



24 June 2021

Organic farming statistics United Kingdom 2020

This release presents final estimates for 2020 of the land area farmed organically, crop areas, livestock numbers and numbers of organic producers and processors in the United Kingdom. These estimates replace those published on 27 May 2021 and include new livestock data not available at the time of the first publication.

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.

Key findings

- Organic land area – 489 thousand hectares is farmed organically in the UK.
- Organic land use – 62% of UK organic land is accounted for by permanent grassland.
- Regional organic land use – 62% of the total UK organic area is in England.
- Organic crops – 9% of the total UK organic area is used to grow cereals.
- Organic livestock – 3.2% of the total UK cattle population is reared organically.
- Organic operators – there are 5.8 thousand organic operators in the UK.

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What you need to know about this release

Contact details

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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.

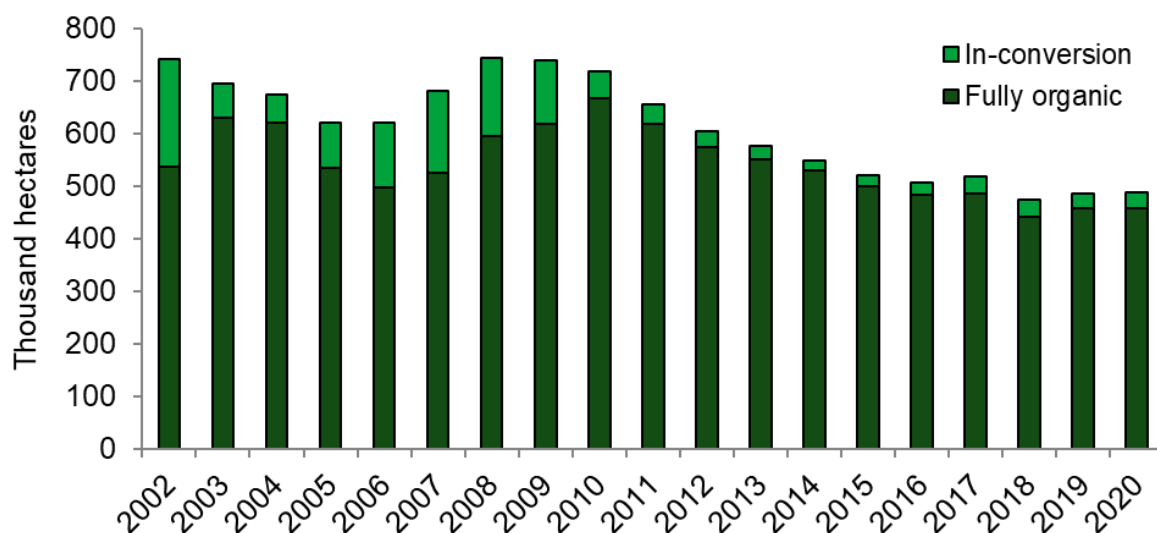
You can find National Statistics on the internet [on the Gov.uk website](#).

Section 1 – Detailed Results

1.1 Land area farmed organically

In 2020, the United Kingdom had a total area of 489 thousand hectares of land farmed organically (i.e. the fully converted area and area under conversion), an increase of 0.8% compared to 2019. This increase was entirely driven by a 12% rise in the area of in-conversion land compared to last year. Since 2008, when the area of land farmed organically peaked, the organically farmed area has declined by 34%. The organically farmed area represents 2.8% of the total farmed area on agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom.

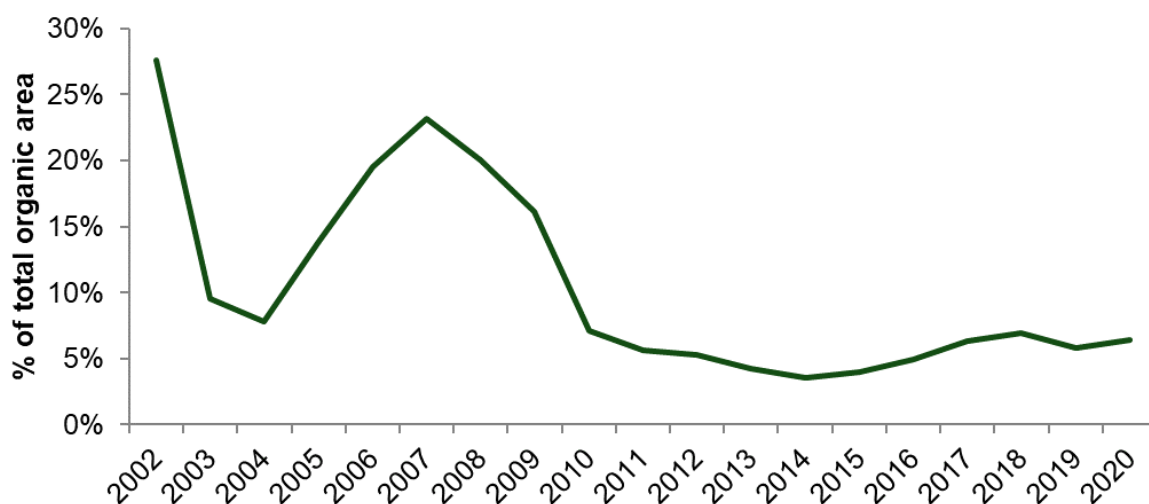
Figure 1: Land area farmed organically in the United Kingdom



