

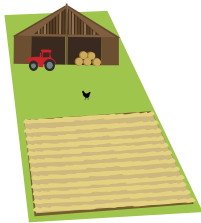


## Organic farming statistics 2017

This release presents estimates of the land area farmed organically, crop areas, livestock numbers and numbers of organic producers and processors in the United Kingdom. The results are produced from data compiled by approved organic certification bodies.

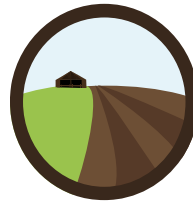
### Key findings:

#### Organic land area ([Table 1](#))



**517 thousand hectares**  
is farmed organically in the UK.

#### Organic land use ([Table 2](#))



**64%**  
of UK organic land is accounted for by permanent grassland.

#### Organic crops ([Table 3](#))



**7%**  
of the total UK organic area is used to grow cereals.

#### Regional organic land use ([Table 4](#))



**58%**  
of the total UK organic area is in England

#### Organic Livestock ([Tables 5 and 6](#))



**2.7%**  
of the total UK cattle population is reared organically.

#### Organic operators ([Tables 7 to 9](#))



**6.6 thousand**  
The number of organic operators in the UK. Up 3.5% since 2016.

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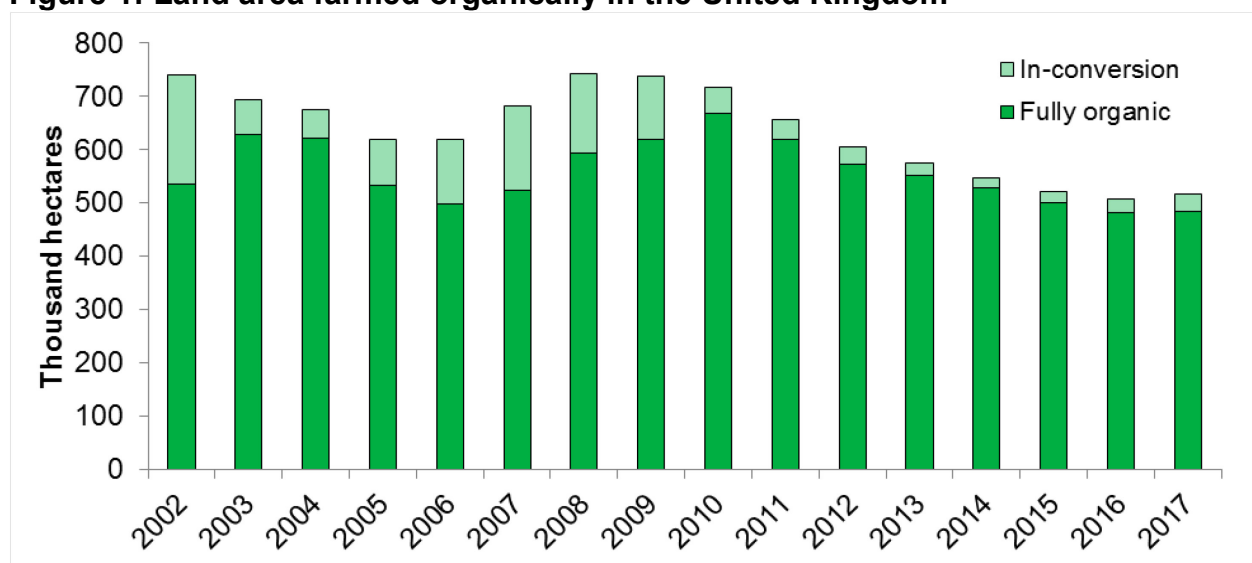
## Detailed results

The total organic area referred to, is made up of fully organic land and organic land in-conversion. Long-term trends and detailed geographical breakdowns are available in the dataset: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/organic-farming-statistics-2017>.

### Land area farmed organically

In 2017, the United Kingdom had a total area of 517 thousand hectares of land farmed organically (i.e. the fully converted area and area under conversion), an increase of 1.9% compared to 2016. Since 2008 when the area of land farmed organically peaked, the organically farmed area has declined by 30%. The organically farmed area represents 2.9% of the total farmed area on agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom.

