

EU POLICIES IN ORGANIC FARMING

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ORGANIC ACTION PLAN - ACTIONS, AXES AND PILLARS

The European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming (EU Commission 2004, COM (2004)415 final) introduces the basic tools for the European-wide growth of the organic sector. Action 6 is connecting the Action Plan to the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and proposes full use of the Rural Development programmes in order to help organic farming in the Member States.

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The enforcement of Action 6 of the Organic Action Plan requires reference to all Member States' Rural Development programmes. This reference should be organized at the level of basic discussions on the programme after through determining the aims for the execution of the activities in the organic sector in the Member States (regions) and finally, through finding the way to reach these aims by specific measures and a substantial budget for the sector.

This budget is confined, because the prevailing 1st pillar payments of the CAP claim that a part of two-thirds of the total EU agricultural budget represents national funding and in addition - co-financing is included. Thus, the Rural Development programmes devoted to organic farming have to undercut with a lot of measures decreasing the resources support for the sector. This will happen if the programme does not provide a set of measures initiated to support organic agriculture. The major parts of the programme put aims on the further execution of organic farming. These aims are realized by keeping the existing field area, increasing the number of farms, working out a product scale, and enhancing product quality by supporting processing and marketing projects.

In the course of executing Action 6, the Member States and regions can be separated in three classes:

A) Group of Member States' programmes lacking in their review and declaratory

- Declaration for organizing the Rural Development programmes - link to the EU Action

- Layout, serving as bypass for execution of Action 6.

B) Group of Member States bounding their view and vindication for some measures to the adequate Community documents and in this way - to the EU Organic Action Plan.

C) Group of Member States that has put organic farming as a priority for the Rural Development programme.

Thus, treating the Organic Action Plan and settling organic farming as a priority, the last two classes can be accepted as Member States implementing Action 6. Anyway, this does not certainly guarantee the programme quality regarding the organic farming.

The Rural development measures are allocated along three thematic axes:

- Axis 1: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector. Here, measures for farm modernization, the setting up and use of advisory services, participation in food quality schemes, adding value to agricultural and forestry products, etc. are foreseen

- Axis 2: Improving the environment and the countryside. Here, agri-environmental programmes, natural handicap payments, etc. are planned.

- Axis 3: Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy. This axis includes measures for diversification into non-agricultural activities, tourism activities, conservation and upgrading of rural heritage, etc.

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The Member States have implemented measures for organic farming by accepting the references of the strategic guidelines - only in Axis 2 (“Improving the environment and the countryside”), said in the Agri-environmental programme. Promotion of the organic land area is proposed nearly by all programmes, but mainly for discussions. Supplementary measures for organic farming can be track down only in some of the national and regional Rural Development programmes. Nevertheless, most of the programmes have treated organic farming as one of the priorities for certain measures as follows.

- Axis 1: Specifically, measure 121 "Farm modernisation", measure 123 "Adding value to agricultural and forestry products", measure 132 "Supporting farmers who participate in food quality schemes", and measure 133 "Supporting producer groups for information and promotion activities for products under food quality schemes".

An advantage for organic farms or projects is proposed only in a several programmes in Europe.

The analysis reflecting stipulations in Action 6 of the ongoing national and regional Rural Development programmes indicates that most Member States do not or only partly are carrying out Action 6. In fact, just few of the Member States possess opportunities to help organic farming to be used and can be considered enough performed.

Thus, the basic features for adequate execution of Action 6 of the European Organic Action Plan within the national and regional Rural Development programmes are listed in Table 1.:

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Table 1. Basic features for adequate execution of Action 6 of the European Organic Action Plan

Activities	Recommendations for realisation
Larger share of 2nd pillar budget in CAP budget in the Member States (especially in „old“ Member States)	Next programming period
Effective use of Rural Development budget with targeted use for the organic sector by defining ambitious aims and delivering appropriate budgets for reaching the aims.	Current programming period
Effective support in agri-environmental programmes (no programme without organic measure, for conversion and maintenance)	Next programming period
Defining the organic farming measure as the top-level measure in the programme, with a considerable gap in the level of support to other measures.	Current programming period
No discrimination for organic farmers in agri-environmental measures, e.g. lower support level for organic land area in the same measure, maximum support level per hectare/per farm too limited to give incentive to conversion to organic farming	Current programming period
Setting priority for organic projects and farmers in Axis 1, Axis 3 and Axis 4 (LEADER) measures to support and develop the organic sector from «field to fork».	Current programming period

The analysis of the data showed an evaluation of all the Member States' and regional Rural Development programmes. It is made considering the budgets for the organic sector, and serves as a basis for new Organic Action Plan. It also outlines the performance of reform of the CAP for future Rural Development programmes development.

