



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Organic farming statistics 2023: United Kingdom

9 May 2024

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Organic farming statistics 2023: United Kingdom

This release presents final estimates of the land area farmed organically, crop areas, livestock numbers and numbers of organic producers and processors in the UK for 2023. A detailed breakdown of organic farming in England is available [here](#). 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 data set for this release can be found on the [organic farming statistics page](#).

1. Key findings for the UK

In 2023:

- 498 thousand hectares were farmed organically in the UK.
- 60% of UK organic land was in England, 23% in Scotland, 15% in Wales and 1.4% in Northern Ireland.
- Permanent pasture (including rough grazing) accounted for 62% of organic land in the UK, covering 307 thousand hectares.
- 10% of organic land in the UK was used to grow cereals (50 thousand hectares).
- 3.0% of cattle in the UK were reared organically.
- There were a total of 5,230 organic operators in the UK.

2. Organic land area

2.1 Land area farmed organically

In 2023, the UK had a total area of 498 thousand hectares of land farmed organically, a decrease of 2.1% compared to 2022. The total area includes both the fully converted area and area under conversion.

Organic production comes from fully converted land, which is land that has undergone conversion to meet organic standards. In 2023, the UK had 462 thousand hectares of fully organic land. This represents a decrease of 1.3% from 2022.

Land in-conversion is discussed in detail in [section 2.2](#).

Figure 1: Land area farmed organically in the UK (thousand hectares)

Year	In-conversion	Fully organic	Total
2014	19.7	529.0	548.6
2015	20.6	500.8	521.4
2016	25.2	482.7	507.9
2017	32.6	484.8	517.4
2018	32.9	441.1	474.0
2019	28.1	457.1	485.2
2020	31.3	457.6	489.0
2021	42.0	464.7	506.6
2022	40.3	468.3	508.6
2023	35.7	462.2	497.9

Table 1: Area farmed organically by country, 2023 (thousand hectares)

Country	Area in-conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total area on agricultural holdings at June	Total organic area as % of June area
United Kingdom	35.7	462.2	497.9	17,140	2.9%
England	18.3	279.1	297.5	8,999	3.3%
Wales	4.2	72.6	76.9	1,768	4.3%
Scotland	13.1	103.5	116.6	5,331	2.2%
Northern Ireland	0.1	6.9	7.0	1,042	0.7%

Notes:

