

Organic Farming in Europe

A sustained growth over the period 1998-2000

Koen Duchateau

In 2000 3.8 million hectares (ha) were devoted to organic farming in the EU-15, representing 3 % of the total utilised agricultural area and an increase of 67 % since 1998. The number of organic holdings in 2000 was a little over 132 000, which represented 2 % of the total number of agricultural holdings and an increase of 32 % since 1998. The average area of an organic holding in the EU-15 is larger than the average area of all agricultural holdings, although this varies considerably by Member State and by type of crop. In Northern Europe, cereals, forage plants and pastures & meadows cover the largest part of the organic production area; in Western Europe pastures & meadows is the single most dominant crop, while in Southern Europe pastures & meadows, forage plants, cereals and olive plantations are the most important organic crops. Organic livestock production seems to be on the rise, but data series are still not long enough to uncover significant trends.

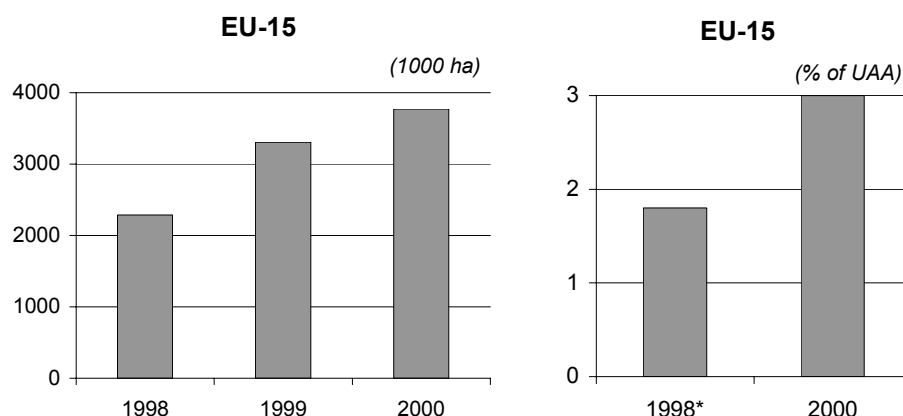
In the European Union, organic agricultural products and foodstuffs are regulated by Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. This Regulation has been amended on several occasions, in particular in 1999 when the Council extended its scope to cover organic livestock production (No 1804/99). The European Commission will propose an action plan on organic farming by the end of 2003.

Organic data in this publication represent the sum of 'fully converted' and 'in conversion' areas, unless otherwise indicated.

3.8 million ha devoted to organic farming...

In 2000, the area devoted to organic farming covered 3.8 million ha in the EU-15, while in 1998 it covered only around 2.3 million ha. This represents an increase of 67% over the period 1998-2000. The organic farming area reached 3.0% of the total Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) of the EU-15 in 2000, up from only 1.8% in 1998 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Area devoted to organic farming in the EU-15



*Percentage is calculated using FSS 1997 data

Statistics in focus

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

THEME 8 – 2/2003

ENVIRONMENT

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Table 1: Organic farming area

	(ha)			
	1998	1999	2000	Evolution 1998-2000
B	11 744	18 515	20 667	+ 76 %
DK	93 201	137 294	157 676	+ 69 %
D	414 293	452 327	546 023	+ 32 %
EL	15 402	21 451	26 707	+ 73 %
E	269 465	352 164	380 920	+ 41 %
F	218 775	315 771	369 933	+ 69 %
IRL	24 411	29 360	27 231	+ 12 %
I	577 475	911 068	1 040 377	+ 80 %
L	744	888	1 074	+ 44 %
NL	22 268	26 350	32 334	+ 45 %
A	287 899	272 635	272 000	- 6 %
P	29 533	46 918	48 066	+ 63 %
FIN	116 206	136 662	147 268	+ 27 %
S	127 329	155 463	174 227	+ 37 %
UK	78 833	425 945	578 803	+ 634 %
EU-15	2 287 577	3 302 812	3 823 306	+ 67 %

