



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Organic farming statistics 2023: England

9 May 2024

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Organic farming statistics 2023: England

This release presents final estimates of the land area farmed organically, crop areas, livestock numbers and numbers of organic producers and processors in England for 2023. An overview of organic farming in the UK 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 England

In 2023:

- 297 thousand hectares were farmed organically in England.
- The South West had the greatest share of organic land in England at 47%, the South East (incl. London) had the second largest at 15% and the West Midlands had the third largest at 11%.
- Permanent pasture (including rough grazing) accounted for 48% of organic land in England, covering 144 thousand hectares.
- 15% of organic land in England was used to grow cereals (43 thousand hectares).
- 4.2% of cattle in England were reared organically.
- There were a total of 3,882 organic operators in England.

2. Organic land area

2.1 Land area farmed organically

In 2023, England had a total area of 297 thousand hectares of land farmed organically, a decrease of 4.8% 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, England had 279 thousand hectares of fully organic land. This represents a decrease of 4.6% from 2022.

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

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

Year	In-conversion	Fully organic	Total
2014	12.5	295.7	308.1
2015	10.0	293.7	303.7
2016	14.7	281.8	296.5
2017	19.8	280.5	300.3
2018	20.3	269.0	289.3
2019	19.0	281.6	300.6
2020	20.4	281.3	301.8
2021	25.8	285.4	311.2
2022	19.6	292.7	312.4
2023	18.3	279.1	297.5

Table 1: Area farmed organically by English region, 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
England	18.3	279.1	297.5	8,999	3.3%
North East	1.4	23.1	24.5	606	4.0%
North West	0.8	11.3	12.1	941	1.3%
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.8	10.3	11.1	1,125	1.0%
East Midlands	2.9	12.1	15.0	1,172	1.3%
West Midlands	1.8	30.9	32.7	912	3.6%
East of England	0.9	17.8	18.8	1,397	1.3%
South East (incl. London)	2.6	40.7	43.3	1,099	3.9%
South West	7.1	132.9	139.9	1,746	8.0%

Notes:

