



ICOAS '18

6th International Conference on
Organic Agriculture Sciences

DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN ORGANIC RESEARCH

Strengthening
partnerships across
Europe and
beyond

**BOOK OF
ABSTRACTS**

7 – 9 November 2018
Esterházy Palace
Eisenstadt, Austria



How to improve collection on organic agriculture in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

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Annually, the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL collects data on key indicators of organic agriculture in European Union such as area, production and trade data among national data sources (for trade data) and Eurostat (for area, production and operator data; Eurostat 2018). Data are compiled in a MySQL database, and quality checks are carried out following the ORMACODE of the EU-funded OrganicDataNetwork (OrganicDataNetwork et al 2014), much of which is based on Eurostat's Statistics Code of Practice (Eurostat 2011). Checks include the comparison against the previous year, the neighbouring countries, and the overall total. In case of inconsistencies, data providers are asked for clarification. FiBL publishes the data annually in collaboration with IFOAM – Organics International in a statistical yearbook (Willer & Lernoud 2018).

Survey results for 2016 show that almost 2.6 million hectares, or 21 % of the EU's organic farmland (12.1 million hectares), were located in the CEE countries of the EU. In 2016, the organic area increased by 4.7% in the CEE countries and thus at a slower rate than in the EU as a whole (+8.2%). Growth was, however, higher than in the three preceding years, for which stagnation was noted. Organic farmland in the CEE countries constitutes 5.1 % of the total agricultural land, which is less than the organic farmland share for the EU of 6.7%. Retail sales data are scarce. According to the data available, the CEE organic market amounts to at least 524 million euros. However, for some CEE countries, no data or no updated data are available; and for many countries, data are based on estimates.

The data show that, currently, the organic sector in the CEE countries is developing at a slower pace than in the EU and that the development of the organic area and production is not matched by a similar development of the market or processing infrastructure. However, due to the many data gaps, it is not possible to draw a clear picture.

This brief analysis indicates that there are many challenges in the area of market data collection. Whereas the availability and accessibility of area and operator data is good, no country, except for the Czech Republic, has a permanent collection system for trade data. The extent of the domestic market is not known for many countries or CEE as a whole, and it is thus not possible to predict trends.

It would therefore be good if governments could support the collection and analysis of organic market data and if actors could follow existing examples of good data collection practices. It would be important to give a mandate to institutions already in charge with data collection to include data on organic agriculture, to help improve statistical processes, to support the harmonisation of classifications and definitions, and to make sure data are going through thorough quality checks (Zanoli 2014).

The work presented here is funded by the Swiss State secretariat for Economic Affairs and the International Trade Centre ITC and it received funding from the European Union in the framework of the OrganicDataNetwork project (No. 289376), which ran from 2012 to 2014.

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