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Organic Agriculture in Norway 2000

Kaare K. Johnsen and Emil Mohr, Debio

1 Agriculture in Norway

Norway is not a member state of the European Union. It has, however, been a member of the European Economic Area (EEA), an economic agreement originating to 1992 between the EFTA (European Free Trade Area) countries Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein on the one side and the EU countries on the other side. The EEA agreement does not include joint agricultural or fisheries policies, but it nevertheless offers trade opportunities for defined goods. Therefore, the Norwegian agricultural policy is influenced by the "Common Agricultural Policy" (CAP) of the European Union.

In former times, agriculture and fisheries were combined in the coastal areas. In the 1960s agricultural production became more specialised, like in many other European countries. Plant production and animal husbandry were separated and each became concentrated in different regions of the country. This split production makes it difficult for farmers to convert to organic farming, which aims at uniting arable farming with animal husbandry.

Norway is one of the European countries with very cheap nitrogen fertilisers. This and the concentration of animal husbandry in certain regions has led to over-fertilisation. On the other hand, Norway has advantages with its climate: due to the long cold period, there are less problems with plant diseases and insects than in the more southern parts of Europe.

Today, the average farm size is about twelve hectares. This figure does not include the huge amount of permanent grassland used for sheep and cattle in the mountain regions. There are strong efforts to keep the farms going, i.e. to maintain the rural population. The Norwegian government pays high subsidies for this.

Concerning the correlation of climate and organic production, it can be said that the farther north organic agriculture is practised, the greater the difference in yields compared to the yields of organic farming in more southern countries and compared to the yields of conventional farms. The latter are able to compensate less mineralisation and a shorter and colder vegetation period with mineral fertilisers. In organic farming this is impossible. One of the consequences is that organic imports from more southern countries are quite cheap compared to Norwegian organic produce. For conventional farmers the difference is not that high. In Norway there are consequently only a few organic farms with vegetable production.

2 History and Development of Organic Agriculture in Norway

Organic agriculture in Norway started with bio-dynamic farming in the 1930s, and until the 1970s there were very few organic farms. Most of the organic farms in Norway were bio-dynamic until recent years. Due to the rising interest in environmental issues from the 1960s onwards, the

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number of organic farms increased significantly to about 30 or 40. The need for certification arose at the beginning of the 1980s, and the first year of *Debio* certification, 1986, included 19 farms. Since then the number of organic farms has increased rapidly.

3 Organic Agriculture in Norway: Present Situation and Statistics

The number of organic farms and hectares under organic management has increased substantially in recent years (table 1).

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Table 1: Organic Farming in Norway, 2000

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Number of farms	946	1,310	1,589	1,745	1,745
Percentage of all farms	1.1	1.5	2.3	n.a.	n.a.
Organically managed area (ha)	4,657	7,392	10,520	14,951	18,084
Area in conversion (ha)	3,240	4,314	5,061	3,822	2,439
Total organic area	7,897	11,706	15,581	18,773	20,532
Percentage of total	0.8	1.2	1.5	1.8 *	2.0

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* Estimate
Source: *Debio*

The number of organic farms in Norway and the area of converted farm land have increased by about 30 percent annually during the years 1994 to 1997. From 1997 to 1998 and from 1999 to 2000, however, the average increase was only 5 percent. The increase is expected to continue, as the demand for all products is greater than the supply. Norwegian exports of organic products are still very limited.

Norwegian farms are small by European standards, the average size of organic farms being about 13 hectares (including several very little herb farms), which is slightly larger than the average size of conventional Norwegian farms. Almost all farms are run as family farms. On many smaller farms it is usual to have an additional income outside the farm.

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There have been policy plans aimed at encouraging organic farming since 1997. The first "Plan of Action" for organic agriculture led to a significant increase in organic milk production in 1997 and 1998.

