



# 8th Environment Action Programme

Agricultural area under organic farming in Europe

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# Agricultural area under organic farming in Europe

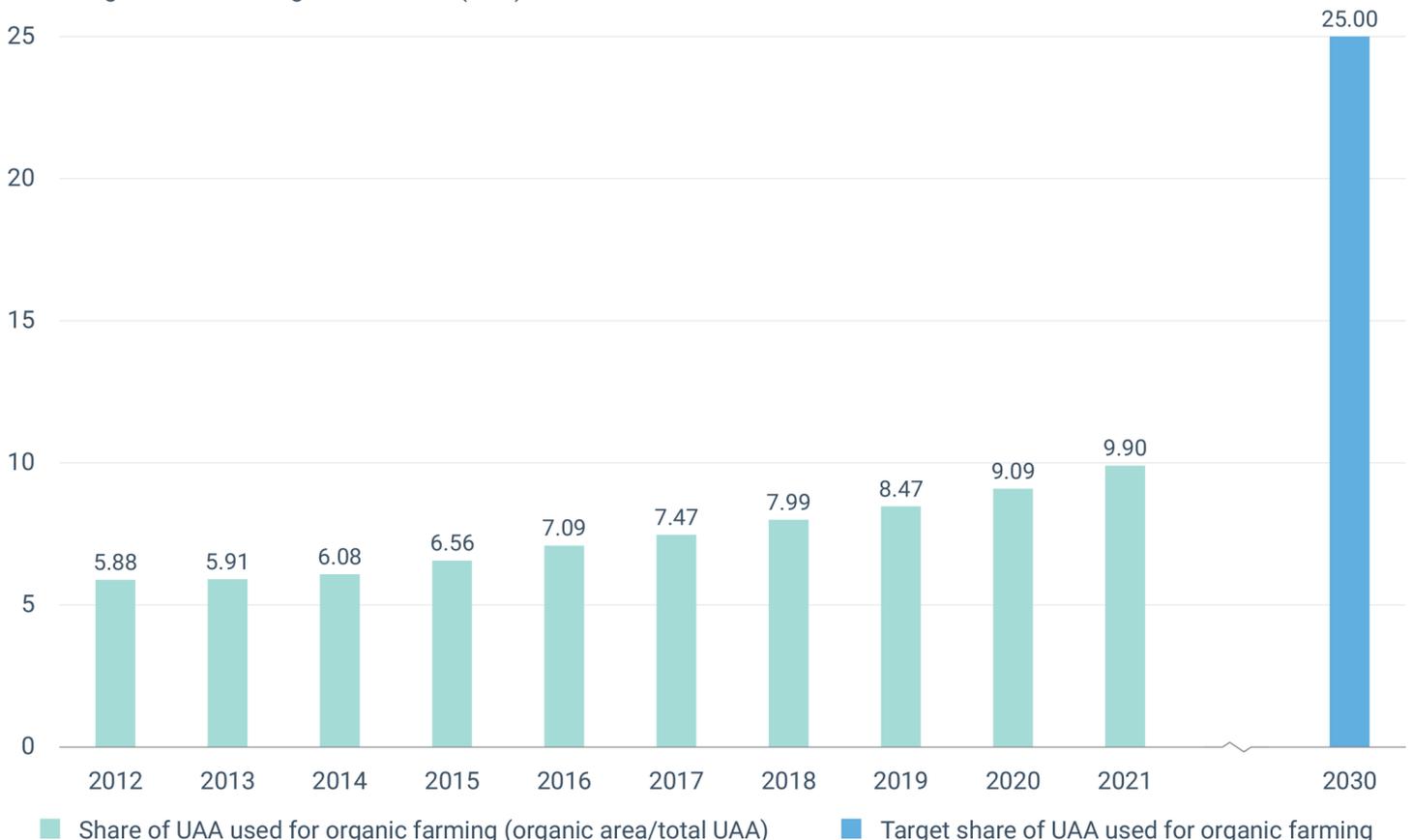
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Home > Analysis and data > Indicators > Agricultural area under organic farming...

The European Green Deal's farm to fork strategy sets the target that, by 2030, at least 25% of the EU's agricultural area should be under organic farming. The share of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming increased from 5.9% in 2012 to 9.9% in 2021 as a result of an increasing demand for organic products and policy support. To meet the target, the pace will need to almost double in the remaining years up to 2030. Although the policies currently in place are expected to increase the share of organic farming, this will not be enough to meet the target.

