



Federal Ministry
of Food
and Agriculture

Organic Farming in Germany

Version: February 2022



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Dear Readers,



We are currently facing challenges due to a number of different crises. These crises are questioning much of what had until recently seemed a matter of course. However, crises must not become the new normal. It is entirely up to us to strike out in new directions.

This particularly applies to the necessary transformation of our food system towards more sustainability. We can, via our diets, protect natural resources – such as water, air, soil, biodiversity and the climate. We can also strengthen regional value chains so that we are more resilient if crises do occur.

Organic farming provides answers to a lot of these problems. It offers a complete system of sustainability – from production and processing to providing clear labelling for consumers. This is why, for us, it is a guiding vision for the future. In the coalition agreement, we enshrined the goal of having 30 % of agricultural land under organic farming.

We would like organic farming to become a successful and exemplary model. We want to create good conditions for ongoing progress, for example by further upscaling support

for research projects. In addition to this, we intend to work together with other ministries, such as Environment and Economic Affairs, to develop new support instruments. The Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming will constitute a key instrument in this regard and will be adapted and expanded to meet the new objectives.

This brochure will give you an interesting insight into organic farming in Germany: from the quality of organic food, the income situation and the inspection of the farms to the support funds.

I hope it informs and inspires you.

Enjoy the read!

Yours,

Cem Özdemir

Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture

This brochure gives a brief overview of organic farming in Germany. It provides an introduction to statutory rules, the organic farming associations and the development and support of organic farms.

1. What does organic farming mean?

The guiding principle of organic farming is management in harmony with nature. Farms are regarded as an organism comprising the components man, flora, fauna and soil.

Organic farming enjoys a long-standing tradition in its various forms. Biodynamic farming was introduced in 1924 and the origins of organic-biological and environmentally-adapted farming also date back well into the last century.

More so than other farming methods, organic farming aims to:

- achieve as closed a nutrient cycle on the farm as possible (the aim is for the farm to produce its own feed and nutrients);
- preserve and enhance soil fertility; and
- place particular emphasis on animal welfare in animal husbandry.

There is a special focus on the following measures:

- no use of synthetically produced chemicals in plant protection; the cultivation of less susceptible crop varieties in appropriate crop cycles; the utilisation of beneficial species; and the use of mechanical weed control measures such as hoeing and flame weeding;

- no use of highly soluble mineral fertilisers; the application of organically fixed nitrogen, mainly in the form of manure or manure compost; green manuring with nitrogen-fixing plants (leguminosae); and use of slow-acting natural fertilisers;
- the preservation of soil fertility through intensive humus management;
- diverse and long crop rotations with many crop rotation periods and intermediate crops;
- no application of synthetically produced chemical growth regulators;
- limited stocking density based on the area of land available;
- where possible, the feeding of animals on farm-grown feed, with as little feed as possible purchased from other sources; and
- the limitation of the use of antimicrobials to an absolute minimum.

Organic farming is specifically geared to sustainability.

Organic farming is particularly effective in conserving natural resources, whilst having a range of positive effects on the environment, for instance:



Soil conservation

Organic farming methods promote humus formation and soil biota. The fields and meadows of organic farms usually contain more biomass and greater microbial activity than on conventional farms. Natural soil fertility also increases. Losses of topsoil caused by erosion are largely avoided.



Species protection

With no synthetically produced chemicals in plant protection products and a low level of fertilisation, organic farming promotes the diversity of animal and plant life. There are frequently more species on organic farmland than on conventional farmland.



Water conservation

Organic farming generally causes less pollution of ground and surface waters with nutrients, such as nitrates, than conventional farming. The fact that organic farming dispenses with synthetically produced chemicals means that there is no input of these pesticides into the soil. Since organic animal husbandry requires animals to be given more space than conventional farming, the plants on organic farms are usually able to absorb the nutrients generated by manure and slurry without any difficulty.



Animal Welfare

The principles of organic farming provide for welfare-oriented animal husbandry. Animals are allowed sufficient exercise in the open air. Husbandry conditions are regularly reviewed.

2. What about the quality of organic food?

Quality through the production process

To determine the quality of a foodstuff, it is necessary to measure and calculate the specific characteristics not only of the product itself but also of its production and processing. However, science is still in its infancy when it comes to the objective assessment of products from different production processes.

As the use of chemical and synthetic fertilisers and pesticides in organic production is banned, there are hardly any residues of these substances in organic products. This is shown repeatedly in the official food controls. Occasionally, however, organic products also contain residues of pesticides, caused for example by drift from neighbouring fields under conventional management, by pollution of the soil with persistent pesticides, or by contamination with environmental pollutants.

Fewer ingredients, additives and processing agents

An increasing number of consumers have developed food intolerances. Organic foods often offer this group of consumers a significantly lower allergy potential as, under the EU legislation governing organic farming, it is only admissible to have a very limited number of ingredients, additives and processing agents in organic products.

These are stated specifically in so-called positive lists. This can be seen with regard to additives. Under food law, it would be possible to approve more than 300 additives. However, significantly fewer additives have currently been approved for organic foods, and even these are subject to limitations and are only permitted to be used in respect of specific products.

In comparison with conventional foods, the number of substances which may be contained in a product is consequently many times lower. Some producer associations limit the number of potential additives even further. An important aspect for consumers is that even the smallest quantities of these substances are usually listed individually on the packaging.

This means that consumers are able to gain in-depth information and, via their choice of foods, to reduce the ingestion of additives.



Ingredients

Some studies show a higher content of vitamins, minerals, trace elements and secondary plant substances in plant-based organic products. But there are also studies that show no significant difference between organic products and products from conventional farming. No conclusive assessment has been made.

Organic food and organic vegetables, as a rule, contain less nitrate and fewer pesticide residues. Some tests indicate that the dry matter content of organic produce is higher than that of conventional products. In some cases, the lower water content results in higher levels of value-enhancing ingredients in organic produce.

Welfare-oriented animal husbandry and feeding play a key role in the quality assessment of animal products from organic farming. Every animal is entitled to space, light and fresh air. Every animal is, therefore, granted access to outdoor runs and pasture land. Fully-slatted floors are prohibited in cattle, pig and sheep farming.



