Minimisation of Copper in Organic Farming: A European Strategy

6th European Conference on Copper in Plant Protection

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IFOAM ORGANICS EUROPE

ONE VOICE FOR ORGANIC STAKEHOLDERS

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MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC

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WHO WE REPRESENT

- IFOAM Organics Europe represents the entire organic food chain and beyond
- We count almost 200 members in 34 European countries
- Based on the IFOAM principles of organic agriculture:
  Health, Ecology, Fairness & Care

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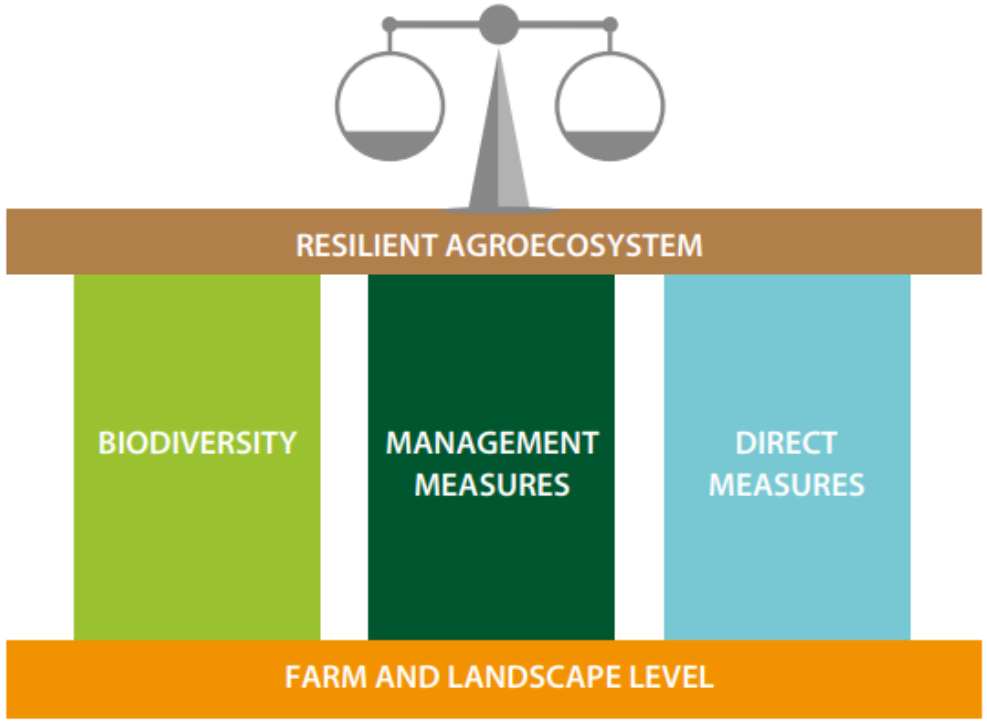
Plant health care in organic farming

A system approach



The four components of a resilient plant production system
(Plant Health care in organic farming – The role of natural substances in a biodiversity-based system approach, IFOAM Organics Europe, 2020)

- Intelligent combination of indirect and direct measures:
  - System stability
  - Efficient and resilient strategy

☛Aim: Reducing <u>dependence</u> on external inputs

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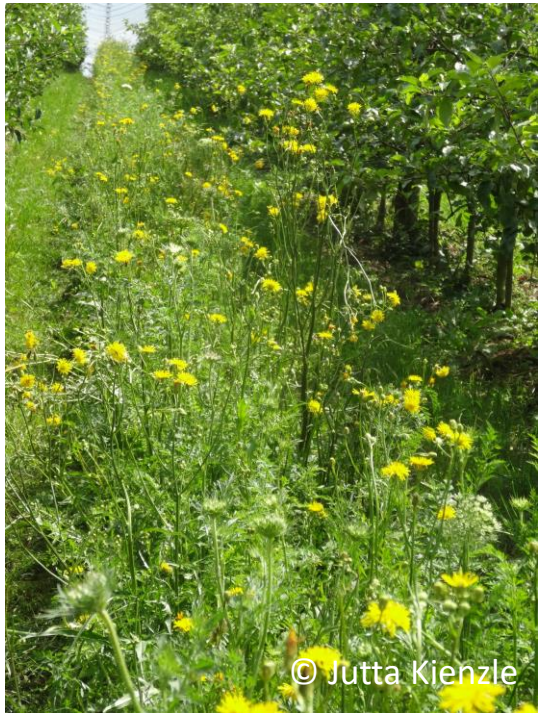
Plant health care in organic farming

Not just an input replacement

- Plant health in organic systems is managed mainly through **preventive** and **indirect** measures:
  - **Genetic diversity**
  - **Seminatural habitats** (e.g. flowering strips or hedgerows)
  - Diverse and complex **crop rotations** and cropping systems
  - Only **mechanical** weed control
  - Cover crops
  - Green manure
  - …
- In intelligent combinations with the use of PPPs based on naturally occurring substances

→ A system approach, not just an input replacement !