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. With the exception of 2019, the area of land in conversion has seen a modest increase every year since 2014. 2020 has followed this trend with an area increase of 12% compared to 2019.

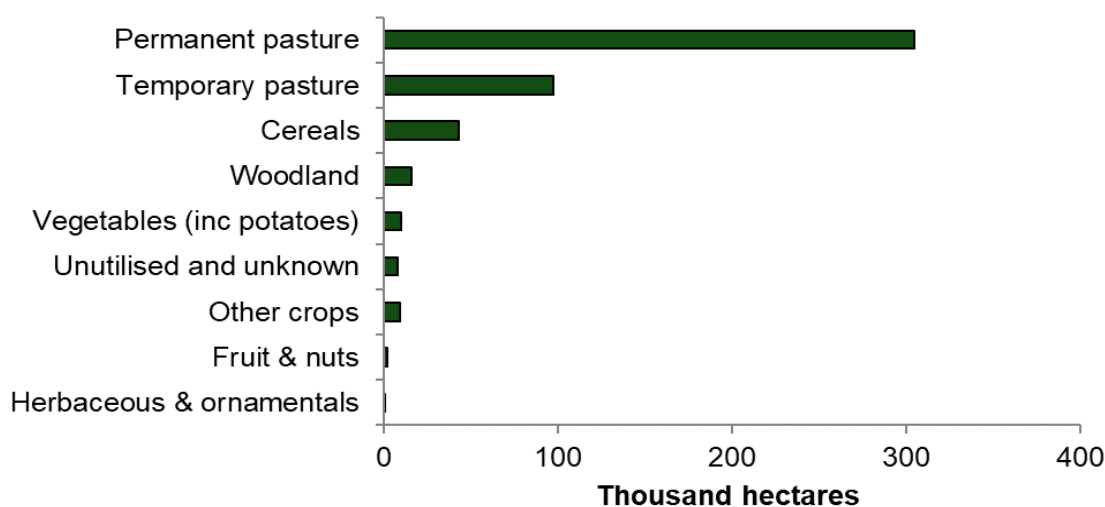
Figure 2: Land in-conversion as a proportion of the total area farmed organically



1.3 Organic land use

Permanent pasture accounts for the biggest share of the organic area (62%) followed by temporary pasture (20%) and cereals (9%). The full breakdown of organic land use is shown in figure 3 and table 2.1.

Figure 3: Organic land use in the United Kingdom: 2020^(a)

