

Statistics, support schemes and research

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Statistical Development: Continued Growth

Since the beginning of the 1990s, organic farming has rapidly developed in almost all European countries. According to this survey in Europe, more than 6.9 million hectares (1.4 percent of the agricultural land) are managed organically by almost 190'000 farms.

In the European Union (EU) almost 6.3 million hectares are managed organically by almost 160'000 farms. This constitutes 3.9 percent of the agricultural area and 1.7 percent of the farms in the EU. Compared to the previous year (as of December 2004) the organic land increased by almost 510'000 hectares (+7.9 percent) in Europe and by 490'000 hectares (+ 8.5 percent) in the European Union.

The increase in the European Union compared to the previous year is due to high growth rates in the new member states (for instance Lithuania: +100 percent, Poland +60 percent) as well as substantial increases in Italy (ca. +113'000 hectares), Poland (+85'000 hectares), Spain (+74'000 hectares). There have, however been decreases of organic land, notably the UK, Sweden, and Turkey.

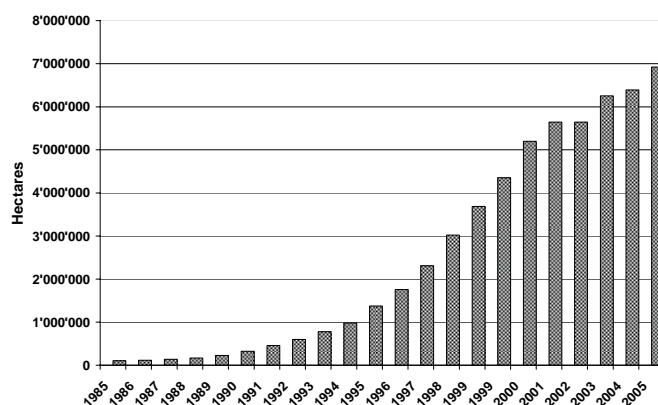


Figure 35: Development of organic land area in Europe 1985-2005

Source: Institute of Rural Sciences, University of Aberystwyth, UK and FiBL Switzerland

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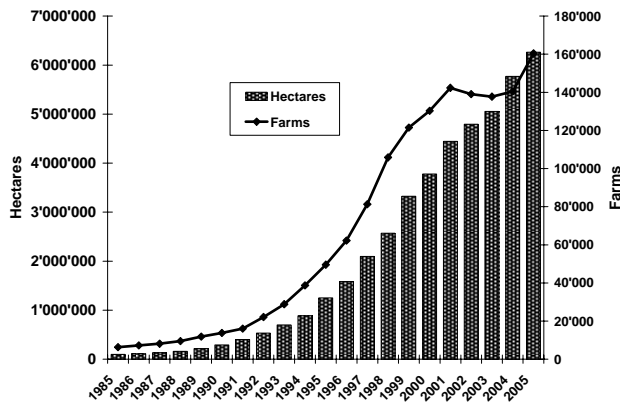


Figure 36: Development of organic farming in the European Union 1985-2005: Organic land and farms

Source: Institute of Rural Sciences, University of Aberystwyth, UK, and FiBL, Frick, Switzerland

The difference between individual countries regarding the importance of organic farming is substantial. More than 14 percent of agricultural land is organic in Austria, 11 percent in Switzerland, and around seven percent in Finland, Italy and Sweden. Some countries have yet to reach one percent. The country with the highest number of farms and the biggest organic land area is Italy.