The European Commission have issued recommendations to the Member States for optimal exploitation of all instruments available to support organic farming within their Rural Development programmes. It is advising the development of national or regional Action Plans to

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be used as an approach for this exploitation. The main focus in these action plans should be put on:

- ✓ Implementation of new quality schemes to stimulate the demand side;
- ✓ Organization of activities that preserve the long-term benefits for the environment and nature protection;
- ✓ Encouragement of organic farmers to convert their whole farms into organic ones;
- ✓ Assurance of equal opportunities to organic and non-organic farmers for receiving investment support;
- ✓ Developing initiatives to stimulate producers in facilitating the distribution and marketing through integration of the production chain by (contractual) arrangements between its main players;
- ✓ Support to extension services;
- ✓ Training and education in organic farming for all engaged with production, processing and marketing;
- ✓ Making organic farming the preferred management option in environmentally sensitive areas.

The development of the Organic Action Plan, The European Rural Development Fund for the period has been established together with the EU Community strategic guidelines for rural development.

For Axis 2 measures - chapter 3.2 of these strategic guidelines a recommendation has been issued that stresses upon "*consolidation of the contribution of organic farming*", because "*organic farming represents a holistic approach to sustainable agriculture. In this respect, its contribution to environmental and animal welfare objectives could be further reinforced*".

Additionally, in the course of development of the national strategies the member States were advised to consider the EU level strategies: "*In working out their national strategies, Member States should ensure that synergies between and within the axes are maximised and potential contradictions avoided. Where appropriate, they may develop integrated approaches. They will also wish to reflect on how to take into account other EU-level strategies, such as the Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming, ...*"

Although the application of the above mentioned instruments supports the organic farming and the implementation of Action 6 of the Organic Action Plan, the quality of this support varied considerably and needs evaluation. The evaluation and the potential obstacles for further development of the sector are defined and performed through the measures of the Rural Development programmes. In fact, the evaluation is necessary to analyze whether the European Commission was successful with one of the most crucial actions of its Organic Action Plan.

ALLOCATION OF BUDGETS TO THE MEMBER STATES

The role of the environment and organic farming for the Member States economies and societies is estimated through evaluation applying the following indicators:

- Allocation of budgets for Rural Development programmes (Pillar 2) (absolute values)
- Allocation of budgets for Rural Development programmes (Pillar 2) (in relation to Pillar 1)
- Relationship of the budgets of Pillar 2 Axes 1, 2 and 3.

These valuable indicators have been applied and analysed for the EU-27. The evaluation was considered important since the EU Pillar 2 budget has been harshly reduced for the financial period 2007-2013, in contrast to the Pillar 1 budget that remained intact. On the other hand, the requirements to be fulfilled by the Rural Development programmes had to take under consideration the severe problems with the climate change and the implementation of nature preservation global programmes (e.g. Natura 2000). That is why the Pillar 2 reduced budgets needed carefully planned targeted use to guarantee the effectiveness of the programmes.

Another important indicator that have to be considered are the budget allocated to the organic farming measures in the agri-environmental programmes and the share for organic projects in other Rural Development measures.

Pillar 1 - Pillar 2 relationship

The CAP budget is divided in two main parts: Pillar 1 for market and direct aids, Pillar 2 for rural development. However, this division is quite unfavorable for the rural development, because of the following main reasons:

- ✓ The EU budget for pillar2 is much lower than for pillar1:
- ✓ Based on the EU budget for 2007, the two budgets (pillar 1 : pillar 2) ration is 77% : 23%. Speaking about total budget (EU plus national co-financing) this ratio is 67% : 33%.
- ✓ The Pillar 2 budgets require national co-financing (on the contrary, the EU funding for Pillar 1 is 100%). This fact which restricts both the interest and the ability of Member States to implement ambitious Rural Development programmes, since it is not easy to assure national co-financing.
- ✓ Pillar 1 payments only require minimum standards to be fulfilled (cross compliance), and therefore they are available to most farmers throughout Europe without the requirements these farmers to assure contribution through improvements on an economic or ecological level.

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Actually, the relevance of Rural Development programmes in the Member States is estimated through the distribution of the budget for the Pillars 1 and 2. The lower financial values for Pillar 2 indicate that considerable financing for it would ensure a broader range of measures that are better financially equipped and therefore more attractive to the farmers.

The effective rural development measures require certain standards, e.g. environmental standards for participation in agri-environmental programmes. That is why, keeping in compliance with these standards lead to increased public acceptance of financial support for agriculture and rural areas.

In addition to the relation to Pillar 1, Pillar 2 absolute budget values are also rather small.

