

Feeding pigs and poultry: tips for a 100% organic diet

Organic pig and poultry farms in the EU must feed their animals with 100 % organic feed. However, there has been an exemption to allow smaller amounts of non-organic feed in the diet to ensure a proper nutrition; this exemption runs out by end 2016.

Researchers from 10 European countries developed a range of recommendations through the ICOPP project on how to provide a balanced organic diet for healthy and productive animals. Supplying sufficient protein may especially pose a problem, and their recommendations below include ideas on how to solve this.



For pigs, the following alternative sources of protein can at least partially substitute commonly used sources of protein such as soybean cake:

- Dehulled sainfoin seeds and heat-treated grass pea seeds: these can also be used to feed weaned piglets, without negatively affecting their health and growth;
- Mussel meal could be used to replace fishmeal in feed for fattening pigs if the price is competitive, and if the hygienic quality is sufficient;
- Roughage (e.g. grass silage) can contribute to protein supply if harvested at an early stage, chopped and mixed with concentrate;
- Well-established alfalfa (also called lucerne) is a very suitable foraging crop for fattening pigs. The pigs clearly prefer to graze instead of rooting if the alfalfa is well-established and of high nutritional value.

Both sainfoin and grass peas can produce seeds in difficult growing conditions, which may in some cases compensate for their relatively low yields.

For poultry the following feed recommendations may help supply sufficient protein

- Protein from organically produced Spirulina algae can fully replace protein from traditional organic sources in broiler diets.
- Low-protein diets stimulate the broilers to forage on the range area and direct foraging can contribute much to protein supply in broilers of slow-growing breeds. - without detrimental effects on growth performance.
- Refining plant-based ingredients to enrich the relative content of the amino-acid Methionine seems to be a useful way to supply relevant protein sources for poultry, e.g. for sunflower seed cake.

- Reducing the energy content of the diet, while maintaining the energy : methionine ratio is another option to fulfil the requirement of 100 % organic diets. This can for instance be relevant when including high quality roughage or herbs in the feed mixture for laying hens.

The project, ICOPP

The project, ICOPP – ‘Improved contribution of local feed to support 100 % organic feed supply to pigs and poultry’ - was funded through the CORE-Organic II ERANET. 13 partners from the following countries were involved: Denmark, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, France and Lithuania. Together, these countries produce 85 and 80 percent respectively of all the European organic pigs and poultry.

A series of technical notes and other publications from ICOPP are available on Organic Eprints: <http://orgprints.org/view/projects/ICOPP.html>

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