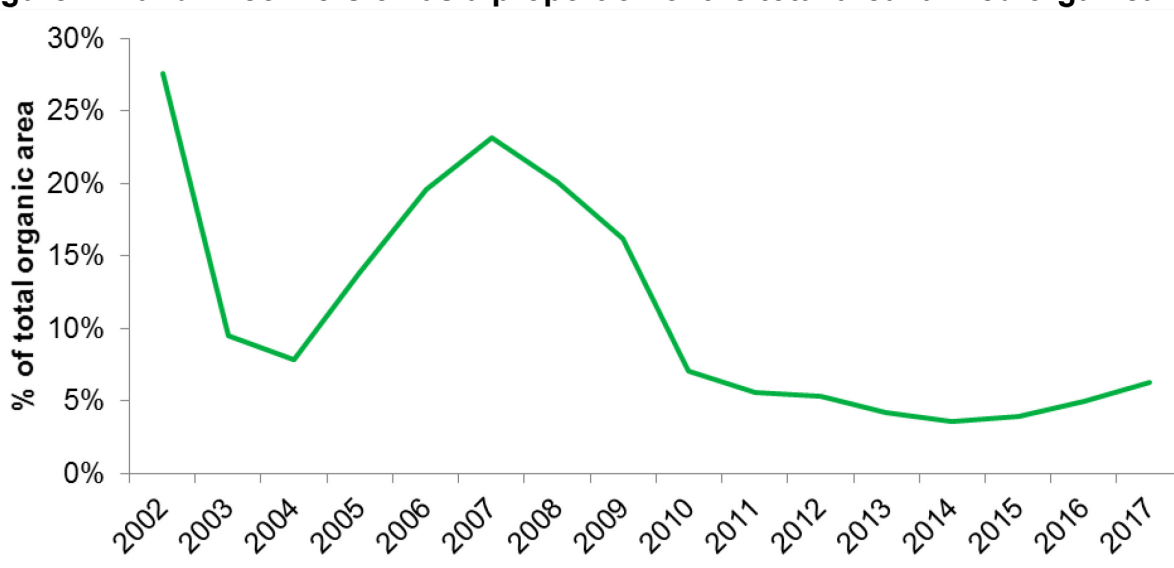
**Figure 1: Land area farmed organically in the United Kingdom**



### Land in-conversion

Organic production comes from fully converted land. Before an area can be considered as fully organic, it must undergo a conversion process. The area in-conversion expressed as a percentage of the total organic area can give an indication of the potential growth in the organic sector. This proportion showed a small increase in 2017, the third consecutive increase since 2014.

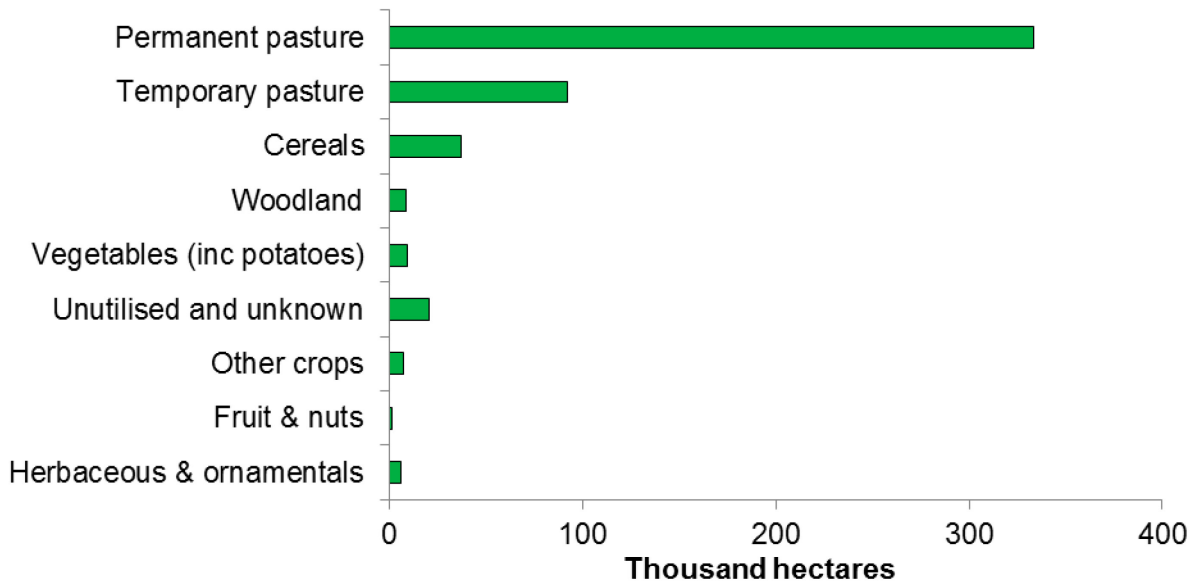
**Figure 2: Land in-conversion as a proportion of the total area farmed organically**