## Figure 1. Share of the utilised agricultural area used for organic farming in the EU-27 over the period 2012-2021

Percentage total utilised agricultural area (UAA)





Organic farming refers to the production of food using natural substances and processes. It avoids or markedly reduces the use of synthetic chemicals, applies high standards of animal welfare and excludes the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It has benefits for biodiversity, soil health and water quality.

European Green Deal initiatives, particularly the EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030<sup>[1]</sup> and the Farm to Fork strategy<sup>[2]</sup>, set the target that at least 25% of the EU's utilised agricultural area (UAA) should be under organic farming by 2030. The UAA under organic farming in the EU has increased since 2012 continuously, due to demand for organic products and policy support. In 2021 it covered an estimated 16 million hectares, 9.9% of the EU's UAA.

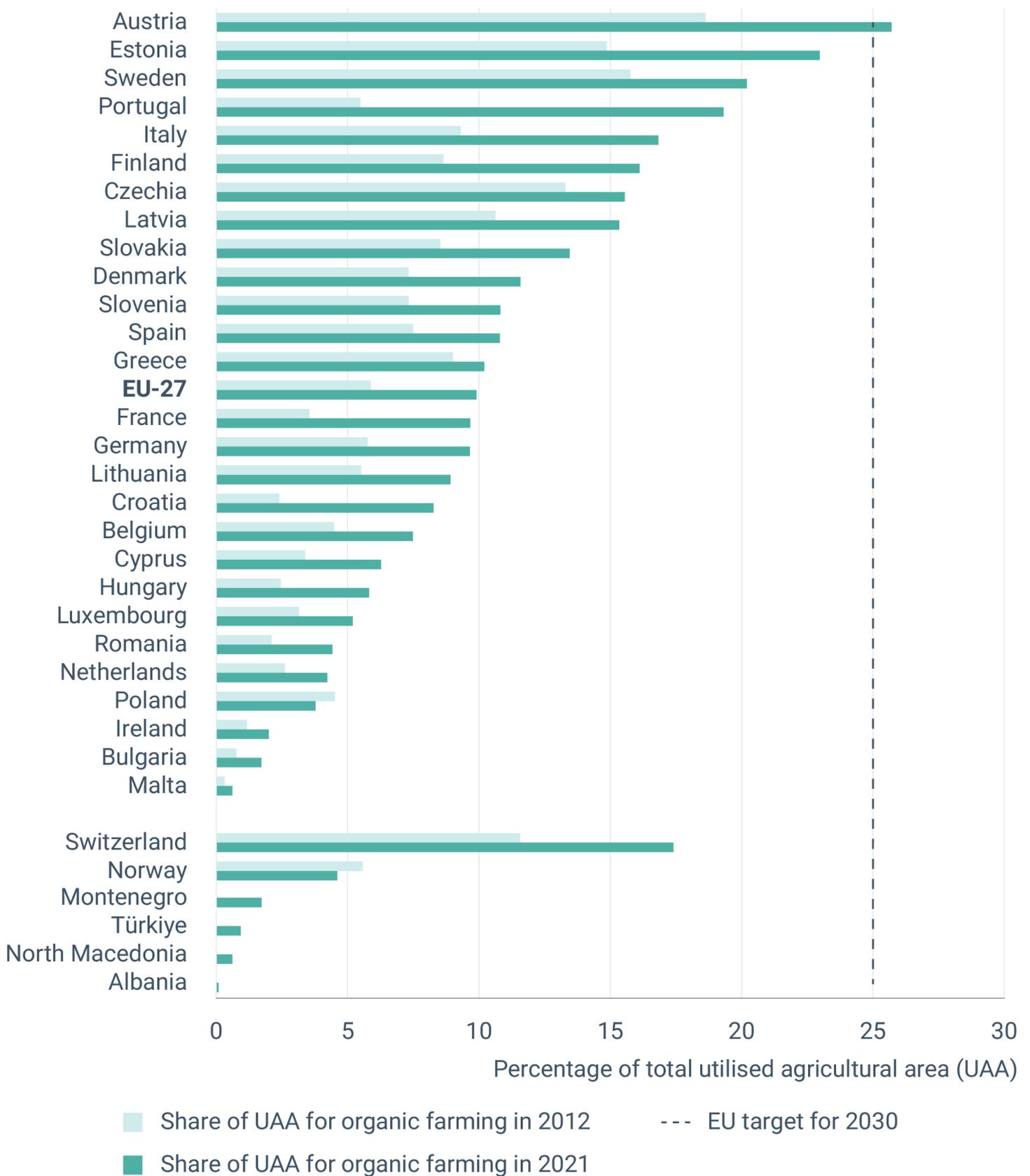
The annual compound growth rate between 2012 and 2021 was 6%. Meeting the 25% target by 2030 would require a nearly doubled annual compound growth rate of 10.8% for the 2021-2030 period. This would require the conversion of 27 thousand km<sup>2</sup> per year in 2021-2030.

