

CORE ORGANIC II – Tapping into Europe's organic trend

Organic food production has continued to grow in popularity, partly because it taps into a number of contemporary consumer concerns such as animal welfare and healthy eating. A new project aims to capitalise on this demand by ensuring better research coordination across Europe.



Consumers buy organic food for different reasons – environmental, ethical, health, nutritional, or other perceived benefits. With growing interest in organic food in Europe, the sector needs to find innovative ways to meet consumer demands. Thus more coordinated research is needed at the EU level to boost the organic food industry, which will have positive spin-offs for European consumers, agriculture, competitive markets, sustainable food production, and society in general.

The EU-funded CORE Organic II project was set up to support coordinated transnational research in this fast-changing market. The research team is investigating issues that directly impact consumers, such as whether or not the restricted use of antibiotics in organic animal farming results in safer products with fewer antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Working together

"Organic farming and food production is a small research area compared to conventional production, [but] by transnational collaboration we try to avoid fragmentation and secure efficient use of resources," explains CORE Organic II's coordinator Ulla Bertelsen.

The project builds on the first CORE Organic project, which set out to establish an effective and sustainable transnational research programme. To achieve this, common research priorities have been identified for the organic sector, where a transnational approach gives added value.

Some 11 projects were initiated last year involving dedicated researchers from 20 countries. For example, the innovative SafeOrganic initiative explored whether or not the restricted use of antibiotics in organic animal farming results in safer products with fewer antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

The SafeOrganic study is also analysing if resistant bacteria from conventionally-reared pigs are cross-contaminating organic pig meat during the slaughtering process. The results of this could be useful for the marketing of organic pig production, giving consumers an extra reason to choose organic meat products. In line with this, the project has initiated another initiative, called ProPIG, which focuses on health management in organic herds.

Lasting impacts

Today's agribusiness sector is more focused on sustainable production, animal welfare, reducing energy dependency and protecting the environment, and these are all factors where organic production can have a positive impact.

CORE Organic II will help Europe to reinforce its leading position in organic research and boost the wider impact of this research on the agricultural sector. Indeed, strong, sustainable collaboration on a series of research projects has the potential to benefit numerous European countries.

Research results from the project are already being implemented by organic farmers, and its work fosters cross-border knowledge-sharing. Danish farmers, for example, have better access to the research results from Northern Germany, thanks to the project's efforts. According to Bertelsen, the project partners are currently discussing how best to further facilitate this knowledge exchange, for example by extending the use of the open access database 'Organic Eprints'.

"Looking at research needs and funding in a transnational European context like this is in itself a lasting idea," says Bertelsen, one that continues to build momentum in line with Europe's growing interest in organic farming.

Further information

See also

Project web site: <http://www.coreorganic2.org/>
Project information on CORDIS:
http://cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/95267_en.html

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