



Organic action plans:

Integrating policies, building capacity, acting locally

Introduction

Organic farming pursues multiple goals with a systems approach. Combined with many policy support measures, this can make policymaking difficult. The dual focus on public and market goods, highlighted in the first EU Organic Action Plan (2004), requires co-ordination between units with sometimes dissimilar aims.

A strong focus on supply-push environmental support measures, such as organic conversion and maintenance payments, can have a negative impact on organic markets. Too strong a demand-pull market focus can undermine environmental delivery.

Organic action plans (OAPs) have the potential to integrate public good and market-oriented, supply-push and demand-pull policies, and ensure coherence with broader policy frameworks. This needs to be supported by effective targets (see policy brief #3), stakeholder engagement, clearly defined development needs, and dedicated resources and co-ordination capacity (Meredith et al., 2018). A broad range of production, market and information, as well as capacity building measures can be included.

The focus is often on EU-level or national OAPs, but regional or local (bio-district or city level) plans are also valuable and can be more responsive to specific local needs.

Key findings

The [OrganicTargets4EU](#) project identified that almost all EU Member States had developed OAPs for the current period (2023 to 2027/30, see Figure 1, green bars), many as a response to the EU OAP recommendations. Only Spain and Lithuania did not do so. Ireland and Luxembourg renewed their plans in 2025 (Figure 1, yellow bars). Some countries have a track record of multiple older OAPs going back as far as 1995 (Figure 1, grey bars with number of plans).

Summary

- Organic action plans, adopted in almost all EU Member States, are important for the integration of public good and market policies, supply-push and demand-pull policies, as well as coherence with the CAP, rural development, and planned National and Regional Partnership Plans.
- A wide range of production, market, and information policies are included in OAPs, with opportunities to do more for capacity-building and local initiatives such as bio-districts and bio-cities.
- The current EU Organic Action Plan plays an important role in guiding MS organic policies in the context of national CAP strategic plans. This needs to be extended to the next CAP and NRP programming period with a revised EU organic action plan.
- The quality of OAPs can be improved with more attention to evaluation, identification of development needs, stakeholder engagement and adequate resourcing of core actions.

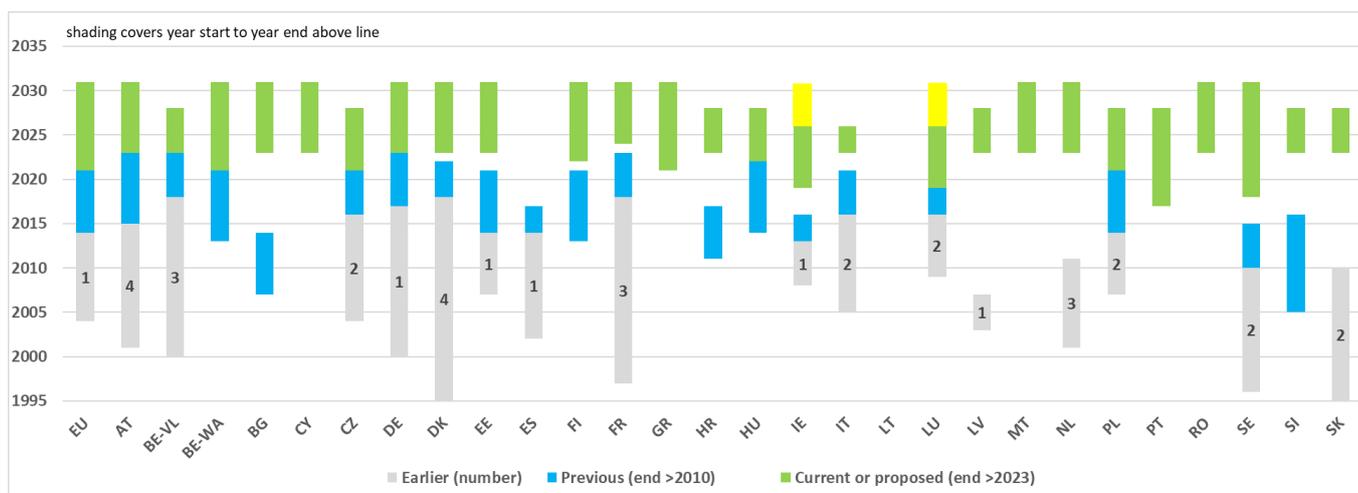


Figure 1: Periods covered by EU and national organic action plans since first introduced in 1995

Source: Lampkin et al. (2024) updated¹

The project analysed the current OAPs in terms of content and compared with previous action plans (Figure 1, blue bars). 13 categories of actions in three broad groups were identified:

- **Production:** Organic and environmental support payments, investment aids.
- **Markets:** Producer groups and supply chains, public procurement, agritourism and gastronomy, exports and trade fairs, logos and branding, certification and regulations.
- **Information:** Consumer information, advice and demonstration, training and education, research and innovation, statistics and market data.

In most cases, both the introduction of new plans and the developments from previous plans represented a step forward in organic policymaking. However, some weaknesses were also identified, including lack of evaluations of previous plans, lack of status quo analyses and specification of sector development needs, lack of stakeholder involvement, and lack of dedicated funding and co-ordination frameworks, at least for the core delivery of the action plans. Similar issues were also raised by the European Court of Auditors in their 2024 review of organic policies.