Scientific studies

No scientific studies have so far been conducted to determine whether the regular consumption of organic food is generally more health-promoting than the consumption of conventional products. One thing that is clear is that food in general must not jeopardise health. A study conducted by the Max Rubner Institute came to the following conclusion: "There is no clear answer so far to whether buyers of organic food generally eat healthier food.

Therefore, 13,000 people of between 18 and 80 years of age have been characterised extensively on the

basis of the data provided by National Food Consumption Survey II. The results show that there is a connection between the purchase of organic foods and dietary habits and lifestyles.

Buyers of organic food eat healthier food, are frequently non-smokers and are actively engaged in sports. All in all, they pursue a lifestyle that can be classified as healthier than that of those who do not buy organic food. Consumers' decisions regarding what food to buy are determined just as much by health-related aspects as by altruistic criteria.

www.orgprints.org/18055/

3. EU legislation governing organic farming

The EU provisions on organic production have been thoroughly revised by Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. The new Regulation and associated implementing rules have been in force since 1 January 2022¹.

The EU legal framework lays down the precise production and manufacturing requirements for agricultural produce and foods labelled as organic products. Stringent production standards prescribed by organic farming must be complied with. The control system accompanying the entire production process and trade is based on risk. The legislation ties in with the basic guidelines of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), encompassing about 750 associations from over 100 countries.

The EU legislation governing organic farming protects consumers from deception and prevents unfair competition Europe-wide. All organic goods produced and sold in the European Union must meet the standards set by this Regulation. Food designations are not permitted to be misleading either.

Irradiation and genetic engineering

It is prohibited to treat organic foods or feedstuffs and the raw materials used for their production with ionising radiation.

Genetically modified organisms (GMO) or their derivatives may not be used. The labelling threshold for the unintended presence of authorised GMOs, which is normally 0.9 %, also applies to organic products.

Detailed rules through positive lists

The EU legislation governing organic farming prescribes exactly how producers and processors have to produce their commodities and which substances they may use in the process. If a substance is not expressly authorised in so-called positive lists, it may not be used. The same applies to the use of ingredients of non-agricultural origin.

In principle, all ingredients of agricultural origin must be organic; strictly limited exemptions are possible for up to 5% of the entire product. A sufficient volume of ingredients of organic quality is not always available. The EU legislation governing organic farming therefore allows the use of some ingredients from conventional agriculture if they are necessary for the production of particular goods and if it can be proven that they can neither be produced in the EU nor imported into the EU at the requisite organic quality. This applies, for example, to specific exotic fruits or some spices and oils. Non-organic ingredients must either be listed in Annex V Part B of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1165 or, in duly substantiated cases, be subject to an exception granted by the competent authority. Substances listed in Annex IX to Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 may still be used until 31 December 2023. Only with an organic percentage of at least 95 % can the foodstuff be marketed as an organic product and be labelled with the German “Bio-Siegel” (organic production logo), the EU organic logo and other organic logos. If the organic percentage of ingredients is less than 95%, the list of ingredients may refer to the organic ingredients subject to certain conditions. These products may not be designated as organic (in German: “bio” or “öko”). Any form of emphasis is not allowed.

1 <https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/landwirtschaft/oekologischer-landbau/aenderungen-oekoverordnung.html>

The EU rules contain the following key points:

Plant production

- Conversion regulations for farms with plant production
- Preserving and increasing soil fertility through special soil tillage and multiannual crop rotations
- Supplementary fertilisers and pesticides only if they are stated in specific positive lists
- General use of organically propagated seed and planting stock
- Requirements for organic wine have been included in the new EU Basic Regulation. This is worthy of particular mention as it was originally not possible to designate wine as organic (it was only permitted to use the words “wine from organic production grapes”). But since the provisions on winemaking were supplemented in 2012, wine has been able to be marketed as “organic wine”.

Animal husbandry

- Conversion provisions for farms and for animals of non-organic origin
- Stockfarming is a land-related activity
- A general ban on keeping livestock tethered
- Livestock must be fed with organically produced feed
- Animals are kept healthy mainly by encouraging their natural immunological defence
- Regular controls and certification of origin for organically-produced meat.

Aquaculture

The production of marine animals and seaweed is a relatively new line of business in organic farming. It was developed because the targeted breeding and husbandry of aquatic organisms (aquaculture) has become increasingly important, also with regard to sea fisheries production, which must be distinguished from it.

The aim of organic aquaculture is to safeguard the production of prime quality products while minimising the strain on the aquatic environment.

As in organic farming in general, welfare-oriented husbandry takes top priority here too.

Third country imports

Another area with comprehensive rules concerns the implementing provisions for imports from third countries. These rules are intended to ensure that agricultural products and foods from non-EU countries may only be freely marketed as organic products in the EU if they comply with EU organic standards regarding production rules and inspection measures.

Organic products from third countries can access the EU market in different ways:

Under the rules that were in force until 2021, the EU Commission recognised certain third countries whose production and inspection rules for specific organic product categories were equivalent to EU legislation. In the medium term, it is planned to translate this recognition into trade agreements with these third countries that define the detailed conditions for trade in organic products. Such trade agreements have already been realised for the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Chile. During a transitional period until the end of 2026, other third countries will still be able to continue trade on the basis of their listing as recognised third countries.

In third countries without organic standards that are recognised as equivalent, it has already been possible for private inspection bodies to establish such standards and check compliance with them in the third countries. A prerequisite for this is the recognition and subsequent listing of these inspection bodies by the EU Commission. In future, it is planned to only grant this recognition if the standards of the inspection bodies are the same as those applicable to businesses within the EU. There will also be more detailed requirements for inspections in third countries. During the transition to the new system, the inspection bodies listed under current law will generally keep this recognition.

4. Organic Farming Act



The **Organic Farming Act (ÖLG)** pools specific executive functions in organic farming in Germany, increasing the effective implementation of the EU legislation governing organic farming. It was amended in 2021 to comply with the new EU legislation.

The Laender are generally responsible for implementing organic farming legislation. If they transfer control activities to private control bodies, certain stipulations in the Organic Farming Act must be complied with. This includes, for example, the duty for commercial operators who wish to be certified for an organic activity to tolerate control measures to be carried out on their premises by the private control bodies. The control bodies, in turn, are required to report infringements of the rules on organic farming to the competent authorities.

Each inspection body must keep a list of the businesses it inspects and publish this list on the Internet for the competent authorities, economic operators and consumers.

