

GREEN PLATES, GREEN PLANET: THE FUTURE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN EUROPE

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Abstract: Organic farming plays an essential role in protecting the environment and maintaining ecological balance, as it promotes agricultural practices that respect the natural rhythms of ecosystems. At European level, organic farming is recognized as an important factor for increasing biodiversity and protecting natural resources, contributing to reducing water pollution and improving environmental quality. In recent years, consumer interest in organic products has increased significantly, amid growing concern for health, food safety and sustainable development. People are increasingly attentive to the provenance of food and prefer products obtained by natural methods, without artificial additives or genetically modified organisms. This article examines the growing importance of organic food and sustainable agriculture in Europe, emphasizing their role in promoting human health, environmental protection, and long-term food security. Healthy food is increasingly recognized as essential for well-being, while organic products are gaining relevance due to consumer concerns about pesticide residues, genetically modified organisms, and environmental degradation. The article also discusses the principles of organic agriculture established by IFOAM and their relevance to sustainable diets defined by FAO. Special attention is given to the integration of emerging technologies (artificial intelligence, IoT, robotics, and digital platforms) which improve productivity while reducing environmental impact. Another focus is the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the introduction of eco-schemes, which encourage farmers to adopt environmentally friendly practices tailored to national needs. The article further explores the contribution of organic farming to soil health, biodiversity, and climate resilience, underlining its significance in achieving sustainable development goals. Finally, it reviews major European organic trade fairs in 2026 as strategic platforms for innovation, networking, and market expansion, demonstrating the sector's continued growth and transformative potential in shaping the future of agriculture and food systems in Europe.

Keywords: organic farming; organic food; Common Agricultural Policy; eco-schemes; European organic trade fairs

JEL Classification: O13; Q01; Q18

1. Introduction

Healthy food is essential for maintaining overall well-being and leading an active, balanced life. It provides the body with the necessary nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats, that support growth, energy,

and proper functioning of organs. By choosing organic foods (fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains) over processed and junk foods, we can develop better eating habits and promote long-term health. Buying organic food is often difficult due to a combination of higher costs, limited availability, and the intensive, time-consuming nature of the production and certification process (Robbins, 2023). Organic farmers depend on natural farming processes and methods, which can lead to lower crop yields compared to conventional agriculture. These reduced yields increase production costs per unit, thereby contributing to the higher market prices of organic food products. The EU's organic market is very dynamic. Its continuous positive development is due to a combination of factors, innovative character of organic food and farming, growing policy support and European citizens' increasing demand for high-quality, sustainable food production. What was previously regarded as a niche segment has emerged as a significant driver within the food industry, influencing supply chain structures, retail strategies, and hospitality offerings. This expansion presents substantial opportunities for food service providers, including restaurants, hotels, and institutional cafeterias, to tap into a rapidly growing and profitable market (Bartolozzi, 2025).

2. Literature review

Organic food sales have shown steady growth since the late 20th century. Increasing environmental awareness, along with concerns about the health effects of pesticide residues and the consumption of genetically modified (GMO) crops, has contributed to the expansion of the organic sector (Adamchak, 2026). The demand for organic food began to grow in the 1960s, largely influenced by the publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, which highlighted the environmental damage caused by insecticides. Many studies consistently show that consumers of organic food exhibit systematically different dietary patterns compared with non-consumers. In particular, regular organic food consumers report significantly higher intakes of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, dietary fibre, and legumes, alongside a lower consumption of red and processed meat. Aguirre (2007) in his research has identified several reasons (e.g. organic products are healthy, chemical-free, protect the environment, relate to personal health, and help farmers) that consumers take into consideration when buying organic products (Wijaya and Purwoko, 2018). It is generally believed that compounds in organic fruits and vegetables promote human health and longevity (Wang et al, 2014). Thus, consumers who consistently consume organic foods tend to choose more fruits and vegetables and less meat (Rahman et al., 2024). Organic foods are also perceived as less processed and free of harmful chemicals, which can have a positive impact on consumers' health (Jakubowska et al., 2025). Consistent with these findings, frequent buyers of organic food demonstrate a significantly higher adherence to healthy dietary patterns (Kesse-Guyot et al., 2013). Many consumers perceive organic products as healthier compared to conventional options, which influences their purchasing decisions (Bazhan, 2024). This perception is often fuelled by marketing and the media, which emphasize the absence of pesticides and synthetic additives in organic products. Concerns about pesticides, herbicides, and other chemical additives used in conventional agriculture also motivate consumers to choose organic products. Many consumers associate the absence of pesticides in food production with better taste and higher quality compared to conventional products

(Jakubowska et al., 2025). Evidence in the current literature suggests that the consumption of organic foods confers promising health advantages for various consumers. Multiple statistical analyses have uncovered that organic foods contain significantly higher levels of certain nutrients, including vitamin C, iron and magnesium (Rahman et al., 2024).

