

# Knowledge transfer

A summary of research conducted under the German Federal Programme for Organic Agriculture and other forms of Sustainable Agriculture

BÖLN

Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau  
und andere Formen nachhaltiger  
Landwirtschaft



# Summary of research results of the German Federal Programme for Organic Farming (BÖLN), 2001-2011

This series of thematic summaries arose from the project 10OE027 „Evaluation of the German Federal Research Programme on Organic Agriculture“. The evaluation was funded by the German Federal Programme for Organic Farming

Conducted by the contractor group Organic Research Evaluations:

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1. Soil fertility – <http://www.orgprints.org/21868>
2. Plant protection in organic arable and horticultural production - <http://orgprints.org/21869>
3. Plant protection in organic apple production - <http://orgprints.org/21875>
4. Nutrition of monogastrics - <http://orgprints.org/21874>
5. Animal health of ruminants - <http://orgprints.org/21872>
6. Food quality and processing - <http://orgprints.org/21871>
- 7. Knowledge transfer - <http://orgprints.org/21870>**
8. Regional marketing - <http://orgprints.org/21873>

From: Ekert, S, Döring, T, Häring, AM, Lampkin, N, Murphy-Bokern, D, Otto, K Padel, S Vieweger, A (2012) Final report (Project 10OE027) „Evaluation des Bereichs Forschung und Entwicklung im Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau“ [Evaluation of the German Federal Research Programme on Organic Agriculture], Organic Research Evaluations: Berlin, Eberswalde and Hamstead Marshall, Annex I-XIII, Page 66-68.

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## 1. Introduction

The German Federal Programme for Organic Agriculture (BÖLN) was founded in 2001, with the goal of improving the conditions for organic farming and food industry in Germany, and to achieve the conditions for a balanced growth of supply and demand. The programme is funded by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV), and implemented and coordinated by the Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (BLE) in Bonn. Since 2008, the programme is part of the German National Action Plan (2005-2014).

Since the beginning of 2011, the second evaluation of the programme (project ID 09OE027) is carried out by the international contractor group Organic Research Evaluations; consisting of the partners InterVal GmbH in Berlin, The Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm, United Kingdom and the University for Sustainable Development in Eberswalde, Germany.

The focus is on the programme of the BMELV to support research projects in organic farming, where more than 650 projects have been funded since 2002. The evaluation is in particular to clarify the extent to which research results helped to strengthen organic agriculture in Germany and expand its market share. The evaluation results, which are expected to be publically available in early 2013, shall also benefit a future optimisation of research funding.

The summaries of research results in eight focus topics (soil fertility, plant protection in arable and horticultural production, plant protection in apple production, nutrition of monogastrics, animal health of ruminants, food quality and processing, regional marketing and knowledge transfer) from the whole period of the programme since 2002. All projects can be identified with the individual project ID number, shown in brackets in the title; and following the link below, further information can be found on the German BÖLN website. Where available, links to the final-reports of individual projects on the Organic Eprints website are added. Further results of running projects of the BÖLN research programme are regularly published at [www.bundesprogramm-oekolandbau.de](http://www.bundesprogramm-oekolandbau.de).

## 2. Summary

Knowledge transfer was an important part of the BÖL programme from the start. Particular emphasis was placed on measures and projects to increase knowledge transfer from research to producers, processors and consumers. Also, in the other direction, intensive exchange between the 'base' (producers and practitioners) and the researchers was always important; this is the only way to ensure that the real problems of producers are identified. Over the years numerous events, workshops and conferences have been organised, through which a large number of practitioners from all sectors and regions have been reached. For example, between 2004 and 2006 a total of 355 events were held at coordination level, to allow regional advisers and representatives of associations to provide knowledge transfer themselves in the form of organising events and sessions within existing events, and thus reach the target audience directly. Between 2006 and 2008 a total of 769 events were held to transfer knowledge, which again reached a large number of stakeholders in all regions of Germany.