New Member States show a significantly different distribution of Pillar 1 and 2 budgets. As a rule, the Pillar 2 budgets are at least equal to the Pillar 1 budgets. As the Pillar 2 budgets are co-financed by the Member States and regions, the proportions shift towards a minimum share 60:40 (pillar 2: pillar 1). The only old Member States exhibiting a similar profile are Austria (46%) and Portugal (43%), based on EU funded budgets, and Finland (62%), Austria (60%), Luxemburg (59%) and Portugal (49%) based on a calculation with national co-financed budgets.

Pillar 2 Axis 1: Axis 2: Axis 3 ratio: inside the Rural Development programmes

The Rural Development programmes budget has to be planned in a way to support financially a wide range of measures, such as support for advisory systems and quality production, farm investment, agri-environmental programmes, infrastructure measures on community level, etc. The good financing of these measures is a prerequisite for their effectiveness. The Rural Development regulations have shaped a framework within which the Member States had the opportunity to tailor their national and regional programmes considering the local circumstances and conditions. Thus, each development programme will set out priorities that are accustomed to the country/region specific conditions. In this way, the different programmes will have an important impact on the further development and orientation of agriculture and rural areas.

EU CAP AND BIO-BASED PRODUCTS

The chemical fertilizers became free for all throughout the world in the last century. This trend resulted in immediate enlargement in the crop yield, thus lead to promotion of the profit for the farmers. Meanwhile, in recent years a serious environmental breakdown is noticed due to chemical fertilizers' permanent field application and overuse. The practice of the chemical fertilizers is related with water and soil pollution, loss of beneficial microorganisms and insects and in this way - in overall reduction of soil fertility. This motivates the modern day farmers to

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show interest in more eco-friendly products like bio-fertilizers that hold promising future in reducing soil quality problems with optimum crop yield.

The EU CAP promotes employment of bio-based products along with organic farming. It furnishes up to 30% of the budget as direct green payment to farmers preserving the sustainable agricultural practices. Moreover, awareness regarding the environment and demand for soil fertility and organic foods propel market sales.

Favorable regulations, especially in Europe and North America, are intended to be a key exploiter of the global industry. Also, the claim for high agricultural output to answer to human needs is appraised to achieve industrial revenues. Besides, minor product costs in parallel to affected spear would impulse industry demand from 2016 to 2024.

Meanwhile European quest for good food and good farming is rising. Human population, as well as farmers and citizens, are eager for innovation and need to receive better food and farming policies based on agro-ecological approaches.

Currently, EU policymakers have recognized the dual role of organic farming: from one hand, it is necessary to meet the consumers' demand for high quality products and from another - to ensure some public goods.

All these involve, for instance, the preservation and retrieve of water and soil quality as a result of organic land management practices.

This perception is coming out in the early 1990s, when organic farming was legally defined under EU Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. During this time, the organic farming support payments for transformation and maintenance were established under the CAP.

For the meantime, the confession of organic farming has also expanded to other EU policy domains, such as research and some areas of market progress.

Nevertheless, it is still important in many policy areas the necessity to support climate for local and organic food chains. The EU citizens are also maintaining the EU organic market opportunities valued at EUR 20.8 billion in 2012. Thus, regardless the consumer demand progress in many EU countries, provision of such organic foods is not enough. The EU citizens prefer organic production of food, and the majority of farmers have to be encouraged for application of such methods in order to produce more organic products. So, researchers and policymakers now also confess the power of agro-ecological practices and innovation.

It is proofed that the favorable climate is crucial for organic farming and for this reason, farmers need public support for use of agro-ecological methods linked with strong demands for organic products production. At the same time, they also need to receive the policymakers' support for the development of this sector.

Here the outlines of some opportunities and challenges impacting the new and existing EU policy for organic food and farming, and the agri-food sector, as well as ways that can help to make Europe more organic are given.

FOSTERING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN A GREENER AND FAIRER CAP

Greening direct payments for all farmers

For the first time, public good delivery constitutes a significant part of both direct payments and rural development. Under Pillar 1 of the CAP, direct payment eligibility depends on farmers undertaking three basic agronomic practices - crop diversification, the protection of permanent grassland and the allocation of 7 % of farmland as ecological focus areas. Collectively, these are known as the greening component. This new component represents 30% of national funding for Pillar 1.

Furthermore, under Pillar 2 Member States are legally required to spend at least 30 % of their rural development budgets on environmental measures, including commitments in support of organic production and agri-environmental climate protection practices, which go beyond the Pillar 1 greening.

