Organic Farming in Germany

As of: January 2018
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This information pamphlet gives a brief overview of organic farming in Germany. It presents statutory rules, organic farming associations as well as 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. The agricultural holding is mainly perceived as an organism comprising the components man, flora, fauna and soil. In its various forms, organic farming enjoys a long-standing tradition. Biodynamic farming was introduced in 1924 and the origins of organic-biological or environmentally-adapted farming also date back well into the last century.

More than other methods of cultivation, organic farming aims to:

- achieve a closed nutrient cycle on the farm, if possible.
  The farm is to establish its own feed and nutrient bases;

- preserve and enhance soil fertility and

- keep animals in a manner conducive to their welfare.

In so doing, organic farming focuses on the following measures:

- no plant protection with synthetically produced chemicals, cultivation of fewer susceptible varieties in suitable crop rotations, using beneficial species, mechanical weed control measures such as hoeing and flame weeding;

- no utilisation of easily soluble mineral fertilisers, 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;

- preserving soil fertility through intensive humus management;

- diverse and long crop rotations with many crop rotation links and intermediate crops;

- no application of synthetically produced chemical growth regulators;

- limited, strictly land-related stocking density;

- feeding animals on farm-grown feed, if possible, few purchased feedstuffs;

- largely dispensing with the use of antibiotics.

Organic farming is specifically geared to sustainability.

It conserves and protects natural resources to a major extent, whilst having diverse positive effects on the environment, for instance:

- Soil conservation

Organic farming methods promote humus formation and soil biota. In the fields and meadows of organic farmers there is usually more biomass and increased microbial activities than in conventional farming. Natural soil fertility is also higher. Losses of topsoil caused by erosion are largely avoided.
Water conservation

As a rule, organic farming does not pollute ground and surface waters with nutrients like nitrates as much as conventional farming. As it dispenses with synthetically produced chemicals, there is no input of these pesticides into the soil. Since organic animal husbandry is a land-related activity, normally no more nutrients accrete from manure and slurry than can be applied to plants on the farm's own land without any difficulty.

Species protection

Organic farming promotes the diversity of flora and fauna as it dispenses with synthetically produced chemical pesticides and has a low level of fertilisation. Often, there are more species on organically than on conventionally farmed land.

Animal welfare

Welfare-oriented animal husbandry meets the principles of organic farming and is guaranteed. Animals are allowed sufficient open-air access in organic farming. Their housing conditions are reviewed on a regular basis.

2. What about the quality of organic food?

Quality through the production process

To determine the quality of a foodstuff, the specific characteristics not only of the product but also of its production and processing must be gauged and proven. Yet, science is still in its infancy when it comes to the objective assessment of products from different production processes. However, in chemical-analytical terms, organic products frequently and demonstrably show better quality features than conventional produce. In several instances they boast equally good features and only in rare cases poorer quality features than conventional produce. 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 repeatedly confirmed by investigations carried out in the course of official food inspections. 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 are subject to 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. With regard to additives alone, only 54 of a total of over 320 are currently admitted, i.e. approximately only a sixth and these only in a restricted and product-related manner. In comparison to conventional foods, the number of substances which may be contained in the product is many times lower. Some producer associations limit the number of potential additives even further. It is important for consumers 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 possibility of ingesting additives.
Ingredients

Some studies show a higher content of vitamins, minerals, trace elements and secondary plants substances in crop products from organic farming. But there are also studies that show no significant difference between products from organic and 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 higher dry matter content of organic produce compared with conventional products. In some cases, the lower water content results in higher levels of value-enhancing ingredients in organic produce. Organic plant products often have a higher content of secondary plant substances which are considered valuable by nutritionists.

Welfare-oriented animal husbandry and nutrition 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. Organic eggs were found to have fewer residues of antibiotics and a higher egg yolk weight than eggs derived from conventionally kept and fed hens. And there has been no confirmed case of BSE in cattle born and reared on an organic farm.