Development needs and challenges

The project’s analysis of current and previous OAPs, and discussions with stakeholders in national backcasting and policy workshops, highlighted some specific development needs that should be considered in future organic action planning.

Better action plans

While there are many good examples of OAPs, e.g., Czechia, Denmark, and Germany, some would benefit from improvement in scope and process. An analysis of the impacts of previous plans and the specific, local development needs of the organic sector is critical. Duplication of actions in the EU OAP does not necessarily address local needs. Stakeholder involvement at all stages—design,

¹ The current plans for FR and GR and new plans (yellow) for IR and LU were not analysed in the original deliverable but have been integrated in the updated national organic sector factsheets available at: <https://organictargets.eu/organic-sector-factsheets/>

implementation, and evaluation—is strongly encouraged. Resources (financial and staffing) need to be allocated to at least the core elements and co-ordination of the plans, even if other funding programmes are used to support individual actions. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks with appropriate indicators and data need to be implemented from the outset.

Capacity building

In several parts of the project, the need for long-term funding for institutional (public and organic sector) capacity building has been highlighted. Examples include information platforms, advisory networks, research institutions, university departments, market observatories, centres of excellence, and policy engagement capacity of the organic sector. Such capacity building has occasionally featured in OAPs but should have a much stronger focus in future plans.

Bio-districts—acting locally

Regional OAPs are common in many countries, e.g., Germany, Italy, Spain. The bio-district idea, promoted as part of the current (2021) EU OAP, takes these a stage further, with a specific focus on local businesses and public authorities working together to support public procurement, short supply chains, gastronomy and agritourism, and by encouraging local consumer engagement. Networks of bio-districts and bio-cities in Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere are emerging to support this process. Active encouragement of such local initiatives is highly desirable.

EU Organic Action Plans

Previous EU OAPs tended to focus mainly on actions (e.g., events, regulatory changes) that could be undertaken by the Commission itself. The introduction of national CAP Strategic Plans gave the current EU OAP more of a focus on guiding and supporting Member State actions. In preparation for the next CAP and the National and Regional Partnership (NRP) Plans for 2028-2034, there is a need for a revised and updated EU OAP, taking account of all the policy recommendations from the OrganicTargets4EU project.

Policy recommendations

Organic action plans including capacity building and bio-districts have proven value in the organic policy context. They should continue to be encouraged as a means of integrating supply-push and demand-pull policies, and public good and market-oriented policies, consistent with organic farming's multi-functional, systemic approach. As an **overall aim**, OAPs at EU, national, regional, and local level should be reviewed, strengthened, and extended to encompass the next CAP and NRP programming period (2028-2034), ensuring good policy integration and coherence.

The EU Commission should review and strengthen the current EU Organic Action Plan in the context of the proposals for the next CAP, by:

- conducting an evaluation of the outcomes so far, as well as surveys of farmer attitudes to conversion and value chain actors, to see what lessons can be learned for the next phase.
- identifying actions that would support improved policy implementation and co-ordination by Member States, for example between national organic research funders.

The EU Commission should support Member States in improving the quality, scope, implementation, and evaluation of national organic action plans, by:

- assessing how well national OAPs are integrated with CAP Strategic plans and other policies.
- establishing a network for sharing best practice OAP examples and guidance between MSs, supported by the EU CAP Network and organic policy experts.
- encouraging capacity building, using existing initiatives for producer groups, farm advisory services, EIP operational groups and extending these to cover other areas.
- exploring options for an EU-level organic market observatory.
- encouraging networks of relevant institutions and organisations to share best practice and co-operate in different fields, supported through other funding mechanisms where feasible.

Member States should review and strengthen their national and regional action plans, including bio-districts and cities, with a 2034/2035 horizon by:

- ensuring coherence and integration with NRP and CAP plans for 2028-34.
- defining meaningful production, market and environmental targets, based on previous OAP evaluations, sector status quo analyses, and clear definition of sector development needs, including opportunities for generational renewal and administrative simplification.
- integrating institutional (public and organic sector) capacity building elements, with resources to ensure long-term delivery of organic-specific initiatives.
- including private sector involvement in delivery, e.g., partnerships with organic organisations, businesses, market data companies, universities and charities.
- committing resources (financial and staff-time) to the core elements and co-ordination.
- engaging stakeholders at all stages (design, implementation and evaluation), including support for organic organisations to develop policy engagement capacity.
- ensuring processes for monitoring and evaluation, including relevant indicators and data sources, are included from the outset.

Further information

Lampkin N, Lembo G & Rehburg P (2024). *Assessment of agricultural and aquaculture policy responses to the organic F2F targets*. Deliverable D1.2 OrganicTargets4EU. IFOAM Organics Europe. <https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/52716/>

Lampkin N & Padel S (2026). *Policy recommendations for the delivery of the organic F2F targets by 2030 and beyond*. Deliverable D7.1 OrganicTargets4EU. IFOAM Organics Europe. <https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/10862>

Meredith S, Lampkin N & Schmid O (2018). *Organic Action Plans: Development, implementation and evaluation*. IFOAM Organics Europe. <https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/32771/>

OrganicTargets4EU national organic sector factsheets <https://organictargets.eu/organic-sector-factsheets/>

OrganicTargets4EU policy briefs: <https://organictargets.eu/policy-briefs/>

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