



INFORMAZIONI PER LA STAMPA

## Vertical farming and soilless crops: certifications are here

How to define soilless culture products: organic, biodynamic, or simply better in all dimensions? AquaFarm hosts the debate on certification protocols of methods and products from vertical farming, aquaponics and soilless crops. Dedicated session on opening of the second edition of the show, 15 and 16 February at Fiera Pordenone.

*Pordenone, 18 January 2018.* In the United States the debate raged for months, with overtones coming from the “pure organics” side. At the end, soilless and aquaponics supporters won: it remains possible to certify as Organic a hydroponic farm and tag its products with the white-and-green label.

In Europe the situation is very different and all hydroponic is excluded from certification, since the EU definition of “organic” implies that the crops roots are supported by soil in direct contact with the baserock...

But, it still makes sense to focus on the “organic” label, in a world where population grows, and still more grows the request for good, safe, sustainable, accessible and affordable food? The chronicle is filled of news of “organic” products retired from the market for a problem or the other. Problems not caused by farmers not respecting the organic protocol, **but by totally unrelated causes. And so, what’s really important?**

On the first day of the show, AquaFarm will offer its contribution to the debate on which are the available answers to a crucial question for the planet future. The opening session is devoted to “post-organic, the certification of soilless crops”, with speaker of the highest standing coming from all Europe. The chairman will be Paolo Battistel, internationally renowned agronomist and consultant that operates in locations as diverse as the Siberian steppe and Sahara desert. Battistel will frame the problem and explain the state-of-the-art of the discussion.



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Next speaker will be Peter Jens, Director of Pura Natura Foundation, since ten years on the leading edge of the fight for an official European recognition of hydroponics as an “organic” method of agriculture.

Mark Horler, operations manager of the Association for Vertical Farming, will describe, for the first time in Italy and the second in Europe, the AVF project for vertical farm certification, from techniques to products. AVF is an active and essential partner of AquaFarm and collaborates to attain the show goals to divulgate the vertical farming and soilless farming and facilitate the building of a community of knowledge and interest out of the diverse actors.

Beyond “organic”, both in Italy and internationally do exist other certification protocols applicable to vertical farms and soilless crops, with a focus on sustainability. One, Italian, is the Sistema di Qualità Nazionale di Produzione Integrata (SNPQI, National Quality System of Integrated Production), a voluntary certification scheme for all agriculture and food products farmed with integrated production techniques (in hydroponics, for example, with recyclable substrates). Internationally it is available the voluntary scheme Friend of the Earth, that will be illustrated by Paolo Bray, founder and director of the renowned Friend of the Sea scheme for sustainable fishing and aquaculture.

More details of AquaFarm, how to participate and the conference program are available at [www.aquafarm.show](http://www.aquafarm.show) .

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