The introduction of greening marks the beginning of a process towards normalizing public good delivery across the entire CAP. Organic farming is deemed to be also a compliant greening factor. This acknowledges the public good delivery aspect of organic farming as the only EU-wide certified, systemic approach to sustainable agriculture. The recognition can be seen as a strong political signal from EU policymakers that they view organic farming as a priority model of agricultural sustainability, and as an active contribution to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, as well as for climate change mitigation and adaptation. On the other hand, the low level of ambition of the greening measures as well as the introduction of questionable exemptions will severely curtail the potential of greening to drive public good delivery. For instance, in the European Commission's original proposals the greening component referred to all farms. However, in the final political agreement the measures are targeted primarily at arable farmers and will probably have very little impact on livestock farming. The concept of equivalency, whereby practices undertaken as part of agri-environmental measures or special certification schemes exempt farmers from greening requirements, also weakens the greening component. Ultimately, therefore, achieving a genuine paradigm change in agricultural sustainability will require corrections and improvements to be made in subsequent reforms.

Organic farming boosts greening

The implementation of CAP regulations regarding the perspective of organic farming defines the recognition of impact on greening. The opposing effect could be expected if Member States use the recognition as a reason for neglecting the support of organic farming under Pillar 2. Thus, the Member States have to guarantee a more positive and functional promotion for the headway towards sustainable agriculture in Europe. It is considered that greening concept is coherent with strong support for organic farming under Pillar 2.

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The support for the organic farming is founded in the demands set up under EU Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, and also through national legislation. It influences the coverage of the greening objectives. Thus, the Pillar 2 payments must therefore ensure explicit sustenance for organic farming, with admission playing as a positive signal of the EU's obligation to sustainability that can help to drive agro-ecological conversion throughout Europe.

Recent sustainability in rural development

The orientation of Pillar 1 regarding public goods provision is a welcome progress; measures under Pillar 2 are the basic exploiter for the growth of organic farming and considerable sustainability in rural areas.

During the new rural development programming period of 2014 to 2020, the organic farming is regarded as a step in its own right, giving opportunity to certify organic farmers or groups of farmers for a period of five to seven years, on a per-hectare basis. Payments are designed to compensate farmers for additional costs incurred and income foregone, and to cover transaction costs such as increased management efforts, certification costs and training and advice. Today, most authorities in the Member States offer organic support payments under their national or regional rural development programmes (RDPs). However, support levels differ between and within Member States, and they often fail to adequately cover all the extra costs, or to take into account the reduction in yields organic farmers might face. Therefore, organic farming support payments must represent a significant top-up compared to conventional farm support payments, in order to provide farmers with strong incentives to convert to and maintain organic farming. In the new programming period, organic farmers are also still eligible for optional agri-environment-climate payments that go beyond the requirements of organic production, such as the preservation of indigenous animal breeds or the conservation of plant genetic resources. However, the provision of combination payments is at the discretion of the Member States; it can be made organic-specific or may apply to all farmers, varying significantly across national and regional RDPs. To stimulate more far-reaching agro-ecological approaches, organic farming systems should be clearly prioritised under new agri-environment-climate schemes.

EU ORGANIC FOOD AND FARMING POLICY

RDP measures combined with organic farming support

New RDPs policy also proceeds to propose different opportunities to join organic farming aid with other RDP measures, like farm funding, diversification, advisory services, information and promotion activities, and producer groups.

Definite assistance for organic farming is now more apparent in a number of measures. The organic farmers now receive financial support for a 20 % higher rate in comparison to the previous

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situations, which improve farm sustainability and performance of processing, marketing and farm product development.

Also, the organic sector can also be helped by EU dissemination activities. But the new CAP Regulations have to be maintained by the Member States' farm advisory systems. Other initiatives are also convenient to strength organic sector such as: planning of non-agricultural activities; assistance in the formation of producer groups; support for measures related to the environment and climate change; short supply chains and innovation performance.

Organic farming is substantially mentioned or prioritized through measures under RDPs for 2007-2013 in some Member States. Besides, a substantial variation in supply under these measures between different countries and within EU states occurs. Many authorities do not succeed to overpass the classical payments model in agri-environmental area and to implement a more holistic model, combining organic support payments with other RDP measures. Meanwhile, the substantial visibility of organic farming regarding other RDP measures, like investments and advisory services, gives new opportunities for prevailing of organic farming in RDPs. boosting agro-ecological innovation in the new European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI).

The prevailing of the organic farming in rural development, pointed out by the EU leaders is of great importance and concerns the need for agri-ecological innovation to change European agriculture in more sustainable way. The priority in the next programme period will be innovation, established by the newly build up structure EIP-AGRI. This new EU policy instrument is also a main subject of Horizon 2020, as well as in the rural development policy until 2020.

