

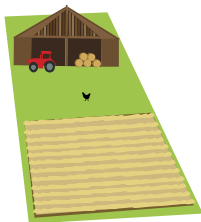


## Organic farming statistics 2018

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

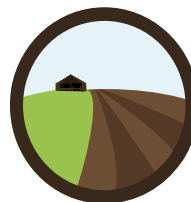
### Key findings:

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



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

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



**70%**  
of UK organic land is accounted for by permanent grassland.

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



**8%**  
of the total UK organic area is used to grow cereals.

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



**61%**  
of the total UK organic area is in England

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



**3.3%**  
of the total UK cattle population is reared organically.

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



**6.2 thousand**  
The number of organic operators in the UK.

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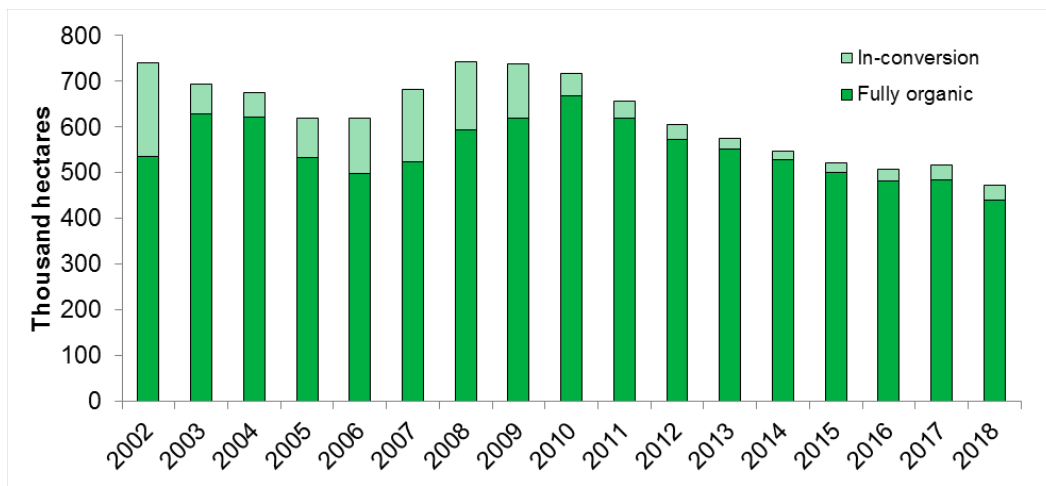
## Detailed results

The total organic area referred to, is made up of fully organic land and organic land in-conversion. Long-term trends and detailed geographical breakdowns are available in the dataset: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/organic-farming-statistics-2018>.

### Land area farmed organically

In 2018, the United Kingdom had a total area of 474 thousand hectares of land farmed organically (i.e. the fully converted area and area under conversion), a decrease of 8.4% compared to 2017. Whilst there has been little change to the main crop areas (cereals, other crops, fruit & nuts and vegetables), this decrease has been driven by the fall in the area of land with a low production value, e.g. temporary pasture, woodland etc. Since 2008 when the area of land farmed organically peaked, the organically farmed area has declined by 36%. The organically farmed area represents 2.7% of the total farmed area on agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom.