The inspection bodies are obliged to inform each other as well as providing the competent authorities with the necessary information for these inspections.

The Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung – BLE) is responsible for the nationwide authorisation, and withdrawal of authorisation, of private, publicly

approved inspection bodies. It will in future also be responsible for carrying out the annual audit of the control bodies.

Compulsory checks in away-from-home consumption

The rules governing the inspections of away-from-home consumption to assess compliance with organic farming standards have not been harmonised throughout the EU. The Organic Farming Act now contains the option of issuing national ordinances to lay down such rules for communal catering institutions such as restaurants, canteens or large-scale kitchens. A corresponding ordinance is currently being prepared. Until it enters force, the current rules of the Organic Farming Act and the Organic Labelling Act will continue to apply.

Provisions regarding penalties and fines

Anyone violating the EU legislation governing organic farming is liable to up to one year's imprisonment or a fine of up to € 30,000. This applies especially to the fraudulent use of indications referring to organic production methods in the labelling and advertising of organic products.

5. Inspection

Just like conventional products, organic products must comply with the provisions applicable under food and feed law. They are inspected within the scope of the control mechanisms envisaged there.

If products are to be presented as organic products, the inspection procedure under the EU legislation governing organic farming must also be carried out. In accordance with the EU legislation governing organic farming, it is up to the Member States to decide whether they let government agencies carry out the inspection procedure alone or whether they opt for a state-supervised private system. The latter system operates in Germany.

Due to Germany's federal structure, the *Länder* authorities in charge of organic farming are responsible for implementing the provisions of the EC Organic Farming Regulation. They are also responsible for the supervision of the 19 private inspection bodies that have been publicly approved by the BLE and are currently operating in the market.



In 2012, the criteria for the accreditation of inspection bodies were put on a federally harmonised legal basis in the Ordinance on the Accreditation of Inspection Bodies pursuant to the Organic Farming Act (ÖLG-Kontrollstellen-Zulassungsverordnung). The currently approved inspection bodies for organic products in Germany are listed on the following website www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen/oeko-kontrollstellen/.

The private inspection bodies control and monitor compliance with the EU legislation governing organic farming on the ground. An inspection agreement is concluded between the company or business that is subject to inspection and the inspection body. Companies or businesses thus undertake to adhere to the EU legislation governing organic farming and agree to the standard inspection scheme of the inspection body. The inspection body controls agricultural holdings as well as processors and importers at least once a year, and more frequently if necessary. The inspected holdings must bear the costs of inspection. The inspection is primarily a procedural inspection supplemented by elements of final product inspection in special cases. Soil and plant samples are also taken and residue analyses carried out on a random basis and in all cases where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion.

The detailed rules implementing the EU legislation governing organic farming set out the minimum inspection requirements for agricultural holdings, processors, stockkeepers, distributors and importers.

Accordingly, producers and processors must specify precisely what land, what buildings and what facilities are used in production. Holdings are obliged to precisely record and document all inputs and products entering the holdings at all stages of processing. Everything sold by the farm or holding must be recorded in their books – what, how much and to whom. This guarantees the traceability of organic products back to the producer.

6. Organic farms in Germany

At the end of 2020, there were 35,396 organic-production holdings in Germany farming 1,701,895 hectares of land organically in accordance with the EU legislation governing organic farming. These account for 13.5 % of all holdings, farming around 10.3 % of the total utilised agricultural area (see Tables 1 and 2).

Most organic farms in Germany have joined associations. In addition to the Bioland and Demeter associations (the largest and oldest organic associations), there are also other associations such as Naturland, Biokreis, Bundesverband Ökologischer Weinbau (Federation for Organic Viticulture, ECOVIN), Gää, Ecoland, Biopark and Verbund Ökohöfe.

Table 1: **Organic farming according to Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 in conjunction with Regulation (EC) No. 889/2008 in Germany in 2020**

Land	Utilised agricultural area (UAA) (ha)	Farms ¹	Organically farmed land (organic area) (ha) ²	Organic farms in total ²
Baden-Württemberg	1,408,063	39,085	193,342	10,624
Bavaria	3,107,697	84,756	386,496	10,989
Brandenburg	1,310,361	5,413	188,605	972
Hesse	764,705	15,128	121,740	2,329
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	1,343,521	4,784	176,791	1,071
Lower Saxony	2,571,337	35,348	137,694	2,253
North Rhine-Westphalia	1,473,157	33,611	92,552	2,252
Rhineland-Palatinate	699,150	16,040	81,959	1,763
Saarland	74,024	1,094	14,377	276
Saxony	898,375	6,500	72,490	856
Saxony-Anhalt	1,162,702	4,344	108,684	628
Schleswig-Holstein	982,753	12,194	68,748	800
Thuringia	774,830	3,708	54,367	441
City-states in total ³⁾	24,349	771	4,050	142
Sum	16,595,024	262,776	1,701,895	35,396

Percentages have been rounded to the first decimal place.

1 As of the 2010 reference year, the lower threshold limits for inclusion in the agricultural statistics were raised. The entire population of farms cannot, therefore, be compared with the previous years' figures. The effects of these changes on the total surveyed agricultural land are minimal. Farms without any agricultural land are not covered.

2 Including farms with less than 5 ha UAA

3 Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg

Sources: reports by the inspection bodies in accordance with REG (EC) 834/2007 in conjunction with REG (EC) 889/2008 as of 31.12.2020; Federal Statistical Office 2020 land-use survey

Representatives from organic farming associations, organic food processors and organic trade founded the “Bund Ökologischer Lebensmittelwirtschaft”

(BÖLW, Organic Food Industry Federation) in 2002 as the umbrella organisation of the entire organic sector.

Land	Percentage of the <i>Land's</i> UAA made up by organic farmland (%) ²	Percentage of total organic farmland in Germany made up by the <i>Land's</i> organic farmland (%)	Percentage of the total number of farms in the <i>Land</i> made up by organic farms (%) ²	Percentage of the total number of organic farms in Germany made up by organic farms in the <i>Land</i> (%)
Baden-Württemberg	13.7	11.4	27.2	30.0
Bavaria	12.4	22.7	13.0	31.0
Brandenburg	14.4	11.1	18.0	2.7
Hesse	15.9	7.2	15.4	6.6
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	13.2	10.4	22.4	3.0
Lower Saxony	5.4	7.9	6.4	6.4
North Rhine-Westphalia	6.3	5.6	6.7	6.4
Rhineland-Palatinate	11.7	4.8	11.0	5.0
Saarland	19.4	0.8	25.2	0.8
Saxony	8.1	4.3	13.2	2.4
Saxony-Anhalt	9.3	6.4	14.5	1.8
Schleswig-Holstein	7.0	4.0	6.6	2.3
Thuringia	7.0	3.2	11.9	1.2
City-states in total ³⁾	16.6	0.2	18.4	0.4
Sum	10.3	100.0	13.5	100.0

Percentages have been rounded to the first decimal place.