### Organic land use

Permanent pasture accounts for the biggest share of the organic area (64%) followed by temporary pasture (18%) and cereals (7%). The full breakdown of organic land use is shown in Figure 3 below and Table 2 on page 5.

**Figure 3: Organic land use in the United Kingdom: 2017<sup>(a)</sup>**

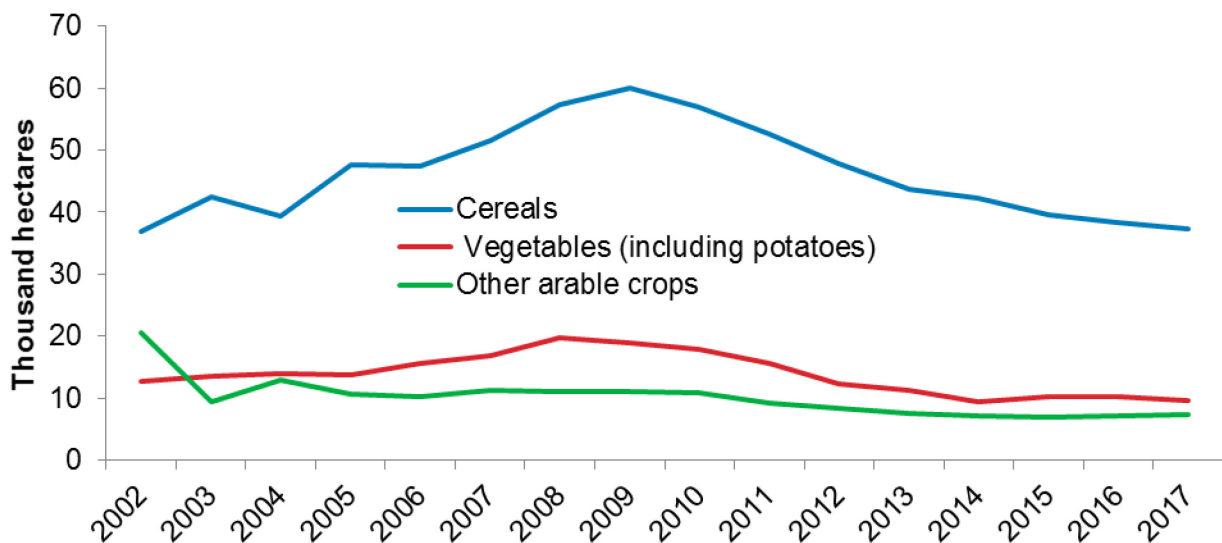


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

### Organic crops

The three main crop types grown organically are cereals, vegetables including potatoes, and other arable crops. Cereals and vegetables including potatoes have both shown a decline since the late 2000s, mirroring the fall in the land area farmed organically since 2008, however both the land area and other arable crops saw a small increase in 2017.

