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## The EU's organic food market: facts and rules (infographic)

**Learn key facts about organic food and farming in Europe and how new rules will improve the quality further.**

New EU rules on organic production will guarantee food quality, environmental protection and animal welfare along the whole supply chain.

More and more EU consumers are buying products that are produced with natural substances and processes. Organic food is no longer a niche market, even though it still only accounts for a minor proportion of the total agricultural production in the EU. But what does “organic” mean exactly?

### **EU definition of organic farming**

- Organic production means a sustainable agricultural system respecting the environment and animal welfare, but also includes all other stages of the food supply chain

### **EU rules for production**

The [EU regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products](#) ensures that the same high quality standards are respected all over the EU. The rules refer to agriculture and aquaculture farming practices, food processing and labelling, certification procedures for farmers as well as to the import of non-EU organic products.

Organic farmers in the EU use energy and natural resources in a responsible way, promote animal health and contribute to maintaining biodiversity, ecological balance and water/soil quality.

Organic farming practices in the EU include:

- Crop rotation for an efficient use of resources
- A ban of the use of chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilisers
- Very strict limits on livestock antibiotics
- Ban of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
- Use of on-site resources for natural fertilisers and animal feed
- Raising livestock in a free-range, open-air environment and the use of organic fodder
- Tailored animal husbandry practices

## Organic labelling and logo

The [EU's organic logo](#) on food products guarantees that EU rules on organic production have been respected. It is compulsory for pre-packaged food. In the case of processed food, it means that at least 95% of the ingredients of agricultural origin are organic. Super markets and other retailers can label their products with the term organic only if they comply with the rules.

## Organic market and farmland

The EU's organic market has constantly expanded and is now worth about €30.7 billion per year. Although the EU's organic farmland has increased over the years, it still only uses 7% of the total agricultural area. The difference between demand and production is covered by increasing imports.

## Main points of the new rules

The EU is working on an update of existing rules on organic production and labelling in response to major changes that have transformed the sector. **Proposed alterations include:**

**Stricter controls:** all operators throughout the food supply chain (farmers, breeders, processors, traders, importers) are checked at least once a year

**Fairer competition:** producers from non-EU countries who want to sell their products in the EU need to comply with the same rules as producers in the EU.

**Prevention of contamination with pesticides:** farmers must take precautionary measures to avoid accidental contamination with non-authorised pesticides or fertilisers. A product loses its organic status if the contamination is due to fraud or negligent behaviour. EU countries that have thresholds for non-authorised substances in organic food can continue applying them, but they must allow other organic foods from other EU countries in their markets. The European Commission will assess the anti-contamination rules in 2025.

**Better supply of organic seeds and animals:** a computer database on the availability of organic seeds and animals is set up in every EU country.

**Mixed farms:** farmers are allowed to produce conventional products in addition to organic ones, but need to clearly separate their farming activities.

**Certification procedures** for small farmers are made easier.

**New products** such as salt, cork and essential oils are included. Others can be added later on.

MEPs adopted the new rules on 19 April 2018. The agreed text still needs to be formally approved by the Council before it can enter into force. German Greens/EFA member [Martin Häusling](#) is the MEP responsible for steering the proposals through Parliament.

### Find out more

[Organic farming in the EU](#)

[Survey: Europeans, agriculture and the EU's common agricultural policy](#)

[Procedural steps](#)

[Check out progress on the proposals](#)

### Briefings

[Organic farming legislation \(March 2018\)](#)

[Organic food: helping EU consumers make an informed choice \(May 2015\)](#)

[Organic production and the EU \(February 2015\)](#)

# WHAT IS ORGANIC FARMING?

Organic production is an overall system of farm management and food production that combines best environment practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources and the application of high animal welfare standards

## KEY PRINCIPLES



The use of chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilisers is banned