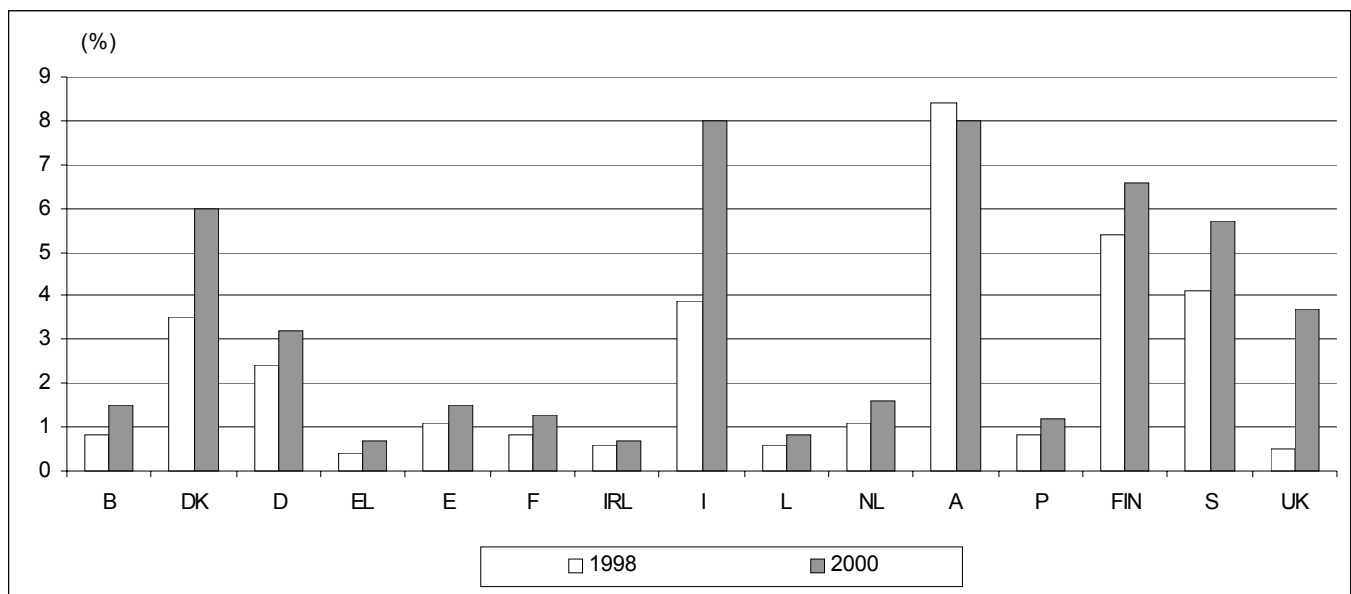
More than a quarter of the total area devoted to organic production in the EU-15 in 2000 was located in Italy (Table 1). The United Kingdom came second, with Germany as a close third. Fourth and fifth were Spain and France respectively.

The countries with an increase in organic farming area in the period 1998-2000 above or close to the EU-15 average were the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Denmark, France and Portugal. The high growth figures for the United Kingdom are mainly due to the recent conversion of very large, very extensive holdings in Scotland.

The countries with an increase in organic farming area lower than the EU-15 average were the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain, Germany, Finland, Sweden and Ireland.

Austria saw a small decrease in its organic farming area since 1998, after the high growth figures in the years before 1998.

Figure 2: Share of organic farming area in total UAA in the Member States



Note: 1998 percentages are calculated using FSS 1997 data

The proportion of organic farming in the total Utilised Agricultural Area for the Member States varies considerably (Figure 2). The Member States which were front-runners in organic farming in 2000, i.e. where the percentage of the UAA was higher than or equal to the EU-15 average (3%), were Austria and Italy (both 8%), Finland (7%), Denmark and Sweden (both 6%), the United Kingdom (4%) and Germany (3%). The other Member States' percentages remained below the EU-15 average. All Member States, except Austria, have seen a more or less pronounced increase in the UAA percentage over the period 1998-2000.

