



NJF Seminar 422

**Fostering healthy food systems
through organic agriculture -
Focus on Nordic-Baltic Region**
- International Scientific Conference

Tartu, Estonia, 25-27 August 2009

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PROGRAMME

ABSTRACTS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Organized by
Estonian University of Life Sciences
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Systemic sustainability characteristics of organic farming: a review

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Agriculture for food production has come to crossroads: while conventional agriculture needs to improve environmental and social performance, organic agriculture needs to increase the production volumes and to re-establish the connectedness between producers and consumers. Through re-localising the food production there is an increasing convergence of the farming practices towards sustainable agriculture acknowledging the prospects, advantages and limitations of the different production systems. The aim is to find a combination of production methods that is optimal in given circumstances and to adapt the production system accordingly. Assessment of the environmental impacts should be integrated into the assessment of the overall sustainability. Formulation of the management strategies requires evaluation and integration of research results from many different disciplines, and the focus of the interdisciplinary research should be on food systems and bioregions rather than on the level of farms or farming systems. The present article is a review on today's discussion and research dealing with conventional, organic and local farming for food production. The future prospects of organic production to respond to the challenges of advancing global food security and to contribute to overall sustainable development are discussed. It seems that as a developing production mode organic agriculture has a role to play in the green global network of local food systems.

Farming systems and biodiversity

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The intensification of agriculture has led to the decrease in food resources and habitats resulting in loss of biodiversity. To overcome the problem more environmentally friendly farming systems are being implemented. Organic farming plays an important role in high nature value farming but there are also other possibilities for low-intensity agriculture. In the frame of the Estonian Rural Development Plan agri-environment support scheme (e.g environmentally friendly production and organic farming payments) is applied to favour environment, including biodiversity. Farmland birds and bumble-bees are studied and their relationships with different farming systems analyzed in the frame of Estonian AE evaluation coordinated by the Agricultural Research Centre since 2005.