



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



18 May 2017

Organic farming statistics 2016

This release presents estimates of the land area farmed organically, crop areas, livestock numbers and numbers of organic producers and processors in the United Kingdom. These estimates are made from data compiled by approved organic certification bodies in the United Kingdom and include long-term trends and detailed results by geographical area.

Key findings:

Organic land use and crops (Tables 1 to 4)

In 2016, the United Kingdom had a total area of 508 thousand hectares of land farmed organically, down from 521 thousand hectares in 2015. The area in-conversion expressed as a percentage of the total organic area rose for the second consecutive year.

Organic livestock (Tables 5 to 6)

Poultry and sheep remain the most popular livestock types farmed organically in the United Kingdom.

Organic producers and processors (Tables 7 to 9)

The total number of organic producers and processors rose by 5.1% in 2016 to 6,363. The number of producers only and producer/processors continue to decline. The number of processors only rose for the third year running and now stands at 2,804, the highest number since 2008. Aside from the manufacture of 'other food products', most processors in the United Kingdom were engaging in the processing and preserving of meat and production of meat products and the processing and preserving of fruit and vegetables. Full details can be found in the time series data, which is available to download at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/organic-farming-statistics-2016>

Methodology (Page 11)

Methodology notes and links to other relevant data sources.

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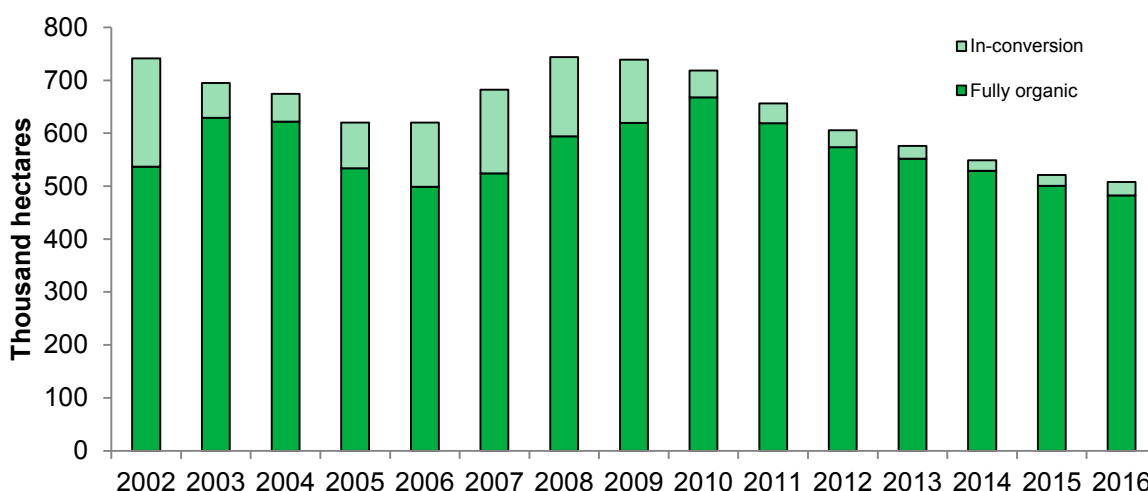
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In this statistical release, the total organic area referred to is made up of fully organic land and organic land in-conversion.

Land area farmed organically

In 2016, the United Kingdom had a total area of 508 thousand hectares of land farmed organically (i.e. the fully converted area and area under conversion), down from 521 thousand hectares in 2015. Since 2008 when the area of land farmed organically peaked, the organically farmed area has declined by 32%. The organically farmed area represents 2.9% of the total farmed area on agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom.

Figure 1: Land area farmed organically: United Kingdom



Land in-conversion

Organic production comes from fully converted land. Before an area can be considered as fully organic, it must undergo a conversion process. The area in-conversion expressed as a percentage of the total organic area can give an indication of the potential growth in the organic sector. This proportion showed a small increase in 2016, the second consecutive increase since 2007.