1 As of the 2010 reference year, the lower threshold limits for inclusion in the agricultural statistics were raised. The entire population of farms cannot, therefore, be compared with the previous years' figures. The effects of these changes on the total surveyed agricultural land are minimal. Farms without any agricultural land are not covered.

2 Including farms with less than 5 ha UAA

3 Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg

Sources: reports by the inspection bodies in accordance with REG (EC) 834/2007 in conjunction with REG (EC) 889/2008 as of 31.12.2020; Federal Statistical Office 2020 land-use survey

Some of the guidelines of German organic farming associations are stricter than those laid down in the EU legislation governing organic farming.

For example, pursuant to the EU legislation governing organic farming, a holding may under certain

circumstances partially convert to organic farming, whereas the organic farming associations always prescribe the total conversion of a holding.

In Germany, the conversion of the entire holding is a prerequisite for support with public funds.

Table 2: **Organic farms and farmland in Germany**

Year	Organically farmed area (ha)	Total number of organic farms	Percentage of UAA in Germany made up by organic farmland (%)	Percentage of farms in Germany made up by organic farms (%)	Area of UAA per organic farm (ha)
1994	272,139	5,866	1.6	1	46.4
1995	309,487	6,642	1.8	1.1	46.6
1996	354,171	7,353	2.1	1.3	48.2
1997	389,693	8,184	2.3	1.5	47.6
1998	416,518	9,213	2.4	1.7	45.2
1999	452,327	10,425	2.6	2.2	43.4
2000	546,023	12,740	3.2	2.9	42.9
2001	634,998	14,702	3.7	3.3	43.2
2002	696,978	15,626	4.1	3.6	44.6
2003	734,027	16,475	4.3	3.9	44.6
2004	767,891	16,603	4.5	4.1	46.3
2005	807,406	17,020	4.7	4.3	47.4
2006	825,538	17,557	4.9	4.6	47.0
2007	865,336	18,703	5.1	5.0	46.3
2008	907,786	19,813	5.4	5.3	45.8
2009	947,115	21,047	5.6	5.7	45.0
2010	990,702	21,942	5.9	7.3	45.2
2011	1,015,626	22,506	6.1	7.5	45.1
2012	1,034,355	23,032	6.2	7.7	44.9
2013	1,044,955	23,271	6.3	8.2	44.9
2014	1,047,633	23,398	6.3	8.2	44.8
2015	1,088,838	24,736	6.5	8.7	44.0
2016	1,251,320	27,132	7.5	9.9	46.1
2017	1,373,157	29,395	8.2	11.0	46.7
2018	1,498,027	31,713	9.0	12.0	47.2
2019	1,613,834	34,110	9.7	12.9	47.3
2020	1,701,895	35,396	10.3	13.5	48.1

*) From 2003 not completely comparable with previous years due to a change in the recording method in Thuringia.

7. Income situation

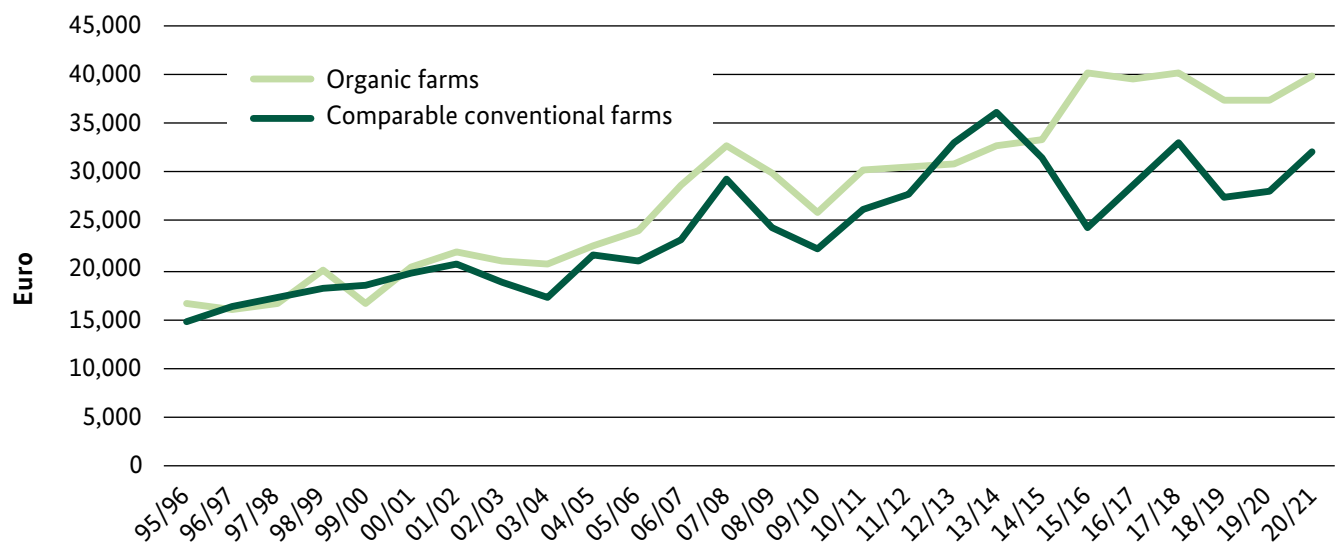
According to calculations by the Thünen Institute, the organic test farms made a significantly higher profit than comparable conventional farms in the 2020/21 financial year (FY). While the organic farms selected for the comparison made an average profit plus labour costs per worker of 39,958 €, the conventional reference farms, which had similar site conditions and production factors, made an average profit of 32,133 €. The average income of the organic test farms thus exceeded the income

of the conventional reference farms by € 7,824 or 24 % (see Figure 1).

