

Survey of the Demands of End Users in Europe for Organic Market Data

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Few European countries produce complete coverage of important market data, standardization is missing, and data are seldom comparable within one country over time and between countries. Furthermore, detailed information on specific commodities is missing. Many different data collection methods are currently used and the variety of agencies collecting data in the various European countries mean that gaining a European level overview of the quality of existing data is difficult. As part of the EU research project "OrganicDataNetwork", a survey was carried out in 2012 to identify the needs and demands of end users of organic market data, and to find areas of information asymmetry. A further goal of the survey was to undertake an appraisal of the quality of the existing available data that is used. This contribution presents some of the highlights of the results, which will be published in full during 2013.

In an online questionnaire, 390 people from 36 European countries were surveyed. Most of the responses (40 percent) came from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, which are all countries with a more developed organic market corresponding with a higher number of organic operators and thus a higher number of potential end users of organic data. Of the 390 respondents, 152 (39 percent) worked for organic producers, 113 (29 percent) for distributors of organic produce/products, and 86 (22 percent) for processor of organic products. 164 (46 percent) respondents were engaged in executive/management, 97 (27 percent) in sales, and 80 (22 percent) in marketing. The primary uses for organic market data are marketing strategy formulation (41 percent), decision support (39 percent), strategy/policy development (34 percent), research (26 percent), and forecasting (23 percent) (note: these total more than 100 percent as each respondent was allowed to indicate more than one use). The regions described by the data that are used are primarily national data (62 percent), and also to a large extent regional data (41 percent). Approximately 32 percent of the respondents use international European data or whole of Europe data, while 20 percent of the respondents use data from non-European countries or data on world level respectively.

The respondents expressed that 'relevance' is always the main quality need for existing data that they used, with other quality indicators ranked about equal: namely that data should be affordable, available as often as needed, accurate, up to date, easily accessible, comparable with other data that respondents use, of high quality, and sufficient for the respondents' needs. The most common criticisms of organic market data were with regard to accessibility, availability as often as needed, and whether it is up to date. Data on organic import volumes were also criticized as being inaccurate and incomparable with other used data, while retail consumer price data for organic food and organic sales

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data at retail level were both criticized on their affordability. When asked about available data that is not used, the main reason was lack of relevance. Price and comparability were rarely the reason, and infrequency and inaccuracy were almost never the reason. The majority of respondents reported however that the quality of the data was rarely the reason that it is not used.

In many cases, the frequencies of responses to export volume and value data were very similar or the same against all of the quality criteria. Using the same means of comparison, import volume and value data, and commercial /public organic procurement price and volume data were evaluated very similarly. These data types are all considered to be quite different from the data collection perspective, but seem to be bundled from the end user perspective. When asked about data that is unavailable, about 30 respondents (up to 25 percent of respondents) could not access each data type, although most would use the data if available and would wish for monthly or annual data to be available for all data types. There was an almost universal expression of feeling at a competitive disadvantage because of lack of available data for all data types.

The following figure shows the number of respondents who report using each of 15 data types that were the focus of this survey. The figure also shows the number of respondents who report that the data types do not exist.

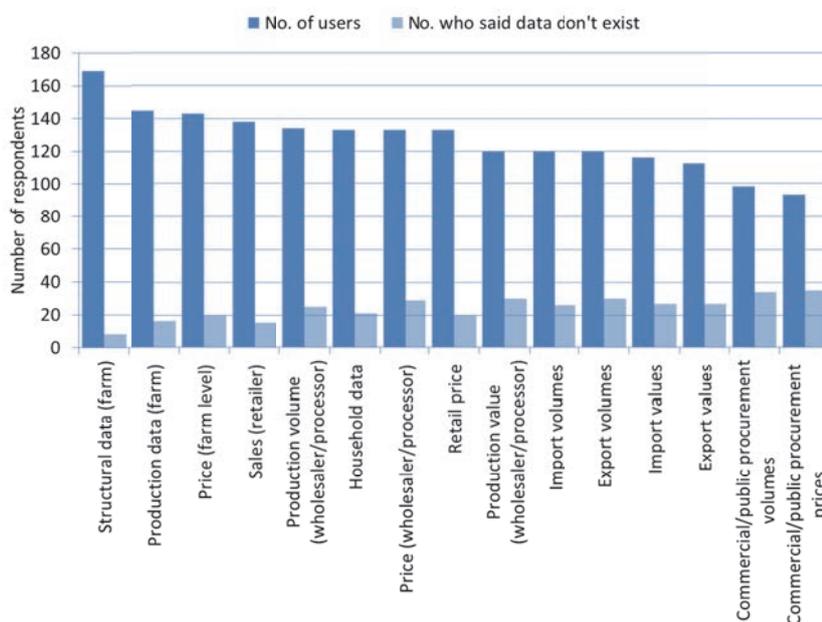


Figure 87: Number of users of each data type and number of respondents who reported that the respective data type does not exist

Source: Home at al.2013

Reference

Robert Home, Michal Lošťák, Matthias Stolze (2013): Survey of the organic market data needs of end users. Draft 27.1.2013. Deliverable D1.1 of the EU FP7 OrganicDataNetwork project. Project number: 289376. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, Switzerland