Scientific studies

No scientific studies to determine whether the regular consumption of organic foods is generally more health-promoting than the consumption of conventional products have been conducted up to now. One principle is clear: food may not jeopardise health in general. A study conducted by the Max Rubner Institute came to the following conclusion: “There is no clear answer so far to the question whether buyers of organic food eat healthier food, in general. Therefore, 13,000 persons ranging in age from 18 to 80 years have been characterized in a thorough manner on the basis of the data provided by the national food consumption survey II. The results show that there is a connection between the purchase of organic foods and the dietary habits and lifestyle. 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 assessed as being better in health terms than that of non-buyers of organic food. When it comes to buying food, aspects of a healthy diet are equally important as altruistic criteria.” (see https://openagrar.bmel-forschung.de/receive/import_mods_00006061).

3. EU legislation governing organic farming


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. The food designations are not permitted to be misleading either.
**EU organic farming logo**

Pre-packaged foodstuffs from the EU must bear the European Union logo for organic/biological production (abbreviated to "EU organic farming logo") on the packaging. The use of the organic farming logo is optional for products imported from third countries. The code number of the competent control body and details about the origin of the agricultural raw materials of the products can be found next to the EU organic farming logo in the form of "EU agriculture", "Non-EU agriculture" and "EU/Non-EU agriculture". The abovementioned indication "EU" or "non-EU" may be replaced or supplemented by a country if all agricultural raw materials (at least 98 %) of which the product is composed have been produced in one country. For the abovementioned "EU" or "non-EU" indication, small quantities by weight of ingredients may be disregarded, provided that the total quantity of the disregarded ingredients does not exceed 2 % of the total quantity by weight of raw materials of agricultural origin.

The simultaneous use of state labels such as the German *Bio-Siegel* and the use of private logos such as those of the growers associations continue to be possible. More stringent standards set by associations or trademarks may be used for labelling and advertising.

**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 GMO, 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 organically grown; 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 of the requisite organic quality nor imported. This applies, for example, to specific exotic fruits or some spices and oils. Ingredients which have not been produced organically must be listed in Annex IX to Regulation EC No 889/2008 or, in duly substantiated cases, the competent authority may have granted an exception. Only with an organic percentage of at least 95% can the foodstuff be sold as an organic product and be labelled with the German Organic Production Logo "Bio-Siegel", 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 then be designated as "bio" or "eco". Any form of emphasis is not allowed.

**The EU rules contain the following key points:**

**Plant production:**

- conversion provisions concerning 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;
• using organically propagated seed and planting stock, in principle.

Animal husbandry:
• conversion provisions concerning farms and animals of non-organic origin;
• stockfarming is a land-related activity;
• a general ban on keeping livestock tethered;
• livestock must be fed organically produced feedstuffs;
• keeping animals healthy mainly by encouraging their natural immunological defence;
• safeguarding maximum consumer safety through 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 had been 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 minimizing the strain on the aquatic environment. Detailed Community legislation has been in effect since 1 July 2010. As in organic farming in general, welfare-oriented husbandry takes top priority here, too.

Wine:

The following shall apply to the labelling of organic wine:

Wine that has been produced according to the new provisions as of 1 August 2012 may be designated as organic/biological wine. In this case, the labelling with the EU organic logo, as in the case of all organic products, is mandatory. It is no longer permissible to use the previous indication "wine from organic production grapes" for this wine.

Wine stocks that were produced before 31 July 2012 and that meet the requirements of Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 or Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 may continue to be marketed with the indication "wine from organic production grapes" until the stocks have been exhausted. Insofar as it can be proven that the wine-making process used complies with the new Regulation (EU) No 203/2012, this wine may also be designated as organic wine coupled with the mandatory EU organic logo.

Third country imports:
Another area with comprehensive rules is the implementing provisions for imports from third countries (Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008). These rules are intended to ensure that agricultural products and foods
from non-EU countries may only be freely marketed as organic product in the EU if these countries have compliant or equivalent regulations regarding both production rules and inspection measures.

The European Commission has already inspected and listed some third countries with their production rules and control systems. By including these countries in Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 (list of recognised third countries or third country list), the Commission has recognised that the production and inspection rules for specific product categories in these countries are equivalent to EU legislation for organic farming. Only listed products of these countries may be imported into the EU without specific marketing authorisation and placed on the market with a reference to organic production methods. This is subject to the products having been inspected and certified by an approved inspection body.