Now there is a new "Plan of Action" which is valid until 2009. One of its aims is to achieve ten percent organically managed area by 2009. According to the plan, this development should coincide with adequate development of the organic market. An additional "Plan of Action" aims to put this new "Plan of Action" described above into concrete form. It was published at the end of February 2000. One of the problems in this context might be that marketing campaigns have been confusing for the consumer. Until today consumers do not really know what is meant by the term "bio".

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4 Organic Agriculture Organisations

There are four producer associations:

- Oikos - Økologisk Landslag (formerly Norsk Økologisk Landbrukslag NØLL) ("Norwegian Association for Organic Agriculture", <http://www.oikos.no>, founded in 1971;
- *Biologisk-dynamisk Forening* ("Bio-dynamic Society"), founded in 1950;
- ØkoProdusentane ("Organic Producers"), founded 1987;
- *Norsk Økologisk Urteleg* ("Norwegian Organic Herb Organisation")

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Other organisations connected with organic agriculture are the *Norsk Permakulturförening* ("Norwegian Permaculture Society"), *ORBIO*, a working group for organic-biologic agriculture in Scandinavia and *Rådgivende utvalg for økologisk landbruk*, a forum for co-operation between the government and the organic movement. Furthermore, there is *Stiftelsen Fokhol gård*, a foundation that offers courses. Its conference centre serves organic meals, and it owns a large bio-dynamic farm.

Debio (<http://www.debio.no>) is the Norwegian inspection and certification body for organic agricultural production. *Debio* also certifies farm land for the receipt of public economic support for organic farming.

Debio certifies for the use of *Debio's* seal for organic products, "Ø-merket", and for the use of the combination of "Ø-merket / Demeter" for bio-dynamic products. "Ø-merket" is the consumers' guarantee for certified organic products.

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Debio is a private, democratic members' organisation. The organisation is a link between producers, distributors, traders and consumers. *Debio* strives to improve the understanding of organic farming and other organic production.

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The Norwegian Agricultural Inspection Service is the state authority for organic agricultural production, and *The Norwegian Food Control Authority (SNT: <http://www.snt.no>)* is the control authority for the processing, trade and importation of organic products. *Debio* has been appointed as a inspection and certification body in both areas.

5 Regional Distribution of Organic Farms in Norway

The old pioneer farms were often followed by other organic farms. Accordingly, little accumulations of organic farms can be found nearly all over the country.

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Most of the farms, especially the larger, grain-growing farms, are mainly located in the south-eastern parts of the country. Sheep, cattle and goats are mainly kept in the south-western, western and northern parts. In the North there are only a very few organic farms. Their percentage of the total number of farms is lower than in the other parts of the country.

6 Land Use and Animal Husbandry

Plant production includes meadows, fodder and pasture land as well as grains, vegetables, fruit, berries and herbs (table 2). Due to climatic conditions, grain production is mainly restricted to barley and oats, but there is also some wheat and rye. The last few years have seen a large increase in herb cultivation, which is especially suitable for the Norwegian climate.

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Table 2: Organic Land Use in Norway in 1999

Crop	Hectares*
Grassland / meadows / green manure	13,592
Grain	861
Seeds	72
Potatoes	147
Vegetables	91
Herbs	36
Fruit	38
Berries	21
Other	87
Total	14,951

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* in conversionnot included
Source: *Debio*, 2000

Livestock production mainly focuses on sheep, dairy cows and beef cattle, but there are also some goats and egg production (table 3). The first governmental "Plan of Action" for organic agriculture led to a significant increase in organic milk production in 1997 and 1998.

Organic eggs and pigs are still rare, as not many organic farms can grow grain (due to climatic conditions).

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Table 3: Organic Livestock in Norway, 1999

Animals	Number
Cattle, milk production	2,998
Cattle, other	4,426
Sheep, lambs	18,393
Goats	1,052
Pigs	282
Poultry (Chickens)	27,228
Horses	156
Other (turkeys, geese, ducks)	469

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Source: *Debio*, 2000

7 Standards, Certification and State Regulations

The Norwegian standards for organic agriculture and for processing, trading and importing organic products conform with *Council Regulation (EEC) 2092/91 and accompanying regulations*, [IFOAM](http://www.ifoam.org) (<http://www.ifoam.org>) *Basic Standards* and the *international Demeter Standards* (*Internationale Demeter-Richtlinien*, <http://www.demeter.net>).