The most important and practically relevant results of the various projects on the market and marketing issues have been summarised and presented. These findings were able to be incorporated into several strategic concepts. The studies analysed have shown that the selling point 'organic' alone is no longer sufficient for consumers to buy organic products, but that for companies that produce, process or sell organic products, credibility has to be the highest priority. All activities of the economy must be environment friendly, socially, morally and ethically sound, and inflict no harm. The problem here is that consumers are not, or not yet, ready to pay the higher price for their higher aims. It will be one of the great challenges of this century to provide information and educational work in the global context to achieve the corresponding fair prices at the retail level.

The aim of another project was to combine the experience of practitioners with information and experience of advisers and researchers and to work out concrete and practical recommendations on reduced-tillage systems in organic agriculture, which were published in a book. Since 2007 (and also in the previous project from 2003) under the advisory-practice network several working groups have been set up, which developed farm-comparison and farm-enterprise-evaluation methods (for pork, poultry and dairy) and have introduced those within consulting organisations. Two new working groups were subsequently created (for agriculture and horticulture), structured in a similar matter, which also developed methods, tools and training for consultants. More 'know-how' events were held in 2008 which could heavily build on past experiences and successes. Here also, other actors within the organic food

industry have been reached, who were previously not sufficiently informed about new results from research and development.

### 3. The individual projects

#### Coordination of activities relating to knowledge transfer (04OE031/1-8) 19-11-2004 to 30-04-2006

<http://orgprints.org/9977/>

The aim of this project was to increase the participation of practitioners, traders and processors in the advancement of knowledge on organic agriculture. To achieve this, advisers and association representatives were put in a position to contribute to this knowledge transfer in the form of organising events and sessions within existing events themselves. Thus, this project: (a) created a list of possible topics for the knowledge transfer, (b) informed all the actors concerned, (c) collected, screened and coordinated feedback on the proposed measures and (d) through the development of relevant documents, gave assistance and consultation to the parties involved. 244 knowledge transfer events were organised within a year, through which 4100 practitioners and advisers in all regions of Germany, mainly in Bavaria, were reached. The majority of events were designed for producers, and a smaller number for traders and processors. In this project high-quality knowledge transfer events were held in the various regions of Germany. As part of the project evaluation, the events were rated by the participants as 'good' to 'very good'.

#### From organic research to practice (06OE022/1-5) 08-08-2006 to 31-12-2006 <http://orgprints.org/13094/>

Building on the experience of project 04OE031, here again nationwide knowledge transfer events were organised. These were again mainly designed for consultants and association representatives, as the relevant multipliers on site, to organise and deliver the knowledge transfer in events, and sessions within existing events, and thus reach the target audience directly. 111 knowledge transfer events were organised within 3 months, where 2100 practitioners and advisers in all regions of Germany were reached. The majority of the events were designed for producers and a smaller number for traders and processors. As part of the project evaluation, participants again rated the events as 'good' to 'very good'. The major emphasis was on the selection and presentation of topics that are directly applicable on the farm, as this was the criterion regarded as the most important both in interviews with participants and in the evaluation.

#### From research to practice (06OE211/1-7) 20-11-2006 to 30-12-2008 and (08OE015) 15-05-2008 to 31-10-

2008 <http://orgprints.org/16830/>

The aim of the project was to bring producers, processors, traders and other players in the organic food industry closer to the advancement of scientific knowledge on organic agriculture. 769 knowledge transfer events were organised as part of this project, in which 15,000 practitioners and advisers in all regions of Germany were reached. The majority of the events were again designed for producers and a smaller number for traders and processors. In this project, high-quality knowledge transfer events were held in the various regions of Germany. As part of the project evaluation, the events were rated by the participants as predominantly good.

