



Federal Ministry
of Food
and Agriculture

Organic Farming in Germany

As of: February 2020



A background image showing a woman with long brown hair looking down at something in a market stall. The stall has various items on display, and the lighting is warm and slightly blurred.

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Dear Readers,



In the German Sustainable Development Strategy and the coalition agreement, the Federal Government agreed to expand organic farming in Germany, with the goal of having 20 percent of agricultural land farmed organically by 2030. This is ambitious, but with the right framework it should be possible for farmers to achieve this goal.

Organic products are also popular with consumers: the 2019 Nutrition Report, a survey commissioned by my ministry, showed that every second person looks out for the “Bio-Siegel”, the state organic label, when shopping. The turnover for organic products has almost doubled over the last ten years. The foundation for a positive development of the sector was laid with the “Organic Farming – Looking Forwards” Strategy (Zukunftsstrategie ökologischer Landbau – ZöL) in 2017 – together with representatives of the organic food sector, the Federal Laender and the academic community. As it is only together that we will be able to ensure that we establish a suitable framework for a positive development of the sector.

We are investing heavily to achieve this task. The most important financing tool is the Federal Scheme for Organic

ic Farming and Other Forms of Sustainable Agriculture (Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau und andere Formen nachhaltiger Landwirtschaft – BÖLN), which was launched in 2002. We have funded over 1,100 research projects – with total funds amounting to 170 million euros – via the BÖLN alone.

This brochure is designed to give you an overview of organic farming in Germany and the support provided by my ministry. I hope you find it an interesting read.

With kind regards,

Julia Klöckner
Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture

This brochure gives a brief overview of organic farming in Germany. It gives an introduction to the statutory rules, 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. 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 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;
- 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 less-susceptible varieties in suitable crop rotations, using beneficial species and 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;
- preservation of soil fertility through intensive humus management;
- varied and long crop rotations with many crop rotation links and intermediate crops;
- no application of synthetically produced chemical growth regulators;
- limited stocking density based strictly on the area of land available;
- where possible feeding of animals on farm-grown feed, few purchased feed;
- largely dispensing with the use of antibiotics.

Organic farming is specifically geared to sustainability.

It achieves a particularly high level of conservation of 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. In the fields and meadows of organic farmers there is usually more biomass and increased microbial activity than in conventional farming. Natural soil fertility also increases. Losses of topsoil caused by erosion are largely avoided.



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 farmed land than there are on conventionally farmed land.



Water conservation

Organic farming generally 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 related to the area of land available, normally no more nutrients accrue from manure and slurry than can be applied to plants on the farm's own land 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. 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, it is necessary to measure and calculate the specific characteristics not only of the product 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 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, significantly less than the 320 additives possible under food law provisions are currently admitted, and these only to a limited degree and in respect of specific products. In comparison with conventional foods, the number of substances which may be contained in the 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 fruit 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.

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.



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 principle is clear: food must 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 generally eat healthier food. Therefore, 13,000 people of between 18 and 80 years of age have been characterized 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 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 classified as healthier than that of those who do not buy organic food. When it comes to buying food, factors relating to a healthy diet are just as important as altruistic criteria." <https://orgprints.org/18055/>

3. EU legislation governing organic farming



The EU legislation governing organic farming, namely “Council Regulation No 834/2007/EC of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation No 2092/91/EEC and its detailed implementing rules (Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008)”, 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 risk-based. 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. In addition, a Regulation laying down detailed rules for implementing imports of organic products from third countries (non-EU countries) has been adopted (Commission Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008).

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 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 above-mentioned indication “EU” or “non-EU” may be replaced or supplemented by a country if all agricultural raw materials (at least 98 %) that went to make the product have been produced in one country. For the above-mentioned “EU” or “non-EU” indication, small quantities of ingredients may be disregarded, provided that the total disregarded ingredients do 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 are still possible. It is possible to use stricter association or trademark labels and to solicit support for these.

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 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. 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 organic (in German: "bio" or "öko"). 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.

