

Organic Farming in Europe 2012

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In 2011, the area of organic land, the number of organic farmers and the organic market continued to grow in Europe. Provisional figures for 2012 indicate that these positive developments have continued.

Current statistics

In Europe, organic agricultural land exceeded the ten million hectare mark in 2010, and in 2011, 10.6 million hectares, constituting 2.2 percent of the agricultural area, were under organic agricultural management. There were more than 290'000 producers. The area of organic land in 2001 was 5.4 million hectares and so has doubled since then, while the number of producers has increased by 70 percent. The total value of the European organic market in 2011 was 21.5 billion euros and the overall growth rate was approximately nine percent. For details see chapter on European organic farming statistics (page 215) and the European market (page 224).

Two projects with relevance to organic farming statistics: OrganicDataNetwork and ICOPP

In January 2012, the new European research project "OrganicDataNetwork" (European Data Network for Improved Transparency of Organic Markets) started. It is expected to be a significant step toward improving European market data. The project aims to increase the transparency of the European organic food market through better availability of market information about the sector, thus meeting the needs of policy makers and actors involved in organic markets. The partnership will act as coordinating centre between stakeholders, and will result in a proposal for the establishment of a permanent network to achieve collaboration on statistical issues regarding organic market data. The first of the two planned stakeholder workshops will take place in March 2013.² For more information see also article by project coordinator Raffaele Zanolini in this volume (page 230).

A second project of interest is called "Improved Contribution of local feed to support 100% Organic feed supply to Pigs and Poultry (ICOPP)".³ One part of the project is the assessment of the current protein supply and the protein demand in European organic agriculture. To that end, the current feedstuff production, imports, and exports are assessed along with the protein needs. The results of this survey should be available by the end of 2013.

EU regulation on organic farming and related issues

Organic farming has had legal protection in the European Union since the beginning of the 1990s with Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. On July 20, 2007, a completely

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² Information on the project "Improved Contribution of local feed to support 100% Organic feed supply to Pigs and Poultry (ICOPP)" is available at the project website www.organicdatanetwork.net.

³ Information about the project is available at the project website www.organicresearchcentre.com/icopp/.

revised organic regulation was published: Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, came into force on January 1, 2009. The new rules include the mandatory use of the EU organic logo on pre-packaged organic products. The logo can be accompanied by national or private logos. The organic logo of the EU has been mandatory since July 1, 2010 on all pre-packaged organic products that were produced in any of the EU Member States and meet the necessary standards.

On February 15, 2012, at BioFach Germany, European Commissioner Dacian Cioloș for the European Union's (EU) Agriculture and Rural Development and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan of the U.S. Department of Agriculture signed the organic equivalence arrangement between the world's two largest markets for organic food. Since the publication of the agreement, quite a few obstacles, problems and instances of misleading language were identified by the sector, and IFOAM EU feeds into the discussions between EU officials and American officials. For more information about the agreement, see articles by Beate Huber et al. on Standards and Regulations (page 140) and Barbara Haumann's chapter on the USA: (page 282).



Figure 78: European Union: Logo for organic products. The "Euro-leaf" design shows the EU stars in the shape of a leaf against a green background conveying the message: Nature and Europe.

A review of the Organic Regulation is currently in progress and the European Commission held three hearings at which a wide range of stakeholders participated. The European Union Group of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM EU) recommended not to opt for a total revision as the organic sector has just experienced a major revision from 2006 to 2012. Furthermore, IFOAM EU urged the Commission to update the European organic action plan and to put organic farming in the context of the new policy framework.

Government support

The current cycle of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the European Union is due to end in 2013. Discussions are now underway to reform the policy for the period 2014 to 2020.¹ Support has been granted to organic farming under the European Union's agri-environmental programs (Pillar II of the CAP, rural development) since the beginning of the 1990s.² IFOAM EU stresses the importance of having a strong rural development budget for mainstreaming sustainable outcomes, including the expansion of organic food and farming systems, which can help to ensure a real future for rural economies by providing healthy food, employment and environmental services. Final budget allocations are expected to be defined at an EU Summit in February or March 2013.

¹ Detailed information on the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 is available at the website of the European Commission at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/index_en.htm.

² Switzerland and Denmark introduced support schemes already in the 1980s, and in 1989 Germany introduced support for organic farming under what is known as the extensification program. With the EU's agri-environmental programs, this support was extended to all EU countries (since 1992). The type and amount of support provided within this program varies within the different EU Member States. Non-EU countries have similar support schemes.

Organic action plans are a further important support measure for organic farming. In 2011, 26 countries and regions in Europe had an action plan (Gonzalvez et al. 2011): many of them with quantitative targets. Austria, for instance, aimed to have 20 percent organically managed agricultural land by the end of 2010: an aim that was achieved in 2010 when 19.7 percent of the agricultural land was organic. The European Action Plan for organic food and farming was launched in 2004. The information campaign proposed in the plan (Action 1, a multi-annual EU-wide information and promotion campaign to inform consumers, public institution canteens, schools, and other key actors) was implemented in July 2008. The campaign website offers a wide-range of information on organic agriculture.

