

WINNERS OF THE EUROPEAN ORGANIC AWARDS 2023 ORGANIZED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

By Kim Assaël

The 25 of September 2023, the EU Organic Awards was granted for the second time to acknowledge excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring projects in the organic value chain that have produced real added value for organic production and consumption.

Coming from Spain, Greece, Austria, Portugal, Ireland, and Germany the announced winners have showcased this year the organic supply chain's role in a sustainable agrifood system, in line with the goals of the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies.

Comprising 7 categories the 8 winners have been chosen from a pool of over 100 applications from 26 Member States.

Much like last year's edition 2022, the winners are various actors from the European organic sector who represent the overall organic's transformative potential in reducing the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and antimicrobials with positive effects on climate, the environment, biodiversity, and animal welfare.

The 2023 winners are:

Best (Female and Male) Organic Farmer:
Ms Clara Benito Pacheco in Spain.

Ms Benito Pacheco runs an extensive organic goat farm fed exclusively on native grass. Her freely grazing ecological herd contributes to biodiversity. Thanks to virtual fence technologies, and the use of GPS collars, adult animals can graze freely as no physical fences are needed anymore, contributing towards carbon sequestration in grassland.

Mr Thomas Moschos in Greece. Together with his brother, Mr Moschos runs the Moschos family farm in Kastoria, which is an organic livestock farm specialised in raising sheep and producing dairy products. He implements new farming methods, improving soil and circularity, which in return leads to higher soil organic matter and yields.

Best Organic Region: **Burgenland region in Austria.** Burgenland has become a role model in the organic reconversion scene thanks to the scientific implementation of the "Bioland Burgenland" strategy. The strategy aims not only to increase the share of agricultural land farmed organically to 50% by 2030, but also to enhance the complete organic supply chain, including for regional canteens, buffets and schools.

Best Organic City: **Vienna in Austria.** The Austrian capital produces organic agricultural products for its inhabitants from its 44,000 hectares of forest and agricultural land in its far-reaching organic "farm to fork"



concept. Thanks to this initiative, the local economy is strengthened via the regional value chain, which provides support to sustainable agriculture and diets.

Best Organic Bio-district: [Idanha-a-Nova in Portugal](#). The Organic Bio-District is the largest area of agricultural land under organic farming in Portugal, supporting projects that reinforce short supply chains and increase the offer of organic products. The integration of organic production in the Bio-District made possible for the Portuguese Municipality to invest in the diversification of the activities with a significant number of producers and involve the community in the project.

Best Organic Food processing SME: [the Terry Merry Mill, Vicarstown, in Ireland](#). The family-run organic farm produces a range of organic gluten-free foods in a closed-loop system on their organic farm. In order to manage the whole process from start to finish to ensure no cross contamination of other grains occurs, they have built Ireland's first organic gluten-free oat mill.

Best Organic Retailer. [Gut Wulksfelde in Germany](#). The company operates a 600 m² farm shop selling products from its own organic farm, a size 450 hectares of land with over 50 varieties of vegetables. Besides selling more than 8,000 organic food products, the shop also features a bakery and a green Michelin star awarded restaurant.

Best Organic Restaurant/food service: [Luftburg - Kolarik im Prater in Austria](#). Luftburg – Kolarik im Prater is the largest fully certified organic restaurant in the world with ecological and social sustainability at the heart of its philosophy. A winner of several Austrian prizes, it uses renewable energy and aims to minimize its environmental footprint wherever it can.

The EU organic awards is jointly organised by the European Commission, the [European Economic and Social Committee](#), the [European Committee of the Regions](#), [COPA- COGECA](#) and [IFOAM Organics Europe](#). The European Organic Awards plays a key role in achieving the goals of the [European Green Deal](#), the [Farm to Fork strategy](#) and the [Biodiversity strategy](#) because it recognises excellence in the organic value chain in the EU at all levels, from individual retailers to Regional dimensions.

In particular, the Awards included the Organic Bio-districts among the 8 categories of the Prize in consideration of the their methodology that in Europe has been spreading for twenty years until the adoption in March 2021 of the [Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production](#), within the framework of the EU including the launch of annual awards. At that moment in fact the territorial Bio-districts were recognized as good practices and new business models to maximize the economic and sociocultural potential of each territory which "includes lifestyle, nutrition, human relations and nature considerations. This results in local agricultural production that is appreciated by consumers and hence has a higher market value" (Action 13).

Today Bio-districts are reinforcing their mutual connections increasingly, as demonstrated [by the shortlisted candidates](#) for the category of Best Organic Bio-district ([Bio-região São Pedro do Sul](#), Viseu district, Portugal, [Bio-região Idanha-a-Nova](#), Portugal, [Biodistretto Via Amerina e Forre](#), Civita Castellana, Italy).



When Bio-districts join together their territorial networks, as in Portugal and in Italy, these collaborative networks are able to address the challenges of the ecological and digital transition through the integration of a number of policy areas, which can mutually reinforce to undertake a path towards sustainability, overcoming the limits of the current, sectorial and fragmented approach, to bring out and strengthen new integrated territorial economies and new forms of value chain creation.

In Portugal the Bio-districts are already a network of five territories. In Italy 12 Bio-districts are collaboratively coordinating themselves in an operational *Regional Hub* at the level of Lazio Region to share good practices and reinforce opportunities reciprocally, also thanks to the dedicated [Regional Law](#) "Provisions for the regulation and promotion of Bio-districts" (Reg. 11/2019) that in Lazio region (Italy) recognizes and support them since 2019.

Organic Bio-districts, Regions and cities, together with their organic farmers, processors, food retailers, and restaurants/services, they all represent the way to build and scale up a more resilient and sustainable agrifood system in Europe, with an organic's transformative potential, and the way how addressing today's pressing challenges, from food security to the biodiversity and climate crises.

Further information about the candidates, the selection criteria, and the awards in general are available on the [EU Organic Awards webpage](#) where it is also possible to meet the winners of the 2023 Organic Awards.

To know more

[EU Organic Awards webpage](#)

[Biodistretto Via Amerina e Forre](#)

[Bio-região Idanha-a-Nova](#)

[Bio-região São Pedro do Sul](#)

[Finalists 2023 announced](#)