The accounting results of 563 organic farms and of 3,243 conventional reference farms were used for the comparison in the 2020/21 financial year www.thuenen.de.

Figure 1: **Development of income (profits plus labour costs per worker) of organic farms and comparable conventional farms¹**

Profit plus labour costs per worker



¹ The increase in income in the 2020/21 financial year is caused in part by a change in comparison criteria.

Source: Thünen Institute based on test farm data (FY 1995/96 – 2020/21)

8. Support for organic farming



Grounds for support

The production of organic products is very environmentally sound and conserves resources sustainably. Organic farming makes a significant contribution to climate change mitigation as well as to biodiversity conservation and enhancement. It also safeguards jobs in rural areas.

However, it also necessitates added effort in farming and greater labour intensity for the processing sectors. That is why organic products are more expensive than conventional foods.

It is especially difficult for holdings to make the transition to organic farming as they are not permitted to market products as organic until after a conversion period. Moreover, new organic farms frequently have to find new marketing channels for their produce.

Legal foundation for support

Germany has therefore supported the introduction of organic farming with public funds since 1989. Up until 1992, organic farming had been promoted by a variant of the EU extensification scheme that banned the use of synthetically produced chemical fertilisers and pesticides on the entire farm. Animal husbandry also had to adhere to basic rules of organic farming.

Since 1994, the introduction and maintenance of organic farming has been supported under the *Länder* programmes for rural development (RDPs). This support is currently based on the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (Art. 29 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013¹), on Delegated Regulation (EU) No 807/2014², Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014³ and on Implementing Regulation (EU) No 2016/669⁴, as amended.

The requirements laid down in these Regulations have been authoritative for the structuring of this support during the EU programming period that began in 2014. The co-financing of measures with EU funds is also based on these Regulations.

The Act on a Joint Task for the Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection (GAK Act – GAKG) forms the national legal basis for support under the joint task, i.e. for the financial participation of the federal government in support measures.

Under the GAK framework plan, the support for organic farming is laid down in aid section 4 on “market-adapted, site-adapted and ecologically compatible land management” (under Measure B1). It is implemented via support guidelines at *Land* level, due to the responsibility of the *Länder* for the implementation of GAK measures.

Under these measures, the national co-financing is provided at a rate of 60 : 40 by federal government and *Länder*. The maximum EU contribution rate is 75 % of the eligible public expenditure (85 % in less developed regions and in the outermost regions) (Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013).

4.5% of the direct payments under the 1st pillar have been redistributed to the 2nd pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) since 2015, i.e. approx. € 226 to 231 million annually, opening up new financial scope for the *Länder* since 2016. For the 2020 and 2021 claim years, funds amounting to 6 % were redistributed to the 2nd pillar. In the new funding period, it is envisaged to raise the reallocation of funds from the first pillar to the second pillar step by step (from 8% in 2022 to 15% in 2026).

This will give the *Laender* more financial scope in the 2nd pillar which they can use to increase promotion of organic farming. According to a decision adopted



by the Conference of Agriculture Ministers of the *Länder* on 4 November 2013, the funds transferred from the 1st to the 2nd pillar are to be used only for the promotion of sustainable agriculture, particularly for organic farming, for area-based agri-environmental and climate protection measures, for the strengthening of particularly welfare-oriented husbandry methods and animal welfare and for the compensatory allowance in naturally less-favoured regions. These funds do not have to be nationally co-financed (100% EU funds).

In the first pillar of the CAP, the level of environmental ambition will continue to increase. All direct payments in the first pillar will in future be linked to the enhanced conditionality i.e. to a better environmental and climate performance. All farms will receive the basic premium as remuneration for the services provided with the conditionality. Organic farms are also no longer generally exempted from carrying out these measures - as they were previously from the Greening provisions.

The so-called eco regulations will in future also be applicable nationwide. Payments that go beyond the basic premium will in future only be granted if additional services are rendered. 25 % of the direct payments are to be provided for this additional environmental and climate performance which goes beyond the conditionality requirements. In Germany, this equates to approximately € 1 billion per year. This represents a further benefit for environment protection and climate change mitigation.

The introduction and maintenance of organic farming are supported with public funds from the EU, the federal government and the *Länder*. Under the 2020-2023 GAK framework plan, support under the above-mentioned promotion guidelines is structured as follows:

- 1 Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 (OJ EU No L 347 of 20 December 2013 p. 347).
- 2 Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 807/2014 of 14 March 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and introducing transitional provisions.
- 3 Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 of 17 July 2014 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).
- 4 Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 2016/669 of 28 April 2016 as regards the amendment and the content of rural development programmes, the publicity for these programmes, and the conversion rates to livestock units.

Table 3: **Promotion of organic farming methods under the 2018-2022 GAK compared with 2013–2016**

Type of crop	Payments per hectare			
	Beginning organic farming in 2013	Beginning organic farming since 2015 ^{*)}	Staying organic in 2013	Staying organic since 2015 ^{*)}
Vegetable growing	€ 480	€ 590 (+23 %)	€ 300	€ 360 (+20 %)
Arable land	€ 210	€ 250 (+19 %)	€ 170	€ 210 (+24 %)
Grassland	€ 210	€ 250 (+19 %)	€ 170	€ 210 (+24 %)
Land under permanent crops or nursery crops	€ 900	€ 950 (+6 %)	€ 720	€ 750 (+4 %)

*) The calculation of the payments took account of the deduction of the amount necessary in order to exclude the double funding of greening requirements.

Under EU legislation, the payments are granted to compensate farmers for all or part of the additional costs of, or income lost through, the special farming requirements.

Since 2015, support rates under the GAK have amounted to € 250 per hectare of arable land and grassland for holdings that begin organic farming and € 210 per hectare for holdings that stay organic. This corresponds to an increase of 19 % (beginning organic farming) and 24 % (staying organic) as compared with 2013. To offset transaction costs, the payment may be increased by 40 € per hectare, up to a maximum of 600 € per holding, to meet the requirements from the EU legislation governing organic farming. The *Länder* may increase or lower the amounts listed in Table 5 by up to 30%.

The premiums for organic farming are currently being recalculated. Adjustments in the size of the premiums are envisaged for the new funding period.

The premiums are set by the *Länder*, within the scope of their competence for the implementation of the GAK measures, against the backdrop of political priorities and the available *Land* budget funds.

