



19 May 2016

Organic farming statistics 2015

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 2015, the United Kingdom had a total area of 521 thousand hectares of land farmed organically, down from 549 thousand hectares in 2014. The area in-conversion expressed as a percentage of the total organic area rose slightly in 2015, the first rise since 2007.

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 slightly in 2015 to 6,056. The number of producers only and producer/processors continue to decline. The number of processors only rose for the second year running and now stands at 2,454, 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-2015>

Methodology (Page 11)

Methodology notes and links to other relevant data sources.

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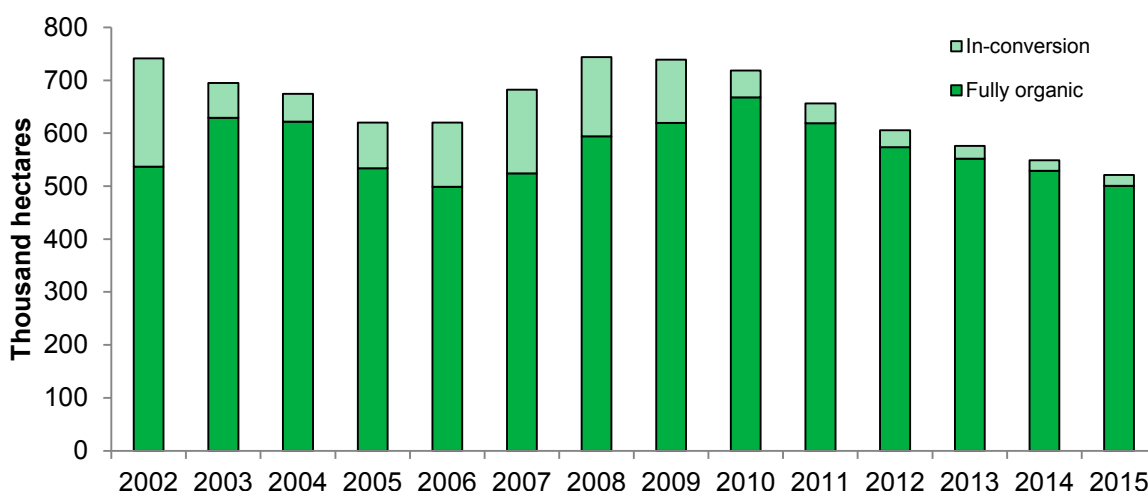
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In this statistical release, the total organic area referred to is made up of fully organic land and organic land in-conversion.

Land area farmed organically

In 2015, the United Kingdom had a total area of 521 thousand hectares of land farmed organically (i.e. the fully converted area and area under conversion), down from 549 thousand hectares in 2014. Since 2008 when the area of land farmed organically peaked, the organically farmed area has declined by 30%. The organically farmed area represents 3.0% 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 2015, the first rise since 2007.

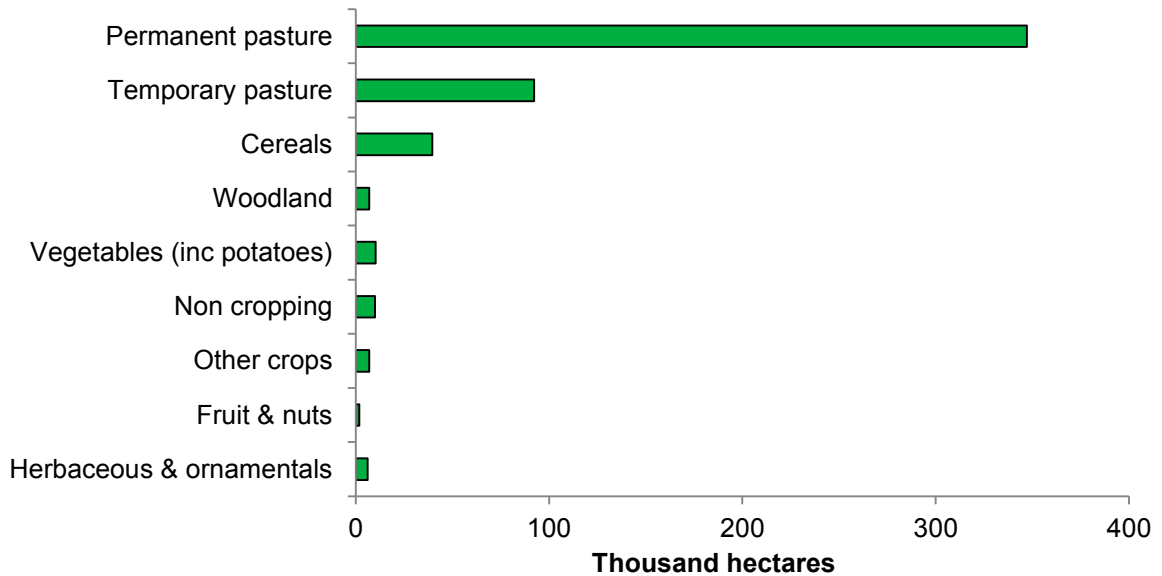
Figure 2: Land in-conversion as a % of the total area farmed organically