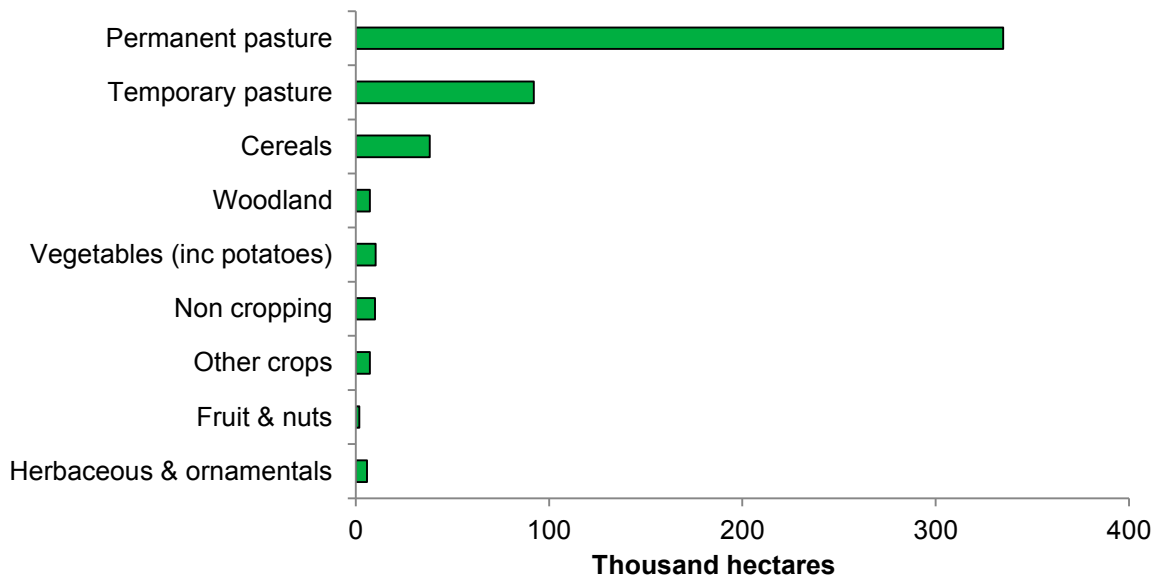
Figure 2: Land in-conversion as a % of the total area farmed organically



Organic land use

Permanent pasture accounts for the biggest share of the organic area (66%) followed by temporary pasture (18%) and cereals (7.6%).

Figure 3: Organic land use: United Kingdom: 2016^(a)