In addition, the European Commission has recognised for the purpose of equivalence a number of control bodies operating in third countries that are responsible for carrying out controls in third countries and issuing certificates. It has included these recognised bodies and authorities in a list.

**Revision of EU legislation on organic production**

On 25 March 2014, the European Commission presented a proposal for a new Regulation on organic production and the labelling of organic products and a proposal for an action plan promoting the further development of organic farming in the EU. Apart from a structural reform of the Regulation, the European Commission also intended to fully revise and tighten the production rules, introduce specific limit values for inadmissible substances in organic production, in excess of which organic products may no longer be marketed as such and thus make the transition from a process-oriented regulation and control to an increasingly product-oriented view.

This legislative proposal also served to make the necessary adaptation of the provisions to the Lisbon Treaty.

The proposed regulation has been subject to great controversy both in the EU and at national level. It was mainly questioned whether the targets of the revision process to boost the growth of organic production and consumer confidence would be achieved by the proposed measures.

Under the different EU Council Presidencies, Germany got very actively involved in the legislative consultation process. In doing so, the Federal Government always pursued the goal of reaching a compromise proposal that builds on tried and tested foundations, whilst also providing answers to the specific new challenges of the globally booming organic sector since it regards the safeguarding of a clear, appropriate and reliable EU legal framework as a key instrument in efforts to promote organic agriculture.

The Organic Farming Regulation currently in place does not adequately regulate a number of issues and circumstances. This results in different interpretations and implementations in the EU Member States and consequently in unequal conditions of competition. The Federal Government aimed to rectify these shortcomings in a targeted manner in the revision process, also with a view to strengthening consumer protection.

At a meeting of the Special Committee on Agriculture on 20 November 2017, a qualified majority of Member States endorsed the compromise that had been achieved as a result of inter-institutional deliberations between the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on 28 June 2017. On 22 November 2017, the European Parliament’s Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development also came out in favour of this vote, thus paving the way for the conclusion of the legislative process.

From the perspective of the Federal Government it can be noted that the adopted compromise text provides, in many respects, good and important answers on shortcomings and open questions of the existing
EU organic farming legislation even though a different solution would have been desirable for some provisions. It was possible to retain many tried and tested rules that had been modified in part.

In addition, following the conclusion of the legislative process, what matters is to shape the implementing provisions and delegated legal acts in such a way as to ensure greater legal clarity, safety and harmonisation on a large number of questions.

We must, at EU level, achieve a system of legislation governing organic production at the end of the entire process that represents a sound and viable legal framework for organic farming in the European Union.

The formal conclusion of the legislative process is expected for mid-2018. According to the present compromise text the new rules shall apply with effect from 1 January 2021.

4. Organic Farming Act

The Organic Farming Act (ÖLG) pools specific executive functions in organic farming in Germany, whilst increasing the effective implementation of the EU legislation governing organic farming. The Organic Farming Act was promulgated in the Federal Law Gazette on 15 July 2002 and was adapted to the amended EU legislation governing organic farming by means of a new wording that took effect on 1 January 2009. A further amendment to the ÖLG entered into force on 1 December 2013. It serves to clarify and supplement the changes in EU legislation in the area of organic farming. These changes are concerned with the publication of records and certificates of organic companies that are subject to the organic inspection system. Furthermore, the legal amendment enables a Land authority competent for overseeing the activities of an inspection body for organic products, once it has initiated the withdrawal procedure, to take immediate action against the inspection body if serious violations are detected. The authority may temporarily prohibit the inspection body from carrying out the control activity in question in its Land without having to wait for the outcome of a withdrawal procedure conducted by the BLE. The provisions serve to strengthen the inspection system in organic farming.

The Organic Farming Act comprises the following regulatory areas:

Reporting duties

The Act stipulates that inspection bodies should always be required to notify the competent authority for the respective holding of established irregularities or violations as defined in the EU legislation governing organic farming. This shall also apply to cases where the queried produce originates from another EU Member State. As far as the information requirements in the case of other irregularities are concerned, the Laender (federal states) made their own separate arrangements within their competence for the monitoring of inspection bodies.