Organic farming involves environment friendly agricultural practices and entails significant restrictions on the use of fertilisers and pesticides. Based on these characteristics, the area under organic farming (expressed as a percentage of total UAA) is proposed as one of 35 indicators for the evaluation of the integration of environmental concerns into the Common Agricultural Policy (COM(2001)144) and is taken up in the 'open list' of environment-related headline indicators (COM(2002)524).

...and more than 132 000 organic holdings

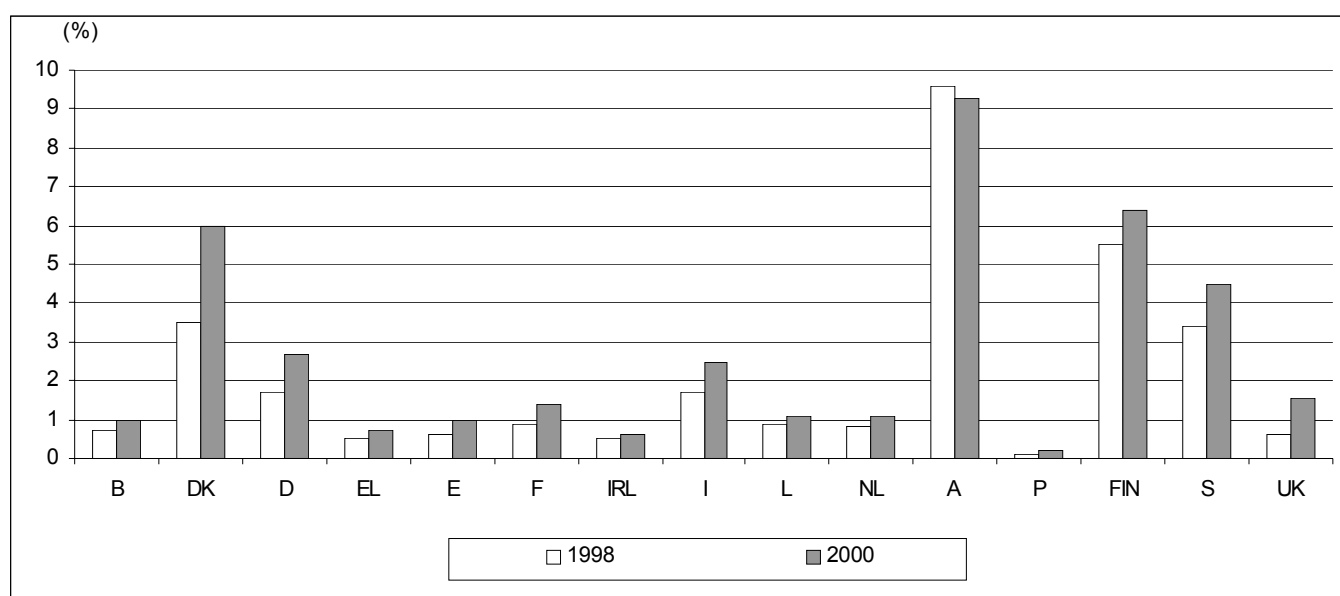
Table 2: Number of organic holdings

	1998	1999	2000*	Evolution 1998-2000
B	480	577	624	+ 30 %
DK	2 228	3 099	3 466	+ 56 %
D	9 194	10 425	12 740	+ 39 %
EL	4 183	4 923	5 343	+ 28 %
E	7 392	11 812	13 394	+ 81 %
F	6 233	8 668	9 576	+ 54 %
IRL	762	972	852	+ 12 %
I	38 616	47 705	53 630	+ 39 %
L	26	28	31	+ 19 %
NL	835	1 004	1 129	+ 35 %
A	20 207	19 741	18 630	- 8 %
P	542	740	723	+ 33 %
FIN	4 984	5 197	5 225	+ 5 %
S	3 027	3 540	3 626	+ 20 %
UK	1 462	2 538	3 563	+ 144 %
EU-15	100 171	120 969	132 552	+ 32 %

