



ORGANIC ACTION PLANS
A GUIDE FOR STAKEHOLDERS

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EDITOR AND PUBLISHER:



IFOAM EU
Rue du Commerce 124, BE - 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 2 280 12 23 - Fax: +32 2 735 73 81
info@ifoam-eu.org
www.ifoam-eu.org

AUTHORS: Otto Schmid¹, Susanne Padel², Nic Lampkin² and Stephen Meredith³

PRODUCTION SUPPORT: Effimia Chatzinikolaou

LANGUAGE EDITING: Ben Tannahill

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PARTNERS:



Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm
Hampstead Marshall, Newbury, RG20 0HR, UK
Phone: +44 1488 658298 - Fax: +44 1488 658503
elmfarm@organicresearchcentre.com
www.organicresearchcentre.com



Research Institute of Organic Agriculture – FiBL
Ackerstrasse 113, CH-5070 Frick, Switzerland
Phone: +41 62 8657272 - Fax: +41 62 8657272
info.suisse@fibl.org
www.fibl.org



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Executive Summary

Over the last decade the development of Organic Action Plans (OAPs) has gained momentum as a mechanism for achieving a more integrated and balanced approach to organic policy-making in different European countries and at EU level. However the uptake, effectiveness and continuity of OAPs can vary significantly from country to country. For instance differing government priorities, the lack of ring-fenced public funding and the expectation that the organic sector should take the lead rather than government can impede the development of OAPs. This guide looks at the current status of OAPs in EU and EFTA countries with a special focus on plans at national and regional level and an in-depth analysis of six OAPs in the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Andalusia (Spain) and Scotland (UK). It also takes into account the OAPs developed at EU level by the European Commission. The guide builds on the EU-funded [ORGAP project](#) which undertook a comprehensive comparative review of several national and regional OAPs and produced a Manual to support the development of OAPs and a toolbox for evaluation.⁴ To support the future OAP development and implementation this guide sets out recommendations for the organic sector and EU, national and regional policymakers.

Organic action plan development in Europe 2015

From 31 countries observed in Europe (European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries), 12 countries were found to have an integrated support programme for organic farming called either a national Organic Action Plan or a similar initiative under a different name. 19 countries were found to have no national OAP. This includes several countries that have undertaken recent initiatives or are in ongoing discussions about potential plans. In countries where the responsibility for agricultural and rural development policy lies with the regional or provincial governments, the initiative to develop an OAP is also taken at regional level. In this case OAPs exist in some but not all of the regions or provinces of 5 countries (Belgium, Germany Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).

Table: Organic action plans in EU and EFTA countries, 2015

Type of Initiative	Country
National organic action plan (or similar integrated support programme)	Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland , France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia
Regional organic action plans (in some parts)	Belgium (Wallonia and Flanders); Germany (Bavaria); Spain (Valencia, Castile and León, Basque Country and the Canary Islands); Switzerland (Fribourg and Jura) United Kingdom (Scotland)
No current national organic action plan	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

A comparative assessment of the existing national and regional OAPs, from an organic sector perspective, found the Danish OAP to be most well developed and implemented, with other plans well received by organic stakeholders in Estonia, Finland, Slovakia and both regions of Belgium. Low scoring for plans or initiatives to develop a plan were identified by stakeholders in countries such as Ireland, Malta and Romania. OAPs have also been developed at EU level in the last 10-15 years. The first EU Organic Action Plan was published by the European Commission in 2004, and a second OAP was adopted by the European Commission in 2014.

Action Plan development process and administration

Development, implementation and evaluation: The survey of existing national and regional OAPs and case studies show that often but not always the first initiative to develop an OAP comes from government. A preparatory team or expert and advisory group with some representation from the organic sector is put in place, making the OAPs either a top-down or mixed initiative (combination of top-down and bottom-up).

The case studies in particular show that policymakers and administrators have an important role in the three critical stages of OAP elaboration. This includes:

- **Development:** In most cases the OAP preparation phase lasts 12-18 months before any actions are implemented. Stakeholder involvement is often stronger at the beginning of the OAP development process, however follow-up activities with stakeholders to ensure the continuity of a plan does not always happen in practice. In most case studies OAP elaboration involved a status quo analysis. Judging by the stated objectives of the OAPs both production and market orientated supply chain development are considered in all cases with the aim of achieving a balanced development between supply and demand. OAP goal setting was strongly influenced by the policy environment.
- **Implementation:** This stage can last from one year up to eight years. Implementation does not always coincide with relevant EU policy processes e.g. taking advantage of EU Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) measures under the CAP in order to adequately resource OAPs. This is particularly relevant as implementation is strongly influenced by available resources.
- **Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation has received less attention at present. Very few of the OAP case studies foresaw either a formative evaluation (to learn lessons and improve plans following a learning cycle, supported with monitoring) or a summative evaluation (final performance evaluation). However, there are some examples e.g. Czech Republic where an evaluation was completed and lessons learned from a previous OAP used to shape the development of the next one

Target setting: Nine countries (all four national case studies) and three regions (none of the regional case studies) have set quantitative targets under their OAPs. This is often related to the proportion of agricultural land that should be managed organically within a certain period. A few OAPs have set an annual target for the proportion of the food market to be supplied organically. However, in the majority of OAPs there is very little real progress in developing quantitative targets and for political reasons many governments plan no longer to set such targets.

Budget allocation: With the exception of Denmark and partly France, most OAPs have no specific budgets for their OAP development process (including support for stakeholder consultations and communication) as well as for specific measures to implement plans (with the exception of producer support covered by CAP). Some plans aim to include private funding for specific actions.

Communication: A good and continuous communication from the launch and the achievements of the actions in the OAP is a key factor for success. There are quite some differences between the case studies as to how this communication is done.

Focus areas of actions and support measures

Most national and regional OAPs focus areas and support measures cover a number of themes. These include:

- **Information:** In the past the information measures were mainly addressed to consumers to make the EU and/or national organic logos better known at national level. Today, however more targeted promotion and information campaigns have been developed e.g. to build awareness at municipal level in schools.
- **Training and education:** Many new plans emphasize the training and education of farmers whilst highlighting the need for integrating organic farming training into college and university curricula
- **Research, innovation and development:** The important role of research and development is explicitly mentioned in many plans. However the financial resources of the governments often do not correspond to the sector needs.

- **Producer support:** To strengthen the supply base, most countries, even without OAPs, use the CAP to support organic producers in-conversion or maintaining farmland organically. OAPs can help to target this support at specific sectors and build capacities in areas such as advisory services and infrastructural investments. Some OAPs therefore propose to use Rural Development funds for investment support or other structural measures to facilitate increased innovation.
- **Market development:** Historically organic policy support has focused on production oriented land area payments. However under current and future OAPs, promotion and market development (including support for short supply chains) are considered a priority. Particular attention is given to public procurement and export opportunities in the many OAPs. Special educational seminars for supply chain actors have also been designed.
- **Measures related to inspection, certification and regulations:** In some OAPs, emphasis is also given to inspection and certification e.g. an extension and/or improvement of organic standards on national level for special product groups or improvements in the efficiency and transparency of inspection.

Recommendations for policymakers and the organic sector

OAPs seek to respond to the needs of the organic sector in a specific country and region whilst contributing to wider policy objectives. As a result the development and implementation of OAPs should be seen as a partnership between policymakers and the organic sector. Below key and more specific recommendations for more effective OAPs are set out, targeted at both policymakers and the organic sector.

General recommendations for all stakeholders

- OAPs objectives should identify and address the specific needs of the organic sector in the country or region
- Allocate a specific budget to the OAP to ensure sufficient financial and human resources are dedicated to implementation
- Regular monitoring and evaluation should be well-integrated into the OAP
- An effective OAP need a broad set of instruments that can tackle the organic sector supply and demand needs

Specific recommendations for policy makers at national, regional and EU level:

- Facilitate participatory stakeholder involvement during the OAP development and implementation
- Tailor some actions towards building capacities and a more resilient organic sector

Specific recommendations for the organic sector:

- An OAP is not an end point in itself, but a strategic instrument for developing the organic sector goals in the context of wider policy goals
- Aim to develop a broad stakeholder alliance that can support the OAP's long-term development and implementation

1 Introduction

1.1 Organic policies and sector development in Europe

Policies to support organic farming first appeared in Europe in the late 1980s and are now widely applied in many countries in the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The development of these policies reflect the growing recognition of the contribution that organic farming can make to agricultural, environmental and rural development policy goals. Such recognition has contributed to the growth of organic farmland in Europe, which represented about 5.7% of EU agricultural land in 2014 (2.4% in Europe), backed by strong consumer demand for organic produce and value-add products across Europe. In the last decade alone, the EU market doubled in value from €11.1 billion in 2005 to €24 billion by 2014 (€11.9 billion to €26.2 billion in Europe).⁵

These developments show the dual role of organic food in society, on the one hand seeking to meet consumer demand for high-quality food and, on the other hand, delivering a number of public goods. In the EU, policy recognition has seen organic farming primarily supported by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), particularly following the harmonisation of organic farming rules in the early 1990s, with the first regulation being agreed in 1991. Over time, organic sector support has extended into other policy areas, such as research and some areas of market development.⁶ By the mid-1990s, the development of national or regional Organic Action Plans (OAPs) started to gain momentum as a mechanism for achieving a more integrated and balanced approach to organic policy-making in different European countries.

1.2 EU policy support for the organic sector, 2014-2020

In several countries OAPs are used to coordinate and combine organic policy support measures. As a result, an overview of the EU policies that are currently relevant to the organic sector for the 2014-2020 period is a suitable place to begin. In the EU, the CAP remains one of the key policy instruments that supports the development of organic farming. In the new CAP for 2014-2020⁷ the role of organic farming is recognised as a way of farming that responds to consumer demand for more environmentally-friendly farming practices. Certified organic farmers automatically qualify for the new 'Greening' payment (30% of the basic direct payment) without needing to fulfil any other obligations, demonstrating the significant contribution that organic farming makes to environmental objectives. Organic farmers can also receive additional support under EU Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) for conversion to, and maintenance of, organic farming as a very important tool in supporting the sustainable development of rural areas and agriculture in the EU. Additional options for supporting organic farming under the CAP include agro-environmental payments, provisions for training and advice, innovation, market development, capital investments (in production and processing infrastructure) and promotions targeted at organic producers and food businesses.

Other EU policies of interest to organic sector development include EU promotional programmes (post-2015) that promote organic farming products in the internal market and third countries, the sourcing of organic food under voluntary 2008 EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria for food and catering (currently under revision),⁸ and support for organic research and innovation under the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020. There is also potential for organic sector development using other European structural and investment funds such as the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development fund.⁹ In some cases, CAP and other EU policy support have been directly or indirectly linked to the development of OAPs at national and regional levels.

1.3 Potential of organic action plans to support sector development

Typically, the development of OAPs is based on a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the organic sector in a specific country or region and seeks to support its development and growth capacities in terms of both production and market development. An overview of Organic Action Plans and similar integrated support initiatives/programmes in many EU Member States and EFTA countries is outlined in Chapter 2. Despite the growing recognition of the potential benefits of organic farming and of the development of OAPs at national and regional levels, in some countries it feels as if little progress in developing coherent support policies has been

made. This reflects the fact that OAPs have been developed and implemented in different ways at national and regional levels.¹⁰ In some cases, an OAP may have been in operation for a certain period of time, and then been discontinued e.g. England and the Netherlands. Others have been continuously updated or a new programme developed e.g. Denmark and Austria. Some countries have developed Organic Action Plans that have never been implemented e.g. Portugal and Romania.