The goal of EIP-AGRI is to build up a link between research and farming practice by enforcing stakeholders from different areas of the agri-food system. It aims to boost farmers, businesses, researchers and advisers to divide concept and trials, to implement innovative decisions, and to put the results of research projects into practice. Within the frame of the Rural Development Regulation, the EIP-AGRI claims the necessity for step ahead in the evolution of agri-ecological production systems, focusing on the crucial role of organic farmers at the core of innovation activities supported by the new RDPs.

It is considered that EIP-AGRI proposes considerable resources to foster the development of agri-ecological technology using the strengths of organic farming and accounting weaknesses, thus grasping new opportunities for innovation

The EIP-AGRI work provided will be performed by specific operational groups. It is intended these groups to set up the link between different stakeholders in order to reveal practical problems, which will be accounted as a voluntary measure in the Rural Development Regulation. In such way, the national and regional authorities instead EU officials will determine the objectives and the content of the EIP-AGRI in the Member States. For this reason, these authorities have to support the operational groups that will be responsible for solving organic and agri-ecological problems in the new initiative. It is important that EIP-AGRI will also act as a tool to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and expertise between projects, sectors and borders. It will

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connect farmers, advisors, agri-businesses, researchers as well as and civil society to create a network - the EIP Network, facilitated by the EIP-AGRI service.

Recently, a 20-member focus group on optimising organic arable yields, headed by the European Commission, is working in this area. The group is cooperating various different stakeholders, and is looking for the ways to improve yields on less productive organic farms, in a way to match better production levels of other farms having similar farming systems.

Thus, the focus group gathers existing knowledge (from scientific reports and projects, as well as practical experience) launching innovative solutions. Also, it indicatse specific areas needed for innovative research and marks the topics and criteria for work of future operational groups, as well as the approach for knowledge sharing.

Cohesion and Structural Funds: a new common framework

The 2014-2020 programming period introduces opportunities to facilitate priorities and visibility performance of organic farming, both - under RDPs and different EU policy frameworks. It is a consequence of the fact that they are linked to a new EU instrument called the Common Strategic Framework (CSF). In it, clear investment priorities are determined in respect to the financial planning period 2014-2020 in the Member States and their regions.

Thus, an effort is being made to link rural development with the Cohesion Fund and other EU structural funds. As a result of this effort, the combination of funds with other opportunities to boost EU economic growth and jobs till 2020 together with national priorities will be achieved. The CSF will be also joined to other EU policy instruments such as CAP direct payments, Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020.

Meanwhile, partnership agreements between the European Commission and the national and regional authorities for the next seven year period are provided. With such institutional recognition of the social, economic and environmental benefits of organic food and farming, the establishment of these agreements gives opportunities to prevail organic farming across the new RDPs and other EU policy frameworks.

CAP expend 2014-2020

Agricultural policy is the only sector that is totally funded by the EU, with the funds exhausted on annual direct payments and market measures (100 % financed by the EU). The recall is released to multi-year rural development measures, which are also co-financed through national and regional budgets.

For more of a decade, Pillar 2 measures have stated the CAP for the perspective competitiveness and sustainability of farming enterprises and for greater economic variegation and quality of life in rural areas.

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At the same time, Member States have also been liable to embed their disposable finance for rural development through the so-called modulation - moving funds from Pillars 1 to 2.

Regardless the pattern for provision of considerable help for rural development during the last ten years, Pillar 2 use up is still just a part of Pillar 1. In the seven years period: 2014-2020, rural development will report for just 9 % of the total EU budget, in parallel to the 29 % given for direct payments and market measures.

A simile of forms for 2013 and 2020, for example would have a decrease of -18 % for rural development (from EUR 13.9 billion to EUR 11.4 billion) in comparison to -13 % for direct payments and market measures (from EUR 43.2 billion to EUR 37.6 billion).

If free will cadence is engaged, the decrease for 2020 would rise to -19.7 %. Now Member States have opportunity to exchange 15 % of their direct payments and rural development funds from Pillar 1 to 2, but also in the *vice versa* - from Pillar 2 to Pillar 1. Through this reverse modulation, some Member States can even move up to 25 %. Eight Member States also have opportunity to tune the percentage for specific years during the programming period.

Member states of 9 are still not clear how will solve to employ this choice, with some likely to make full use of the possible cadence alternative, while others will choose modulation to close the gap in Pillar 2 spending, which results from budget cuts.

Until the new CAP has a serious accent on public goods provision between Pillars 1 and 2, the low level of purpose with respect to greening, coupled with the threats of reverse modulation and cuts to the Pillar 2 budget, could seriously undermine support for organic farming. However, other measures could potentially contribute to the development of more sustainable food and farming in Europe.

EU ORGANIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Besides the support under the CAP, EU legislation on organic food and farming has proceeded to develop since EU Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, which was stated in the early 1990s. The growth process also involved a full checkup of the Regulation, culminating in the acceptance of EU Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. From its reception, rules on the performance have been agreed to detail the organic production, as specification of rules on organic wine, organic yeast and organic aquacultures.