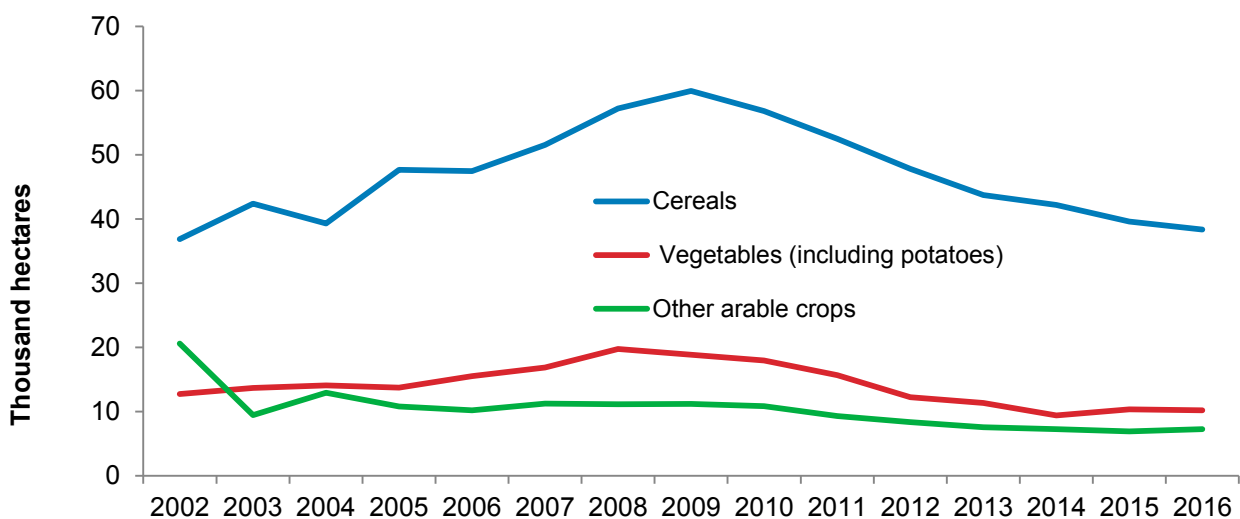


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

Organic crops

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

Figure 4: Organic crops: United Kingdom^(a)

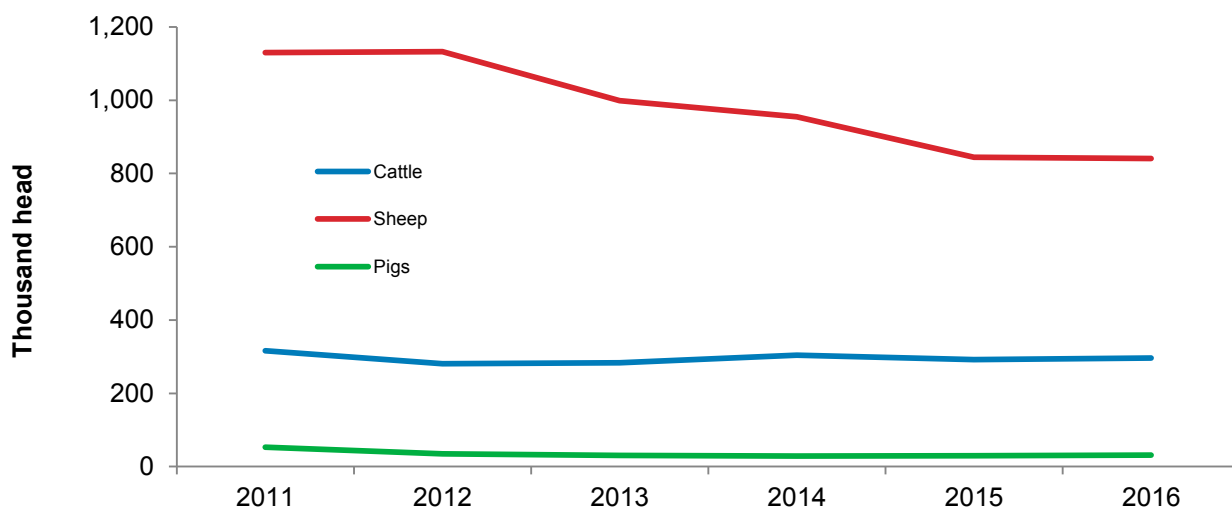


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

Organic livestock

Poultry continues to be the most popular livestock type farmed organically in the United Kingdom, rising by 10% in 2016 to just over 2.8 million birds. In the red meat sector (see Figure 5), despite a small decrease sheep remained the most popular species with around 841 thousand animals in 2016. Cattle numbers increased in 2016 to 296 thousand animals compared to 292 thousand in 2015, with the number of pigs also increasing by 5.0% to 31 thousand animals.

Figure 5: Organic livestock: United Kingdom^(a)



(a) Includes fully organic only

Number of organic producers and processors

In 2016, there were 6,363 producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in the United Kingdom, an increase from 6,056 in 2015. The number of producers has declined by 35% since 2007, mirroring the decline in the land area farmed organically. The number of processors has increased for the third year running and now stands at almost 2,800 (see Figure 6 and Table 7).