The share of the organic farming area is expected to further increase by 2030<sup>[3]</sup>. The growth rate is projected to remain stable and to lead to a 15% organic farming area share in 2031<sup>[4]</sup>, with the assumption of a growing demand and continuing policy support<sup>[5]</sup>.

The European Green Deal introduced new initiatives to increase demand and supply of organic products, such as the new EU Organic Action Plan<sup>[6]</sup>. In this context, the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2023-2027<sup>[7]</sup> aims to encourage support to organic farming. In its first year of implementation, the national [CAP strategic plans of Member States](#) set a level of area targets and financial allocation to organic farming to increase the support to [about 10%](#) of the total utilised agricultural area in 2027<sup>[8]</sup>.

At present, it is very unlikely that the 2030 target will be met because of the large distance to the target. The current policy support, in itself, is not sufficient to reach the target. More time is needed for the implementation of European Green Deal actions. Furthermore, the evolution of the demand for organic products has become more unstable since 2022. To reach the target, accelerated development and implementation of coherent policies with increased ambition levels need to support a fundamental transformation of food production and consumption.

## Figure 2. Share of total utilised agricultural area used for organic farming by country and in the EU-27, in 2012 and 2021



Source: Eurostat.



In 2021, Austria <sup>[9]</sup>, Estonia and Sweden had more than 20% of their UAA under organic farming, the highest shares of all EU Member States. By contrast, in six Member States less than 5% of their UAA were under organic farming, the lowest shares being in Ireland, Bulgaria and Malta.

In the EEA member and cooperating countries for which data are available, less than 5% of their UAA were under organic farming, except Switzerland (with 17%). The share of organic farming area increased in Switzerland, and decreased in Norway between 2012 and 2021.

The shares of UAA under organic farming increased between 2012 and 2021 in all EU Member States, except Poland, where the share decreased.

## ▼ Supporting information

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### Definition

This indicator shows the share of the utilised agricultural area (UAA) used for organic farming in the EU. According to the EU definition, the 'total organic area' includes both the 'certified organic farming area' and the 'area under conversion to organic farming', with farms undergoing a conversion process that typically takes 2-3 years, depending on the crop, before being certified as organic.

Organic farming is an integrated agricultural production system. It combines environment- and climate-friendly practices with benefits for biodiversity, the sustainable use of natural resources and the adoption of high animal welfare standards. This is in line with the demand of a growing number of consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes. Organic production thus plays multiple societal roles. It provides for a specific market, responding to consumer demand for organic products, and it delivers publicly available goods that contribute to benefits for environmental and human health, animal welfare and rural development.

The legal framework for organic farming in the EU is defined by Council Regulation 2018/848<sup>[10]</sup>, which came into force on 1 January 2022. Organic agriculture is defined by regulated standards (production rules), certification procedures (compulsory inspection schemes) and a specific labelling scheme in the EU.

**Utilised agricultural area (UAA):** the total area taken up by arable land, permanent grassland, permanent crops and kitchen gardens, regardless of the type of tenure or whether or not it is used as a part of common land. It excludes land used for mushroom cultivation; unutilised agricultural land (NUAA); woodland (WA); other land occupied by, for example, buildings, farmyards, tracks or ponds; UAA that is the property of the owner but is leased or rented to someone else; and common land that is not used (NUAA).

See: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Utilised\\_agricultural\\_area\\_\(UAA\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Utilised_agricultural_area_(UAA))

## Methodology

The total organic agricultural area is reported by countries in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/848 <sup>[10]</sup>. The data from non-EU EEA member countries and cooperating countries are transmitted annually to Eurostat on a voluntary basis, based on the [European Statistical System Agreement](#).

