



European  
Commission

# Organic farming

A guide on support  
opportunities for  
organic producers  
in Europe

*Agriculture  
and Rural  
Development*

This publication is an informative document intended for organic farmers, processors and retailers. It aims at presenting support measures under the common agricultural policy (CAP) and within the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in favour of organic producers and gives an overview and useful references on the rules applicable to organic production, processing and trade, including the rules applying to conversion. In the light of the growing demand for organic products and taking into account the important recent changes in the CAP, the European Commission within the framework of the 2014's Action Plan for the future of the Organic Production in the European Union is seeking to increase awareness among farmers and rural actors on the available measures in favour of organic farming in relevant instruments foreseen in the new Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy. This publication falls within Action 1 of the Action Plan.

**Action Plan:** [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/documents/eu-policy/european-action-plan/act\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/documents/eu-policy/european-action-plan/act_en.pdf)  
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# Foreword

If you are a farmer and wish to join the European organic scheme, and benefit from the support measures detailed in this brochure you need to convert to organic farming and to be certified as an organic producer according to the rules laid down in Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products. This regulation needs to be read together with the Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 which lays down detailed rules for its implementation. In particular, the detailed rules on conversion of plant and plant products as well as of livestock and livestock products to organic are laid down in Chapter 5 of Regulation (EC) No 889/2008.

Support for conversion to organic agriculture is foreseen under the CAP. It is calculated to compensate for the loss of income and for the costs resulting from this conversion. Support is also foreseen for the maintenance of organic agriculture.

Processors and retailers can also join the EU organic scheme so that they can use the organic logo of the European Union on their organic products. They have to respect the specific rules laid down in Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products, for their part of the organic chain.



For more information you can visit the website of the European Commission on organic farming at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/index_en.htm)

More information on the legal framework of organic production and labelling:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy/eu-rules-on-production/legal-frame/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy/eu-rules-on-production/legal-frame/index_en.htm)

# 1

## Direct payments in the post-2013 common agricultural policy

### What should organic producers know?

Making agriculture greener, more efficient and fairer, this is the goal of the new CAP. It will be achieved by encouraging better use of natural resources to tackle climate change, safeguard biodiversity and by doubling funding for research, innovation and knowledge-sharing.

From 2015 all Member States will have to use 30 % of their direct payments to finance payments to farmers for sustainable agricultural practices


that are beneficial for climate and environment. This is called the greening of the CAP and is implemented via the three basic measures below:

- maintaining permanent grassland;
- crop diversification: a farmer must cultivate at least two crops when his/her arable land exceeds 10 hectares and at least three crops when his/her arable land exceeds 30 hectares;

#### Web references:

The new CAP: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/index_en.htm)

Direct payments: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/direct-support/direct-payments/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/direct-support/direct-payments/index_en.htm)



→ maintaining an 'ecological focus area' of at least 5 % of the arable area of the holding for farms with an area larger than 15 hectares (excluding permanent grassland) — i.e. fallow land, landscape features, buffer strips, afforested area, catch crops and nitrogen fixing crops.

From the **organic farming perspective** the main element of the new greening payment is the fact that the practices of an organic farmer will be considered per se as complying with the three measures presented above. They will not need to change their practices to comply with the greening.

It has to be noted that Member States may decide to apply equivalent practices of the 3 greening basic measures. These equivalent practices shall be based on agri-environment schemes and certification schemes although an exhaustive list of such equivalent measures is not available.

# 2

## Rural development and Fisheries and Maritime measures

### 2.1 Organic agricultural production and new programming period for Rural Development programmes (2014–2020).

*Organic farming now has its own specific measure both for conversion to organic farming practices and maintenance of organic farming practices, aiming at a wider visibility of organic farming production. Conversion means the transition from non-organic to organic farming within a given period of time, during which the provisions concerning the organic production have been applied. Maintenance is the period during which the provisions of the organic production have been applied.*

Why do Rural development programmes foresee this measure?

- ➔ A separate measure to recognise the importance of organic farming in contributing to various rural development priorities;
- ➔ To support both conversion to and maintenance of organic farming practices and to answer society's demand for the use of such practices.





## What you need to know is:

- **Support:** it can be given for conversion and maintenance;
- **Time period:** 5 to 7 years (in case of conversion, the period can be shorter than that);
- **Extension:** Member States may decide to provide for (unlimited) annual extension after the expiration of the initial period of maintenance.

## Who can benefit?

- Active Farmers (as specified in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013).

**You can find information on how to benefit from the new rural development measure at your national administration contact point (see below).**

In the new Action Plan for the future of Organic Production in the European Union adopted by the European Commission in 2014, the Commission recommends that Member States use the opportunities and tools to support organic farming which are available in the new legal framework for rural development, in blue growth and in the Common Fisheries Policy.

