PRACTICE ABSTRACT

Arable farmers, what does it take to convert in Denmark?

Problem

Organic farming requires specialised knowledge and techniques. The available premiums and subsidies are mostly insufficient to compensate for the extra effort (Figure 1).

Solution

Organic farmers can reduce financial uncertainty by adopting preventive and adaptive management strategies (Table 1).

Applicability box

Theme

Economic challenges, farm management

Keywords

Costs, farm economics, adaption

Context

Denmark

Benefits

Sufficient premiums, targeted subsidies, and payments for ecosystem services compensate the farmers and maintain a competitive farm income.

Practical recommendations

- Use knowledge and recommendations from experienced advisors or peers to optimise input and fixed costs and overall revenues
- Enhance resilience to uncontrollable production conditions by diversifying crops and varieties
- Combine high-value crops (such as grass clover seed or arable vegetables) with bulk products to balance income and risk
- Identify a yield level that minimises vulnerability to fluctuation in prices or environmental factors
- Align cultivation methods and production ambitions that match reduced input costs through resource-efficient practices and self-sufficiency where possible
- Document increases in biodiversity and nature value with the help of certified advisors, enabling payments or subsidies based on measurable ecosystem values
- Calculate the farm´s climate impact to avoid potential penalties or taxes.

Arable farmers, what does it take to convert in Denmark? OrganicTargets4EU, Innovation Centre for Organic Agriculture, Practice Abstract, 2025.

Table 1: Comparison of organic/conventional farm economics for the high-value crop winter rapeseed, based on Danish advisory tool, farm data online, 2025.

Winter rapeseed, data per ha in DKr						
organic				**conventional**		
Revenue	**yield**	**price/kg**	**amount**	**yield**	**price/kg**	**amount**
sold seeds	2500 kg	6,7	16725	4600 kg	2,79	12834
subsidy (DK)			870			
sum			**17.595**			**12834**
Costs						
seed			-675			-488
manure			-700			-700
cleaning			-161			-322
fertiliser			0			-523
weeds			0			-690
fungi			0			-210
insects			0			-110
growth regulation			0			-175
analysis			0			-125
sum			**-1.536**			**-3.343**
machine operartions etc.			-5.456			-5.861
total costs			**-6.992**			**-9.204**
Result			**10.603**			**3.631**

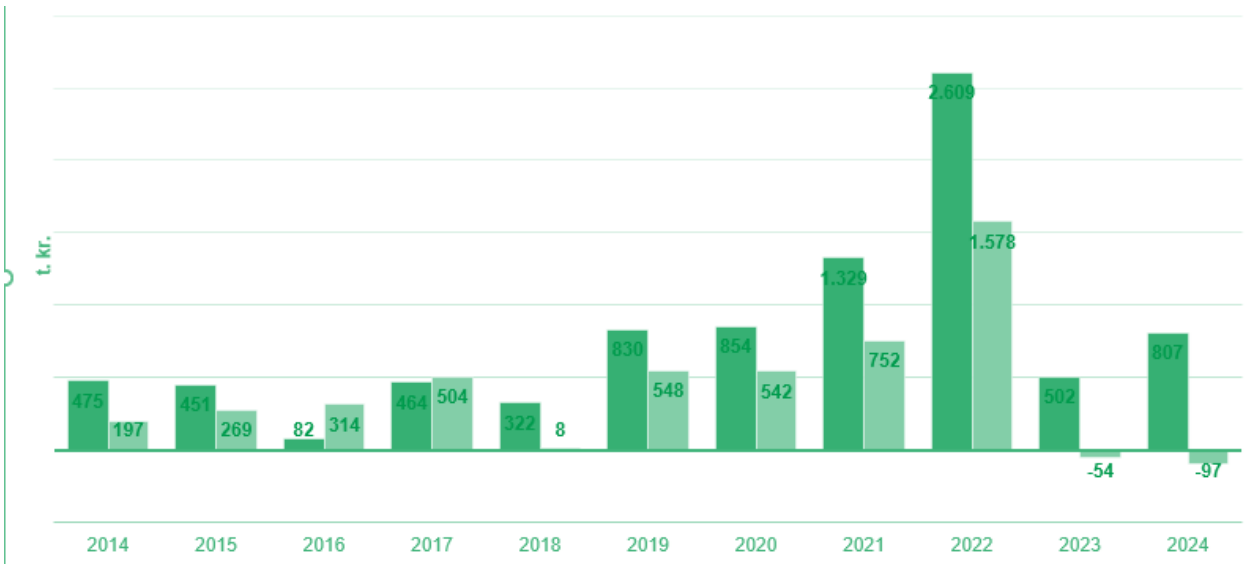

Figure 1: Farm income in 1,000 DKK. for conventional (dark green) and organic (green) arable farms (Data from actual farm accounts, all organic farms and a representative group of conventional farms, based on Danish advisory tool, farm data online, 2025.) Farm results measured in thousands of DKK. per farm, show full-time organic farmers in Denmark earn less than their conventional counterparts. In the past two years, their average income has even been negative, despite receiving modest subsidies for organic production. A more realistic rewarding for their contribution to public goods could help offset these losses.

Further information

Further reading

- How have the farmers been motivated and assisted in turning and staying organic? Innovation Centre for Organic Farming,

Weblinks

- Organic Summit Presentations
- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge platform for more practical recommendations.

About this practice abstract and the OrganicTargets4EU project

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Project website: https://organictargets.eu/

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