

# Small Farms Best for Environment: Organic Group

Contributed by Administrator

Reuters, 7/2/2008

[Go to Original](#)

MODENA, Italy - Small-scale, not industrial farming, is the answer to food shortages and climate change, organic farmers argued this week.

Meeting at the Organic World Congress this week, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements IFOAM -- [www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org) -- criticized a recent U.N. food summit for touting chemical fertilizers and genetically modified (GM) crops rather than organic solutions to tackle world hunger.

The World Bank says an extra 100 million people worldwide could go hungry as a result of the sharp rise in the price of food staples in the last year.

At the U.N. food summit in Rome this month, the World Bank pledged \$1.2 billion in grants to help with the food crisis.

"The \$1.2 billion the World Bank says will solve the food crisis in Africa is a \$1.2 billion subsidy to the chemical industry," said Vandana Shiva, an Indian physics professor and environmental activist speaking at the forum in Modena.

"Countries are made dependent on chemical fertilizers when their prices have tripled in the last year due to rising oil prices," she said. "I say to governments: spend a quarter of that on organic farming and you've solved your problems."

She said industrial farming was based on planting a single crop on vast surfaces and heavy use of chemical fertilizers, a process that used 10 times more energy than it produced.

"The rest turns into waste as greenhouse gases, chemical runoffs and pesticide residues in our food," she said.

In contrast, organic farms could increase output by 10 times by growing many different species of plants at the same time, which helped retain soil and water, she said. "In a one-acre farm in India they can grow 250 species of plants," she said.

## FEEDING 9 BILLION PEOPLE

The U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization Director General Jacques Diouf said last December there was no reason to believe that organic agriculture can substitute conventional farming systems in ensuring the world's food security.

"You cannot feed six billion people today and nine billion in 2050 without judicious use of chemical fertilizers."

Shiva has began a civil disobedience campaign in India against the patenting of natural seeds, particularly of crops that resist flooding and drought and can better withstand climate change.

"We need this worldwide. Seeds are for everyone," she said.

According to IFOAM, a quarter of greenhouse gases are emitted by industrially farmed crops and livestock. The proportion rises to 40 percent when including the emissions caused by transporting commodities around the world.

IFOAM members also criticized the production of fuel from grains, citing a U.S. university study that it took 1.3 gallons of fossil fuel to make 1 gallon of ethanol from corn.

The United States and Brazil defended their use of corn and sugar cane to make ethanol to fuel cars at the UN food summit saying it was a minor factor in food price inflation.

(In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, this material is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. o l y f a r m s has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of this article nor is o l y f a r m s endorsed or sponsored by the originator.)