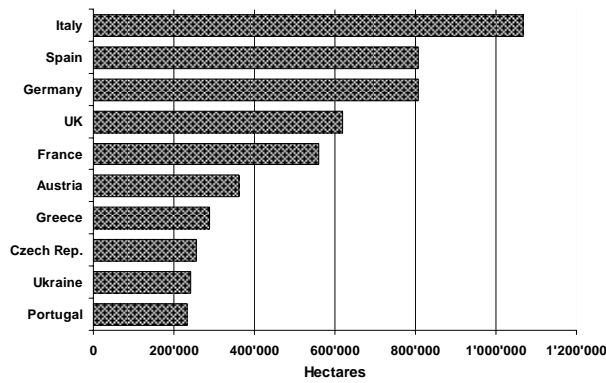


Figure 37: The ten countries with the highest area of organic farming land in Europe 2005

Source: FiBL-SOEL survey 2007

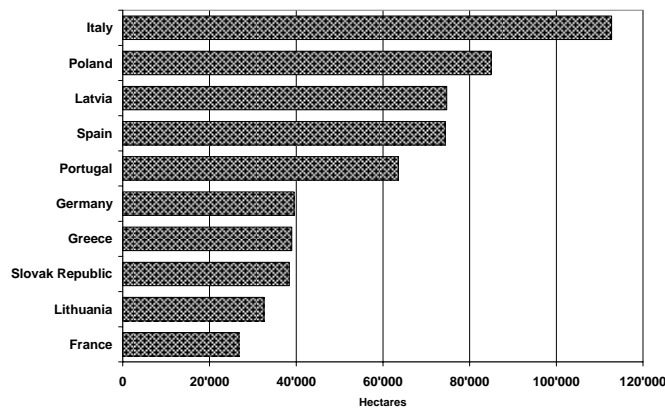


Figure 38: The ten countries with the highest increase (hectares) of organic land in Europe 2004-2005

Source: FiBL-SOEL-surveys 2006 and 2007

According to the global organic survey 2007 in Europe, the organic agricultural land (6.9 million hectares) is mainly used for arable cropping (39 percent of organic land) and for permanent pastures (42 percent). Permanent crops amount for seven percent of the land. For seven percent of the organic land no information on the main land use categories was available.

On a European level, cereals and fodder crops play the most important role in arable farming. Among the permanent crops, olives, fruits, nuts, and grapes are the most important categories. For the European Union a similar picture emerges.

Data collection and processing in Europe still suffers from a lack of standardization (Rippin et al. 2006; Recke et al. 2004), but basic production data are now available from several sources, and the situation is getting increasingly better. Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, is now making the data including land use information available at its homepage, and it provides extensive reports. Many of the European data provided in this book are based on the Eurostat information. The Institute of Rural Sciences at the University of Wales provides historical figures as well as detailed analyses, and a complete overview of the statistical development of the organic sector since the 1990s is available at its homepage. The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) makes the latest data (not consolidated) available on its homepage. A database for organic market data was set up by the Central Market and Price Reporting Bureau in Germany ZMP, a development supported by the European Commission within the framework of the concerted action EISfOM 'European Information System for Organic Markets'¹.

¹ Information and links to all these information resources are available via www.organic-europe.net/europe_eu/statistics.asp

Development at a policy level

Support for organic farming in the European Union includes support under the European Union's rural development programs¹, legal protection under the recently revised EU regulation on organic farming (since 1992)² and the launch of the European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming in June 2004³.

The **Rural Development policy 2007-2013**⁴, as laid down in Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005⁵ employs targeted measures for strengthening rural development instead of a general support to the agricultural sector. Since 1992, organic farming has been supported with area payments under the rural development programs, and these payments are one reason for the high number of organic farms in the European Union and other European countries, many of which have similar schemes. The EU's future Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 will focus on three axes: 1) improving competitiveness for farming and forestry; environment and countryside; 2) improving the environment and countryside and 3) improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification.

Along with the regulation, the 'Community strategic guidelines for Rural Development'⁶ were published in February 2006. These guidelines mention organic farming several times, for instance:

Under 'Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector' Member States are encouraged to focus their support on the key actions in order to meet the priorities mentioned above. One of the key actions is organic farming and it is recommended that the contribution of organic farming should be consolidated. 'Organic farming represents a holistic approach to sustainable agriculture. In this respect, its contribution to environmental and animal welfare objectives could be further reinforced.'

Furthermore, it is recommended that Member States, when making their national programs, insure consistency in programming and take into account other EU-level strategies, such as the Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming.

