

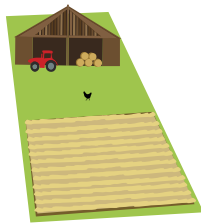


28 May 2020

Organic farming statistics United Kingdom 2019

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. The total organic area referred to, is made up of fully organic land and organic land in-conversion. The key results for 2019 are given below.

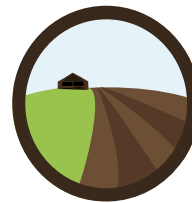
Organic land area



**485
thousand
hectares**

is farmed organically in
the UK.

Organic land use



63%

of UK organic land is
accounted for by
permanent grassland.

Organic crops



8%

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

Regional organic land use



62%

of the total UK organic
area is in England

Organic Livestock



3.1%

of the total UK cattle
population is reared
organically.

Organic operators



6.1 thousand

The number of organic
operators in the UK.

Contents

What you need to know about this release	3
National Statistics Status	3
Section 1 – Detailed Results	3
1.1 Land area farmed organically	4
1.2 Land in-conversion	5
1.3 Organic land use	5
1.4 Organic crops	6
1.5 Organic livestock	6
1.6 Number of organic producers and processors	7
Tables	7 to 17
Section 2 – Methodology and data notes	18 to 19

What you need to know about this release

Contact details

Responsible statistician: Sarah Thompson

Team: Farming Statistics - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Email: farming-statistics@defra.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 060 0170

National Statistics Status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in 2014 following a [full assessment](#) by the UK Statistics Authority against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Since the last review of these statistics in 2014, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made improvements including:

- Providing a detailed breakdown of livestock categories following user feedback
- Improved the data quality by updating guidance for data providers and carrying out enhanced validation checks on data received

For general enquiries about National Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service:

Tel: 0845 601 3034

Email: info@statistics.gov.uk.

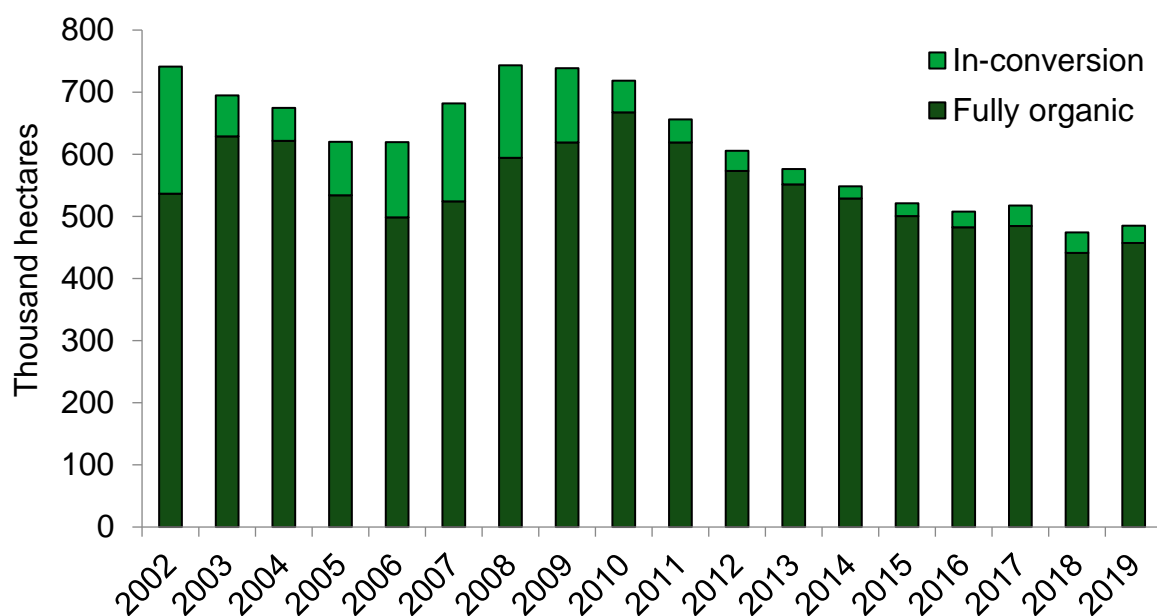
You can find National Statistics on the internet [on the Gov.uk website](#).