Antibiotics are severely restricted



GMOs are not allowed



Crops are rotated



The EU's organic logo guarantees EU rules on organic farming have been respected

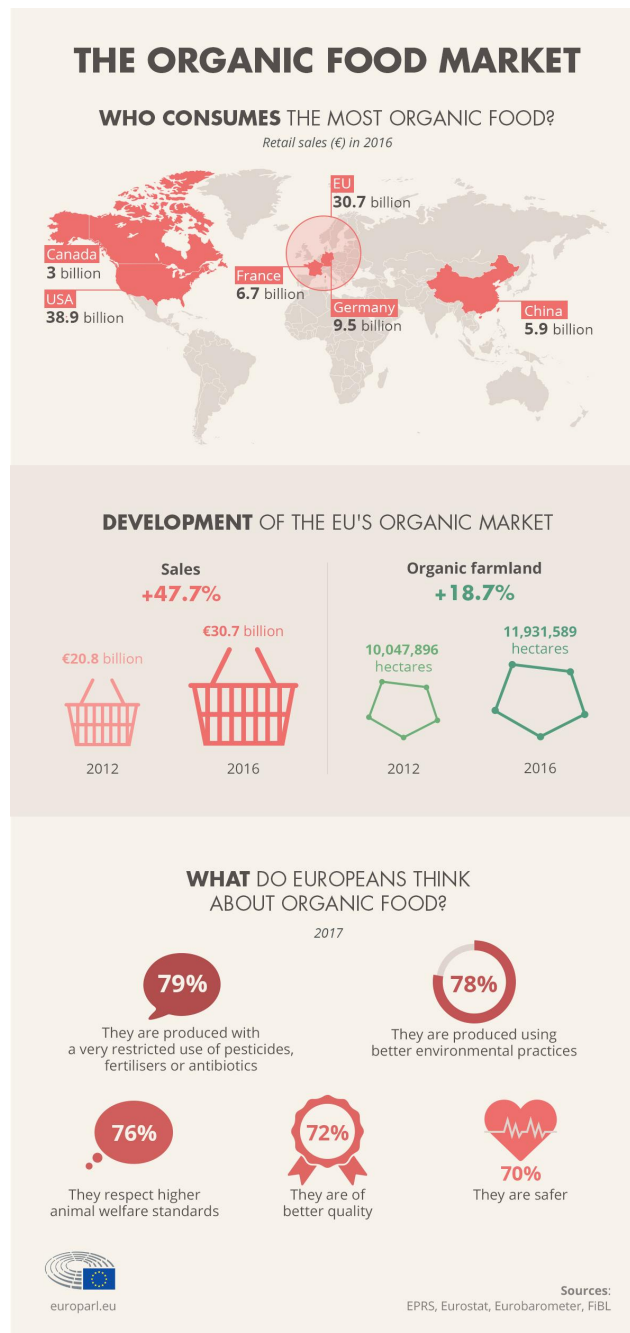


[europarl.eu](http://europarl.eu)

Sources:

EPRS, Eurostat, Eurobarometer

[Click on the image for a larger version](#)



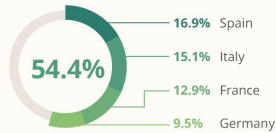
Click on the image for a larger version

## ORGANIC FARMING IN THE EU

### ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL LAND\* IN THE EU-28 (2016)

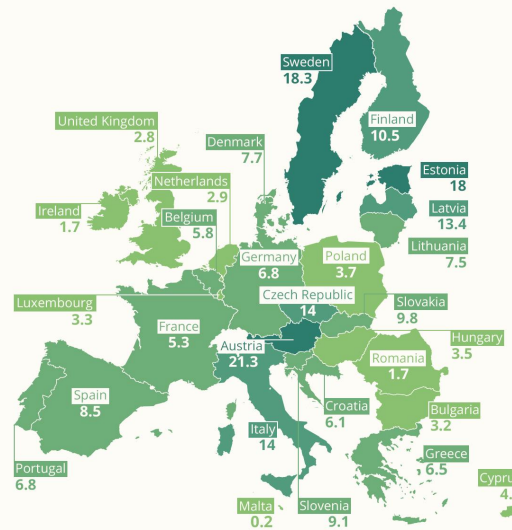
**11.9** million hectares 6.7% of land used for agriculture

Four countries together account for **54.4%** of the EU's total organic area



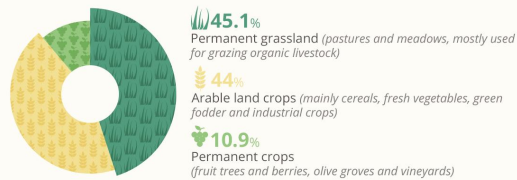
### ORGANIC FARMING IN EU COUNTRIES

Proportion of organic agricultural land\* in 2016 (in %)



### CROP TYPES

% of the EU's total organic crop area



\*fully converted and under conversion



Sources: EPRS, Eurostat, Eurobarometer

Click on the image for a larger version