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Copper, a multifunctional substance

Copper is a naturally-occurring substance:

- native metal, occurring in nature in a directly usable metallic form
- an essential trace element for human, animal and plant physiology

Copper in agriculture:

- used as foliar fertiliser
- used as supplement in animal nutrition
- used as an active substance in PPPs to control fungal and bacterial diseases such as:
  - grapes downy mildew
  - downy mildew of hops
  - apple scab
  - fireblight (apples and pears)
  - potato late blight

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EU copper minimisation strategy

Why do we need a copper minimisation strategy?

→ Today, copper is the only effective fungicide authorised for some uses in organic farming

The unique features of copper:

- No resistance building
- Effective against a high number of fungal and bacterial diseases
- Naturally occurring in crops – no problem with traces of residues

→ It is unlikely that an alternative product with the same properties as copper will ever be developed

\+ recent regulatory restrictions on copper use

→ IFOAM Organics Europe paper: "Strategy for the minimisation of copper in organic farming in Europe" (May 2018)

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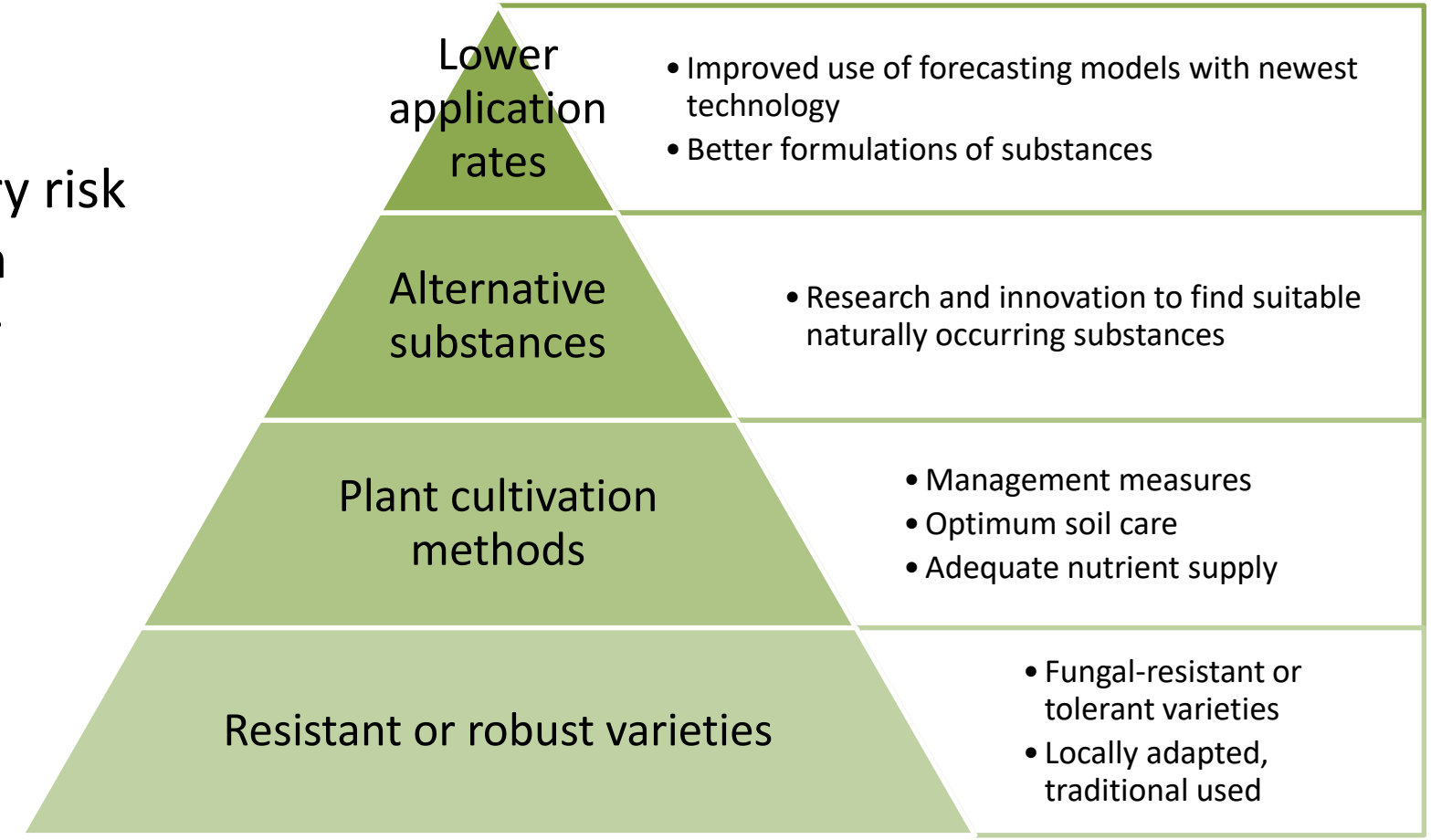
Copper Minimisation Strategy:
A system approach