Organic land use

Permanent pasture accounts for the biggest share of the organic area (67%) followed by temporary pasture (18%) and cereals (8%).

Figure 3: Organic land use: United Kingdom: 2015^(a)

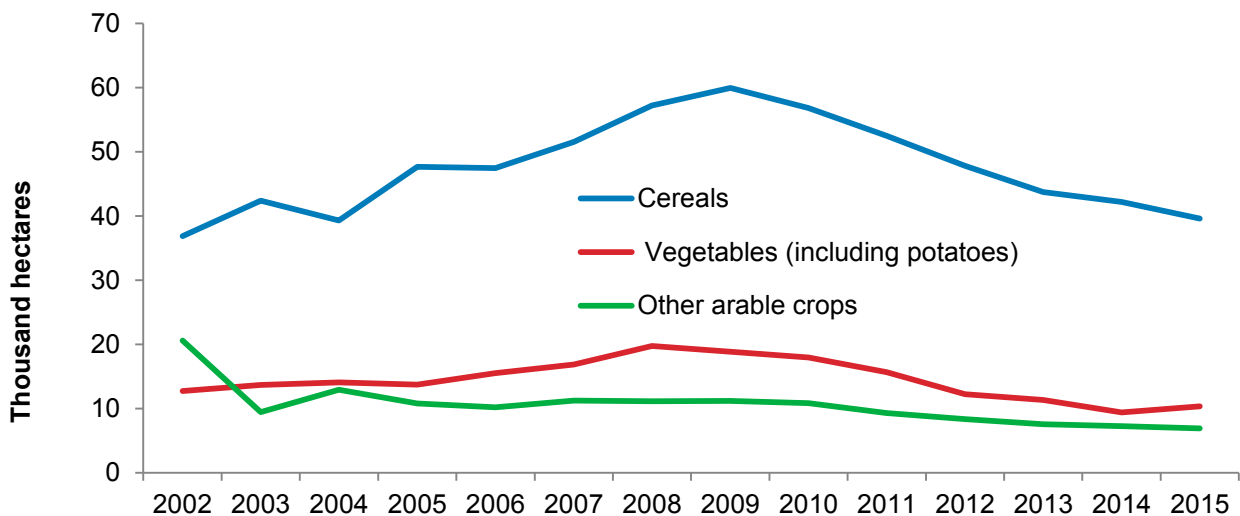


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

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)

