

## ECOFI's position on the draft regulation on fertilising products

ECOFI welcomes the Commission's proposal to replace the EU Fertilisers Regulation (2003/2003) with a new regulation that covers the full range of products related to plant nutrition and soil fertility, including organic-based fertilisers and soil improvers. ECOFI's comments on the new proposal are largely of a technical nature with a view to increasing consistency and clarity or fostering innovation.

By creating a single market for these products, the new regulation represents an important opportunity to transform an environmental problem – excess nutrients being lost to the environment – into an opportunity for innovation and economic growth. For example, organic fertilisers make it economical to transport organic nutrients from regions with an overconcentration to areas where soils are poor in organic matter.

While the new regulation is an important step to creating a single market for organic-based fertilisers and soil improvers, there are a number of important challenges. Notably, there needs to be more joined-up thinking with other regulations, particularly with the animal by-products regulation, which inadvertently creates market barriers that the draft regulation on fertilisers is attempting to remove. EU policy-makers need to approve processes for transforming manures that have been demonstrated to be safe at the national level. This will dramatically increase the amount of organic materials and recycled nutrients that are eligible for transport from one EU Member State to another.

Regions like Brittany and the Netherlands suffer from an excess in organic materials as a result of livestock farming. Transforming these products into organic-based fertilisers makes it possible to use them in places like the Mediterranean Basin, where soils often lack organic matter. This creates a win-win solution.



### Carbon is at the heart of organic fertilisers



In scientific terms “organic” refers to any material or substance containing carbon. Carbon is what differentiates organic fertilisers from mineral or synthetic fertilisers. Their carbon content is one of the reasons that organic fertilisers have so many benefits. As well as providing nutrients, they also improve the soil’s capacity to retain water. In addition, much of their carbon is stored in the soil, which is one of the measures needed to help combat climate change.

### About ECOFI

The European Consortium of the Organic-Based Fertiliser Industry (ECOFI) promotes the contribution made by the organic-based fertilisers sector to the emergence of a knowledge-intensive, environmentally sustainable and high-employment economy in Europe.

ECOFI was created in 2014 to represent European producers of organic fertilisers, organo-mineral fertilisers and organic soil improvers. ECOFI membership is open to any European producer in the sector whose production fully ensures the upstream traceability and the origin of raw material components.

### What are organic-based fertilisers?

The broad category of organic-based fertilisers includes diverse formulations of products that provide plants with nutrients and/or improve organic matter in the soil. They are applied to plants and/or soils to improve soil fertility, plant vigour, and both the quality and yield of harvested crops. Organic-based fertilisers are used in both organic and conventional agriculture.

Organic-based fertilisers include the following product categories:

- **Organic fertiliser:** a fertiliser whose main function is to provide nutrients in organic forms from organic materials of plant and/or animal origin.
- **Organo-mineral fertiliser:** a complex fertiliser obtained by industrial co-formulation of one or more inorganic fertilisers with one or more organic fertilisers and/or organic soil improvers into solid forms (with the exception of dry mixes) or liquids.
- **Organic soil improver:** a soil improver containing carbonaceous materials of plant and/or animal origin, whose main function is to maintain or increase the soil organic matter content.

ECOFI accounts for roughly 60% of the European market in organic-based fertilisers, which is worth about 250 million euros

### The EU market

Members are active in most European countries and also export to, or are active in, many other countries, including the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Together, the membership accounts for roughly 60% of the European market in organic-based fertilisers, which is worth about 250 million euros.