Section 1 – Detailed Results

1.1 Land area farmed organically

In 2019, the United Kingdom had a total area of 485 thousand hectares of land farmed organically (i.e. the fully converted area and area under conversion), an increase of 2.4% compared to 2018. This increase has been driven by the rise in fully organic land which has increased by 3.6% compared to 2018, this has more than offset the decrease in the area of in-conversion land. Since 2008 when the area of land farmed organically peaked, the organically farmed area has declined by 34%. 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



1.2 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 15% decrease in 2019, the first decrease since 2014.

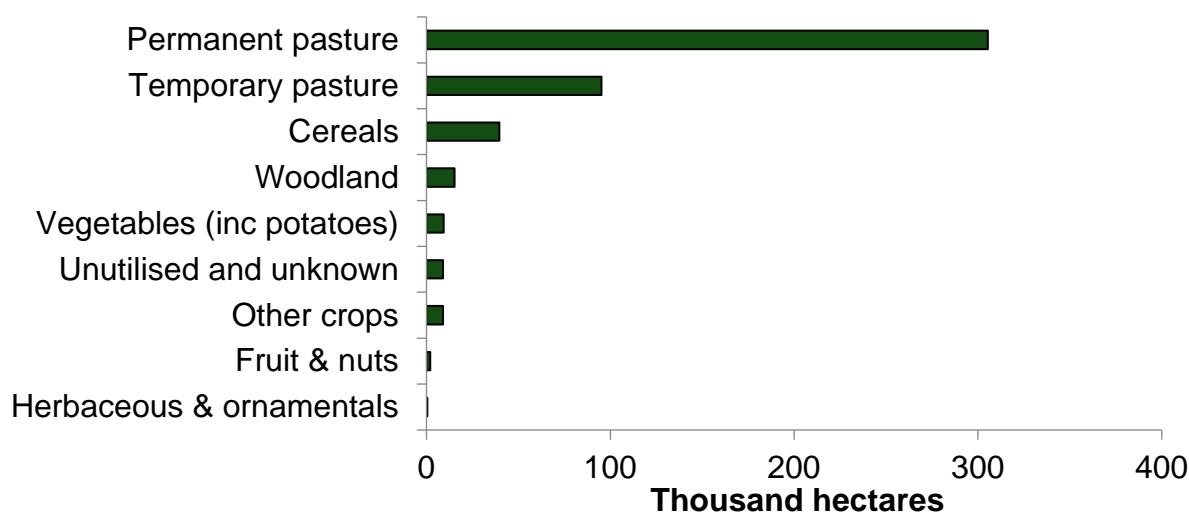
Figure 2: Land in-conversion as a proportion of the total area farmed organically



1.3 Organic land use

Permanent pasture accounts for the biggest share of the organic area (63%) followed by temporary pasture (20%) and cereals (8%). The full breakdown of organic land use is shown in Figure 3 and Table 2. The fall in unknown area reflects the continued data cleaning being carried out to assign crop types.

Figure 3: Organic land use in the United Kingdom: 2019^(a)

