

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Agriculture, Forestry, Regions
and Water Management

Organic Farming in Austria



Content

Imprint.....	2
Preface.....	5
Many things speak in favour of organic farming.....	6
This is the way organic farms work	10
From the beginnings to today.....	24
Legal affairs.....	36
Organic market	48
Support measures	56
What does the youth think?.....	62
Organic as a subject of controversial debates	68
Annex	76

Imprint

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Text and editing: Maria Ladinig, Thomas Rech (Dir. II/3–Agri-Environment, Mountain farmers and Less-Favoured Areas, Organic Farming), Karin Tischler–Communication and Services

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Preface

Organic farming offers approaches to solutions for a number of agricultural, social and ecological challenges we are currently facing in Europe. Austria recognised the benefits of organic farming early on and is therefore now considered to be the EU's number one organic country.

Organic products offer security and confidence and are highly appreciated by Austrian consumers. It is gratifying to see that they remain loyal to organic farming, despite generally rising prices.

This brochure offers the opportunity to learn more about organic farming, to create more awareness and thus to support our organic farmers in terms of diversity, quality and conservation of natural resources. Only jointly will it be possible to expand organic agriculture in line with production and demand towards the goals we have set and to strengthen our international position as a pioneer.

Norbert Totschnig
Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry,
Regions and Water Management



Norbert Totschnig
Federal Minister



Many things speak in favour of organic farming

This speaks in favour of organic farming

Among all forms of land management, organic farming is considered to be the most environmentally friendly one.

Organic farming: promotes the closed cycle economy

Organic farming works as much as possible in closed cycles. Compost is thus produced and applied to the land to recycle organic material and valuable plant nutrients. Manure, liquid manure and slurry are used as farm fertilisers or legumes are grown to fix nitrogen in the soil.

Organic farming: revitalises the soils

Soil life is promoted by means of gentle tillage, selective crop rotations and the application of compost and well-prepared farm manures. In this way, soil nutrients are activated and the humus content is increased. The targeted cultivation of legumes and field fodder has a positive effect on soil fertility. The goal is an intact soil system.

Organic farming: relies on animal-friendly husbandry

The husbandry systems with outdoor runs or grazing are particularly animal-friendly. The feed comes from organic farming and no preventive veterinary medicines are used. More space in the stable, soft resting areas, manipulable material and feed with a high share of raw fibre for ruminants are also a prerequisite.

Organic farming: preserves the species and habitat diversity

By avoiding the use of chemical-synthetic plant protection products, biodiversity is promoted on the cultivated land. For example, an Austria-wide insect survey (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management BML, Sustainable Development Research Database DaFNE) gives indications that organic

farming has a positive effect on insect density. The use of rare plant varieties or animal breeds contributes to the conservation of genetic diversity.

Organic farming: protects the climate

Greenhouse gases are saved by using regional fodder and avoiding synthetic nitrogen fertilisers. The humus build-up is promoted, resulting in a higher water storage capacity. In addition, organic soils can bind more CO₂ due to humus-promoting management measures.

Organic farming: protects the resource water

By avoiding the use of chemical synthetic plant protection products and by keeping the number of animals per hectare of farmland mostly low, organic farming helps to keep both surface waters and groundwater clean. Targeted soil cover (catch crops, undersowing) results in less evaporation during drought.

Organic farming: is guaranteed free from genetic engineering

Organic farming is guaranteed GMO-free and processed food must not contain any genetically modified ingredients and food additives. Animals are not fed with genetically modified feed.

Organic farming: is being regularly controlled

The production of organic food is controlled even more strictly than that of conventionally produced food. At least once a year organic farms are inspected—from field to stable and processing—by independent and officially approved inspection bodies.



This is the way
organic farms
work

Organic farmers give insights into their work



Nodule bacteria—important helpers in organic crop production

In order to do justice to the holistic approach of organic farming, organic farmers have to deal intensively with the processes on their farms. The way, how a farm must be managed, is defined in the EU Organic Regulation No. 2018/848 and in the respective national provisions.

Circular economy

Foundation of organic farming

Organic farmers work according to the principles of circular economy. Raw materials are reused in the best possible way within a closed cycle. By means of the use of organic by-products (sugar beet pulp, potato water, plant material) on the farm, nutrient use can be improved.

Johannes Wedenig: "It was clear to me that I want to practice agriculture in a way in which one tries to close cycles as much as possible and to omit harmful things. For example, I produce biochar, which is important for the hens' house hygiene, but which is also used together with the chicken manure in home composting and, last but not least, increases the fertility of the soil as a nutrient store."



Diversity farm Zetmau, Johannes Wedenig

In terms of climate change adaptation, a well-functioning circular economy strengthens the natural mechanisms of ecosystems and makes them more resilient.

Crop production

gentle and diverse

In organic crop production, the activity of the soil life is primarily promoted in order to ensure that the natural balance and fertility are maintained. This

is achieved, for example, by means of the intake of plant-based bio-mass, the cultivation of catch crops, and the application of organic fertilisers.

Crop rotation plays a central role in organic farming. In organic farming, for example, cereals are not grown in the same field for years, but are followed by a leaf crop, such as potato, beet or oil pumpkin. The targeted succession of nitrogen-gathering (legumes) and nitrogen-consuming plants (e.g. cereals, vegetables) does not deplete the soil and ensures the long-term supply of the plants. Regular cultivation of legumes introduces atmospheric nitrogen into the soil with the help of rhizobia (nodule bacteria).

Johann Aufreiter: "With soils that can store little water, it is all the more important to preserve the uppermost layers, including the humus, and to ensure a good crop rotation and winter greening."



Organic Herb Farm, Johann Aufreiter

In addition to the crop rotation, catch crop mixtures with a share of legumes (e.g. alfalfa, clover) are cultivated (green manure). This means that the application of mineral fertilisers can be dispensed with and that there is additional erosion protection with year-round plant cover.

Fertiliser management **organic and farmyard**

Organic farmers do without easily soluble commercial fertilisers and use instead of it farm manure such as slurry, dung, liquid manure or compost. If the soil is not in equilibrium, stone meals and lime can also be added to the soils, as well as poorly soluble fertilisers such as certain forms of rock phosphates or potash crude salts, if needed.

Plant protection and weed control **naturally and on a long-term basis**

For the control of pests, fungal diseases and undesirable weeds no chemical-synthetic plant protection products are used in organic farming. Preventive measures and the promotion of the ecological balance have priority.

Natural substances, beneficial organisms and microorganisms are used to protect the plants. Beneficial insects, such as ichneumon wasps and predatory mites, are deliberately propagated in glasshouses and help to control pests. Bacteria, fungi and viruses are also used in a targeted way against certain harmful organisms, such as powdery mildew. By providing hedges, flower strips, trees and deadwood, favourable conditions for beneficial insects are created in the open.

Weeds do not only have undesirable properties. They also serve as shelter and habitat for useful animals that feed on pests. With the right choice of field location, healthy seeds, the right time for sowing, and a well-balanced crop rotation system a high degree of weed infestation is avoided in organic arable farming. Otherwise, weeds are removed by machine or by hand.

