

EU organic policy supports agro-ecology's expansion

Sustainable, ecological approaches to European farming, the heart of the European Green Deal, are needed to safeguard food supplies for EU citizens and protect the long-term livelihoods of rural communities. The emergence of more support for organic systems as a form of agro-ecological production can help address these policy challenges by achieving sustainable agricultural and food systems for Europe.



Agro-ecological approaches to food production and land management are acknowledged for their sustainability contributions by the **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations as well as by the EU's **Farm to Fork Strategy**. Agro-ecological approaches can be financed through the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2023-2027**. Organic production methods form a core component of the EU's **agro-ecological focus** on smart, evidence-based, and resilient farming systems which deliver sufficient, safe, nutritious and affordable food, while respecting planetary boundaries – including climate and nitrogen goals - and rewarding farmers better by higher prices for their products and consumer confidence by means of a recognizable logo.



The Action plan aims to boost the amount of agricultural land **certified as organic** in terms of "best environmental and climate action practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources and the application of high animal welfare standards and high production standards in line with the demand of a growing number of consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes." As such, the Action plan has the potential to help make real contributions that advance **European ambitions for agro-ecology**, and it can achieve this using a suite of **23 specific actions** supporting better **production, sustainability, and consumption** of organics.



Organic farming and agro-ecology share many complimentary common goals, practices and approaches. **IFOAM Organics Europe**, for instance, have **credited agro-ecology** as offering "inspiration for the organic movement to remain in control of its development" and highlighted how "organic farming may be the best chance for further development of agro-ecology in Europe." EU Member States' new CAP Strategic Plans include significant opportunities for funding organic farming, thereby promoting agro-ecology through the **EU's main organic farming policy tool** – the **Action plan for organic production in the EU**.

Axes of the EU Organic Action Plan

Axis 1

Stimulating demand and ensuring consumer trust

Increasing the consumption of organic products and strengthening consumers' trust in them are vital to encourage farmers practicing agro-ecology to convert to organics.

Actions here have been designed to involve:

- increasing consumer awareness via the EU organic logo;
- encouraging public and private procurement, including organic food in schools and canteens;
- fostering consumer confidence, such as improved traceability and tackling food fraud.

Axis 2

Stimulating conversion and reinforcing the entire value chain

In 2019, some 8.5% of EU agricultural land was farmed organically; the aim is 25% by 2030.

CAP-funded actions nurturing agro-ecological expansion through higher levels of organic coverage can extend across supply chains and comprise:

- conversion and investment aid;
- networking of best practices;
- improved market analysis;
- better food chain organisation, cooperation, and efficiency;
- improved animal nutrition.

Axis 3

Organics leading by example: improving the contribution of organic farming to sustainability

Nature conservation and climate action are often major agro-ecological advantages of organic farming. These stem from less agri-pollution and more green infrastructure or ecosystem services.

These types of agro-ecological actions can:

- make more efficient use of resources and increase yields while reducing farming's eco footprint and enhancing biodiversity;
- developing alternative plant protection products and methods;
- reinforcing animal welfare.

Development of agro-ecological practice throughout Europe through its organic sector can be further assisted by upskilling and re-skilling of Member States' agri-food workforces. The [European Pact for Skills](#) is a prominent and strategic policy vehicle that can be harnessed and harvested for this purpose.

Networking knowledge also holds a useful array of people-centred possibilities for magnifying awareness and understanding about the connection between organic farming and agro-ecology. EIP-Agri, for example, have collated a large library of useful [agro-ecology knowledge](#) and the ENRD Contact Point website also provides a collection of [resources about European agro-ecology](#).