Animal husbandry:

- conversion provisions concerning farms and animals of non-organic origin;
- stockfarming relates to the area of land available;
- a general ban on keeping livestock tethered;
- livestock must be fed organically produced feedstuffs;
- keeping animals 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 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 implementing Commission regulation (EU) No 203/2012 of 8 March 2012 has applied since 1 August 2012. It supplements Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 by rules governing organic wine-making. The Regulation, among other things, lays down rules for specific approved organic wine-making practices.

The following applies to the labelling of organic wine:

Wine that has been produced since 1 August 2012 according to the new provisions may be designated as organic 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 products 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.

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

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

The publication of the new EU Basic Regulation on organic farming (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) in the Official Journal of the European Union on 14 June 2018 concluded the legislative process. The new EU Basic Regulation on organic farming entered into force 3 days after its publication and will apply from 1 January 2021. It will at that time replace the currently valid Basic Regulation and its implementing provisions.

This does not, however, conclude the process of revising the EU legal framework for organic production. Following the adoption of the new Basic Regulation, what now matters is to shape the implementing provisions and delegated legal acts to ensure greater legal clarity, safety and harmonisation. The drafting and adoption of these provisions that are to follow is to be completed in good time prior to the new EU Basic Regulation on organic farming becoming valid. To this end, the European Commission is in close contact with the relevant business circles, Member States of the European Union and the European Parliament.

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.



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. 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, if it ascertains serious violations, to take immediate action against the inspection body once it has initiated the withdrawal procedure. 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 the withdrawal procedure which is determined 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, whenever they ascertain in holdings irregularities or violations as defined in the EU legislation governing organic farming, be required to notify the authority competent for the respective holding. This also applies 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 Länder (federal states) have 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 Länder to the private inspection bodies

The Länder 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 authorisation, and withdrawal of authorisation, 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 17 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. 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/>.



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, which buildings and which 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.

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 2018, there were 31,713 organic-production holdings in Germany farming 1,521,314 hectares of land organically in accordance with the EU legislation governing organic farming. They account for 12.0 % of all holdings, farming around 9.1 % 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), Gäa, 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 2018

Federal state (Land)	UAA (ha)	Farms ¹⁾	Organically farmed land (organic area) (ha)	Total of producing farms
Baden-Württemberg	1,413,400	39,610	197,751	9,290
Bavaria	3,099,900	86,480	342,517	9,871
Brandenburg	1,323,400	5,220	162,653	883
Hesse	770,900	15,860	113,368	2,245
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	1,346,400	4,790	157,976	939
Lower Saxony	2,601,300	35,850	107,694	1,953
North Rhine-Westphalia	1,449,400	31,030	85,320	2,161
Rhineland-Palatinate	706,900	16,720	74,064	1,574
Saarland	74,900	1,140	12,324	251
Saxony	900,900	6,340	61,900	750
Saxony-Anhalt	1,169,000	4,220	93,973	566
Schleswig-Holstein	987,400	12,370	61,365	715
Thuringia	776,800	3,430	46,637	387
City-states in total ³⁾	24,500	830	3,772	128
Sum	16,645,100	263,860 ⁴⁾	1,521,314	31,713

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

1) For the reference year 2010 and subsequent years the lower limits for coverage by agricultural statistics were raised. Therefore the entire population of farms cannot be compared to 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

4) Rounding difference

Sources: reports by the inspection bodies in accordance with REG (EC) 834/2007 in conjunction with REG (EC) 889/2008 as of 31.12.2018; Federal Statistical Office as of 30.11.2018

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.

Federal state (Land)	Share of the organic area in the UAA of the Land (%) ²⁾	Share of the Land's organic area in the total German organic area (%)	Share of the organic farms in the farms of the Land (%) ²⁾	Share of the Land's organic farms in the organic farms in Germany (%)
Baden-Württemberg	14.0	13.0	23.5	29.3
Bavaria	11.0	22.5	11.4	31.1
Brandenburg	12.3	10.7	16.9	2.8
Hesse	14.7	7.5	14.2	7.1
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	11.7	10.4	19.65	3.0
Lower Saxony	4.1	7.1	5.4	6.2
North Rhine-Westphalia	5.9	5.6	7.0	6.8
Rhineland-Palatinate	10.5	4.9	9.4	5.0
Saarland	16.50	0.8	22.0	0.8
Saxony	6.9	4.1	11.8	2.4
Saxony-Anhalt	8.0	6.2	13.4	1.8
Schleswig-Holstein	6.2	4.0	5.8	2.3
Thuringia	6.0	3.1	11.3	1.2
City-states in total ³⁾	15.4	0.2	15.4	0.4
Sum	9.1	100.0	11.0	100.0