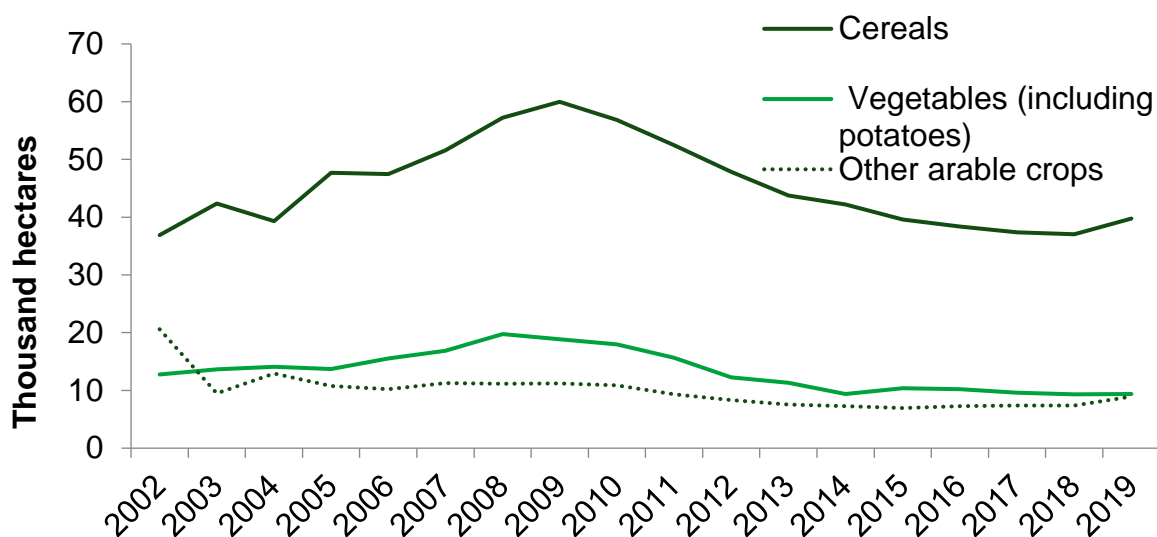


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

1.4 Organic crops

The three main crop types grown organically are cereals, vegetables including potatoes, and other arable crops. All have seen modest increases this year, mirroring the increase seen in the land area farmed organically.

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



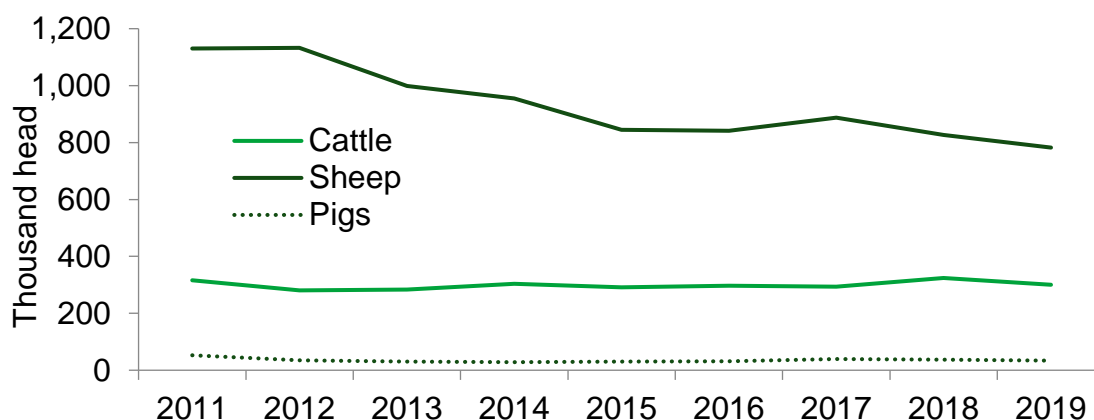
(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

1.5 Organic Livestock

The number of total poultry farmed organically in the United Kingdom increased by 2.5% between 2018 and 2019, rising to almost 3.5 million birds. However, this equates to 1.9% of the total UK poultry population.

In the red meat sector (see Figure 5), sheep reared organically decreased by 5.4% to 782 thousand animals in 2019. Pigs reared organically also saw a decrease of 9.3% from 37 thousand animals in 2018 to 34 thousand animals in 2019. Organically reared cattle numbers fell from 324 thousand animals in 2018 to 301 thousand animals in 2019, a decrease of 7.2%.