Figure 6: Organic producers and processors: United Kingdom

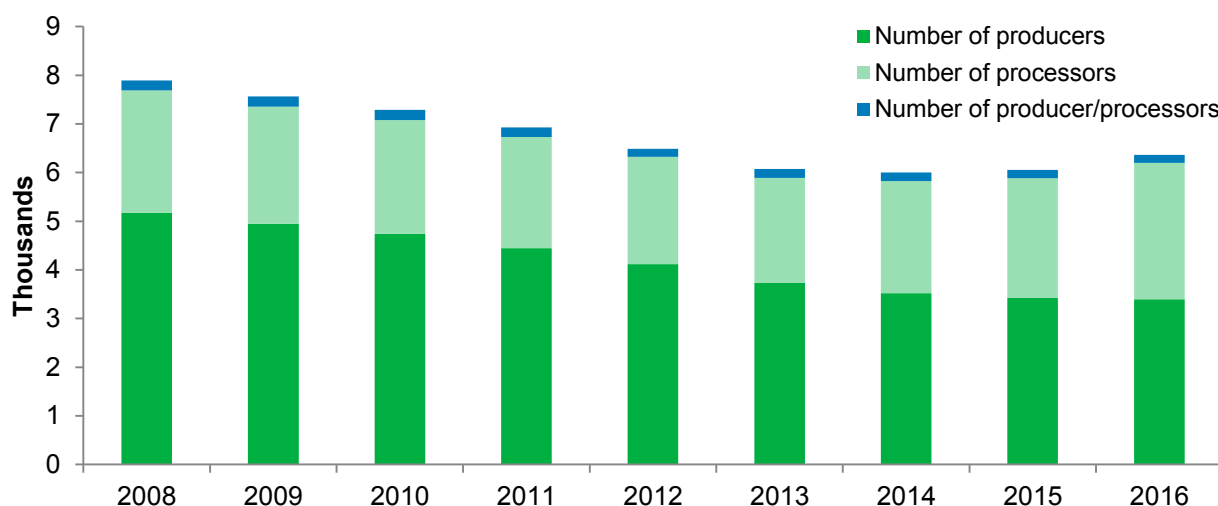


Table 1: Land area farmed organically 2013 to 2016

	Thousand hectares				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change 2016/2015
United Kingdom					
In-conversion	24.4	19.7	20.6	25.2	22.1
Fully organic	551.7	529.0	500.8	482.7	-3.6
Total organic area	576.0	548.6	521.4	507.9	-2.6
England					
In-conversion	14.0	12.5	10.0	14.7	47.2
Fully organic	302.4	295.7	293.7	281.8	-4.1
Total organic area	316.4	308.1	303.7	296.5	-2.4

Table 2: Organic land use 2013 to 2016^(a)

	Thousand hectares				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change 2016/2015
United Kingdom					
Cereals	43.7	42.2	39.6	38.4	-3.2
Other crops	7.6	7.3	6.9	7.3	4.7
Fruit & nuts	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.9	-0.4
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	11.3	9.4	10.4	10.2	-1.2
Herbaceous & ornamentals	6.8	8.5	6.2	5.8	-7.5
Temporary pasture	98.9	93.7	92.2	92.1	-0.2
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	387.0	369.7	347.1	335.0	-3.5
Woodland	7.6	7.0	6.9	7.4	6.1
Non cropping	10.4	8.7	10.0	9.9	-0.7
Total	575.3	548.6	521.4	507.9	-2.6
England					
Cereals	35.2	34.9	33.1	32.1	-3.1
Other crops	5.6	5.3	5.1	5.4	5.7
Fruit & nuts	2.0	2.1	1.8	1.8	-3.1
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	9.2	7.7	8.7	8.5	-1.8
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.8	7.4	5.4	5.0	-8.1
Temporary pasture	81.2	77.3	75.7	75.0	-0.9
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	163.2	161.7	160.9	155.6	-3.3
Woodland	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.3	1.7
Unutilised land	8.0	6.8	7.8	7.8	0.9
Total	315.6	308.1	303.7	296.5	-2.4

