



Strengthening organic in AKIS

for better advice, training, and knowledge exchange

Introduction

Strengthening advice, mentoring, education, and training is essential for the sustainable growth of the organic sector. Organic farming requires a whole farm management approach, adapting practices to local conditions. Farmers depend on accessible, high-quality information, peer-to-peer learning, and organic expertise in well-functioning Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), central to the successful conversion and long-term performance of organic farms.

EU initiatives-including SCAR-AKIS, EIP-AGRI, Horizon research, and the 2021 EU Organic Action Plan-stress knowledge exchange, interactive innovation, digital tools, and advisor training as important to foster a more resilient and innovative farming community. High-quality advice and skills development attract a new generation of future farmers and support sustainability transitions.

Member States are responsible for advisory services, AKIS implementation, and education systems. They must ensure that farmers have access to innovation and up-to-date knowledge and can leverage existing funding opportunities.

Advisory systems and training are core elements of AKIS in both the CAP Strategic Plans Regulation (EU 2021/2115) and proposals for the post-2027 CAP. Organic farming is mentioned as one agri-environmental and climate action for which Members States are encouraged to provide incentives. National CAP Strategic Plans often include conversion advice, demonstration activities, or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support, but coverage and funding differ greatly. National Organic Action Plans frequently highlight training

Summary

This policy brief outlines findings related to organic in AKIS, such as advisory service and education activities, complemented by policy brief #9 Research and Innovation.

- Major gaps in quality and coverage of advice for organic exist. Organic knowledge is often shared in informal networks, peer to peer, and by organic farming associations. Organic is poorly integrated into formal education systems.
- Advisory systems and training are core elements of AKIS in the CAP. Organic farming is an agri-environmental action. Member States should provide support for farmers in this area through AKIS.
- Organic farming actors and activities need full integration and sustainable funding for AKIS, and farmers should have access to qualified and affordable advice on organic.
- This will create enabling conditions for conversion to organic, innovation, and public-good delivery.



needs, awareness raising, curriculum development, and support for advisory systems essential for organic expansion.

This policy brief complements policy brief #9 Research and Innovation, also part of AKIS.

Key findings

The [OrganicTargets4EU](#) project engaged with more than 300 advice and training stakeholders through national workshops and surveys, mainly in eight focus countries (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania). It carried out an analysis of support policies and national organic action plans. The results provide one of the most complete pictures to date of how organic advice, mentoring, and training function across EU Member States. We also considered reports of the ongoing OrganicAdviceNetwork project on Mapping advisory service providers for organic farming, an analysis of CAP and other funding sources supporting advice for organic and a mapping of educational pathways to become an advisor for organic in 13 Member States.¹

Major gaps in quality and coverage of advice for organic advisory support in the EU

Advisory systems for organic are highly uneven across the EU. There is no clear information on the number of advisors competent in organic agriculture in most countries, and training systems are inconsistent. Organic farmers often receive support through general advisory systems, which are uneven in quality and not consistently tailored to the specific knowledge needs of organic production.

Organic knowledge relies on informal networks and organic farming associations

Peer-to-peer exchanges and networks emerge as crucial knowledge engines. Organic farming associations are often the most trusted and competent providers of organic-specific information and in some cases advice. They also offer training, peer-to-peer exchange, field days and mentoring. They frequently are a bridge between farmers, researchers, and policymakers. Many help farmers connect with processors, supply chains, and consumers and support market development. However, they are rarely fully recognised or supported financially in the national AKIS.

Organic is poorly integrated into formal education

From vocational schools to universities, organic curricula are limited or absent in most Member States. As a result, new advisors often lack education and training in organic, whilst many have practical organic experience.

General advisory systems focus too narrowly on organic production

Farmers also need support on markets, financial management, climate resilience, soil health, digitalisation, and supply chains, but most systems provide only technical or administrative advice.

¹ See deliverable D1.1, 3.1 and 3.2 of at <https://www.organicadvicenetwork.eu/project-deliverables>



Policy recommendations

Organic farming is one climate and environment priority area in the CAP. Fully integrating and sustainably funding organic farming actors and activities in AKIS will create enabling conditions for conversion to organic, innovation, and public-good delivery—far beyond what scattered or project-based measures can achieve (see also policy brief #1 Drivers and Barriers).

Improve farmers' access to affordable and up-to-date advice on conversion and maintaining organic farming

- **EU policymakers:** Ensure that organic farming is explicitly embedded in AKIS and Farm Advisory Services in the CAP and develop a European database of qualified advisors competent in organics to improve transparency for farmers as part of the European Organic Action Plan.
- **National policymakers:** Using instruments of the CAP with clear budget allocations to promote specialised, affordable, and high-quality advice on organic farming. Encourage advice that integrates business planning, market access, digitalisation, and climate adaptation alongside technical production; carry out mapping of organic advice to create and maintain publicly accessible databases of qualified advisors; recognise and support organic farming associations as important AKIS stakeholders.
- **Organic farming associations and other NGOs:** Complement formal advisory systems through peer-to-peer support, mentoring, and capacity-building initiatives.

Improve training opportunities for advisors and other professionals and education in organic farming at all levels

- **EU policymakers:** Encourage the use of EU programmes (Erasmus+ and the Pact for Skills) to support training for advisors and professionals in organic farming and sharing of curricula and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (e.g., the as developed in the [OrganicAdviceNetwork](#) project) for vocational and higher education and support cross-border learning and exchange.
- **National level policymakers:** integrate organic farming (including some mandatory) into vocational and higher education, building on existing training programs to provide specialised knowledge for advisors and agricultural professionals and covering topics beyond production (e.g., markets, climate resilience, sustainability).
- **Organic and other NGOs:** Co-develop training programmes with educational institutions, ensuring accessibility for advisors and farmers and supporting lifelong learning pathways in organic.

Build and recognise peer-to-peer networks as core AKIS instruments

- **EU policymakers:** Peer-to-peer learning should be systematically supported through CAP interventions, EIP-AGRI, and Horizon Europe. Demonstration farms, communities of practice, field days, and conversion “one-stop shops” should be recognised as core AKIS tools.
- **National level policymakers:** Member States should support national and local farmer-led networks, including demonstration farms and learning clusters, and invest in digital platforms to enable exchange in remote areas. Organic organisations and NGOs play a key role in facilitating such networks that complement formal advisory systems.



Invest in European organic knowledge hubs, digital tools, and knowledge exchange initiatives in the context of the European Organic Action Plan

- **EU policymakers:** secure long-term funding for the European Organic Farm Knowledge Platform, ensuring integration with EUFarmBook and multilingual access and the integration of digital tools; promote cross-border networking for organic advisors and the establishment of organic innovation and competence centres (see also policy brief #12 Capacity building)
- **National level policymakers:** support national organic knowledge hubs with links to research, education, and advisory services, connecting actively to European platforms and networks and develop digital tools.
- **Organic and other NGOs:** host open-access knowledge hubs, organise cross-border exchanges, and translate research into practical tools for farmers and advisors.

Further information

Nagy G, et al. (2023) Assessment of the knowledge and innovation systems for organic agriculture, aquaculture, and value chain actors. Deliverable D1.1 OrganicTargets4EU. IFOAM Organics Europe. <https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/51867/>

Padel S et al. (2025) Analysis of barriers of conversion and recommendations for strengthening organic advisory services and capacity building. Deliverable D5.2 OrganicTargets4EU. IFOAM Organics Europe. <https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/55675/>

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/>

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