

ASPECTS REGARDING THE STAGE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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For the New Member States from 1st May 2004, organic holdings represent 0.25% in total holdings. In 2003, certified organic and in-conversion area accounted for 5.1 million ha in EU-15, with around 3.1 million ha of grassland&fodder crops, 1.3 million of arable crops, 0.4 million ha under horticulture and 0.3 million ha occupied by other. Cereals appeared the most important crop and represented about 70% of organic arable area. In 2003, EU-25 certified total livestock amounted to about 3 million livestock unit or 2.3% of the total EU-25 livestock. The number of certified pigs is still quite low with 450,000 heads or 0.4% of the total pig herd in the EU-15. EU-15 certified broiler and laying hens number amounted to more than 9 and 6 million respectively. France represented about half of broilers. The United Kingdom and France held the largest number of laying hens. EU-15 certified sheep&goats amounted to 2.4 million heads or 2.4% of total sheep&goats herd. Significant share of EU-15 certified sheep are located in the United Kingdom and Italy. Half of the certified goats are located in Greece.

Keywords: *organic agriculture, Europe Union, EU-15.*

Organic agriculture is developing rapidly and is now practiced in more than 120 countries of the world. Its share of agricultural land and farms continues to grow in many countries. According to the latest survey on organic farming worldwide, almost 31 million hectares are currently managed organically by at least 633891 farms.

The continent with most organic land is Australia/Oceania with almost 11.9 million hectares, followed by Europe with almost 7 million hectares, Latin America (5.8 million hectares), Asia (almost 2.9 million hectares), North America (2.2 million hectares) and Africa (almost 0.9 million hectares) (table 1).

The top 10 countries have 23.7 million hectares together, thus constituting more than three quarters of the world's organic land (figure 1).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, organic farming has rapidly developed in almost all European countries. As of the end of 2005, 6.9 million hectares in Europe were managed organically by almost 190'000 farms. In the European Union, almost 6.3 million hectares are under organic management, and there are almost 160'000 organic farms. This constitutes 3.9 percent of the agricultural area. The country with the highest number of farms and the largest organic area is Italy. (fig. 2).

Table 1

Organic land and farms by continent

Continent	Organic land area (hectares)	Share of total agriculture area	Organic farms
Africa	890,504	0.11	124,805
Asia	2,893,572	0.21	129,927
Europa	6,920,462	1.38	187,697
America Latină	5,809,320	0.93	176,710
America de Nord	2,199,225	0.56	12,063
Australia/Oceania	11,845,100	2.59	2,689
TOTAL	30,558,183	0.74	633,891

Source: Willer Helga, Yussefi M., *The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends, 2007*

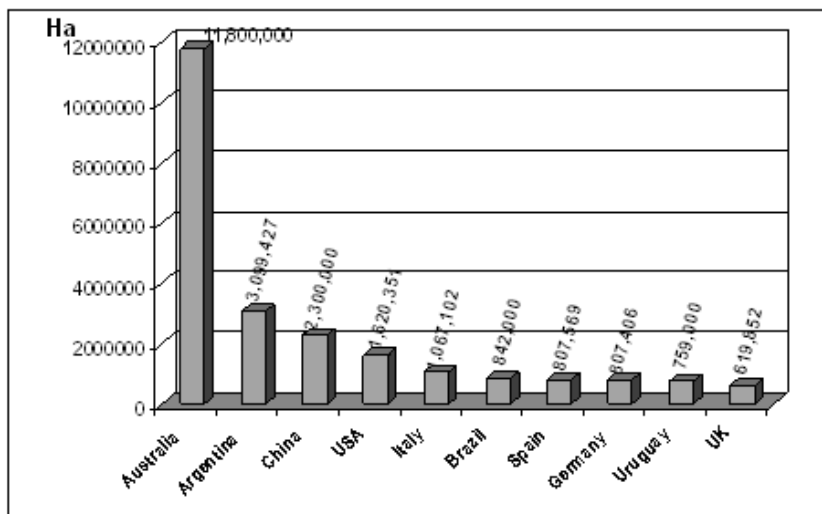


Figure 1. The ten countries with most organic land

Source: Willer Helga, Yussefi M., *The World of Organic Agriculture Statistics and Emerging Trends, 2007*

The certified organic and in-conversion area is 5.7 mio ha at EU-25 and represents 3.6 % of the Utilized Agriculture Area. At EU-15 level, certified organic and in-conversion area increased from 0.7 mio ha in 1993 to 5.1 mio ha in 2003, which means that nearly, 4.0% of Utilized Agriculture Area were estimated to be grown under organic conditions in 2003. In New Member States from 1st May 2004 certified organic and in-conversion area was 0.6 mio ha, representing 1.9% of the Utilized Agriculture Area (fig. 3).