Organic consumption patterns are closely aligned with the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) definition of "sustainable diets", as follows: *Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources* (Burlingame and Dernini, 2012).

Data available on EU production and consumption of organic food show a growing trend in the 2010-2020 decade. An action plan for the development of organic production in the EU was adopted in 2021 (EC, 2021) to support both production and consumption, and to further enhance sustainability, in line with the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy (EC, 2020) and the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (EC, 2023a).

3. Research methodology

The research methodology of this article is based on a qualitative documentary analysis approach, focused on collecting, examining, and interpreting data from both official institutional sources and scientific literature related to organic agriculture and sustainable food systems in Europe. The study relies on information obtained from European Union institutions, including European Commission reports, CAP Strategic Plans, and policy frameworks such as the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. Also, are used reports from organizations such as FAO and IFOAM to provide comparative perspectives and guidance on policy trends in organic farming. The scientific foundation of the article is supported by academic articles, and books, addressing consumer behaviour, health benefits of organic food, and technological innovation in agriculture.

4. Organic in Europe

Sustainable agriculture represents a fundamental approach that transforms the way we produce food, focusing on the balance between productivity, environmental protection, and social well-being. This approach integrates practices that protect soil, conserve water, promote biodiversity, and ensure economic viability for farmers (Dubey, 2026).

Organic agriculture is an important pillar of sustainable agriculture because it limits the use of synthetic chemical substances and emphasizes natural methods of fertilization and crop protection (Table 1). By using compost, organic fertilizers, and biological pest control solutions, farmers can work in harmony with nature and maintain ecosystem balance (Adamchak, 2026).

Table 1. IFOAM Principles about Organic Agriculture

IFOAM Principles	Description
Principle of Health	Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plants, animals, humans, and the planet as one and indivisible.
Principle of Ecology	Organic farming should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, working with them, emulating them, and helping sustain them.
Principle of Fairness	Organic agriculture should build relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.
Principle of Care	Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations.

Source: made by the author based on the information presented by IFOAM (The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements)

More than just a production technique, organic agriculture brings benefits to both the environment and consumers. It encourages the production of cleaner and more natural food, while also offering farmers the opportunity to develop long-term sustainable practices. Thus, this agricultural model contributes to a responsible lifestyle and to building healthier and more resilient communities (Table 2).

Table 2. Objective of Organic Production

Category	Objective of Organic Production
Environment & Climate	Contributing to the protection of the environment and the climate
Soil Health	Maintaining the long-term fertility of soils
Biodiversity	Contributing to a high level of biodiversity
Non-toxic Environment	Contributing substantially to a non-toxic environment
Animal Welfare	Ensuring high animal welfare standards and meeting species-specific behavioural needs of animals
Local & Short Supply Chains	Encouraging short distribution channels and local production across the EU
Genetic Resources Conservation	Encouraging the preservation of rare and native breeds at risk of extinction
Plant Genetic Adaptation	Developing plant genetic material adapted to the specific needs of organic agriculture
Genetic Diversity in Crops	Promoting biodiversity through diverse plant genetic material, including organic heterogeneous material and suitable organic varieties
Innovation & Breeding Development	Fostering organic plant breeding activities to support the economic development of the organic sector

Source: made by the author based on the information available in the document REGULATION (EU) 2018/848

4.1. Organic Farming and Emerging Technologies

Organic farming has proven sustainability benefits, including improved soil quality, enhanced biodiversity, and reduced pollution (Eyhorn et al, 2019 cited by Çakmakçı 2023). Agricultural sustainability is defined as the ability of a crop production system to continuously produce food without environmental degradation. Soil health is closely associated with sustainable agriculture, because soil microorganism diversity and activity are the main components of soil health (Tahat et al., 2020). The organic farming may largely exclude the usage of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, growth hormones and feed additives of livestock activities.

A combination of organic farming and new technologies is of utmost importance to reduce the limitations and challenges of organic farming (Gamage et al., 2023). The digital revolution helps farmers optimize resources, reduce environmental impact and increase productivity in a sustainable way (Tabel 3).

