

Organic Farming in Europe

HELGA WILLER¹

Current statistics

In 2012, the area of organic land, the number of organic farmers and the organic market continued to grow in Europe. In Europe, 11.2 million hectares (EU: 10 million), constituting 2.3 percent (EU: 5.6 percent) of the agricultural area, were under organic management in 2012, an increase of six percent compared with 2011. There were more than 320'000 producers (EU: more than 250'000). The value of the European organic market in 2012 was 22.8 billion euros (EU: 20.9), and the overall growth rate was approximately six percent. For details, see the chapter on European organic farming statistics (page 217) and the European market (page 207).

Review of the European political and legal framework for organic agriculture

In January 2013, the European Commission announced a public consultation for the review of the European policy on organic agriculture. All citizens, organizations, and public authorities who have an interest in a review of the European policy on organic agriculture were welcome to contribute to this consultation, which ran early 2013. The results were published in September 2013 (European Commission 2013). The online consultation, which took place in the first half of 2013, attracted major interest with close to 45'000 responses. The report highlights that consumers trust organic products (71 percent), that they buy them mainly out of concern about the environment (83 percent), and because they are free from GMOs and pesticide residues (81 percent). The vast majority of respondents (78 percent) also indicated that they were prepared to pay more for organic goods.

The report also shows a very strong demand for harmonized rules at the EU level, with 74 percent of all respondents requesting European organic standard to be strengthened and 86 percent wishing organic rules to be uniform across the EU. The results of the public consultation will feed the ongoing review of the political and legal framework for organic agriculture in Europe, with an overall strategy to be put forward in early 2014 (European Commission 2013).

EU regulation on organic farming

The European Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development² is currently drafting a legal proposal for a new organic regulation to replace the current legal organic framework³ to be published together with a new organic action plan in March 2014. An

¹ Dr. Helga Willer, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, Switzerland, www.fibl.org

² Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development - http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/agriculture/index_en.htm

³ 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 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.

inter-service consultation of the different Directorates of the European Commission is now assessing this proposal.

The European Union Group of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM EU) (2014) believes that this opportunity must be used to bring the regulation and implementing rules up-to-date to match the dynamic developments of the sector and bridge the specific needs that have been identified. According to IFOAM EU, the current legislative framework provides a solid basis for organic production and consumer confidence; however, its implementation potential is not yet fully exploited. IFOAM EU, therefore, recommends a focused improvement of the existing framework. The most important points of improvement to the current legislative framework identified by IFOAM EU (2014) are:

- 1) Increasing the effectiveness of controls of European and third country operators;
- 2) Moving to a '100% organic ingredients' approach (away from a '95% approach'), cutting the list of non-organic ingredients by half in organic processing and improving origin labelling;
- 3) Reducing exceptional rules and increasing transparency in the regulation using a step-by-step approach;
- 4) Introducing requirements for measuring environmental performance by organic processors and traders; and
- 5) Enabling group certification for small farmers in Europe.



Figure 57: 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. The logo can be accompanied by national or private logos. Since July 1, 2010, the organic logo of the EU has been made mandatory on all pre-packaged organic products that were produced in any of the EU Member States and meet the necessary standards.

Policy support

Since the beginning of the 1990s, support has been granted to organic farming under the European Union's agri-environmental programs (Pillar II of the CAP, rural development).¹ Discussions on the reform of policy for the period 2014 to 2020 have taken place over the last three years. New legislation was agreed by the European Commission, Parliament and Agricultural Ministers at the end of 2013.² The reform process has now shifted towards implementation of the legislation in the different Member States and the new policy is expected to come into force in 2015. The importance of using this CAP reform to transition EU agriculture towards a more sustainable path, with organic farming as a model approach, has been stressed by the

¹ 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.

² 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.

organic movement through IFOAM EU's advocacy work. Key outcomes for the movement have been the recognition of organic farming under direct payments and rural development programmes including higher investment support rates and EU co-financing as well as acknowledgement under quality schemes support and advisory services. The new reform also promotes innovation that seeks to move towards agro-ecological production approaches, whilst maintaining a legal minimum spending for environment measures that includes organic farming. At the same time the new CAP does not introduce a radical shift towards more sustainable farming systems with overall spending for rural development disproportionately cut compared to direct payments¹. However the reform does mark the beginning of mainstreaming CAP payments towards better public good delivery and greater visibility of organic farming under that can help to promote its development to 2020 (Meredith *et al.*, 2014).

Action plans

Organic action plans are a further important support measure for organic farming. In several countries, different organic support measures are combined and coordinated within an organic action plan. Typically, organic action plans are based on a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the organic sector. They comprise a balanced mix of different supply-oriented policy measures (such as area payments, information for farmers, etc.) and demand-oriented policy measures (such as marketing aids, consumer information campaigns, etc.) tailored to local conditions. The action plan mechanism is particularly useful, because efforts to develop the organic sector seek to address and enforce the growth capacity of the entire sector. In 2013, 27 countries in Europe had an action plan many of them with quantitative targets (Sanders and Schmid 2014; see also country reports Willer *et al.*, 2014).

The European Action Plan for organic food and farming was launched in 2004. With the current review of the political and legal framework, it is envisaged that the European Commission will develop a new action plan. IFOAM EU (2014) calls for the action plan to be resolutely implemented and to provide political and financial measures for organic research and innovation, education and training, information, and promotion.

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-Net³ project CORE Organic¹ amounted to more than 60 million euros in 2006 (Lange *et al.* 2007). Newer data are not available.