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

1) For the reference year 2010 and subsequent years the lower limits for coverage by agricultural statistics were raised. Therefore the entire population of farms cannot be compared to 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 31.12.2018; Federal Statistical Office as of 30.11.2018

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 2: Organic farms and organically farmed land in Germany

Year	Organically farmed area (ha)	Total number of organic farms	Share of organically farmed area in the UAA in Germany (%)	Share of the organic farms in Germany (%)	Ø of UAA per farm (ha)	Support funds in million €
1994	272,139	5,866	1.6	1.0	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	65.431
1998	416,518	9,213	2.4	1.7	45.2	38.908
1999	452,327	10,425	2.6	2.2	43.4	61.207
2000	546,023	12,740	3.2	2.9	42.9	61.154
2001	634,998	14,702	3.7	3.3	43.2	80.123
2002	696,978	15,626	4.1	3.6	44.6	98.437
2003 ^{*)}	734,027	16,475	4.3	3.9	44.6	109.576
2004	767,891	16,603	4.5	4.1	46.3	119.733
2005	807,406	17,020	4.7	4.3	47.4	129.092
2006	825,538	17,557	4.9	4.6	47.0	128.973
2007	865,336	18,703	5.1	5.0	46.3	119.398
2008	907,786	19,813	5.4	5.3	45.8	116.902
2009	947,115	21,047	5.6	5.7	45.0	143.583
2010	990,702	21,942	5.9	7.3	45.2	143.978
2011	1,015,626	22,506	6.1	7.5	45.1	148.161
2012	1,034,355	23,032	6.2	7.7	44.9	155.325
2013	1,044,955	23,271	6.3	8.2	44.9	160.704
2014	1,047,633	23,398	6.3	8.2	44.8	158.513
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	1,521,314	31,713	9.1	12.0	48.0	

^{*)} Not completely comparable with previous years due to a change in the recording method in Thuringia