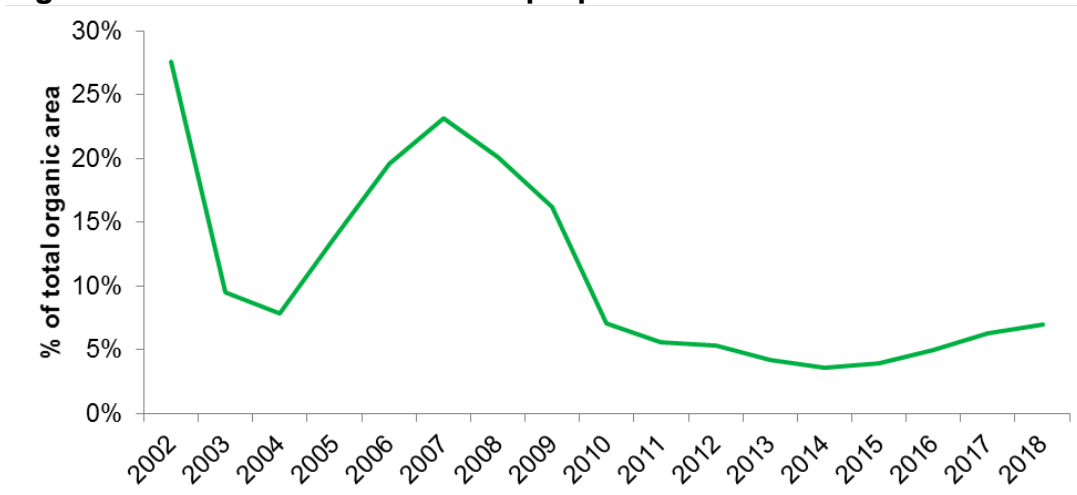
**Figure 1: Land area farmed organically in the United Kingdom**



### Land in-conversion

Organic production comes from fully converted land. Before an area can be considered as fully organic, it must undergo a conversion process. The area in-conversion expressed as a percentage of the total organic area can give an indication of the potential growth in the organic sector. This proportion showed a small increase in 2018, the fourth consecutive increase since 2014.

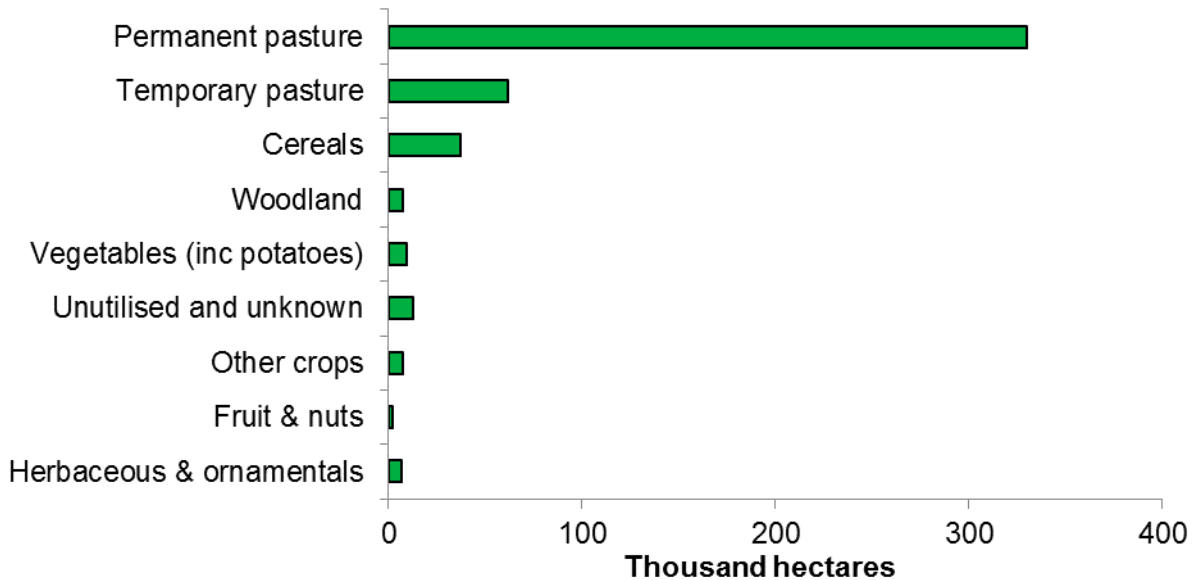
**Figure 2: Land in-conversion as a proportion of the total area farmed organically**



### Organic land use

Permanent pasture accounts for the biggest share of the organic area (70%) followed by temporary pasture (13%) and cereals (8%). The full breakdown of organic land use is shown in Figure 3 below and Table 2 on page 5. The drop in unknown area reflects the data cleaning carried out to assign crop types.