OAPs have also been developed at EU level. The first EU Organic Action Plan was published by the European Commission in 2004, and a second OAP was adopted by the European Commission in 2014. These OAPs are particularly oriented towards the revision of the EU rules on organic farming, but they have also acknowledged the relevance of some EU policy instruments for the development of organic farming. For instance, the European Commission's 2004 OAP played an important role in highlighting the role of different EU policies in addressing challenges facing the organic sector across Europe in a more coherent way. In particular, Action 6 called on Member States to make full use of their RDPs to support the development of the sector through a combination of supply-push and demand-pull measures. This move was reaffirmed in the latest EU Organic Action Plan published by the Commission in 2014 as a recommendation to Member States. At the same time, there are strategic opportunities to use OAPs at EU level to address challenges facing the organic sector and to mainstream organic farming in different policy frameworks.¹¹

In practice, the role of national, regional and EU policymakers in supporting and promoting organic food and farming in partnership with the organic sector is a very complex one. Indeed, one key conclusion of the most recent EU commissioned evaluation of the use and efficiency of public support measures addressing organic farming found that the effectiveness of any single policy measure, such as area-based support schemes, depends not only on support for the policy itself e.g. the level of payments and eligibility conditions, but also on the size and stage of development of the organic sector in any given country. This reflects the fact that EU and national policy measures for organic farming are interdependent.¹² This is the reason why integrated policy packages using OAPs are more effective – provided they fit into a broader policy picture, set strategic goals and directly cater to the sector's needs. As a result, the ongoing development and implementation of OAPs both in Member States and at EU level presents huge opportunities to address national and regional objectives, whilst contributing to meeting the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.¹³

This stakeholder guide examines the current status of OAPs in the EU and EFTA countries with a special focus on plans at national and regional level. It seeks to build on the EU-funded [ORGAP project](#), which undertook a comprehensive comparative review of several national and regional OAPs and produced a manual to support the development of OAPs as well as a toolbox for evaluation.¹⁴ To support future OAP development and implementation this guide sets out a number of general recommendations for all stakeholders as well as specific recommendations for the organic sector and national, regional and EU-level policymakers

2 Organic Action Plan Development in Europe, 2015

2.1 National and regional organic action plans

In Europe the majority of Organic Action Plans (OAPs), or similar integrated support programmes, are organised on a national basis with some countries organising plans on a regional basis. Building on existing data, a survey of existing national and regional OAPs in EU Member States and EFTA countries was conducted in October and November 2015.¹⁵ Although not all plans are called 'Organic Action Plans', we refer to all these programmes as OAPs, even if a different name was used for the programme.

Of the 31 countries for which we were able to obtain information, there are 12 countries with a national OAP. In 5 countries, where some responsibility for agricultural and rural development policy lies with the regional governments, the initiative to develop an OAP has been taken at the regional level. In 19 countries, there is currently no national OAP. This includes several countries that have undertaken recent initiatives or are in ongoing discussions about potential plans. In countries for which we were not able to confirm details of any plan with an organic sector representative we assume that there is no OAP (or similar programme) in place. Table 2.1 provides an overview of these OAPs with a more detailed information on OAP activity at national and regional level for 2015 outlined in annexes 1 and 2.

Table 2.1: Organic action plans in the EU and EFTA countries, 2015

Type of Initiative	Country
National organic action plan (or similar integrated support programme)	Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland , France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia
Regional organic action plans (in some parts)	Belgium (Wallonia and Flanders) Germany (Bavaria) Spain (Valencia, Castile and León, Basque Country and the Canary Islands) Switzerland (Fribourg and Jura) United Kingdom (Scotland)
No current national organic action plan	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany*, Greece, Iceland, Italy*, Latvia, Lithuania*, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain*, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom*

* Germany, Spain and Italy all have national strategic plans for organic farming. Germany is in the process of developing a national OAP for 2017, whilst an action plan exists at the regional level. In Andalusia (ES), Scotland (UK), Italy and Lithuania OAPs for 2016 were under development when this study was conducted.

IFOAM EU national representatives were asked to make an assessment of OAP-related activities in their respective countries based on a selection of the *Golden Rules for Organic Action Plans* from the *Organic Action Plan: development, implementation and evaluation* manual, developed under the [ORGAP project](#). The survey focused primarily on the most recent OAPs in each country, as well as stakeholders activities related to the development of an OAP in countries where no plan currently exists. The results are summarised in table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Summary of national and regional organic action plan assessments (organic sector perspective)

Criteria for a good Organic Action Plan (based on the ORGAP project)	Summary score*	Summary of assessment results and comments
1. Participatory involvement of stakeholders and good communication during the entire period of OAP development	Medium (3-3.5)	Most often stakeholder involvement is in place at the start with potential for improvement, e.g. through the possibility for follow-up or continuous engagement.
2. Objectives are clear and can realistically be achieved	Medium (3-3.5)	Most OAPs have objectives for some areas that are clear and can be achieved, but for other areas, clear objectives (and targets) are missing.
3. Objectives are based on a status-quo analysis	Medium (3-3.5)	For several OAPs, the status-quo analysis covers only some areas e.g. research needs with other areas missing e.g. market development.
4. Actions are tailored to the respective problem	Medium (3-3.5)	For most OAPs, actions are described for some problems, but not all of them are really tailored to specific local problems, or are not precise enough.
5. Sufficient financial and human resources to implement the plan	Low (<2)	Most plans have no resources allocated, or only a budget for one specific area e.g. payments under CAP Pillar 2 (Rural Development Programmes) or research for organic farming.
6. Good balance of 'supply-push' and 'demand-pull' policy measures	Medium to low (2-3)	For the majority of OAPs, there are either supply-push or demand-pull measures in place, but they are seldom well-balanced.
7. Regular monitoring of achievements (evaluation) has been included from the outset	Medium to low (2-3)	Many plans have not been evaluated. For some OAPs, an evaluation has been planned for, but there is either no support for monitoring from the outset, or only irregular monitoring.

*Scores were given on a five point scale (from 1 - very bad to 5 - very good)

When comparing the assessment of the different OAPs from an organic sector perspective we found that the highest-scoring plan overall is in Denmark, with other high-scoring plans found also in Estonia, Finland, Slovakia and the regions Flanders and Wallonia, Belgium. Low scores for plans, or the uptake of stakeholder initiatives to develop a plan, were identified by stakeholders in Ireland, Malta and Romania, for example.

2.2 EU organic action plans

Since the early 2000s, two EU OAPs have been developed by the European Commission. The first *European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming (2004)* included 21 actions to explicitly address three main areas: information-led development of the organic food market to make public support for organic farming more effective; improving and reinforcing the Community's organic farming standards, and import and inspection requirements. The second *Action Plan for the future of Organic Production in the European Union (2014)* is currently being implemented for the period to 2020. It features 18 actions and three recommendations oriented towards three priority areas: the competitiveness of organic producers; consumer confidence in the organic food and farming sector; and international trade between the European Union and third countries.¹⁴ Both OAPs have been developed in the context of revisions to the EU rules on organic farming and as a result have greatly influenced their orientation. The plans also acknowledge the relevance of some EU policy instruments for the development of organic farming. However where actions and recommendations have been proposed time-bound targets with dedicated budgets lines or procedures for evaluation have not been set. Given the strong focus on EU organic rules Member States have not always paid particular attention to these OAPs when planning the design of organic support policies using different EU policy instruments.¹⁶

2.3 Overview of organic action plan case studies

An in-depth analysis of national (Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, France) and regional (Scotland and Andalusia) OAP was conducted in selected EU Member States. These case studies seek to reflect ongoing initiatives and processes from various geographical regions of Europe at different levels and stages of development. The plans not only differ in process, ambition and focus, but also in how well-developed the support system for organic agriculture and organic sector as a whole already is in the respective country or region. Some of these plans are ongoing e.g. Czech Republic, Denmark, and France whereas others are in the early stage of development based on lessons learned from previous plans e.g. Germany, Scotland and Andalusia. The analysis was based on document assessment and several interviews with national and regional experts using a questionnaire adapted from the ORGAP project, where some of the previous plans from the selected countries had already been analysed. An overview of the four national and two regional OAPs is outlined below:

Czech Republic

The current [Action Plan for the Development of Organic Farming in the Czech Republic 2011-2015](#) (*Akční plán ČR pro rozvoj ekologického zemědělství v letech 2011-2015*) was in its final year of implementation when this study was conducted. A new plan has been developed for the 2016-2020 period. Background analysis of the new plan showed that legislation, government grants, systems of inspection and certification, and the labelling of organic food are well established as a result of government action, but that the education of farmers and research are not sufficiently developed and that market development (particularly for domestic products) should be supported, and consumers should be better informed about organic products. The Czech Republic is an example of a central eastern European country with strong organic sector development. In 2014, the share of total farmland land under organic production was 11.1%, whereas the share of organic food in the market was 0.7%. Average organic food consumption was valued at €7.3 per capita.

Denmark

The current [Organic Action Plan for Denmark: Working together for more organics](#) (*Økologiplan Danmark Sammen om mere økologi*) for the period 2015 to 2018 illustrates good implementation of integrated support backed by significant funding. Analysis showed that in order to achieve its aim (no longer explicitly stated) of doubling the organically cultivated area by 2020 (compared to 2007), all relevant actors in Denmark need to be engaged. The public sector should lead the way, for example by speeding up the transition from conventional to organic production on publicly-owned land and by continuously supporting public kitchens (in schools, hospitals and nurseries) to go organic. Denmark is an example of a northern European country with a long tradition of OAP development and implementation. In 2014, the share of total farmland land under organic production was 6.3% and the country is among those with the highest average organic food spending in Europe at €162 per capita.

France

The French national OAP [Organic Ambition 2017](#) (*Ambition Bio 2017*) was launched in 2013 and is particularly interesting due to its links to the French government's agro-ecology agenda. The Ministry of Agriculture supports a national organic farming development process and emphasises the potential for further territorial development in specific regions. The plan's development process also brought together the ministries of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy; Economy and Education in working towards improving the contribution organic farming can make to protecting the environment and biodiversity, providing regional employment and as a solution for water-sensitive areas. France is an example of a national plan from a western European country with a strongly developing organic sector. In 2014, the share of total farmland land under organic production was similar to the European average at 4.1%. Sales of organic food represented 2.5% of the total French market with average organic food consumption valued at €73.4 per capita.

Germany

Currently an OAP does not exist in Germany, but the country is in the process of developing its [Future Strategy for Organic Farming](#) (*Zukunftsstrategie Ökologischer Landbau*). The need for the current OAP initiative is based on the conclusion that if the current annual organic land area growth trajectory of 1-

2% continues, Germany's target of having 20% farmland under organic production will not be reached until 2080. It is acknowledged that other support is needed to encourage growth and allow producers to participate and benefit more from the growing organic food market. From the sector's point of view, one challenge lies in the fact that many competencies for the promotion and control of organic farming are the responsibility of the regions (*Länder*), despite the fact that a federal programme supporting information and research for organic farming has been in place since 2000. The current strategy process is a federal initiative that defines the areas where action must be taken, building on the previous programme with working groups and a broad, ongoing consultation during 2015/16, with implementation planned for 2016/17 onwards. Germany is an example of the development of a national plan from a central European country with a strong organic sector and the largest market for organic food in Europe. In 2014, the share of total farmland land under organic production was 6.3%. Sales of organic food represented 4.4% of the total food market with the average consumption of organic food per valued at €96.6 per capita.

Andalusia (Spain)

A new OAP 2016-2020 was under development in Andalusia when this study was conducted. It seeks to build on what was arguably an overly-ambitious [Second Andalusian Plan for Organic Farming 2007-2013](#) (*II Plan Andaluz de Agricultura Ecológica 2007-2013*) launched in 2007. This over-ambition was principally with regard to the political and budgetary commitment of successive governments to organic farming. Due to limited information available about the forthcoming plan the reports focus primarily on the last plan for the period 2007-2013. Andalusia is an example of a regional plan from a Mediterranean country where there is only a very limited domestic market and a strongly export-oriented production sector. Nationally, organic production in Spain had a 6.9% share of total farmland land in 2013. In the same year, sales of organic food represented about 1% of the total Spanish market with average organic food consumption valued at €21.7 per capita (Regional figures are not available).