Hence the GAK provides the framework for the setting of the premiums. The premiums set out in the support guidelines of the *Länder* are authoritative and can be accessed at www.oekolandbau.de/landwirtschaft/umstellung/foerderung/foerdermittel

GAK also promotes improvement of the processing and marketing of quality products, including organically produced agricultural products. The support covers the following measures: foundation of and actions taken by producer groups, investments for the processing and marketing of agricultural products (quality products) and co-operations (collaboration). The grant recipients, the eligibility conditions and the subject of the support scheme are explained in aid section 3 (“Improving the marketing structures”) of the GAK framework plan www.bmel.de/DE/Landwirtschaft/Foerderung-Agrarsozialpolitik/GAK/_Texte/GAK-Rahmenplan.html

9. Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming

Organic farming is a particularly resource-conserving and environmentally friendly farming system based on the principle of sustainability. The new Federal Government's coalition agreement has therefore set the goal of expanding organic farming to make up 30 percent of farmland by 2030. The previous goal of 20 % has therefore been increased significantly.

However, in order to be able to meet the long-evident dynamic market development and increased consumer demand for organic products, it was necessary to give new growth impetus to organic farming and food production in Germany.

This is why the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) initiated the development of a Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming in 2015.

Objective

The strategy is intended to help address resource policy challenges in agriculture and identify additional development prospects for farm operators in Germany. The selection of these areas of action is pragmatically based on the key question of what policy makers can do at national level to expand the amount of land used for organic farming. The principal focus is on creating an appropriate policy framework for the relevant economic operators. In addition, it provides an insight into the ease of movement between organic and conventional methods of production, progressing from coexistence to interaction.

The process

The strategy was developed jointly with representatives of the organic food sector, with the Laender and with scientists. To sound out options to encourage stronger growth, a number of different thematic working groups were set up at the beginning of the strategy process. Each working group included representatives of practitioners, public servants,



advisers and scientists. The strategy first evaluated the status quo, specified the concrete need for action and designated sub-goals in each case. After that, a list of existing and potential new measures was drawn up for each line of action. Detailed strategies were then developed for measures that were particularly relevant or worth intensifying. The individual work steps were taken in close consultation with an advisory committee, whose members included scientists and representatives of associations. In addition to that, two conferences were held during the strategy process, where interim results were presented and put up for discussion. Overall, some 200 persons were actively involved in drawing up the strategy. The Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, one of the BMEL's research institutions, was commissioned to design and coordinate the workflow.

Core contents

There are five lines of action at the centre of the Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming. They were identified as key national areas for stronger growth and they address core challenges in the organic sector:

1 *designing a viable and coherent legislative framework*



2 *facilitating access to organic farming*



3 *fully utilising and expanding the demand potential*



4 *improving the productivity of organic farming systems*



5 *rewarding ecological contributions adequately*



The 24 action strategies that are assigned to the respective lines of action describe and specify the respective instruments and approaches for achieving these objectives. Depending on the identified weaknesses, the respective solution strategies have highly varying approaches to providing the organic sector with additional growth impetus along the entire value adding chain: they include legal and financial support instruments, action to promote research, technology and knowledge transfer as well as other conceptual tasks of the federal government. They thus range from the problem-oriented, ongoing development of European legislation governing organic farming, and stronger specialised guidance for agricultural enterprises that decide to convert to organic farming, to potential support for staff canteens planning to offer their guests more organic products in the future. In December 2019, approx. 150 experts met to initially assess the current situation with a view to evaluating how the implementation status of the measures had progressed since the publication of the Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming and to discussing approaches for the further development and readjustment of measures. Based on the results of this conference, and the more ambitious goal of 30 % organic farming, the Strategy on the Future of Organic Farming will be further developed through a participatory process.



10. Bio-Siegel (German organic production logo)

The Bio-Siegel constitutes an important step in the development of the organic market in Germany.



The label is voluntary. The underlying standard set by the EU legislation governing organic farming, and the waiving of further procedural steps such as award or licensing procedures, permit broad use

of the label, even for products from other EU states and third countries. EU law does not allow a state label that goes beyond the standard set by the EU legislation governing organic farming.

This label can be used to mark any unprocessed agricultural products or any agricultural products processed for human consumption that are subject to the EU legislation governing organic farming, as long as the prerequisites regarding the indications referring to organic production methods under Article 40 of the EU Basic Regulation on Organic Farming have been met. This basically means that the products are manufactured and controlled in accordance with the requirements of the EU legislation governing organic farming.

As the Bio-Siegel is based on the EU legislation governing organic farming, it is fully subject to its inspection provisions. The implementation of inspections falls within the competence of the *Länder*.

On 15 December 2001, the Eco-labelling Act took effect to legally protect the Bio-Siegel. The Eco-labelling Ordinance, which is based on the Eco-labelling Act, entered into force on 16 February 2002. It lays down detailed rules regarding the design and use of the Bio-Siegel. The Eco-labelling Ordinance also expressly permits the option of affixing national or regional indications of origin in the immediate environment of the Bio-Siegel, for example the "Biozeichen" of Baden-Württemberg, Hesse and Rhön. The Eco-labelling Act was adapted to the amended EU organic farming legislation with effect from 1 January 2022.

The Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung; BLE) in 53168 Bonn provides information for interested market operators (bio-siegel@ble.de).

Since the Bio-Siegel was announced on 5 September 2001, there have been 6,486 users of the label who have registered 96,509 products (as of 31/01/2022).

The Bio-Siegel is particularly widely-used by businesses in the processing and trade sectors. The Bio-Siegel establishes transparency and reliable guidance for consumers in the maze of trademarks in the organic sector.

The Bio-Siegel has provided the processing and trade sectors with an uncomplicated label that does not interfere with competition and that contributes to the reliable supply of a sufficient volume all year round.

The Bio-Siegel can be used in addition to the EU organic logo.



11. Federal Scheme for Organic Farming and Other Forms of Sustainable Agriculture



Aim

In 2002, the Federal Organic Farming Scheme was set up to improve the general conditions for organic farming.

The Scheme was extended to include other forms of sustainable agriculture under a resolution adopted by the German Bundestag on 26 November 2010.

The Federal Scheme for Organic Farming and Other Forms of Sustainable Agriculture (BÖLN) aims at improving the general conditions for the organic agri-food sector and other forms of sustainable agriculture in Germany and at paving the way for a well-balanced expansion of supply and demand.