In January 2013, the European Commission announced a public consultation for the review of the European policy on organic agriculture.¹ All citizens, organizations, and public authorities who have an interest in a review of the European policy on organic agriculture are welcome to contribute to this consultation. The consultation runs from January 15, 2013 to April 10, 2013. In this consultation, the European Commission would like to gather views on how best to develop organic farming. Key issues are: simplifying the legal framework while ensuring standards are not watered down; co-existence of GM crops with organic farming; better control systems and trade arrangements for organic products; and impact of the new labelling rules. Other issues are the European action plan, controls and imports.

Research

Today, organic farming research is substantially funded under national research programs or national organic action plans, as well as through European projects.² Even though no figures for all European countries are available, it is known that the funds of the eleven countries that are part of the ERA-Net project CORE Organic³ amounted to more than 60 million euros in 2006 (Lange et al. 2007). Newer data are not available.

Several organic farming research projects have been funded under the framework programs of the European Commission since the mid-1990s. Furthermore, there are several European projects that do not have organic farming as their focus but carry out research related to organic farming. In the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, launched in 2008, ten funded projects are currently focusing on organic farming. The main projects are listed here:

- IMPRO: Impact matrix analysis and cost-benefit calculations to improve management practices regarding health status in organic dairy farming (2012-2016), www.impro-dairy.eu

¹ Information on the “Consultation for the review of the European policy on organic agriculture” is available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/organic/2013_en.htm

² For a list of organic farming research projects funded by the European Commission, see <http://www.organic-research.org/european-projects.html>

³ CORE Organic (Co-ordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming); Internet www.coreorganic.org. CORE Organic was a three-year coordination action in organic food and farming (2004 to 2007). The overall objective was to gather a critical mass and enhance quality, relevance and utilization of resources in European research in organic food and farming. It has been succeeded by the CORE Organic II project.

- OSCAR: Optimising Subsidiary Crop Applications in Rotations (2012-2016), web3.wzw.tum.de/oscar
- OrganicDataNetwork: Data network for better European organic market information (2012-2014), www.organicdatanetwork.net
- Co-Free: Innovative strategies for copper-free low input and organic farming systems (starting 2012), www.co-free.eu
- SOILIBAM: Strategies for organic and low-input integrated breeding and management, www.solibam.eu
- CERTCOST: Economic analysis of certification systems for organic food and farming, www.certcost.eu
- LowInputBreeds: Development of integrated livestock breeding and management strategies to improve animal health, product quality and performance in European organic and "low input" milk, meat and egg production (2009-2014); www.lowinputbreeds.org
- Organic Sensory Information System (OSIS) (www.ecropolis.eu): Documentation of sensory properties through testing and consumer research for the organic industry, www.ecropolis.eu;
- BioBio: Indicators for biodiversity in organic and low-input farming systems, www.biobio-indicator.wur.nl/UK
- CORE Organic II - Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems, www.coreorganic2.org

CORE Organic II started in April 2010 and builds on the outcome of the first CORE Organic project - successfully completed in 2007 - with the aim of building an effective and sustainable transnational research program. CORE Organic is a network of funding bodies and has 21 partner countries. CORE Organic's goal is to identify common research priorities for the organic sector where a transnational approach gives added value, initiate research projects, organize project monitoring and dissemination of results, and consider funding models. A call for proposals was launched in 2010, and eleven projects were selected, covering three thematic organic research areas: Cropping, monogastric animals and quality.¹ A second call was launched in autumn 2011 with two main focus areas: breeding and market development. One project was selected for each of the thematic research areas of the second call.² A CORE Organic research seminar will take place in the Netherlands on May 15, 2013, and the projects initiated by CORE Organic II will be presented.

The Technology Platform (TP) Organics (www.tporganics.eu), which was founded in 2008, joins the efforts of industry and civil society in defining organic research priorities and defending them vis-à-vis policy-makers.³

¹ Information on CORE Organic II is available on www.coreorganic2.org.

² COBRA - Coordinating Organic plant Breeding Activities for Diversity coordinated by Thomas Döring, The Organic Research Centre, United Kingdom and HealthyGrowth and "Healthy growth: From niche to volume with integrity and trust" coordinated by Egon Noe, Agroecology, Aarhus University, Denmark.

³ The TP Organic vision paper, published in December 2008, reveals the huge potential of organic food production to mitigate major global problems, from climate change and food security, to the whole range of socio-economic challenges in the rural areas (Niggli et al. 2008). In February 2010 the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA), the second major document of the Technology Platform TP Organics (www.tporganics.eu) was finalized, underlining research priorities and a number of suggestions for research projects (Schmid et al.