**Figure 3: Organic land use in the United Kingdom: 2018<sup>(a)</sup>**

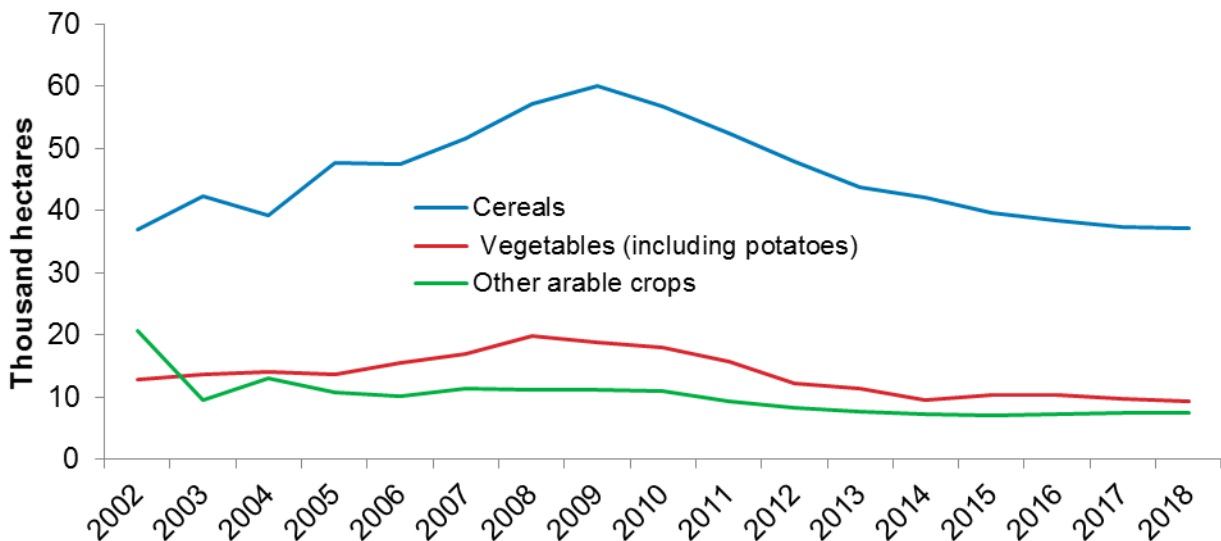


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

### Organic crops

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

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



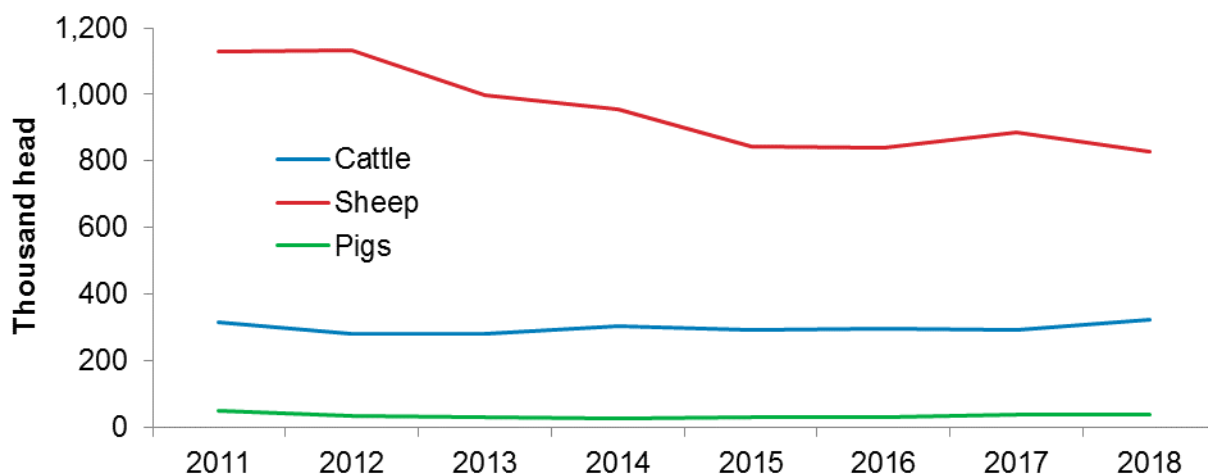
(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