Scotland (UK)

[Organic Ambitions: Scotland's Organic Action Plan 2016-2020](#) was under development when this study was conducted. The new OAP is a two stage process, featuring a diagnosis of the issues and the selection of a number of areas for tactical intervention. Stage 1 was led by the *Scottish Organic Forum* an industry-led body supported by the *Scottish Government* to develop the plan. Stage 2, which will start in 2016, will decide on the human and financial resources available for implementation as well as targets and an evaluation process. Although not explicitly stated in the document, one of the reasons for this new initiative is to stem the decline of the organic sector in the context of recent reductions in land area and the number of producers, as well as to increase the sales of Scottish organic products in the recovering UK organic market. The OAP argues that organic farming could and should be an integral part of achieving Scotland's policy goal of becoming a world leader in *green farming* and protecting its natural resources. The plan builds on a previous OAP from 2013/14. Scotland's plan will be launched in January 2016, and groups will be set up to work on implementation and to monitor progress. Scotland is an example of a regional plan from north-western Europe, where the UK unlike other countries, has witnessed organic market and farmland area contraction over the last few years, with the organic market only recently starting to recover. In 2013, national organic production in the UK totalled 3.3% of total farmland. In the same year, sales of organic food represented 1.2% of the total UK market with average organic food consumption valued at €33 per capita. (Regional figures are not available).

Table 2.3: Overview of organic action plan case studies

Country/region	CZ*	DK	FR	DE*	ES-AND*	UK-SCO* **
Organic share of national farmland, 2014	11.1%	6.3%	4.1%	6.3%	6.9% (ES)	3.3% (UK)
Organic share of national food market, 2014	0.7%	7.6%	2.5%	4.4%	1% (ES)	1.2% (UK)
Consumption food (per capita), 2014	€7.3	€162	€73.4	€96.6	€ 21.7	€33 (UK)
Start of OAP development	2010	2013	2013	2015	2007	2015
implementation period	2011 - 15	2015-18	2013-17	2016 -20	2007-13	2016-20
Approach (top-down, bottom-up, mixed government & stakeholders)	Top-down	Top-down (later mixed)	Mixed	Top - down	Mixed	Mixed
Stakeholder participation levels in AP development	High	High	Medium	High	High	High
AP includes procedure of evaluation/monitoring	Partly	No	Partly	Foreseen	No	Foreseen in 2016
AP has already been evaluated	No	No	No	Yes (previous plan)	No	Foreseen in 2016

Source: Willer and Lernoud (2016) eds. and own data¹⁷

* New OAPs for the 2016-2020 period has been drawn up in Scotland, approved in the Czech Republic and are currently under development in Andalusia and Germany to begin in 2017 and 2017 respectively.

**Market estimates for UK cover sales through supermarkets only.

3 Action plan development process and administration

Preparing an Organic Action Plan (OAP) will generally take 12-18 months from planning to implementation. The duration of the implementation period varies considerably, from 1 to up to 8 years. The [ORGAP project](#) found that effective OAP development requires input from various organic stakeholders, policymakers and administrators¹⁸. This should build on a partnership between stakeholders and policymakers, with the commitment of adequate financial resources to enable actions to be implemented and outcomes to be achieved. As a result the development process and administration are highly influenced by the policy environment in which stakeholders, policymakers and administrators interact. As part of this process Action Plans should ideally follow a cyclical process of:

- consultation and development – including status-quo analysis and reviews of previous plans
- implementation
- monitoring/evaluation

In some countries e.g. Denmark and the Czech Republic, there is a strong tradition of developing and maintaining plans. Specific actions and recommendations in the EU OAPs appear to have also encouraged some Member States to take initiative in developing their own plans. In other cases, interest in OAPs has declined. We found several examples of a lack of continuity, with plans expiring but no immediate new initiative taking its place, or any lessons learned being taken forward in new plans. This has been the case, for example, in Italy, Netherlands, England and some regions of Spain. The reasons why this is the case are not always clear, but likely include changes of government, economic constraints, lack of public funding, or a broader focus on agricultural policy development that does not want to single out the organic sector specifically.

If OAPs are to be more than a list of aspirations, financial and other resources need to be committed to ensure that plans can be fulfilled. It is worrying that the majority of OAPs have no overall budget for planned activities, or the dedicated amount for plan has not been published as part of the relevant documentation. One common reason is that different funding sources are used, some of which are not specified or not known in advance. Very few countries or regions have a binding or detailed budget for the whole period of the OAP's implementation. However, positive exceptions exist e.g. in Denmark, France (to a certain degree) and Wallonia. The situation in Denmark, for instance, is helped by close integration of the OAP into the country's Rural Development Programme (RDPs). Some countries and regions decide annually on the amount that is dedicated to the OAP, e.g. Flanders, Belgium. In several countries, there is a payment framework and budget estimate only for support payments to organic farms under CAP Pillar 1 direct payments and Pillar 2 RDPs. However, the length of OAPs does not seem to coincide with the EU rural development programming periods or the implementation of other CAP instruments. Cases where the orientation of the OAP changed during the CAP implementation process indicate that a change of government may be more important than the actual policy cycle. For example, in Germany in 2012, following a change in governmental and political priorities, the Federal Support Programme was broadened to include 'other forms of environmentally friendly production methods' in addition to organic farming.

Based on our survey results and the in-depth case studies, a more detailed overview of the OAP process and administration is elaborated below.

3.1 The role of stakeholders

Involving relevant stakeholders ensures that the plan can meet the needs of the sector. Involvement is often secured at the beginning of the plan development process, but it is not clear in all cases how follow-up and continuity of stakeholder engagement will be ensured. Often a preparatory team or expert/advisory group with some representation from the organic sector is created. While all stakeholders are directly involved, the survey and the case studies show that in most situations, the first move towards developing a plan more often than not comes from government, with the Ministry for Agriculture as the body responsible for the OAP. In some countries, other ministries and agencies are also involved.

Denmark

The Ministry for Agriculture was in charge of the preparation of the plan, together with a consulting agency. The Organic Food Council supports the Ministry in the development and implementation stages. Preparation was based on a comprehensive process involving more than 200 stakeholders who participated in three large workshops.

France

During preparations there was a consultation with different stakeholder groups, based on experiences from the previous plan. In particular, the National Research Council for Organic Agriculture (*Conseil Scientifique en Agriculture Biologique*) coordinated by the Technical Institute of Organic Agriculture (*L'Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique - ITAB*), a national coordinating body for research and experimentation in organic farming, had a stronger role in the coordination of research goals and the evaluation of research projects.

Germany

There is a broad participatory process for the forthcoming plan that is due to be implemented from 2017 onwards. The programme was initiated by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), and consists of seven main action areas, each of which is split into three work sequences including analysis, concept development, and implementation.

Andalusia

Different stakeholders were involved both for the 2008-2012 OAP as well as for the new plan from 2016 onwards.

Scotland

The development of the plan was initiated by a sector group, which received a small amount of funding from the government to carry out the consultation process. The draft document is largely an identification of areas in which action should be taken, but not yet an implementable plan with specific and time-bound measurable objectives and how to achieve them.

The way external experts are involved depends very much on which kind of participatory approach is taken. In most cases, an expert group is established, consisting of various stakeholder groups, but also of administrators from different government ministries. Once the OAP has been implemented, the follow-up is still actively supported by an expert group in some countries, whereas in other countries there is no such formal group.

Czech Republic

The Ministry for Agriculture established a broad expert group for the preparation of their 2011-2015 plan, but their capacity and willingness to work with stakeholders declined in the final stages, and the finalisation of the plan was left up to the Ministry itself.

Denmark

The Organic Food Council supports the Ministry of Agriculture in the development and implementation stages.

Germany

Specific working groups have been established for most of the focus areas, and some areas make use of, and relate to, other ongoing policy initiatives (for example, regulation, public procurement and research priorities).

Generally, across our case study countries and regions, the preparation of an OAP lasted between 12 and 18 months. This process was not always fully transparent. In some cases, public seminars or hearings were held, whereas in other cases the process was limited to internal planning within Ministry for Agriculture with some selected external stakeholders also involved. This was often linked to the availability of human and financial resources for stakeholder involvement. In some countries, some stakeholder groups felt insufficiently involved.

From our analysis, we can conclude that, in most cases, a significant improvement of the stakeholder involvement process was necessary and would have been possible for better development of the plan.

3.2 The policy environment

When looking at the different political processes, it is clear that the formulation of the objectives of a given plan is strongly influenced by the policy environment. That means that the parties that form the government and lobby groups that have a strong influence over the political process have a significant impact on overall outcomes of OAP elaboration. The policy environment influences, for example, whether the focus of the plan is more on the supply side or the demand side. This implies also the risk that, if there is a political change, e.g. another government is formed, then the goals (although not necessarily the whole plan) might be changed to bring it in line with new government policy. For example, in Denmark there was a governmental change in 2015. As a result, the main quantitative targets were taken out of the OAP, but the main qualitative targets and the budget remained the same. Similarly, in Andalusia a change of government led to changes in the OAP.

At the administrative level, generally only a handful of people in the Ministries, in charge of agriculture, rural development, food and environment were responsible for the OAPs. Often the human resources to conduct the process properly were not available with limited stakeholder involvement.

Case study highlights	Czech Republic The Ministry of Agriculture led the OAP development, supported by the Institute of Agricultural Economics and Information (IAEI). This equated to two persons - 1 full-time and 1 part-time - being dedicated to the plan's preparation.
	France The Ministry of Agriculture has led the process in the past, but with support from other ministries, which formulated their expectations of organic farming. This included the organic sector's contribution to different policy areas ranging from job creation in the regions and better links between economic actors, farmers and consumers (Ministry of Social Economy and Consumption); the environment and biodiversity, regional employment and prioritisation as a solution for the protection of sensitive water catchment areas (Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy); to the well-being of school children combined with education on health and environment (Ministry of National Education).
	Germany The process was initiated by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, with a federal research institute in charge overall. Politicians and administrators were engaged and stakeholders participated in working groups. The process was clearly linked to the federal government's overall sustainability strategy.

Within the policy environment, key pieces of legislation and strategic policy documents, in particular in a national and regional context as well as at EU level, can influence the decision to develop an OAP to varying degrees. An overview of the different references to specific policy framework within the different case studies can be found in table 3.1. In Denmark, the influence of EU policies is particularly strong, whereas in Scotland mainly national and regional documents are referred to. Most relevant EU and national policies had some influence on the development of OAPs but, in several cases, references to EU policy documents remain absent. The opportunity to anchor OAPs in the CAP Rural Development Programmes framework has only been realised in very few cases e.g. Czech Republic and Denmark. In addition, links between national OAPs and the Commission's current EU OAP are in almost all cases very weak.

Table 3.1: Overview of references to specific policy frameworks in organic action plan case studies

Policy Framework	CZ	DK	FR	DE	ES-AND	UK-SCO
Europe 2020 Strategy		X	X			
EU Organic Action Plans (2004 & 2014)	X	X	X	X	X	
Common Agricultural Policy	X	X	X	X	X	X
EU Environmental legislation e.g. Water Framework, Birds and Habitats Directives	X	X	X		X	
EU promotional policy	X	X	X		X	
Research and innovation policies	X	X	X		X	
National/regional agriculture, food and forestry sector strategy	X	X	X		X	X
National/regional food quality and nutrition strategy		X	X		X	
Green procurement policy		X	X			X
National/regional sustainable development plan (green growth, job creation)		X		X		X

3.3 Status-quo analysis and previous plan evaluations

In several cases, in the planning phase an evaluation of previous OAPs is made as part of a status-quo analysis.

Case study highlights	<p>Germany</p> <p>Information, research and development programmes have so far been evaluated twice, in 2004 and 2011/2012.¹⁹ In addition, the new strategy process started with an initial analysis and it is foreseen that each of the seven focus areas of the OAP will be part of a learning cycle (with an evaluation included).</p>
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Even if formal evaluations of previous Actions Plans are the exception rather than the rule, most of the in-depth case studies did carry out a status-quo analysis at some point.

Czech Republic

The 2011-2015 OAP was based on a detailed analysis of the previous 2004-2010 plan and a SWOT analysis of the sector. The main conclusion was that increasing consumer confidence and knowledge of organic farming was seen as a key aspect of further development of the organic food market, with promotion of the national BIO brand seen as especially important. These are now part of the proposed plan for 2016 onwards.