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

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

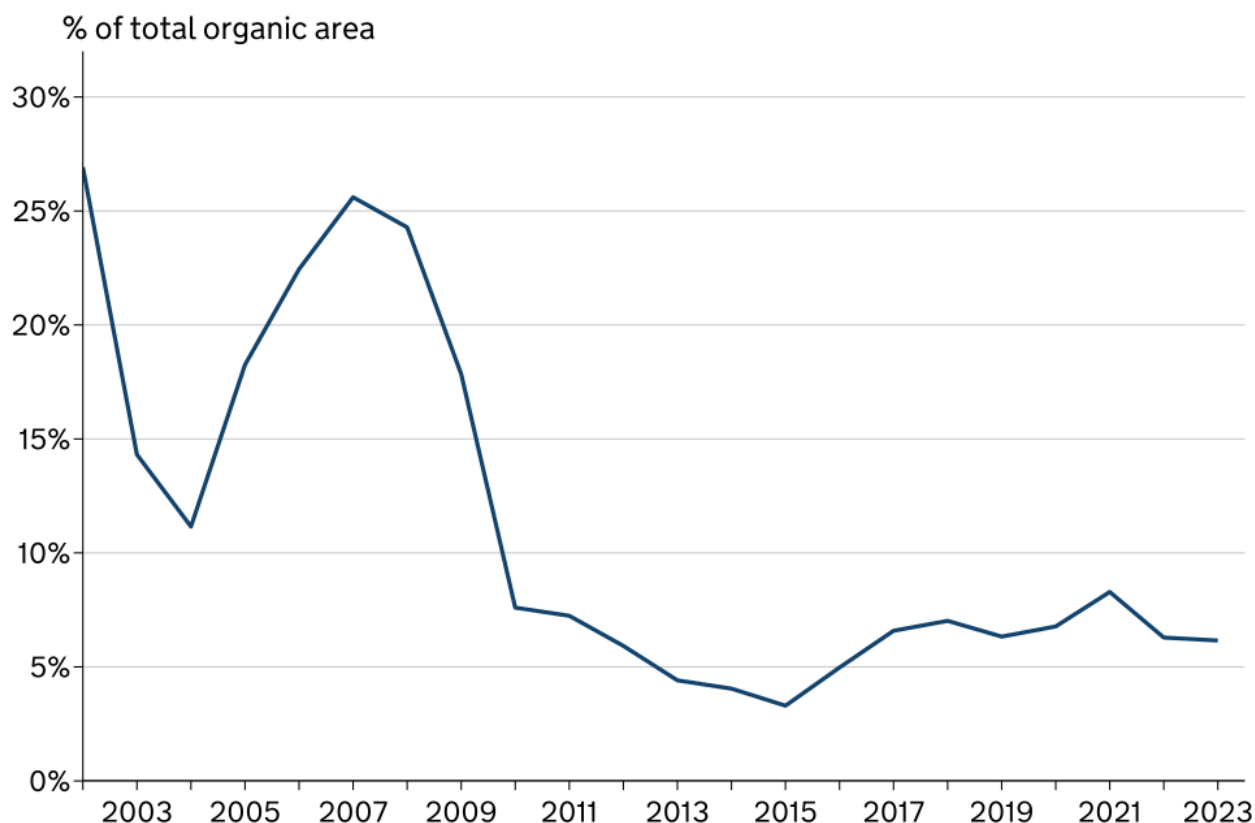
2.2 Land in-conversion

Before an area can be considered as fully organic, it must undergo a conversion process. In 2023, England had 18 thousand hectares of land in-conversion. This constitutes a decrease of 6.7% from 2022.

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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 6.2% of the total organic land in England. This was a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from 2022.

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



[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 England from 2002 to 2023. The percentage of land in-conversion in England peaked in 2002, with the lowest percentage occurring in 2015. 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 England (48%), followed by temporary pasture (25%) and cereals

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(15%). The full breakdown of organic land use in England is shown in figure 3 and tables 2 and 3.

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

Use	Area (thousand hectares)
Permanent pasture (incl. rough grazing)	143.6
Temporary pasture	74.0
Cereals	43.2
Woodland	11.3
Other arable crops	9.3
Vegetables (incl. potatoes)	8.3
Unutilised & unknown	5.1
Fruit & nuts	2.1
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 England, 2020 to 2023 (thousand hectares)

Use	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage change 2023/2022
Cereals	36.4	39.9	42.7	43.2	1.2%
Other arable crops	7.3	8.7	8.6	9.3	7.1%
Fruit & nuts	1.9	2.3	2.2	2.1	-1.9%
Vegetables (incl. potatoes)	7.7	7.9	8.4	8.3	-0.4%
Herbaceous & ornamentals	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.5	-20%
Temporary pasture	77.6	79.4	77.4	74.0	-4.4%
Permanent pasture (incl. rough grazing)	153.3	154.5	155.5	143.6	-7.6%
Woodland	11.4	11.8	11.5	11.3	-1.9%
Unutilised land	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.2	-10%
Unknown	4.4	4.7	4.1	3.9	-4.4%
Total	301.8	311.2	312.4	297.5	-4.8%