The EU's total organic agricultural area is calculated by Eurostat as the sum of the areas reported by the EU Member States. The total organic agricultural area as a share of the UAA is calculated as a percentage by Eurostat. The data set is updated annually by Eurostat, as soon as the underlying data become available and have been validated by Eurostat.

Switzerland provides the percentage of the organic area calculated from the national UAA excluding summer pastures and from the national data on the organic farming area.

## Methodology for gap filling

EU aggregates were calculated from available national data except in a few cases for which national data were not yet available and the data reported for the previous year by a country were taken into account in the calculation of the EU aggregate. Data gaps for Greece and Austria in 2021 were filled by using data from 2020.

## Methodology references

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/org\\_esms.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/org_esms.htm)

## Policy/environmental relevance

This indicator is a headline indicator for monitoring progress towards achieving objectives of the Eighth Environment Action Programme (8th EAP)<sup>[11][12]</sup>. It mainly contributes to monitoring food system aspects of the 8th EAP priority objective under Article 2(f), to be met by 2030: 'promoting environmental aspects of sustainability and significantly reducing key environmental and climate pressures related to the Union's production and consumption, in particular in the areas of energy, industry, buildings and infrastructure, mobility, tourism, international trade and the food system<sup>[12]</sup>'. The European Commission Communication on the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP monitoring framework specifies that this indicator should monitor whether the EU will reach '25% of EU agricultural land organically farmed by 2030'<sup>[11]</sup>.

The indicator is also used for several monitoring frameworks such as for [EU monitoring](#) related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Organic farming is one of the areas covered by the European Green Deal's Farm to Fork strategy, which sets a target that: 'at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land should be under organic farming by 2030'<sup>[2]</sup>. To achieve this target and to help the organic farming sector reach its full potential, a comprehensive action plan for organic production in the EU was set out<sup>[6]</sup>. It includes 23 actions, some of which follow on from the actions successfully undertaken in the period 2014-2020 and some of which are new, complementing existing actions and mobilising different sources of funding.

The three interlinked axes of the action plan reflect the structure of the food supply chain and the European Green Deal's sustainability objectives.

- Axis 1: stimulate demand and ensure consumer trust
- Axis 2: stimulate conversion and reinforce the entire value chain
- Axis 3: organics leading by example – increase the contribution of organic farming to environmental sustainability.

As part of the action plan, the regulation laying down the rules related to organic production in the EU has been revised. Since 1 January 2022, Regulation (EU) 2018/848<sup>[10]</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 has been the applicable legislative act, also known as the 'basic act'. It lays down rules on organic production and the labelling of organic products, and repeals and replaces Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007<sup>[13]</sup>. It aims, among other things, to:

- strengthen the control system to build increased trust in EU organic certification
- make the organic conversion easier for smaller-scale farmers
- ensure the same standards for imported organic products as for EU organic products
- increase the range of products that can be marketed as organic.

## **Related policy documents**

- Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007<sup>[10]</sup>.
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an action plan for the development of organic production. COM/2021/141 final<sup>[6]</sup>.

· Stakeholder Consultation – Synopsis report accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an action plan for the development of organic production. SWD/2021/65 final<sup>[14]</sup>.

## **Rationale**

Organic farming is a farming system that has been explicitly developed to be environmentally sustainable. It is governed by clear, verifiable rules. In the EU, farming is considered organic only if it complies with Regulation (EU) No 2018/848 (Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 before Regulation (EU) No 2018/848 entered into force). In line with this legislation, organic farming is differentiated from other approaches to agricultural production by the application of a monitored conversion period (from conventional farming), regulated standards (production rules), certification procedures (compulsory inspection schemes) and a specific labelling scheme. It is thus more suited to identifying environmentally friendly farming practices than other types of farming that also consider environmental aspects.

## **Accuracy and uncertainties**

The accuracy of the data varies in the reporting countries. In most countries, a large share of the data comes from the responsible national control body. There are only provisional or estimated values for a few countries.

## **Data sets uncertainty**

### Geographic coverage:

- Data are presented for all EU Member States.
- Non-EU EEA member countries with available data for 2021: Norway, Switzerland, Türkiye and for 2012: Norway, Switzerland.
- Non-EU EEA cooperating countries with available data for 2021: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia. No data for 2012.