All Norwegian standards for organic agricultural production are drawn up by standards committees appointed by the board of [Debio](#). The standards are suggested by the committees to the Agricultural Inspection Service. The Ministry of Agriculture in turn lays down the final standards. All further standards are decided on by the board of [Debio](#).

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The Ministry of Agriculture has established the *Debio* standards for plant production and livestock as a supplement to the *Regulation on the Production and Labelling of Organic Agricultural Production*. The term "organic" (Norwegian: "øko-logisk") is thereby legally protected, and in order to market or label agricultural products as organic, they must be inspected and certified by [Debio](#).

Debio has developed standards for:

- [Labelling with *Debio*'s seals](#)
- [Organic agriculture](http://www.debio.no/regler/debprim.htm) (<http://www.debio.no/regler/debprim.htm>)
- Organic textiles
- [Processing, importing and trading organic products](http://www.debio.no/regler/debfore.htm) (<http://www.debio.no/regler/debfore.htm>)
- [Certified input factors for use in organic production](http://www.debio.no/regler/debdrift.htm) (<http://www.debio.no/regler/debdrift.htm>)

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Certification of organic production is handled by [Debio](#). *Debio* is accredited as a certification body by "Norwegian Accreditation" according to European norm EN-45011.

Organic certification is not a certification of food *quality* - it is the organic *production method* that is certified. Quality control of both conventional and organic agricultural primary production (not processing), and of input factors (fertilisers, etc.), is the responsibility of *Statens landbrukstilsyn* (*The Norwegian Agricultural Inspection Service*).

Quality control of refined, processed and / or imported food is handled by the local Food Control Authorities, headed by *Statens næringsmiddeltilsyn* (the Norwegian Food Control Authority).

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Certification of Norwegian Organic Aquaculture

After a two-year aquaculture project on organic salmon farming, *Debio*'s board of representatives decided in March 1997 that *Debio* shall no longer be involved in organic aquaculture. *Debio* made an agreement with [KRAV](#), the Swedish certification body for organic agriculture, and handed their documents on aquaculture over to [KRAV](#), including the *Debio* standards for organic salmon farming. The agreement enabled [KRAV](#) to continue the certification of Norwegian organic aquaculture (fish farming, slaughtering, refining and trading), which had previously been *Debio*'s responsibility. Since 1999, *Debio* has again been involved in developing standards for organic aquaculture, which will be put into practice in January 2001.

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8 Implementation of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91

Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU). However, Norwegian legislation on organic farming is subject to *Council Regulation (EEC) 2092/91 and accompanying regulations on organic farming* through Norway's membership in the EEA (an economic agreement between the EFTA countries Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland and the EU). Furthermore, *Debio's* certification is in accordance with the *JFOAM Basic Standards* and *International Demeter Standards*.

9 State Funding of Organic Farming

The state supports organic agriculture in two ways: through subsidies paid directly to the farmers and through financial support to organisations in the organic movement.

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The conversion subsidy is paid during the conversion period (in 1999: 6.000,- Norwegian crowns [NKR] or 731 Euro per hectare). The area subsidy is paid annually for fully converted areas (in 1999: NKR 1.500,- or 183 Euro per hectare for food crops and NKR 1100,- or 134 Euro per hectare for other crops).

The financial support for organisations, including advisory services, research and producer organisations, the certification body etc., totalled 50 million Norwegian crowns (6.1 million Euro) in 1998. The government (<http://www.debio.no/diverse/debengad.htm#authorities>) decided in 1997 on a national "Plan of Action" to develop organic agriculture (see chapter 3: "Present Situation and Statistics").

Two thirds of the budget for the inspection body (Debio) is financed by the government, and one third comes from annual inspection fees paid by the producers.