## Organic livestock

The number of total poultry farmed organically in the United Kingdom increased by 10% between 2017 and 2018, rising to almost 3.4 million birds. However, this equates to 1.8% of the total UK poultry population.

In the red meat sector (see Figure 5), sheep reared organically decreased by 6.8% to 827 thousand animals in 2018. Pigs reared organically also saw a decrease of 4.2% from 39 thousand animals in 2017 to 37 thousand animals in 2018. Organically reared cattle numbers rose from 294 thousand animals in 2017 to 324 thousand animals in 2018, an increase of 10%.

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

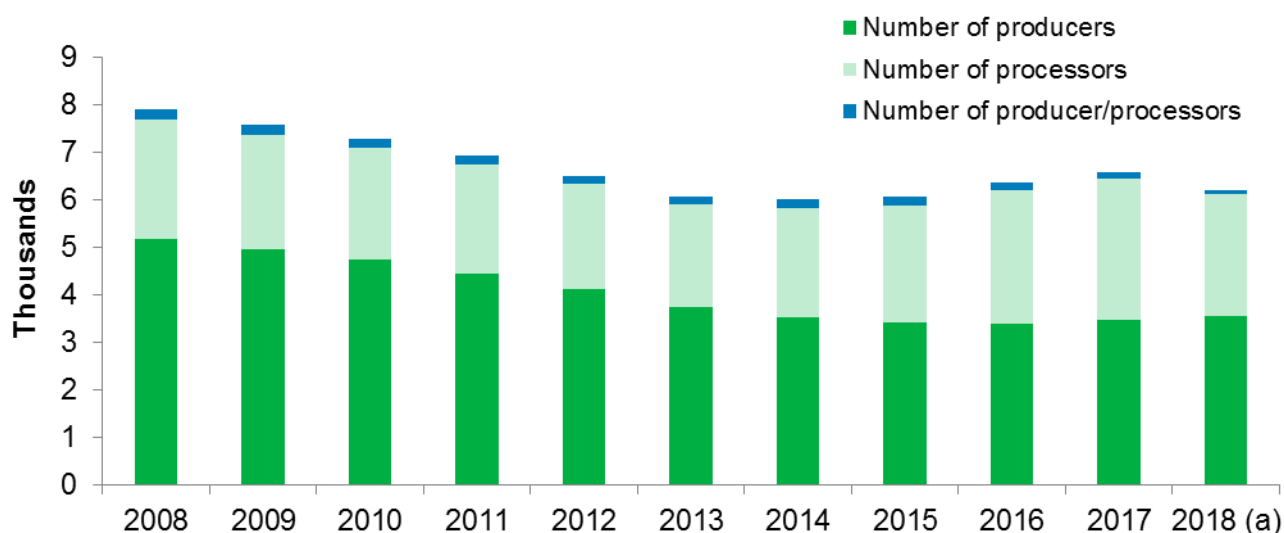


(a) Includes fully organic only

## Number of organic producers and processors

In 2018, there were almost 6.2 thousand producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in the United Kingdom. This is a decrease of 6% compared to 2017, however the figures are not directly comparable to previous years, see note (a).

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



(a) In 2018 work has been carried out to clarify how operators are recorded. This has resulted in a number of operators that were previously recorded as processors now being recorded in the correct categories of wholesalers/traders/retailers etc. We are unable to backdate these changes so earlier data is not directly comparable.