Building on the identification of problems and development potential, the support measures provided by the Scheme address areas where growth can be efficiently boosted by closing gaps in support.

A range of different measures for all areas of the production chain are included under this general aim: from agricultural production, processing and data collection to trade, marketing and consumers.

Activities

Since the start of the programme, some € 200 million have been provided in support for research projects. In addition, more than 50 measures have been devised and implemented, including a knowledge transfer and advanced training programme with several hundred seminars for representatives of the entire value-added chain, while five support guidelines have, since 2005, provided support for approx. 2500 companies at trade fairs, 185 information projects on organic farming and around 720 holdings in the lead-up to or during their conversion to organic farming. In the course of the implementation of the Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming since 2019, the main focus has been on strengthening organic value chains. Two new support guidelines on establishing, or providing information on, value chains have so far supported 29 projects.

Both the composition of this coherent package of BÖLN measures and the concepts of the individual measures are continually adapted to take account of experiences and changing conditions.

At the same time, the BÖLN scheme is the central funding instrument for the Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming (see Chapter 9). Its main activities in this respect are focused on the following key activity areas: “Facilitating access to organic farming”, “Exploiting and expanding demand potential” and “Improving the performance of organic agricultural systems”.

The BÖLN funds are used to finance research projects submitted to the ERA-NET CORE Organic scheme (European Research Area Network on Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems). ERA-NETs were launched for the first time in the 6th European Framework Programme for Research with the aim of intensifying cooperation between national and regional research support organisations at EU level. As ERA-NET initiatives are no longer supported under the new Horizon Europe research programme, the funding of CORE Organic’s work in the network will stop in May 2022. Core Organic looks back on 18 years of successful cooperation between what had risen to 27 partners from 19 European states. Overall, 50 transnational research projects on organic farming and organic food were carried out, with German research institutions being involved in 35 of them. In 2019, Core Organic also issued a joint publication with ERA-NET SUSFOOD2 (SUStainable FOOD production and consumption) on sustainable organic food systems. The publication involved 21 funding partners from 18 countries/regions, and resulted in the selection of twelve further projects for support,

nine with German participation. The projects started in late 2020/early 2021.

An overall budget of € 61.9 million for transnational projects was raised during CORE Organic’s 18 years, of which € 541 million was provided by BÖLN. The research projects that have not been concluded by May 2022 will continue to be supported by BÖLN, even after CORE Organic has finished.

Financial envelope

The programme was provided with around € 35 million annually for 2002 and 2003, € 20 million annually for 2004 to 2006, and € 16 million annually from 2007 until 2012. Since 2013, funds have totalled € 17 million per year. For the 2017 financial year, the title was topped up by € 3 million to € 20 million and for 2018 to € 30 million per year. In the 2021 financial year, funds totalling € 33.38 million are available for the BÖLN scheme.

Office

The BLE is charged with the implementation and execution of the Scheme. The Office for the Federal Scheme for Organic Farming and Other Forms of Sustainable Agriculture (GS-BÖLN) has been set up there for this purpose.



12. Research



The Institute for Organic Farming is, under the research concept, one of 14 institutes affiliated to the Thünen Institute. It is located at the Trenthorst site in Schleswig-Holstein.

Some of the subjects the institute focuses on include organic farming and the processing, safety and quality of organic food. A number of other research institutes affiliated to the BMEL also deal with these subjects. The research is organised on an interdisciplinary basis and meaningfully dovetailed with research activities relating to the conventional agricultural and food sectors.

Under the Federal Scheme, a significant part of the funds is used to support practice-orientated research and development projects.

In addition, any thematically relevant invitations to tender announced by the BMEL or other government departments can also be used to fund organic farming projects.

13. Federal Organic Farming Competition

Every year, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture stages the Federal Organic Farming Competition (BÖL) to reward innovative approaches in certain fields that have been successfully put into practice by organic farms.

These approaches are intended to set an example to other organic farms, whilst providing incentives for conventional farms to switch to organic farming. Another objective of this competition is to increase the general public's appreciation and understanding of organic farming as a particularly eco-friendly type of production.

The awards are presented to a total of up to three holdings or business co-operations. The prize money amounts to up to € 7,500 per winner, i.e. a maximum of € 22,500 in total.

Information on the conditions for participation, the application areas and the application forms can be accessed on the Internet at:

www.wettbewerb-oekolandbau.de.



14. Outlook

Germany has the greatest demand for organic products in the EU and is second only to the USA at global level. Market experts estimated that the sale of organic foods (excluding away-from-home

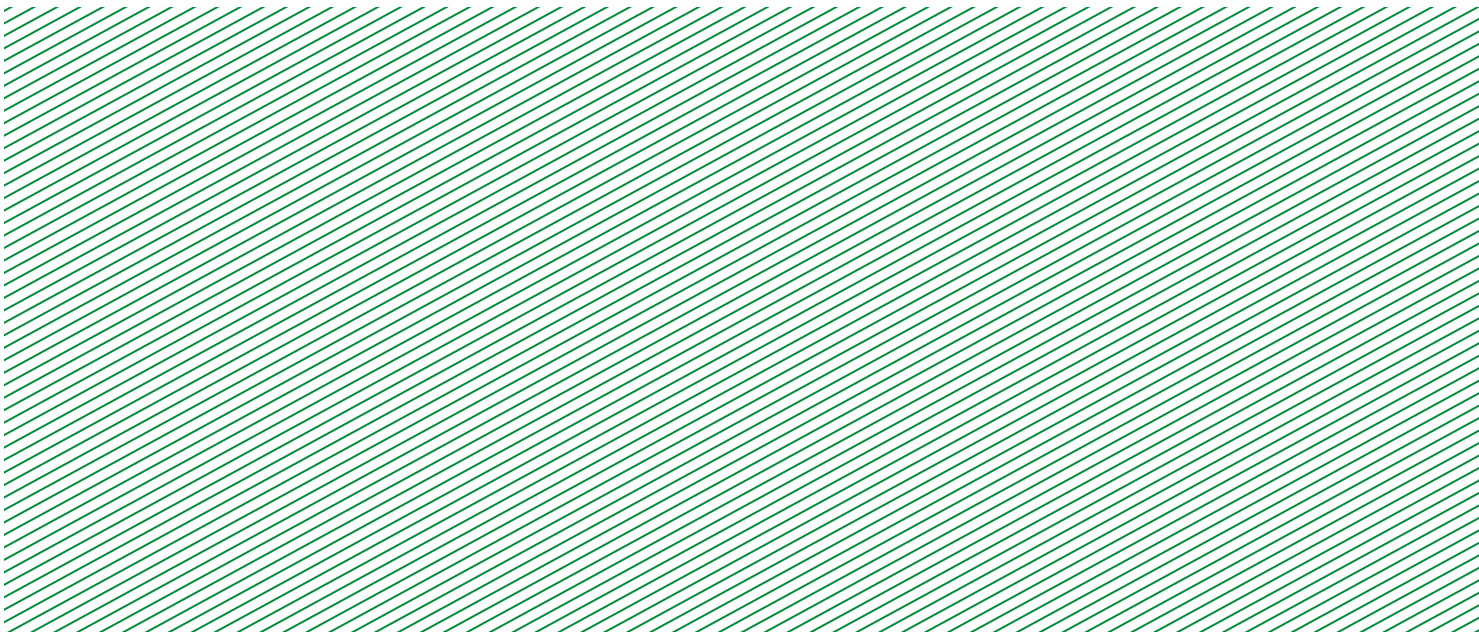
catering) rose to € 15.87 billion in 2021, an increase of 5.8 %. Experts believe that organic farming still has considerable growth potential.