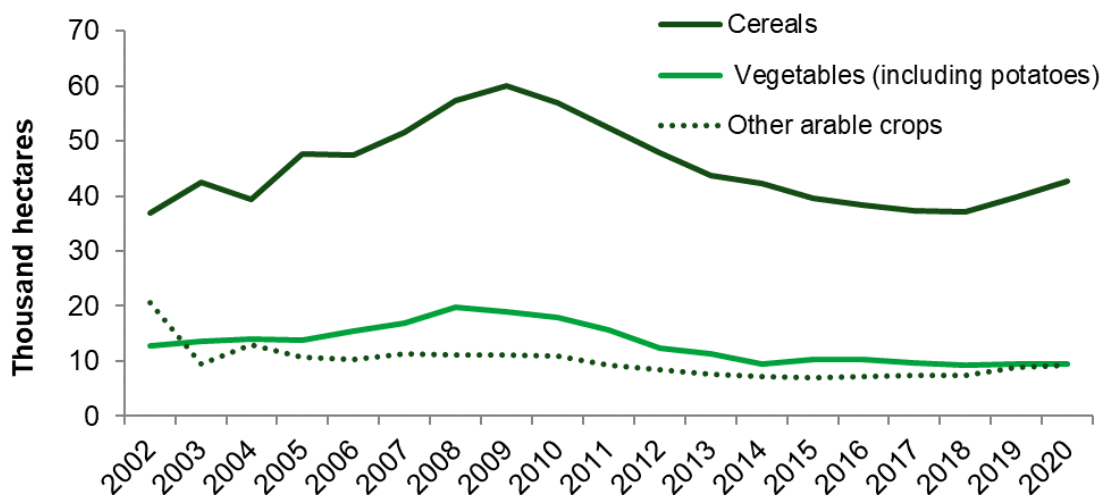


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

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)

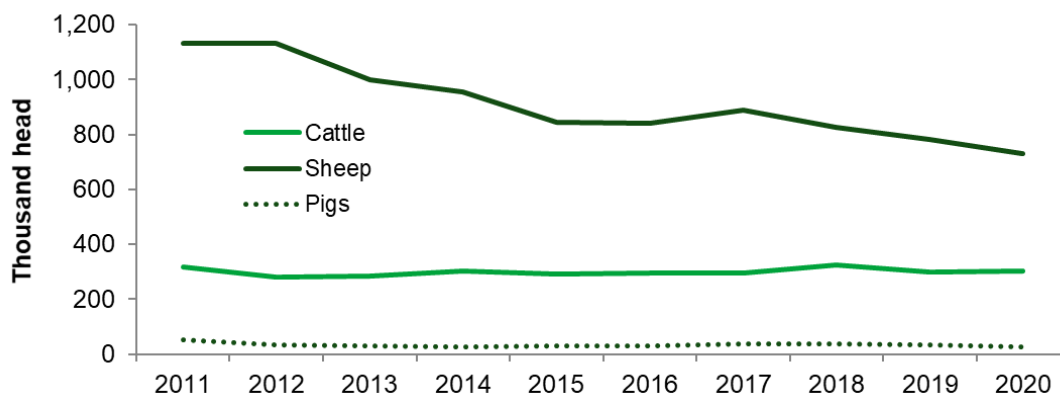


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

1.5 Organic Livestock

Figure 5 shows that in the organic red meat sector, sheep reared organically decreased by 6.5% to 731 thousand animals and accounted for 2.2% of the total UK flock. Pigs reared organically decreased by 20% to 27 thousand animals and accounted for 0.5% of the total UK pig herd. Organically reared cattle numbers increased by 1.0% to 304 thousand animals and accounted for 3.2% of the total UK herd.

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



(a) Includes fully organic only

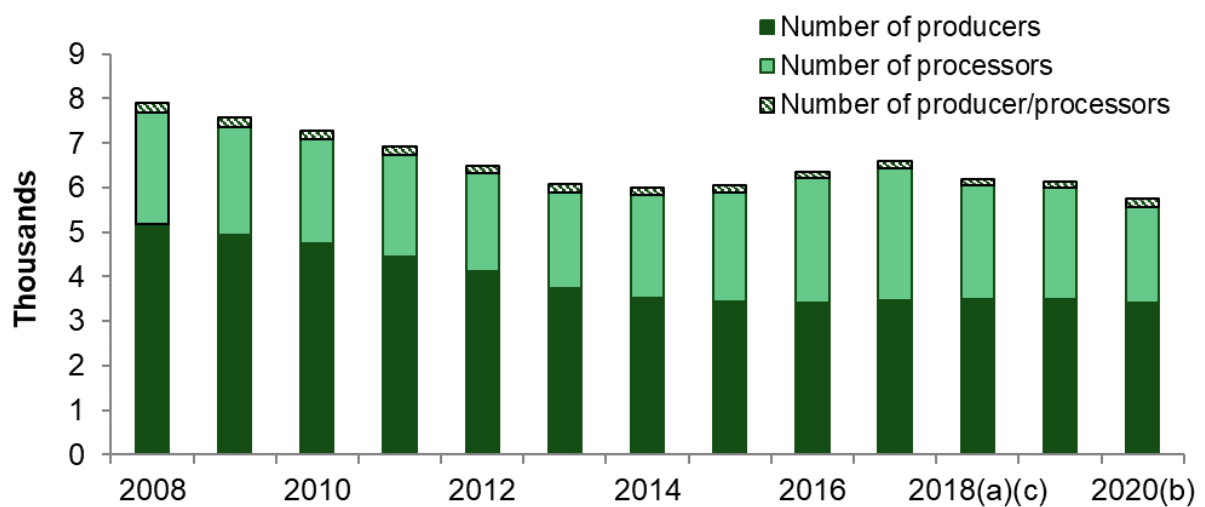
The number of total poultry farmed organically in the United Kingdom increased by 11% between 2019 and 2020, rising to just over 3.8 million birds. This equates to 2.1% of the total UK poultry population.