EU organic regulations look for to execute a coherent approach to consumer protection, suspending devious contest and providing common standards for organic production, labelling and marketing in the EU.

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Meanwhile, private and other national organic standards, based on the EU claims imaging the specific cultural, structural, geographic and climatic diversity of different Member States and regions, motivate establishment of innovation in organic standards across the sector.

As they form the only EU-wide sustainability label for food, organic standards and certification can facilitate sustainable agriculture, through emphasizing the increase of sustainability across the whole agri-food sector.

The organic farming policy and legislation starting by the European Commission in 2012 culminated in the progress of a new EU Organic Action Plan in 2014, and the substitute of EU Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 in the next EU legislative period 2014-2019. It raises the growth of the EU framework for organic food and farming by achieving a balance between policy bidding and legislative needs.

This could influence the partial and uncertain gathering of data and the anticipating of the production by market quest, to the lack of peculiar organic inputs such as seeds, young animals and protein feed, as well as the administrative load that discourages smaller-scale farmers and operators.

In fact, the current Regulation came into force in 2009. Hence, the goals, objectives and principles of the existing Regulation are not still entirely revealed by the evolution of further rules. Also, any complementary improvements to the regulatory and policy framework have to be understood in the sense of existing progress in organic farming. This process is facilitated through tied in and concerted solution between EU organic legislation and the new EU food and farming policy structure till 2020, such as the CAP and Horizon 2020.

Organic legislation fits the objective

The legislative goals and objectives are linked with chance of considerable variations in respect to time and challenges regarding organic food and farming across the EU. It is important to know, that the small improvements to EU legislation or new regulation based on organic principles or market forces, done by EU policymakers can cause significant effect on the organic sector's future in Europe.

Such evidence is that, a market-driven way could emphasize too much influence on market-orientated outcomes, go after fewer strict legal requirements and spending organic principles. For instance, if any discharge agreed to Member States under the current Regulation, or introduction of option of national ministries allowing imports happens, a serious adverse effect on the realization of sustainable organic agriculture could occur. This will tolerate the risk of contest deformation between Member States. In order to make organic production close to the principles set out in the Regulation, an approach of standards strengthening is keeping. However, it is necessary flexibility or exemption rules available to Member State to be maintained in order to fit the purpose for sustainable development of organic farming. For this reason, sector realities in different Member States and regions must be considered. So long as some delivery is no longer needful, then others will call for changes in line with the evolution of standards that the organic

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sector has performed since the onset of the Regulation. Anyway, the prompt elimination of all exclusive rules would be unthinkable today, since their amount stays crucial for definite production sectors and in geographical areas where the organic sector is still in its beginning.

Thus, combination of the different ways is necessary to assure a good account within the basic norms of organic farming and the long-term evolution and enlargement of the European organic sector.

Alterations, like input of group certification systems (currently only accepted in non-EU developing countries), or the demand that processors and traders have measured the environmental performance of their activities or present opportunities, are considered.

A set of certification systems in the EU for instance, would allow groups of small-scale farmers to receive certification as single unit, thus reducing the bureaucratic load of certification.

In addition, better environmental output insistence for processors could influence the sustainability standards minding by organic growers and livestock producers in order to move EU organic food to an even wider concept of sustainability.

Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 has been an important driver of the organic sector in Europe.

A new regulation should proceed to favor the growth of the sector by fostering a process-orientated approach that progress standards in the line of the basic organic farming principles.

Consumers and producers should work together to help the progress of the sector with EU and national policy frameworks giving to this dynamic through new EU and national organic action plans.

A NEW EU ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

The EU food and farming policies provokes interest of organic farming, and policymakers begin to value the multi-layered importance of organic systems and sustainable food and agriculture.

This began from the making of high quality food products and the provision of public goods, to job creation and the promotion of the agri-food sector and rural economies. Yet, a pursuant organic policy framework with a compound of policy measures was still necessary to use the benefits ensured by organic production. Following the application of a number of actions set out in the 2004 EU Organic Action Plan, such as specific standards for organic wine and aquaculture, the Commission's notice of a new EU Action Plan in 2014 was an acceptable initiative.

A principle-driven approach helped to direct organic production nearby to the principles set out in the Regulation, while strengthening the standards. Nevertheless, it was taken in mind that if this would necessary change of units of mobility or release rules available to Member States,

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the approach would not be fit for purpose and could prevent the sustainable progress of organic farming. Sector reality in different Member States and regions was taken correctly into account. So long as some changes were no longer necessary, others had to be involved in agreement to standards increase that the organic sector had offered because of the Regulation. Besides, the immediate removal of all the exceptional rules, considered necessary today, some of them remain critical for certain production sectors and in geographical areas where the organic sector is still in its infancy.