Denmark

The status quo analysis in the OAP led to the conclusion that there is a need for emphasis to be placed on certain areas. This included more innovation within the sector, more organic products in public kitchens, a levelling out of price differences between conventional and organic products in the market place, better cooperation between ministries, sufficient access to land and nutrients, a simplification of the rules, more research and development and an increase in the level of knowledge of organic production. Some of these are implemented in other Danish action plans, for example, in the Danish action plan to reduce pesticides.

France

A status-quo analysis and lessons learned from the previous plan led to greater emphasis on education for the whole production chain, including development of the public procurement market, and to better dissemination of research results.

Germany

Seven main focus areas were identified in the pre-analysis, and working groups involving various stakeholders have been put in place for most of them. These are:

- Regulation and certification
- Organic inputs (focusing on a) seed, b) protein feeds, c) poultry, young stock)
- Research, innovation and knowledge exchange
- Extension services and education
- Public procurement (linked to ongoing initiatives)
- Supply chain and market development
- Coherent and innovative political support

Where there have been previous OAPs, a certain continuity is envisaged in some areas – for example - for producer support, training and education as well as for research. Where new plans are being developed, these areas are also included.

Our analysis confirmed the benefit of an effective status-quo analysis, but not all case studies utilised the full potential of such an analysis. We believe that to ensure informed decisions, proposals for action must address multiple issues relating to underlying needs and how these can be met, including nature, cost, and expected benefits. However, to ensure that the best decisions are made, and with maximum credibility, proposals must also include a complete analysis comparing the proposed actions to known alternatives, including ‘keeping things as they are’. ‘Doing nothing for now’ is not necessarily ‘neutral’ – as here can be both negative and positive consequences – and a full consideration of all factors will only serve to strengthen any subsequent actions taken.²⁰

Overall, formal evaluations of plans remain the exception rather than the rule, and there are very few examples where evaluation is explicitly considered part of the plan and monitoring regularly carried out. Neither a formative evaluation, i.e. to learn lessons and improve plans following a learning cycle, supported with monitoring nor a summative evaluation i.e. a final performance evaluation using, for example, the criteria developed in the ORGAP project has ever been foreseen.

3.4 Developing objectives and headline actions

Building on the status-quo analysis and lessons learned from the past, the next stage in developing an Action Plan is to set areas for action and objectives to improve on the status quo. The case studies all illustrate this next stage.

Case study highlights

Scotland

The new OAP for 2016-2020 identifies four main action areas, based on extensive stakeholder consultation of the current situation. These include:

- Knowledge – increase awareness of the economic, environmental and social value of Scottish organic produce;
- Strength – strengthen the Scottish organic supply chain;
- Skills – support and develop the Scottish organic sector through the transfer of knowledge, information, best practice and training opportunities;
- Resilience – strengthen the ability of organic farming to conserve and enhance the natural capital of Scotland. Actions to make progress in this area include rolling out best practice developed in the organic sector more widely and ensuring that organic producers have better access to environmental support schemes.

Denmark

The OAP for 2013-2018 has "more resilient organic production" as one of its main objectives. Speaking about the concept in 2015, Daniel Jørgensen, former Danish Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, explained *"We will now unite our efforts to further develop organic production and consumption for the benefit of the environment, nature, animal welfare and future generations"*

France

There is renewed impetus for balanced development and a restructuring of all sectors with the aim of mobilising not only the actors in production, processing and marketing but also the general public

The development of both production and market/supply chains is considered in all case studies as very important in achieving a balanced development of supply and demand. For further information see table 3.2. However, there might be differences between case studies at a later stage when it comes to implementation and available resources. In some case studies, objectives include making organic agriculture more sustainable and resilient e.g. Denmark and Scotland. In most, however, supply chain linkages are considered more widely. For example they also include the involvement of intermediary actors such as processors and traders. In addition, some plans also seek to achieve wider uptake of certain practices among non-organic farmers as to encourage buy-in from different stakeholders.

Table 3.2: Main priority objectives of the organic action plan case studies

Objectives of OAPs	High priority	Low to medium priority
To promote organic production/supply	CZ, DE, DK, FR, ES-AND, UK-SCO	
To promote domestic demand	CZ, DK, FR, ES-AND, UK-SCO	
To promote export of organic products	DK, FR, UK-SCO	CZ
To promote organics across many public institutions	DE, DK, ES-AND, UK-SCO	CZ
To support the organic business sector	CZ, DK, FR, ES-AND, UK-SCO	DE
To speed up the transition to organic production	DE, DK, FR, UK-SCO	CZ
To reduce challenges in production and develop resilience	DK, FR, UK-SCO	CZ
To establish a stable, long-term, prosperous and competitive market for organic products in harmony with organic farming principles	DK, FR	ES-AND UK-SCO
To educate and train the actors across the whole chain	FR, ES-AND, UK-SCO	CZ

The main question at this stage is whether the focus areas and objectives are well targeted, and what priority is given to them, as well as if actions accurately and effectively address weak points, as identified by status-quo analyses. Some of the case studies tackle issues that have previously not received much attention in the context of OAPs, but are of high political importance. For example, the Danish plan looks at how organic farming is responding to climate change and the Scottish plan mentions the role of organic farming in preserving natural capital. The French plan identifies a clear link between organic farming and agro-ecology. The Danish plan also identifies price differences with conventional products as a barrier to market development.

3.5 Formulation of quantitative targets

In principle, quantitative targets can be valuable by providing a goal to work towards and to help secure the resources needed to achieve that goal. Such targets should be similar to SMART objectives - specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, and time-bound - and provide a good basis for evaluating whether the actions specified are effective. The Estonian plan, for example, has set many quantitative targets for 2020. The availability of data for each target success indicator should be considered when setting such detailed targets. It includes several targets related to production e.g. a 50% increase in the proportion of organic farming production compared to total agricultural production in 2014 and a 65% increase in the net value added euro per labour unit of organic farming compared to 2013. Market development targets include a 20% increase in the proportion of frequent (weekly) organic food consumers, securing the engagement of a minimum of 220 enterprises in organic food preparation and processing, and a tripling of the value of the products processed in organic processing units compared to 2013. Targets also provide a basis for evaluating the success of plan implementation. At the same time, there is a risk that over-ambitious targets might have unintended negative consequences on market development and producer engagement. They, therefore, need to be implemented with caution.

Nine countries and three regions have set quantitative targets related to the proportion of agricultural land that should be managed organically within a specific target year as part of a national Organic Action Plan. For further information see annexes 1 and 2. There are some examples of real ambition, such as Denmark, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Wallonia in Belgium, and Basque Country in Spain. Only a few countries/regions have set a target for the proportion of the food market to be supplied by organic foods by a target year. Table 3.3 shows that of the six case studies all four national OAPs include quantitative targets.

Germany

The current strategy process is framed in the context of their target of having 20% of farmland managed organically, as stated in the German national sustainability strategy, but the current process has not specified a year by which this target is to be reached.

Czech Republic

The Czech Action Plan for 2011-2015 included targets of a 15% organic share of farmland compared to total Utilised Agricultural Land (UAA), a 3% market share of organic food, a 60% share for domestic organic food of the total organic food market and a 20% increase in the annual growth of organic food consumption by 2015. The new OAP for 2016-2020, by comparison, extended the time period for achieving the land share and the growth of organic food market targets until 2020 to be more realistic.

France

The French programme *Ambition Bio 2017* has set a target of achieving a 20% share for organic of the public procurement market.

Table 3.3: Overview of quantitative targets in the organic action plan case studies

Country	CZ	DK	FR	DE
Period of OAP	2011-2015	2013-2017	2013-2017	2016/17-2020
Increase of organic farming area	15% by 2015	(Doubling by 2020)*	Doubling by end 2017	Up to 20% in total (no year)
Increase of organic arable land share of total organically managed farmland	20% by 2015	-	-	-
Market share of organic products	3%	-	-	-
Increase in the consumption of organic foods in % per year	20%	-	-	-
Share of organic food in public catering	-	-	20% by end 2017	-
Share of nationally-produced organic products on organic market	60% by 2015	-	-	-

* Compared to 2007. However, this target has since been removed after to a change of government.

In the majority of the countries, however, very little real progress has been made in relation to quantitative targets. In addition, many government plans no longer explicitly state quantitative targets because it is too difficult for politicians to accept them e.g. Flanders, Belgium. Targets also change due to political changes, because they were deemed unrealistic e.g. Czech Republic or for financial reasons. For example, due to a change in government, the Danish Plan now contains very few quantitative targets, but does have a set of clearly-defined action points outlining how the plan is to be achieved.

3.6 Budget allocation

Very few OAPs have clear budgets for all areas of activity. One of the main sources of support for activities related to producer support and to a lesser extent market development are the national and regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) (the CAP's Pillar 2 that is co-financed by the EU). Another source of support is EU promotional funds, which requires co-financing. These funds are more difficult to access, particularly if a government is unsupportive. National funding sources also exist for research in several of the regions studied e.g. Denmark, France, Germany, Andalusia.

Denmark

The Danish OAP (2013-2018) has a clearly specified budget, which makes use of Danish the RDP as well as other funds. It provided 390m kr. (€52.3m) in 2015, and will provide about 300m kr. per year (€30.2m per year) for 2016, 2017 and 2018. The 2016 budget includes about 240m kr. (€32.2m) of Danish RDP funds for area payments.

France

The French plan (2013-2017) has a budget of €160m per year for regional RDP measures and €4m for market development with *Fonds Avenir Bio* (through *Agence Bio*).

Czech Republic

The Czech RDP was a main source of funding for the previous Czech OAP (2011-2015) and will also be the main source for the new OAP (2016-2020).

The Scottish and German OAP processes described here are in the early stages of development and no decision on budgets for the implementation phase has been taken, but both governments appear at present to be supportive of committing resources. The role of private sector funding remains vague in most OAPs (it is explicitly mentioned only in the Danish OAP, while the Scottish Action Plan includes some examples of privately funded activities). This leaves important areas of continuous stakeholder engagement and Organic Action Plan administration without the support of specifically budgeted resources. Even if an OAP has a budget, it does not really mean that there is real financial commitment or a clear concept for implementation. There is also a great risk of large budget cuts, e.g. when there is a governmental change, as in Denmark, or if a financial crisis hits one country or region particularly hard, as was the case in Andalusia, where the ambitious first OAP budget was greatly reduced.

3.7 Action plan communication

An OAP calls for action, ideally involving many different organic stakeholders as well as policy makers. The basis for strong action is strong communication and a spirit of partnership. Effective and continuous communication of the launch and the achievements of an OAP is a key factor for success. There are significant differences between the case study countries in how this is done, either more proactively e.g. Denmark and Germany, or more reactively. What administrators often underestimate is the importance of internal communication between different ministries, a factor that is seldom mentioned.

For example, in the Danish Action Plan, better collaboration between ministries in order to promote organics is specifically mentioned. This includes organic production on publicly-owned land, the use of organic food in public canteens and the promotion of organic farming as a topic in education and in farmer training. In the cases of Germany and Scotland, specific websites for the communication of Action Plan activities have been set up by the supporting institutes. The German case appears better resourced and produces regular updates on progress on the website.

4 Focus Areas and Support Measures

Most Organic Action Plans (OAPs) focus activities in a few key areas. These are typically expressed either as the quantitative and qualitative targets or in the headline actions and are outlined in further details in annexes 3 and 4. Nearly all refer to producer support, which is provided as part of the land management priorities of the CAP's Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) namely restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems (Priority 4), promoting resource efficiency and a transition to a low-carbon economy (Priority 5). Many Organic Action Plans also refer to information, training and education as well as research and innovation. Market development, including short supply chains, processing, and public procurement have moved up the agenda in many Action Plans.

In the following section, we illustrate the focus areas of OAPs with examples from the case studies and the survey of OAPs in Europe.