**Figure 4: Organic crops in the United Kingdom<sup>(a)</sup>**



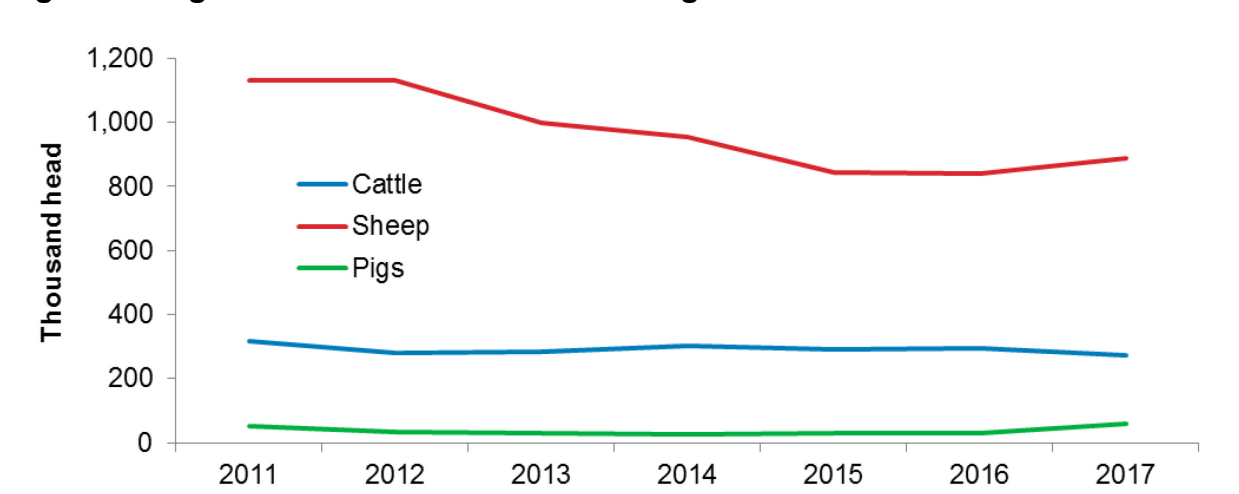
(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

### Organic livestock

The number of total poultry farmed organically in the United Kingdom increased by 8.5% between 2016 and 2017, rising to just over 3 million birds. However, this equates to 1.7% of the total UK poultry population.

In the red meat sector (see Figure 5), sheep reared organically increased by 5.5% to 887 thousand animals in 2017. Organically reared cattle numbers saw a decrease of 7.4% from 296 thousand in 2016 to 274 thousand animals in 2017. The number of pigs reared organically saw the largest proportional increase, rising from 31 thousand animals in 2016 to almost 59 thousand animals in 2017.

