



Organic support payments: An environmental priority for all in the next CAP

Introduction

Organic farming delivers on two main areas of EU policy: **environmental public goods** by adapting production practices and restricting certain inputs, and **economic and employment benefits** for farmers and rural areas through specialist organic markets. In recognition, organic farming is supported in the EU by legal definition since 1992 and by area payments for organic conversion and maintenance introduced as a CAP agri-environmental measure in 1994.

In the current CAP (2023-2027), organic support payments are foreseen in all national CAP Strategic Plans: 10% of EU agricultural area (UAA) is planned to be supported as organic by 2027, using 5% of the total CAP budget (20% of the environmental support) for the 5-year period. Member states can use Pillar 1 eco-schemes or Pillar 2 environment-climate measures for this support.

The [OrganicTargets4EU](#) project analysed planned support in the national CAP strategic plans and compared it with support available 2014 to 2022.

In the proposal for the next CAP (2028-2034), organic farming is one of six environmental priorities (Art. 4 of Proposal 2025/0241(COD)). Member States must implement agri-environmental-climate support schemes for organic farming (Art. 10.1a). Lump-sum transition funding (Art 10.1b) can support conversion-related investments in advice, training and capital expenditure. Organic farming is also de facto compliant with Farm Stewardship requirements for soil and water conservation if the full holding is certified (Art. 3.6).

Key findings

The planned conversion and maintenance support for organic farming in the current CAP was analysed for all Member States based on their national CAP strategic plans and compared with the previous CAP period (2014-2022). Wide variations in payment bases (e.g., land use categories like arable land or individual crops/livestock), and amounts (e.g., for arable crops, see Figure 1) were identified.

Summary

Organic conversion and maintenance payments have been implemented as agri-environmental measures since 1994 and played a significant role in the growth of organic farming in the EU.

This support will be continued in the next CAP (2028-2035), with organic farming identified as an environmental priority and all Member States required to provide support.

The support recognises the environmental benefits of organic land management. Combinations with other agri-environmental-climate measures help to reinforce this.

The implementation of this support is challenging due to the linked market focus of organic systems, which should not undermine the environmental outcomes. Unintended impacts on the organic market should also be avoided, as the market plays a key role in securing long-term engagement by farmers, underpinning environmental gains.

Additional costs, lack of access to organic premium prices, and restructuring investments during conversion justify higher support levels. The transition lump-sum funding proposed for the next CAP could be a valuable innovation.

Organic farming is attractive to young farmers and new entrants. Support targeting these groups, including the proposed Generational Renewal Strategy, should ensure the organic option is part of the solution.