Active substances (plant protection products, cleaning agents for the stable) may only be used in organic farming if they are listed in the current EU Organic Regulation and the preventive measures are not sufficient.

The active ingredients are naturally occurring substances based on plant extracts, for example of the neem tree.

Mineral substances such as clay meals, copper, sulphur and potash soap are also applied. For example, copper is currently still indispensable with some crops (e.g. fruit and wine growing). However, alternatives for the use of copper are already being sought.

Animal husbandry **species-specific and outdoors**

Organically kept animals are provided with more space and they are enabled to live out behavioural needs as freely as possible. In the stable, plenty of bedding and contact with conspecifics is guaranteed. Fully slatted floors are not allowed in organic husbandry.

The animals are regularly allowed to go outside. Grazing and/or outdoor exercise are a matter of course for organic animals. Regular access to pasture strengthens the immune system and natural resistance against diseases. Veterinary medicines or antibiotics must not be used preventively. They must be prescribed by a veterinarian. The waiting period after which organic milk, for example, can be resold after medication was taken by the animals, is longer than the legally prescribed waiting period for conventionally produced milk.

Gertraud Grabmann: "On our free-range pig farm we do not only rely on very high animal welfare standards, but also on old animal breeds. And you can just taste that our pigs were doing well."



Schlipfing Organic Farm, Gertraud Grabmann

Feeding **local and GMO-free**

Animals are fed only with organic feed or in-conversion feeding stuffs. (= fodder from areas that have been organically farmed for less than two years). If possible, the feed comes from the farm itself or from the region. The regulations are also strict for feed additives, silage additives and cleaning agents for the barn, where only agents listed in the annex of the current EU Organic Regulation may be used.

Processing and Marketing **regional and seasonal**

Organic food is sold directly via farm shops, at markets and in particular via food retailers. Organic food has also found its way into gastronomy. In many restaurants there is a conscious focus on products from organic production.

Martin Sönmezay: "What we do is to put the spotlight on the protagonists. We "only" process the food, but the stars are outside on the fields, get up every day early in the morning and guarantee that we can process organic food here. It would be desirable that in future, more attention would also be paid in the gastronomy sector to where the food comes from and how it was produced."



Organic Restaurant Humboldtstüb, Martin Sönmezay

In the production of organic food, organic farmers proceed according to the specifications of the current EU Organic Regulation. Farms, as well as companies that produce and market organic food, are certified organic enterprises and are inspected annually by approved inspection bodies.

Education and research Knowledge and experience

Organic farmers also play an active role in the transfer of knowledge. By means of Green Care measures, they strive to impart knowledge about the diverse work processes on an organic farm, the origin of food and the importance of nature. Green care or social farming includes the areas of pedagogy, social initiatives and the creation of protected jobs.

Waltraud Kaml: "A lot of educational work is needed—and not only with children, but often also with their parents. Whole school classes come to us, who learn for the first time what organic means or how to bake bread. Many of them never really came into contact with animals and plants before."



Organic Farm Großwidmoos, Waltraud Kaml (left)

Moreover, many farms participate in a wide variety of projects. Participation enables theoretical approaches from research to be put into practice and trials to be carried out on agricultural land. In this way they also make a very important contribution to research in the field of agriculture.

The statements come from farmers who were portrayed in the project The Organic Roadshow – **DER BLOG** by **BIO AUSTRIA**. The project is available at the following link:



www.bio-austria.at/a/konsument/die-bio-road-show-der-blog

How does a farm convert to organic farming?

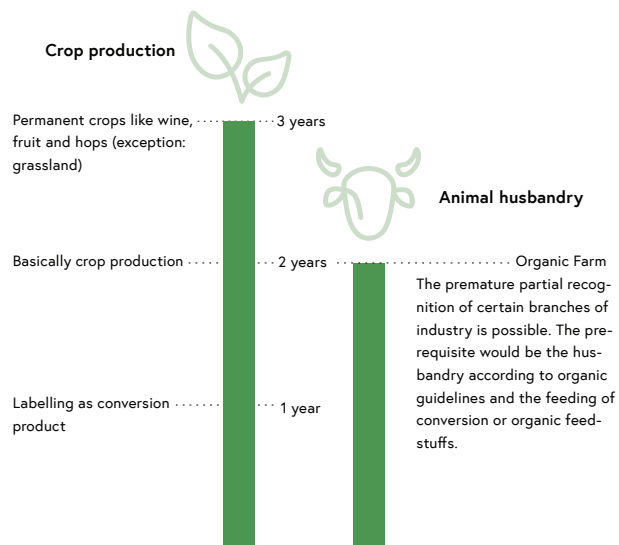
In order for a farm to be allowed to call its products organic, it must conclude a contract with a state-recognised organic inspection body. This inspection body registers the farm with the food authority and, after a certain conversion period, it grants the permission (certification) to label and market its products as organic to the farm.

Consulting plays a central role

Comprehensive advice and training play a particularly important role in organic farming. Farmers who want to convert their farm are best advised to contact an organic association or the organic departments of the regional Chambers of Agriculture for initial advice. These offer conversion advice directly on the farm, as well as conversion courses, training and excursions. In some Federal Provinces, farming working groups are intensively supervised by special advisors. This applies, for example, to organic vegetable production, organic fruit growing or organic pig farming.



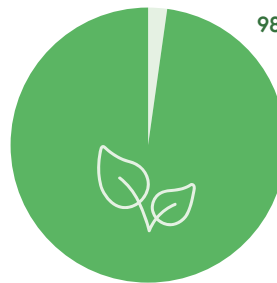
That's how long the conversion to organic farming takes



Source: Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (BML)

During the conversion period, the farm must be managed in accordance with the requirements of organic farming.

Podcast Tip: [Suddenly organic](#)
„Suddenly organic: How to convert a farm to organic farming?”



98 % would convert to organic farming again

The fact that just about all organic farmers are satisfied with their decision to convert to organic farming, is documented by a KeyQUEST study conducted in 2018. According to the survey, 98 per cent of the farmers would convert to organic farming again.

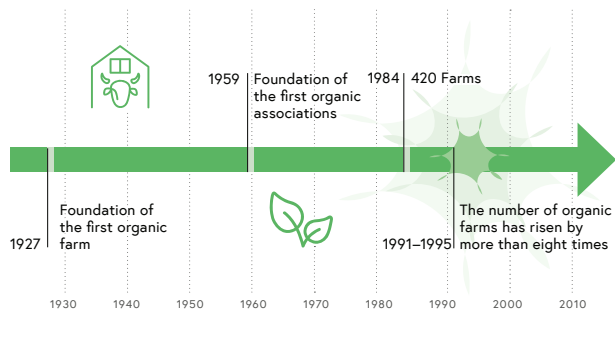
From the
beginnings
to today



Success story organic farming

Austria is the No. 1 organic country in the EU. Austria is in the first place both in terms of the share of organic farms and the share of organically farmed land. Austria is also at the forefront when it comes to the value of buying organic.

Organic farming in Austria has a long history dating back to the 1920s. Due to the increasing industrialisation and the associated social problems a near-natural agriculture was looked for.