1. Total land area on agricultural holdings at June. Excludes common land.

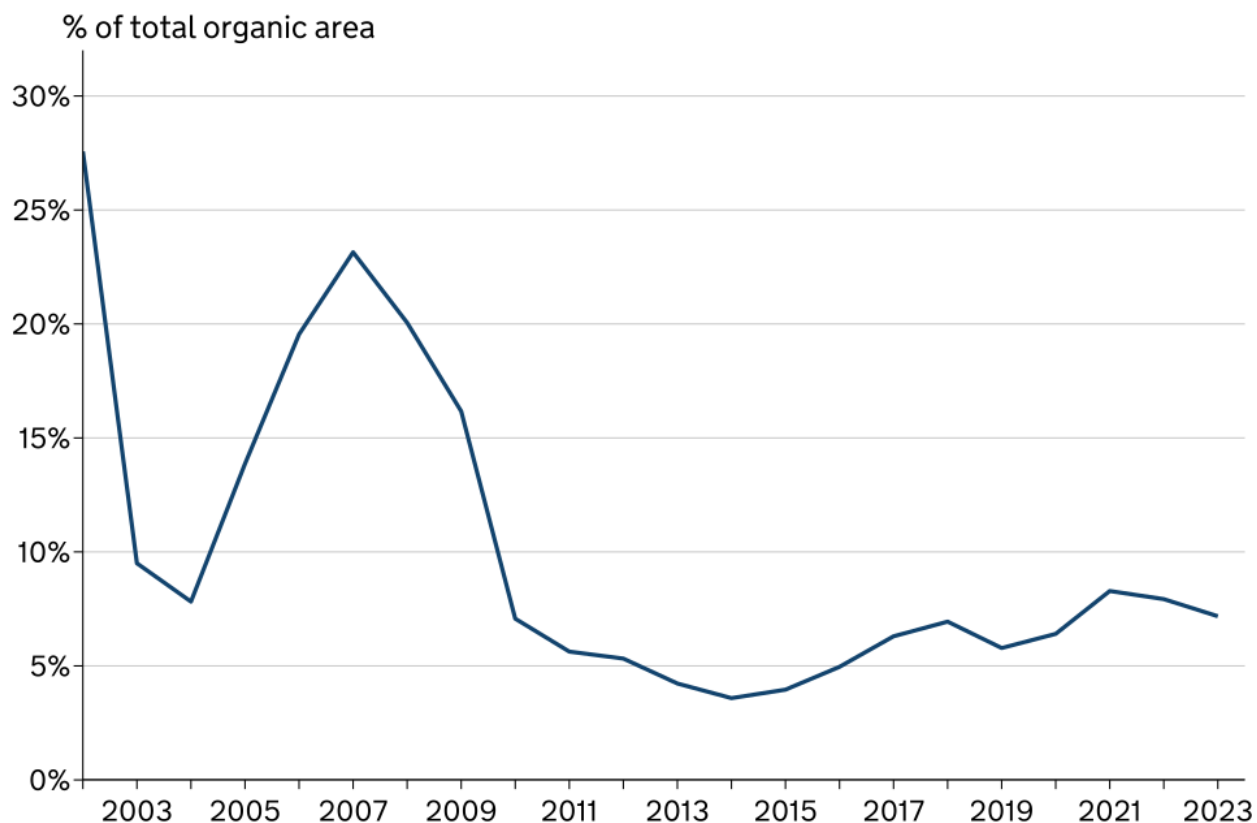
Source: [June Survey of Agriculture](#) as at 1 June 2023.

2.2 Land in-conversion

Before an area can be considered as fully organic, it must undergo a conversion process. In 2023, the UK had 36 thousand hectares of land in-conversion. This constitutes a decrease of 11% from 2022.

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. In 2023, land in-conversion made up 7.2% of the total organic land in the UK. This was a decrease of 0.8 percentage points from 2022.

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



[Download the data for this figure](#)

Text description of Figure 2: Figure 2 shows the area of land in-conversion as a proportion of total land area farmed organically in the UK from 2002 to 2023. The percentage of land in-conversion in the UK peaked in 2002, with the lowest percentage occurring in 2014. Since 2021, the area of in-conversion land has fallen steadily year on year.

3. Organic land use

3.1 Organic land use

Permanent pasture (including rough grazing) accounts for the biggest share of the organic area in the UK (62%), followed by temporary pasture (18%) and cereals (10%). The full breakdown of organic land use in the UK is shown in figure 3 and tables 2 and 3.

Figure 3: Organic land use in the UK, 2023 (thousand hectares)

Use	Area (thousand hectares)
Permanent pasture (incl. rough grazing)	307.1
Temporary pasture	91.5
Cereals	50.3
Woodland	17.8
Other arable crops	11.0
Vegetables (incl. potatoes)	10.3
Unutilised & unknown	7.3
Fruit & nuts	2.2
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.5

Notes:

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

Table 2: Organic land use in the UK, 2020 to 2023 (thousand hectares)

Use	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage change 2023/2022
Cereals	42.7	46.6	49.5	50.3	1.6%
Other arable crops	9.2	10.8	10.7	11.0	3.1%
Fruit & nuts	2.0	2.4	2.3	2.2	-2.2%
Vegetables (incl. potatoes)	9.5	9.8	10.3	10.3	-0.7%
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.5	-27%
Temporary pasture	97.1	99.7	96.1	91.5	-4.8%
Permanent pasture (incl. rough grazing)	304.5	310.8	314.1	307.1	-2.2%
Woodland	16.0	17.4	17.3	17.8	2.8%
Unutilised land	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.2	-2.6%
Unknown	4.9	5.2	4.4	4.2	-5.1%
Total	489.0	506.6	508.6	497.9	-2.1%

Notes:

1. Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion.
2. Some land areas are provided without a crop category or land use description, therefore these are classified as unknown.