*Preliminary data

At the end of 2000 there were a little over 132 000 organic holdings in the EU-15 (Table 2), which represented 2.0% of the total number of agricultural holdings. Italy alone has 40% of the organic holdings, followed by Austria (14%), Spain (10%), Germany (9%) and France (7%). There was on average an increase of 32 % in the number of organic holdings in the EU-15 over the period 1998-2000. This increase is even more remarkable, because the total number of agricultural holdings in the EU-15 continued to decrease during the same period. The increase has been significantly higher than the EU-15 average in the United Kingdom, Spain, Denmark and France. Growth figures, comparable with the EU-15 average, were reached in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Belgium and Greece. Only Austria shows a decrease in the number of organic holdings, reflecting the negative trend in its organic farming area.

Figure 3: Share of organic holdings in total number of agricultural holdings in the Member States



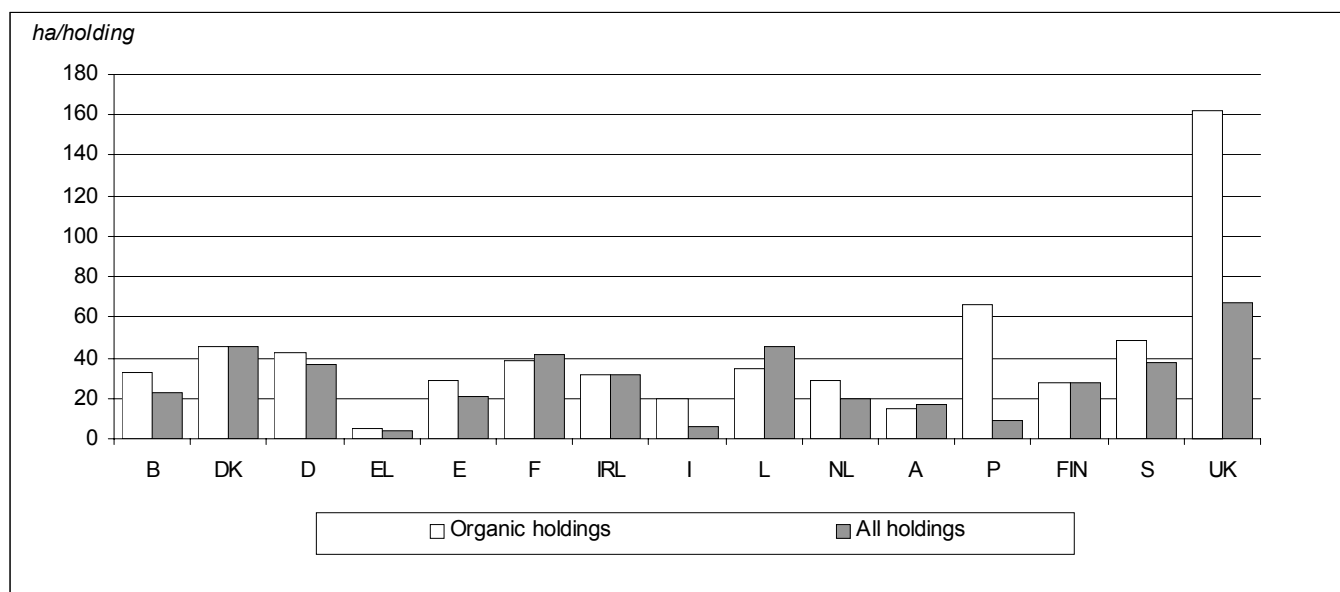
Note: 1998 percentages are calculated using FSS 1997 data

The share of organic holdings in the total number of agricultural holdings varies considerably among the Member States (Figure 3). The EU-15 average is 2.0% for 2000, up from 1.4% in 1998. Austria (9%), Finland and Denmark (both 6%), Sweden (4 %), Germany and Italy (both 3%) are the Member

States which are above the EU-15 average in 2000, while the other Member States remain below. All Member States, except Austria, showed a more or less pronounced increase in the share of organic holdings in the total number of holdings over the period 1998-2000.