15. Links

- www.bmel.de → Themen → Landwirtschaft → Ökologischer Landbau
- Central Internet portal: www.oekolandbau.de
- Federal Organic Farming Competition: www.wettbewerb-oekolandbau.de
- „Echt kuh'!' – Nationwide school competition on sustainable food and agriculture: www.echtkuh-l.de
- Labelling of organic products with the Bio-Siegel: www.bio-siegel.de
- Federal Scheme for Organic Farming and Other Forms of Sustainable Agriculture: www.bundesprogramm.de
- Thünen Institute of Organic Farming, Trenthorst 32, 23847 Westerau: www.thuenen.de/de/ol/
- Committee for Technology and Structures in Agriculture (KTBL), Bartningstraße 49, 64289 Darmstadt: www.ktbl.de
- Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE), Deichmannsaue 29, 53179 Bonn: www.ble.de
- Inspection authorities of the *Länder*: [www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen Kontrollbehoerden/](http://www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen/Kontrollbehoerden/)
- List of the approved inspection authorities in the Federal Republic of Germany: www.ble.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Landwirtschaft/Oekologischer-Landbau/ListeKontrollstellen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3
- Online directory of inspected organic businesses in Germany: www.oeko-kontrollstellen.de/suchebiunternehmen/SuchForm.php
- Online directory of inspected organic farms: www.bioC.info
- Federal Information Centre on Agriculture: www.ble.de/bzl
- AMI Agricultural Market Information Association mbH, Dreizehnmorgenweg 10, 53175 Bonn: www.ami-informiert.de
- Organic monitoring programme run by the Land of Baden-Württemberg: www.oekomonitoring.ua-bw.de/start.html
- CORE – Organic Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Farming: www.coreorganic.org
- Organic Eprints, the international archive of scientific publications on organic farming: www.orgprints.org

- Foundation Ecology & Agriculture (SÖL), Weinstraße Süd 51, 67089 Bad Dürkheim: www.soel.de
- Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL): www.fibl.de
- IFOAM – Organics International, Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5, 53113 Bonn: www.ifoam.bio/
- Organic Food Industry Federation (BÖLW), Marienstraße 19-20, 10117 Berlin: www.boelw.de
- Bioland e. V., Kaiserstraße 18, 55116 Mainz: www.bioland.de
- Biokreis e. V., Stelzlhof 1, 94034 Passau: www.biokreis.de
- Biopark e. V., Rövertannen 13, 18273 Güstrow: www.biopark.de
- Demeter e. V., Brandschneise 1, 64295 Darmstadt: www.demeter.de
- Ecoland e. V., Haller Straße 20, 74549 Wolpertshausen: www.ecoland.de
- Ecovin Federation for Organic Viticulture, Wormser Str. 162, 55276 Oppenheim: www.ecovin.de
- Gää e. V. – Organic Farming Association, Brockhausstraße 4 , 01099 Dresden: www.gaea.de
- Naturland – Verband für ökologischen Landbau e. V., Kleinhaderner Weg 1, 82166 Gräfelfing: www.naturland.de
- Verbund Ökohöfe e. V., Windmühlenbreite 25d, 39164 Stadt Wanzleben-Börde: www.verbund-oekohoefe.de
- German Association for Natural Food and Products (BNN), Michaelkirchstr. 17–18, 10179 Berlin: www.n-bnn.de
- Organic produce without genetic engineering, a practical manual as a joint project of BÖLW, FiBL and the Öko-Institut: www.boelw.de/news/praxishandbuch-bioproducte-ohne-gentechnik/
- Anti Fraud Initiative – an international federation of organic farming organisations that campaigns against fraud on the organic market worldwide: www.organic-integrity.org
- Organic seed database: www.organicxseeds.de



PUBLISHED BY

Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL)
Division 712 – Organic Farming
Rochusstraße 1, 53123 Bonn, Germany

AS OF

February 2022

DESIGN

Serviceplan Solutions 1 GmbH & Co. KG, Munich

PRINT

BMEL, Bonn

PHOTOGRAPHS

Pages 1 + 11 + 16 + 17 + 19 + 25 + 30: BMEL/Anika Mester; Page 2: Boggy/StockAdobe.com; Page 3: Janine Schmitz/photothek; Page 5: Pixelbliss/StockAdobe.com; Page 6: Organic market garden in Watzkendorf (field, box of vegetables); Page 7: Lunghammer/StockAdobe.com; Page 8: Robert Kneschke/StockAdobe.com; Page 10: Visions-AD/StockAdobe.com; Page 20: Hubertus Blume/Stock-Adobe.com; Page 21: Schmutzler-Schaub/StockAdobe.com; Page 22: Patrick Daxenbichler/StockAdobe.com; Page 23: Gerhard Seybert/StockAdobe.com; Page 24: LEDOMSTOCK/StockAdobe.com; Page 26: Jürgen Fälchle/StockAdobe.com

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