The new Rural Development programmes have a more flexible structure which makes it easier for Member States to combine different types of rural development measures which are also relevant to organic farmers or operators. Member States can also decide to allow the combination of the various agri-environment-climate commitments, animal welfare commitments with organic farming commitments. It is entirely up to the Member States whether they plan to include the combination of the measures or the commitments in their rural development programme. If they decide so, the following measures can be proposed for organic farmers (not an exclusive list):

**The cooperation measure**, under which cooperation will expand the possibilities to support technological, environmental and commercial cooperation. The cooperation will be possible between different actors of the food chain, which can concern, among others, the development of innovative products, processes, practices, technologies, the investments in physical assets.

**Support for quality schemes for agricultural products** which includes quality schemes under the organic farming regulation. Farmers are encouraged to form organisations to create quality products and this measure is destined to help such endeavour.

Support can be granted for organic farmers who would like to set up producer groups for organic products. It will be possible under the measure of **setting up of producer groups**. Producer groups and organisations would assist the farmers to overcome challenges that were posed by increased competition and fluctuations of markets.

Organic farming can also be promoted through thematic sub-programmes of rural development programmes. The most relevant sub-programme, in terms of content and financing, would be the one on **climate change mitigation and adaptation** and biodiversity. However, also other thematic sub-programmes such as the ones on **small farms and short supply chains** may also, to some extent be relevant for organic farming.

To sum up, organic farming plays a central role in the new Common agricultural policy and is specifically addressed both in Direct payments, via the new greening payment which organic farmers will be able to claim automatically from 2015 and in Rural development measures in which organic farming has now its own specific measure both for conversion to and maintenance of organic farming practices.



#### **Web references:**

European Network for Rural Development: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

Rural development 2014–2020: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/index_en.htm)





## 2.2 Organic Aquaculture

*Organic aquaculture production is growing faster following the introduction of EU rules in 2009. As part of the renewed focus on aquaculture promotion within the Common Fisheries Policy, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) will also provide support for organic aquaculture practices.*

### Why does the EMFF include this measure?

- ➔ To support the conversion of conventional aquaculture production methods into organic aquaculture <sup>(1)</sup> to answer society's increasing demand for organic seafood.

### What you need to know is that:

- ➔ **Support:** can be given for conversion only, and shall take the form of compensation for the loss of revenue or additional costs incurred during conversion;
- ➔ **Time period:** support shall be given for a maximum of 3 years during the conversion period of the enterprise to organic production;

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<sup>(1)</sup> Within the meaning of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and in accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 710/2009.

### Who can benefit?

- ➔ Farmers who commit themselves to complying with the requirements of organic aquaculture for a minimum of 5 years.

You can find information on how to benefit from the new EMFF measure at your national administration contact point (see below).

### Web references:

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/eff/apply\\_for\\_funding/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/eff/apply_for_funding/index_en.htm)

# 3

## Research and Innovation

In order to foster a competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry sector throughout the European Union, the European Commission established the European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP AGRI).

The EIP AGRI contributes to ensuring a steady supply of food, feed and biomaterials, developing its work in harmony with the essential natural resources on which farming depends.

The main actors of the EIP AGRI are operational groups under the rural development regulation, which bring together farmers, researchers, advisors, businesses, NGOs and other actors from rural areas to work together on innovative projects.

The main funding instrument of the EIP AGRI is the rural development regulation. In addition there is some interaction with the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation of the EU 'Horizon 2020'.

Horizon 2020 includes several opportunities to support multinational demand-driven innovation in agriculture, especially through thematic networks and multi-actor research approaches.

As with the EIP AGRI, the European Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Platform (EATiP) is an organisation dedicated to developing, supporting and promoting sustainable aquaculture.

Technology and innovation in sustainable aquaculture in Europe contribute to a strong relationship between aquaculture and the consumer and consolidate the role of aquaculture in society.

### Web references:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eip/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eip/index_en.htm)

<http://www.eatip.eu/default.asp>

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en>



The EATiP has been designed to include all members of the European aquaculture value chain — from suppliers to producers and processors within the sector, accompanied by leading research groups and key representative organisations.

The main funding instrument for research, optimising the sustainable contribution of aquaculture to food security is the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation of the EU 'Horizon 2020'.





# 4

## Funding possibilities for the promotion of the EU organic farming scheme

The European policy on information and promotion activities of agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries offers funding possibilities to operators for campaigns which aim to increase consumer awareness on:

- ➔ the main features of the organic production scheme;
- ➔ the EU system of control; and
- ➔ on the EU organic logo.

Promotional activities can include advertising campaigns in the press, on television, on radio or on the Internet; point-of-sale information; public relations campaigns; participation in exhibitions and fairs, and a range of other activities.