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 not only required to provide the competent authorities with the necessary information for these inspections, but are also obliged to inform each other.

Delegation of tasks from the Lander to the private inspection bodies

The Lander may delegate specific inspection tasks wholly or in part to the inspection bodies operating in the respective Land.
The Länder are also entitled to delegate sovereign tasks to private inspection bodies by transferring statutory powers.

Among other things, the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE) is responsible for the nationwide approval, and withdrawal of approval, of private, publicly approved inspection bodies.

**Compulsory checks in away-from-home consumption**

The rules governing the inspections of away-from-home consumption for compliance with organic farming standards have not been harmonised throughout the EU. However, the Organic Farming Act stipulates that community catering establishments, such as restaurants, staff canteens and large-scale catering establishments, are, if they commercially market organic products, subject to the inspection and labelling provisions of the EU legislation governing organic farming.

**Provisions regarding penalties and fines**

Violations of the EU legislation governing organic farming are liable to one-year 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 examined 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 18 private inspection bodies that have been publicly approved by the BLE and are currently operating in the market.

The private inspection bodies control and monitor compliance with the EU legislation governing organic farming on the spot. 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. All the same, 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 currently approved inspection bodies for organic products in Germany are listed at the website [https://www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen/oeko-kontrollstellen/](https://www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen/oeko-kontrollstellen/).

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 which areas, which buildings and which facilities are used in production. Holdings are obliged to precisely record and list 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.

Against the backdrop of the continuous growth of the organic market that Germany has experienced for many years, it is necessary to make lasting arrangements to ensure that the inspection system for organic farming functions in line with the legislation, in order to guarantee a high consumer protection level and fair competition between the inspection bodies on the basis of a sound inspection quality. The BMEL has therefore put the detailed criteria already established for the accreditation of private inspection bodies on a federally harmonised legal basis by adopting the Ordinance on the Accreditation of Inspection Bodies pursuant to the Act Concerning Organic Farming (ÖLG-Kontrollstellen-Zulassungsverordnung), which entered into force on 12 May 2012.

6. Organic farms in Germany

At the end of 2016, there were 27,132 organic-production holdings in Germany farming 1,251,320 hectares of land organically in accordance with the EU legislation governing organic farming. They account for 9.9% of all holdings, farming around 7.5% 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, the Verbund Ökohöfe and BIO.VEGAN.

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.

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 only 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 3: **Organic Farming in Germany**
Developments in organically farmed land and its percentage of total agricultural land since 1996

<table>
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* Due to a change in coverage in Thuringia not fully comparable with previous years
Table 4: Organic farming in Germany
Developments in the number of organic farms and their percentage of the total number of farms since 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of farms</th>
<th>Percentage of total number of farms</th>
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</table>

* Due to a change in coverage in Thuringia not fully comparable with previous years

7. Income situation

According to calculations by the Thünen Institute, organic test farms earned, on average, profits plus labour costs per man-work unit (MWU) of € 39,504 in the 2016/17 marketing year. Thus, their income situation has not changed significantly compared with the previous year. Comparable conventional farms earned, on average, in the 2016/17 marketing year, profits plus labour costs per MWU of € 28,700. Thus, the average income of the organic test farms exceeded the income of the conventional reference farms by around € 10,800 or 38 percent (see figure 1)

The accounting results of 434 organic farms and of 1,965 conventional reference farms were used for the 2016/17 marketing year (http://www.thuenen.de).
Fig. 1: Development of the income (profits plus labour costs per MWU) of organic farms and comparable conventional farms in Germany

Source: Thünen Institute for Farm Economics on the basis of the test farm survey, marketing years 1995/96-2016/17

8. Support for organic farming

Grounds for support

The production of organic products is very environmentally sound and sustainably conserves resources. 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 management 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 may not market products as organic produce 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, promoted the introduction of organic farming with public funds since 1989. Up to 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. In addition, animal husbandry 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 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) (Art. 29 of Regulation (EU) No
1305/2013\(^3\)), on Delegated Regulation (EU) No 807/2014\(^2\) Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 808/2014\(^3\) and on Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/669 as amended.\(^4\) The requirements laid down in these Regulations are relevant for the structuring of this support in the EU programming period from 2014 onwards. 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 the aid section on "market-adapted and 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.