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 England, 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	2.9	40.4	43.2	2,568	1.7%
Wheat	1.6	16.7	18.2	1,580	1.2%
Barley	0.6	4.5	5.2	799	0.6%
Oats	0.3	13.3	13.6	134	10%
Other cereals	0.3	5.9	6.2	55	11%
Other arable crops	1.0	8.3	9.3	1,039	0.9%
Sugar beet	0.0	0.3	0.3	99	0.3%
Fodder, forage and silage	0.8	7.2	8.1	57	14%
Maize, oilseeds & protein crops	0.2	0.7	0.9	883	0.1%
Fruit & nuts	0.3	1.9	2.1	29	7.4%
Vegetables	0.5	6.5	7.1	77	9.1%
Potatoes	[low]	1.2	1.3	82	1.5%
Herbaceous & ornamentals	[low]	0.4	0.5	9	5.3%
Temporary pasture	4.9	69.1	74.0	803	9.2%
Permanent pasture (excl. rough grazing)	8.0	129.5	137.5	3,097	4.4%
Rough grazing	0.1	6.0	6.1	440	1.4%
Woodland	0.5	10.8	11.3	398	2.8%
Unutilised land	0.1	1.2	1.2	[x]	[x]
Unknown	0.1	3.8	3.9	[x]	[x]
Total	18.3	279.1	297.5	[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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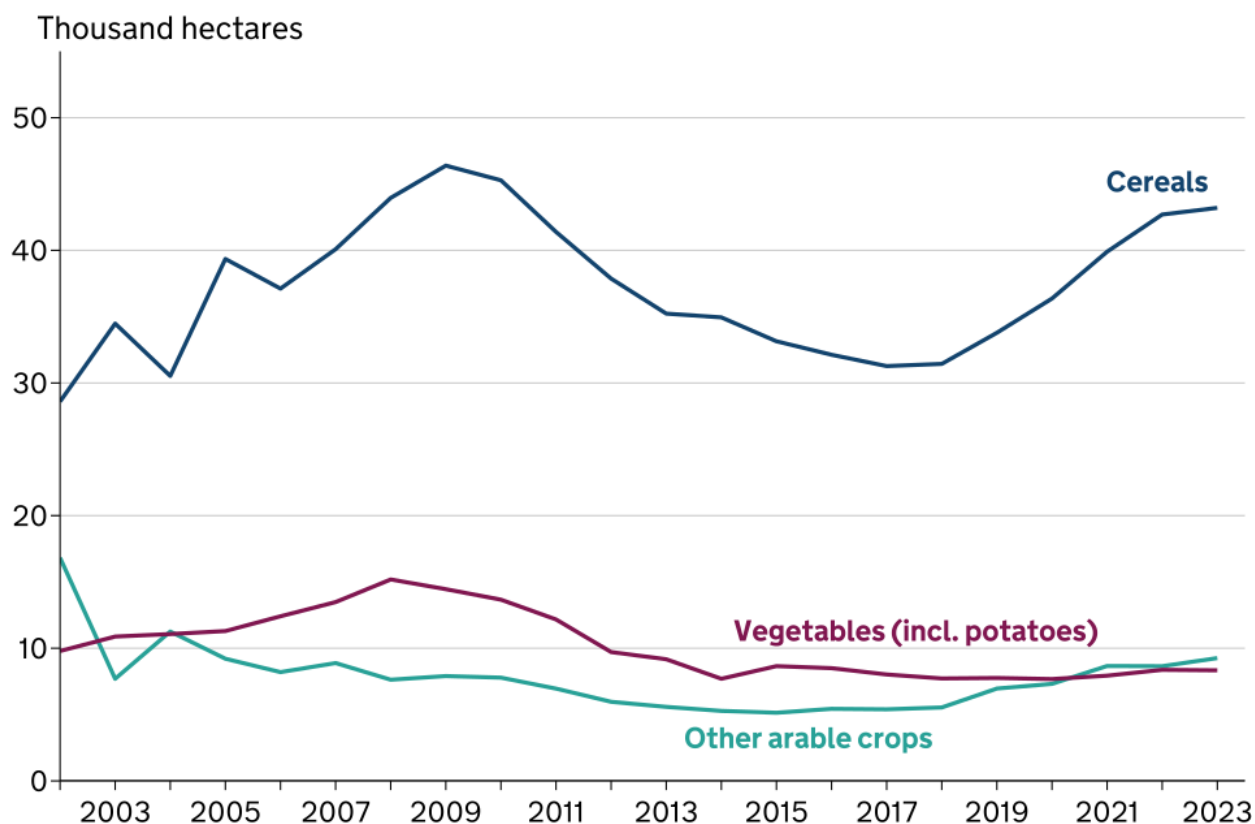
3. “[x]” indicates no comparable June survey data is available.
4. “[low]” indicates a value that is greater than zero, but shows as zero due to rounding. See the accompanying dataset for the unrounded value.

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 England the area of organically grown cereal crops increased by 1.2% to 43 thousand hectares in 2023. Other arable crops increased by 7.1% to 9.3 thousand hectares. The area of organically grown vegetables (including potatoes) decreased by 0.4% to 8.3 thousand hectares in 2023.

