

Organic Facts and Statistics

Supplied by Elm Farm Research Centre www.efrc.co.uk

Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS)

The OCIS helpdesk is funded by MAFF and the National Assembly for Wales' Agriculture Department. The growing interest in conversion has been reflected in the growth of OCIS clients by almost 250% this year. In three years over 10,000 enquiries have been received, representing almost 10% of farmers in England and Wales (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*). Since its launch in June 1996, the Organic Advisory Service based at EFRC has delivered over 4,500 half day visits and 1,500 full days.

Organic Land Farmed Organically in the UK

By April 1999 over 240,000 ha was being farmed organically (1.3% of total UK agricultural area). 60,000 ha had gained full organic status; 180,000 ha was undergoing the two-year conversion process (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*). Forty-four per cent is classed as unimproved grazing.

By July 1999, 678,340 acres (275,00ha) was being farmed organically (UK Register of Organic Food Standards).

Retail Value of Organic Food in the UK

The *Organic Food and Farming Report 1999* shows that the total 1998/1999 retail value of organic food sales in the UK was £390 million (Soil Association). Seventy per cent of this total was imported. Seventy per cent was sold in supermarkets with fresh produce accounting for £175 million (45% of the total).

Supply and Demand

In the UK, overall demand is growing faster (40% a year) than supply (25% a year) (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*). www.efrc.co.uk for information on the estimated wholesale value of the main UK produced organic commodities.

Between April 1998 and April 1999 primary production rose by 25% and was valued at £50 million (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*). The number of registered organic and in-conversion producers increased from 1,000 to 1,500.

Processing

Registered organic processors increased from 500 to 800, supplying products with a total value of £300 million to the retail sector (£77m UK produced; £223m imported) (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*). These figures include businesses licensed to process for human consumption and for animal feed, together with licensed importers/exporters, distributors/packers and wholesalers of organic products.

www.efrc.co.uk for information on licensed organic processors.

Retail

UK Organic Sales through different outlets 1998/1999: supermarkets 69%; independent retailers and health food shops 16%; farmgate/box schemes/market stalls 15% (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*).

Organic food now accounts for 3-4% of all food sold in supermarkets (*Guardian*, 7 September 1999).

It is estimated that by 2002, organic food will account for 7-8% of the total food market with a retail value of £1 billion.

Potential for Organic Farming in Europe

On an annual basis the overall rate of growth over the last 10 years has been 25%. Continuing at this rate, 10% of Western European agriculture would be organic in 2005, and 30% by 2010. A slower rate of growth of 15% per year would result in 10% by 2010 (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*).

Agricultural Support

MAFF spends over £3 billion each year on supporting agriculture, but only 3% is spent on the agri-environment budget

Only 8% of the agri-environment budget is currently spent on organic farming (£6.2 million) This is 0.2% of the total UK spending on agriculture (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*).

Government Research Support

MAFF spends over £125 million each year on agricultural R&D, with an additional £52 million on agricultural biotechnology.

The amount it spends on organic farming, the healthiest and most sustainable agricultural option, is £2.1 million, 1.2% of the total (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*).

Comparison with Europe

The amount spent specifically on supporting organic farming in the UK is half of the EU average.

Twelve EU countries provide maintenance payments for organic farming after the 5-year conversion payments; only the UK and two other countries do not. The governments of many EU countries have adopted action plans and targets for organic farming (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*).

Public Opinion

Perception of the words "organic food": natural (47%); no chemicals/additives/pesticides (59%) healthy (41%); GM free (35%) (Soil Association, *Organic Food & Farming Report 1999*).

MORI Research 4-7 June 1999.