The national funds are therefore co-financed at a rate of 60 : 40 by the federal government and the 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 305/2013).

4.5% of the direct payments under the first pillar have been redistributed to the second pillar of the CAP since 2015, i.e. approx. €226 to 231 million annually, opening up new financial scope for the Länder as of 2016. According to a decision adopted by the Conference of Agriculture Ministers of the Länder on 4 November 2013, the funds transferred from the first to the second pillar are to be used only for the promotion of sustainable agriculture, particularly for grassland sites, for grazing stock, for area-based agri-environmental and climate protection measures, for the strengthening of particularly welfare-oriented husbandry methods and animal welfare, for organic farming and for the compensatory allowance in naturally less-favoured regions. These funds do not have to be nationally co-financed (100% EU funds).

The grant recipients for the introduction and maintenance of organic farming shall be "active farmers" within the meaning of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013\(^5\).

Under the so-called 1\(^{st}\) Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, direct payments have been tied more strongly to specific environmental services as of 2015 and have thus been "greened" considerably. Organic farming is exempt from these greening provisions of the aforementioned EU Regulation since the requirements to be met by these farming practices go far beyond the provision of these environmental services.

The introduction and maintenance of organic farming are supported with public funds from the EU, the federal government and the Länder. Under the GAK 2018 framework plan, support under the above-mentioned promotion guidelines is structured as follows:

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\(^2\) Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 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 5: Promotion of organic farming methods under the GAK 2018-2021 compared to 2013-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of culture</th>
<th>Introduction Payments per hectare</th>
<th>Maintenance Payments per hectare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>as from 2015 *)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable growing</td>
<td>480 €</td>
<td>590 € (+23 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arable land</td>
<td>210 €</td>
<td>250 € (+19 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassland</td>
<td>210 €</td>
<td>250 € (+19 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land under permanent crops or nursery crops</td>
<td>900 €</td>
<td>950 € (+6 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) 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 and income foregone related to special management requirements. The payments were recalculated and raised in view of the changed price-cost ratios on the market (cf. Table 5).

As from 2015, support rates under the GAK amount to € 250 per hectare of arable land and grassland for holdings embarking on organic farming and € 210 per hectare for holdings that maintain organic farming. This corresponds to an increase of 19% (introduction) and 24% (maintenance) as compared with 2013. Holdings that participate in the control procedure under the EU legislation on organic farming can receive an additional € 50 per hectare, up to a maximum of € 600 per holding. The Länder may increase or lower the amounts listed in Table 5 by up to 30%.

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 decisive and can be accessed on https://www.oekolandbau.de/erzeuger/oekonomie/betriebswirtschaft/foerderung/.

GAK also promotes the 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 (https://www.bmel.de/DE/Landwirtschaft/Foerderung-Agrarsozialpolitik/GAK_Texte/Foerdergrundsaeetze.html#doc7886404bodyText3).

9.  Bio-Siegel (German organic production logo)

The Bio-Siegel constitutes an important step in the development of the organic market in Germany. The label may be used on a voluntary basis. The underlying standard set by the EU legislation governing organic farming as well as the waiving of further procedural steps such as the award or licensing procedures permit broad use of the label, even for products from other EU states and third countries. Community 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 23 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, an 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, e.g. the "Biozeichen" of Baden-Württemberg, Hesse and Rhön. The Eco-labelling Act was adapted to the amended EU legislation governing organic farming with effect from 1 January 2009.

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](mailto:bio-siegel@ble.de)). Since the announcement of the Bio-Siegel on 5 September 2001, 5,044 users of the label have notified the information centre of the labelling of 77,449 products (as of 30/12/2017). Businesses from the processing and trade sectors in particular use the Bio-Siegel. The Bio-Siegel establishes transparency and reliable guidance for consumers in the maze of trademarks in the organic sector.

