

SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

ORGANIC SECTOR AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION SYSTEMS

In Austria the experienced and well-established network of actors, connecting farmers, researchers, extension services, policymakers, or industry representatives can be considered a strength of the AKIS for organic, but there are weaknesses in relation to coordination, strategic focus, and specialised support for farmers. Also, there is an overall willingness of cooperation between actors in the food chain, the local, regional structures make it easier to exchange and to support each other.

There are several AKIS actors providing support for organic food processors and retailers. The organic farming association Bio Austria is providing advice and occasionally offering specific training programmes for processors and retailers. Further important actors are the agricultural chambers, research institutes and certification bodies. Organic control bodies are legally not allowed to give advice, but they are allowed to inform about the legal rules and needs. Another important source of support are retail chains with own brands.

GENERAL INFORMATION

MAIN CULTIVATED CROPS



Cereals



Corn



Oilseeds

CROPPING PATTERN (% OF UAA)



Arable Land

51.5 %



Permanent Grassland

46.1 %



Permanent Crops

2.3 %



CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO ECONOMIC OUTPUT

1.57 % (2022)



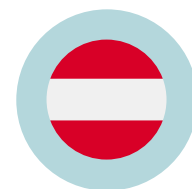
CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO EMPLOYMENT

3.1 % (2022)



UTILIZED AGRICULTURAL AREA (UAA)

2,565,690 Hectares (2020)
31 % of Total Area (2020)



ORGANIC SECTOR OVERVIEW

The country's commitment to sustainable practices, consumer demand for organic products and the presence of political support have been the main driving forces for the expansion of the organic sector in Austria. The development of the organic sector in Austria has been fuelled both by early organic subsidies in 1992-1995 and by the consumer demand for organic products, that are accessible to a wide range of consumers in different retail chains. This led to organic farming becoming a significant player in the country's agricultural sector. In Austria, organic farmland grew by more than 7000% between 1985 and 2021. In 2022, the organic land and land under conversion was 27.2% of the utilised agricultural area (UAA).



GROWTH OF ORGANIC AREA (2001-2021)
48%



AQUACULTURE PRODUCTION
N.A.



GROWTH OF ORGANIC RETAIL (2001-2021)
965%



NO. OF PRODUCERS
25,081



EXPORTS AND IMPORTS
N.A. / N.A.



NO. OF PROCESSORS (2022)
2,374



DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION
274.14€/Person



NO. OF IMPORTERS (2022)
86

MAIN CROP TYPES

1
CEREALS

2
PLANTS HARVESTED GREEN

3
OILSEEDS

4
PROTEIN CROPS

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES, POLICIES & REGULATIONS

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management financially and institutionally supports compulsory advanced training programmes on organic farming and conversion under the Austrian Rural Development Programme (ÖPUL 2014-2020), recently replaced by the CAP Strategic Plan (2023-2027). The Bio Aktionsprogramm (2023 – ongoing) provides additional funding for education and advisory services and calls for organic education projects. The Austrian CAP Strategic Plan (SP) main targets are modernisation, digitalisation, improvement and development of AKIS. The CAP SP foresees a key role for the Chamber of Agriculture and the Organic Farmers' Association BIO AUSTRIA in the national AKIS system in cooperation with other institutional actors e.g., the federal authority system.

KEY COMPONENTS & FUNCTIONS OF AKIS FOR ORGANIC

KNOWLEDGE CREATION, RESEARCH & INNOVATION

The promotion of knowledge exchange, innovation, and sustainable practices across the agricultural sector, including organic agriculture is a primary objectives of the AKIS. LEADER programmes as well as EIP-Agri projects are key to foster knowledge and innovation in organic farming. There is further potential in developing research and practice cooperation, for example by organising demonstrations on technologically advanced farms to spotlight innovative practices.

ADVICE AND CONSULTANCY

In Austria, organic farming advice is provided by (organic) farming associations as well as the Chamber of Agriculture. Through close cooperation with the latter, the Organic Farmers' Association Bio Austria is able to benefit of national funds for extension services and consulting since 2017. The collaboration also builds the foundation for advisory services across all regions in Austria.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

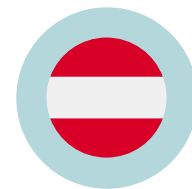
Public educational and (vocational) training programmes on organic agriculture are coordinated at a national level, especially on regulatory aspects and on-farm processing of organic farming. Capacity building for organic advisors and trainers is limited.

Organic associations and the Rural Training Institute (LFI) are the most important providers for training courses for organic farmers. Nearly all courses for organic farmers are subsidised (at least 50%) under the regime of the Austrian Rural Development Programme.

CONCLUSIONS

The strength of AKIS for organic lies in the experienced and well-established network of actors, but there are weaknesses in relation to coordination, strategic focus, and specialised support. There is still a fragmentation of organic advisory services with missing cross-regional specialised advisory services. Funding for extension services is considered not to be sufficient and comes with high administration requirements. Bureaucratic duties are reported to reduce the time availability of advisors in their work with organic clients. Exchange with research organisations is described as not sufficient to support organic knowledge in advisory services. Training and education needs improvement overall, from missing organic curricula through lack of schools and teachers' interest and understanding of organic to the lack of educated / skilled advisors focussing on organic and the low availability of online courses for organic farmers. Overcoming these challenges would require targeted funding, improved coordination, and stronger focus on farmers' education, advisors' training, and innovative integration of research and practice.

FIND OUT MORE HERE



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