**Table 1: Land area farmed organically 2015 to 2018**

	Thousand hectares				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	% change 2018/2017
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
In-conversion	20.6	25.2	32.6	32.9	1.0
Fully organic	500.8	482.7	484.8	441.1	-9.0
<b>Total organic area</b>	<b>521.4</b>	<b>507.9</b>	<b>517.4</b>	<b>474.0</b>	<b>-8.4</b>
<b>England</b>					
In-conversion	10.0	14.7	19.8	20.3	2.7
Fully organic	293.7	281.8	280.5	269.0	-4.1
<b>Total organic area</b>	<b>303.7</b>	<b>296.5</b>	<b>300.3</b>	<b>289.3</b>	<b>-3.7</b>

**Table 2: Organic land use 2015 to 2018<sup>(a)</sup>**

	Thousand hectares				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	% change 2018/2017
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
Cereals	39.6	38.4	37.4	37.1	-0.8
Other crops	6.9	7.3	7.4	7.4	-0.7
Fruit & nuts	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.7	-5.3
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	10.4	10.2	9.6	9.3	-3.1
Herbaceous & ornamentals	6.2	5.8	5.9	6.7	12.1
Temporary pasture	92.2	92.1	92.3	61.8	-33.0
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	347.1	335.0	333.3	330.1	-1.0
Woodland	6.9	7.4	9.0	7.6	-15.5
Unutilised land	5.7	5.4	5.5	4.0	-28.2
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	4.3	4.5	15.2	8.4	-44.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>521.4</b>	<b>507.9</b>	<b>517.4</b>	<b>474.0</b>	<b>-8.4</b>
<b>England</b>					
Cereals	33.1	32.1	31.3	31.4	0.5
Other crops	5.1	5.4	5.4	5.5	2.6
Fruit & nuts	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.6	-0.5
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	8.7	8.5	8.0	7.7	-3.7
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.8	11.4
Temporary pasture	75.7	75.0	75.5	51.9	-31.2
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	160.9	155.6	153.9	172.2	11.9
Woodland	5.2	5.3	5.3	4.7	-11.2
Unutilised land	4.4	4.0	4.0	2.7	-31.8
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	3.4	3.8	10.1	5.6	-44.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>303.7</b>	<b>296.5</b>	<b>300.3</b>	<b>289.3</b>	<b>-3.7</b>

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

(b) In 2018 some land areas were provided without a crop category or land use description, therefore these are classified as unknown.

**Table 3: Detailed organic land use 2018**

Thousand hectares

	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2018 <sup>(a)</sup>	Total organic area as % of June area
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
<b>Cereals</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>34.8</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>3 178</b>	1.2
Wheat	0.5	8.2	8.7	1 797	0.5
Barley	0.9	11.2	12.1	1 157	1.0
Oats	0.6	12.1	12.7	173	7.3
Other cereals	0.2	3.3	3.6	51	7.0
<b>Other arable crops</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>1 285</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Sugar beet	0.0	0.0	0.0	116	0.0
Fodder, forage & silage	0.8	6.0	6.7	86	7.8
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	0.5	0.6	1 083	0.1
Vegetables	0.7	7.4	8.0	117	6.9
Potatoes	0.2	1.1	1.3	142	0.9
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.6	1.7	35	4.8
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	6.6	6.7	12	56.4
Temporary pasture	7.3	54.5	61.8	1 164	5.3
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	20.3	309.9	330.1	10 110	3.3
Woodland	0.5	7.1	7.6	1 020	0.7
Unutilised land	0.4	3.5	4.0		
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	0.3	8.1	8.4		
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>441.1</b>	<b>474.0</b>		
<b>England</b>					
<b>Cereals</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>2 671</b>	1.2
Wheat	0.4	7.7	8.2	1 668	0.5
Barley	0.7	8.9	9.6	825	1.2
Oats	0.5	10.0	10.6	134	7.9
Other cereals	0.2	3.0	3.2	43	7.4
<b>Other arable crops</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>1 189</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Sugar beet	0.0	0.0	0.0	116	0.0
Fodder, forage & silage	0.6	4.4	5.0	58	8.5
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	0.5	0.6	1 014	0.1
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.5	1.6	32	5.0
Vegetables	0.7	6.2	6.8	97	7.0
Potatoes	0.1	0.8	0.9	107	0.8
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	5.7	5.8	10	55.9
Temporary pasture	6.3	45.7	51.9	668	7.8
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	9.6	162.6	172.2	3 789	4.5
Woodland	0.3	4.4	4.7	376	1.2
Unutilised land	0.3	2.4	2.7		
Unknown <sup>(b)</sup>	0.3	5.3	5.6		
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>269.0</b>	<b>289.3</b>		