Figure 4: Organic crops in England



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 England, 2023 (thousand head)

Livestock	Total organic livestock	Total livestock at June	Organic livestock as % of June livestock
Cattle	212	5,082	4.2%
For slaughter	92	1,850	4.9%
Dairy cows	40	1,862	2.2%
Other cattle	80	1,370	5.8%
Sheep	295	14,451	2.0%
Breeding females	164	6,956	2.4%
Other sheep	131	7,495	1.7%
Pigs	21	3,633	0.6%
Fattening pigs	15	3,304	0.4%
Breeding sows	2	257	0.7%
Other pigs	4	72	6.2%
Poultry	2,333	130,549	1.8%
Broilers	919	91,096	1.0%
Laying hens	1,346	23,007	5.9%
Other poultry	68	16,446	0.4%
Other livestock	5	[x]	[x]
Farmed deer	3	22	15%
Goats	1	92	1.0%
Horses	1	137	0.7%
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 2.6% to 212 thousand head. This represents 4.2% of the total herd in England.

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

Years	For slaughter	Dairy cows	Other cattle	Total
2016	66.2	66.4	86.7	219.3
2017	76.4	61.2	79.7	217.3
2018	81.3	70.1	89.2	240.6
2019	58.7	70.9	91.1	220.8
2020	83.5	47.8	89.1	220.4
2021	82.0	47.2	84.6	213.8
2022	84.3	44.8	88.1	217.1
2023	91.6	40.4	79.6	211.6

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

4.2 Organic sheep

The number of sheep reared organically decreased by 5.5% to 295 thousand head and accounted for 2.0% of the total flock in England.

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

Years	Breeding females	Other sheep	Total
2016	211.8	194.1	405.9
2017	227.5	193.8	421.2
2018	213.3	160.7	374.0
2019	179.4	171.2	350.6
2020	183.5	128.5	312.0
2021	179.1	120.7	299.8
2022	172.9	138.9	311.8
2023	164.1	130.6	294.6

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

4.3 Organic pigs

The number of pigs reared organically decreased by 20% to 21 thousand head and accounted for 0.6% of the total pig herd in England.

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

Years	Fattening pigs	Breeding sows	Other pigs	Total
2016	20.1	4.1	5.3	29.4
2017	23.8	5.0	8.4	37.2
2018	14.7	3.4	11.1	29.2
2019	19.1	3.0	8.6	30.6
2020	13.3	1.6	9.0	23.9
2021	14.7	2.5	6.5	23.7
2022	15.8	2.9	7.7	26.5
2023	14.9	1.9	4.5	21.2

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

4.4 Organic poultry

Organically reared poultry numbers increased by 3.0% to 2,333 thousand birds and accounted for 1.8% of the total population in England.

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

Years	Broilers	Laying hens	Other poultry	Total
2016	830	796	73	1,699
2017	1,033	912	57	2,002
2018	969	1,015	54	2,038
2019	911	1,104	57	2,072
2020	880	1,465	66	2,411
2021	1,074	1,412	64	2,550
2022	795	1,422	49	2,265
2023	919	1,346	68	2,333

Notes:

1. Data relates to fully organic only.

5. Organic operators

In 2023, there were 3,882 producers and processors registered with the organic certification bodies in England, a decrease of 5.4% 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 England

Years	Producers	Producers & Processors	Processors	Total
2014	2,352	148	1,954	4,454
2015	2,336	145	2,098	4,579
2016	2,302	132	2,414	4,848
2017	2,335	124	2,578	5,037
2018	2,327	113	2,196	4,636
2019	2,354	99	2,174	4,627
2020	2,264	165	1,878	4,307
2021	2,269	175	1,852	4,296
2022	2,202	176	1,725	4,103
2023	2,133	174	1,575	3,882

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 English region, 2023

Region	Number of producers only	Number of producers and processors	Number of processors only	Total organic producers and processors
England	2,133	174	1,575	3,882
North East	77	4	28	109
North West	103	13	111	227
Yorkshire and the Humber	85	7	91	183
East Midlands	142	6	114	262
West Midlands	278	20	120	418
East of England	177	9	218	404
South East (incl. London)	336	42	618	996
South West	935	73	275	1,283

Notes:

- 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 English region, 2020 to 2023

Region	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage change 2023/2022
England	4,307	4,296	4,103	3,882	-5.4%
North East	117	118	112	109	-2.7%
North West	241	244	233	227	-2.6%
Yorkshire and the Humber	227	216	198	183	-7.6%
East Midlands	328	308	298	262	-12%
West Midlands	468	454	449	418	-6.9%
East of England	419	412	407	404	-0.7%
South East (incl. London)	1,092	1,143	1,042	996	-4.4%
South West	1,415	1,401	1,364	1,283	-5.9%

Notes:

- 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](#).