4.1 Financial support for producers

Financial support for organic producers (both for land conversion and maintaining organic production) is part of the range of policy instruments provided for under the CAP.²¹ Such payments are made in most EU countries through RDPs and are likely to continue even in the absence of an Organic Action Plan. However, many OAPs make specific reference to the need to improve the support provided for organic farmers as part of the CAP. For example, the OAP in Scotland states that basic support for organic producers remains essential. We also found Action Plans that highlight specific ways to better use of other RDPs funds e.g. for investment support and agri-environmental programmes.

Case study highlights

France

The OAP sets out to create a system of aid that is more stable, easier to understand and that offers more incentives over the whole programme period with the ultimate goal of ensuring farm viability. In addition to support for organic conversion and maintenance, the Action Plan wants to increase the priority allocation of funds for investment in agro-ecological projects and the development of organic farming in geographical areas with water-related issues.

Denmark

The Danish Action Plan supports payments for organic land with reduced nitrogen as well as areas used for organic fruit production.

This is particularly relevant where the status-quo analysis shows that the organic sector has weak political representation and is, as such, not so successful in communicating its needs when new Rural Development Programmes are created.

In some regions and several Swiss Cantons, special direct payments for conversion, in addition to the payments for ongoing organic farming, are given to farmers in the conversion period to compensate for higher costs and more expensive labour, as well as lower premium prices for organic produce. In the OAP for Canton Jura in Switzerland, financial support in the form of credit without interest is given to farmers that are converting to organic, to be paid back within eight years.

In addition, some OAPs support individual producers or producer groups through additional means, such as teaching co-operation and management via seminars, providing support to improve competitiveness through benchmarking initiatives as well as early-stage support for specific sectors (e.g. for seed or protein feed sectors). In Germany, in addition to a working group, special focus is placed on the coherence of support measures. Furthermore, the German strategy process pays particular attention to the non-organic inputs used in organic agriculture by initiating working groups in relation to increasing the domestic supply of organic feed and seed.

Czech Republic

The OAP proposes providing economic indicators for farmers and state administrators (including key indicators, price monitoring, and consultancy).

Denmark

The OAP supports experimental projects, facilitates the use of alternative pesticides (by reducing registration fees and facilitating their approval) and organises working groups relating to increasing farmers' access to plant nutrients (such as improved recirculation of organic waste, better phosphorus use, etc.). The OAP highlights the importance of the development of organic cultivars and testing, the development of organic pig production and more effective and more consistent tools for organic production, education and development.

Germany

Where the implementation of Rural Development Policy is the responsibility of the regions, the federal OAP and organic strategy includes a specific module for policy development and coherence that is split into four themes:

- collecting information about organic support programme implementation in the regions
- analysing regional development and funding strategies and the coherence of support policies
- analysis of the coherence of support measures from the perspective of farmers
- gathering and analysing information about support for organic farming throughout the EU.

4.2 Information and awareness-raising

Information and awareness-raising campaigns have in the past almost exclusively been aimed at consumers, for example, to make the EU and/or the national organic logo better known. The focus has now broadened in several countries e.g. Denmark and France and regions e.g. Andalusia to informing citizens and consumers more about the environmental benefits of organic food and farming with regards to the impacts of climate change).

Czech Republic

In the previous Czech OAP (2004-2010) there were some innovative awareness events for the public, like a competition for the 'Best of Organic Farmer of the year' and 'Best organic food of the year', a regular 'Month of Organic Foods' event, as well as promotional brochures for the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) publications 'Organic Farming and Biodiversity' and 'The Contribution of Organic Farming to the Quality of Ground and Surface Water.' The later OAPs (2011-2015 and 2016-2020) include promotional and educational activities for the public on the advantages of organic food and farming.

Denmark

The Danish OAP promotes organics in local municipalities and schools through educational activities and materials for schools (e.g. annual digital maps of organic fields).

France

The French OAP mentions improving communication through multi-partner communication and information programmes for young audiences, to be coordinated by Agence Bio, as well as raising awareness amongst schoolchildren, their parents and their teachers in conjunction with Ministry of Education programmes including gardening, visits to organic farms and tastings.

Andalusia

The 2007-2013 OAP aimed to raise awareness of the environmental and health benefits of organic food and to promote its consumption (e.g. through institutional promotion campaigns, support for industry publications and social organisations engaged in activities relating to the development of production activities and the consumption of organic food).

Scotland

The first main theme of the Scottish OAP ('knowledge') aims to increase awareness of the economic, environmental and social value of Scottish organic produce to a wide range of stakeholders, including consumers, procurement and catering teams, businesses, public, private, voluntary and third sector organisations as well as local and national policymakers.

A range of other activities also fall broadly in this area, including improving the statistical and market data that are important not only for business investment decision-making but also for the monitoring of Action Plan outcomes and targets. In other countries, information and awareness activities also cover societal benefits e.g. Czech Republic, climate change e.g. Denmark and the protection of natural resources e.g. Scotland.

4.3 Education, training and advice

Many OAPs emphasize the need for the training and education of farmers. This has been a traditional element of Organic Action Plans for many years, but several plans, even in countries with reasonably well-developed organic sectors, highlight the need for further improvement in this area. Different methods are proposed: individual advice, farmer-to-farmer exchange, group meetings, seminars, visits to pilot farms and experimental fields, machine demonstrations, etc. (AGRIDEA, 2015). Several countries aim to have the subject of 'organic farming' better integrated into the agricultural curricula for vocational training and higher education (e.g. through introducing organic farming in schools and as a mandatory subject at universities e.g. Austria, Italy, Flanders and Wallonia, Belgium). The Action Plan in the Swiss Canton of Fribourg, for instance, argues for the integration of training for organic farming in the reference criteria for vocational qualifications.

Case study highlights**France**

Better integration of the specific features of organic farming in agricultural vocational education is envisaged. A diversified offering of organic farming training in advanced and/or specialist courses is planned. More numerous, higher-profile continuous education options for organic farmers and food supply chain actors are on the agenda.

Czech Republic

The Czech plan wants to improve the teaching of organic farming in schools.

Germany

One objective of the strategy process in Germany is to ensure that knowledge about organic production and processing is conveyed to all related and relevant occupations throughout Germany.

In addition, developing and/or maintaining advisory support for organic farmers is mentioned in many plans, for example, in Ireland and Austria as well as in regional plans in Switzerland (Jura, Fribourg). The OAP in Hungary, for instance wants to review training, research and development as well as consulting activities. Advisory services should be strengthened and/or existing advisory provisions safeguarded and farmer knowledge exchange groups developed.

Case study highlights**Czech Republic and Denmark**

The Danish and the Czech plans want continued support for the advisory service for organic farmers (e.g. by private consultants that can apply for financial support from the ministry).

Scotland

A real threat of losing existing capacities for organic advisory services was mentioned in Scotland.

Germany

One objective of the German plan is to examine whether and in what form advice for farmers interested in conversion can be improved and, specifically in the German situation where agricultural advice and education is the responsibility of the regions, what supporting role the federal government should play.

The opportunities that can be generated to improve access to information through the internet must also be considered. Other specific examples of training and advisory measures include:

Case study highlights

Andalusia

The OAP in Andalusia (Spain) (2007-2013) focused on improving knowledge of organic production and its economic and environmental efficiency (e.g. with technical materials, references for farmers, a study of the contribution of organic farming to climate change mitigation, a strengthening of partnerships for the development of organic production) as well as enhancing training in the organic production sector.

Scotland

In the new OAP in Scotland, training, advice and information for farmers play a central role under the central theme of 'skills'. This aims to provide dedicated, specialist advice for all those within the Scottish organic sector and, making use of new media, to develop an accessible online hub for Scottish organic farming and agro-ecological research, high-level training and employment schemes for organic producers and processors, and regional knowledge exchange groups.

4.4 Research, innovation and development

In most case study countries, the importance of research and development is explicitly mentioned with more research to evaluate the effects of organic farming on the environment, on employment and on consumer preferences for, and attitudes towards, organic food, as a basis for more targeted communication and marketing foreseen in several countries. Several Action Plans e.g. in Slovakia highlight the need to focus research on organic farmers' practical problems or the need for the joint setting of research priorities e.g. the Canary Islands, Spain. Research needs, highlighted in the Action Plans, are related to production techniques e.g. France and Denmark or better access to the necessary machinery e.g. Fribourg, Switzerland. So far, research projects related to the processing of organic food are less widely available (with the exception of Germany) so it is likely that this is needed in other countries too.

Case study highlights

France

The OAP in France wants to provide more funds for agro-ecological research, based on the assumption that organic farming would also benefit (which may not always be the case if non-allowed inputs are used). The Action Plan highlights the need for the development of synergy and mutual complementarity between activities specific to organic farming and those relating to other types of production. More effective dissemination and wider sharing of research results is proposed.

Germany

In Germany, building on the experience of a federal programme for research into organic farming that has been running since 2001, the research section of the new strategy process aims to further develop how the federal governments' research can support organic farming in preserving and further expanding its pioneering role in the field of sustainable land management and resource use.

Scotland

In Scotland (UK), work with universities and research institutes has been proposed to identify and address the key technical and practical challenges of organic production and distribution as part of the key activities under the 'skills' theme. In addition, also activities to collect and distribute biodiversity data on Scottish organic farms and to ensure that habitat management and organic farming. Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) options can be undertaken together in a way that ensures maximum environmental benefit are foreseen.

Several examples also illustrate the need for gathering basic information about the sector e.g. the Czech Republic and France and the market e.g. Scotland, as well as improving the evidence base for the performance of organic farming in delivering to wider policy goals such as climate change, natural resource protection, and biodiversity.

Czech Republic

The previous Czech OAP (2011-2015) provided support for applied research projects with a focus on the monitoring and verification of organic food authenticity and comparative studies on the quality of organic and conventional products and foods. It foresaw regular evaluation of the impact of organic farming on the environment (through, for example, systems of indicators and specific research projects) and further improvement of animal welfare in organic farming. In the new OAP (2016-2020), more emphasis is placed on the utilisation of research findings and innovation.

However, governmental financial resources are not necessarily able to respond to the needs of the organic sector. The OAP in Wallonia mentions the need to review capacity and lobby for more research activities. Apart from a substantial contribution from EU research and innovation programmes e.g. Horizon 2020, EIP-AGRI), most research is financed either directly through national funds or through co-financing from European ERA-Nets (like CORE organic). This points to the need for better organisation of research networks at the national level e.g. the Czech Organic Technology Platform, the *Conseil Scientifique en Agriculture Biologique* in France, the national research plan in Italy and TP Organics at the European level. Furthermore, a national and regional OAP can influence priority setting for research.

Czech Republic

The Czech OAP also aims to ensure the operation of the Technology Platform for Organic Agriculture in the Czech Republic, which would lead to the development of a national plan for innovation and research in organic agriculture.

Denmark

The Innovation Fund in Denmark is used for investments in organic research. Support for the International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS) will continue. ICROFS is a virtual centre that coordinates different institutes in Denmark and runs a dedicated programme for organic farming research and knowledge exchange with support from the Danish Government and in co-ordination with the European ERA-Net CORE organic.

Andalusia

The OAP for 2007-2013 included promotion, research, development and technology transfer in the specific sector of organic production and processing.

4.5 Market development and supply chains

Whereas in the past the focus of policy support for organic farming was often production-oriented, many current and future OAPs consider market development (including support for certain marketing channels) and promotion/awareness as well as public procurement a priority. Improvements to the efficiency of market mechanisms, structural market issues and the stimulation of product diversity are generally high priority. Examples include measures to strengthen horizontal supply chain relations from production to consumption e.g. in France and Italy.

France

The French OAP includes tools for structuring sectors and funding for specific projects. Better information on markets and support for the development of exports is envisaged. It also seeks to continue the structural organisation of sectors (e.g. collecting, processing resources) with an emphasis on sectors where demand is not yet met.

Scotland

The Scottish (UK) OAP aims to develop new, and strengthen existing, routes to the domestic market (including procurement and processing) and to increase support for Scottish organic exports. As such,

the OAP aims to strengthen the infrastructure required to support the organic supply chain and to make the best use of all organic produce.