The Bio-Siegel as 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.

10. Federal Organic Farming Scheme and other forms of sustainable agriculture (BÖLN)

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 Organic Farming Scheme 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 Scheme envisages support measures 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, data collection, and processing to trade, marketing and consumers.
Activities

Since the start of the programme, a total of around 1,110 research projects have been supported with a funding volume of some €1.55 million. In addition, more than 50 measures, including a knowledge transfer and advanced training programme with several hundred one-day and multi-day seminars for representatives of the entire value-added chain, were devised and implemented, while five support guidelines provided support for 1,240 stalls at trade fairs, 157 information and sales promotion projects and more than 570 holdings either in the lead-up to or during their conversion to organic farming.

The financial resources of BÖLN are also used to fund an ERA-NET (European Research Area Network) project. ERA-NET activities are designed to strengthen cooperation between national and regional research promotion institutions. Within ERA-NET’s CORE Organic (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming), transnational research projects on organic farming and organically produced foods are supported and coordinated. 24 partners from 21 European countries are now involved in the research network.

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

In 2006, in view of the market development that were becoming evident, the programme concentrated on central activities to strengthen the competitive position of German producers and processors.

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 respectively for 2007 until 2012. Since 2013, €17 million per year have been made available. Under the 2017 budget year, the title has been topped up by €3 million to €20 million.

Office

The Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food was 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) was set up there for this purpose.

11. "Organic Farming – Looking Forwards" strategy

Organic farming is a particularly resource-conserving and environmentally friendly type of farming geared towards the sustainability principle. The federal government therefore supports the extension of organic farming in Germany as a full partner of the general farming sector. Consumer demand is rising, as seen in the dynamic market development. German organic producers cannot fully meet this demand. To boost growth in the organic agri-food sector Federal Minister Christian Schmidt initiated the "Organic Farming – Looking Forwards" strategy in 2015.

Objective

The strategy objective 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 orientated around the key question of what can be done, in particular by policy makers at national level, to make it possible in the medium term to achieve the target of “20 % organic farming” that is
enshrined in the federal government’s sustainable development strategy. The principal focus is on creating an appropriate policy framework for the relevant economic operators. In addition, it provides an overview of the removal of barriers between organic and conventional methods of production, progressing from co-existence to interaction.

The process

The strategy was developed jointly with representatives of the organic food sector, involving the federal states and scientists. To sound out design options for stronger growth, 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 with 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 worthy of 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 forward-looking strategy. The Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, a departmental research institution of the BMEL, was commissioned to design and coordinate the workflow.

Core contents

There are five lines of action at the centre of the “Organic Farming – Looking Forward” strategy. They were identified as national core areas for stronger growth and they address core challenges of the organic sector:

1. designing a viable and coherent legislative framework;
2. facilitating access to organic farming;
3. fully utilizing and expanding the demand potential;
4. improving the productivity of organic farming systems; and
5. rewarding ecological contributions adequately.

The 24 action strategies that are assigned to the respective lines of action describe and specify the specific instruments and approaches for achieving these objectives. Depending on the identified weaknesses, the respective solution strategies have highly varying approaches for 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 responsibilities of the federal government. They thus range from the problem-oriented continued development of the 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.

Implementation of the measures

The implementation of the different action strategies requires greatly varying timelines and operative steps. The different action groups have drawn up recommendations for action in connection with developing the forward-looking strategy.

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6 Deutsche Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie, Neuaufgabe 2016, Seite 68
Some of those measures have already been implemented during the past months or they are already in the focus of political deliberations now. For instance, the BMEL has closely monitored the process for the amendment of the EC Organic Farming Regulation since late 2013. Special projects aimed at strengthening extension services and education were also taken up in the initial phase of the process for the development of a forward strategy. This also applies to research projects aimed at developing solutions for particularly relevant weaknesses, for instance in animal or plant breeding.

The BMEL, its subordinate authorities and its departmental facilities will take prompt action to initiate the steps required for the measures that have not yet been implemented.

