

ORGANIC FARMING (OF) IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(current situation and data from 2010)

The driving forces in development of Czech organic farming (OF) are: subsidies paid within agroenvironmental measures, the interest of traders in organic raw materials and development of the Czech organic market. The Czech Republic has a sufficient number of experts in organic plant and animal production and organic food processing and marketing. Consultancy and education are also well developed. There are accredited advisory, inspection and certification organizations.

At present approximately 450,000 hectares of land are farmed organically, which represents 10.5 % of the total agricultural acreage. In this respect the Czech Republic is above the EU average. There are about 3,500 Czech agricultural enterprises varying significantly in size, with predominantly grassland. However, the number of cash crops producers has been increasing. There are small organic farms e.g. of just 5 hectares, but also whole former cooperatives or state farms with acreage over 1000 hectares. The Czech Republic is the leader in the field of organic farming among new EU members. Every year 1 billion CZK (40 million EUR) is paid in the form of subsidies to organic farmers. We organize European conferences (e.g. Bioacademy, FQH Conference or the International Scientific Conference) and we have experts for international cooperation. The Czech "Organic Agriculture in Practice" handbook has been translated into English and Russian.

The role of the state in supervising organic farming in the Czech Republic:

The main role in the development and concept of organic farming in CZ is that of the Czech Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) where a department for Organic Farming and the Environment has been established, employing five OF specialists. Development of Czech organic farming until 2015 is determined by the Action Plan approved by the Czech Government in December 2010. The MoA has also established the Czech Technology Platform for Organic Agriculture which is managed by Bioinstitut Olomouc, specialising in OF. The key role of the MoA is to guarantee and subsidize OF. As in other EU countries, subsidies are paid out within the Rural Development Plan. Organic agriculture is programme No. 1 in so-called agroenvironmental measures. Supervision of payments is carried out by the State Agricultural Intervention Fund (SZIF) – an accredited payment agency. Supervision of organic farming is carried out by the MoA; official inspections are the responsibility of ÚKZÚZ – the Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture. Besides this, there are three government-authorized private organisations for inspection and certification in the Czech Republic (KEZ, ABCert and Biokont). Czech organic farming rules are adjusted in accordance with European Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 and Commission Regulation (No. 889/2008), and with Czech Act No. 242/200.

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Basic statistical data (31. 12. 2010)

	31. 12. 2010	31. 12. 2009	31. 12. 2008	31. 12. 2007
Organic Processors	626	497	410	253
Organic farms	3 517	2 689	1 834	1 318
Total organic area (ha)	448 202	398 407	341 632	312 890
Share (%)	10.55	9.38	8.04	7.35
Arable land (ha)	54 937	44 906	35 178	29 505
Permanent pasture (ha)	369 272	329 232	281 596	257 899
Permanent culture (orchards) (ha)	5 128	3 678	2 764	1 625
Permanent culture (vineyards) (ha)	803	645	341	245
Permanent culture (hop production) (ha)	8	8	0	0
Other land (ha)	18 054	19 890	21 753	23 616

This table shows current basic statistical data on organic farming at 31.12.2010. The number of organic farmers increased significantly during 2010. At 31.12.2010 there were as many as 3,517 companies farming a total of almost 450,000 ha which represents over 10.55 % of total Czech farmland. Arable land acreage is constantly increasing, reaching 55,000 ha which means an increase of 10,000 ha during 2010. Organic vineyard acreage has also increased to a current 803 hectares, including both European and resistant (interspecific) cultivars.

Thus, in 2010, the number of organic farms grew by 31 % and the number of organic food producers by 26 %, amounting to nearly 630 production plants. Complete and detailed statistical data for 2010 will be published in the "Organic Farming Yearbook 2010".

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