Some Organic Action Plans want to use rural development funds for investment support to strengthen supply chains for organic food, or foresee using other structural measures to facilitate an increase in innovation. More emphasis could be given to innovative approaches in organic food processing, e.g. using careful processing techniques to preserve the special quality of organic products.

Some Action Plans mention specific activities such as the promotion of organic brands e.g. the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the creation of guidelines for small-scale food producers e.g. Slovakia or support for short supply chains e.g. Fribourg and Jura, Switzerland. The French Action Plan focuses on the development of sectors where demand is not being met (in particular the oil and protein crop sectors).

Case study highlights

Czech Republic

The previous OAP (2011-2015) provided support for establishing new points of sale, e.g. using organic products in public catering, providing support for the establishment of sales cooperatives for organic farmers and the further development of farmers' markets with the possibility of direct sale of organic products from farmer to consumer. The new OAP (2016-2020) seeks to promote both more direct sales from farmers and of organic food from retail stores, encourage vertical associations in the supply chain and promote a Czech brand for domestic organic food.

The examples also show that in several cases there is a lack of knowledge and information about how the market functions and whether stronger cooperative marketing structures could benefit organic producers. Accordingly, calls for the collection of information or the undertaking of feasibility studies are included as well as calls for strengthening the regional identity of organic products.

Case study highlights

Czech Republic

The Czech OAP (2004-2010) included special educational seminars for supply chain actors, in which market success factors for organically processed food are identified and where they can learn how farmer groups can cooperate better with processors and retail shops.

Scotland

In the Scottish OAP several activities are aimed at market development, such as improving the collection and distribution of market intelligence on Scottish organic food and drink throughout the supply chain, conducting feasibility studies for a Scottish organic brand and for a more cooperative marketing strategy for Scottish organic products.

Two market channels receive particular attention in the most of the new and current OAPs. These are: public procurement, improving the access to organic food through trade and institutional kitchens e.g. the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France and Scotland (UK), and supporting export opportunities e.g. Denmark, France and Scotland (UK).

Denmark

The Danish OAP (2015-2018) promotes organics in local municipalities and schools through government subsidies for schools for organic fruit and vegetables and for educational activities and materials for schools. Furthermore, support is provided for public catering to go organic (with financial support and advice for public institutions) with a focus on increasing the share of organic food in public procurement in 2015-2016 (e.g. through advice, specific projects, partnerships for Public Green purchasing, and the promotion of organic brands for canteens and restaurants). The Danish Action Plan also aims to promote exports (through financial support, dialogue forums, trade fairs, and facilitating exports to China by increasing staffing) and increase support for the domestic market by simplifying control for supermarkets.

France

The OAP includes tools for improving the structural organisation of market sectors and funding the most appropriate projects. Better information on markets and support for the development of exports is envisaged. It also seeks to continue the structural reorganisation of market sectors (e.g. collecting, processing resources) with an emphasis on sectors where demand is not met yet.

Germany

The federal strategy process embeds an existing government initiative on sustainable procurement into the Action Plan process.

Scotland

The OAP in Scotland highlights the potential of both procurement and of generating export opportunities.

4.6 Measures related to inspection, certification and regulations

In some OAPs, emphasis is also placed on inspection and certification, for example, the extension and/or improvement of standards at the national level for special product groups, improvement of inspection efficiency in certain areas, such as animal welfare, and the publication of inspection results.

Czech Republic

The OAP (2011-2015) focused on improving inspection in the area of animal welfare through the development of the methods and training for organic farming inspectors.

France

The French OAP argues for the consideration of specific features of organic farming in general regulations (e.g. plant protection products, seeds, fertilising materials and livestock breeds) and for improvements to specific organic farming regulations (both at EU and national level).

Germany

The aim of regulation and certification in the German strategy process is to contribute to greater problem-oriented development of EU legislation and to study ways of improving national implementation of regulations. The overall strategy process also looks specifically at how the availability of organic inputs (feed, seed and chicks) can be improved.

Andalusia

The OAP (2007-2013) aimed to improve the control system for agricultural, livestock, industrial and organic inputs, make it more transparent, and ensure the co-existence of organic production with other production systems (e.g. promote regulatory and administrative instruments to prevent contamination by genetically modified organisms - GMOs).

Scotland

The new Scottish OAP wants to reduce the barriers to entry into, and expansion within, the organic sector.

5 Recommendations for policymakers and the organic sector

The development and implementation of OAPs should be seen as a partnership between policymakers and the organic sector. It seeks to respond to the needs of organic food and farming in a specific country and region whilst contributing to wider policy objectives. More specific recommendations for more effective OAPs are set out below, targeted at both policymakers and the organic sector. They are illustrated using examples from different national and regional Organic Action Plans, as outlined in the guide.²²

5.1 General recommendations for all stakeholders

- OAPs' objectives should identify and address the specific needs of the organic sector in the country or region

The existence of an OAP alone does not mean very much if there is no implementation. The process of developing a plan can be a very good way of focusing attention on the specific needs and demands of the organic sector, particularly if done in a participatory way.

Focusing on specific needs helps to prioritise actions and prevent the plan from becoming a wish-list of aspirations. It is very useful to build the OAP and its objectives on the basis of a systematic status-quo analysis to identify the needs and demands of the different actor groups. A sound status-quo analysis should consider the whole sector, taking account of current challenges and areas where there is room for improvement. Issues should be openly discussed between stakeholders, policymakers and administrators. A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) can be a helpful tool. Lessons from prior policy initiatives in support of organic food and farming (if any) should be taken into account, including the outcomes of any evaluations.

This process can lead to the formulation of goals that both policymakers and the organic sector want to achieve and to a good understanding of the means and resources needed to achieve them. Other policy areas related to the plan and their impact on organic agriculture must be reviewed as it helps to identify potentially conflicting or supportive policy instruments. An appropriate balance between securing public goods from organic land management and the development of the organic market must be achieved.

Objectives with both quantitative and qualitative targets should be ambitious but also realistic. The objectives should be SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, time-bound), which also makes evaluation and monitoring easier. Unrealistic objectives risk losing credibility, while not setting clear targets weakens the Action Plan. Making an implementation plan for each of the actions means that they can be reviewed over time. The Action Plan must take account of the different administrative levels involved and the competences necessary for implementation at each level.

Czech Republic

A SWOT analysis is included in the 2011-2015 Organic Action Plan document to make the analysis transparent.

Germany

A broad participatory process to design a new programme for 2017 is currently underway. This was initiated by government and consisted of seven main focus areas. The work sequence 'analysis, concept development and implementation' is performed separately for each. A challenge is that most competences for the promotion and control of organic farming exist at the regional level, so the OAP might have only marginal impact. Therefore, linking them to regional Organic Action Plans e.g. Bavaria is important.

Andalusia

The OAP also included the evaluation of the previous OAP.

Scotland

The 'discovery' step was fully industry led – in this case by the Scottish Organic Forum, an organic sector-led body with support from the Scottish Government. It included a SWOT analysis of the sector.

- 2. Allocate a specific budget to the OAP to ensure sufficient financial and human resources are dedicated to implementation

An effective OAP needs a specific, dedicated budget that is capable of supporting effective implementation. For EU Member States, one of the most important sources of support is provided through the CAP and, in particular, from various rural development measures under Pillar 2. Other complementary European Common Structural and Investments funds, for example, the European Regional Development and European Social Funds, can also be drawn down to support OAP implementation. Full utilisation of these funds by policymakers and authorities takes account of the sector's contribution to wider political and societal goals at international, EU, and Member State level.

A successful OAP will involve a range of relevant government departments and ministries, besides agriculture and food, including, for example, health, education, sustainable development, environment and research. Sufficient staffing in the relevant ministries and departments is needed for processes related to both the development and implementation of the plan. Alternatively, an external agency could be commissioned to undertake the delivery of these actions with appropriate stakeholder engagement based on clear a governance structure. Clear distribution of the responsibilities of the institutions and persons in charge is recommended.

Czech Republic

During preparation for the OAP, at least one person from the Ministry of Agriculture was fully in charge of the process, with the ministry recruiting the services of a research institute to provide additional capacities.

Denmark

An agency close to the ministry was put in charge of the preparation of the Action Plan.

France

Several ministries have been involved in the preparation of organic programmes.

Germany

A government institute prepares and coordinates the process for a new programme for organic food and farming.

- 3. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be well-integrated into the OAP

Regular monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part of OAP implementation and future development. SMART objectives (see above) will aid the monitoring if suitable indicators can be identified. This does not necessarily have to be set out in the OAP document, but should be addressed explicitly and appropriately from the outset and be fully integrated into the OAP. This also allows lessons from the implementation of previous plans to be taken into account when developing new Action Plans.

The type of evaluation required, and a definition of how and by whom the results are to be used, is necessary and should be clarified to increase the transparency and accountability of the OAP. Specific indicators (standards) appropriate to the OAP should be developed and need to be closely linked to the goals and objectives of stakeholders and policymakers. Indicators may be developed by defining and clustering impact statements using a participatory process between policymakers and stakeholders. The indicators need to be described and possibly quantified.

The ORGAPET toolbox and the ORGAP Manual, developed in the ORGAP project provide useful resources for choosing indicators for specific objectives.²³ For more details, see the further reading and useful materials section below.

The process of OAP development and implementation should be transparent, professional, well documented, and clearly communicated to those who are not part of it.

Case Study highlights

Czech Republic

The implementation of the OAP is continuously overseen by a committee that advises the Ministry of Agriculture.

Denmark

Monitoring is taken up in a specific project although not described in the document.

Germany and Scotland

Both have websites where the process and the outcomes of stakeholder consultations are clearly documented.

- 4. An effective OAP needs a broad set of instruments that can tackle the organic sector's supply and demand needs

OAPs should tackle both the supply and demand needs of the organic sector in the context of current production and market trends. For policymakers, the organic sector has huge potential to contribute to a broad list of policy objectives and long-term goals. It can therefore play a strategic role in meeting EU, national and regional policy objectives and help transition of agriculture and the food sector towards greater sustainability. As a result, the aim is to have an OAP with a balanced mix of 'supply-push' and 'demand-pull' policy measures.

Therefore, for effective implementation policymakers should aim to forge public-private partnerships, with the main stakeholders continuously involved. Producer support plays a critical role, but other measures such as knowledge exchange, advice, information provision and training opportunities are important to develop supply. Supply-side measures should be balanced with stronger support for further supply chain development. Public and private procurement of organic food has huge potential to develop the organic market and support more sustainable consumption. National and regional policymakers must ensure a transparent and simple mechanism for producers to register and apply for available supports is imperative, including timely communication of acceptance into relevant schemes. Both producers and processors require confidence in an administration system that is effective and efficient. Without this level of confidence in the administration of support, producers

will be reluctant to make the shift to organic production, whilst processors will not invest in organic lines unless they have certainty and continuity of supply.

The EU institutions and in particular the European Commission also have a responsibility to assess and understand how national and regional OAPs are contributing to EU policy objectives. Such assessments could be used to inform the development of organic food and farming policies at EU level and offer relevant recommendations on OAP development and implementation.

Case Study highlights

Czech Republic

Innovative public events like the ‘Best Organic Farmer of the Year’ and ‘Best Organic Food of the Year’ competitions, and a regular ‘Month of Organic Foods’ event were organised in the OAP (2004-2010).

Denmark

The Organic Action Plan was a mix of push and pull effects. Push effects included, for example, the Organic Land Subsidy Scheme and on-the-spot advice on conversion. Pull effects included, for example, conversion of public catering as well as support schemes for sales promotion in Denmark and export activities. The OAP principally seeks to broadly inform the public about organics, but also to promote their consumption. One focus is on local municipalities and schools (subsidies for schools for organic fruit and vegetables, educational activities and materials, using annual digital maps of organic fields).

France

An important activity is raising the awareness of schoolchildren, their parents and their teachers in conjunction with Ministry of Education programmes: gardening, visits to organic farms, taste education classes, school activities, etc.