The titles of the Federal Scheme for Organic Farming and Other Forms of Sustainable Agriculture (BÖLN) and the protein crop strategy will continue to be the pivotal financing instruments for the realisation of these projects under the forward-looking strategy. The BMEL is committed to increase the BÖLN funds to € 30 million per year and to maintain the resources dedicated to the protein crop strategy at the current level of € 6 million per year.

**Next steps**

When considering the five lines of action and the pertinent measures described in detail in part two of the strategy, account needs to be taken of the fact that the intended expansion of organic farming cannot be achieved by a one-off action programme in a couple of years. Therefore the "Organic Farming – Looking Forwards" strategy needs to be understood as a governance process aimed at the ongoing optimisation of the general conditions for the organic agri-food sector.

The milestones of the coming years have been summarised in a roadmap. For instance, it is planned to make an initial assessment of the current situation in 2019 and to draw up a progress report evaluating the implementation status of the individual measures in 2022. Following up on this, the BMEL intends to draw up an amended strategy for the period 2023 to 2030.

**12. Research**

The Institute for Organic Farming is, as part of the research concept, now one of 15 institutes affiliated to the Thünen Institute. It is located at the Tre nthor st site in Schleswig-Holstein. The institute’s tasks include subjects relating to organic farming and to the processing, safety and quality of organic products. A large number of the research institutes affiliated to the BMEL are also dealing with these subjects. The research is organised on an interdisciplinary basis and to this extent meaningfully interlinked with research activities related to the conventional agricultural and food industries.

Under the Federal Organic Farming Scheme and other forms of sustainable agriculture, part of the funds will be 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. The BMEL is pressing for tender offers for research projects, ERA-NET schemes, etc. to be instigated at the European level. The BMEL supports transnational research projects on organic farming via the ERA-NET CORE Organic Plus scheme.
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 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 and come with prize money of € 7,500\(^7\) per winner, i.e. up to € 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 by far the greatest demand for organic products in the EU and is second only to the USA at global level.

With a growth of approx. 5.9 % in 2017, the share of sales of organic foods in the total turnover of foods in Germany amounted to around € 10.04 billion (excluding away-from-home catering). According to preliminary estimates, this corresponds to a 5.1 % share in the food market. With € 9.48, this accounted for 5.0 % of the food market in 2016. Experts believe that organic farming still has considerable growth potential.

Organic production and regional products from welfare-oriented animal husbandry play an important role in agricultural policy. Organic farming is an element of Germany's national sustainability strategy. What is more, the organic products and transparent production processes truly reflect the wishes of many consumers.

Initiatives by economic stakeholders, especially in the marketing sector, are also needed to further increase sales of organic products.

In the final instance, the development of organic farming is up to the consumers. They are the ones who must be prepared to pay higher prices for organic produce and, in this way, to reward the special ecological contribution and quality features of organic farmers.

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\(^7\) de minimis aid in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 and Regulation (EU) No 1408/2013 of 18 December 2013
15. Links