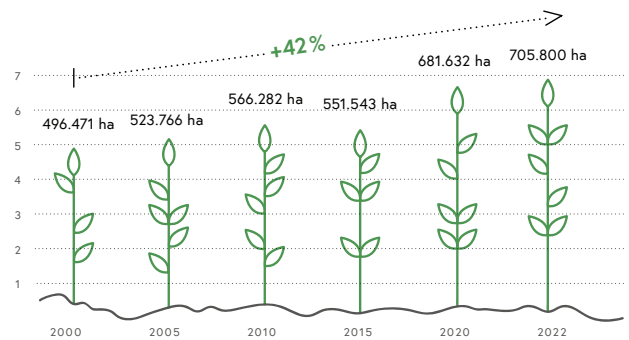
At the beginning, the development took place mainly in the grassland area in the west of Austria. Later, the arable farms, especially in the drylands of eastern Austria, also caught up significantly.

The share of organic areas in Austria has increased by more than one third since 2000.

A matter of common concern of all actors in organic farming is to produce high-quality food and to ensure at the same time that ecosystems are treated with care.

Increase in organic areas* in Austria

*agriculturally used area, including alpine pastures

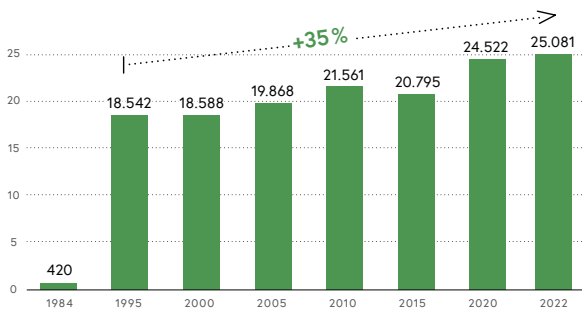


The share of organic farmland in Austria has increased by more than one third since 2000. Already every fourth hectare is farmed organically.

Source: BML/AMA

Increase in subsidised organic farms* in Austria

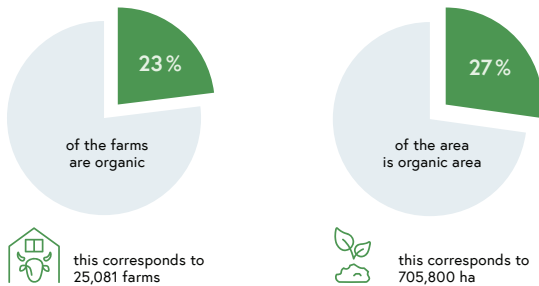
*Farms with utilised agricultural area, including alpine pastures



Our accession to the EU has strengthened the trend towards more organic farming. Since then, the positive development has continued: Organic farming is growing naturally!

Source: BML/AMA

Organic farms and organic areas in Austria in 2022

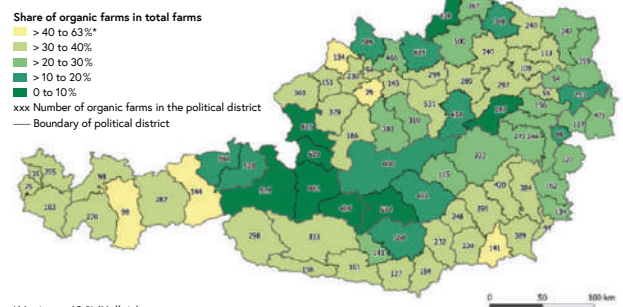


Source: BML/AMA

In 2022, Austria had 25,081 organic farms. This corresponds to a share of about 23 per cent of all subsidised farms. The subsidised organic areas amounted to 705,800 ha (including alpine pastures), i.e. 27 per cent of the total utilised agricultural area.

Share and number of the subsidised organic farms of all subsidised farms in the respective districts

25,081 organic farms; 23.3 % organic farms of total farms

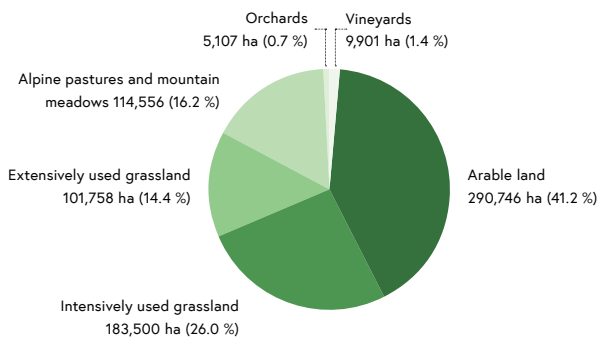


Source: BML

Distribution of crop types in Austria

The distribution of crop types shows that in 2022 almost 40 % of the orchards were already managed organically. About one third of the permanent grassland and one fifth of the arable area were managed by organic farmers in Austria. There is a strong upward trend in the area of organically cultivated vineyards, which already accounted for almost 22 % of all vineyards in Austria.

Distribution and share of the organic area according to crop types 2022



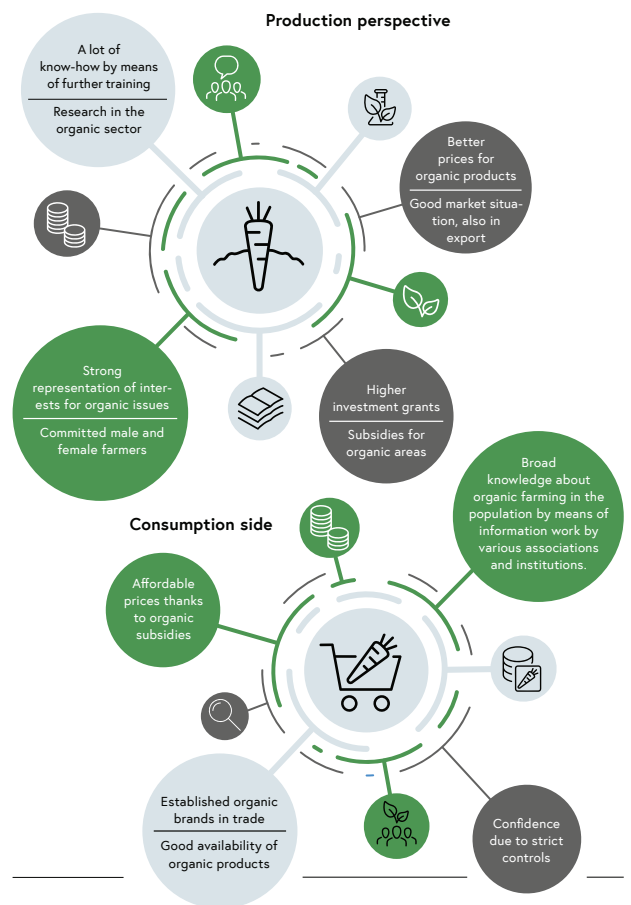
	Share in %	area in ha
Orchards ¹⁾	40.5 %	5,107
Alpine pastures and mountain meadows	36.9 %	114,556
Extensively used grassland	35.0 %	101,758
Intensively used grassland	32.3 %	183,500
Arable land	22.0 %	290,746
Vineyards ²⁾	21.8 %	9,901

Source: BML, AMA

Further tables and charts are provided in the current Green Report.