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

(a) Table 3: Detailed organic land use 2016

Thousand hectares

	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2016 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
United Kingdom					
Cereals	1.6	36.8	38.4	3 132	1.2
Wheat	0.5	10.4	10.9	1 823	0.6
Barley	0.8	12.1	12.9	1 122	1.2
Oats	0.2	11.4	11.6	141	8.3
Other cereals	0.1	2.8	2.9	45	6.4
Other arable crops	0.6	6.7	7.3	1 235	0.6
Sugar beet	0.0	0.1	0.1	86	0.1
Fodder, forage & silage	0.5	4.9	5.4	80	6.8
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	1.7	1.7	1 069	0.2
Vegetables	0.4	8.9	9.3	113	8.3
Potatoes	0.0	0.9	0.9	139	0.7
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.9	1.9	35	5.5
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	5.7	5.8	12	50.2
Temporary pasture	6.2	85.9	92.1	1 144	8.1
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	15.3	319.7	335.0	10 079	3.3
Woodland	0.2	7.1	7.4	978	0.8
Unutilised land	0.7	9.2	9.9		
Total	25.2	482.7	507.9		
England					
Cereals	1.3	30.8	32.1	2 617	1.2
Wheat	0.4	9.6	10.1	1 684	0.6
Barley	0.6	9.8	10.3	791	1.3
Oats	0.2	8.8	9.0	102	8.8
Other cereals	0.1	2.6	2.7	40	6.8
Other arable crops	0.3	5.1	5.4	1 146	0.5
Sugar beet	0.0	0.1	0.1	86	0.1
Fodder, forage & silage	0.3	3.7	4.0	55	7.2
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	1.3	1.4	1 005	0.1
Fruit & nuts	0.0	1.7	1.8	32	5.5
Vegetables	0.3	7.5	7.8	93	8.4
Potatoes	0.0	0.6	0.7	104	0.6
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	4.9	5.0	10	49.6
Temporary pasture	4.9	70.1	75.0	627	12.0
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	6.9	148.6	155.6	3 760	4.1
Woodland	0.2	5.1	5.3	370	1.4
Unutilised land	0.6	7.2	7.8		
Total	14.7	281.8	296.5		

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2016. Excludes common land.

Table 4: Area farmed organically by country and English region 2016

Thousand hectares

	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total agricultural area at June 2016 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
United Kingdom	25.2	482.7	507.9	17 463	2.9
Wales	7.8	73.7	81.5	1 677	4.9
Scotland	2.3	119.3	121.6	5 652	2.2
Northern Ireland	0.3	8.0	8.3	1 013	0.8
England	14.7	281.8	296.5	9 121	3.3
North East	0.4	24.9	25.2	603	4.2
North West	1.1	11.4	12.5	940	1.3
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.6	10.0	10.5	1 115	0.9
East Midlands	0.9	13.6	14.5	1 203	1.2
West Midlands	2.0	28.0	30.0	932	3.2
Eastern	1.3	13.5	14.8	1 398	1.1
South East (inc London)	1.4	42.4	43.8	1 139	3.8
South West	7.2	138.0	145.1	1 791	8.1

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2016. Excludes common land.

Table 5: Organic livestock numbers 2013 to 2016^(a)

Thousand head

	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change 2016/2015
United Kingdom					
Cattle	283.3	304.1	291.5	296.4	1.7
Sheep	999.2	954.9	844.6	840.8	-0.5
Pigs	30.2	28.3	30.0	31.5	5.0
Poultry	2 487.6	2 398.7	2 560.2	2 821.2	10.2
Other livestock ^(b)	4.1	5.7	4.3	3.4	-22.1
England					
Cattle	199.5	215.6	217.7	219.3	0.7
Sheep	400.8	404.2	415.3	405.9	-2.3
Pigs	26.5	25.8	22.2	29.4	32.4
Poultry	1 687.5	1 495.9	1 512.4	1 699.2	12.4
Other livestock ^(b)	3.4	3.1	3.9	2.8	-27.8