- [www.bmel.de](http://www.bmel.de) → A strong agricultural sector → Sustainability and organic farming
- Central Internet portal: [www.oekolandbau.de](http://www.oekolandbau.de)
- Federal Organic Farming Competition: [www.wettbewerb-oekolandbau.de](http://www.wettbewerb-oekolandbau.de)
- “ECHT KUH-L!” – Nationwide school competition on sustainable food and agriculture: [www.echtkuh-l.de](http://www.echtkuh-l.de)
- Labelling of organic products with the Bio-Siegel: [www.bio-siegel.de](http://www.bio-siegel.de)
- Federal Organic Farming Scheme and other forms of sustainable agriculture: [www.bundesprogramm.de](http://www.bundesprogramm.de)
- Thünen Institute of Organic Farming, Trenthorst 32, 23847 Westerau: [www.ti.bund.de/ol](http://www.ti.bund.de/ol)
- Committee for Technology and Structures in Agriculture (KTBL), Bartningstraße 49, 64289 Darmstadt: [www.ktbl.de](http://www.ktbl.de) → Ökolandbau
- Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food, Deichmannsaue 29, 53179 Bonn: [www.ble.de](http://www.ble.de)
- Inspection authorities of the Länder: [https://www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen/zustaendige-behoerden-der-bundeslaender/](https://www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen/zustaendige-behoerden-der-bundeslaender/)
- Online directory of inspected organic farms in Germany: [http://www.oekokontrollstellen.de/suchebiounternehmen/SuchForm.php](http://www.oekokontrollstellen.de/suchebiounternehmen/SuchForm.php)
- Online directory of inspected organic farms: [www.bioC.info](http://www.bioC.info)
- Federal Information Centre on Agriculture: [www.ble.de/bzl](http://www.ble.de/bzl)
- AMI Agricultural Market Information Association mbH, Dreizehnmorgenweg 10, 53175 Bonn: [www ami-informiert.de](http://www ami-informiert.de)
- Organic monitoring programme run by the federal state of Baden-Württemberg: [www.oekomonitoring.cvuas.de/start.html](http://www.oekomonitoring.cvuas.de/start.html)
- CORE – Organic Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Farming: [www.coreorganic.org](http://www.coreorganic.org)
- Organic Eprints, the international archive of scientific publications on organic farming: [www.orgprints.org](http://www.orgprints.org)
- Information platform ORGANIC STANDARDS with different international standards for the production of organic products: [www.organic-standards.info/de/](http://www.organic-standards.info/de/)
- Foundation Ecology & Agriculture (SÖL), Weinstraße Süd 51, 67089 Bad Dürkheim: [www.soel.de](http://www.soel.de)
- Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL): [www.fibl.de](http://www.fibl.de)
IFOAM – Organics International, Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5, 53113 Bonn: www.ifoam.bio

Organic Food Industry Federation, Marienstraße 19-20, 10117 Berlin: www.boelw.de

Bioland-Verband für organischen Landbau 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

BIO VEG AN Biozyklisch-Veganer Anbau e.V., Sonnenweg 1, 76870 Kandel: www.biozyklisch-vegan.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

Gäa 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

Verbund Ökohöfe Nordost e.V., Schwaneberg 60A, 17291 Randowtal: www.verbund-oekohoefe-nordost.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: http://www.boelw.de/presse/pm/praxishandbuch-bioprodukte-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
**Table 1**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal state (Land)</th>
<th>UAA (ha)</th>
<th>Fams 1)</th>
<th>Organically farmed land (organic area) (ha)</th>
<th>Total of producing farms</th>
<th>Share of the organic area in the UAA of the Land (%) 2)</th>
<th>Share of the Land's organic area in the total German organic area (%)</th>
<th>Share of the organic farms in the farms of the Land (%) 2)</th>
<th>Share of the Land's organic farms in the organic farms in Germany (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>1,415,980</td>
<td>40,589</td>
<td>151,111</td>
<td>7,619</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td>3,125,366</td>
<td>90,162</td>
<td>285,243</td>
<td>8,539</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
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<td>Brandenburg</td>
<td>1,315,469</td>
<td>5,318</td>
<td>145,812</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
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<td>16,259</td>
<td>96,673</td>
<td>1,982</td>
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<td>7.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
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<td>1,347,590</td>
<td>4,903</td>
<td>132,203</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
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<td>Schleswig-Holstein</td>
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<td>49,641</td>
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<td>Thuringia</td>
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<td>3,607</td>
<td>37,449</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>City-states in total&lt;sup&gt;3)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>24,534</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>3,135</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>12.4</td>
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<td><strong>Sum</strong></td>
<td>16,658,930</td>
<td>275,392</td>
<td><strong>1,251,320</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,132</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
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</table>

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

1) Starting with the year under review 2010, the lower limits of scope were raised in agricultural statistics.
2) Including farms with less than 5 ha UAA
3) Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg
Organic farms and organically farmed land in Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organically farmed area (ha)</th>
<th>Total number of organic farms</th>
<th>Share of organically farmed area in the UAA in Germany (%)</th>
<th>Share of the organic farms in Germany (%)</th>
<th>of UAA per farm (ha)</th>
<th>Support funds in million €</th>
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