For this reason, a combination of different ways is necessary to assure a convenient relation of the basic principles of organic farming as well as the durable progress and expansion of the European organic sector.

Changes, such as the introduction of group certification systems (which are currently only accepted in developing countries outside Europe), or the requirement that processors and traders measure the environmental performance of their activities, present opportunities.

Group certification systems in the EU for example, would enable groups of small-scale farmers to gain certification as single entities, thereby decreasing the bureaucratic burden of certification; and greater environmental performance requirements for processors could build on sustainability standards delivered by organic growers and livestock producers in order to move EU organic food to an even wider concept of sustainability.

Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 has been an important driver of the organic sector in Europe. A new regulation should continue to support the development of the sector by enabling a process orientated approach that advances standards in the direction of the fundamental organic farming principles. Consumers and producers should work hand in hand to support the growth of the sector, with EU and national policy frameworks contributing to this dynamic through new EU and national organic action plans.

This should foster the proceeding growth of the organic sector until 2020. The definite outcomes of the 2004 Action Plan also give momentum for growth in respect to a pursuant organic policy framework at EU level. It also involves description of achievements, as well as an assessment of the issues needed to be performed.

For example, it is admitted that better contacts are necessary between national organic actions and national and regional RDPs, as said in Action 6 of the 2004 Action Plan. In this way an establishment of considerable agreement of policy frameworks for the organic sector in Member States will be sustain (Sanders et al., 2011). This is a field, in which more work still needs to be performed in order to direct organic farming in new RDPs by 2020.

Thus, the EU and national organic action plans have to be developed supplementary for achievement of the right outcomes in Member States and regions. Therefore, all action plans up to 2020 should be supported fully from all EU policy frameworks.

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In this respect, they should:

- ✓ perform considerable exploitation of all convenient instruments and measures under the CAP in the following directions: support of organic and agri-environmental measure payments; support of knowledge transfer and innovation, market development and capacity building;
- ✓ develop organic approaches in EU research programmes and innovation tools, aiming to promote substantial transition to agri-ecological approaches;
- ✓ connect the organic regulations with the horizontal legislation more effectively, such as labelling and the regulation of farm inputs;
- ✓ enhance the stock of quality protein feeds by increasing local protein feed production and using different protein sources;
- ✓ promote the disposability of organic seeds and propagating material by funding long-term breeding programmes for locally adapted and organic plant varieties that enhance agri-diversity and optimize the yield potential of organic farming;
- ✓ set up new sign share events for organic products, linked with the EU organic logo, and promoting organic farming in educational programmes and green public-sector provision;
- ✓ refine the gathering of organic data, currently collected by researchers and Member States' authorities, are not harmonized enough to be used effectively by policymakers and stakeholders;
- ✓ enhance legislation to protect the organic sector from GMO contamination;
- ✓ support the registration of organic, traditional plant protection substances under horizontal legislation.

EU RESEARCH POLICY AND ORGANIC FUNDING SCENARIOS

The ideas of organic issues have been involved systematically into the EU research policy framework during early 1990s. Up to the 1980s, research activities on organic farming had been performed predominantly by private research institutes, with the first EU projects on organic farming funded in the 1990s. After that the EU budget for organic research has risen from EUR 767 000 in 1993 to more than EUR 6 million in 2013. In such way, EU became an important investor in organic research, as well as in the development of the sector. Thus, it is decisive to realize the different EU policy tools for research and innovation, and how they can be affected.

The EU's most important funding instrument for research for the period 2014-2020 is the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020, with a total budget of almost EUR 80 billion. As outlined above, the support for agricultural innovation implemented under the EIP-AGRI comes from both Horizon 2020 and the new RDPs. Horizon 2020 addresses three key areas: scientific excellence, industrial leadership and societal challenges. The last of

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these is particularly important for the agricultural sector (especially the issue of food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research, and the bio-economy). With at least 5 % of the total Horizon 2020 budget (EUR 4 billion) allocated to address societal challenges for the next seven years, the budget for these research areas has almost doubled compared to the previous programming period.

New instruments under Horizon 2020 include multi-actor projects and thematic networks. They will be used to fund specific projects contributing to the EIP-AGRI.

- Multi-actor projects are intended to involve different stakeholders (researchers, farmers, advisors, enterprises, educators, NGOs, administrations and regulatory bodies). They are targeted at the needs and problems facing farmers and other practitioners. They also seek to foster participatory research - something with which the organic sector already has broad experience, for example, through on-farm breeding programmes. Keeping in mind the sector's long history of strong collaboration across disciplines and between researchers and producers, the multi-actor approach presents good opportunities. Moreover, many of the calls for multi-actor research projects are expected to be specifically relevant to organic agriculture, for example calls related to soil quality and function, or genetic resources and agricultural diversity.