At the time of writing this article the Member States' rural development programs were just being drawn up. It remains to be seen if the area support for organic farming will remain as in previous years or will be improved, and if further instruments for organic farming will be implemented.

1 A collection of links related to European agripolicy documents is available at www.organic-europe.net/europe_eu/rural-development.asp

2 Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 of 24 June 1991 on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs; available via www.organic-europe.net/europe_eu/eu-regulation-2092-91.asp

3 Information on the European Action plan is available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/plan/index_en.htm and at www.organic-europe.net/.

4 European Commission (2006): Rural Development policy 2007-2013 m. The European Commission's Homepage, Brussels, http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm

5 COMMISSION REGULATION (EC) No 1320/2006 of 5 September 2006 laying down rules for the transition to the rural development support provided for in Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005

6 COUNCIL DECISION of 20 February 2006 on Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013) (2006/144/EC)

The support of organic farming throughout national rural development programs is, however, not obligatory – a fact which is criticized by the IFOAM EU Group, as organic farming can provide more employment, the average age of organic farmers is lower in many countries. Organic farmers are more engaged in on-farm-processing and direct sales and are highly innovative. This creates added value, consumer confidence, and viable rural regions, as shown in reports from the Member States at a seminar on the current EU agri policy in November 2006. This seminar was held by the IFOAM EU Group in November 2006¹.

The whole of 2006 was characterized by the revision of EU regulation on organic farming (for details on the new regulation see the article of Beate Huber et al. book on standards and regulations). The EU's Agricultural Council decided on December 19, 2006 on a 'general approach'. This is close to a final agreement, after which only small technical changes are possible during the German Presidency (January to June 2007). According to the IFOAM EU Group,² the latest text has clearly progressed since the original proposal. The sector remains concerned, however, for example, about the lack of stakeholder involvement, GMO's, the mandatory use of the EU logo, the inadequately defined link to the food and feed control regulation (882/2004) and the exclusion of catering and non-food products from the scope of the regulation. According to the IFOAM EU Group, a big achievement has been that proposed restrictions on private trademarks and standards have been dropped, these private standards being essential to maintaining a dynamic and expanding organic food and farming sector.

Currently the information campaign proposed in the **European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming** is being prepared. With this campaign, Action 1 - a multi-annual EU-wide information and promotion campaign to inform consumers, public institutions, cantens, schools and other key actors - will be implemented. This campaign is funded under Council Regulation (EC) No 2826/2000 of 19 December 2000 on information and promotion actions for agricultural products on the internal market³. With such monies several national information campaigns have already been or are currently being co-funded, for instance the German campaign 'Bio – mir zuliebe' or the French 'Printemps Bio'.

Research

Today organic farming research is substantially funded under national research programs or national organic action plans as well as in European projects⁴. A unique overview of research currently conducted in Europe, was given at the Joint Organic Congress, which was held in May 2006 in Odense, Denmark, where 300 papers were presented⁵.

¹ IFOAM EU Group (2006): CAP Seminar Organic Farming and Lisbon Strategy. The IFOAM Homepage, IFOAM, DE-Bonn, www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group/positions/Brussels_seminar_CAP.html

² IFOAM EU Group Info page - Revision of Organic Regulation. The IFOAM Homepage, IFOAM, DE-Bonn, www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/around_world/eu_group/web_Revision/Revision_info_page.html

³ European Commission: Promotion for EU agricultural products on the Internal Market. The European Commission Homepage, http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/prom/intern/index_en.htm

⁴ For a list of projects funded by the European Commission see www.organic-europe.net/europe_eu/research-euprojects.asp

⁵ The papers can be downloaded at the Organic Eprints Archive at http://orgprints.org/view/projects/int_conf_joint2006.html. Organic Eprints is an internet-based archive for papers related to research in organic agriculture. The database has now more than 5000 entries.

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 Organic¹ and of the European Union for organic farming research amount to 60 to 70 million Euros annually.

