

Procedure file

Basic information			
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2021/2239(INI)	Procedure completed	
The EU Action plan on Organic Agriculture			
Subject 3.10.09.04 Organic farming			

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development		22/06/2021
		 SCHMIEDTBAUER Simone	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 ANDRIEU Eric	
		 ALIEVA-VELI Atidzhe	
		 GRUFFAT Claude	
		 BIZZOTTO Mara	
		 VRECIONOVÁ Veronika	
		 HAZEKAMP Anja	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Agriculture and Rural Development	WOJCIECHOWSKI Janusz	

Key events			
16/12/2021	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
31/03/2022	Vote in committee		
11/04/2022	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0126/2022	Summary
02/05/2022	Debate in Parliament		
03/05/2022	Results of vote in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2021/2239(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/9/07684

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report	PE700.500	01/12/2021	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee	PE700.717	26/01/2022	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A9-0126/2022	11/04/2022	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T9-0136/2022	03/05/2022	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2022)413	25/07/2022	EC	

The EU Action plan on Organic Agriculture

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted an own-initiative report by Simone SCHMIEDTBauer (EPP, AT) on an EU action plan for organic agriculture.

In 2019, the EUs total agricultural area under organic farming grew to 13.8 million hectares. It currently accounts for 8.5 % of the EUs total utilised agricultural area and the value of the EUs organic market more than doubled between 2010 and 2019. The retail sales of organic products increased from EUR 18 billion to EUR 41 billion in the period 2009-2019.

The Commission communication on an action plan for the development of organic production (organic action plan, OAP) emphasises that the Green Deal, and the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies under its umbrella, is the key to managing the transition towards a more sustainable food system, in particular strengthening farmers efforts to protect the environment, preserve biodiversity and tackle climate change. According to the report, the key role in attaining this objective is played by agriculture in general, and organic agriculture in particular.

Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products, which will apply from 1 January 2022, aims to increase consumers trust in organic products through more stringent controls and rules for imports.

General comments

Members welcomed the Commission communication on an action plan for the development of organic production, the objective of increasing the EUs agricultural area under organic farming by 2030 through the development of supply and demand, and the Commissions recognition of organic farming as one of the main components on the EUs path towards more sustainable food systems. They considered that the development of organic farming, which delivers many positive externalities and benefits for climate change mitigation, biodiversity and soil protection, and will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies.

The committee is of the opinion that legislation and the OAPs must provide sufficient room for flexibility to take into account the differences in the nature and conditions of organic agriculture in the Member States. It urged the Commission to pay particular attention to supporting the Member States which are lagging behind. Furthermore, there is also a need to remove excessive administrative burdens.

The report stressed that the environmental benefits of organic farming should not only be supported by consumers of organic products willing to pay a higher price, but the CAP budget should also properly reward organic farmers for the specific public goods that they deliver through the protection of the environment and of natural resources.

According to Members, for an EU action plan to succeed, it must stimulate and mobilise the Member States, as well as regional and local authorities. Member States are encouraged to establish their own national strategies for organic farming and to develop their own national and/or regional OAPs, in coordination with the National Strategic Plans.

Stimulating demand and ensuring consumer trust

Members support the Commission in further promoting and sharing information about the EU organic logo among consumers, including through school schemes, which should give a larger share to organic products when the school schemes are revised, as well as in other

institutions such as nursing homes. They expressed concern about misleading labels, packaging and advertising that makes it difficult for consumers to distinguish conventional products from organic products. According to the report, frequent independent controls are the basis for consumers trust in organic products and they called on the Member States to communicate clearly on the EU organic logo.

The report highlighted the importance of improving transparency in the organic food supply chain and of better traceability in all production and distribution processes in line with the demands from European consumers to have more information on the origin and production methods of the foodstuffs they consume.

Incentives and reinforcing the entire value chain

Members consider that, in order to fulfil the ambitions of the National Strategic Plans, an adequate CAP budget, as well as compatibility with other European funds or programmes, is essential to create incentives to encourage farmers to convert to and maintain organic farming practices, through adequately resourced rural development measures or financially attractive eco-schemes, or a combination of the two.

The report noted the potential of short, local and seasonal, and smart food supply chains and direct marketing opportunities, including farmers markets, for organic producers and rural economies to deliver environmental and animal welfare benefits, while also securing incomes, preserving and creating employment, ensuring the vitality of rural areas and bridging the gap between EU producers and consumers. Member States should allocate sufficient resources to investments easing the development of short food chains, such as through increasing the number of mobile slaughterhouses or on-farm processing facilities.

Stressing that innovative digital tools have the potential to significantly increase transparency and traceability, thereby combating fraud and illegal production methods, as well as improving consumer confidence, Members encouraged the Commission to ensure greater deployment of digital technologies, such as precision farming and blockchain in organic farming.