- Thematic networks, on the other hand, will focus on specific themes, mapping the current state of existing scientific knowledge and best practice. The networks will help to develop materials that are easily accessible and facilitate knowledge exchange. Like the multi-actor projects, thematic networks should involve all the relevant stakeholders, and provide a platform for actors in the organic sector to exchange their knowledge at EU level.

The EU's big investments in research are still managed by Member States. Research funds of relevance to organic farming and sustainable food and agriculture include CORE Organic, ERA-Net SUSFOOD and the Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI). The EU supports these examples of Member States pooling national research funding. The aim is to establish greater coherence between EU and the national research policies.

ORGANIC PERSPECTIVES OF THE BROADER EU POLICY FRAMEWORK

While EU organic legislation and policies, such as the CAP and policies on research and innovation, affect organic farming directly and indirectly, other EU policies also have significant implications for the development of agro-ecological approaches. A paradigm shift towards sustainability in EU food and farming also depends on EU rules and regulations that empower rather than impede the growth of small and local businesses and sustainable consumption. Organic farmers have always been pioneers of sustainability of food and agriculture, offering solutions that

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not only benefit the rest of organic sector, but which can also inspire the entire food and farming sector.

Small and local farm businesses adaptation

A lot of organic farms are involved in on-farm processing and direct marketing. As these activities help them to create own added value through use the 2004 EU Food Hygiene Package. But it has been found that the process is difficult for the farmers of many Member States, as they put added costs to answer these strict requirements. Some farmers have had as a result to give up processing altogether. Also, Member States often do not properly implement the flexibility measures, allowing adapted rules and lesions for primary producers. The later are engaged in direct supply chains involving small quantities of primary products, or for local retailers supplying directly to consumers.

The introduced hygiene requirements influence the processing sector and cause bigger confirmation of processing facilities. For instance, many small butchers have been forced out of business due to economic constraints and difficult hygiene rules. This limits the opportunities for organic farmers to deliver their products to certified organic processors within an appropriate distance of their farm.

Food and farming are free from GMO

The majority of European consumers throw out genetically modified organisms (GMO) in food. The risk of GMO pollution of food is still not definitely concerned by the EU authorities. Thus, the organic sector still stands high costs in ceasing the risk of such contamination. Such events happened in Spain, where GM maize has contaminated organic fields, and some farmers have lost their organic certification and their premium prices. As a consequence, many of these organic farmers have ceased to cultivate maize in those traditional regions, which cause loss of local maize sorts.

In order to prevent the soy and maize from such contamination processing companies, working with soy and maize reported in 2009 costs of about EUR 20-86 per tonne.

Marketing of seed and planting material legislation

The plant genetics is working in favor of the organic farming through disposal of a broad range of species responding to consumer demand and to different geographic conditions. The growing environmental challenges in Europe such as resource depletion and climate change are of crucial importance for special care towards plant genetic resources and their preservation. Therefore, it could be possible to market new varieties and populations adapted to low input and local conditions.

EU legislation on the marketing of seed and planting material definitely restricts market access to registered plant varieties. There are strict criteria for registration and certification of plant

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reproductive material. This policy affords to market concentration in seed companies and loss of genetic diversity in crops. In this way, the legislation needs to be tailored to support farmers' rights and facilitate the conservation and further development of genetic resources and the diversity of crops.

Encourage young people to start organic farming

Farming community in Europe is growing old very fast. Investigations in this respect show that in 2007 1 farmer under the age of 35 relates with nine farmers over 55. Beginning from 1975 and lasting to 2007, the total farm numbers for Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the UK decrease with more than 2.6 million, measured with loss of 83 000 farms per year. Of these, almost 1.8 million were in Italy and France alone. Substantial renewal is crucial for the evolution of economically viable rural areas and the preservation of diverse cultural landscapes, and for high quality food production, biodiversity and food cultures. Younger farmers also need access to land. As no EU-wide framework can provide an all-in-one solution, a coordinated mix of policy measures is needed, which takes into account the CAP and other EU policies and encourages young people to take-up farming. This should include a common understanding between Member States of land use policy.

Consumers are able to make informed food choices

To choose the proper food depends on many factors: from cultural proficiency to the information maintaining the transparency of production process. The EU legislation on food information to consumers can ensure consumers with detailed information about ingredients.

The organic logo is an important element linked to a certification pattern based on a broad number of sustainability aspects. The use of different labels and logos is now also actual for debate at EU level.

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