**Figure 5: Organic livestock in the United Kingdom<sup>(a)</sup>**

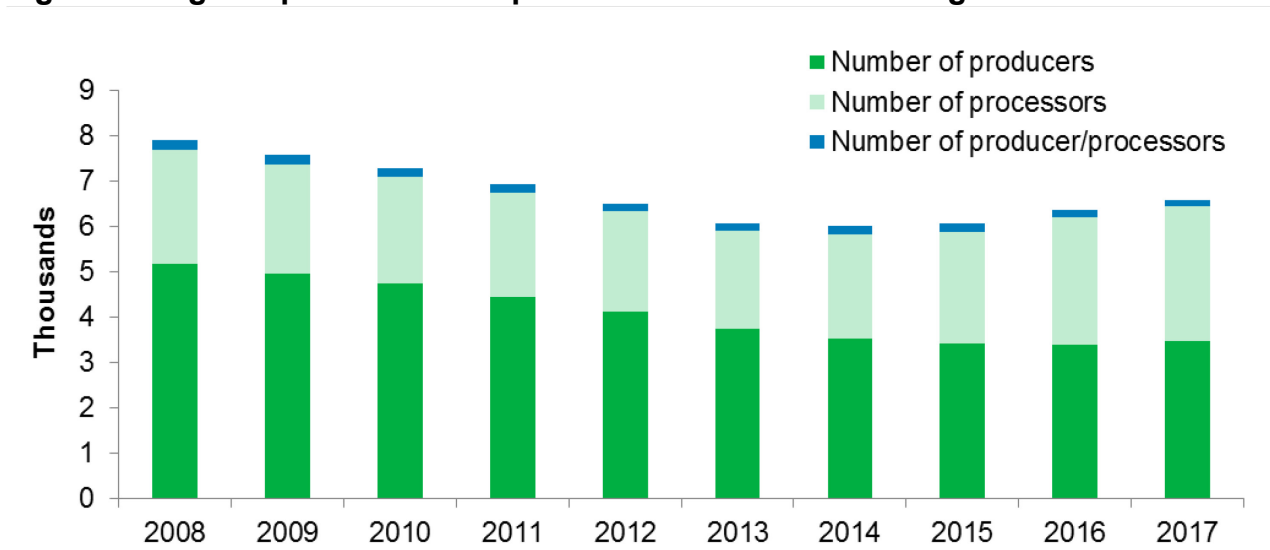


(a) Includes fully organic only

### Number of organic producers and processors

In 2017, there were almost 6.6 thousand producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in the United Kingdom. This was an increase from almost 6.4 thousand in 2016. The number of producers has declined by 34% since 2007, mirroring the decline in the land area farmed organically. However both the land area and number of producers saw small increase of around 2% between 2016 and 2017. The number of processors has increased for the fourth year running and now stands at almost 3 thousand (see Figure 6 and Table 7).

**Figure 6: Organic producers and processors in the United Kingdom**



**Table 1: Land area farmed organically 2014 to 2017**

	Thousand hectares				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	% change 2017/2016
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
In-conversion	19.7	20.6	25.2	32.6	29.4
Fully organic	529.0	500.8	482.7	484.8	0.4
<b>Total organic area</b>	<b>548.6</b>	<b>521.4</b>	<b>507.9</b>	<b>517.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>England</b>					
In-conversion	12.5	10.0	14.7	19.8	34.1
Fully organic	295.7	293.7	281.8	280.5	-0.4
<b>Total organic area</b>	<b>308.1</b>	<b>303.7</b>	<b>296.5</b>	<b>300.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>

**Table 2: Organic land use 2014 to 2017<sup>(a)</sup>**

	Thousand hectares				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	% change 2017/2016
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
Cereals	42.2	39.6	38.4	37.4	-2.6
Other crops	7.3	6.9	7.3	7.4	1.9
Fruit & nuts	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.8	-7.2
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	9.4	10.4	10.2	9.6	-6.0
Herbaceous & ornamentals	8.5	6.2	5.8	5.9	3.0
Temporary pasture	93.7	92.2	92.1	92.3	0.2
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	369.7	347.1	335.0	333.3	-0.5
Woodland	7.0	6.9	7.4	9.0	21.6
Unutilised land	4.4	5.7	5.4	5.5	1.5
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	4.4	4.3	4.5	15.2	237.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>548.6</b>	<b>521.4</b>	<b>507.9</b>	<b>517.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>England</b>					
Cereals	34.9	33.1	32.1	31.3	-2.7
Other crops	5.3	5.1	5.4	5.4	-0.7
Fruit & nuts	2.1	1.8	1.8	1.6	-9.4
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	7.7	8.7	8.5	8.0	-5.6
Herbaceous & ornamentals	7.4	5.4	5.0	5.2	4.4
Temporary pasture	77.3	75.7	75.0	75.5	0.6
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	161.7	160.9	155.6	153.9	-1.1
Woodland	5.0	5.2	5.3	5.3	0.4
Unutilised land	3.2	4.4	4.0	4.0	0.1
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	3.5	3.4	3.8	10.1	165.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>308.1</b>	<b>303.7</b>	<b>296.5</b>	<b>300.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>

(a) Includes fully organic and in-conversion areas.

(b) In 2017 some land areas were provided without a crop category or land use description, therefore these are classified as unknown.