A large variation in the average size of the organic holdings

Figure 4: Average size of organic and agricultural holdings in 2000



The size of an organic holding is related among other factors to the crop (e.g. extensive olive production in Portugal) and type of holding ownership system. The average size of an organic holding differs between Member States (Figure 4). There are particularly large, extensively farmed organic holdings in some Member States, when compared to the national average size of all agricultural holdings.

This is the case for Portugal (6 times larger), Italy (3 times larger) and the United Kingdom (2 times larger). The high figures for Portugal and Italy are due to the large number of very small agricultural holdings. In contrast, the average size of an organic holding is smaller than the national average size of all agricultural holdings in Austria, France and Luxembourg.

Box 1: Number of organic processors

Unit

	Processors			Evolution 1998-2000
	1998	1999	2000*	
B	218	304	495	+ 127 %
DK	502	609	505	+ 1 %
D	3 109	3 339	3 850	+ 24 %
EL	71	119	270	+ 280 %
E	388	526	666	+ 72 %
F	3 467	4 392	4 937	+ 42 %
IRL	15	38	61	+ 307 %
I	1 490	2 165	3 006	+ 102 %
L	16	18	19	+ 19 %
NL	:	:	:	:
A	437	401	577	+ 32 %
P	14	17	23	+ 64 %
FIN	380	469	439	+ 16 %
S	465	556	547	+ 18 %
UK	664	:	1 945	+ 193 %

*Preliminary data

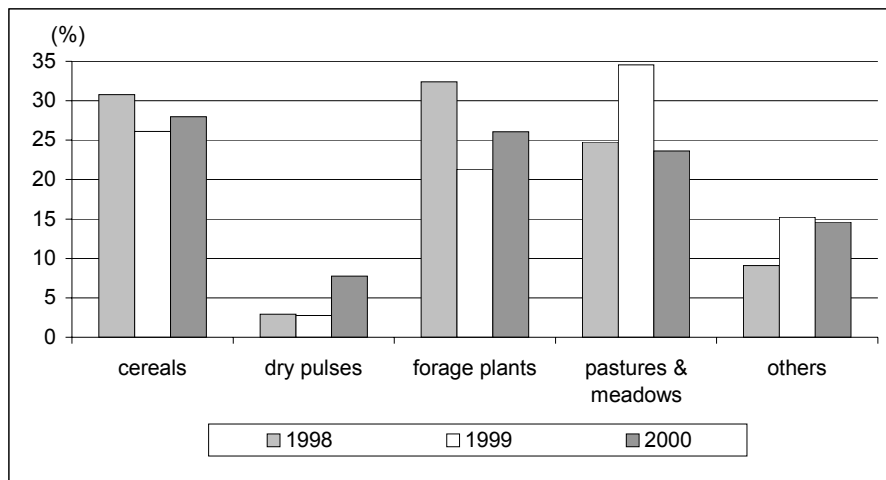
The processing and import of organic products are covered by Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91.

Processors include market operators that preserve, process, package and label organic products in order to make them ready for the market. Their size ranges, however, from small to large enterprises.

There has been growth in the number of organic processors in the Member States over the period 1998 to 2000. The increase has been especially high in Ireland, Greece, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Italy, reflecting the dynamic growth of the organic food industry.

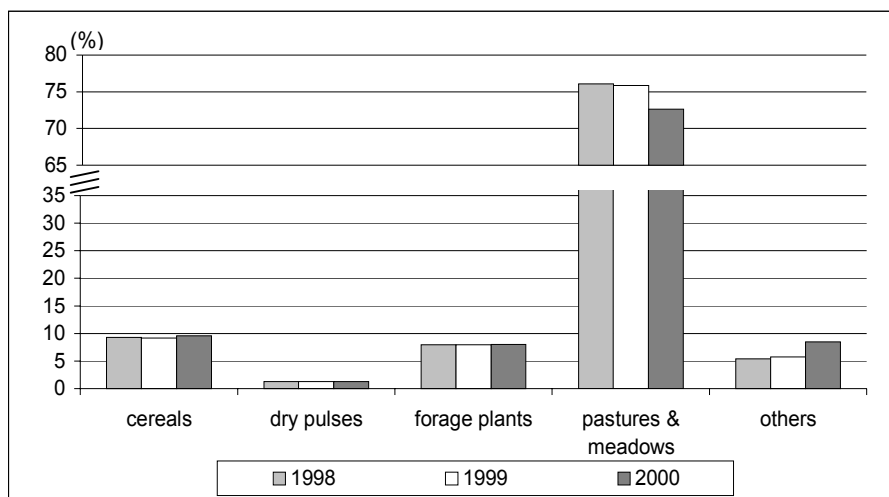
The dominant organic crops differ across Europe

