

TP Organics Briefing: building political will for research & innovation into organics and agroecology at national level

We know the current food systems' production is unsustainable and unable to ensure **long-term food security**. **Sustainable food security requires system change** and a paradigm shift away from the narrow "feed the world" narrative and focus on productivity/yields only. Rather, one could say that Europe "eats" the world: Our high levels of food production, consumption and exports are largely dependent on high imports of agricultural inputs such as animal feed or fertilisers, with severe environmental and social impacts globally.

Organic farming and agroecology are the best guarantee for long-term food security:

- As holistic approaches based on principles of ecology, circularity, diversity and fairness, they balance yields against the protection of our climate and biodiversity.
- They make crops – and yields – more stable and resilient to pests, environmental variability, and climate change, including increasingly frequent droughts, water shortages and new pathogens, thus reducing the need for inputs.
- They show that we can produce nutritious and sufficient food whilst preserving biodiversity, soil and water and making our food production more resilient to the increasing impacts of climate change, proving that there is no reason to polarise nature protection versus agriculture.

To make an agroecological Europe a reality, we also importantly need to address food waste and consumption/diets.

As we face unprecedented environmental challenges and as public demand for more sustainable practices gets ever louder, it is imperative that we support and expand organic and agroecological research and innovation (R&I) at EU level but also importantly at national level. Please find below **key messages for making the case for organic** towards your national ministries based on our [policy brief on food security](#) published in September 2023. We kept them simple to be suitable for automatic translation.

1. Sustainable soil management

- **Improved soil health:** Organic farming practices, such as crop rotation, composting, and reduced tillage, enhance soil fertility and structure. Healthy soils are more productive over the long term, ensuring a stable food supply.
- **Erosion prevention:** Techniques used in organic farming, such as cover cropping, help prevent soil erosion, preserving arable land for future food production.

2. Biodiversity protection

- **Crop diversity:** Organic farming promotes the cultivation of diverse crops, reducing reliance on monocultures. This diversity increases resilience to pests, diseases, and climate change, safeguarding food supplies.
- **Wildlife conservation:** Organic practices create habitats for beneficial insects and other wildlife, which can contribute to natural pest control and pollination, essential for food production.

3. Water conservation and quality

- **Efficient water use:** Organic farms often use techniques such as drip irrigation and mulching, which help maintain food production during water supply crises.
- **Reduced pollution:** By avoiding synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, organic farming reduces water contamination, ensuring cleaner water sources for agriculture and human consumption.

4. Resilience to climate change

- **Carbon sequestration:** Organic farming practices, like maintaining permanent cover crops, help sequester carbon in the soil, mitigating climate change impacts and supporting long-term food security.
- **Adaptation strategies:** Organic agriculture's emphasis on local knowledge and biodiversity enhances the ability of farming systems to adapt to changing climatic conditions.

5. Economic viability for farmers

- **Fair prices:** Organic products often fetch higher market prices, which can improve the economic stability of farmers.
- **Reduced input costs:** Organic farming reduces reliance on expensive synthetic inputs, lowering costs and making farming more sustainable economically.
- **Job creation:** Organic farming often requires more labour than conventional farming, creating job opportunities and supporting rural economies. By supporting organic, policy can contribute to maintaining jobs and creating new ones.

6. Healthier food production

- **Nutrient-rich food:** Organic farming can produce more nutrient-dense foods, contributing to better nutrition and health, which are critical components of food security.
- **Reduced chemical exposure:** By avoiding synthetic chemicals, organic farming provides safer food, reducing health risks and ensuring the availability of nutritious, healthy food.

7. Community and social benefits

- **Local food systems:** Organic farming often supports local food systems, reducing dependency on global supply chains and enhancing local food security.
- **Empowering farmers:** Organic agriculture can empower smallholder and family farmers by promoting agroecological knowledge and practices that enhance self-reliance and community resilience.

Additionally, please find below again the “**fact check**” from our communication package shared with our members in September last year following the launch of our [policy brief on food security](#).

Myth	Fact
<i>We do not produce enough food, which threatens food security.</i>	<p>The real issue is unequal distribution and income inequality, exacerbated by inflation/increase in food and energy costs. We already produce enough food to feed the world population, but it is unequally distributed, and a lot of food is wasted and lost along the chain. We need to address food waste and consumption/diets.</p>
<i>Organic cannot “feed the world”.</i>	<p>Organic and agroecology can feed the people healthy and sustainable diets, especially in combination with reduced food waste and a reduced consumption of animal products. Organic and agroecology perform better than conventional farming (when performance is not narrowly defined as productivity but includes the production of public goods for society) and can even yield higher, especially under a changing climate and the increasingly extreme weather conditions threatening harvests.</p>
<i>Organic is too expensive.</i>	<p>Conventional products are more expensive; their hidden costs (or negative externalities) are just not factored in the price of food. Equally, the free use of public funds and heavy funding of inputs like pesticides by the Common Agricultural Policy distort reality. What we really cannot afford is to further degrade/destroy ecosystems and the climate. Organic farming and agroecology balance yields against protection of the climate and biodiversity, which makes them the best guarantee for long-term food security.</p>
<i>We need pesticides to feed the world and safeguard the EU’s food and feed security.</i>	<p>Food production relies on healthy soils and ecosystems. Pesticides have negative effects on our bases of production, on farmers’ and consumers’ health, and even on yields. Focusing on maximising yields at all expenses will not guarantee long term food security. Rather, we urgently need to transition to sustainable, organic and agroecological farming and plant-based diets. Such a transition is possible in Europe by 2050 and would simultaneously reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve ecosystem health. It requires involving consumers, aligning public policies on the use of pesticides, food and farming, CAP reforms, international agreements, and transition support tools such as subsidies, insurance, etc.</p>