5.2 Specific recommendations for policymakers at EU, national and regional level

- Facilitate participatory stakeholder involvement during the OAP development and implementation phases

Involving stakeholders is now a well-established part of good policy-making. There are different ways of involving stakeholders in OAP development. We recommend using workshops and/or public seminars with different perspectives on organic farming well-represented (producers, market actors, consumers, citizens, NGOs, administrators).

The initial process should be neither too long nor too short (about 12-18 months). Important success factors include transparency and the continuous dissemination of information between the actors and stakeholders involved, as well as internally between different government departments.

Communication helps legitimise the OAP and allows for the exchange of information and support. A plan should help increase awareness of the economic, environmental and social value of organic produce among consumers and citizens. Stakeholder engagement should not be restricted only to the development phase and should include a genuine partnership approach to underpin implementation.

Denmark

The 'Organic Food Council', a government-led forum of relevant interest groups, was involved in prioritising the initiatives recommended as a result of three workshops and from 35 interviews with key actors in the organic sector.

Germany

About 140 experts/stakeholders are involved in the preparation of the new programme for 2017 through conferences and workshops. A website²⁴ has been set up that is regularly updated with news from events and is used as the main vehicle for documenting the process.

Scotland

In preparation for the OAP, almost 700 survey responses were received and over 100 experts/stakeholders were involved through a series of workshops and interviews.

- Tailor some action points towards building additional capacities and more resilience in the organic sector

OAPs should help improve capacities in the organic sector. The aim should be to increase the economic, environmental and social performance of the organic sector so it can achieve its full potential. These improvements should be seen in the context of existing challenges facing the organic sector and the latest production and market trends, as identified through the different stakeholders and experts in the relevant regions.

For example, an OAP can strengthen the ability of organic farming to confront current problems, such as the availability of organic pullets, raw materials, seed and feed. Other examples covering producer support, information, training and education, research and development, and certification are illustrated throughout this guide.

Training and education is particularly relevant because if more farmers are to convert there will be greater need for advice, training and for more qualified farm workers, advisors and inspectors. Provision of advisory and training services has been successfully included in many OAPs, as well as measures related to the development of market access and demand for organic products. Such services should consider not only specialist courses but also ensure that there is qualified teaching and advice for organic farming in all agricultural schools and advisory services. Moreover, information sources and resources used by all farmers and the agro-food sector, not only those that are specific to organic farming, should be utilised to support production and market development.

Denmark

The OAP promotes organics in the public sector and, in particular, in local municipalities through subsidies for schools for organic fruit and vegetables as well as educational activities and materials.

France

The development of market sectors with the greatest needs is prioritised, notably in responding to demands that are not being met (in particular the oil and protein crop sectors).

Germany

The leading private organic label organisations are leading the discussion on Organic 3.0 and were active in the development of 'An Organic Vision for Europe 2030', together with other European organic

partners. The website of the ORGAP project refers to the dual role that organic farming fulfils in serving both a growing market for organic food and delivering public goods for society.

Scotland

The OAP makes 'knowledge' of organic farming its first main focus area. This includes developing an accessible online information hub for Scottish organic farming and agro-ecological research, and providing high-level training and employment schemes for organic producers and processors.

5.3 Specific recommendations for the organic sector

- An OAP is not an end goal in itself, but a strategic instrument for developing organic sector goals in the context of wider policy goals

An OAP should be seen as a strategic instrument for strengthening the organic sector. However, there is a need for stakeholders to recognise that, from the perspective of policymakers, the contribution of the organic sector to meeting overarching policy goals is a key consideration for supporting the organic sector through an Action Plan.

Governments are unlikely to support the development of organic farming just for its own sake. Therefore, the OAP should make reference to other wider national and regional policy initiatives that impact on agriculture and sustainable development, such as biodiversity, soil protection, climate change strategies, health, well-being, green growth and job creation. As a result, OAPs play an important role in clarifying how the organic sector can help achieve these wider policy objectives, ideally backed up by evidence from research on the impacts of organic farming in contributing to wider policy goals.

The organic movement's previous experiences in tackling key production and market challenges locally, across Europe and more globally, should be taken into account and, where appropriate, adapted and mainstreamed to national and regional contexts and circumstances.

Case Study highlights

Czech Republic

The Action Plan foresees an improvement in the reporting of animal welfare in organic farming and the Scottish Action Plan includes an improvement of the monitoring of biodiversity benefits.

France

The OAP is placed in the wider context of the reorientation of the agricultural policy to agro-ecology.

Germany

The development of organic food and farming is linked to achieving the '20% organic agriculture' target that is enshrined in the German National Sustainability Strategy.

Scotland

The Organic Action Plan refers to the 2015 government discussion document (The Future of Scottish Agriculture) that calls for Scotland to be a world leader in 'green farming'.

Denmark, France, Scotland and Germany

In all of these countries, the issue of improved resilience and sustainability is considered in specific objectives and action points in their OAPs.

- Aim to develop a broad stakeholder alliance that can support the OAP's long-term development and implementation

OAPs are more likely to be successful if all the stakeholders are working together to reach a common position on the political process during the initial stages of OAP development as well as the implementation phase.

Stakeholder involvement should be broad and include all actors in the organic supply chain sector. Civil society organisations and NGOs that have influence over the development of agricultural and environmental policy can be useful allies of the organic sector. Involving relevant actors from the conventional agro-food sector is likely to lead to wider political acceptance of an OAP. As resources are limited, stakeholders should look for synergies by offering public-private partnerships and contributing to greater cooperation between the different actor groups. There are many action points that are not primarily a question of having additional funding or more resources, but one of having better framework conditions with smaller administrative burdens, in particular for smaller operators.

As OAPs remain vulnerable to changes in government, it is important that there is a broad alliance or support platform. This helps the OAP to continue even if governmental changes occur.

Case Study highlights

Denmark, Germany and the Czech Republic

All OAPs illustrate that it is possible to achieve continuous engagement with different consecutive governments throughout the OAP process if there is broad political support from civil society and other agro-food stakeholders.

Further reading and useful materials

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Annexes

Annex 1: Summary of national organic action plans, 2015

Country	Name of organic action plan (or programme)	Running period/total funding	Period of previous OAP	Implementation year of first OAP	Quantitative targets	Further informaiton
Austria	5 th Action Programme Biological Agriculture 2015-2020	2015-2020	2008-2013	2001	No specific target set 20% share of organic farmland area to be “exceeded” by 2016 and “continuous growth”	www.bmlfuw.gv.at/dam/jcr:45abdf9d-c425-4b9e-82f1-2afec6ddf80e/Bioaktionsprogramm_2015_2020.pdf
Belgium	No current OAP (see Flemish and Walloon regional OAPs below)	-	-	-	-	
Bulgaria	No current OAP	-	2007-2013	2007	8% organic farmland area by 2013	www.mzh.government.bg/MZH/Libraries/Organic_Farming/NOFAP_FINAL_en.sflb.ashx
Croatia	Action Plan for development of organic agriculture in Croatia for the period 2011-2016	2011-2016	-	-	8% organic farmland area by 2016	www.mps.hr/UserDocImages/strategije/AKCIJSKI%20PLAN%20RAZVOJA%20EKOLO%20C5%A0KE%20POLJOPRIVREDE%20ZA%20RAZDOBLJE%202011-2016.pdf
Czech Republic	Action Plan for the Development of Organic Farming 2011-2015	2011-2015 (New plan for 2016-2020)	2004-2010	2004	15% organic farmland area by 2015 3% organic food in total food consumption/20%	eagri.cz/public/web/file/214536/Akcni_plan_2011_2015_EZ.pdf

					annual growth in OF consumption (2015)	
					60% share of Czech organic food in total organic market (2015)	
Cyprus	No current OAP	-	-	-	-	
Denmark	Organic Action Plan for Denmark: Working together for more organics	2012-2020 (updated 2015) Specified budget for 2015-2018	1999-2003	1995	No quantitative target but further growth in response to market demand (15% share of organic farmland area envisaged under previous government)	www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/english/SiteCollectionDocuments/Kemi%20og%20foedevarekvalitet/Oekologiplan%20Danmark_English_Print.pdf
Estonia	Estonian Organic Farming Development Plan 2014-2020	2014-2020	2007-2013	2007	50% increase share of organic farmland area by 2020 compared to 2014 20% of regular (weekly) organic food consumers in Estonia in 2020 (Other very detailed targets)	www.agri.ee/sites/default/files/content/arengukavad/arengukava-mahepollumajandus-2014-2020-eng.pdf
Finland	More organic! Government development programme for the organic product sector and objectives to 2020	2013-2020	-	2013	20% share organic farmland area by 2020 Growing volumes of organic production	mmm.fi/documents/1410837/1890227/Luomualan_kehittamisohjelmaEN.pdf/1badaefc-bc12-4952-a58a-37753f8c24ad

France	Organic Ambition 2017 Program	2013-2017 Ca. €164,000 per year	2008-2012	-	Doubling the share of organic farmland area by the end of 2017 20% organic in public catering facilities by the end of 2017	agriculture.gouv.fr/telecharger/59433?token=514834d8e104b36d6b89c7d5c6aee915
Germany	No current OAP (see Bavarian regional OAP below)	Future strategy for Ecological Agriculture 2017-2020	2012-2015 (BÖLN)	2001	20% share of organic farmland area, but no target year	www.bmel.de/DE/Landwirtschaft/Nachhaltige-Landnutzung/Oekolandbau/Texte/ZukunftsstrategieOekologischerLandbau.html
Greece	No current OAP	-	-	-	-	-
Hungary	National Action Plan for the Development of Ecological Farming (2014-2020)	2014-2020	-	-	-	videkstrategia.kormany.hu/download/3/c8/90000/Nemzeti%20Akci%C3%B3terv%20az%20C3%96kol%C3%B3gai%20Gazd%C3%A1lkod%C3%A1s%20Fejleszt%C3%A9s%C3%A9rt%20vegyes.pdf
Iceland	No current OAP	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	Organic Farming Action Plan 2013 - 2015	2013-2015	2008-2012	-	5% organic farmland area by 2020	www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingsectors/organicfarming/OrganicFarmingActionPlan20132015230414.pdf
Italy	No current OAP	New strategic plan post-2015 under development	2005 (Updated 2005-2009)	2005	-	www.sinab.it/sites/default/files/share/PIANO%20D'AZIONE%20NAZIONALE%20PER%20L'AGRICOLTURA%20BIOLOGICA%20E%20I%20PRODOTTI%20BIOLOGICI.pdf

Latvia	No current OAP ²⁵	-	2012-2014	2007	-	
Lithuania	No current OAP	(New OAP post-2015 under development)	2007-2010	2002	-	www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.D7FA9D17AE86
Luxembourg	Action Plan for Organic Agriculture Luxembourg	2009-2015 Ca. €800,000	2009-2013	-	-	
Malta	No current OAP	-	2004	-	-	
Netherlands	No current OAP	-	2008-2011	2001	-	
Norway	No current OAP (Working on an Action Plan for 2020, but only defining aims, no actions yet)	-	-	-	-	(proposed 15% organic farmland area and 15% of animal production by 2020)
Poland	Frame Plan for Organic Food and Farming in Poland	2015-2020	2011-2014	2007	-	www.minrol.gov.pl/content/download/47685/262371/version/4/file/Ramowy%20Plan%20Dzialan%202014-2020%201%20sierpnia%202014.pdf
Portugal	No current OAP	-	-	-	-	
Romania	No current OAP ²⁶	-	-	-	-	
Slovakia	No current OAP ²⁷	-	-	-	-	

Slovenia	Action Plan for the Development of Organic Farming in Slovenia until 2015	2005-2015	-	2007	15% organic share of farmland area by 2015 10% organic share of domestic foods in the total food market by 2015	www.itr.si/uploads/WI/IH/WIIHbBnx9t7e9JlyUdgwRw/ANEK_en.pdf
Spain	No current OAP (Strategic lines to implement OAPs - see several regional OAPs – below)	Strategic lines 2014-2018	2007-2010	2007	-	www.magrama.gob.es/imagenes/es/Estrategia%20Apoyo%20Produccion%20Ecol%C3%B3gica_tcm7-319074.pdf
Sweden	No current OAP	-	2006-2010	1996	-	www.regeringen.se/contentassets/c6196df78e394d59881dc094ad0ac96a/ekologisk-produktion-och-konsumtion---mal-och-inriktning-till-2010
Switzerland	No current OAP (See some regional OAPs below)	-	-	-	-	
United Kingdom	No current OAP (see Scottish OAP below) ²⁸	-	-	-	-	