Table 3: Detailed fully organic and in-conversion land use in the UK, 2023 (thousand hectares)

Use	Area in-conversion	Fully organic area	Total organic area	Total area on agricultural holdings at June	Total organic area as % of June area
Cereals	3.4	46.9	50.3	3,088	1.6%
Wheat	1.7	17.8	19.5	1,720	1.1%
Barley	1.0	6.2	7.2	1,137	0.6%
Oats	0.4	16.6	16.9	167	10%
Other cereals	0.3	6.4	6.7	65	10%
Other arable crops	1.1	9.9	11.0	1,168	0.9%
Sugar beet	0.0	0.3	0.3	99	0.3%
Fodder, forage and silage	0.9	8.8	9.8	94	10%
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.2	0.8	0.9	974	0.1%
Fruit & nuts	0.3	2.0	2.2	32	7.0%
Vegetables	0.7	7.9	8.6	100	8.6%
Potatoes	[low]	1.6	1.6	115	1.4%
Herbaceous & ornamentals	[low]	0.5	0.5	10	4.6%
Temporary pasture	5.3	86.1	91.5	1,260	7.3%
Permanent pasture (excl. rough grazing)	16.6	226.3	242.9	6,074	4.0%
Rough grazing	6.7	57.5	64.2	3,655	1.8%
Woodland	1.2	16.5	17.8	948	1.9%
Unutilised land	0.2	3.0	3.2	[x]	[x]
Unknown	0.1	4.1	4.2	[x]	[x]
Total	35.7	462.2	497.9	[x]	[x]

Notes:

1. Total land area on agricultural holdings at June. Excludes common land.
2. Some land areas are provided without a crop category or land use description, therefore these are classified as unknown.

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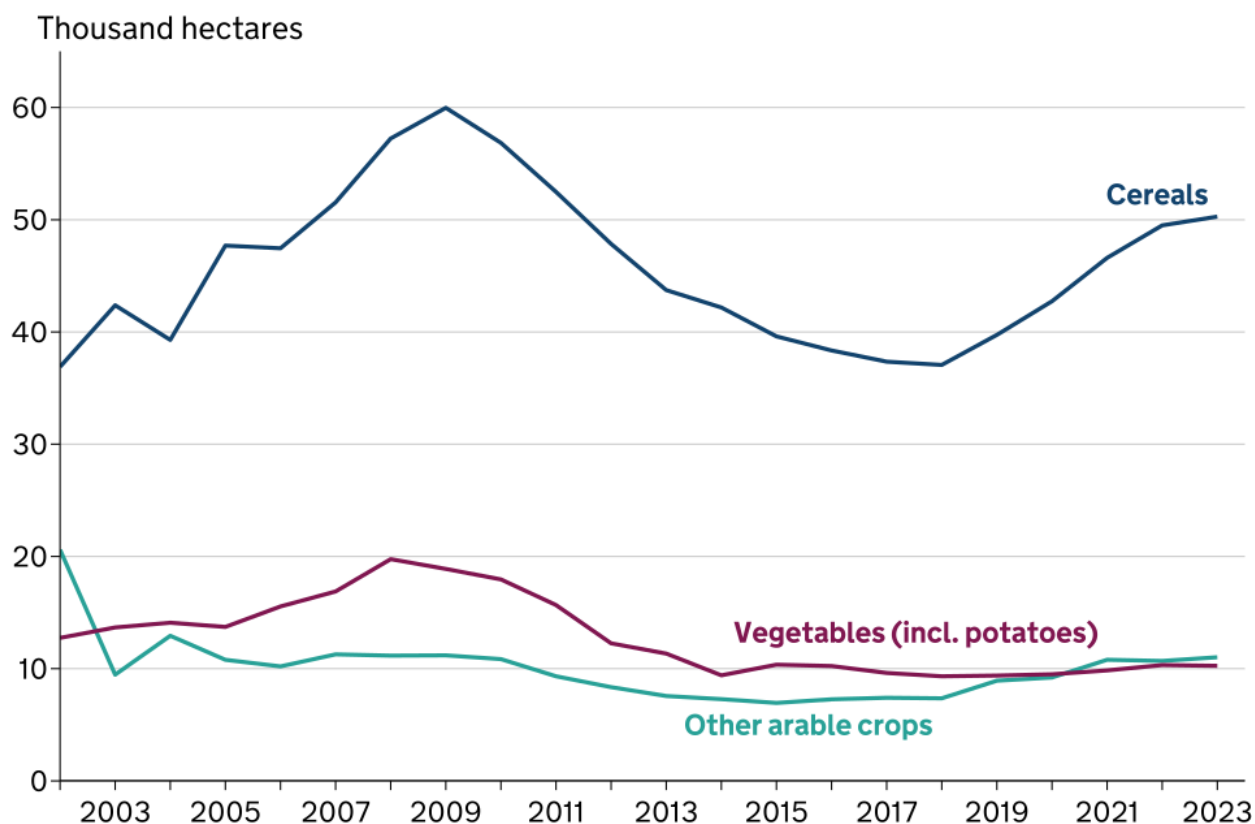
3. “[x]” indicates no comparable June survey data is available.
4. “[low]” indicates a value that is greater than zero, but shows as zero due to rounding. See the accompanying dataset for the unrounded value.

