

Conversion to organic of a goat dairy farm



Clàudia Sucarrat Coll

INTRODUCTION

Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agroecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs. This is accomplished by using, where possible, cultural, biological and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials (Codex Alimentarius, 1999).

The **Regulations (CE) 834/2007 and 889/2008** set down the rules for production, labelling and control of organic products in the European Union.



CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Anyone who produces under the indications of organic farming have to follow the regulations and needs to be authorized by a certification system.

The Catalan Council of Organic Agriculture Production (CCPAE) is the only authorized system to carry out the control and certification of organic products in Catalonia.

CONVERSION

The conversion period is 6 months for goats and 2 years for grassland or perennial forage. If there is simultaneous conversion of the complete production unit, including livestock and any land used for animal feed, the total period may be reduced to 24 months.

MAINTENANCE OF ORGANIC DAYRI GOATS

FEEDING AND PLANT PRODUCTION

Feeding must be **100% organic**, produced without synthetic products or genetically modified organisms. The livestock husbandry needs to be associated with the plant production, so it's necessary to own agricultural land to obtain at least 50% of the feed from the own production unit. A 60 % of the dry matter in daily rations shall consist on forage.

The plant management, to ensure the health of the system, is based on: promote soil biodiversity, the selection of adapted varieties, and a properly shifting cultivation.

MANAGEMENT

The aim of organic farming is to avoid unnecessary pain or suffering. Therefore, adult goat dehorning is prohibited. Is not allowed to tie or isolate animals, or permanent stabling, the goats must have access to pasture.

HEALTH

The management of animal health is based on disease **prevention**. The use of chemically synthesised allopathic medicinal products or antibiotics for preventive treatment is prohibited. As well as routine treatments for parasites. Alternative treatments shall be used in preference. If it's necessary, chemically synthesised drugs may be used, but not more than 3 treatments/year for animal. The withdrawal period between the last administration will be twice the legal period.

LIVESTOCK HOUSING

Buildings shall provide the **biological and the behavioural needs** of the goats. Livestock housing shall have indoor and outdoor areas, the minimum surface is:

	Indoor area	Outdoor area
Adult	1,5 m ²	2,5 m ²
Kid	0,35 m ²	0,5 m ²

BREEDING

The use of hormones or similar substances to control reproduction is prohibited. **Traditional methods** can be used to stimulate ovulation or increase fertility, such as: male effect, flushing and the light influence.

Kids shall be fed on maternal milk in preference to natural milk, for a minimum period of 45 days.

MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

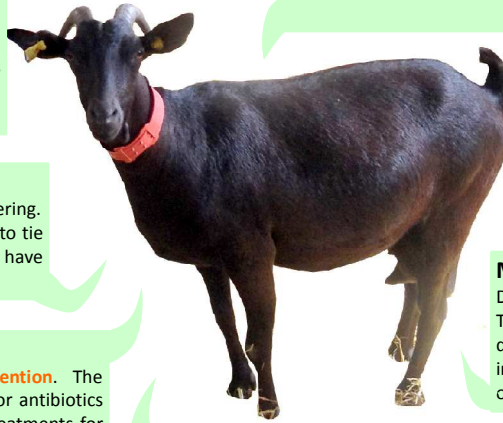
Dairy machine shall be cleaned with authorised products.

The dairies that process organic and non-organic milk must be done in complete series and separately. The substances and ingredients for use in production are listed in Annex VIII and IX of the Regulation (CE) 889/2008.

PROFITABILITY AND COMMERCIALISATION

The determinant factors of economic profitability are: the milk yield, feeding and maintenance expenses and the milk and cheese price.

In Catalonia organic products are sold mostly by direct selling at the local market.



REAL CASES



General information	CASE 1	CASE 2	CASE 3	CASE 4
Status	Certificate	Certificate	In conversion	In conversion
Location	Tona (Osona)	Sant Vicenç de Castellet (Bages)	Santa Maria d'Oló (Bages)	Franqueses del Vallès (Vallès Oriental)
Nº of animals	500	800	150	200
Breed	Murciano-Granadina	Murciano-Granadina and Malagueña	Murciano-Granadina	Murciano-Granadina
Land (ha)	33 cultivable (18 with irrigation)	180 cultivable and 300 of forest	12 cultivable and 40 of forest	7 cultivable and 80 of forest
Dairy	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Employees	2 at the farm, 5-7 at the dairy	2 at the farm, 2 at the dairy, 1 driver, 3 shepherd	2	2
Health				
Vaccines	Enterotoxemia and contagious agalactia	None	Enterotoxemia	Enterotoxemia
Medicinal products	Conventional	Only a natural anti-inflammatory ointment	Alternative	Conventional
Plant production				
Self-sufficient	Totally	Except grain	Only pastures	Only pastures
Grazing	1 hour/day, the goats don't eat	5 hours/day, means 90% of the goat diet	9-10 hours/day	4 hours/day
Cost increase	No	Organic grain is 40% more expensive	Not many, they use pastures a lot	None, to the moment
Commercialisation				
Products sold as organic	All except for kids	All except for kids	All	None, to the moment
Commercialisation	Specialized stores. Project for selling to the supermarket.	Self distribution to local stores	90% to consumer cooperatives, the rest to specialized stores	Farmer will sell the milk to organic cheesemaker
Conclusions				
Changes they did	The management of lands and animals	Searching for an organic grain and hire shepherds	Grazing the animals and enlarge outdoor areas	Convert cattle facilities for goats
What's necessary to be organic?	To be at least 70% self-sufficient	Feeling it as the best way of production	Believe in it and to have pastures	Owning land

CONCLUSIONS

- The farmers use to convert into organic when their management is close to the organic system. The certification provided to them a distinctive logo about their high quality production.
- Owning land and accessibility to organic ingredients for the goats ration, use to be the key factors for the conversion.
- The daily pasture is an essential component for the goat nutrition in many farms. It means a lot of work, and in some cases, the need to hire labour.
- The health management doesn't imply a problem for the farmers, who making better prevention of diseases and slaughtering the chronic or weak animals, obtains an improvement of the general herd health.
- Currently kids selling as organic is not viable.