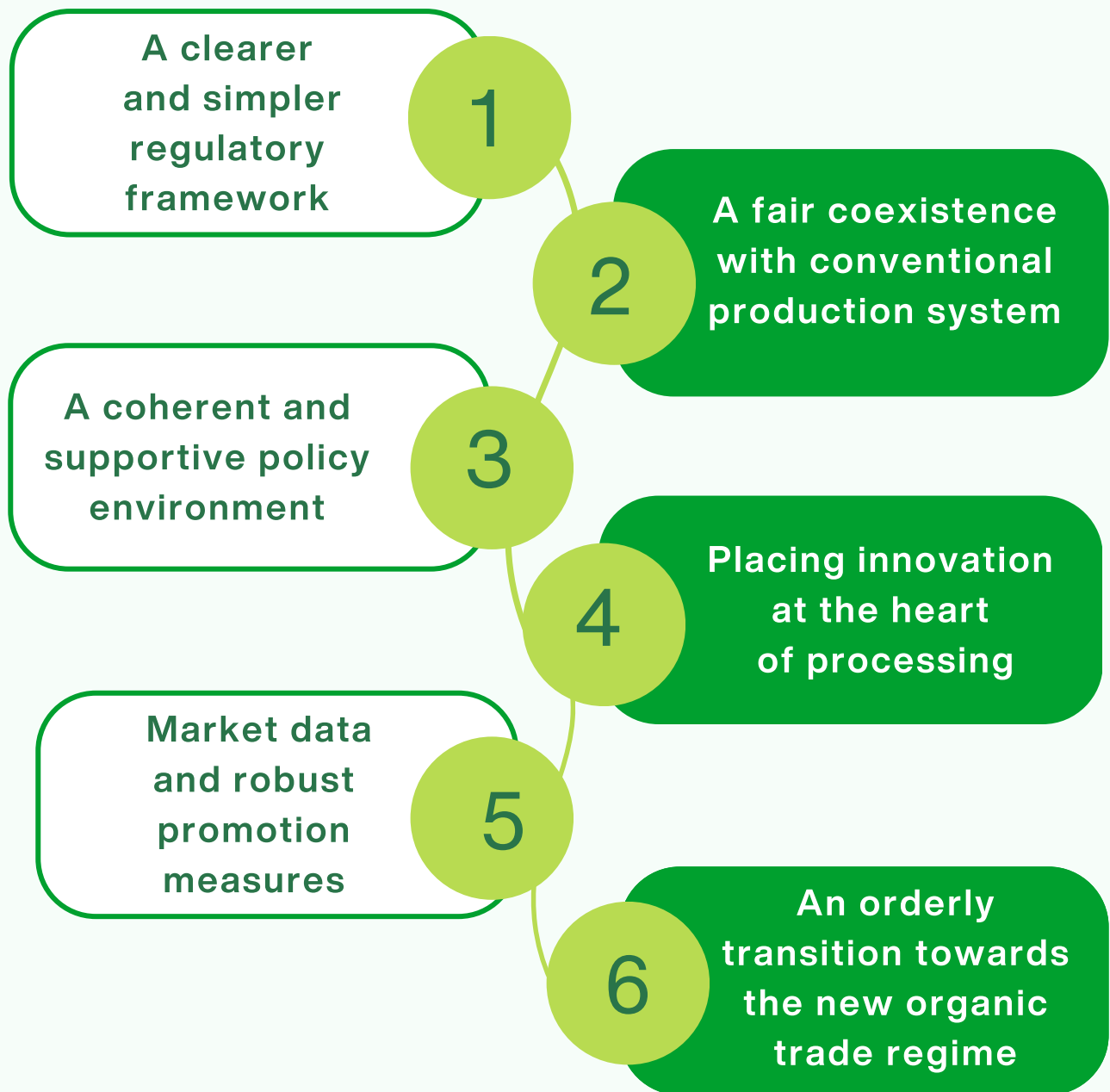




LOOKING AHEAD

Key priorities for European organic companies ahead of 2024 EU elections



1

A clearer and simpler regulatory framework

The burdensome and complex EU organic framework discourages newcomers and represents a real barrier for operators, in particular the smaller ones, to understand the rules. We propose:

- to **simplify and streamline** regulations to ensure readability;
- to issue guides and tools to swiftly respond to operators' questions;
- to grant public access to the interpretative letters from the European Commission on the organic rules.