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

Table 6: Detailed organic livestock numbers 2016

		Thousand head	
	Total organic livestock ^(a)	Total livestock at June 2016 ^(b)	Total organic livestock area as % of June livestock
United Kingdom			
Cattle	296.4	10 033	3.0
for slaughter	98.7	3 849	2.6
Dairy cows	81.4	3 401	2.4
Other cattle	116.4	2 783	4.2
Sheep	840.8	33 943	2.5
Breeding females	431.2	16 304	2.6
Other sheep	409.6	17 639	2.3
Pigs	31.5	4 866	0.6
Fattening pigs	21.5	4 356	0.5
Breeding sows	4.3	415	1.0
Other pigs	5.7	94	6.1
Poultry	2 821.2	172 607	1.6
Broilers	1 574.3	110 639	1.4
Laying hens	1 134.9	38 058	3.0
Other poultry	112.1	23 910	0.5
Other livestock	3.4	:	:
Goats	0.5	104	0.5
Horses	0.2	268	0.1
Others ^{(b)(c)}	2.7	:	:
England			
Cattle	219.3	5 429	4.0
for slaughter	66.2	1 868	3.5
Dairy cows	66.4	2 058	3.2
Other cattle	86.7	1 504	5.8
Sheep	405.9	15 283	2.7
Breeding females	211.8	7 114	3.0
Other sheep	194.1	8 169	2.4
Pigs	29.4	3 911	0.8
Fattening pigs	20.1	3 494	0.6
Breeding sows	4.1	334	1.2
Other pigs	5.3	82	6.5
Poultry	1 699.2	128 879	1.3
Broilers	829.6	85 328	1.0
Laying hens	796.5	25 451	3.1
Other poultry	73.2	18 101	0.4
Other livestock	2.8	:	:
Goats	0.5	83	0.6
Horses	0.1	177	0.1
Others ^{(c)(d)}	2.2	:	:

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

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

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

Table 7: Number of organic producers and processors 2016

	Number of producers only	Number of producer/processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
United Kingdom	3 398	161	2 804	6 363
Wales	595	23	133	751
Scotland	349	6	205	560
Northern Ireland	152	0	52	204
England	2 302	132	2 414	4 848
North East	86	1	43	130
North West	116	6	179	301
Yorkshire & the Humber	102	6	165	273
East Midlands	151	9	211	371
West Midlands	245	15	186	446
Eastern	161	12	335	508
South East (inc London)	337	21	834	1 192
South West	1 104	62	461	1 627

Table 8: Number of organic producers and processors 2013 to 2016

	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change 2016/2015
United Kingdom	6 072	6 002	6 056	6 363	5.1
Wales	913	779	741	751	1.3
Scotland	551	576	539	560	3.9
Northern Ireland	189	193	197	204	3.6
England	4 419	4 454	4 579	4 848	5.9
North East	127	130	137	130	-5.1
North West	253	246	277	301	8.7
Yorkshire & The Humber	240	238	257	273	6.2
East Midlands	351	346	329	371	12.8
West Midlands	426	424	438	446	1.8
Eastern	449	445	457	508	11.2
South East (inc London)	957	1 020	1 083	1 192	10.1
South West	1 616	1 605	1 601	1 627	1.6

Table 9: Number of organic crop and livestock producers and processors 2016^(a)

	Number of:			
	Crop producers	Crop producers and processors	Livestock producers	Livestock producers and processors
United Kingdom	3 168	152	2 348	126
Wales	579	23	465	19
Scotland	310	6	252	6
Northern Ireland	120	0	105	0
England	2 159	123	1 526	101
North East	82	1	70	1
North West	113	6	78	4
Yorkshire and the Humber	92	6	74	4
East Midlands	134	7	105	6
West Midlands	229	13	157	11
Eastern	142	11	70	7
South East (inc London)	319	20	190	14
South West	1 048	59	782	54

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

Organic statistics methodology

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

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

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

Note

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

Organics overview

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

Key elements of organic farming systems

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

Conversion

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

Other relevant data sources

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

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

Users and uses of these statistics

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

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