Success factors from the production and consumption sides



Reasons for the success



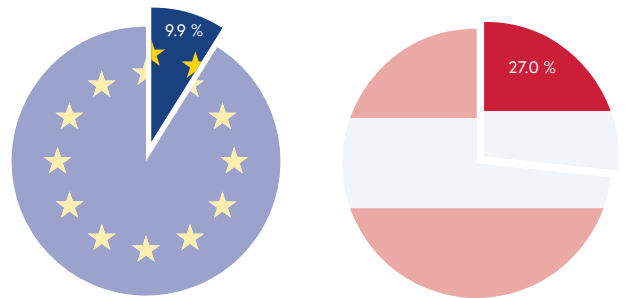
One of the reasons for the rapid increase was the subsidy for organic farmers, which was introduced in Austria in 1991 and extended as of Austria's accession to the EU in 1995. The commitment of organic farmers as well as the demand of consumers also contributed to the strong upward trend.

The entry of one of the large retail chains into organic marketing in 1994 provided a further impetus. For the first time, this made it possible to reach large sections of the population and promote ecological awareness among consumers. Their willingness to make a contribution to environmental protection and to accept the higher price of organic products gradually encouraged other retail chains to start marketing organic products.

Austria in comparison

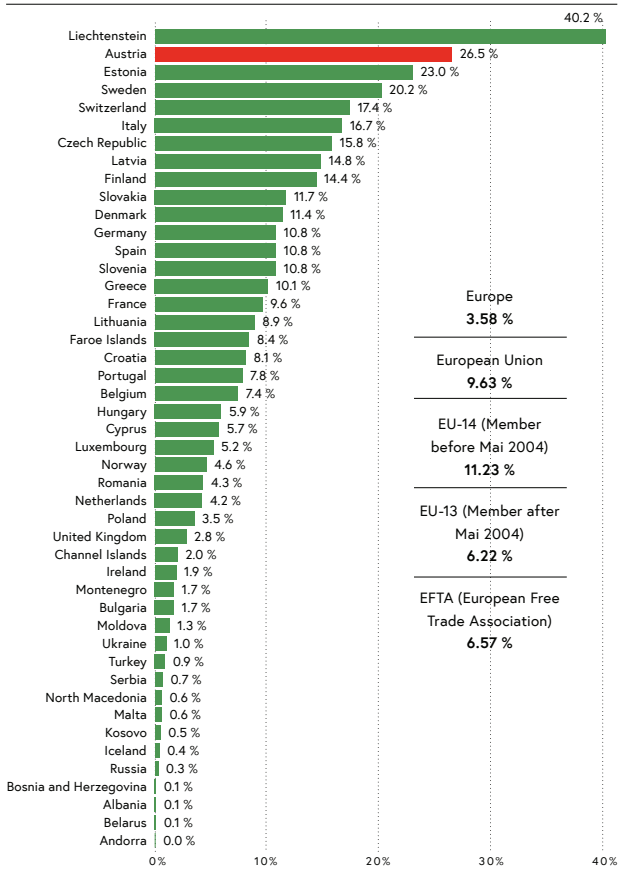
In relative terms, Austria occupies the top position among EU countries in organic farming. According to "Statistics Explained–Developments in organic farming (europa.eu)", the organic area in Austria was over 27 per cent in 2022, compared to an EU average of 9.9 per cent (2021; more recent figures are not yet available for the EU).

Organic area in Austria and the EU



Source: Eurostat/BML

Europe: Share of Organic areas 2021



Source: FiBL-AMI survey 2023

Organic areas worldwide

Organic farming is also on the rise worldwide.

Organic Farming	Worldwide 2011	Worldwide 2021
Countries with organic farming	162 countries	191 countries
Organic agricultural area	37.2 million ha	76.4 million ha
Organic share of the total agricultural area	0.86 %	1.6 %

Source: 2011 FiBL and IFOAM, The World of Organic Agriculture 2013.
2021 FiBL survey 2023, The World of Organic Agriculture 2023



Legal affairs

Legal framework



Austria was the first country in the world to establish national guidelines for the organic production of food. In 1983, the first decrees were issued by the Federal Ministry of Health and Environmental Protection.

Organic farming now follows clear legal regulations in all areas (production, inspection, imports). These regulations are laid down at European level and are applied and implemented in Austria. The EU Organic Regulation regulates organic production in the European Union and must be complied with. The "Organic Production" guideline provides a guideline for areas of organic production that are not yet defined in the EU Organic Regulation.

You can find more information on the legal regulations at www.verbrauchergesundheit.gv.at/lebensmittel/bio



The EU Organic Regulation

Ever since Austria joined the European Economic Area in July 1994, the EU Regulation on Organic Production of Agricultural Products has been applicable in Austria (first enacted in 1991). It lays down production, labelling and control regulations as well as provisions for imports. Since 1 January 2022, (EU) Regulation No 2018/848 has been applicable. In addition, details on the implementation of the Organic Regulation are defined by the EU. The Organic Regulation applies in particular to live or unprocessed agricultural products including plant-propagating material, processed agricultural products intended for use as food and animal feed.

The Inspections



Every year inspections are carried out

The inspection of an organic farm is carried out by independent inspection bodies that are authorised by the food authority of the respective Federal Province. The food authority also checks the activities of the inspection bodies. The responsible federal ministry is the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.

Every organic farm and every organic processing and marketing enterprise (for the marketing of unpackaged organic products) is fully inspected at least once a year. In addition, the inspection body also carries out unannounced inspections.

Inspections by state-authorized organic inspection bodies provide security to consumers and producers alike.

The following things will be checked

The organic inspection covers the entire production and processing process. This means that not only organic farmers, but also processing enterprises (e.g. slaughterhouses, mills, bakeries, dairies, and packaging plants) are checked. Subject to checks are:

- Fertilisers and pesticides
- Seeds
- Animal husbandry (e.g. outdoor exercise for animals and grazing requirements)
- Exceptional authorisations (e.g. temporary tethering, cultivation of conventional seed)
- Origin of the products (entire value chain)
- EU organic standards for imported products

Of course, records must be kept by both farms and processing enterprises. For example, farmers must keep a record of all farm inputs and medicines purchased and submit a cultivation plan for the following year. Processing enterprises must keep record of purchases and sales (= quantity flow control).

Control by the example of yoghurt production

Subject to inspections are:



Organic farm that supplies milk.



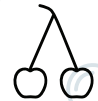
Dairy, in which the milk is processed.

Final product

Final product



Packaging companies, if the yoghurt is filled by another company.



Fruits must be verifiably from organic production.

Test result

Should the inspection bodies actually come across an infringement of the regulation and the organic regulations are not complied with, sanctions will follow depending on the severity of the offence. Organic farmers may lose their marketing authorisation for the affected batch of goods or the general authorisation to label products as "organic". In addition, there may also be reductions or a general withholding of funding (e.g. compensation for services under the Agri-environmental Programme ÖPUL).