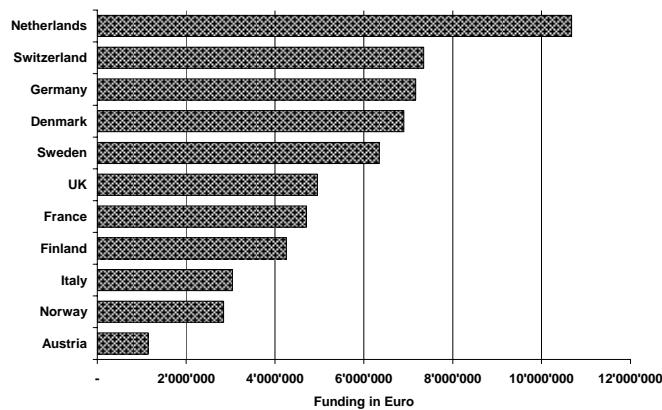


Figure 39: Funding for research in organic food and farming in 11 European countries 2004

Source: Country reports in Lange et al, also available at www.coreportal.org. Graph: FiBL, CH-Frick

In the course of the 2006, the EU's 7th framework research program, to be running 2007-2013, was drafted and the first calls were launched at the end of December 2006². The IFOAM EU Group has expressed its concern that there might be less funding for organic food and farming research under the new Program. Reducing research money for organic farming in the seventh Framework Program would contradict the various EU policy strategies relating to organic farming, e.g. the European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming. It would also hamper the further development of a dynamic organic food and farming sector and market (Newsletter No. 15 of the IFOAM EU Group, December 2006).

In 2006, the first European Call of the ERA-NET Project CORE Organic was launched. The call resulted in 37 proposals many of which came from consortia with participants from several member countries. The projects will be implemented from 2007 onwards. Furthermore, in 2006 an internet portal on European organic farming research was set up as part of the CORE Organic Project at www.coreportal.org. This portal has country reports on organic food and farming research in the eleven CORE Organic partner countries. A summary of these reports is below (see also Lange et al. 2006).

1 CORE Organic (Co-ordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming); Internet www.coreorganic.org. CORE Organic is a three year Co-ordination Action in organic food and farming (2004 to 2007). The overall objective is to gather the critical mass and enhance quality, relevance and utilization of resources in European research in organic food and farming.

2 Cordis: 7th Research Framework Programm. The Cordis Homepage, available at http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

- In **Austria**, organic farming research started in 1980, initiated by the private Ludwig-Boltzmann Institute for Organic Farming and Applied Ecology in Vienna (now Bio Forschung Austria). In 1996, the Institute for Organic Farming at the Agricultural University in Vienna (BOKU) was set up in order to intensify teaching of students and to do research. Most recently, the national Centre for Agricultural Research at Raumberg Gumpenstein set apart an institute dedicated to organic farming research. In addition, the Veterinary University in Vienna and the University of Innsbruck are involved in organic farming research. In Austria, organic farming is one topic of the national research program PFEIL 05 (2002 to 2005), which has been funded by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. A new program (PFEIL 10, from 2006 to 2010) will also fund organic farming research. A network of scientists and stakeholders called 'BioEnquête' helped to set priorities and to survey the research activities.
- **Germany** was a pioneer country in organic farming research. The biodynamic research institute in Darmstadt was already funded in 1950, the first university chair dedicated only to organic food and farming started 1981 at the Kassel University in Witzenhausen, the second University chair 1987 in Bonn, followed by others since. In 1996, the entire Faculty for Agronomy at Kassel University with 20 chairs got oriented towards organic food and farming research. In 2000, the Federal Agricultural Research Centre (FAL) in Braunschweig established an institute for organic farming (in the very Northern part of Germany). In 2001, the German Ministry established - after a wide consultation with all stakeholders - the Federal scheme on organic farming that funded research activities in 2002 and 2003 with 10 million Euros annually. For the second phase from 2004 to 2007, 7 million Euros on average were allocated to research projects every each year. The program will be continued until 2009 at least. The communication of research activities is through the internet site forschung.oekolandbau.de. Research results are available at the open access archive Organic Eprints (www.orgprints.org/).
- **Italy**: In 2001, the Italian Ministry for Agriculture MIPAF launched an action plan on organic farming research. This action plan was worked out after consultations with the regions and with the national committee for organic agriculture. The first open call was published in 2002 and many research projects are still ongoing. A broader action plan focusing on research and on promotion of organic farming was launched for the period from 2005 to 2007. The main actors are the National Centres for Research (CRA) and various agricultural universities. Many universities offer Master Courses in organic farming, and the Research Centre for Mediterranean Agriculture in Bari (IAMB-CIHEAM) is an international player in organic farming training and research.