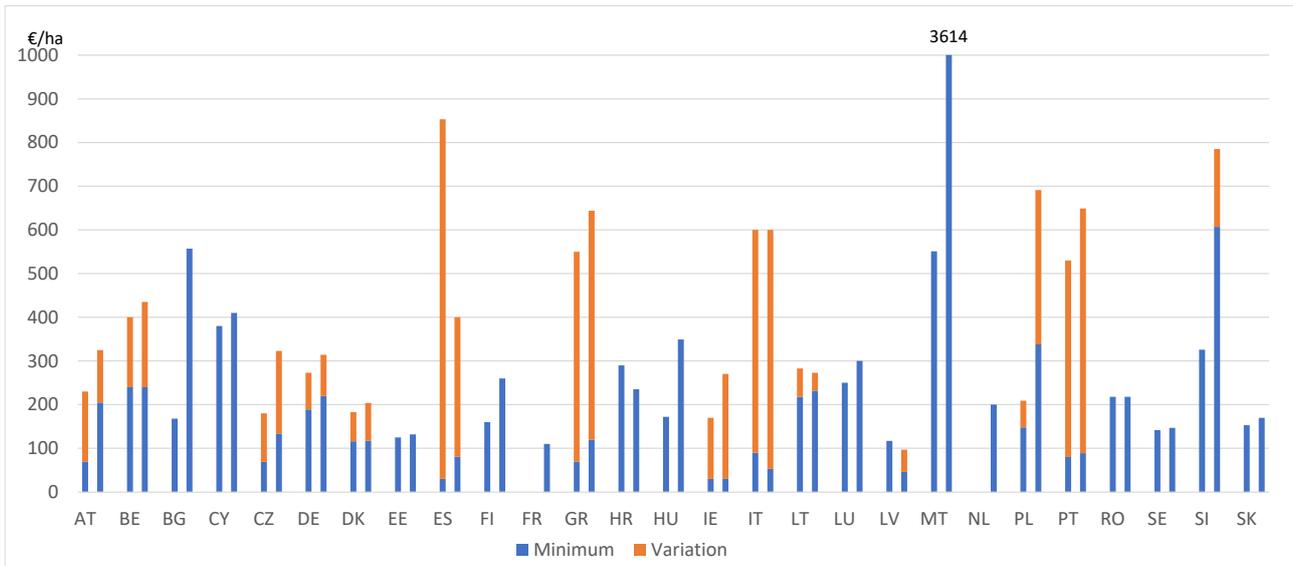


Figure 1: Maintenance payments for arable crops in 2018 (first column) and 2023 (second column). Variation covers minimum to maximum payment level and may be due to regional, crop and other factors. Source: Lampkin et al. (2024)

Eligibility and other conditions also varied widely, including exclusions of certain land uses and part-organic farms, or reduced/capped payments for larger farms, and constraints on combinations with other eco-schemes or agri-environment-climate measures¹.

There are also wide variations in the share of agricultural area supported as organic, and the proportion of certified organic land that is not supported (see Figure 2). At EU level, about one-third of organic land was not supported in 2018. If planned supported areas (10% of UAA) are achieved and the unsupported share is maintained to 2027, about 15% of UAA may be certified organic or in-conversion at that point.

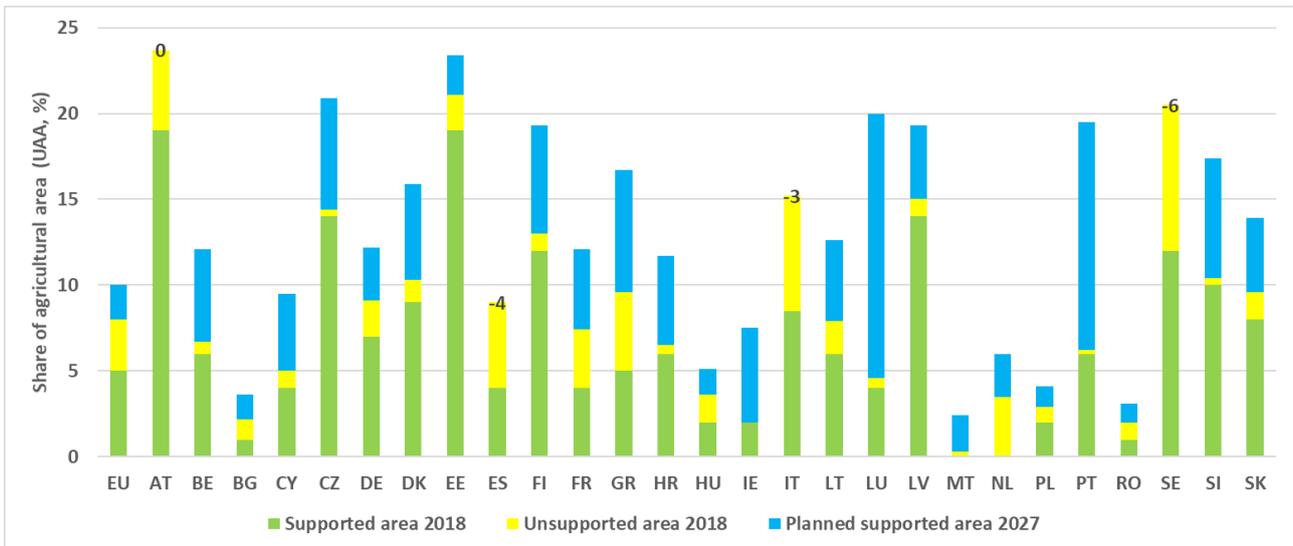


Figure 2: Share of UAA supported as organic in 2018, certified but not supported in 2018, and planned to be supported in 2027. Columns with no blue bars indicate that 2027 support plans were for lower areas than were certified organic in 2018, the numbers indicate the percentage difference. Source: Lampkin et al. (2024)

¹ Results for the main land uses (grassland, arable, vegetables, fruit, olives, grapes) in individual countries are summarised in the national organic sector factsheets. <https://organictargets.eu/organic-sector-factsheets/>

Development needs and policy challenges

There is a clear focus on organic farming as an environmental measure in the current and future CAP. A key challenge for administrations implementing the organic support is getting the right balance between the environmental outcomes and possible market impacts. The focus on **environmental outcomes** can be strengthened by using indicator-based frameworks, sustainability benchmarking or similar approaches². Better compatibility with other eco-schemes and agri-environment-climate measures can also help to achieve synergies. High double-funding deductions, or higher payments for options that are not combinable with organic, should be avoided to not deter organic scheme participation.