¹ The EU budget for the period 2014-2020 was agreed by EU Heads of State and Government at a European Council meeting in February 2013 and approved by European Parliament in 19 November 2013 following some small concessions by the European Council. Meredith *et al.*, 2014 provides an overview of agricultural spending for period 2014-2020 based on information available at time of press. More information is now available on the European Commission's website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-funding/budget/index_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 The objective of the ERA-NET scheme is to step up the cooperation and coordination of research activities carried out at the national or regional levels in the Member States and Associated States.

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 focusing or focused on organic farming. The following projects are ongoing:

- 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
- 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 (2012-2014), www.solibam.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
- CORE Organic Plus - Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems (2014-2016), www.coreorganic.org

CORE Organic - "Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems" intends to increase cooperation between national research activities. CORE Organic Plus, the third CORE Organic project that started in 2014, has 24 partners from 21 countries/regions. The overall objective of CORE Organic is to enhance quality, relevance and utilization of resources in European research in organic food and farming and to establish a joint pool for financing transnational research in organic food and farming.

The European Technology Platform for Organic Food and Farming Research (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.²



In July 2013, TP Organics was granted official "technology platform" status by the European Commission; this status is reserved for outstanding European technology

¹ CORE Organic (Co-ordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming), 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 the quality, relevance, and utilization of resources in European research in organic food and farming. It was succeeded by the CORE Organic II and CORE Organic PLUS projects.

² 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

platforms (ETPs).¹ ETPs are explicitly mentioned as stakeholders to be consulted on EU research priorities in the context of the European Innovation Partnerships and play a considerable role in setting priorities for Horizon 2020, the next EU framework programme for research running from 2014 to 2020.

Progress of the OrganicDataNetwork project

In January 2012, the European research project OrganicDataNetwork (Data network for better European organic market information, www.organicdatanetwork.net) started. The project aims to increase the transparency of the European organic food market through better availability of market information about the sector, meeting the needs of the policy makers and actors involved in organic markets. The partnership acts also as a coordinating centre between stakeholders and strives to establish a permanent network to achieve collaboration on

statistical issues related to organic market data. The project has achieved a number of results so far, including a classification of data collection methods (Hamm and Feldmann 2013), an inventory of data collecting and publishing institutions (Gerrard et al. 2012), a report on data demand by end users (Home et al. 2012) and a compilation of key market data (Willer and Schaack 2013).



Based on the results of the first Organic Data Network workshop and the discussions on the Organic Data Forum with all involved stakeholders, the OrganicDataNetwork project issued a statement on data collection and made a number of suggestions on how data collection could be improved in the context of the current review of the political and legal framework for organic production. The full OrganicDataNetwork statement can be viewed on page 200.

Current project activities include case studies in six different countries/regions: Germany, France, United Kingdom (UK), Czech Republic, Italy, and a group of non-EU Mediterranean countries. These case studies primarily aim to produce new/improved organic market reports by using quality checks developed in the project, and by exchanging experiences among the countries under study. The case studies will also produce a collection of methods and 'lessons learned' during the process, which then can be shared or applied Europe-wide.

In 2014, the project will also be engaged in preparing the Code of Practice for the initiation and maintenance of good organic market data collection and publication

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. 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 More information is available at <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/en/news/2013/07/17/organic-research-and-innovation-platform-tp-organics-officially-recognized-european>

procedures (OrMaCode). The Code of Practice will cover different key areas of organic market data collection, processing, storage, and publication/dissemination.

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 that focus on regulation, agricultural policy and research are very well documented in its monthly newsletter.¹ In 2013, IFOAM EU celebrated its 10th anniversary.

Key policy work for 2013 has concentrated on the CAP reform process 2014-2020, prospective revisions to the EU organic regulation, and the development of a new EU Organic Action Plan (as outlined above). Other important work has been taking place with regard to the ongoing discussions on the marketing of seed and plant propagating materials as well as the organic control system.² A major project in 2013 was the 'Mind the CAP' campaign,³ which seeks to raise awareness and increase understanding of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) among farmers and citizens from the perspective of the organic movement. Activities and events are organised by the IFOAM EU Group and partners seeking to explore the CAP 2014-2020 and the potential contribution of organic food and farming systems to the CAP reform process and new rural development programming. A major outcome of the project was the publication of "Organic in Europe: Prospects and Developments". This book provides an overview of the latest trends in European organic farming and market development and includes reports about organic farming from more than 20 European countries (Meredith & Willer 2014). Other activities organised by IFOAM EU included the 7th European Organic Congress⁴ on the impact of EU regulatory framework under the new CAP reform and the launch of an Organic Vision for 2030 in Brussels in November 2013.⁵

Further reading

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

http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l_189/l_18920070720en00010023.pdf

European Commission (2013): Report on the results of the Public consultation on organic farming. European Commission, Brussels http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/files/eu-policy/of_public_consultation_final_report_en.pdf

European Commission, Directorate General for Research and Innovation (2012): A decade of EU-funded, low-input and organic agriculture research. European Commission, Brussels, available at http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/pdf/189756_2011_2695_a_decade_of_eu_en.pdf

¹ 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

² For more information on IFOAM EU's advocacy works is available: <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/en/library/position-papers>

³ More information about the Mind the Cap campaign is available at <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/en/mind-cap/mind-cap-campaign>

⁴ Proceedings of the European Organic Congress held in Lithuania in July 2013 is available at: <http://www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org/>

⁵ More information on the launch of an Organic Vision for 2030 in Brussels in November is available at: <http://www.ifoam-eu.org/en/making-europe-more-organic/organic-vision-2030-build-european-organic-future>

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- Willer, Helga and Schaack, Diana (2013) Intermediate report on compilation of key organic market data = Deliverable 4.2 of the OrganicDataNetwork project. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, Switzerland. <http://orgprints.org/23157/>
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Websites

- ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013 : Webpages of the European Commission on the CAP reform
- 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