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

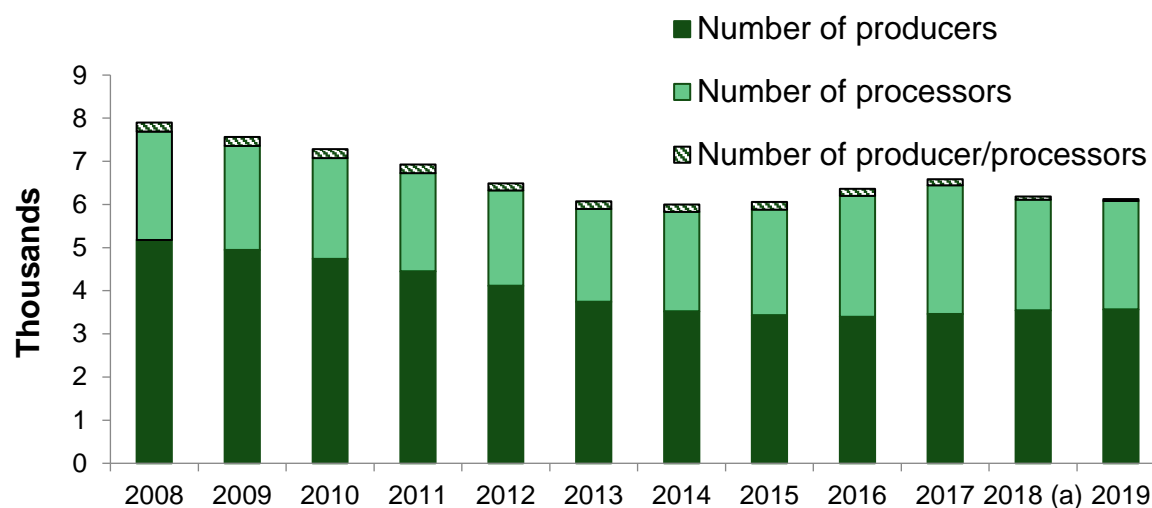


(a) Includes fully organic only

1.6 Number of organic producers and processors in the United Kingdom

In 2019, there were just over 6.1 thousand producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in the United Kingdom. This is a decrease of 1% compared to 2018.

Figure 6: Organic producers and processors in the United Kingdom



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

Table 1.1: Land area farmed organically United Kingdom 2016 to 2019, thousand hectares

	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change 2019/2018
In conversion	25.2	32.6	32.9	28.1	-14.7
Fully organic	482.7	484.8	441.1	457.1	3.6
Total organic area	507.9	517.4	474.0	485.2	2.4

Table 1.2: Land area farmed organically England 2016 to 2019, thousand hectares

	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change 2019/2018
In conversion	14.7	19.8	20.3	19.0	-6.3
Fully organic	281.8	280.5	269.0	281.6	4.7
Total organic area	296.5	300.3	289.3	300.6	3.9

Table 2.1: Fully organic and in conversion land use 2016 to 2019 United Kingdom(a), thousand hectares

	2016	2017^(c)	2018^(c)	2019	% change 2019/2018
Cereals	38.4	37.4	37.1	39.7	7.2
Other crops	7.3	7.4	7.4	8.9	21.3
Fruit & nuts	1.9	1.8	1.7	2.0	15.7
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	10.2	9.6	9.3	9.4	0.7
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.8	5.9	6.7	0.4	-94.0
Temporary pasture	92.1	92.3	61.8	95.1	53.9
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	335.0	333.3	330.1	305.4	-7.5
Woodland	7.4	9.0	7.6	15.2	100.9
Unutilised land	5.4	5.5	4.0	4.5	14.5
Unknown ^(b)	4.5	15.2	8.4	4.5	-47.0
Total	507.9	517.4	474.0	485.2	2.4

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

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

(c) In 2019 data issues have been identified with the detailed split of crops provided for 2017 and 2018. The overall totals for 2017 and 2018 remain unaffected but the breakdowns are subject to a degree of error and therefore should be treated with caution.

Table 2.2: Fully organic and in conversion land use 2016 to 2019 England^(a), thousand hectares

	2016	2017^(c)	2018^(c)	2019	% change 2019/2018
Cereals	32.1	31.3	31.4	33.8	7.5
Other crops	5.4	5.4	5.5	7.0	25.8
Fruit & nuts	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.9	15.7
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	8.5	8.0	7.7	7.8	0.5
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.0	5.2	5.8	0.3	-94.0
Temporary pasture	75.0	75.5	51.9	76.8	47.9
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	155.6	153.9	172.2	154.9	-10.1
Woodland	5.3	5.3	4.7	11.2	138.6
Unutilised land	4.0	4.0	2.7	2.9	7.0
Unknown ^(b)	3.8	10.1	5.6	4.1	-26.6
Total	296.5	300.3	289.3	300.6	3.9

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

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

(c) In 2019 data issues have been identified with the detailed split of crops provided for 2017 and 2018. The overall totals for 2017 and 2018 remain unaffected but the breakdowns are subject to a degree of error and therefore should be treated with caution

**Table 3.1: Detailed fully organic and in conversion land use 2016 to 2019
United Kingdom, thousand hectares**

	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2019 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
Cereals	3.0	36.8	39.7	3,211	1.2
Wheat	0.9	8.3	9.2	1,816	0.5
Barley	1.5	12.0	13.5	1,162	1.2
Oats	0.5	13.3	13.8	182	7.6
Other cereals	0.1	3.1	3.2	51	6.3
Other arable crops	0.9	8.0	8.9	1,196	0.7
Sugar beet	0.1	0.0	0.1	108	0.0
Fodder, forage and silage	0.8	7.3	8.0	99	8.1
Maize, oilseeds and protein crops	0.1	0.7	0.8	989	0.1
Vegetables	0.9	7.3	8.2	115	7.1
Potatoes	0.2	1.0	1.2	144	0.8
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.9	2.0	35	5.7
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.0	0.4	0.4	11	3.5
Temporary pasture	6.1	89.0	95.1	1,193	8.0
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	15.4	290.0	305.4	10,193	3.0
Woodland	0.8	14.4	15.2	1,033	1.5
Unutilised land	0.4	4.2	4.5	na	na
Unknown ^(b)	0.2	4.2	4.5	na	na
Total	28.1	457.1	485.2	na	na

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2019. Excludes common land.