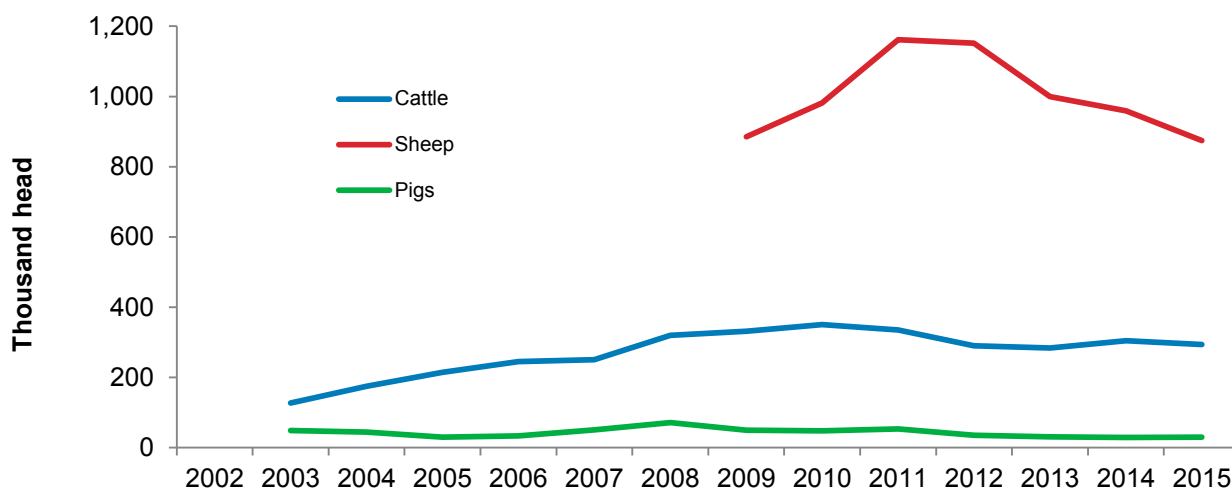


(a) Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion

Organic livestock

Poultry continues to be the most popular livestock type farmed organically in the United Kingdom, rising by 6.7% in 2015 to just over 2.5 million birds. In the red meat sector (see Figure 5), despite a fall of 8.8% sheep remained the most popular species with around 874 thousand animals in 2015. Cattle numbers also declined in 2015 to 293 thousand animals compared to 304 thousand in 2014 whilst the number of pigs increased by 5.8% to 30 thousand animals.

Figure 5: Organic livestock: United Kingdom^{(a)(b)}



(a) Includes fully organic and in-conversion livestock

(b) We are unable to provide full historic data for sheep as there are some inconsistencies in the historical data

Number of organic producers and processors

In 2015, there were 6,056 producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in the United Kingdom, a slight increase from 6,002 in 2014. 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 second year running and stands at its highest since 2008 (see Figure 6 and Table 7).

Figure 6: Organic producers and processors: United Kingdom

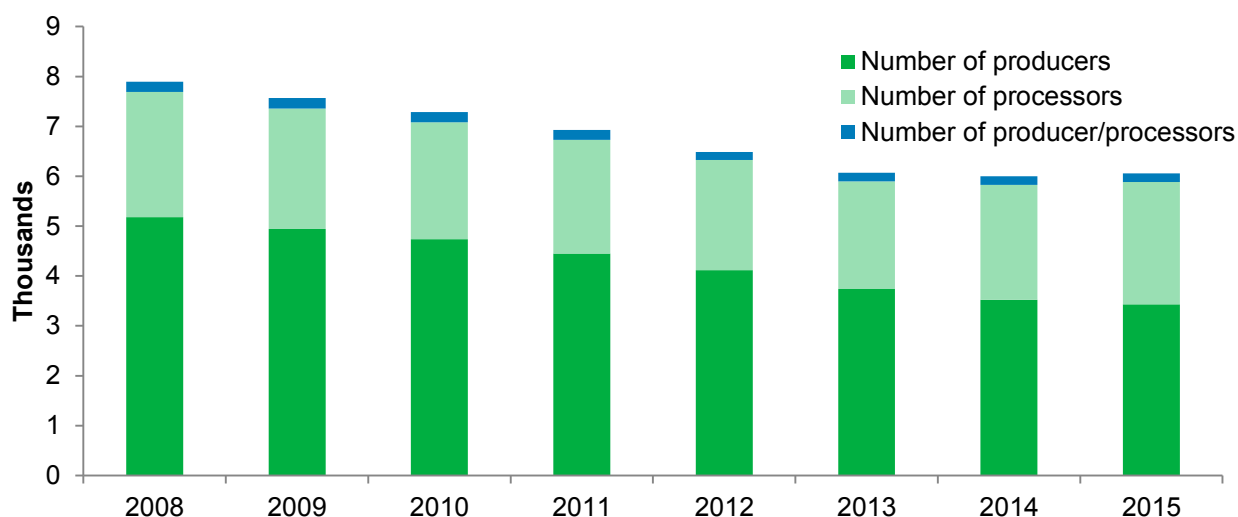


Table 1: Land area farmed organically 2012 to 2015

	Thousand hectares				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change 2015/2014
United Kingdom					
In-conversion	32.2	24.4	19.7	20.6	4.9
Fully organic	573.4	551.7	529.0	500.8	-5.3
Total organic area	605.7	576.0	548.6	521.4	-5.0
England					
In-conversion	19.2	14.0	12.5	10.0	-19.7
Fully organic	304.8	302.4	295.7	293.7	-0.7
Total organic area	323.9	316.4	308.1	303.7	-1.4

Table 2: Organic land use 2012 to 2015^(a)