Annex 2: Summary of regional organic action plans, 2015

Region	Name of Organic Action Plan (or programme)	Running period/total funding	Period of previous OAP	Implementation year of first OAP	Quantitative targets	Further information
Flanders (Belgium)	Strategic action plan organic agriculture 2013-2017	2013-2017 €3m per year	2008-2012	2000	-	lv.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/attachments/strategisch-plan-bio-2013.pdf
Wallonia (Belgium)	Strategic plan for the development of organic farming in Wallonia at 2020 horizon	2013-2020 €13m (total)	-	2013	14% organic farmland area, 10% of farmers 3% of food market by 2020	agriculture.wallonie.be/apps/spip_wolwin/IMG/pdf/plan_bio_final_juin_2013.pdf
Bavaria (Germany)	BioRegio Bayern 2020	2014-2020	-	-	Double organic production from 2014-2020	www.stmelf.bayern.de/landwirtschaft/oekolandbau/027495/index.php
Andalusia (Spain)	No current OAP New OAP for 2016 under development	-	2007-2013	2002	-	www.juntadeandalucia.es/agriculturaspesca/portal/export/sites/default/comun/galerias/galeriaDescargas/cap/produccion-ecologica/libro_plan_ae.pdf
Aragon (Spain)	Strategic to promote and develop Organic Production in Aragon. Period 2014-2020	2014-2020	-	2014	-	www.aragon.es/estaticos/GobiernoAragon/Departamentos/AgriculturaGanaderiaMedioAmbiente/GENERICAS/PLANES/AGMA_PLAN_PRODUCION_ECOLOGICA_2014_2020.pdf
Castile and León (Spain)	Strategic Action Organic Plan of Castile and León 2015-2020	2015-2020 €4m (total)	-	2015	-	participa.jcyl.es/forums/333405-proyecto-de-plan-estrat%C3%A9gico-de-producci%C3%B3n-ecol%C3%B3gica

Basque Country (Spain)	Promotional Plan of Organic Production Promotion Plan from the Autonomous Region (FOPE)	2014-2016 €420,000 (total)	2009-2012	2009	2.2% of organic farmland, 600 organic producers 200 organic processors 2% of food market	www.nasdap.ejgv.euskadi.eus/content/enidos/plan_programa_proyecto/fope/es_def/adjuntos/FOPE_CAS.pdf
Canary Islands (Spain)	Performed Plan for the development of the organic production in the Canary Islands	2015-2016	2013-2014	2011	-	
Fribourg (Switzerland)	Action Plan for the development of organic farming	2014-2020	-	2014	50% more organic farmland area by 2020, compared with 2013	www.fr.ch/iag/files/pdf59/plan_action_bio.pdf
Jura (Switzerland)	Development of organic farming in Canton Jura and Bernese Jura	2011-2015	2007-2010	2007	50% more organic farms by 2015 compared with 2010	www.frij.ch/documents/showFile.asp?ID=3432
Scotland (UK)	Organic Ambition 2020	2016-2020	2013-14	2011		http://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120636/scottish_organic_action_plan

Annex 3: Focus areas in national organic action plans

Country	Information, training, education	Research and innovation	Supply & producer support	Market development, processing & procurement	Other areas mentioned
Austria	x	x	x	x	Statistical data about organic should be improved
Croatia	x		x		
Czech Republic	x	x		x	Increase the actual benefit of organic for the environment, animal welfare and human health
Denmark	x	x	x	x	Export, climate change
Estonia	x	x	x	x	
Finland	x	x	x	x	
France	x	x	x	x	Improving regulations
Germany	x	x	x	x	Organic inputs
Hungary	x	x	x	x	
Ireland	x		x		
Italy	x	x	x	x	Paperless certification, improvements to certification and control system
Luxembourg	x	x	x	x	Awards for organic agriculture
Romania	x	x	x	x	Regulation, control and certification
Slovakia	x	x	x	x	
Slovenia	x	x	x	x	

Annex 4: Focus areas in regional organic action plans

Region	Information, training, education	Research and innovation	Supply & producer support	Market development, processing & procurement	Other areas mentioned
Flanders (Belgium)	x	x		x	Increasing demand through communication, marketing and sensitisation
Wallonia (Belgium)	x	x	x	x	Harmonise nomenclature used by the certifiers in order to have all operators on a level playing field
Bavaria (Germany)	x		x	x	Investment support should be provided. The evaluation of the sector carried out by an expert group should be published
Andalusia (Spain)	x	x	x	x	improving transparency and control/certification systems, GMO coexistence
Castile and León (Spain)			x		Transparency measures
Basque Country (Spain)			x		
Aragon (Spain)			x		
Canary Islands (Spain)	x	x	x	x	
Fribourg (Switzerland)	x	x	x	x	Ensure sufficient resources for the coordination of the OAP
Jura (Switzerland)	x		x	x	
Scotland (UK)	x	x	x	x	Resilience - strengthen the ability of organic farming to conserve and enhance the natural capital of Scotland

References

- ¹ Otto Schmid, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture - FiBL, Ackerstrasse 113, CH-5070 Frick, Switzerland, Tel: +41 62 8657272. Fax: +41 62 8657272, otto.schmid@fibl.org, www.fibl.org
- ² Susanne Padel and Nic Lampkin, Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm, Hampstead Marshall, Newbury, RG20 0HR, United Kingdom, Tel: +44 1488 658298, Fax: +44 1488 658503, elmfarm@organicresearchcentre.com, www.organicresearchcentre.com
- ³ Stephen Meredith, IFOAM EU, Rue du Commerce 124, BE - 1000 Brussels, Tel: +32 2 280 11 51 Fax: +32 2 735 73 81, stephen.meredith@ifoam-eu.org, www.ifoam-eu.org
- ⁴ ORGAP was an EU funded research project on the evaluation of the EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture which took place between 2006 and 2008. See Schmid, O., Lampkin, N., Dabbert, S., Zanolli, R., Michelsen, J., González, V. (eds.) (2008): European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming – Final synthesis report of the ORGAP-Project Report D 14. Research. More information available at: www.orgap.org
- ⁵ Willer, H., Lernoud, J., (eds.) (2016): The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture – FiBL, Frick and IFOAM- Organics International, Bonn. Available at: www.organic-world.net/yearbook/yearbook-2016.html
- ⁶ Stolze, M., and Lampkin N., (2009): Policy for organic farming: Rationale and concepts. Food Policy, 34 (3), 237-244,
- ⁷ European Commission (2015): The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013: CAP reform - basic Regulations. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/legislation/index_en.htm
- ⁸ The 2008 voluntary GPP criteria are currently under revision by the European Commission. The process started in 2015 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. More information available at: http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/Food_Catering/
- ⁹ European Commission (2015): Investing in jobs and growth - maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds. Available at: eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:81ed8553-a248-11e5-b528-01aa75ed71a1.0022.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
- ¹⁰ Sanders, J., and Schmid, O., (2014): Organic Action Plans: Mainstreaming organic farming in public policy. In: Meredith, S., and Willer, H. (eds.) Organic in Europe: prospects and developments. Brussels: IFOAM EU, pp 46-54 Available at: www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/page/files/ifoameu_policy_04_capbook201403.pdf
- ¹¹ Since the early 2000s, two EU OAPs have been developed by the European Commission in 2004 and 2014 respectively see; European Commission (2004): European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming. COM (2004) 415 final. European Commission, Brussels. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0415:FIN:EN:PDF>; European Commission (2014): Communication: Action Plan for the future of Organic Production in the European Union. COM (2014) 179 final. Available at: European Commission, Brussels Available at: eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2014:179:FIN:EN:PDF
- ¹² Sanders J., Stolze M., Padel S., (Eds.) (2011) Use and efficiency of public support measures addressing organic farming, Braunschweig: Institute of Farm Economics of the von Thünen Institute on behalf DG AGRI, European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/organic-farming-support_en.htm
- ¹³ Europe 2020 is the EU's ten-year jobs and growth strategy that was launched in 2010 to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Proposals to review the strategy were expected to be presented by the Commission before the end of 2015. More information available at: ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm.
- ¹⁴ See ORGAP research project 2006-2008. More information available at: www.orgap.org
- ¹⁵ Respondents were the representatives of the different member countries of IFOAM EU. As part of the survey respondents delivered both a summary and self-assessment of the existing situation in their countries with regards to the development and implementation of OAPs (or comparable programmes) and made an assessment of the OAP on the basis of some key questions and issues reflecting their perspective of the organic sector in their country or region. The survey was informed by existing data collection and assessments under the ORGAP project and Sanders, J., and Schmid, O., (2014): Organic Action Plans: Mainstreaming organic farming in public policy. In: Meredith, S., and Willer, H. (eds.) Organic in Europe: prospects and developments. Brussels: IFOAM EU, pp 46-54 Available at: www.ifoam-eu.org/sites/default/files/page/files/ifoameu_policy_04_capbook201403.pdf
- ¹⁶ Sanders, J., and Schmid, O., (2014): Organic Action Plans: Mainstreaming organic farming in public policy.
- ¹⁷ More information on the latest production and market trends is available through the IFOAM EU website. Available at: www.ifoam-eu.org/en/organic-in-europe/ More detailed data sets are available through the Organic Data Network. Available at: www.organicdatanetwork.net
- ¹⁸ See ORGAP research project 2006-2008. More information available at: www.orgap.org
- ¹⁹ Ekert S., Döring T., Häring AM., Lampkin N., Murphy-Bokern D., Otto K., Padel S., Vieweger A., (2012): Abschlussbericht (Projekt 09OE027): Evaluation des Bereichs Forschung und Entwicklung im Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau. Forschungsgemeinschaft Organic Research Evaluations (INTERVAL GmbH; Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm; Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde in Zusammenarbeit mit Donal Murphy-Bokern) im Auftrag der Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung (BLE). Berlin, Eberswalde, Hamstead Marshall. Available at: orgprints.org/22369/
- ²⁰ Right Track Associates (2015): Using the Status Quo Analysis for Strategic Project Planning. Available at: www.ittoolkit.com/how-to-it/projects/status-quo-analysis.html

²¹ Sanders et al., (2011): Use and efficiency of public support measures addressing organic farming, Braunschweig: Institute of Farm Economics of the von Thünen Institute on behalf DG AGRI, European Commission. Available at: ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/organic-farming-support_en.htm

²² Recommendations are based on a literature review, in particular the evaluation of Action Plans carried out as part of the ORGAP project. Another useful reference was the recent EU-commissioned evaluation of the 'Use and efficiency of public support measures addressing organic farming' (Sanders et al., 2011).

²³ See ORGAP research project 2006-2008. More information available at: www.orgap.org

²⁴ Sanders, J., *Zukunftsstrategie Ökologischer Landbau*, www.ti.bund.de/de/thema/oekologischer-landbau/zukunftsstrategie-oekologischer-landbau/

²⁵ Latvia currently does not have a national OAP. The previous OAP (2012-2014) prepared by the Latvian Organic Agriculture Association

²⁶ Romania currently does not have a national OAP. A framework of a National Plan for Ecological Agriculture Development has been elaborated and is supported by Romanian Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Romanian Business Leaders and American Chamber of Commerce

²⁷ Slovakia currently does not have a national OAP. However a bottom-up stakeholder led initiative has been developed called 'Action Plan for organic farming development until 2020'. Available at: www.ecotrend.sk/uploads/media/akcny_plan_EP.doc

²⁸ Scotland is currently the only UK region with an OAP. The last OAP in England was from 2002-2007, in Wales over 1999-2004 and 2005-2010, and in Northern Ireland from 2007-2009.