Table 3. Technological Innovation in Organic Agriculture

New Technology	Challenges in traditional organic agriculture	Benefits
IoT, AI, and data analytics integration	Integrating the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and data analytics to automate agricultural processes helps in automatic irrigation control, early detection of plant diseases and prediction of crop yield.	Improved efficiency, early problem detection, optimized resource use, higher productivity
Drones	Real-time crop monitoring and early pest detection	Faster interventions, reduced losses
Sensor networks	Collection of environmental data (soil, humidity, temperature, etc.)	Informed decision-making and optimized growing conditions
Smart irrigation	Efficient water management	Reduced water consumption, preservation of soil health
Digital platforms and mobile applications	Provide farmers with real-time weather data, personalized crop management recommendations, and direct connectivity with markets and suppliers	Faster and more informed decision-making, improved market access, better farm management

Source: made by the author based on the information presented by Baldin, 2025

The integration of these modern technologies in agriculture is not only a step toward efficiency but also a way to ensure the long-term sustainability of agricultural production. From smart crop monitoring to connecting farmers with markets and suppliers through digital platforms, all these solutions support a more competitive, more resilient, and more environmentally friendly agriculture. By integrating ecological principles, innovative technologies, and scientifically validated traditional practices, this approach provides concrete solutions to the major challenges of the 21st century.

4.2. Eco-scheme, the new instruments of the CAP

The new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), adopted in December 2021, was designed to help the EU farming sector respond to both local and global challenges by supporting the transition toward a smarter, more sustainable, competitive, resilient, and diversified agricultural system that ensures long-term food security (Table 4). Eco-schemes are a new instrument within the CAP designed to support this transition. EU Member States define eco-schemes in their CAP Strategic Plans. The European Commission evaluates and approves them as essential tools for helping the CAP achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal (EC, 2023b).

Table 4. The benefits of organic products from the perspective of sustainable development

Benefits of organic products	Contribution to sustainable development (European Green Deal)
<i>Reduction in chemical pesticide use</i>	Organic farming supports the EU target of reducing pesticide use and related risks by 50% by 2030, protecting the environment and human health.
<i>Expansion of organic farmland</i>	Contributes to achieving the goal of allocating 25% of EU agricultural land to organic farming by 2030, promoting more sustainable farming systems.
<i>Reduction in antimicrobial use</i>	Supports a 50% reduction in antimicrobial use in livestock and aquaculture, lowering the risk of antimicrobial resistance and protecting public health.
<i>Efficient use of nutrients and fertilizers</i>	Helps reduce nutrient losses by 50% and fertilizer use by at least 20%, maintaining soil fertility while reducing water and soil pollution.

Source: made by the author based on the information available in the document entitled 'Sustainable agricultural practices and methods' (European Commission)

A key innovation of the new CAP is the introduction of eco-schemes, which encourage farmers to adopt practices that reduce the negative environmental and climate impact of agriculture and promote more sustainable farming models. At EU level, eco-schemes targeted to soil conservation (increasing natural fertility, carbon farming) account for 30% of the overall; those addressing biodiversity and landscape features represent nearly 20% and those on grazing and grassland management account for 15%. Support to organic farming and pesticide management account for 6% each. Few Plans include specific schemes targeted to peatland and wetlands (2%) and animal-related actions (5%) (EC, 2023b).

Member States have the flexibility to adapt these eco-schemes to their national environmental and climate priorities (Table 5). Overall, CAP Strategic Plans include 158 eco-schemes across the European Union, with most Member States implementing several schemes, each targeting specific environmental or climate objectives (EC, 2023b).

Table 5. Eco-Schemes

Aspect	Description
Multi-dimensional eco-scheme countries	Six Member States — Czech Republic (CZ), France (FR), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Netherlands (NL), Slovakia (SK) — introduced one multi-dimensional eco-scheme. Such schemes include a package of options, made up of a mix of practices of various degree of ambition, from which farmers can make a selection.
Whole-farm approach	In such cases, farmers are often requested to select or perform practices covering their whole agricultural area (this approach is referred to as a 'whole-farm approach'). In addition to the main 'whole-farm eco-scheme', Czech Republic (CZ) and Slovakia (SK) set out more specific ones;
Points-based eco-schemes	Netherlands (NL) and Hungary (HU) put forward points-based eco-schemes, which allocate a scoring/weighting to the different practices according to their likely positive impact and encourage farmers to select those practices most relevant to the environmental and climate-related needs on their farms and/or in their regions;
Other Plans	Some countries, such as Lithuania (LT), Ireland (IE), and Poland (PL), request farmers to take up more than one eco-scheme or a minimum number of practices, relating for instance to arable land, to ensure synergies and provide a higher environmental value

Source: made by the author based on the information provided by European Commission, (EC, 2023b)

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5. Key Events for Success in the European Organic Sector

In 2026, the organic products sector continues to strengthen its position internationally through a series of leading trade fairs and exhibitions dedicated to innovation, sustainability, and the development of responsible food supply chains. These events represent essential meeting platforms for producers, distributors, retailers, and industry specialists, offering opportunities for networking, the exchange of best practices, and the promotion of the latest trends in the field (Table 6). From certified organic foods and “free from” products to sustainable solutions for fruits, vegetables, and natural ingredients, each exhibition contributes to shaping the future of the global organic market. At the same time, the 2026 editions place special emphasis on new generations of entrepreneurs, innovative technologies, and the industry’s adaptation to the demands of modern consumers.