Additional guidelines from associations and trade



Almost two thirds of all organic farmers are voluntary members of an organic association. As such, organic farmers must also comply with additional guidelines (e.g. additional biodiversity services, lower use of concentrated feed, manual harvesting in viticulture). This entitles the holder to use the association's trademark. Members of an organic association are also checked for compliance with the special association guidelines by the inspection bodies mentioned above.

If a product also carries the organic label of a particular retail chain, this guarantees additional quality assurance measures and often also additional regulations.

You can find more information on the organic associations in the annex.

Which Ingredients are permitted in organic products?

In principle, all ingredients in organic food must come from organic farming. As not all raw materials are available in organic quality, the proportion of certain products of non-organic origin listed in the implementing regulation may be up to five per cent. Processed foodstuffs that contain less than **95 per cent of organic ingredients** of agricultural origin may not bear the EU organic logo. In this case, organic ingredients and organic designations may only be stated in the list of ingredients (usually on the back).

The current EU Organic Regulation authorises 56 additives and 42 processing aids in the processing of organic food. These include, for example, the thickening agent tara gum, which is obtained from the seeds of the tara shrub.

Most recently, the number of additives that must come exclusively from organic production has increased from eight to fifteen.



Processors of organic food should only use the gelling and thickening agents gellan gum (obtained with the help of bacteria), gum arabic (from acacia sap), tara gum, guar gum and locust bean gum in organic quality.

Natural flavours are permitted, but 95% must come from the fruit from which the product takes its name. Synthetic amino acids or synthetic dyes must not be used:

Labelling

In Austria, an organic product can be recognised by the following designations: “aus biologischer Landwirtschaft” (“from organic farming”) or “aus ökologischer Landwirtschaft” (“from ecological farming”) and/or abbreviations derived from them such as “Bio” (“organic”) or “Öko” (“eco”).

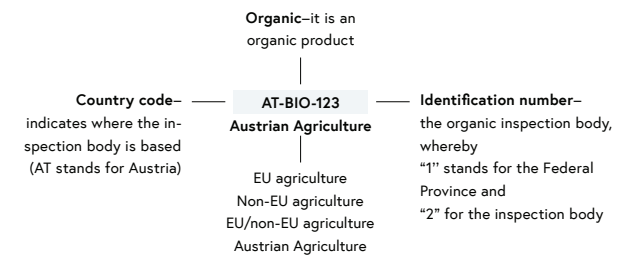


Correct labelling and the use of the EU organic logo on packaged organic food are **mandatory** throughout the EU.

The logo can be used on a voluntary basis for unpackaged organic food or for organic food originating from third countries.

In addition to the EU organic logo, information on the code number of the respective inspection body and the origin of the ingredients is provided.

The three elements of the code number



The following spelling is used for Austria:

AT-BIO-### (3 digits at the end = code number of the inspection body)

What should be achieved by the EU organic logo?

On the one hand, organically produced products are given a standardised identification mark—which is good for consumers. On the other hand, farmers can market their products more easily throughout the EU.

Labelling of organic products with ingredients from other countries



“EU agriculture”: At least 95 per cent of the ingredients of agricultural origin were produced within the EU. (IT = Italy)



“Non-EU agriculture”: At least 95 per cent of the ingredients of agricultural origin were produced outside the EU. (LK = Sri Lanka)



“EU/non-EU agriculture”: The ingredients of agricultural origin were partly produced within the EU and partly outside the EU. (NL =Netherlands)

If at least 95 per cent of the ingredients of agricultural origin have been produced in the same country, the indication “EU” or “non-EU” may be replaced by the indication of that country or that country and its region or be supplemented by them.

AMA organic seal

The state-approved AMA organic seal was developed by the AMA Marketing GesmbH based on the EU organic logo. Only ingredients of agricultural origin from organic farming are used in AMA organic seal products and additional environmental standards are complied with.



AMA organic quality seal with indication of origin: The origin of the ingredients used is clearly labelled. The indication of origin refers to either a region (e.g. Tyrol, Bavaria), a state (e.g. Austria, France) or a homogeneous area across several countries or states (e.g. Alpine region, European Union).

In the case of the AMA organic quality seal with indication of origin “Austria” all raw materials must originate entirely from Austria, if they can be produced in our country.



AMA organic quality seal without indication of origin: Used for those organically produced products for which labelling of origin is not possible. Even if there is no region- or country-specific labelling of the origin, the traceable origin of the organic ingredients must be ensured.

Identifying organic products at the first glance:

- The label “from organic farming”
- the abbreviation “organic” may be printed on the product
- The code number (e.g. AT-BIO-301) of the inspection body must be indicated
- The EU organic logo (green leaf with stars) must be displayed, including the origin of the products
- In addition, the AMA organic seal or the organic producer label can be indicated optionally



Organic market

Development of the organic shares

Sales of organic products in the food retail sector have been rising steadily for years. Despite general inflation, organic farming remains crisis-proof and the sales figures of organic products are largely stable.

The **most important distribution channel** for organic food is the **food retail trade**. Around 81 per cent of all organic food is sold via food retailers, with a further 14 per cent being sold via direct sales and specialist retailers. The catering industry accounts for around 5 per cent of the total organic market. The organic shares of sales in terms of value of food have risen in the long term and are now over 11 per cent.

Value-based organic shares of the purchases in the food retail trade in per cent

n = households in Austria



All RollAMA product groups, white and coloured pallet, cheese, yellow fats, meat and poultry, sausage and ham, fresh/frozen/sterilised fruit and vegetables, eggs, ready meals, excl. bread

Source: RollAMA/AMA-Marketing

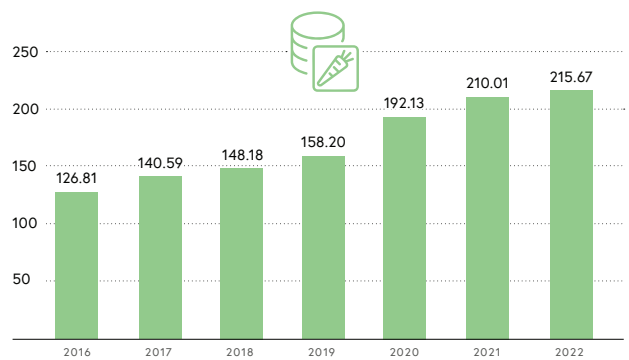
The positive development is mainly due to the fact that the availability of organic food has also improved in all shopping sources. Supermarkets, discounters and farmers' markets have expanded their organic range.

Dairy products and baked goods are the frontrunners in terms of the proportion of organic food. The proportion of organic products is increasing for fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, meat and poultry.

According to Sensor Market Research/AMA Marketing, consumer appreciation can also be seen in the increasing annual expenditure on organic products. Household spending on organic food in food retail increased by 2.7 per cent to EUR 216 in 2022.

Annual expenditure for organic products

in euros per buyer household, RollAMA Total Bio, food retail



All RollAMA product groups, white and coloured pallet, cheese, yellow fats, meat and poultry, sausage and ham, fresh/frozen/sterilised fruit and vegetables, eggs, ready meals, excl. bread

Source: RollAMA/AMA-Marketing

Why are organic foodstuffs bought?