1.6 Number of organic producers and processors in the United Kingdom

In 2020, there were just over 5.7 thousand producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in the United Kingdom.

This figure is not directly comparable with previous years due to a change in methodology of how producers are classified by some control bodies, see footnote (b) in figure 6.

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.
- (b) In 2020 work was carried out by some control bodies to group existing operators together, so they effectively became 'one operator' whilst previously they may have been separate operators with separate licences.
- (c) Amendments have been made to 2018 and 2019 data following revisions to the number of organic producers and organic producer/processors.

Table 1.1: Land area farmed organically United Kingdom 2017 to 2020, thousand hectares

Item	2017	2018	2019	2020	% change 2020/2019
In conversion	32.6	32.9	28.1	31.3	11.6
Fully organic	484.8	441.1	457.1	457.6	0.1
Total organic area	517.4	474.0	485.2	489.0	0.8

Table 1.2: Land area farmed organically England 2017 to 2020, thousand hectares

Item	2017	2018	2019	2020	% change 2020/2019
In conversion	19.8	20.3	19.0	20.4	7.5
Fully organic	280.5	269.0	281.6	281.3	-0.1
Total organic area	300.3	289.3	300.6	301.8	0.4

Table 2.1: Fully organic and in conversion land use United Kingdom(a) 2017 to 2020, thousand hectares

Item	2017 ^(c)	2018 ^(c)	2019	2020	% change 2020/2019
Cereals	37.4	37.1	39.7	42.7	7.5
Other crops	7.4	7.4	8.9	9.2	3.2
Fruit & nuts	1.8	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.0
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	9.6	9.3	9.4	9.5	1.2
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.9	6.7	0.4	0.4	-6.9
Temporary pasture	92.3	61.8	95.1	97.1	2.0
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	333.3	330.1	305.4	304.5	-0.3
Woodland	9.0	7.6	15.2	16.0	5.0
Unutilised land	5.5	4.0	4.5	2.8	-38.7
Unknown ^(b)	15.2	8.4	4.5	4.9	8.8
Total	517.4	474.0	485.2	489.0	0.8

(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 were 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 England^(a) 2017 to 2020, thousand hectares

Item	2017^(c)	2018^(c)	2019	2020	% change 2020/2019
Cereals	31.3	31.4	33.8	36.4	7.6
Other crops	5.4	5.5	7.0	7.3	5.1
Fruit & nuts	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.9	2.6
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	8.0	7.7	7.8	7.7	-1.1
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.2	5.8	0.3	0.3	-13.2
Temporary pasture	75.5	51.9	76.8	77.6	1.1
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	153.9	172.2	154.9	153.3	-1.0
Woodland	5.3	4.7	11.2	11.4	2.3
Unutilised land	4.0	2.7	2.9	1.4	-51.0
Unknown ^(b)	10.1	5.6	4.1	4.4	7.0
Total	300.3	289.3	300.6	301.8	0.4

(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 were 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 United Kingdom 2020, thousand hectares

Item	Area in-conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2020 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
Cereals	3.7	39.0	42.7	3,038	1.4
Wheat	0.7	9.3	10.1	1,387	0.7
Barley	1.7	10.4	12.1	1,388	0.9
Oats	0.6	15.0	15.6	210	7.4
Other cereals	0.6	4.3	5.0	53	9.3
Other arable crops	1.5	7.7	9.2	1,134	0.8
Sugar beet	0.3	0.0	0.3	111	0.2
Fodder, forage and silage	0.9	7.1	8.0	112	7.2
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.3	0.6	0.9	911	0.1
Vegetables	0.7	7.4	8.1	118	6.9
Potatoes	0.1	1.3	1.4	142	1.0
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.9	2.0	34	5.9
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	0.3	0.4	11	3.2
Temporary pasture	6.5	90.5	97.1	1,181	8.2
Permanent pasture (excl rough grazing)	14.0	243.4	257.4	10,042	2.6
Rough grazing	3.4	43.7	47.1	3,924	1.2
Woodland	0.9	15.1	16.0	1,065	1.5
Unutilised land	0.2	2.6	2.8	na	na
Unknown ^(b)	0.2	4.7	4.9	na	na
Total	31.3	457.6	489.0	na	na

