

# Will policy support for organic farming be justified in the future?

## The environmental impacts of organic farming

### 1. Introduction

The most commonly used argument in support of organic farming is its positive environmental effects.

In the EU, dynamic development of organic farming was in part induced by financial support from policy measures.

Support of organic farming is only justified if it actually results in less negative environmental impacts than conventional farming.

### 2. Objectives

Review and evaluate the existing evidence on the environmental effects of organic farming in comparison to conventional farming - taking the most recent research results into account.

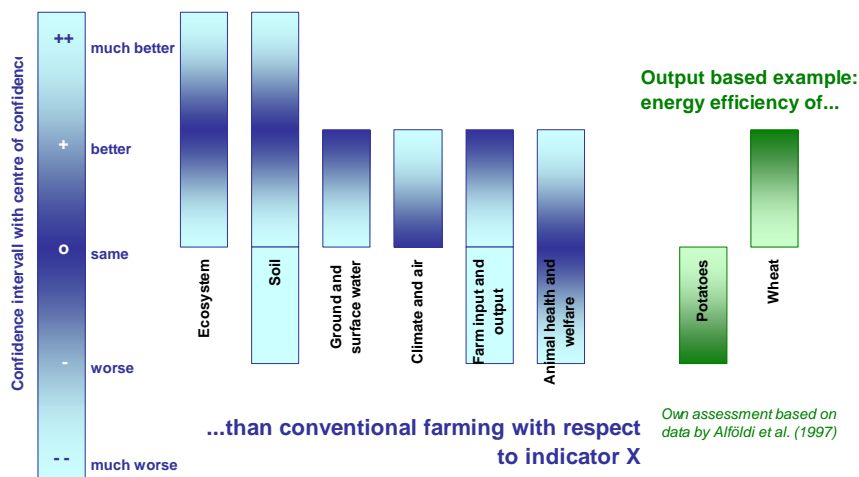
➤ Is policy support for organic farming justified?

### 3. Methodology

Results of natural science research (up to 2002) were evaluated according to the conceptual framework of Stolze et al. (1999) based on the OECD framework of environmental indicators for agriculture (1997).

### 4. Results

The area based environmental performance of organic farming is...



### 5. Conclusion

Support to organic farming is currently justified due to its positive environmental effects - as long as production of sufficient quantities of food is guaranteed.

An output based assessment may lead to a different conclusion, i.e. energy efficiency of potato production.

Environmental efficiency (output based assessment) depends on environmental as well as yield performance!

### 6. Outlook

#### Will technological developments and tightening legislation change the relative environmental efficiency of organic farming?

**Issue 1:** Which yield level will organic farming achieve in the future?

**Issue 2:** How will the environmental performance of conventional farming develop in the future?

$$\text{Efficiency}_{\text{Environment.}} = \frac{\text{Performance}_{\text{Environment}}}{\text{Performance}_{\text{Yield}}}$$

#### How should the organic farming sector react to potentially diminishing environmental advantages?

**Reaction 1:** The "environmental advantage" must be conserved by all means to justify policy support.

**Reaction 2:** The "greening" of conventional farming makes organic farming obsolete. The prime long-term objective - greener farming - is achieved. Organic farming does not create more environmental benefits than conventional farming. Specific policy support for organic farming is not justified.

**Sources** Alföldi, T., E. Spiess, U. Niggli, J.-M. Besson (1997). Energiebilanzen für verschiedene Kulturen bei biologischer und konventioneller Bewirtschaftung. Ökologie & Landbau 25 (1). OECD (1997). Environmental Indicators for Agriculture. Stolze M., Piorr A., Häring A. and S. Dabbert (2000). The Environmental Impacts of Organic Farming in Europe. Organic Farming in Europe: Economics and Policy, Volume 6.

**Authors** Anna Maria Häring & Stephan Dabbert, Institute of Farm Management, University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany  
Matthias Stolze, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, Switzerland

**Bibliographische Angaben zu diesem Dokument:**

Häring, A. M. und Dabbert, S. und Stolze, M. (2002) Will policy support for organic farming be justified in the future? The environmental impacts of organic farming. Poster präsentiert bei der Konferenz 14th IFOAM Organic World Congress, Victoria BC, Canada, 21. - 24.08.2002; Veröffentlicht in *Proceedings of the 14th IFOAM Organic World Congress*.

**Das vorliegende Dokument ist archiviert unter**  
**<http://orgprints.org/00002316>**