According to an analysis of motives for buying organic products by Sensor Marktforschung/AMA-Marketing (2022), animal welfare has increasingly moved to the forefront of consumers' minds. Sustainability and climate protection are further motives for buying organic products. Of course, flavour also plays a role for consumers.

The availability and public discourse on topics such as animal welfare, climate change and regionality have thus contributed to the increased perception of organic products on the market.

Motives to buy organic products

For occasional consumption of organic products:

- Organic food is healthier
- Organic food has a better flavour
- Local offer / support of farmers

In case of regular consumption of organic products:

- animal welfare
- sustainability

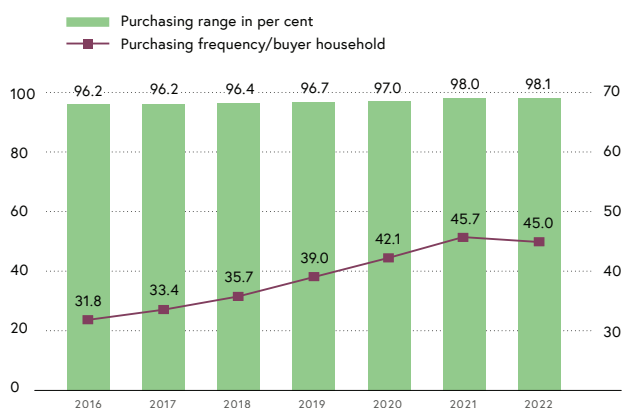
Purchasing behaviour

Almost all people buy organic products

Organic food in food retail ("supermarkets") achieved a purchasing range of 98.1 per cent in 2022. This meant that almost every household in Austria bought an organic product at least once a year in food retail trade. The frequency of purchases has remained stable and around 55 kilos of organic food ended up in the shopping trolleys of households.

Almost every Austrian buys organic products

Food retail (LEH)



All RollAMA product groups, white and coloured pallet, cheese, yellow fats, meat and poultry, sausage and ham, fresh/frozen/sterilised fruit and vegetables, eggs, ready meals, excl. bread

Source: RollAMA

Tips for the reduction of additional costs caused by organic food

Organic food is more expensive than conventionally produced food due to the higher production costs. However, these additional costs can be compensated. Here are a few tips:

- Reducing the proportion of meat
- Replacing individual products (e.g. only buy organic potatoes)
- Exchanging organic food with a small price gap to non-organic food first (e.g. cereal products, pasta, dairy products, seasonal fruit and vegetables)
- Choosing seasonal and regional products
- Reducing food waste

Organic food in the out-of-home catering

Meanwhile many people in Austria are eating out. Besides restaurant visits, public facilities such as kindergartens, schools, hospitals and canteens are used.



Out-of-home catering is roughly divided into the following two areas

1. Community catering: Educational institutions, health and care institutions, company canteens
2. Gastronomy: Hotels, guesthouses, inns, restaurants, coffee houses, bars, street food

The Austrian action plan for sustainable public procurement (naBe) provides for a gradual increase in the minimum proportion of organically produced food from 25 % in 2023 to 55 % in 2030 in public catering. Increasing the proportion of organic products in canteens in public institutions could give a major boost to organic farming.

Consumers want to have more organic food in kindergartens and schools

According to a study commissioned by the Enkeltaugliches Österreich movement the majority of Austrians would like to see organic food for children in kindergartens and schools:

56 % want to have exclusively organic food for meals in schools, nurseries and hospitals.



70 % Think that organic farming is important for a healthy environment and for climate protection.



81 % of the meat-eating participants could imagine to refrain from eating meat for one day a week and thus to enable the conversion to exclusively organic food.



Almost one in two would be prepared to pay € 1.50 more per day if only organic food were served at schools and kindergartens.



Support measures

Organic Action Programme



Organic farming has become well established in Austria and is a showcase model for Europe and the rest of the world. Austria has already achieved the European Union's target of 25 per cent of agricultural land being farmed organically. Nevertheless, we do not want to rest on our laurels and work towards 35 per cent organically farmed land. For this purpose, Austria guarantees framework conditions that will also ensure the growth of organic farming in the future. The expansion of the marketing channel and the demand for organic products should also ensure the intended expansion of organic production in Austria.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (BML) regularly issues an Organic Action Programme with measures, which are intended to promote organic farming. They set out the direction according to which all players in the sector can orientate themselves in order to further develop organic farming.

Goals for the Period 2023+:

- Maintaining and expanding Austria's position as the EU's No 1 organic country
- Increasing the demand for organic products
- Achieving the EU Green Deal targets in agriculture

Priority topics:

- Research and innovation
- Extension, education and school
- Production and sales
- Processing and marketing
- Public relations work
- Community catering



The core goal of the new Organic Action Programme is the further development of organic production in line with the market development.



The programme will be developed in coordination with the Chambers of Agriculture, organic associations, research institutions, Federal Agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, and the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and serves as a basis for the measures to be implemented in future.

Common Agricultural Policy and organic farming

In the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) from 2023 onwards, the Austrian Agri-environmental Programme ÖPUL has remained the most important funding channel for organic farms. The centrepiece is the “organic farming” measure.



The measure was further developed in the areas of biodiversity, crop diversification, grassland conservation and further training, adapted to current requirements and can be combined with numerous other ÖPUL measures (e.g. greening–catch crop or evergreen, animal welfare–pasture and stable keeping).

Flexible options are offered for the compensation of additional environmental services, such as the creation of biodiversity areas, the preservation of punctiform landscape elements (especially scattered fruit trees), the creation of multi-benefit hedges or breeding areas, as well as supplements for the cultivation of rare crops. In addition to general environmental requirements, further training for sustainable management is a mandatory component.

Additional earmarked funds for the organic sector will be made available for measures in the areas of education and advisory services, processing and marketing as well as innovation. There are also funding opportunities for the construction of particularly animal-friendly stables and other facilities on organic farms. In addition to the investment grants there is an organic supplement of five per cent for this purpose. Young farmers and mountain farmers are also supported by increased grants.

These are the consequences of organic farming:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in agricultural production and in rural areas
- Optimising agricultural and forestry carbon reservoirs
- Improving surface and groundwater protection

- Maintaining the quality and improving the condition of the soil and/or of soil fertility
- Preserving the cultural landscape and biodiversity by means of site-adapted agriculture and forestry
- Safeguarding genetic diversity

Challenges

Organic farming in Austria has already achieved a great deal and is well on the way to achieving Austria's ambitious organic targets. Recognising weak points is important for the further development in order to be able to develop approaches to solutions. Further growth in the organic sector requires a balance between supply and demand. The growth rates of organic production in the EU countries represent increasing competition on the international organic market. Furthermore, a reduction in the use of plant protection products, in particular copper (authorisation not secured for the future), and the testing of alternatives is necessary. A further focus should be placed on dealing with exemptions, as well as on counselling and education.

The success in overcoming the challenges mentioned and those not mentioned will depend decisively on how well the players will manage to work together. The constant exchange between farms, interest groups, processing and marketing, science, teaching and consulting, administration and the media, but also the involvement of consumers play an important role in this context.

What does the youth think?