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2020. 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 England 2020, thousand hectares

Item	Area in-conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2020 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
Cereals	3.0	33.4	36.4	2,526	1.4
Wheat	0.7	8.8	9.5	1,265	0.8
Barley	1.2	8.0	9.2	1,045	0.9
Oats	0.5	12.5	13.0	169	7.7
Other cereals	0.6	4.1	4.7	46	10.1
Other arable crops	1.3	6.0	7.3	1,057	0.7
Sugar beet	0.3	0.0	0.3	111	0.2
Fodder, forage and silage	0.8	5.5	6.3	92	6.8
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.3	0.5	0.7	854	0.1
Fruit & nuts	0.1	1.8	1.9	31	6.2
Vegetables	0.6	6.1	6.6	96	6.9
Potatoes	0.0	1.0	1.0	108	1.0
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	0.2	0.3	10	3.1
Temporary pasture	5.8	71.8	77.6	710	10.9
Permanent pasture (excl rough grazing)	7.9	140.5	148.5	3,679	4.0
Rough grazing	0.7	4.2	4.8	437	1.1
Woodland	0.6	10.8	11.4	385	3.0
Unutilised land	0.1	1.3	1.4	na	na
Unknown ^(b)	0.2	4.2	4.4	na	na
Total	20.4	281.3	301.8	na	na

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2020. 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 2020, thousand hectares

Item	Area in-conversion	Fully Organic area	Total Organic area	Total agricultural area at June 2020 ^{(a) (b)}	Total Organic area as % of June area
United Kingdom	31.3	457.6	489.0	17,434	2.8
Wales	1.8	81.3	83.1	1,698	4.9
Scotland	8.7	87.0	95.7	5,640	1.7
Northern Ireland	0.3	8.0	8.4	1,016	0.8
England	20.4	281.3	301.8	9,080	3.3
North East	0.4	22.2	22.6	na	
North West	1.5	11.0	12.5	na	
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.5	10.0	10.6	na	
East Midlands	1.3	11.2	12.5	na	
West Midlands	2.6	32.0	34.6	na	
Eastern	2.6	15.6	18.2	na	
South East (inc London)	2.8	41.2	44.0	na	
South West	8.7	138.0	146.7	na	

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2020. Excludes common land.

(b) In 2020 a smaller scale June Survey was run and as a result no regional data is available.

Table 5.1: Number of livestock farmed organically United Kingdom 2017 to 2020^(a), thousand head

Item	2017	2018	2019	2020^(c)	% change 2020/2019
Cattle	294.0	324.1	300.8	303.9	1.0
Sheep	887.0	826.6	782.2	731.2	-6.5
Pigs	39.1	37.4	34.0	27.2	-19.8
Poultry	3,059.9	3,380.9	3,464.1	3,836.6	10.8
Other livestock ^(b)	2.6	6.0	6.0	6.5	8.8

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

(c) 2020 livestock data has been included and the numbers are now final

Table 5.2: Number of livestock farmed organically England 2017 to 2020^(a), thousand head

Item	2017	2018	2019	2020^(c)	% change 2020/2019
Cattle	217.3	240.6	220.8	220.4	-0.2
Sheep	421.2	374.0	350.6	312.0	-11.0
Pigs	37.2	29.2	30.6	23.9	-22.1
Poultry	2,002.0	2,038.2	2,071.6	2,461.5	18.8
Other livestock ^(b)	2.3	4.8	5.0	5.0	-1.3

(a) Data relates to fully organic only

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

(c) 2020 livestock data has been included and the numbers are now final

Table 6.1: Detailed organic livestock numbers United Kingdom 2020, thousand head

Item	Total organic livestock^{(a)(d)}	Total livestock at June 2020^(b)	Total organic livestock as % of June livestock
Cattle	303.9	9,615	3.2
for slaughter	122.0	3,824	3.2
Dairy cows	60.0	3,185	1.9
Other cattle	121.8	2,606	4.7
Sheep	731.2	32,697	2.2
Breeding females	399.6	15,370	2.6
Other sheep	331.7	17,328	1.9
Pigs	27.2	5,055	0.5
Fattening pigs	16.3	4,553	0.4
Breeding sows	1.6	402	0.4
Other pigs	9.3	99	9.3
Poultry	3,836.6	181,957	2.1
Broilers	1,708.0	118,388	1.4
Laying hens	2,031.7	39,758	5.1
Other poultry	97.0	23,810	0.4
Other livestock	6.5	na	na
Farmed deer	4.2	37	11.2
Goats	0.6	112	0.5
Horses	1.0	235	0.4
Others ^(c)	0.7	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