Improving sustainability

Members stressed the need for research and innovation to encourage the conversion to organic agriculture and to further develop robust farming systems and increase tolerance to drought, pests and disease. They encouraged a science-based approach regarding soil fertility and the need to develop, accept and incentivise innovations in novel plant nutrient sources in organic farming.

The Commission is called on to ensure that sufficient financial resources are allocated to research into organic seeds and animal breeding.

Lastly, the report called on the Commission to conduct comprehensive studies and analyses of the impact that an increase in organic farming would have in terms of both climate change and food security in the European Union.

The EU Action plan on Organic Agriculture

The European Parliament adopted by 611 votes to 14, with 5 abstentions, a resolution on an EU action plan for organic agriculture.

In 2019, the EUs total agricultural area under organic farming grew to 13.8 million hectares. It currently accounts for 8.5 % of the EUs total utilised agricultural area and the value of the EUs organic market more than doubled between 2010 and 2019. The retail sales of organic products increased from EUR 18 billion to EUR 41 billion in the period 2009-2019.

General comments

Parliament welcomed the Commission communication on an action plan for the development of organic production, the objective of increasing the EUs agricultural area under organic farming by 2030 through the development of supply and demand, and the Commissions recognition of organic farming as one of the main components on the EUs path towards more sustainable food systems. It considered that the development of organic farming, which delivers many positive externalities and benefits for climate change mitigation, biodiversity and soil protection, and will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies.

Parliament is of the opinion that legislation and the OAPs must provide sufficient room for flexibility to take into account the differences in the nature and conditions of organic agriculture in the Member States. It urged the Commission to pay particular attention to supporting the

Member States which are lagging behind. The measures and instruments proposed in this respect should be based on thorough analyses and impact assessments.

In addition, the CAP budget should also properly reward organic farmers for the specific public goods that they deliver through the protection of the environment and of natural resources.

According to Members, for an EU action plan to succeed, it must stimulate and mobilise the Member States, as well as regional and local authorities. Member States are encouraged to establish their own national strategies for organic farming and to develop their own national and/or regional OAPs, in coordination with the National Strategic Plans. All stakeholders should be involved in a consultative process in the design and implementation of National Strategic Plans.

Organic production offers better economic returns to farmers but often involves higher production costs. Higher consumer prices may be a barrier to expansion but are currently necessary to support the organic sector. In this context, the resolution stressed the need to address the issue of affordability and accessibility of organic products.

Stimulating demand and ensuring consumer trust

Parliament supported the Commission in further promoting and sharing information about the EU organic logo among consumers, including through school schemes promoting the consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk, as well as in other institutions such as nursing homes. It also supports the promotion of local organic logos which exist in several Member States and offer the same guarantees as the EU organic logo.

Members expressed concern about misleading labels, packaging and advertising that makes it difficult for consumers to distinguish conventional products from organic products. They stated that frequent independent controls are the basis for consumers trust in organic products. They await the Commissions future initiatives aimed at better guiding consumers in their choice of food through labelling, promotion and information campaigns, based on sound, independent and operational scientific foundations.

The resolution highlighted the importance of improving transparency in the organic food supply chain and of better traceability in all production

and distribution processes in line with the demands from European consumers to have more information on the origin and production methods of the foodstuffs they consume.

Stressing the role of local, regional and national authorities in raising public awareness of all types of sustainable farming methods, Members suggested promoting farmers' markets at local and regional level to bridge the gap between producers and consumers.

Members also believe that positive and trade promoting actions are needed to further promote EU organic products at international level.

Incentives and reinforcing the entire value chain

Members considered that, in order to fulfil the ambitions of the National Strategic Plans, an adequate CAP budget, as well as compatibility with other European funds or programmes, is essential to create incentives to encourage farmers to convert to and maintain organic farming practices.

Noting the potential of short, local, seasonal and smart food supply chains, Parliament called on Member States to allocate sufficient resources to investments that facilitate the development of short food supply chains, for example by increasing the number of mobile slaughterhouses or on-farm processing facilities.

Stressing the need for clear contractual conditions and fair recognition of the work of organic farmers, Members recommended promoting tools such as supply chain contracts.

The Commission is urged to ensure greater deployment of digital technologies, such as precision farming and blockchain in organic farming to combat fraud and illegal production methods.

Improving sustainability

Members stressed the need for research and innovation to encourage the conversion to organic agriculture and to further develop robust farming systems and increase tolerance to drought, pests and disease. They encouraged a science-based approach regarding soil fertility and the need to develop, accept and incentivise innovations in novel plant nutrient sources in organic farming.

The Commission is called on to ensure that sufficient financial resources are allocated to research into organic seeds and animal breeding.

Lastly, the resolution called on the Commission to conduct comprehensive studies and analyses of the impact that an increase in organic farming would have in terms of both climate change and food security in the European Union.