2

A fair coexistence with conventional production system

Organic and conventional systems need to move forward hand-in-hand, but policies to ensure a smooth coexistence are lacking.

It is well substantiated the transition of phytosanitary products used in conventional farming into the organic food chain. Despite that evidence, the organic operator not only must put in place measures to prevent the contamination with chemicals used in conventional, but also bears the burden of proof when such substances are found in the organic product.

The future Commission must ensure a **proportional and sensible implementation of the rules regarding the presence of chemical phytosanitary products in organics**, based on efficient cooperation between companies, control bodies and competent authorities.

Drawing lessons from the unfortunate precedent of pesticides contamination, OPTA Europe requests to **properly address the coexistence issue in the New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) regulation.**

3

A coherent and supportive policy environment

The environmental benefits of organics are well substantiated. Therefore, organic must take centre stage in EU policymaking taking on the challenges of climate change and environmental sustainability (Green Taxonomy, Green Claims, Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, Sustainable Food Systems...).

5

Market data and robust promotion measures

➤ The sector needs statistical data to read **market signals** -production, consumption and trade – to ensure a balanced and diversified organic market.

➤ Robust implementation of the measures identified in the EU Organic Action Plan to boost the demand of organic products, such as:

- integrating organic products into school meals and canteens through **public procurement**;
- **communication campaigns** to explain their beneficial attributes to consumers. They should allow to emphasise **brands**;
- support to companies to **export** organic products to third country markets.

4

Placing innovation at the heart of processing

Continued innovation is key to meet new consumer's preferences and needs. Regulatory obstacles to innovative processing solutions must be addressed. **Functional ingredients** should be allowed in organic food, to reach consumers with special dietary needs.

6

An orderly transition towards the new organic trade regime

A complete overhaul of the trade regime for organics will be put in place within the next three years. For OPTA Europe, this shift represents an opportunity for EU companies to consolidate longstanding trading partnerships and also to expand organics worldwide, if the below principles are respected.



Providing predictability and sufficient transitional periods

Companies need to anticipate changes, make informed decisions and organize the necessary adjustments. For that:

- the list of recognized control authorities/bodies for the purpose of compliance and the list of substances authorized for use in organic production in certain areas of third countries must be known several months before entry into force;
- the reciprocal equivalence agreements with major trading partners and high potential ones (US, Japan, Canada, India) must be in place by 2027 deadline.



Ensuring the continuity of imports of organic ingredients

Given the limited sourcing alternatives under organic quality, it is essential to secure the imports of organic raw materials that EU companies need for their production processes. Concrete recommendations to remove roadblocks:

- **controls** on the organic integrity in origin and at EU borders must be proportional, fit for purpose and non-discriminatory;
- a **fast procedure** to correct purely formal mistakes in the Certificate of Inspection;
- **technical assistance** to emerging countries supplying the EU, to support them in the transition to the new regime.



Maximizing the export opportunities

Our key asks to boost exports of organic products:

- The future organic equivalence agreements that the Commission is negotiating with 13 countries must **overcome the variances** between standards that are today considered 'critical' -thus unacceptable- and address those regulatory divergences that are preventing some EU organic products to reach key export markets.
- The trade talks are a timely opportunity to progress towards **international convergence of organic standards**, to spare EU traders the burden of meeting diverging standards to sell their products in different markets;
- Support to exporters by providing **clear and detailed information** on organic standards and requirements for each export destination market;
- Creation of **specific CN Codes** to establish an accurate picture of the trade performance of organic products.