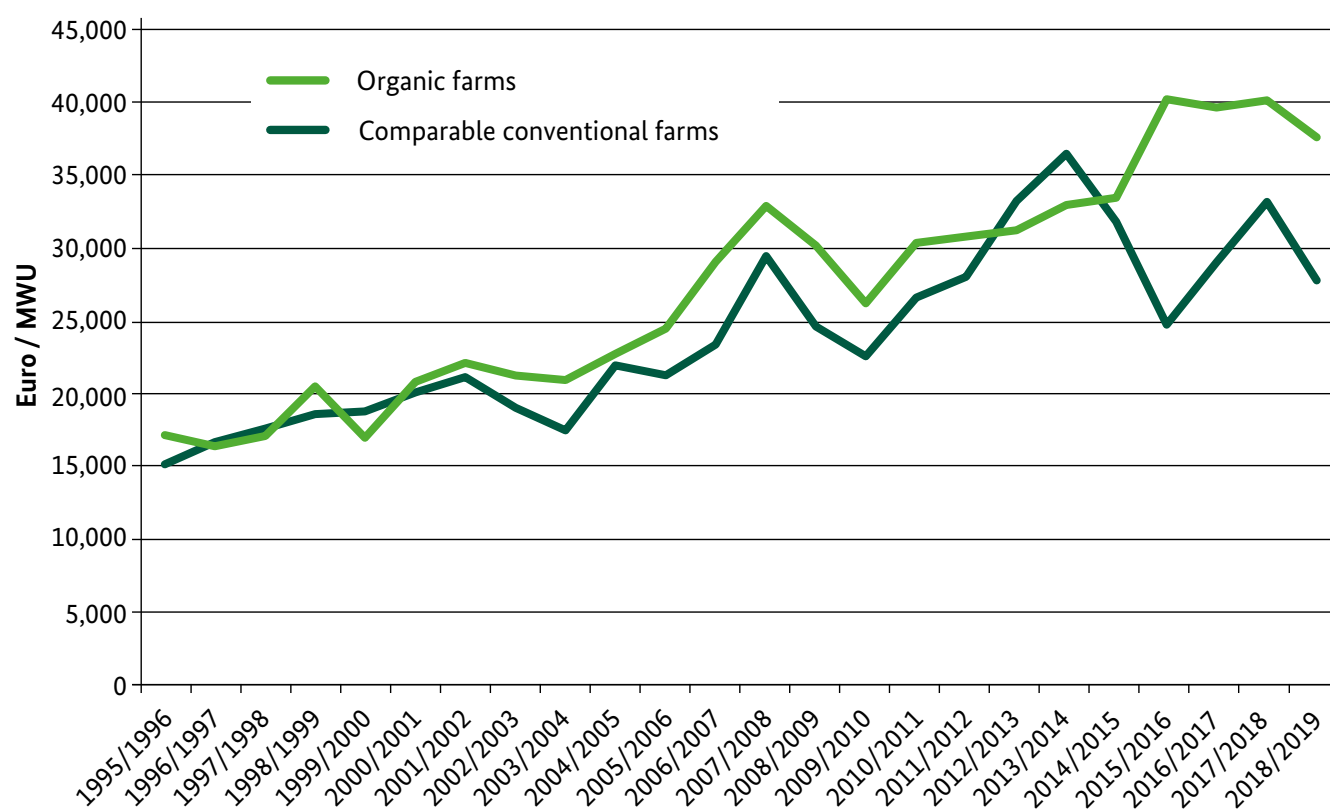
7. Income situation

According to calculations by the Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, organic test farms earned, on average, profits plus labour costs per man-work unit (MWU) of € 37,447 in the 2018/19 marketing year. As compared with the previous year, incomes declined by 6 %. Comparable conventional farms earned, on average, in the 2018/19 marketing year, profits plus labour costs per MWU of € 27,453 and hence had to accept even higher income

losses. The average income of the organic test farms exceeded the income of the conventional reference farms by around € 10,000 or 36 % (see Figure 1).

The accounting results of 456 organic farms and of 2,026 conventional reference farms were used for the 2018/19 marketing year (<http://www.thuenen.de>).

Figure 1: Development of incomes (profits plus labour costs per MWU) of organic farms and Comparable conventional farms in Germany



Source: Thünen Institute based on FADN data (Yr. 1995/96 – 2018/19)

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 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) 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 aid section 4 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 1st pillar have been redistributed to the 2nd pillar of the CAP since 2015, i.e. approx. € 226 to 231 million annually, opening up new financial scope for the Länder since 2016. For the claim year 2020, it is planned to redistribute funds in the amount of 6% to the 2nd pillar. 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).

The grant recipients for the introduction and maintenance of organic farming must be “active farmers” within the meaning of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013⁵.

Under the so-called 1st 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:

-
- 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 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
 - 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 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.
 - 5 Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing rules for direct payments to farmers under support schemes within the framework of the common agricultural policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 637/2008 and Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009

Table 3: Promotion of organic farming methods under the GAK 2018-2021 compared to 2013-2016

Type of culture	Introduction Payments per hectare		Maintenance Payments per hectare	
	2013	since 2015 ^{*)}	2013	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 and income foregone due to special management requirements.

Since 2015, support rates under the GAK have amounted 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://oekolandbau.de/landwirtschaft/umstellung/ablauf-und-planung/foerdermittel/#c24821>

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/GAK-Rahmenplan.html

9. The “Organic Farming – Looking Forwards” Strategy

Zukunftsstrategie
ökologischer Landbau 

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, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture initiated the “Organic Farming – Looking Forwards” strategy 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 orientated around the key question of what can be done 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.⁶ 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 coexistence to interaction.

The process

The strategy was developed jointly with representatives of the organic food sector, with the federal states and with 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.

⁶ German Sustainability Strategy, 2016 version, page 68

Core contents

There are five lines of action at the centre of the “Organic Farming – Looking Forwards” 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*



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.



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 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).