Pupils Raumberg-Gumpenstein

Expectations

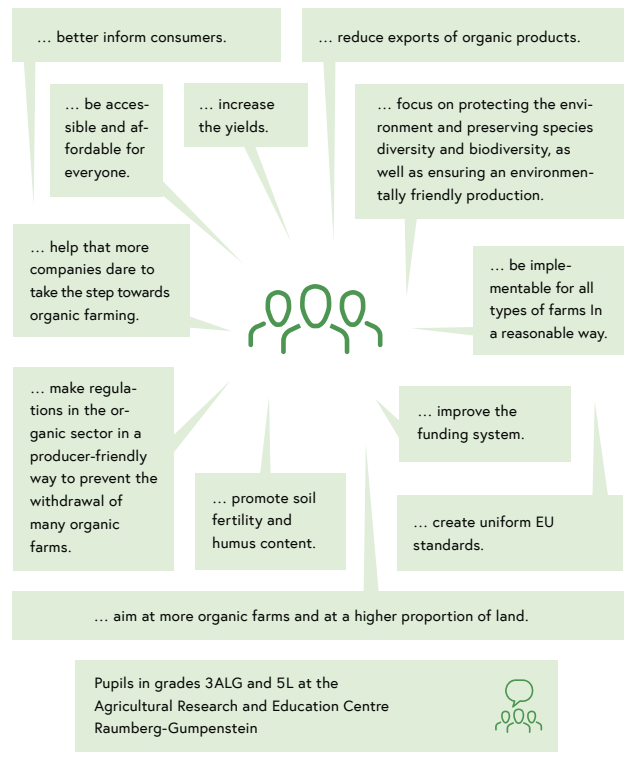


Pupils Raumberg-Gumpenstein

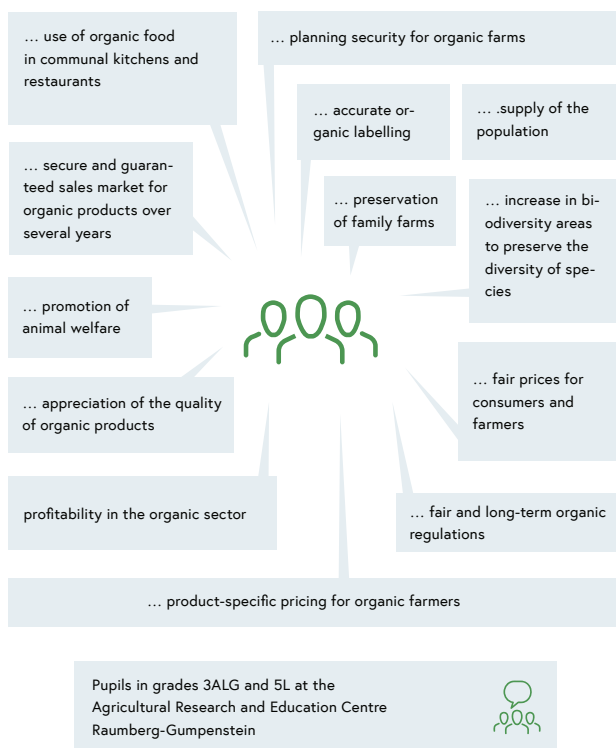
Pupils in grades 3ALG and 5L of the Agricultural Research and Education Centre Raumberg-Gumpenstein have worked out in a workshop their ideas and goals for the future organisation of organic farming.

They give us an insight into what young people expect from organic farming.

Organic farming should in future ...



What is particularly important to the pupils





Organic as a subject of controversial debates

Discussions

Despite the scientifically proven benefits for animals and the environment the concept of organic farming is repeatedly challenged from the agricultural sector as well as from the consumer side and from the media. In many cases, the advantages are not sufficiently taken into account or are presented too generally. In return, however, organic farming must also honestly address its weaknesses in order to make progress.

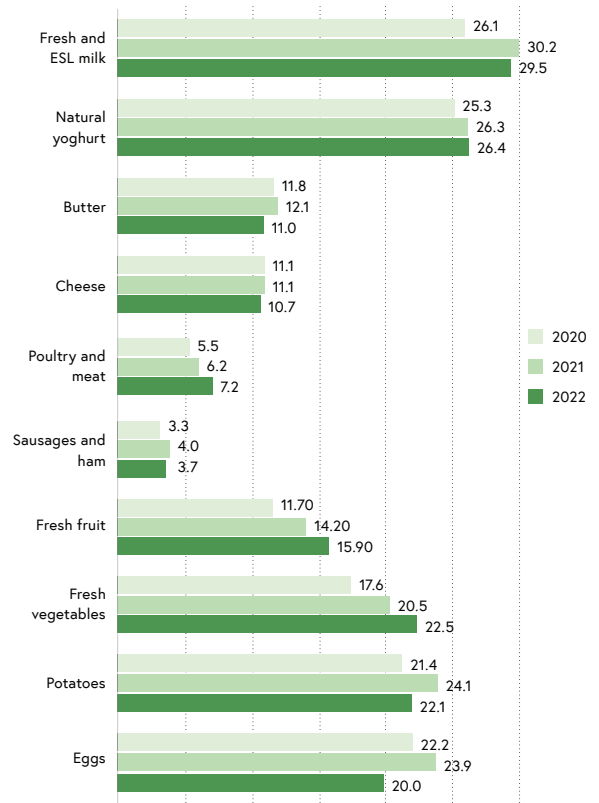
Effects of waves of inflation = decline in sales?

In a world that is changing ever more rapidly, we are not only confronted with constantly changing market situations, but also with price increases in all areas of the value chain. Even without crises, higher production standards and environmentally friendly farming methods in organic agriculture lead to an increased workload (e.g. due to mechanical weed control), which is reflected in the prices. Organic sales figures in Austria have risen steadily in recent years and the products have been well received by consumers. However, if various crises lead to price increases, the question remains as to how these crises will affect organic sales

Due to the wave of inflation in 2022, organic sales figures have fallen slightly, but are still over 10 per cent. If you look at the share by product group, the development varies slightly depending on the product group.

Organic shares by product groups

Percentage of organic purchases in food retail by value
n = 2,800 households in Austria



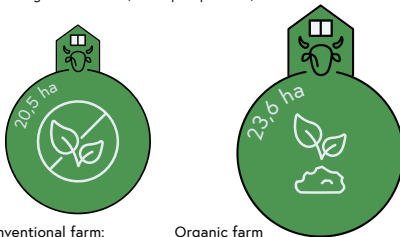
Source: RollAMA/AMA-Marketing

Is organic farming a question of the farm size?

Consumers' expectations are strongly influenced by advertising. Not infrequently does it paint an idyllic, romanticised picture of country life. Austria's agriculture is still mostly run by family farms. In an international comparison these are relatively small-scale. This is also due to the prevailing topographical conditions in Austria with its large proportion of mountainous areas. In principle, no farming method is tied to a specific scale; both organic and non-organic food can be produced on a small and on a large scale. The requirements of the EU Organic Farming Regulation are observed by all organic farms, regardless of their size.

Farm sizes

Average utilised agricultural area (excl. alpine pastures) 2022



Source: BML

It has to be noted positively that organic farming has been successfully established on a large scale in Austria. This can only succeed if organic farms allow innovation, grow with technical developments and at the same time the demand for organic products is increased.