- In the **Netherlands**, the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Food Quality introduced a policy in favor of organic farming with the goal to convert ten percent of the agricultural land area until 2010. In parallel, the Ministry increased the funding for organic farming research from 4.6 million Euros in the year 2000 to 9.2 million in the year 2005. In order to integrate the stakeholders into priority setting and into the annual work program, a stakeholder network 'Bioconnect' funded by Ministry is in charge of consultation and supervising work. The funding goes to the Wageningen University and Research Center (WUR). There is a bilateral contract between WUR and the private Louis Bolk Institute (an early pioneer institute in organic farming research) on many research projects, so that part of the funding goes to Louis Bolk Institute as well. Commercial farmers are closely linked to the research projects. Therefore, results from research work have been very relevant to the practice, and the mutual flow of information is strong.
- In **Norway**, research activities were started in 1986 by the private Institute NORSØK at Tingvoll. 20 years later, in 2006, NORSØK was merged with two state research institutes now called Bioforsk, and organic farming is a small part of their activities. In addition to Bioforsk, several other Universities and research centers are involved in organic farming research.
- In **Sweden**, the first national research program on organic farming was launched in 1996, funded by the Forestry and Agriculture Research Board (SJFR), now Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas). Since 1996, there has been a permanent sequence of three-year programs on organic farming. The total funding for organic farming research was 34 million Euros for the years 2000 to 2005. The Center for Sustainable Agriculture (CUL) at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) coordinates the programs 'Formas' and 'Ekoforsk'. The coordination is accompanied by a group of stakeholders. The research projects are mainly run by the run by the Universities of Halmstadt, Linköping, Lund, Uppsala, by SLU (main actor), and by the two private Institutes.
- **Switzerland** was an important pioneer for the development of organic farming research. Initial research projects began at the anthroposophic center Goetheanum at Dornach (Ehrenfried Pfeiffer and others) in the 1920s. Organic pioneers like Hans Mueller and Hans Peter Rusch initiated research work on commercial organic farms between 1950 and 1970. In 1973, the private Research Institute of Organic Agriculture Research (FiBL) was founded. From 1973 to 2000, FiBL successfully developed a broad research program with private and state money. Since 2000, the federal state research centers Agroscope started to become involved into organic farming research. Since 2000, the total input of human resources and funding into organic farming research has steadily increased and is currently at 7.3 million Euros per year. The funding agency for Agroscope and FiBL is the Federal Office for Agriculture (BLW). There are also other sources of funding like grants from the industry (food retailers, biocontrol companies, alternative veterinary pharmaceutical companies etc.) and from charities.

- In the **UK**, several private pioneer organizations and institutes carried out research work on organic farming: the Soil Association (founded in 1946), Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA, founded in 1954) and the Elm Farm Research Centre (EFRC, founded in 1981). Since 1991, the government (via DEFRA, The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs) has been funding research; the current funding is almost 5 million Euros per year. Consequently, many universities and state research institutes have become involved in organic farming research. The main objectives of the government funding are transparency for the economic performance of different types of organic farms, evaluation of ecological impacts of organic farming, improvement of the production technique of organic farming and gaining scientific data for amending the standards of organic farming.

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