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

na no comparable June survey data is available

**Table 3.2: Detailed fully organic and in conversion land use 2016 to 2019
England, thousand hectares**

	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2019 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
Cereals	2.6	31.2	33.8	2,695	1.3
Wheat	0.8	7.8	8.7	1,677	0.5
Barley	1.1	9.7	10.8	832	1.3
Oats	0.5	10.9	11.4	143	8.0
Other cereals	0.1	2.8	2.9	43	6.6
Other arable crops	0.8	6.1	7.0	1,107	0.6
Sugar beet	0.1	0.0	0.1	108	0.0
Fodder, forage and silage	0.7	5.5	6.1	80	7.6
Maize, oilseeds and protein crops	0.1	0.7	0.8	919	0.1
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.8	1.9	32	5.9
Vegetables	0.8	6.2	6.9	94	7.3
Potatoes	0.1	0.7	0.8	109	0.8
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.0	0.3	0.3	10	3.5
Temporary pasture	5.2	71.6	76.8	696	11.0
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	8.3	146.6	154.9	3,736	4.1
Woodland	0.6	10.6	11.2	379	2.9
Unutilised land	0.3	2.7	2.9	na	na
Unknown ^(b)	0.2	3.9	4.1	na	na
Total	19.0	281.6	300.6	na	na

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2019. Excludes common land.

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

na no comparable June survey data is available.

Table 4: Area farmed organically by country and English region 2019, thousand hectares

	Area in-conversion	Fully Organic area	Total Organic area	Total agricultural area at June 2019 ^(a)	Total Organic area as % of June area
United Kingdom	28.1	457.1	485.2	17,652	2.7
Wales	1.8	82.6	84.4	1,764	4.8
Scotland	6.8	85.3	92.1	5,660	1.6
Northern Ireland	0.5	7.6	8.1	1,023	0.8
England	19.0	281.6	300.6	9,206	3.3
North East	1.7	22.3	24.1	624	3.9
North West	0.5	11.5	12.1	972	1.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.7	10.3	11.0	1,136	1.0
East Midlands	1.6	13.7	15.2	1,192	1.3
West Midlands	2.0	30.3	32.2	944	3.4
Eastern	2.1	16.4	18.6	1,411	1.3
South East (inc London)	2.3	42.8	45.1	1,137	4.0
South West	8.0	134.3	142.2	1,789	8.0

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2019. Excludes common land.

Table 5.1: Number of livestock farmed organically United Kingdom 2016 to 2019 (a), thousand head

	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change 2019/2018
Cattle	296.4	294.0	324.1	300.8	-7.2
Sheep	840.8	887.0	826.6	782.2	-5.4
Pigs	31.5	39.1	37.4	34.0	-9.3
Poultry	2,821.2	3,059.9	3,380.9	3,464.1	2.5
Other livestock ^(b)	3.4	2.6	6.0	6.0	0.3

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

Table 5.2: Number of livestock farmed organically England 2016 to 2019 ^(a), thousand head

	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change 2019/2018
Cattle	219.3	217.3	240.6	220.8	-8.2
Sheep	405.9	421.2	374.0	350.6	-6.2
Pigs	29.4	37.2	29.2	30.6	4.8
Poultry	1,699.2	2,002.0	2,038.2	2,071.6	1.6
Other livestock ^(b)	2.8	2.3	4.8	5.0	4.8

