinforced through research application procedures insisting upon cooperation of researchers of the two research networks CCBT and NOBL with the farmers' networks

4. *Methodologies and processes are very important to get to actual results in the field*

5. *Trust amongst participants in the different networks is crucial, dedicate time for informal networking is crucial*

6. *Dissemination of results in the different phases of the process is tailor-made*

7. *Co-operation with regional and European partners* (Tp Organics, Biokennis,...) is an ongoing aspiration

8. *Continuity is needed* to get to the heart of the knowledge needs and to get the right results (of coordinators, researchers, network activities, connecting activities, financial support,...)

#### **Other methods for exchange of (foreign) knowledge**

Since foreign practices and knowledge can be very inspiring to Flemish farmers, the FORK-network organizes different activities to attract this knowledge: Two- or three-day study trips, Facilitating and organizing trips to foreign fairs, Trainings for and by farmers on DIY machinery are brought in from France, Brochures that summarize knowledge and results from research outside Flanders are translated, not only into Dutch but also into the Flemish farming situation, and are disseminated.

**Suggested readings and/or references to your work:** *De Cock Lieve, Landuyt Carmen, Jamart An (2014). The Flemish Organic Research & Knowledge Network: bridging research and practice for organic food and farming in Flanders. Practitioners' Track, IFOAM Organic World Congress 2014, 'Building Organic Bridges', 13-15 Oct., Istanbul, Turkey*  
*De Cock, L., Taragola, N., Crivits, M. and J. Dessein (2016). Networks for a competitive and innovative organic horticulture in Flanders. IN: Proc. Int. Symp. on Innovation in Integrated and Organic Horticulture (INNOHORT), Eds.: S. Bellon et al.. Acta Hortic. 1137. DOI 10.17660/ActaHortic.2016.1137.45*

Landuyt, C., Jamart, A. and De Cock, L. (2019). The Flemish Organic Research and Knowledge (FORK) In: De Cock, I. and Van Waes, J. (eds) Organic Food and Farming in Flanders: Research 2017-2018. P18-27.

*De Cock Lieve, Landuyt Carmen, Jamart An (2019). The Organic Food and Farming in Flanders (BE) Research Strategy 2018-2022. NOBL- ILVO, Mellebeke, 12 p.*

**Image 1:**



**Disclosure of Interest:** None Declared

**Keywords:** Co-creation, Farmersnetworks, Organic Research, Participative research