Main aims:

- Precautionary risk minimisation
- Reduction of dependence



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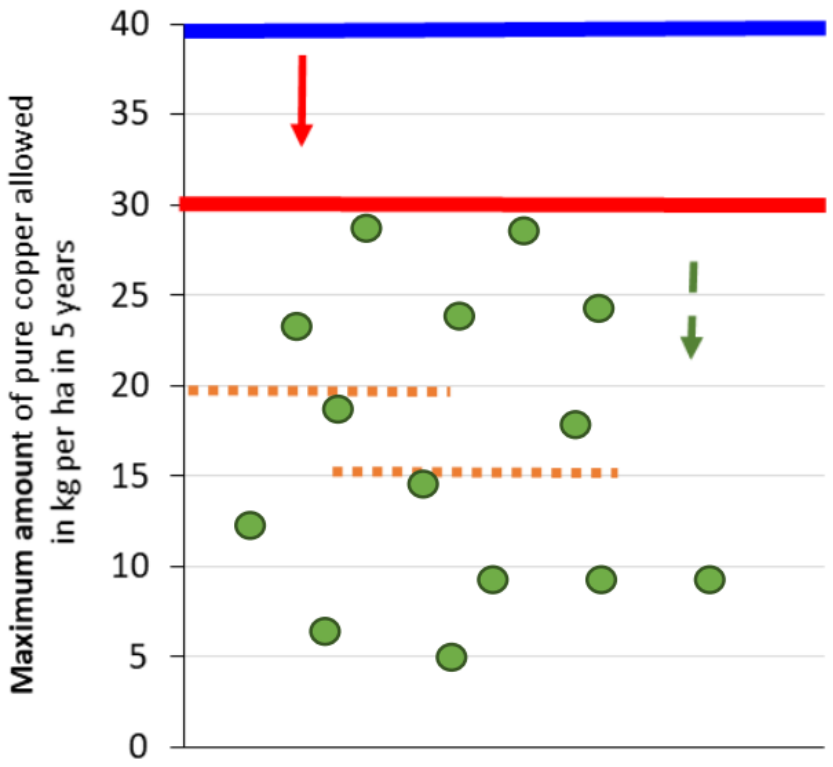
Copper minimisation strategy

The pioneering role of the organic movement



Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91:
Max. 40 kg in 5 years = 8 kg per ha and year

Regulation (EC) No 834/2007:
Max 30 kg in 5 years with Smoothing mechanism
6 kg copper per ha and year and the limit can be exceeded in a given year provided that the average quantity actually used over a 5-year period consisting of that year and of the 4 preceding years does not exceed 6 kg.

Lower crop specific limits of single MS or private associations

Real amounts applied in practice

2 key application characteristics:

- Splitting
- Smoothing mechanism

*Minimisation of maximum amounts of copper allowed in organic farming, **before 1 January 2019***
(Figure from the Strategy for the minimisation of copper in organic farming in Europe, IFOAM Organics Europe, 2018)

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Copper minimisation strategy

Developments induced by the re-approval of copper in 2018

- Commission implementing regulation (EU) 2018/1981 renewing the approval of the active substance copper
  - For 7 years (starting 1 January 2019)
  - 4 kg/ha/year
  - **Possibility** for smoothing mechanism (28 kg/ha/7 years)
  - Candidate for substitution (since 2015)

- First introduction of a limit for application of copper PPPs in EU horizontal legislation → apply both to conventional and organic farmers

IFOAM Organics Europe position in 2018

- 7 years reapproval
- 6 kg/ha/year
- Maintaining a smoothing mechanism (30kg/ha/5 years)

\+ Guidance document for the risk-assessment of mineral substances

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Copper minimisation strategy

What's next?

- Continuous development of the European strategy paper for copper minimisation in organic agriculture
- Effective implementation of the smoothing mechanism
- More progress on Guidance for the risk assessment

- **Research and innovation** to reduce copper and to create more resilient systems
  - ✓Two Horizon 2020 projects (**RELACS** **&** **Organic-Plus**) to identify alternatives to copper are nearing completion

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Copper minimisation strategy

Focus on the EU Organic Action Plan

New Organic Action Plan (OAP) for the EU published in April 2021

- ✓The European Commission intends to dedicate at least **30% of the EU budget for R&I actions** in the field of agriculture, forestry and rural areas to topics specific to or relevant for the organic sector → around 380 M€ (estimation)
- ✓Starting 2023, the European Commission "intends to earmark funding under Horizon Europe for research and innovation projects on alternative approaches to contentious inputs, paying particular attention to copper and other substances as assessed by the European Food Safety Authority."

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Thank you for your attention

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