Source: [June Survey of Agriculture](#) as at 1 June 2023.

3.2 Organic crops

The three main crop types grown organically are cereals, other arable crops and vegetables (including potatoes). In the UK the area of organically grown cereal crops increased by 1.6% to 50 thousand hectares in 2023. Other arable crops increased by 3.1% to 11 thousand hectares. The area of organically grown vegetables (including potatoes) decreased by 0.7% to 10 thousand hectares in 2023.

Figure 4: Organic crops in the UK



Notes:

1. Includes fully organic land and land in-conversion.

[Download the data for this figure](#)

Text description of Figure 4: Figure 4 shows the area of land, in thousand hectares, used to organically farm cereals, other arable crops and vegetables (including potatoes) from 2002 to 2023. Cereals have the highest area of organic farming, which peaked in

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2009. From this peak, the organic area used to farm cereals declined until 2018, since when it has increased steadily year on year. Other arable crops and vegetables (including potatoes) have had similar areas of organic farming throughout the time series. Other arable crops peaked in 2002 and vegetables peaked in 2008.

4. Organic livestock

Table 4: Detailed organic livestock numbers in the UK, 2023 (thousand head)

Livestock	Total organic livestock	Total livestock at June	Organic livestock as % of June livestock
Cattle	290	9,555	3.0%
For slaughter	129	3,754	3.4%
Dairy cows	51	3,228	1.6%
Other cattle	110	2,574	4.3%
Sheep	692	31,803	2.2%
Breeding females	370	15,438	2.4%
Other sheep	322	16,365	2.0%
Pigs	23	4,683	0.5%
Fattening pigs	15	4,255	0.4%
Breeding sows	2	338	0.6%
Other pigs	6	90	6.4%
Poultry	4,365	178,142	2.5%
Broilers	2,200	116,440	1.9%
Laying hens	2,021	41,073	4.9%
Other poultry	144	20,629	0.7%
Other livestock	8	[x]	[x]
Farmed deer	6	39	14%
Goats	1	112	0.9%
Horses	1	215	0.6%
Others	[low]	[x]	[x]

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.
2. "Others" include camelids and any livestock not recorded elsewhere.
3. "[x]" indicates no comparable June survey data is available.
4. "[low]" indicates a value that is greater than zero, but shows as zero due to rounding. See the accompanying dataset for the unrounded value.

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Source: [June survey of agriculture](#) as at 1 June 2023 and the Cattle Tracing System for cattle populations.

4.1 Organic cattle

In 2023, organically reared cattle numbers decreased by 2.8% to 290 thousand head. This represents 3.0% of the total herd in the UK.

