

SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

ORGANIC SECTOR AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION SYSTEMS

In France, the organic Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS for organic) has experienced remarkable advancement over the past decade, catalyzing the rapid expansion of the organic sector. Its strength lies in its interdisciplinary and cross-cutting institutional framework, bolstered by robust grassroots collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including conventional farmers. AKIS's most influential actors like the INRAE, the ITAB, ITAs, the organic agency of the ministry (Agence Bio), as well as networks of Chambers of Agriculture (the CDAF) and farmers' groups (the FNAB), supported by several certifying organizations, alternative advisory structures, the sectoral press and educational institutes. Despite a long-standing, diverse institutional background and cross-cutting inter-institutional programs, the lack of political will and strategy backed up by adequate budgets hinders implementation. Coordination and collaboration within the organic AKIS are sporadic, resulting in actors competing with each other. Enhanced collaboration, financing and inclusion would lead to improved exchange/dissemination of extant knowledge and increased expert influence on France's AKIS for organic.

French organic production needs stronger governmental engagement demonstrated by coordination, adequate funding, more dissemination work, and better training for advisors. Rivalry both among AKIS actors and productions modes (such as agroecology, organic, regenerative, etc.) should be replaced by synergies. Support for producers in transition should be strengthened. Intraregional, interregional as well as intragenerational knowledge transfer would be highly beneficial.

Regarding organic food processing and retail, there are a range of public institutions and private organisations at regional and national level which are actively engaged in supporting the knowledge and innovation system for organic processing and retailing. It ranges from research institutes, chambers of agriculture, the Agence Bio, regional groups of organic producers, retailers' unions, individual consultants, association of certification bodies, certification bodies and NGOs as e.g., IFOAM. ITAB has a food processing group providing knowledge. However, the sector is marked by a strong competition, hampering the exchange and knowledge transfer among processors and retailers. Also, there's a wide range of topics that should be better covered by advisory services (market development, access to international markets, branding, processing, use of social networks, energy decisions, etc.).

GENERAL INFORMATION

MAIN CULTIVATED CROPS



Cereals



Plants Harvested Green



Industrial Crops

CROPPING PATTERN (% OF UAA)



Arable Land
62.3%



Permanent Grassland
33.4%



Permanent Crops
3.8%



CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO ECONOMIC OUTPUT

2.24 % (2022)



CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO EMPLOYMENT

2.48 % (2022)



UTILIZED AGRICULTURAL AREA (UAA)

27,364,630 Hectares (2020)
42.5 % of Total Area (2020)

ORGANIC SECTOR OVERVIEW

The organic sector in France had a remarkable expansion in the last two decades. Between 2001 and 2021, organic land management expanded with 561% (FiBL, 2023). In 2021, the organic and under conversion area was 9.6% of the utilised agricultural area (UAA) of the country. In 2019, France had the second largest European organic market with 11.9 billion EUR revenue and a significant export market generating 826 million EUR (Taste France for Business, 2023). The domestic organic food market accounts for 6.6% of the total retail food market.



GROWTH OF ORGANIC AREA (2001-2021)
561%



AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION
N.A.



GROWTH OF ORGANIC RETAIL (2001-2021)
1,001%



NO. OF PRODUCERS
58,413



EXPORTS AND IMPORTS
887 / 2,830 (million €)



NO. OF PROCESSORS
19,311



DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION
176€/Person



NO. OF IMPORTERS
662

MAIN CROP TYPES

1
CEREALS

2
PULSES AND PROTEIN CROPS

3
OILSEEDS

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES, POLICIES & REGULATIONS

The Ambition Bio Plan 2018-2022 set a target of achieving a 15% of organic land share with a budget of 1.1 billion EUR. This was supported by a reinforcement of funds, the "Avenir Bio" structuring fund managed by Agence Bio, which has been gradually increased from four to eight million EUR per year. This shall be supported by the 2019-2025 Strategic Plan and the 2021-2025 "Contract of objectives and performance of the network" of the Chambers of Agriculture. The new Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plans (CAP SP) highlights the importance of cooperation among actors, setting several tasks on already existing sectoral bodies to accelerate the implementation of the tasks omitted from the previous CAP period.

KEY COMPONENTS & FUNCTIONS OF AKIS FOR ORGANIC

KNOWLEDGE CREATION, RESEARCH & INNOVATION

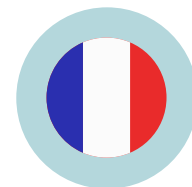
The research culture in France is participatory, demand- and practice-oriented. There is a long-standing history of active NGOs and a civil society with a well-established “bottom-up” dynamic, which is politically supported through diverse programmes and networks. A nationwide coordination structure with the right mechanisms could improve that (e.g., CSAB (Organic Agriculture Scientific National Committee), the Synergy Programme, Metabio). The public research institute INRAE is considered as an important knowledge hub together with the private research institute ITAB, a transversal technical institute dedicated to knowledge development. Networks such as GIS (Groupement d’Intérêt Scientifique), RMT (Réseau Mixte Technologique), UMT (Unité Mixte Technologique) facilitate knowledge exchange between researchers, advisors and applied research programmes such as CASDAR, which requires partnerships between research, development and training.

ADVICE AND CONSULTANCY

Despite regional differences, the advisory services in France mostly meet the specific knowledge needs of small-scale organic farmers. Although the number of advisors for organic farming has increased in France, the lack of staff and insufficient expertise remains an issue for organic advisory services. The lack of funds to cover extension services adds to the rivalry between advisory structures (such as GABs and CDAs) in some regions. Overall, however, the chronic underfinancing disincentivises actors to devote time and effort to training, knowledge sharing, or facilitation.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Already in 2021 there were 130 training courses on organic farming. There are more students in technical agricultural training programmes (BTS studies, age 16-20) than in higher education programmes in agronomy. However, teachers’ knowledge and attitude towards organic farming agricultural high schools remains a bottleneck. By 2025, the agricultural chambers aim at supporting at least 40,000 established farmers through adult training for organic conversion. Fomabio, a recognised network of public and private agricultural education on organic farming, has only very limited human resources and not always up to date with the challenges of organic producers. Different training schemes on organic agriculture also exist for advisors, such as RESOLIA for advisors of agricultural Chamber.



CONCLUSIONS

Not only is there a lack of political willingness to implement plans and strategies for organic, but organic AKIS actors do not have the necessary influence on political decision-making. Recent difficulties of ITAB and the loss of CSAB have weakened the institutional background. Besides rivalry among production modes, there is strong competition between AKIS actors for the limited available funds. Inadequate funding also leads to the demotivation of advisors to engage in training. Even though organic is gaining momentum both in vocational and continuing education, teachers' knowledge and attitude towards organic farming remains a bottleneck and Fomabio, a recognised network of public and private agricultural education on organic farming, has only very limited human resources. The actors setting R&D goals are disconnected from those providing advisory services, and also, too little is known about research needs in the field.

FIND OUT MORE HERE

[Deliverable D1.1 Assessment of Knowledge and Innovation Systems for Organic Agriculture, Aquaculture and Value Chain Actors](#)



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