	Thousand hectares				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change 2015/2014
United Kingdom					
Cereals	47.8	43.7	42.2	39.6	-6.1
Other crops	8.4	7.6	7.3	6.9	-4.6
Fruit & nuts	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.9	-8.8
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	12.3	11.3	9.4	10.4	10.1
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.8	6.8	8.5 ^(b)	6.2	-26.7
Temporary pasture	106.1	98.9	93.7	92.2	-1.6
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	405.6	387.0	369.7	347.1	-6.1
Woodland	7.4	7.6	7.0 ^(b)	6.9	-1.3
Non cropping	10.1	10.4	8.7	10.0	14.6
Total	605.6	575.3	548.6	521.4	-5.0
England					
Cereals	37.9	35.2	34.9	33.1	-5.2
Other crops	6.0	5.6	5.3	5.1	-2.6
Fruit & nuts	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.8	-10.8
Vegetables (inc potatoes)	9.7	9.2	7.7	8.7	12.4
Herbaceous & ornamentals	5.1	5.8	7.4 ^(b)	5.4	-26.7
Temporary pasture	87.1	81.2	77.3	75.7	-2.1
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	163.1	163.2	161.7	160.9	-0.5
Woodland	5.4	5.4	5.0 ^(b)	5.2	3.4
Unutilised land	7.6	8.0	6.8	7.8	14.7
Total	323.9	315.6	308.1	303.7	-1.4

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

(b) These areas have been revised following a data correction. These revisions are explained on the following page and shown in Table 2a.

Revisions to Organic Land use data

In 2014 there was an error in the way some of the categories were reported, this has now been corrected and the original published and revised data is shown for comparison in Table 2a (below). The revisions only affected the areas of Herbaceous & ornamentals and Woodland. All other areas, including the totals, were unchanged.

Table 2a: Organic land use 2014 revisions^(a)

	Thousand hectares	
	2014 original data	2014 revised data
United Kingdom		
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.3 ^(b)	8.5 ^(b)
Woodland	15.3 ^(b)	7.0 ^(b)
Total	548.6	548.6
England		
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.3 ^(b)	7.4 ^(b)
Woodland	12.1 ^(b)	5.0 ^(b)
Total	308.1	308.1

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

(b) These areas have been revised following a data correction.

Table 3: Detailed organic land use 2015

Thousand hectares

	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total areas at June 2015 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
United Kingdom					
Cereals	1.0	38.6	39.6	3 100	1.3
Wheat	0.2	11.6	11.8	1 832	0.6
Barley	0.5	11.9	12.4	1 101	1.1
Oats	0.2	11.7	12.0	131	9.1
Other cereals	0.1	3.3	3.4	35	9.7
Other arable crops	0.4	6.6	6.9	1 277	0.5
Sugar beet	0.0	0.1	0.1	90	0.1
Fodder, forage & silage	0.3	4.8	5.1	79	6.5
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	1.7	1.7	1 108	0.2
Vegetables	0.1	9.3	9.5	123	7.7
Potatoes	0.0	0.9	0.9	129	0.7
Fruit & nuts	0.0	1.9	1.9	36	5.4
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	6.2	6.2	13	49.1
Temporary pasture	3.1	89.1	92.2	1 167	7.9
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	15.1	332.0	347.1	9 880	3.5
Woodland	0.4	6.6	6.9	961	0.7
Unutilised land	0.3	9.7	10.0		
Total	20.6	500.8	521.4		
England					
Cereals	0.8	32.3	33.1	2 573	1.3
Wheat	0.2	10.8	10.9	1 693	0.6
Barley	0.4	9.3	9.7	748	1.3
Oats	0.2	9.2	9.4	98	9.5
Other cereals	0.0	3.1	3.1	34	9.3
Other arable crops	0.2	4.9	5.1	1 164	0.4
Sugar beet	0.0	0.1	0.1	90	0.1
Fodder, forage & silage	0.2	3.5	3.7	43	8.7
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.1	1.3	1.3	1 031	0.1
Fruit & nuts	0.0	1.8	1.8	33	5.6
Vegetables	0.1	7.9	8.1	104	7.7
Potatoes	0.0	0.6	0.6	96	0.6
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.1	5.3	5.4	11	47.9
Temporary pasture	2.7	73.0	75.7	646	11.7
Permanent pasture (inc rough grazing)	5.5	155.4	160.9	3 695	4.4
Woodland	0.4	4.8	5.2	348	1.5
Unutilised land	0.2	7.6	7.8		
Total	10.0	293.7	303.7		

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2015. Excludes common land.