#### Analysis of research results (06OE301) 02-10-2007 to 30-06-2008 <http://orgprints.org/13769/>

A variety of valuable practice and research results, relevant for strategic decisions of players in the organic market, can be found in the numerous project reports and studies of the BÖL programme. The purpose of this project was to professionally prepare and clearly present the main findings of these projects. The aim was to develop a brief, concise and clear presentation of the most important and practically relevant results of the various projects that have studied the market and marketing issues. Apart from the simplified description of the results, tangential topics were compared and a synthesis of different projects was made, which can incorporate any findings into one or more strategic approaches. The studies analysed have shown that it is no longer sufficient to label a product as 'organic'; neither the selling point organic, nor the combination of organic+healthy, organic+indulgence or organic+ethical are enough to inspire consumers to buy organic food. For companies that produce, process or sell organic products, credibility has to be the highest priority. All activities of the economy must be environment friendly, socially, morally and ethically sound, and inflict no harm. The problem here is that the consumers are not, or not yet, ready to pay the higher price for their higher aims. It will be one of the great challenges of this century to provide information and educational work on the global context to achieve the corresponding fair prices at the retail level. The analysis results show further that savings can be made on marketing. In some circumstances, standard marketing activities can be stopped or significantly reduced, since their effect is much lower than previously thought. Research has proven that personal communication with the consumer is the most important way to market organic products successfully. It is often not the higher price that represents the actual purchase barrier, but the absence of the crucial selling points.

### Evaluation of practical experience and research (06OE107) 01-06-2007 to 31-05-2010

<http://orgprints.org/17200/>

The aim of this project was to combine the experience of practitioners with information and experience of advisers and researchers and to work out concrete and practical recommendations on reduced-tillage systems in organic agriculture. From the combined results of the study, a summary of the impact of reduced tillage on soil, plants and the economy was created. The detailed farm examples and the analysis of the research results are presented in the book '*Öko-Ackerbau ohne tiefes Pflügen*' (*organic agriculture without deep ploughing*) (H. Schmidt (ed.), 2010, Verlag Dr. Koster).

### Advisory practice network for knowledge exchange (06OE231) 01-09-2007 to 31-08-2010

<http://orgprints.org/18387/>

A high proportion of organic products and raw materials are being imported because domestic production cannot cover the demand or cannot provide the products under the required conditions. For an objective evaluation of economic success, the existence of comparative figures is crucial in order to evaluate and assess whether the market prices actually cover the full costs. In the adviser-producer network project (BPN) I (03OE495) four working groups were established, which developed methodologies for farm-comparison (BV) and farm-enterprise-specific analysis (BZA pork, poultry, dairy) and introduced them to adviser organisations. Two new working groups (arable and horticulture) were then created following the same strategy, and methods and tools were developed and consultants trained. The project's target groups were organic farms, advisers and researchers. The project contributed to, deepened and improved the existing database on specific organic agriculture enterprises (dairy cattle, pigs and poultry) and an additional database was created for arable and horticulture. Furthermore, the conditions for a wider dissemination and use of the farm-comparison (BV) and farm-enterprise-specific analysis (BZA) methods were developed. The project was conducted in collaboration with 15 consulting organisations, 39 advisers and approximately 400 farm businesses. The project consisted of six working groups: 1, Total farm comparison to permanently secure operational success of organic farming; 2, Dairy; 3, Pork; 4, Poultry; 5, Arable; and 6, Horticulture. The knowledge platform for advisers was provided with a newsletter, and new team rooms were set-up. The broad general practice of organic agriculture in Germany, in terms of both performance and economics, was investigated. Detailed evaluations of animal health (dairy, pork, poultry) showed very heterogeneous structures of the farms. In particular the operational management can be improved. The project interaction with many advisers from various consulting organisations led to a respectful, constructive and trusting cooperation.

### Know-how events for organic practitioners (08OE214-22) 16-12-2008 to 31-12-2010

Building on experience since 2004 as part of the projects 04OE031, 06OE022 and 06OE211, knowledge transfer events took place nationwide. They focused on issues that are highly relevant to the target audience and that had, so far, only been partially covered. The goal was a methodological diversity in knowledge transfer. Practitioners and entrepreneurs had already been reached by previous knowledge transfer measures, but other stakeholders in the organic food industry, which had previously been poorly informed on new findings from research, development and testing, were reached by this project.

### Know-how events for organic practitioners (09OE021) 01-01-2010 to 31-12-2010

The project took place in the context of the Framework project 08OE09. Three events for practitioners within the organic food industry were organised. About 60 representatives of the target groups were reached. The events were evaluated individually. The result of the project was the improvement of the producers' knowledge of relevant recent research.