(d) 2020 livestock data has been included and the numbers are now final

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 2020, thousand head

Item	Total organic livestock^{(a)(d)}	Total livestock at June 2020^(b)	Total organic livestock as % of June livestock
Cattle	220.4	5,168	4.3
for slaughter	83.5	1,887	4.4
Dairy cows	47.8	1,889	2.5
Other cattle	89.1	1,393	6.4
Sheep	312.0	15,027	2.1
Breeding females	183.5	6,977	2.6
Other sheep	128.5	8,049	1.6
Pigs	23.9	4,021	0.6
Fattening pigs	13.3	3,616	0.4
Breeding sows	1.6	319	0.5
Other pigs	9.0	86	10.4
Poultry	2,461.5	134,312	1.8
Broilers	879.6	91,968	1.0
Laying hens	1,515.8	24,472	6.2
Other poultry	66.2	17,872	0.4
Other livestock	5.0	na	na
Farmed deer	2.9	21	13.9
Goats	0.5	90	0.6
Horses	0.9	153	0.6
Others ^(c)	0.7	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

(d) 2020 livestock data has been included and the numbers are now final

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 by country and English region, 2020^(a)

Item	Number of producers only	Number of producer/processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
United Kingdom	3,407	197	2,150	5,754
Wales	593	15	93	701
Scotland	388	11	142	541
Northern Ireland	162	6	37	205
England	2,264	165	1,878	4,307
North East	71	4	42	117
North West	110	12	119	241
Yorkshire and the Humber	95	8	124	227
East Midlands	156	9	163	328
West Midlands	307	16	145	468
Eastern	174	9	236	419
South East (inc London)	329	39	724	1,092
South West	1,022	68	325	1,415

(a) In 2020 work was carried out by some control bodies to group existing operators together, so they effectively became 'one operator' whilst previously they may have been separate operators with separate licences.

Table 8: Number of organic producers and processors by country and English region, 2017 to 2020

Item	2017	2018	2019	2020 ^(a)	% change 2020/2019
United Kingdom	6,586	6,188	6,129	5,754	-6.1
Wales	751	759	737	701	-4.9
Scotland	578	577	559	541	-3.2
Northern Ireland	220	216	206	205	-0.5
England	5,037	4,636	4,627	4,307	-6.9
North East	132	113	116	117	0.9
North West	308	263	274	241	-12.0
Yorkshire & The Humber	275	240	246	227	-7.7
East Midlands	388	350	353	328	-7.1
West Midlands	514	475	460	468	1.7
Eastern	543	477	457	419	-8.3
South East (inc London)	1,254	1,196	1,217	1,092	-10.3
South West	1,623	1,522	1,504	1,415	-5.9

(a) In 2020 work was carried out by some control bodies to group existing operators together, so they effectively became 'one operator' whilst previously they may have been separate operators with separate licences.

Table 9: Number of organic crop and livestock producers and processors by country and English region, 2020^(a) ^(b)

Item	Number of:			
	Crop producers	Crop producers and processors	Livestock producers	Livestock producers and processors
United Kingdom	3,175	185	2,327	121
Wales	579	13	498	10
Scotland	354	10	283	8
Northern Ireland	135	6	123	3
England	2,107	156	1,423	100
North East	67	4	52	4
North West	101	11	76	9
Yorkshire and the Humber	87	7	60	4
East Midlands	143	9	112	4
West Midlands	296	15	170	10
Eastern	145	8	75	5
South East (inc London)	295	36	165	19
South West	973	66	713	45

(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.

(b) In 2020 work was carried out by some control bodies to group existing operators together, so they effectively became 'one operator' whilst previously they may have been separate operators with separate licences.

Section 2 - 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.

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 UK organic control body may be legally sold as 'organic' within the UK. The inputs and practices used in organic farming are strictly regulated in accordance with UK Regulations.

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

The information is heavily used by a broad range of people and organisations within the UK and also international organisations. The data is important to the government and the organic certification bodies in the UK, who provide the information used to compile the statistics, to formulate policies and provide support to organic farming. Other users include farming organisations, research bodies, 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?