Are organic products always seasonal and regional?



The label "organic" does not say anything about the origin of the product. It relates exclusively to the type of production. Of course, it would be important, and in particular in terms of climate protection, to buy only seasonally available products from the respective region. The most environmentally friendly would be a combination of organic, seasonal and regional.

A change in purchasing behaviour can already be felt, but there is still a lot to be done at all levels. Demand still largely determines supply. Consumer behaviour can therefore influence the product range in retail. Where the organic food comes from can be read from the EU organic logo (green leaf with stars) on the packaging.

organic + seasonal + regional = ideal

In this way I can find regional organic products

www.markta.at



www.bio-austria.at/biomap



Organic farming and security of supply: Can organic farming feed the world?

Productivity is often at the centre of political debates, pushing the environmental benefits of organic farming into the background. Yields are usually lower in organic farming, for example because non-organic yield-enhancing inputs are not used. The difference can vary greatly depending on the crop and the region.

The organic approach leads to higher soil fertility and a more resilient agro-ecosystem, which also leads to more stable harvests. This is achieved in the long term over several years through careful management. Especially in extreme climatic conditions, such as drought and heavy rainfall, a well-functioning agro-ecosystem is more resistant to higher yield losses. Moreover, effective nutrient management and the use of new technologies can also minimise yield losses.

Not only the reduction of yield losses, but also the reduction of food waste and the decrease in meat consumption play a particularly important role in this matter.

Is agroecology a “thinking ahead” of organic farming?

Agroecology and organic farming are often referred to together as approaches to solutions for the agricultural, ecological and social challenges Europe is facing.

Agroecology is regarded as a science, as a practice, and as a social movement and is not only dealing with the ecological conditions and processes in the agricultural system, but also with the reorganisation of agricultural and food systems as a whole. The principles of agroecology pursue transparency and sustainability along the entire value chain. In this context, attention is paid to social, ecological and economic components in the entire food system.

There are many interfaces between the concerns of organic farming and agroecology. This is why organic farming is often considered to be a part of agroecology. However, there is one significant difference: Organic farming has established guidelines and works according to production standards. Standards in certified organic agriculture are verifiable, controlled and documented. So far, there are no such standards for agroecology.

Austria joined the international Agroecology Coalition in 2022. The aim is to support and accelerate the transformation of food systems towards sustainability with the help of agroecological principles. The dependence on external inputs and fossil raw materials shall be minimised.



Annex

Organic associations in Austria

Organic associations have made a significant contribution to the success of organic farming in Austria with their dedicated work in the areas of public relations, farmer counselling, the promotion of marketing initiatives, and as interest groups. By joining them, organic farmers are making a conscious decision to continue and further develop the path of organic farming together.

Bio Austria is currently Europe's largest organic association with around 13,500 members (as of 2023). Various associations work together in the organic network and are thus available as partners to consumers, politicians and the media as well as to processing and trade at national and regional levels.

Smaller organic associations, some of which operating regionally, also play an important role in the further development of organic products and in providing advice, marketing and disseminating information.



Bio-Austria

Theresianumgasse 11/1, 1040 Vienna
Phone: +43 1 8794701
Email: office@bio-austria.at
Web: www.bio-austria.at



Demeter Austria

Mommsengasse 25/4, 1040 Vienna
Phone: +43 1 8794701
Email: info@demeter.at
Web: www.demeter.at



Bioverband Erde & Saat

(Organic association Earth & Seeds)

Wolfenstraße 20b, 4400 Steyr
Phone: +43 7252 75113
Email: kontakt@erde-saat.at
Web: www.erde-saat.at



Arche Noah

Obere Straße 40, 3553 Schiltern
Phone: +43 2734 8626
Email: info@arche-noah.at
Web: www.arche-noah.at



ORBI-Förderungsgemeinschaft für gesundes Bauerntum (Association for the promotion of healthy peasantry)

Haimschlag 15, 3903 Echtsenbach
Phone: +43 664 5248966
Email: josef.kuehboeck@wvnet.at
Web: www.orbi.or.at



BIO Ennstal

Stainach 160, 8950 Stainach
Phone: +43 676 5503310
Email: marketing@bio-ennstal.at
Web: www.bio-ennstal.at



Freiland Verband

Doblhoffgasse 7/10, 1010 Vienna
Phone: +43 1 4088809
Email: office@freiland.or.at
Web: www.freiland.or.at





**B.A.F. Verein der biologisch wirtschaftenden Ackerbaubetriebe
(Association of organic arable farms)**

Loosdorf 1, 2133 Loosdorf

Phone: +43 664 432 4948

Email: a.schmid@gut-kanzelhof.at

Web: www.bioackerfrucht.at



Selected Links

Organic information

Website of the Ministry of Agriculture: www.bml.gv.at/land/bio-lw.html

Platform of the Ministry of Consumer Protection:

www.verbrauchergesundheits.gv.at/lebensmittel/bio/bio_produkte.html

Organic information of the Austrian Marketing Association

AMA Marketing GesmbH: www.bioinfo.at

Information portal of Bio Austria: www.bio-austria.at

Institute of Organic Farming at the Research and Education Centre

Raumberg-Gumpenstein: www.raumberg-gumpenstein.at

Institute of Organic Agriculture at the University of Natural Resources and

Life Sciences (IFÖL): www.nas.boku.ac.at/ifoel

Organic Research Austria: www.bioforschung.at

Website of the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture: www.lko.at/bio

Organic in the leisure time

www.biomaps.at

www.biohotels.at

www.urlaubambauernhof.at/de/hofarten/betriebe/biohof

International affairs

Organic information from the European Commission:

www.organic-farming.europa.eu

IFOAM Organics Europe: www.organicseurope.bio

IFOAM Organics International: www.ifoam.bio

Interesting organic statistics at

Green Report: www.gruenerbericht.at

Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau (FiBL)

(Research Institute of Organic Agriculture): www.organic-europe.net

Organic research platforms

Research platform of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management BML: dafne.at

Organic Eprints: www.orgprints.org

Organic Farm Knowledge: organic-farmknowledge.org

TP Organics: tporganics.eu

More information

IFOAM Organics Europe (2022): Organic agriculture and its benefits for climate and biodiversity. www.organicseurope.bio/content/uploads/2022/04/IFOAMEU_advocacy_organic-benefits-for-climate-and-biodiversity_2022.pdf?dd (organicseurope.bio)

Thomas Zuna-Kratky (2022): Veränderung von Insektenpopulationen in Österreich in den letzten 30 Jahren – Ursachen und ausgewählte Beispiele. dafne.at/content/report_release/dab90513-3f9f-4f54-a963-ff51bc631fad_2.pdf (dafne.at)

Helga Willer, Jan Trávníček, Claudia Meier and Bernhard Schlatter (Eds.) (2022): The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2022. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL, Frick, and IFOAM–Organics International, Bonn. www.fibl.org/fileadmin/documents/shop/1344-organic-world-2022.pdf

Orders

This brochure “Organic Farming in Austria” can be downloaded online or ordered at info.bml.gv.at/service/publications