**Table 3: Detailed organic land use 2017**

				Thousand hectares	
	Area in-conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2017 <sup>(a)</sup>	Total organic area as % of June area
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
<b>Cereals</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>3 181</b>	1.2
Wheat	0.5	9.5	10.0	1 792	0.6
Barley	1.1	11.7	12.8	1 177	1.1
Oats	0.4	11.6	12.0	161	7.5
Other cereals	0.0	2.5	2.5	52	4.9
<b>Other arable crops</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>1 251</b>	0.6
Sugar beet	0.0	0.1	0.1	111	0.1
Fodder, forage & silage	0.7	4.9	5.5	81	6.8
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	1.6	1.8	1 058	0.2
Vegetables	0.4	8.1	8.5	117	7.3
Potatoes	0.0	1.1	1.1	145	0.8
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.7	1.8	35	5.1
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.0	5.9	5.9	13	47.6
Temporary pasture	7.4	84.9	92.3	1 144	8.1
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	17.4	316.0	333.3	10 138	3.3
Woodland	0.3	8.6	9.0	1 037	0.9
Unutilised land	0.2	5.4	5.5		
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	4.1	11.1	15.2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>484.8</b>	<b>517.4</b>		
<b>England</b>					
<b>Cereals</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>2 660</b>	1.2
Wheat	0.4	8.7	9.1	1 652	0.6
Barley	0.7	9.4	10.2	842	1.2
Oats	0.3	9.3	9.6	121	7.9
Other cereals	0.0	2.3	2.4	44	5.3
<b>Other arable crops</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>1 153</b>	0.5
Sugar beet	0.0	0.1	0.1	111	0.1
Fodder, forage & silage	0.4	3.5	3.9	54	7.2
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	1.4	1.4	988	0.1
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.5	1.6	32	5.0
Vegetables	0.3	7.0	7.3	96	7.6
Potatoes	0.0	0.7	0.7	108	0.7
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.0	5.1	5.2	11	47.2
Temporary pasture	6.2	69.2	75.5	640	11.8
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	7.7	146.2	153.9	3 757	4.1
Woodland	0.3	5.0	5.3	369	1.4
Unutilised land	0.1	3.9	4.0		
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	3.1	7.0	10.1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>280.5</b>	<b>300.3</b>		

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2017. Excludes common land.

(b) In 2017 some land areas were provided without a crop category or land use description, therefore these are classified as unknown.

**Table 4: Area farmed organically by country and English region 2017**

	Thousand hectares				
	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total agricultural area at June 2017 <sup>(a)</sup>	Total organic area as % of June area
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>484.8</b>	<b>517.4</b>	<b>17 637</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Wales	7.3	78.8	86.1	1 687	5.1
Scotland	5.1	117.6	122.7	5 754	2.1
Northern Ireland	0.4	7.9	8.3	1 020	0.8
<b>England</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>280.5</b>	<b>300.3</b>	<b>9 176</b>	<b>3.3</b>
North East	0.8	22.6	23.4	656	3.6
North West	1.0	13.9	14.9	985	1.5
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.8	10.2	11.0	1 161	0.9
East Midlands	0.8	12.6	13.4	1 191	1.1
West Midlands	5.1	27.6	32.7	910	3.6
Eastern	1.2	13.9	15.1	1 400	1.1
South East (inc London)	1.7	42.5	44.2	1 105	4.0
South West	8.4	137.2	145.6	1 769	8.2

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2017. Excludes common land.