Figure 5: Organic crops in Northern Europe (DK, FIN and S)



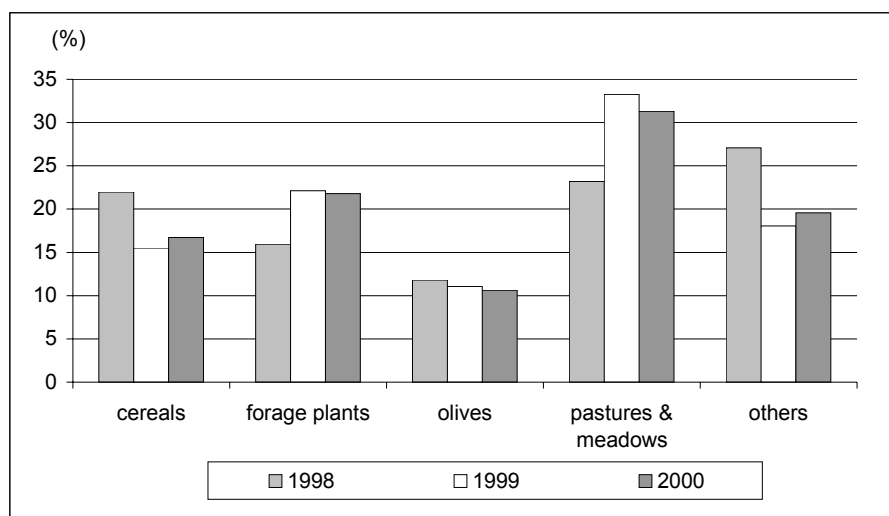
The dominant organic crops in the EU's Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) in 2000 were cereals, forage plants and pastures & meadows, each covering around a quarter of the combined organic area (Figure 5). The prevalence of these crops has fluctuated only slightly since 1998, although the total organic area has increased by almost 50%.

Figure 6: Organic crops in Western Europe (A, B, L and NL)



In a selection of Western European countries (combined data of Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), the single most prevalent crop (pastures & meadows) covered around 75% of the combined organic area in 2000, while both cereals and forage plants remain below 10% (Figure 6). The total organic area as well as the relative importance of the organic crops have remained constant over the period 1998-2000.

Figure 7: Organic crops in Southern Europe (F, EL, I, P and E)



The more southerly European countries (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) show a wider variety of dominant organic crops in 2000 (Figure 7). These are pastures & meadows, forage plants, cereals and olive plantations. In the group 'others', vineyards present 3% of the organic crops. The combined organic area has grown by around 70% over the period 1998-2000, with some fluctuation in the importance of the dominant crops.

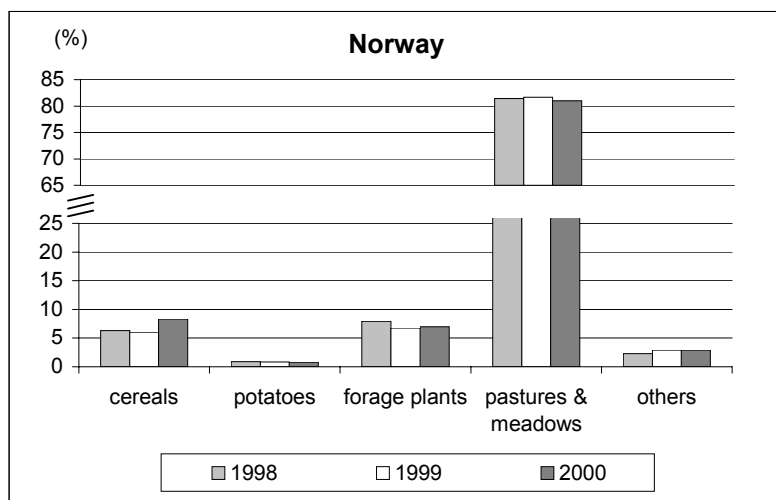
First figures on organic livestock production