There are substantial differences between the individual countries regarding the importance of organic farming in EU-25. In 2003, in absolute value, Italy had the most important organic area with more than 1.0 mio ha (about a fifth of EU-25), followed by Germany, Spain and United Kingdom, all three countries with about 0.7 mio ha, and France (0.55 mio ha). The most important organic area in the New Member States from 1st May 2004 is located in the Czech Republic with 0.25 mio ha and Hungary 0.1 mio ha.

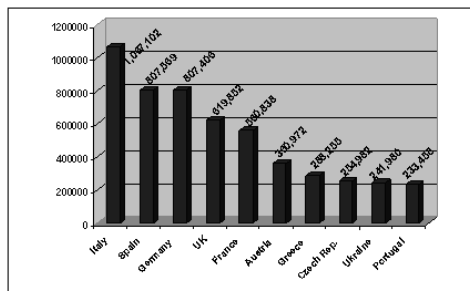


Fig. 2. The ten countries with the highest area of organic farming land in Europe (2005)

Source: Willer Helga, Yussefi M., *The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends, 2007*

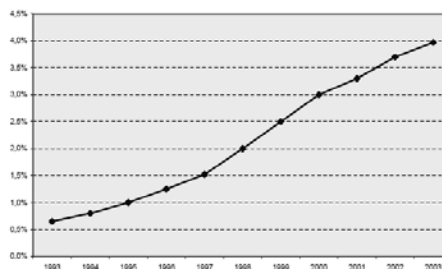


Fig. 3. Share of organic area in Utilized Agriculture Area in EU-15, 1993-2003 (%)

Source: *Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures Report Commission Européenne, 2005*

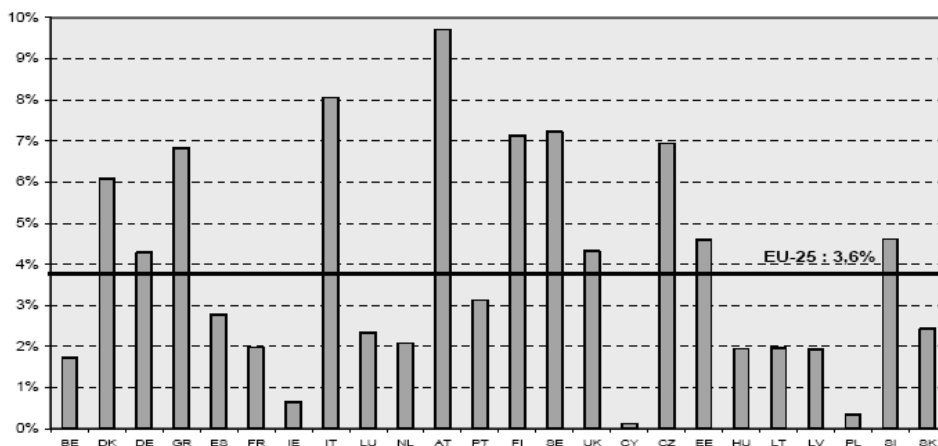


Figure 4. Share of organic area in Utilized Agriculture Area in EU-25, 2003 (%)

Source: *Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures, Report Commission Européenne, 2005*

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This paper aims at providing an overview of the development in the organic farming sector over the last years. Based on Eurostat statistical information and other sources, it analyses certified organic and in-conversion area, number of certified organic and in-conversion holdings, breakdown of crop area, livestock.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At EU-25 level, 149,000 holdings are certified organic and in-conversion holdings, which represent 1.4% of total agricultural holdings. In EU-15, certified organic and in-conversion holdings increased from 29,000 in 1993 to more than

140,000 in 2003, which means that in 2003, slightly more than 2% of all holdings were organic. Moreover, after reaching its highest in 2001 at 143,000, this number was slightly decreasing over the following years. For the New Member States from 1st May 2004, organic holdings represent a share of 0.25% in total holdings.

In 2003, certified organic and in-conversion area accounted for 5.1 million ha in EU-15, with around 3.1 million ha of grassland & fodder crops, 1.3 million of ha arable crops, 0.4 million ha under horticulture and 0.3 million ha occupied by other.

Of the 1.3 million ha of organic arable crops, 0.30 million ha are located in Germany, 0.28 million ha in Italy, 0.16 million ha in Spain and 0.12 million ha in France. Cereals appeared the most important organic crop and represented about 70% of organic arable area (figure 5).

Of the 3.1 million ha of organic grassland & fodder crops, 0.60 million ha are located in the United Kingdom, 0.56 million ha in Italy, 0.42 million ha in Spain, 0.37 million ha in Germany, 0.35 million ha in France, 0.23 million ha in Austria and 0.20 in Greece (figure 6).