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2018. Excludes common land.

(b) In 2018 some land areas were provided without a crop category or land use description, therefore these are classified as unknown.

**Table 4: Area farmed organically by country and English region 2018**

Thousand hectares

	Area in-conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total agricultural area at June 2018 <sup>(a)</sup>	Total organic area as % of June area
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>441.1</b>	<b>474.0</b>	<b>17 677</b>	<b>2.7</b>
Wales	3.6	81.4	85.0	1 723	4.9
Scotland	8.5	83.1	91.6	5 604	1.6
Northern Ireland	0.5	7.6	8.1	1 022	0.8
<b>England</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>269.0</b>	<b>289.3</b>	<b>9 328</b>	<b>3.1</b>
North East	1.6	21.6	23.2	..	..
North West	0.6	11.6	12.2	..	..
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.6	9.7	10.3	..	..
East Midlands	1.1	12.6	13.7	..	..
West Midlands	4.4	28.7	33.1	..	..
Eastern	1.2	12.1	13.3	..	..
South East (inc London)	2.0	39.4	41.4	..	..
South West	8.7	133.3	142.0	..	..

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2018. Excludes common land.

.. Comparison with 2018 data is not available.

**Table 5: Organic livestock numbers 2015 to 2018<sup>(a)</sup>**

Thousand head

	2015	2016	2017	2018	% change 2018/2017
<b>United Kingdom</b>					
Cattle	291.5	296.4	294.0	324.1	10.3
Sheep	844.6	840.8	887.0	826.6	-6.8
Pigs	30.0	31.5	39.1	37.4	-4.2
Poultry	2 560.2	2 821.2	3 059.9	3 380.9	10.5
Other livestock <sup>(b)</sup>	4.3	3.4	2.6	6.0	130.8
<b>England</b>					
Cattle	217.7	219.3	217.3	240.6	10.7
Sheep	415.3	405.9	421.2	374.0	-11.2
Pigs	22.2	29.4	37.2	29.2	-21.5
Poultry	1 512.4	1 699.2	2 002.0	2 038.2	1.8
Other livestock <sup>(b)</sup>	3.9	2.8	2.3	4.8	110.0