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10 Implementation of Agenda 2000

Until now, Agenda 2000 has only played a subordinate role, as it hardly influences the agricultural policy. Nevertheless, the agreements of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the following talks will influence the national agricultural policy.

11 The Market

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For a long time, the main marketing channels for organic products were direct marketing, organic food shops and health food shops. Vegetable box schemes started in mid-1999 and have been quite successful. Processed organic food is available, but there is very little fruit and vegetables. The share of imported organic fruit and vegetables was about 50 percent in 1999.

There is a trend towards marketing via the supermarkets. Marketing in Norway is mainly based on co-operatives ("co-ops"). They receive state subsidies, and they practically have a monopoly on dairies and meat processing plants. Small producer associations do not receive any financial aid from the state, so marketing structures are quite big and immobile. Few of the co-ops are willing to introduce organic products to their product range, but when organic milk was added to the range in 1999, milk sales increased by 40 percent. In general, however, the supermarkets still show little interest in selling organic products. Therefore, there were no advertisements or other kinds of publicity in the past. Altogether it can be said that selling organic produce via the wholesale trade is quite difficult.

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Exports of Norwegian organic products are still very low.

12 Education

One agricultural school for farmers, Sogn Jord-og Hagebruksskule, teaches organic farming and nothing else. All other agricultural schools offer at least some courses on organic farming. At the only Norwegian agriculture university, Norges Landbrukshøgskole (<http://www.nlh.no>) near Oslo, there are only a few courses and seminars on organic farming.

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13 Organic Advisory Service

The most important advisory service is the nation-wide net of organic agricultural advisory groups (<http://www.lfr.no>). The local groups or organisations consist of people with agricultural education or training. The groups run courses, offer advice and carry out research and experiments. There are about 20 local groups which are part of a larger net including the conventional advisory groups (about 125 in all). The groups are state funded.

Advice is also given by the Norwegian Centre for Organic Agriculture (NORSØK); <http://www.norsok.no>

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and the *Bio-dynamic Society*.

14 Research

The only Norwegian organic research institute is the Norwegian Centre for Organic Agriculture (NORSØK); <http://www.norsok.no/>.

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Some research is also carried out at the Norwegian Agricultural University Norges Landbrukshøgskole (<http://www.nlh.no>), at some agricultural schools (<http://www.debio.no/diverse/debengad.htm#education>) and by the advisory groups.

The Planteforsk (The Norwegian Crop Research Institute) also does research on organic agriculture

15 Challenges and Outlook

There are two main goals for organic agriculture in Norway in the near future.

The first is to introduce a new certification system for organic aquaculture, which is a very urgent project. From January 2001 on, basic standards that have been developed in co-operation with KRAV (Sweden), the Soil Association (United Kingdom);

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<http://www.soilassociation.org>) and [Naturland](http://www.naturland.de) (Germany; <http://www.naturland.de>) will go into effect. These standards will be based to a large extent on standards that were originally developed by [Debio](http://www.debio.no) some years ago (see above chapter "Standards and Certification").

The second goal – the marketing of organic fish and fish meal - is closely connected to the first, since fish and fish products are the second most important Norwegian export after mineral oil. This market could be a chance for organic fish and processed organic fish goods. Organic fish for export could include salmon, arctic char, trout, shrimps and mussels. Furthermore, there could be a market for fish meal, as the demand for it is increasing on the European market.

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16 Authors

Kaare K. Johnsen and Emil Mohr, [Debio](http://www.debio.no), N-1940 Bjørkelangen, Tel. +47-63862650, Fax +47-63856985, e-mail kontor@Debio.no, website <http://www.debio.no>

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Comments to helga.willer@fibl.org



Forschungsinstitut fuer biologischen Landbau (FiBL) , Research
Institute of Organic Agriculture
Ackerstrasse, CH-5070 Frick
Tel: +41-62-865 72 72 Fax:+41-62-865 72 73
Internet <http://www.fibl.org>

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