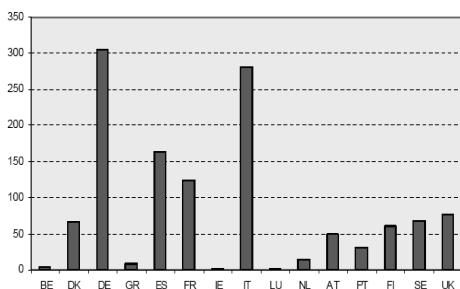


Fig. 5. Organic and in-conversion arable land in EU-15, 2003 (000 ha)

Source: *Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures, Report Commission Européenne, 2005*

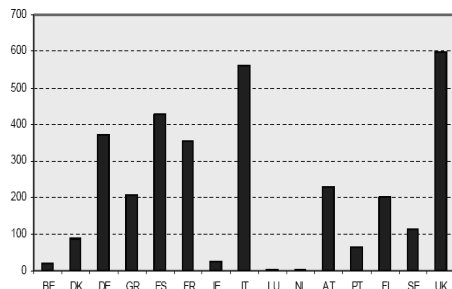


Fig. 6. Organic and in-conversion grassland & fodder area in EU-15, 2003 (000 ha)

Source: *Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures, Report Commission Européenne, 2005*

At EU-25 level, certified total livestock was about 3 million Livestock Unit or 2.3% of the total EU-25 livestock in 2003. On average in the New Member States from 1st May 2004 organic livestock is at a low level, but quite significant number of organic livestock was observed in the Czech Republic (75 000 Livestock Unit) and Hungary (60 000 Livestock Unit) (figure 7).

In 2003, EU-15 certified pigs amounted to 450,000 head or about 0.4% of total pig herd. Only a few Member States had a significant share of certified animals, Germany with 8% and France with 4%. The number of certified pigs is still relative low (figure 8).

In 2003, EU-15 certified broiler and laying hens number amounted to more than 9 and 6 million respectively, France ranked first with 5.1 million for broilers and the United Kingdom (1.4 million) and France (1.3 million) for laying hens (figure 9).

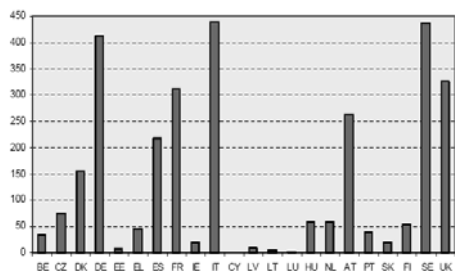


Fig. 7. Certified livestock units in EU-25, 2003 (000)

Source: Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures, Report Commission Européenne, 2005

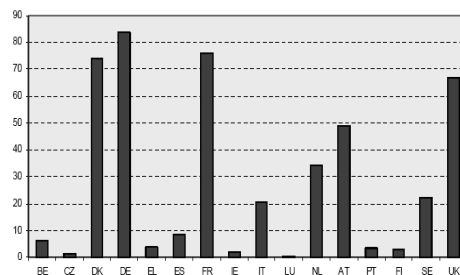


Fig. 8. Number of certified pigs in EU-17, 2003 (000)

Source: Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures, Report Commission Européenne, 2005

In 2003, EU-15 certified sheep & goats amounted to 2.4 million heads or 2.4% of total sheep & goats herd. Of the about 2 million certified sheep, 35% are located in the United Kingdom, 21% in Italy and 11% in Germany. Of the 380 000 certified goats, 49% are located in Greece and 26% in Italy (figure 10).

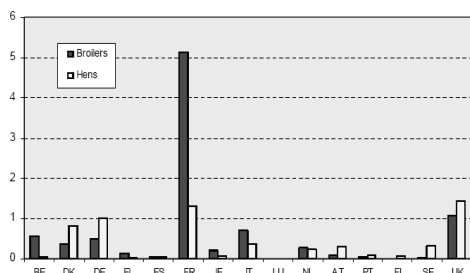


Fig. 9. Number of certified broilers and hens in EU-15, 2003 (million)

Source: Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures, Report Commission Européenne, 2005

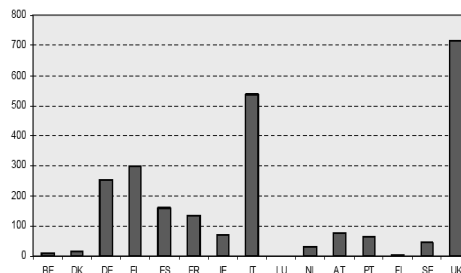


Fig. 10. Number of certified sheep & goats in EU-15, 2003 (000)

Source: Organic farming in the European Union. Facts and figures, Report Commission Européenne, 2005

CONCLUSION

In 2004, twenty-four million hectares were managed organically, 2005 saw twenty-six million hectares in production, and, finally, in 2006, the area of land rose to thirty-one million hectares. For organic agriculture to continue succeeding globally, it will be important for developed country players to find a level of comfort with big businesses, avoid internal divisions that weaken and undermine the industry and cause frustrations and uncertainty for consumers, and, in particular, support the entry of developing country producers into the market.

If all people and organizations that show interest in organic agriculture - governments, agribusiness, executives, farmers, and consumers - come together, it is possible to find solutions to the biggest of challenges. Organic agriculture

contributes directly to poverty alleviation and increased food security and indirectly to increased health and environmental conditions of local communities and, ultimately, an increased standard of living.

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