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

Table 6.1: Detailed organic livestock numbers United Kingdom 2019, thousand head

	Total organic livestock^(a)	Total livestock at June 2019^(b)	Total organic livestock as % of June livestock
Cattle	300.8	9,739	3.1
for slaughter	88.2	3,854	2.3
Dairy cows	89.8	3,223	2.8
Other cattle	122.7	2,662	4.6
Sheep	782.2	33,580	2.3
Breeding females	389.7	16,035	2.4
Other sheep	392.5	17,545	2.2
Pigs	34.0	5,078	0.7
Fattening pigs	20.6	4,569	0.5
Breeding sows	3.4	413	0.8
Other pigs	9.9	96	10.3
Poultry	3,464.1	186,982	1.9
Broilers	1,767.6	121,500	1.5
Laying hens	1,584.3	41,535	3.8
Other poultry	112.2	23,947	0.5
Other livestock	6.0	na	na
Farmed deer	3.4	38	9.1
Goats	0.6	111	0.6
Horses	1.1	250	0.4
Others ^(c)	0.9	na	na

(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

na June figures are not provided for other livestock as the type of animals are not comparable

Table 6.2: Detailed organic livestock numbers England 2019, thousand head

	Total organic livestock^(a)	Total livestock at June 2019^(b)	Total organic livestock as % of June livestock
Cattle	220.8	5,280	4.2
for slaughter	58.7	1,909	3.1
Dairy cows	70.9	1,923	3.7
Other cattle	91.1	1,448	6.3
Sheep	350.6	15,390	2.3
Breeding females	179.4	7,234	2.5
Other sheep	171.2	8,156	2.1
Pigs	30.6	4,060	0.8
Fattening pigs	19.1	3,650	0.5
Breeding sows	3.0	327	0.9
Other pigs	8.6	83	10.4
Poultry	2,071.6	138,850	1.5
Broilers	911.2	95,150	1.0
Laying hens	1,103.7	25,388	4.3
Other poultry	56.7	18,312	0.3
Other livestock	5.0	na	na
Farmed deer	2.7	22	12.6
Goats	0.6	89	0.6
Horses	0.9	162	0.6
Others ^(c)	0.8	na	na

(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

na June figures are not provided for other livestock as the type of animals are not comparable

Table 7: Number of organic producers and processors 2019

	Number of producers only	Number of producer/processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
United Kingdom	3,568	49	2,512	6,129
Wales	611	6	120	737
Scotland	383	1	175	559
Northern Ireland	161	2	43	206
England	2,413	40	2,174	4,627
North East	79	1	36	116
North West	118	5	151	274
Yorkshire and the Humber	103	1	142	246
East Midlands	171	3	179	353
West Midlands	307	5	148	460
Eastern	185	6	266	457
South East (inc London)	373	4	840	1,217
South West	1,077	15	412	1,504

Table 8: Number of organic producers and processors 2016 to 2019

	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change 2019/2018
United Kingdom	6,363	6,586	6,188	6,129	-1.0
Wales	751	751	759	737	-2.9
Scotland	560	578	577	559	-3.1
Northern Ireland	204	220	216	206	-4.6
England	4,848	5,037	4,636	4,627	-0.2
North East	130	132	113	116	2.7
North West	301	308	263	274	4.2
Yorkshire & The Humber	273	275	240	246	2.5
East Midlands	371	388	350	353	0.9
West Midlands	446	514	475	460	-3.2
Eastern	508	543	477	457	-4.2
South East (inc London)	1,192	1,254	1,196	1,217	1.8
South West	1,627	1,623	1,522	1,504	-1.2

Table 9: Number of organic crop and livestock producers and processors 2019^(a)

	Number of:			
	Crop producers	Crop producers and processors	Livestock producers	Livestock producers and processors
United Kingdom	3,294	46	2,390	32
Wales	596	5	511	2
Scotland	340	1	265	1
Northern Ireland	134	2	117	0
England	2,224	38	1,497	29
North East	75	1	56	1
North West	110	4	75	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	93	1	67	1
East Midlands	159	3	115	1
West Midlands	290	5	168	5
Eastern	155	5	76	3
South East (inc London)	332	4	184	3
South West	1,010	15	756	12

(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, data notes and feedback

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: [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 [European statistics](#)

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.

Feedback

We welcome feedback and any thoughts to improve the publication further. Please send any feedback to: organic-stats@defra.gov.uk

Suggested questions to help you structure your feedback are below but all feedback is welcome:

- How relevant is the current content of the publication to your needs as a user?
- What purpose do you require the data for?
- Which data do you find most useful?
- Is there any content that you did not find useful?
- Do you have any suggestions for further development of this release; including additional content, presentation and any other thoughts?