Since the announcement of the Bio-Siegel on 5 September 2001, 5,459 users of the label have notified the information centre of the labelling of 81,537 products (as of 30/11/2019).

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 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 Scheme provides for 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, approx. 1,140 research projects have been supported with a funding volume of some € 170 million. In addition, more than 50 measures, including a knowledge transfer and advanced training programme with several hundred seminars for representatives of the entire value-added chain, were devised and implemented, while five support guidelines provided support for 2,371 companies at trade fairs, 169 information and sales promotion projects on organic farming and more than 630 holdings either in the lead-up to or during their conversion to organic farming (as of 1.11.2019). New in 2019

are two guidelines aimed at strengthening organic value chains and promoting the relevant information.

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

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

The financial resources of BÖLN are also used to fund an ERA-NET (European Research Area Network). ERA-NET activities are designed to strengthen cooperation between national and regional research promotion institutions in the EU. Within ERA-NET’s CORE Organic (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems), transnational research projects on organic farming and organically produced foods are supported and coordinated. The CORE Organic ERA Net was established in 2004 under the 6th framework programme for research. 25 partners from 19 European countries are now involved in the research support network. A total of 45 transnational research projects have

been realized thus far, of which 34 involved German research institutions. On 2 September 2019, a joint announcement with ERA-NET SUSFOOD2 (SUStainable FOOD production and consumption) on sustainable organic food systems was published. The budget of the 21 funding partners from 18 countries/regions for this call amounts to approx. 9.5 million euros. The launch of the projects is scheduled for 2020.

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 was topped up by € 3 million to € 20 million for 2018 and 2019 by a further € 10 million to € 30 million per year.

Office

The Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food 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, as part of the research concept, now one of 15 institutes affiliated to the Thünen Institute. It is located at the Trenthorst site in Schleswig-Holstein.

The institute's tasks include subjects relating to organic farming and to 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 interlinked with research activities related to the conventional agricultural and food industries.

Under the Federal Scheme, a significant 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 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 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 and come with prize money of € 7,500⁷ 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.



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

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 11.97 billion € in 2019, an increase of 9.7 %. Experts believe that organic farming still has considerable growth potential.



15. Links

- www.bmel.de → starke Landwirtschaft → Nachhaltigkeit, Klimaschutz & Biolandbau → Biologischer Landbau
- Central Internet portal: www.oekolandbau.de
- Federal Organic Farming Competition: www.wettbewerb-oekolandbau.de
- “ECHT KUH-L!” – 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 → Ökolandbau
- Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (BLE), Deichmannsaue 29, 53179 Bonn: www.ble.de
- Inspection authorities of the Länder:
www.oekolandbau.de/service/adressen/zustaendige-behoerden-der-bundeslaender/
- 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 federal state of Baden-Württemberg:
www.oekomonitoring.cvuas.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
- Information platform ORGANIC STANDARDS with different international standards for the production of organic products: www.organic-standards.info/de/

- 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-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
- 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, D-53123 Bonn

AS OF

February 2020

DESIGN

design.idee, Büro für Gestaltung, Erfurt

PRINTED BY

BMEL, Bonn

PHOTOGRAPHS

Coverpage 1+ Page 32: Miredi/StockAdobe.com; Page 2: Boggy/StockAdobe.com; Page 3: Steffen Kugler/Bundesregierung; Page 5: Pixelbliss/StockAdobe.com; Page 6: M.Dörr & M.Frommherz/StockAdobe.com; Page 7: Lunghammer/StockAdobe.com; Page 8: Robert Kneschke/StockAdobe.com; Page 10: goodluz/StockAdobe.com; Page 13: goodluz/StockAdobe.com; Page 18: alexeg84/StockAdobe.com; Page 21: Henry Schmitt/StockAdobe.com; Page 22: Hubertus Blume/Stock-Adobe.com; Page 23: Schmutzler-Schaub/StockAdobe.com; Page 24: Patrick Daxenbichler/StockAdobe.com; Page 25: Gerhard Seybert/StockAdobe.com; Page 26: LEDOMSTOCK/StockAdobe.com; Page 27: BMEL/Ruthe Zuntz; Page 28: Jürgen Fälchle/StockAdobe.com

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