Time coverage: 2012-2021. Data from before 2012 are not used for the indicator assessment, as these data are not comparable with data series from 2012-2021 because of methodological changes in data collection and reporting procedures.

### Representativeness of data at the national level:

- The level of representativeness is high.

### Comparability:

· The level of comparability is high. An EU-harmonised questionnaire is available for collecting data on organic farming, which guarantees geographical comparability. The actual comparability depends on national practices, left to subsidiarity.

· Length of comparable time series without methodological break is longer than four data points.

## Rationale uncertainty

No uncertainty has been specified.

## Data sources and providers

- [Organic crop area by agricultural production methods and crops \(ORG\\_CROPAR\)](#), Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat)

## ▼ Metadata

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### DPSIR

Pressure

### Topics

# Agriculture and food # Land use

### Tags

# Utilised agricultural area # AGRI001 # Organic farming # 8th EAP

### Temporal coverage

2012-2021

### Geographic coverage

Austria	Belgium
Bulgaria	Croatia
Cyprus	Czechia
Denmark	Estonia
Finland	France
Germany	Greece

Hungary

Ireland

Latvia

Luxembourg

Netherlands

Norway

Portugal

Serbia

Slovenia

Sweden

Türkiye

### **Typology**

Iceland

Italy

Lithuania

Malta

North Macedonia

Poland

Romania

Slovakia

Spain

Switzerland

Descriptive indicator (Type A - What is happening to the environment and to humans?)

### **UN SDGs**

Life on land

### **Unit of measure**

Percentage of total utilised agricultural area (UAA)

### **Frequency of dissemination**

Once a year

### **Contact**

[info@eea.europa.eu](mailto:info@eea.europa.eu)

## **✓ References and footnotes**

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1. EC, 2020, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 – Bringing nature back into our lives, COM(2020) 380 final.

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2. EC, 2020, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, COM(2020) 381 final.  
[a](#) [b](#)
3. European Commission. Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development., 2022b, *EU agricultural outlook for markets, income and environment 2022-2032.*, Publications Office, LU.  
[↵](#)
4. EC, 2021, 'EU agricultural outlook 2021-31: sustainability and health concerns to shape agricultural markets', ([https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-agricultural-outlook-2021-31-sustainability-and-health-concerns-shape-agricultural-markets-2021-12-09\\_en](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-agricultural-outlook-2021-31-sustainability-and-health-concerns-shape-agricultural-markets-2021-12-09_en)) accessed January 19, 2023.  
[↵](#)
5. Projections about the share of organic farming in 2030 are uncertain due to different reasons such as the evolution of the organic farming market becoming less predictable due to current uncertainty in economic developments. High inflation levels might affect food prices on the short- and medium-term, which might slow down the increase in demand for organic products (EC, 2022b). Support for research and innovation in organic farming is being increased in the EU (EC, 2023), but it is not yet possible to factor in the development and uptake of research & innovation in organic farming practices, which is key to improve their competitiveness and hence uptake.  
[↵](#)
6. EC, 2021, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION  
[a](#) [b](#) [c](#)
7. EU, 2021, Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP strategic plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013, OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1-186.  
[↵](#)
8. Some Member States set organic farming area targets for 2027 some others for 2030. The targets are set only for areas receiving CAP support for organic farming. Areas farmed organically without receiving CAP support are not included. In 2020, 61.6% of organically farmed land received specific organic CAP payment.

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9. Based on 2020 data.

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10. EU, 2018, Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 1-92., 848  
[a](#) [b](#) [c](#) [d](#)

11. EC, 2022, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the monitoring framework for the 8th Environment Action Programme: Measuring progress towards the attainment of the programme's 2030 and 2050 priority objectives, COM(2022) 357 final.  
[a](#) [b](#)

12. EU, 2022, Decision (EU) 2022/591 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 on a general Union Environment Action Programme to 2030, OJ L 114, 12.4.2022, p. 22–36.  
[a](#) [b](#)

13. EU, 2007, Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, OJ L 189, 20.7.2007, p. 1-23.  
↵

14. EC, 2021, Stakeholder consultation – synopsis report accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an action plan for the development of organic production, SWD(2021) 65 final.  
↵