If policymakers are more focused on **market outcomes**, they may conclude that payments can be discontinued when the market is strong or are not worth making if the market is weak. Requirements on producers to market products as organic to qualify for the payments may be enforced. These approaches can be disruptive to market development and result in environmental outcomes not being delivered. Long gaps between successive funding rounds or highly differentiated payments for individual crops can also be problematic. At the same time, generous payments encouraging high uptakes may create supply surpluses and undermine market development.

The assumption made in calculating organic support payments, that **organic premium prices** can offset yield reductions and production cost increases can be problematic. The costs of accessing organic markets also need to be considered, as this is not guaranteed. This can result in organic farmers receiving lower payments than non-organic farmers for the same actions. Premium prices may be better interpreted as a return to the marketing activities undertaken, supporting long-term engagement with organic farming, but not as compensation for environmental outcomes.

The differentiation between conversion and maintenance payments is intended to take account of **higher costs during conversion** due to system restructuring, skills and experience gathering, and the lack of access to premium prices during the conversion period. Some countries make no differentiation between the schemes; others provide a small uplift of 10 or 20%. These limited differences do not fully account for the costs and income forgone faced by farmers during conversion—effectively a lower intervention rate for these payments. This is often justified in terms of not making the conversion payment too attractive and stimulating an unsustainable level of interest. However, it can also deter farmers from converting.

The **lumpsum transition funding** mechanism proposed for the next CAP envisages a payment of up to €200,000 per farm, to cover advice and training as well as capital investments in buildings, machinery, and breeding livestock. If designed appropriately, this could prove attractive for farmers, as restructuring costs can be a major deterrent to conversion, especially for pig and poultry producers. It remains to be clarified how this funding could be integrated with the organic farming maintenance payments.

Several countries show that organic farming can be attractive for **young farmers and new entrants** to agriculture. In Portugal, Next Generation Covid recovery funding to encourage new entrants, prioritising organic farming, resulted in a dramatic uptake in 2021. The Commission proposals for support for young/new farmers and a Generational Renewal Strategy (Proposal 2025/0241 Arts. 14 & 15) could support this, particularly if organic farming is prioritised, or the funding integrated with organic area support.

² Eurochoices special issue, January 2026: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/1746692x/2025/24/3>

Policy recommendations

In reviewing their current support payments, and preparing the support measures from 2028, Member States should focus on environmental outcomes whilst considering the organic market context and supporting the next generation of farmers.

Strengthen the focus on rewarding environmental outcomes from organic farming, by:

- Defining and quantifying the anticipated environmental outcomes
- Developing support that links payments to the extent of environmental outcomes delivered
- Identifying the minimum support levels necessary to encourage organic growth
- Enabling effective combinations with other environmental measures to top-up delivery
- Determining regional, land use, and farm size payment differentiation based on anticipated environmental outcomes, not other factors that might be market-distorting
- Engaging with water agencies and climate and biodiversity organisations to develop partnership approaches to rewarding the environmental outcomes.

Consider the market context and impacts of organic support payments to minimise negative impacts, by:

- Providing a stable support base that allows for development in response to market signals
- Excluding organic premium prices from income forgone calculations, recognising them **instead** as a reward for investments in marketing initiatives
- Avoiding support payment variability and availability delays that can be market distorting
- Avoiding requirements to market products as organic to qualify for payments, or the modification of payments to manage supply and demand

Prioritise organic farming as an option for new entrants and young farmers, by:

- Highlighting the opportunities and the potential environmental and market benefits
- Supporting potential organic producers with getting access to land, including making publicly owned land available on a preferential basis
- Ensuring that the starter-packs and other resources appropriately address the organic option

Further information

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>.

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

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

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

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