Table 3: Organic livestock production

	Belgium		The Netherlands	
	Number of animals 2000	Evolution 1999-2000	Number of animals 2000	Evolution 1999-2000
Equidae	72	+ 47%	864	+ 46%
Bovine	24 497	+ 31%	31 089	+ 24%
Sheep	7 530	+ 58%	18 882	+ 10%
Goats	1 552	+ 32%	14 220	+ 10%
Pigs	10 399	+ 309%	24 449	+ 39%
Poultry	119 559	+ 144%	232 945	+ 55%

Council Regulation (EC) N° 1804/1999 supplements Council Regulation (EEC) N° 2092/91 on organic agricultural production to include livestock production. The first official data on organic livestock production for Belgium and the Netherlands show strong growth in most of the livestock categories (especially pigs and poultry) over the period 1999-2000 (Table 3). The increase in the number of bovine animals is lower, due to the longer conversion period of this livestock category which delays the profits for the farmer for his shift to organic farming. Significant trends in organic livestock production will only become apparent in the coming years.

Box 2: Organic farming in Norway – main figures



Norway's regulation on organic farming is comparable to the EU Regulation.

Pastures and meadows occupy more than 80% of the organic area in 2000, while cereals and forage plants account for less than 10%. These figures have remained constant over the period 1998-2000, although the total organic area has increased considerably.

	1998	1999	2000	Evolution 1998-2000
Area (ha)	15579	18773	20523	+ 32 %
n° of holdings	1627	1762	1840	+ 13 %
n° of processors	320	338	374	+ 17 %
n° of importers	21	20	18	- 14 %

The organic area in Norway increased by 32% over the period 1998-2000 and the number of organic holdings has shown an increase, although less pronounced.

The number of processors is on the rise, while the number of importers has slightly fallen.

➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Article 15 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 requires Member States to inform the Commission before 1 July each year of measures taken in the preceding year for the implementation of the Regulation. The Agriculture DG, in collaboration with Eurostat, has designed standard reporting formats for statistical data on organic farming.

The Regulation has been supplemented by Regulation (EEC) No 1804/99 to include livestock production. Standard reporting formats for statistical data on organic livestock production have been developed.

Data treatment

The statistical information on organic farming presented in this publication is based completely on the information submitted by Member States to the Commission through the use of these statistical forms. Not all Member States have completed all the statistical forms, which restricted the analysis to a certain extent.

Organic data in this publication represent the sum of 'fully converted' and 'in conversion' areas, unless otherwise indicated.

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) and number of holdings data are extracted from the Farm Structure Survey (FSS) (New cronos/theme 5/Eurofarm).

Terminology

Organic farming can be defined as a method of production which puts the highest emphasis on environmental protection and, with regard to livestock production, animal welfare considerations. It avoids or largely reduces the use of synthetic chemical inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, additives and medicinal products.

Farming is only considered to be organic at EU-level if it complies with Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. In this framework, organic farming is differentiated from other approaches to agricultural production by the application of regulated standards (production rules), certification procedures (compulsory inspection schemes) and a specific labelling scheme, resulting in the existence of a specific market, partially isolated from non-organic foods. It does not deal with other types of low-input farming, for example, integrated production.

A producer/organic farmer is any natural or legal person who operates an agricultural holding involved in producing, packaging and labelling of his own organic products following the rules of the Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91.

A processor is any natural or legal person who preserves and/or processes organic agricultural produce (including slaughter and butchering of livestock). The packaging and labelling of organic products is also considered as processing.

An importer is any natural or legal person who imports organic products from a third country with a view to the subsequent marketing of these products.

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