Table 6. Key Events for Success in the European Organic Sector

Event	Description	Date and Venue
BIOFACH 2026: “Young Voices, Bold Visions”	The world’s leading trade fair for organic food. BIOFACH brings together the international organic industry and highlights the innovations and visions of the new generation in sustainable agriculture and food systems.	10–13 February 2026, Nuremberg Exhibition Centre, Nuremberg, Germany
SANA Food – Organic Revolution 2026	A leading B2B event for the conscious and sustainable food sector, offering exclusive insights into organic market trends, consumption, supply chains, and sustainable development. It connects Horeca sectors, specialty retailers, and restaurant outlets with innovative agri-food producers of organic, vegan and high-quality sustainable products.	23 February 2026, Bologna, Italy
Alimentaria: 50 Years Feeding the Future	A landmark event for food industry professionals, celebrating its 50th anniversary with a special focus on organic producers and the European organic certification label.	23–26 March 2026, Fira de Barcelona – Gran Via, Barcelona, Spain
MedFEL: the meeting point of the fruit and vegetable world	France’s leading trade fair exclusively dedicated to the fruit and vegetable sector, focused on 100% sustainable practices and economic exchange within the industry.	28–29 April 2026, Exhibition Centre of Perpignan, Perpignan, France
Free From Specialty Food 2026	An exhibition dedicated to “free from” food and beverage products, promoting natural, organic, GMO-free, and pesticide-free ingredients in a rapidly expanding market sector.	16–17 June 2026, Vienna, Austria
Natural & Organic Food Show (NOPEX)	An event dedicated to natural and organic products, bringing together professionals from retail, hospitality, manufacturing, and international trade to explore future market trends.	16–17 September 2026, Excel London, London, United Kingdom
NATEXPO Lyon 2026	A strategic trade fair for organic industry stakeholders, designed to encourage exchange of ideas and shape the future of the organic market.	28–29 September 2026, Lyon, France
Nordic Organic Expo 2026	The leading Nordic event for certified organic and natural products, gathering top companies in food, beverages, health, and beauty sectors.	18–19 November 2026, Malmö Massan, Malmö, Sweden

Source: made by the author based on the information available in the document entitled ‘Yearbook 2025 - Trends 2026 Bioeco Actual’ INDEPENDENT ORGANIC TRADE MEDIA

In Europe's major exhibition centres, these events are becoming true strategic landmarks for the development of organic agriculture and responsible trade. Participation in such events provides industry stakeholders with direct access to international markets and valuable insights into the evolution of the organic sector. In this context, the main international trade fairs of 2026 highlight the dynamism and growth potential of the global bio industry.

Despite challenges such as economic fluctuations, supply chain constraints, and certification complexities, the European organic food market continues to thrive. The continued support of government policies, sustainable farming incentives, and the evolving tastes of consumers will ensure that organic food remains at the forefront of Europe's food industry (Bartolozzi, 2025).

6. Conclusions

Organic agriculture has become a central pillar of sustainable development in Europe, responding effectively to the interconnected challenges of food security, environmental protection, and public health. The steady expansion of the organic sector reflects not only growing consumer demand for healthier and safer food, but also a broader societal shift toward environmentally responsible production and consumption models. Organic farming contributes significantly to soil conservation, biodiversity preservation, reduced chemical dependency, and climate resilience, making it a key component of the transition to sustainable food systems. This article demonstrates that the integration of innovative technologies such as precision agriculture, artificial intelligence, IoT systems, and digital platforms is transforming organic farming into a smarter and more efficient sector. These technologies help overcome traditional limitations of organic production by improving resource management, increasing productivity, and supporting data-driven decision-making. At the same time, European policy instruments, particularly the reformed Common Agricultural Policy and its eco-schemes, provide essential financial and regulatory support for farmers adopting sustainable agricultural practices. Furthermore, the development of the organic market is reinforced by strong institutional commitment at EU level, including the European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, and the Organic Action Plan, all of which promote long-term sustainability goals. International trade fairs and specialized events across Europe also play a strategic role in accelerating innovation, strengthening partnerships, and expanding access to global markets. The future of European agriculture depends on the successful integration of ecological principles, technological advancement, and supportive public policies. Organic agriculture, supported by innovation and collaborative governance, offers a viable pathway toward a more resilient and sustainable agricultural system capable of meeting the demands of present and future generations.

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