At the end of 2012, TP Organics proposed amendments for the next EU framework programme for research (called HORIZON 2020 and running from 2014 to 2020), which the Industry Technology Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee of the European Parliament approved. IFOAM EU sees this as a major step towards obtaining funding for organic farming research in the future. The next steps in the legislative procedure are the plenary vote of the European Parliament and the negotiations with the Member States. TP Organics will continue its lobby work to ensure that organic food and farming receives an important place within the European Research Area for the next seven years.



From the 24th to the 26th of September 2012, around 100 participants gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus for the “Organic Days”. One day focused on “Organic and Low-input Agriculture. Implementing innovation to respond to EU challenges.” At the conference, the European Commission presented a catalogue of 49 EU research projects on low-input and organic agriculture that were funded in the period from 2000-2012.¹ Speakers proposed several topics for inclusion in the European Innovation Partnership (EIP)² “Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability“, such as participatory plant breeding, the design of agroforestry systems for better nutrient efficiency, and the development of processing methods that preserve the original quality of the raw materials.

Successful policy work of IFOAM EU

The European Union Group of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM EU) can look back on another year of successful policy work. The activities of the group are very well documented in its monthly newsletter.³ In 2013, IFOAM EU will celebrate its 10th anniversary.

Its work focuses on three areas:

- Regulation - to work on the implementation and evaluation of the EU organic regulation EC 834/2007 according to IFOAM standards;

2009). The Implementation Action Plan explains how the research priorities and research topics, identified in the Strategic Research Agenda, can be implemented. A focus is laid on funding instruments, research methods, and communication of results (Padel et al. 2010). Many of the topics covered in these documents were taken into consideration in recent European calls.

¹ The publication „A decade of EU-funded, low-input and organic agriculture research (2002-2012)“ is available at http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/pdf/189756_2011_2695_a_decade_of_eu_en.pdf

² European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) are a new approach to EU research and innovation. EIPs are challenge-driven, focusing on societal benefits and a rapid modernisation of the associated sectors and markets. EIPs act across the whole research and innovation chain, bringing together all relevant actors at EU, national and regional levels in order to: (i) step up research and development efforts; (ii) coordinate investments in demonstration and pilots; (iii) anticipate and fast-track any necessary regulation and standards; and (iv) mobilise ‘demand’ in particular through better coordinated public procurement to ensure that any breakthroughs are quickly brought to market. Rather than taking the above steps independently, as is currently the case, the aim of the EIPs is to design and implement them in parallel to cut lead times. Taken from the website of the European Commission, page “European Innovation Partnerships”, available at http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=eip

³ The newsletter of the IFOAM EU Group is available at http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group-new/positions/newsletters/newsletters.php

- Agricultural policy - to achieve an effective European organic action plan and to lobby for a more sustainable Common Agricultural Policy;
- Research – to lobby for organic farming research as coordinator of the Technology Platform for organic food and farming and to participate in relevant research projects, especially in the dissemination of results.

The sixth congress of IFOAM EU was organized in cooperation with Organic Denmark and held in Copenhagen, Denmark on April 17-18, 2012. With 200 participants, including high-level speakers from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European organic sector, the 6th European Organic Congress took place at a crucial point in time for the debate on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).¹ The 7th European Organic Congress of IFOAM EU will take place from the 8th to the 10th of July, 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

A second important event for IFOAM EU were the “Organic Days” in Cyprus in September 2012: 100 participants gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus. The event was organized by IFOAM EU, TP Organics, Pasybio - the Cypriot organic association, the European Commission and the Cyprus Presidency of the EU Council, and offered the organic sector and wider civil society the opportunity to discuss the future of European agricultural and research policy with researchers and representatives of the European Commission.²

Further reading

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¹ Information on the congress is available at <http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/>

² A detailed report is available in Newsletter No. 58 of IFOAM EU at http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group-new/positions/newsletters/pdf/2012/IFOAMEU_newsletter_September_final_.pdf

Websites

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www.ifoam-eu.org: European Union Group of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements - IFOAM EU Group
www.ifoam.org: International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)
europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/index_en.htm: The European Commission's organic farming website
ec.europa.eu/Eurostat: Eurostat: Organic farming data: ec.europa.eu/eurostat > Statistics > Statistics A-Z > Agriculture > Data > Main tables > Organic Farming
www.fibl.org: FiBL – Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org: Website of the organic congresses of the IFOAM EU Group
www.organic-europe.net: Organic Europe, maintained by FiBL: Country reports, address database, statistics
www.organic-market.info: Organic Market Info: Market News and updates: www.organic-market.info
www.organic-world.net: Organic World (maintained by FiBL): Statistics, country information, news
www.tporganics.eu: Technology Platform TP Organics