**Table 5: Organic livestock numbers 2014 to 2017<sup>(a)</sup>**

	Thousand head				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	% change 2017/2016
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
Cattle	304.1	291.5	296.4	274.4	-7.4
Sheep	954.9	844.6	840.8	887.0	5.5
Pigs	28.3	30.0	31.5	58.8	86.9
Poultry	2 398.7	2 560.2	2 821.2	3 059.8	8.5
Other livestock <sup>(b)</sup>	5.7	4.3	3.4	2.6	-23.8
<b>England</b>					
Cattle	215.6	217.7	219.3	201.7	-8.0
Sheep	404.2	415.3	405.9	421.2	3.8
Pigs	25.8	22.2	29.4	53.0	80.2
Poultry	1 495.9	1 512.4	1 699.2	2 001.9	17.8
Other livestock <sup>(b)</sup>	3.1	3.9	2.8	2.3	-19.0

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

(b) "Other livestock" includes goats, farmed deer, horses, camelids and any livestock not recorded elsewhere

**Table 6: Detailed organic livestock numbers 2017**

		Thousand head	
	Total organic livestock <sup>(a)</sup>	Total livestock at June 2017 <sup>(b)</sup>	Total organic livestock area as % of June livestock
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
<b>Cattle</b>	<b>274.4</b>	<b>10 004</b>	<b>2.7</b>
for slaughter	95.4	3 893	2.5
Dairy cows	76.3	3 347	2.3
Other cattle	102.7	2 763	3.7
<b>Sheep</b>	<b>887.0</b>	<b>34 832</b>	<b>2.5</b>
Breeding females	462.1	16 669	2.8
Other sheep	424.9	18 163	2.3
<b>Pigs</b>	<b>58.8</b>	<b>4 969</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Fattening pigs	37.2	4 457	0.8
Breeding sows	5.2	417	1.3
Other pigs	16.4	95	17.2
<b>Poultry</b>	<b>3 059.8</b>	<b>181 818</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Broilers	1 725.4	117 619	1.5
Laying hens	1 239.0	39 510	3.1
Other poultry	95.3	24 689	0.4
<b>Other livestock</b>	<b>2.6</b>	:	:
Goats	0.2	105	0.2
Horses	0.2	258	0.1
Others <sup>(c)(d)</sup>	2.1	:	:
<b>England</b>			
<b>Cattle</b>	<b>201.7</b>	<b>5 418</b>	<b>3.7</b>
for slaughter	64.0	1 899	3.4
Dairy cows	61.2	2 022	3.0
Other cattle	76.5	1 497	5.1
<b>Sheep</b>	<b>421.2</b>	<b>15 757</b>	<b>2.7</b>
Breeding females	227.5	7 385	3.1
Other sheep	193.8	8 372	2.3
<b>Pigs</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>3 969</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Fattening pigs	33.2	3 553	0.9
Breeding sows	5.0	334	1.5
Other pigs	14.7	82	17.9
<b>Poultry</b>	<b>2 001.9</b>	<b>134 869</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Broilers	1 033.1	90 605	1.1
Laying hens	911.6	25 486	3.6
Other poultry	57.2	18 778	0.3
<b>Other livestock</b>	<b>2.3</b>	:	:
Goats	0.2	84	0.2
Horses	0.2	170	0.1
Others <sup>(c)(d)</sup>	1.9	:	:

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

(b) Source: June survey of agriculture/Cattle Tracing system for cattle populations

(c) "Others" include farmed deer, camelids and any livestock not recorded elsewhere

(d) June figures are not provided for other livestock as the type of animals are not comparable



**Table 7: Number of organic producers and processors 2017**

	Number of producers only	Number of producer/processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>3 465</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>2 977</b>	<b>6 586</b>
Wales	605	15	131	751
Scotland	366	5	207	578
Northern Ireland	159	0	61	220
<b>England</b>	<b>2 335</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>2 578</b>	<b>5 037</b>
North East	79	2	51	132
North West	113	7	188	308
Yorkshire & the Humber	98	6	171	275
East Midlands	150	7	231	388
West Midlands	308	14	192	514
Eastern	170	12	361	543
South East (inc London)	328	19	907	1 254
South West	1 089	57	477	1 623