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

**Table 6: Detailed organic livestock numbers 2018**

		Thousand head	
	Total organic livestock <sup>(a)</sup>	Total livestock at June 2018 <sup>(b)</sup>	Total organic livestock as % of June livestock
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
<b>Cattle</b>	<b>324.1</b>	<b>9 891</b>	<b>3.3</b>
for slaughter	116.1	3 890	3.0
Dairy cows	88.3	3 277	2.7
Other cattle	119.7	2 723	4.4
<b>Sheep</b>	<b>826.6</b>	<b>33 781</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Breeding females	446.6	16 286	2.7
Other sheep	380.0	17 495	2.2
<b>Pigs</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>5 012</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Fattening pigs	21.3	4 509	0.5
Breeding sows	3.8	409	0.9
Other pigs	12.3	94	13.1
<b>Poultry</b>	<b>3 380.9</b>	<b>188 442</b>	<b>1.8</b>
Broilers	1 878.7	123 946	1.5
Laying hens	1 412.8	39 852	3.5
Other poultry	89.4	24 644	0.4
<b>Other livestock</b>	<b>6.0</b>	:	:
Farmed deer	3.3	34	9.9
Goats	0.7	108	0.7
Horses	1.0	250	0.4
Others <sup>(c)(d)</sup>	0.9	:	:
<b>England</b>			
<b>Cattle</b>	<b>240.6</b>	<b>5 372</b>	<b>4.5</b>
for slaughter	81.3	1 918	4.2
Dairy cows	70.1	1 972	3.6
Other cattle	89.2	1 483	6.0
<b>Sheep</b>	<b>374.0</b>	<b>15 651</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Breeding females	213.3	7 383	2.9
Other sheep	160.7	8 268	1.9
<b>Pigs</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>4 038</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Fattening pigs	14.7	3 630	0.4
Breeding sows	3.4	327	1.0
Other pigs	11.1	82	13.7
<b>Poultry</b>	<b>2 038.2</b>	<b>139 689</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Broilers	968.8	95 849	1.0
Laying hens	1 015.2	25 278	4.0
Other poultry	54.2	18 562	0.3
<b>Other livestock</b>	<b>4.8</b>	:	:
Farmed deer	2.5	21	11.8
Goats	0.6	87	0.6
Horses	0.8	162	0.5
Others <sup>(c)(d)</sup>	0.8	:	:

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

(c) "Others" include 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 2018**

	Number of producers only	Number of producer/processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>3 544</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>2 569</b>	<b>6 188</b>
Wales	627	4	128	759
Scotland	379	2	196	577
Northern Ireland	162	5	49	216
<b>England</b>	<b>2 376</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>2 196</b>	<b>4 636</b>
North East	74	2	37	113
North West	112	6	145	263
Yorkshire & the Humber	102	2	136	240
East Midlands	163	4	183	350
West Midlands	311	9	155	475
Eastern	175	9	293	477
South East (inc London)	343	9	844	1 196
South West	1 096	23	403	1 522

**Table 8: Number of organic producers and processors 2015 to 2018**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	% change 2018/2017
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>6 056</b>	<b>6 363</b>	<b>6 586</b>	<b>6 188</b>	<b>-6.0</b>
Wales	741	751	751	759	1.1
Scotland	539	560	578	577	-0.2
Northern Ireland	197	204	220	216	-1.8
<b>England</b>	<b>4 579</b>	<b>4 848</b>	<b>5 037</b>	<b>4 636</b>	<b>-8.0</b>
North East	137	130	132	113	-14.4
North West	277	301	308	263	-14.6
Yorkshire & The Humber	257	273	275	240	-12.7
East Midlands	329	371	388	350	-9.8
West Midlands	438	446	514	475	-7.6
Eastern	457	508	543	477	-12.2
South East (inc London)	1 083	1 192	1 254	1 196	-4.6
South West	1 601	1 627	1 623	1 522	-6.2

**Table 9: Number of organic crop and livestock producers and processors 2018<sup>(a)</sup>**

	Number of:			
	Crop producers	Crop producers and processors	Livestock producers	Livestock producers and processors
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>3 244</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>2 397</b>	<b>51</b>
Wales	609	4	517	2
Scotland	327	1	255	1
Northern Ireland	127	2	117	0
<b>England</b>	<b>2 181</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1 508</b>	<b>48</b>
North East	72	2	57	2
North West	105	6	78	4
Yorkshire and the Humber	90	2	65	2
East Midlands	147	4	109	2
West Midlands	291	9	175	6
Eastern	140	7	70	5
South East (inc London)	307	9	183	8
South West	1 029	23	771	19

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

## Organic statistics methodology and data notes

### Organic statistics methodology

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

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

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

### Note

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

### Organics overview

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

### Key elements of organic farming systems

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

### Conversion

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

### Other relevant data sources

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

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

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

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

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