National authorities in EU countries pre-select campaigns for EU support. In order to participate,

interested trade and/or inter-trade organisations representative of the sector submit their proposals to the Member States — there are two submission deadlines every year: 15 April and 30 September. The Member States then send the list of proposals they have selected to the Commission along with a copy of each programme. Subsequently the Commission evaluates the programmes and decides whether they are eligible.

Generally, the EU finances up to 50 % of the cost of these measures, trade and/or inter-trade organisations finance at least 20 %, the remainder may be co-financed by the Member States concerned.

### Web references:

Information on promotion: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/promotion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/promotion/index_en.htm)

How to apply for support? [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/promotion/procedure/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/promotion/procedure/index_en.htm)

Links to national websites: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/promotion/member-states/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/promotion/member-states/index_en.htm)

# 5

## Possibilities for organic farming products

Along with the rural development programmes, the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme and the School Milk Scheme represent another opportunity for organic farmers. These voluntary schemes are funded from the Union budget, with the Union subsidising milk products under the School Milk Scheme (up to €18.15/100kg), while the SFVS operates on the principle of co-financing with the total EU budget of €150 million per school year.

The European Commission has proposed to merge the two schemes and bring them under a common framework. The new scheme, once agreed, would have a budget of €230 million per school year (€150 million for fruit and vegetables and €80 million for milk).

The new scheme would encourage the sourcing of organic products in educational establishments (a possibility and practice already now under the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme), and also the integration of organic-related topics under the supporting educational measures that can be financed from the Union funds as well.

The participation of organic farmers in these schemes is a good opportunity for strengthening the links between schoolchildren and organic farming, and consequently ensuring/boosting the demand for organic products in the long term.

### Web references:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/index_en.htm)

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk/school-milk-scheme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk/school-milk-scheme/index_en.htm)



# 6

## Information measures related to the European organic farming legislation and measures

As set in Article 45 of Council Regulation 1306/2013, the European Commission co-finances information measures relating to the common agricultural policy that aim, in particular, to help explain, implement and develop the CAP and to raise public awareness of its content and objectives to reinstate consumer confidence following crises through information campaigns, to inform farmers and other parties active in rural areas and to promote the European model of agriculture, as well as to help citizens understand it.

In order to implement the previous point, the Commission publishes by 31 October of each year a call of proposal respecting the conditions set out in the Financial Regulation.

This call should permit organic farming associations, farm unions, environmental organisations, and other eligible stakeholders to present projects aiming at better explaining the organic farming rules and measures under the CAP.

### Web references:

Information measures relating to the common agricultural policy: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/grants-for-information-measures/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/grants-for-information-measures/index_en.htm)

Financial Regulation and Rules of Application: [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm)

# SUPPORT FOR ORGANIC PRODUCERS

## The new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

From 2015, all EU Member States must use 30% of direct payments to finance farmers for sustainable agricultural practices ('greening'). If you are an organic farmer, you will not need to change your practices to comply with greening.

## GREENING

### Information on organic farming under the new CAP

EU co-financing is available to organic farming associations, farmers' unions, environmental organisations and other stakeholders to support them in explaining organic farming under the new CAP to the public farmers, and others active in rural areas.

## ORGANIC IN SCHOOLS

### School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme (SFVS) and School Milk Scheme (SMS)

The EU funds voluntary schemes enabling schools to source organic products and integrate organic-related topics. This funding possibility strengthens links between schoolchildren and organic farming and helps ensure the demand of organic products in the long-term.

## PROMOTION

### Promotion of EU organic farming

EU funding for trade/inter-trade organisations to support raising awareness of EU organic production, controls and logo among consumers.

All kinds of promotion activities on internal market and in countries outside the EU are considered. Usually the EU funds up to 50%, the applicant at least 20%, and Member States co-finance the remainder.

## HORIZON 2020

## Rural development programmes (2014-2020)

New support for active farmers for conversion to, and maintenance of, organic farming practices. Member States can also provide additional support to organic farmers and operators through a variety of flexible funding opportunities to promote, for example: cooperation in food chain to boost innovation; development of quality schemes for agricultural products; creation of producer groups or organisations etc.

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## AQUACULTURE

### Fisheries and Maritime measures

Support for conversion of conventional aquaculture production methods into organic aquaculture through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

## INNOVATION

### Research and Innovation

Support for groups of farmers, researchers, advisors, businesses, NGOs, etc. from rural areas to work together on innovative projects through the EIP AGRI. Funding is provided through the EAFRD and Horizon 2020, the biggest ever EU Research Innovation programme.



[www.organic-farming.europa.eu](http://www.organic-farming.europa.eu)



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