**Table 8: Number of organic producers and processors 2014 to 2017**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	% change 2017/2016
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>6 002</b>	<b>6 056</b>	<b>6 363</b>	<b>6 586</b>	<b>3.5</b>
Wales	779	741	751	751	0.0
Scotland	576	539	560	578	3.2
Northern Ireland	193	197	204	220	7.8
<b>England</b>	<b>4 454</b>	<b>4 579</b>	<b>4 848</b>	<b>5 037</b>	<b>3.9</b>
North East	130	137	130	132	1.5
North West	246	277	301	308	2.3
Yorkshire & The Humber	238	257	273	275	0.7
East Midlands	346	329	371	388	4.6
West Midlands	424	438	446	514	15.2
Eastern	445	457	508	543	6.9
South East (inc London)	1 020	1 083	1 192	1 254	5.2
South West	1 605	1 601	1 627	1 623	-0.2

**Table 9: Number of organic crop and livestock producers and processors 2017<sup>(a)</sup>**

	Number of:			
	Crop producers	Crop producers and processors	Livestock producers	Livestock producers and processors
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>3 164</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>2 310</b>	<b>123</b>
Wales	595	15	488	13
Scotland	318	5	248	5
Northern Ireland	127	0	102	0
<b>England</b>	<b>2 124</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1 472</b>	<b>105</b>
North East	76	2	63	2
North West	113	7	78	5
Yorkshire and the Humber	90	6	63	4
East Midlands	133	7	101	6
West Midlands	240	13	166	12
Eastern	145	11	68	9
South East (inc London)	306	19	179	15
South West	1 021	56	754	52

(a) Mixed organic holdings will be recorded under both the crop and livestock headings above. The numbers shown cannot be added together to arrive at total producers / processors by region as this will lead to double counting.

## Organic statistics methodology and data notes

### Organic statistics methodology

This statistical release contains summary results of data compiled by the UK Organic Certification Bodies. Each year, certifier bodies visit their registered farms to carry out annual inspections. During these inspections, certifiers record the crop areas and numbers of livestock present on the organic holding on that day.

The data collected during these inspections are sent to Defra each January to form an annual return required by the European Commission under Regulation No. 889/2008 of 5 September 2008.

The information collated by Defra is checked thoroughly before the figures are presented in this statistical release. Data are checked against historical data for comparability and any unusual values are queried with the relevant certification bodies. Due to the nature of the inspections, the data are collected at varying times through the year. Therefore, the data presented here do not give an exact snapshot of organic farming at any specific time of year, so they should be treated with a degree of caution. Defra is very grateful to the inspectors and members in the UK's Organic Certification Bodies for the information collected in the annual returns each year.

### Note

In this statistical release, unless specified otherwise, all figures include both in conversion and fully organic holdings. Also, totals in this release are based on unrounded figures so may not agree with the sum of their components in the tables.

### Organics overview

Only food that has been produced in accordance with organic standards by farmers /producers registered with an approved inspection body may be legally sold as 'organic' within the EU. The inputs and practices used in organic farming are strictly regulated in accordance with EU Regulation.

### Key elements of organic farming systems

The main components of an organic farming system are the avoidance of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, and the use of crop rotations and other forms of husbandry to maintain soil fertility and control weeds, pests and diseases. Livestock also form an integral part of the majority of organic farms, although there are some successful stockless systems. Organic standards do not allow intensively housed stock or systems where a large amount of total feed has to be bought in. Pigs and poultry must be managed with extensive outdoor access under an organic system.

### Conversion

In most cases, land must be managed organically for a minimum of two years (three years for top fruit orchards) before it is granted approved 'organic' status and is eligible for organic certification. Producers can then sell their produce as 'organic' and organic livestock breeding can commence.

### Other relevant data sources

Data on agricultural crop areas and livestock numbers are collected through the annual June Survey of Agriculture. Results from this survey can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/series/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry>

### **Users and uses of these statistics**

Users of the data include the EU Commission who require these statistics to be supplied annually under paragraph 36, Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and Article 93 Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008. The purpose is to support the management of the organic production sector in the EU. Statistics are published by Eurostat in their database <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

Other major users include the organic certification bodies in the UK, who provide the information used to compile the statistics, and the Government and devolved administrations, who use the information when formulating policy on support for organic farming. Other users include farming organisations, research bodies, students and there is interest also from the general public.