Figure 5: Number of organic cattle in the UK (thousand head)

Years	For slaughter	Dairy cows	Other cattle	Total
2016	98.7	81.4	116.4	296.4
2017	110.5	76.3	107.1	294.0
2018	116.1	88.3	119.7	324.1
2019	88.2	89.8	122.7	300.8
2020	122.0	60.0	121.8	303.9
2021	119.6	59.3	116.7	295.6
2022	122.3	57.4	119.0	298.6
2023	129.3	51.4	109.7	290.4

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

4.2 Organic sheep

The number of sheep reared organically decreased by 5.8% to 692 thousand head and accounted for 2.2% of the total flock in the UK.

Figure 6: Number of organic sheep in the UK (thousand head)

Years	Breeding females	Other sheep	Total
2016	431.2	409.6	840.8
2017	462.1	424.9	887.0
2018	446.6	380.0	826.6
2019	389.7	392.5	782.2
2020	399.6	331.7	731.2
2021	393.3	330.3	723.6
2022	385.1	349.4	734.4
2023	370.0	322.0	692.0

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

4.3 Organic pigs

The number of pigs reared organically decreased by 34% to 23 thousand head and accounted for 0.5% of the total pig herd in the UK.

Figure 7: Number of organic pigs in the UK (thousand head)

Years	Fattening pigs	Breeding sows	Other pigs	Total
2016	21.5	4.3	5.7	31.5
2017	25.2	5.2	8.7	39.1
2018	21.3	3.8	12.3	37.4
2019	20.6	3.4	9.9	34.0
2020	16.3	1.6	9.3	27.2
2021	21.3	2.9	7.8	32.1
2022	22.5	3.4	9.1	35.0
2023	15.3	2.0	5.7	22.9

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

4.4 Organic poultry

Organically reared poultry numbers increased by 19% to 4,365 thousand birds and accounted for 2.5% of the total population in the UK.

Figure 8: Number of organic poultry in the UK (thousand birds)

Years	Broilers	Laying hens	Other poultry	Total
2016	1,574	1,135	112	2,821
2017	1,725	1,239	95	3,060
2018	1,879	1,413	89	3,381
2019	1,768	1,584	112	3,464
2020	1,708	1,981	97	3,786
2021	1,910	2,015	96	4,021
2022	1,577	2,005	83	3,665
2023	2,200	2,021	144	4,365

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

5. Organic operators

In 2023, there were 5,230 producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in the UK, a decrease of 4.8% from 2022. A detailed breakdown of organic crop and livestock operators is available in the dataset accompanying this release.

Figure 9: Organic operators by type in the UK

Years	Producers	Producers & Processors	Processors	Total
2014	3,521	174	2,307	6,002
2015	3,429	173	2,454	6,056
2016	3,398	161	2,804	6,363
2017	3,465	144	2,977	6,586
2018	3,483	136	2,569	6,188
2019	3,494	123	2,512	6,129
2020	3,407	197	2,150	5,754
2021	3,401	205	2,126	5,732
2022	3,285	223	1,988	5,496
2023	3,193	223	1,814	5,230

Notes:

1. Processors can include abattoirs, bakers, storers and wholesalers. The recorded location depends on the address registered with the Certifier Bodies and so larger businesses may be recorded at their headquarters.
2. 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 are not directly comparable.
3. 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.

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Table 5: Number of organic operators by type and country, 2023

Country	Number of producers only	Number of producers and processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
United Kingdom	3,193	223	1,814	5,230
England	2,133	174	1,575	3,882
Wales	535	27	77	639
Scotland	379	15	127	521
Northern Ireland	146	7	35	188

Notes:

1. Processors can include abattoirs, bakers, storers and wholesalers. The recorded location depends on the address registered with the Certifier Bodies and so larger businesses may be recorded at their headquarters.

Table 6: Number of organic operators by country, 2020 to 2023

Country	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage change 2023/2022
United Kingdom	5,754	5,732	5,496	5,230	-4.8%
England	4,307	4,296	4,103	3,882	-5.4%
Wales	701	693	663	639	-3.6%
Scotland	541	529	528	521	-1.3%
Northern Ireland	205	214	202	188	-6.9%

Notes:

1. 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.

6. About these statistics

6.1 Contact details

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6.2 Methodology and more information

For more information about these statistics and how they were produced, please see the [about organic farming statistics page](#).