Table 4: Area farmed organically by country and English region 2015

Thousand hectares

	Area in- conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total agricultural area at June 2015 ^(a)	Total organic area as % of June area
United Kingdom	20.6	500.8	521.4	17 229	3.0
Wales	9.4	73.5	82.9	1 663	5.0
Scotland	1.0	125.3	126.3	5 576	2.3
Northern Ireland	0.3	8.2	8.5	998	0.8
England	10.0	293.7	303.7	8 992	3.4
North East	0.3	27.6	27.9	593	4.7
North West	0.3	13.8	14.1	903	1.6
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.5	10.2	10.7	1 086	1.0
East Midlands	0.7	13.5	14.3	1 188	1.2
West Midlands	1.0	28.3	29.4	931	3.2
Eastern	1.0	13.7	14.7	1 382	1.1
South East (inc London)	0.7	45.0	45.7	1 131	4.0
South West	5.5	141.6	147.1	1 777	8.3

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture as at 1 June 2015. Excludes common land.

Table 5: Detailed organic livestock numbers 2015

Thousand hectares

	Livestock in- conversion	Fully organic livestock	Total organic livestock	Total livestock at June 2015 ^(a)	Total organic livestock area as % of June livestock
United Kingdom					
Cattle	1.6	291.5	293.1	9 919	3.0%
Sheep	29.6	844.6	874.2	33 337	2.6%
Pigs	0.0	30.0	30.0	4 739	0.6%
Poultry	0.1	2 560.2	2 560.3	167 579	1.5%
Other livestock ^{(b)(c)}	0.1	4.3	4.4	:	:
England					
Cattle	0.2	217.7	217.8	5 385	4.0%
Sheep	0.5	415.3	415.8	15 142	2.7%
Pigs	0.0	22.2	22.2	3 826	0.6%
Poultry	0.0	1 512.4	1 512.5	125 433	1.2%
Other livestock ^{(b)(c)}	0.0	3.9	3.9	:	:

(a) Source: June Survey of Agriculture / Cattle Tracing System for cattle populations

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

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

Table 6: Organic livestock numbers 2012 to 2015^(a)

	Thousand head				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change 2015/2014
United Kingdom					
Cattle	290.2	283.3	304.4	293.1	-3.7
Sheep	1152.1	999.2	958.9	874.2	-8.8
Pigs	34.6	30.2	28.3	30.0	5.8
Poultry	2457.7	2487.6	2398.8	2 560.3	6.7
Other livestock ^(b)	4.2	4.1	5.7	4.4	-23.2
England					
Cattle	201.7	199.5	215.6	217.8	1.0
Sheep	434.5	400.8	405.0	415.8	2.7
Pigs	29.5	26.5	25.8	22.2	-13.8
Poultry	1681.2	1687.5	1495.9	1 512.5	1.1
Other livestock ^(b)	3.6	3.4	3.1	3.9	26.2

(a) Includes fully organic and in-conversion livestock

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

Table 7: Number of organic producers and processors 2015

	Number of producers only	Number of producer/ processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
United Kingdom	3 429	173	2 454	6 056
Wales	596	22	123	741
Scotland	352	6	181	539
Northern Ireland	145	0	52	197
England	2 336	145	2 098	4 579
North East	94	2	41	137
North West	118	5	154	277
Yorkshire & the Humber	107	6	144	257
East Midlands	149	10	170	329
West Midlands	241	15	182	438
Eastern	170	13	274	457
South East (inc London)	341	28	714	1 083
South West	1 116	66	419	1 601

Table 8: Number of organic producers and processors 2012 to 2015

	Number				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change 2015/2014
United Kingdom	6 487	6072	6002	6 056	0.9
Wales	1 080	913	779	741	-4.9
Scotland	611	551	576	539	-6.4
Northern Ireland	204	189	193	197	2.1
England	4 592	4419	4454	4 579	2.8
North East	137	127	130	137	5.4
North West	273	253	246	277	12.6
Yorkshire & The Humber	262	240	238	257	8.0
East Midlands	366	351	346	329	-4.9
West Midlands	442	426	424	438	3.3
Eastern	456	449	445	457	2.7
South East (inc London)	950	957	1020	1 083	6.2
South West	1 706	1616	1605	1 601	-0.2

Table 9: Number of organic crop and livestock producers and processors 2015^(a)

	Number of:			
	Crop producers	Crop producers and processors	Livestock producers	Livestock producers and processors
United Kingdom	3 271	159	2 437	140
Wales	601	23	515	18
Scotland	323	6	222	6
Northern Ireland	114	0	107	0
England	2 233	130	1 593	116
North East	93	2	79	2
North West	114	5	85	4
Yorkshire and the Humber	100	5	75	4
East Midlands	132	8	106	6
West Midlands	239	12	169	11
Eastern	141	12	65	9
South East (inc London)	327	25	187	21
South West	1 087	61	827	59

(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://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_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.