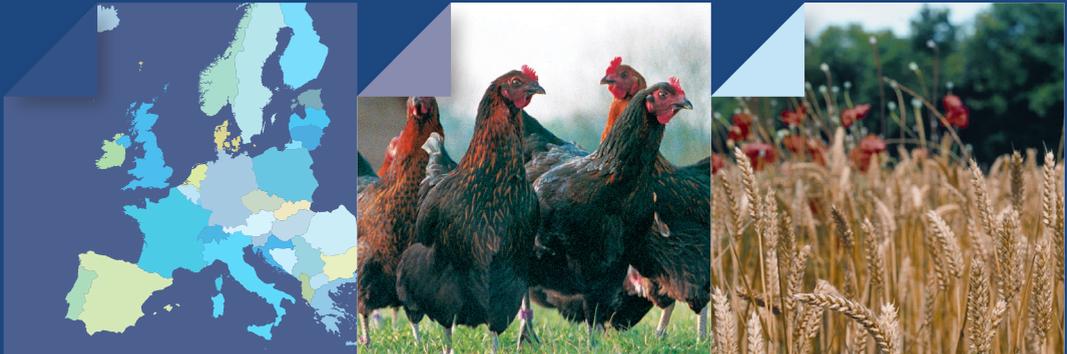


Organic Action Plans

Development, implementation and evaluation

A resource manual for the organic food and farming sector

Schmid O., Dabbert S., Eichert C., González V., Lampkin N., Michelsen J., Slabe A., Stokkers R., Stolze M., Stopes C., Wollmuthová P., Vairo D. and Zanoli R.



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Foreword

In June 2004 the European Commission published the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming. With this Action Plan the Commission intended to assess the situation of organic farming and to lay down the basis for future policy development. At the national level many governments have also developed Action Plans for promoting organic farming. Therefore it was seen as necessary to consider how such Action Plans could be evaluated successfully.

The European Action Plan was the main reason why the DG Research of the European Commission decided to fund a specific support project, the ORGAP Project No. CT-2005-006591 within the 6th Framework Research programme. This project, with the title *European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming: Development of criteria and procedures for the evaluation of the EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture*, started in May 2005 and was completed in April 2008.

Within the project a toolbox was developed to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the European Action Plan in the following areas: information, training and education, research, production, processing, market development, certification, and public expenditures. This toolbox was tested on selected existing national Action Plans and partially also for the European Action Plan, mainly focussing on the implementation processes. In addition, policy recommendations to the European Commission, national authorities and other stakeholders were made.

In order to communicate the recommendations of this project as widely as possible, this practical manual for initiating and evaluating Action Plans has been produced. This manual is intended to serve two functions:

- a) A tool for stakeholder involvement in future Action Plan development and implementation at the EU, national and regional levels
- b) A guide to the use of the ORGAPET, the Evaluation Toolbox of the ORGAP project (included as a CD-ROM with the manual and at www.orgap.org).

The manual was developed as part of the ORGAP project and is largely based on the documents included in the Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET).

The following institutions contributed to the development of ORGAPET and the manual: Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (Otto Schmid, Bettina Landau,

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The IFOAM EU Group (Victor González, Marco Schlüter and Christopher Stopes on behalf of Soil Association, United Kingdom) was responsible for the development of the manual together with the project coordinator FiBL and the assistance of Dr. Nic Lampkin (UWA).

The other partners in the project have contributed to the manual, providing information about national Organic Action Plans: Institute of Sustainable Development (ISD) Slovenia (Anamarija Slabe); Institute for Agricultural Economics (VUZE) Czech Republic (Pavla Wollmuthova); Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI) Netherlands (Robert Stokkers); Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica (SEAE) Spain (Victor González).

A special thanks goes to Christopher Stopes, who helped to edit the text of this manual. We are also grateful to Ben Millbank and Joy Carey of the Soil Association for the final layout and the graphic design of the manual.

We acknowledge the support of DG Research of the Commission of the European Communities, in particular their scientific officer Dr. Danièle Tissot.

The editors hope that this manual helps to initiate a process of evaluation and progressive development of Organic Action Plans at the European, national and regional level.

Otto Schmid

ORGAP Scientific Project Coordinator

Frick, Switzerland, April 2008

1 Introduction

1.1 About this manual

Who is this manual for?

This manual has been created to inspire the people, organisations and institutions involved and with an interest in the organic food and farming sector to engage in the initiation, review, revision and renewal of regional, national and European Organic Action Plans.

The manual is targeted at all the stakeholders who have participated in the development and implementation of Organic Action Plans – and those who didn't!

- Members of Action Plan and policy advisory groups
- Policy administrators
- Politicians
- Organisations and representative bodies
- Farmers and farming businesses
- Food businesses.

The manual is a tool for stakeholder involvement and for the use of ORGAPET

The objectives of the manual are to provide:

- a tool for stakeholder involvement in future Action Plan development and implementation processes at EU, national and regional level
- a guide to the use of the Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET) developed through the project.

What does the manual include?

The manual outlines:

- The development of the organic food and farming sector in Europe;
- Organic Action Plans as a component of European and national policies for organic farming;
- Planning and implementation of Organic Action Plans;
- Methods and tools for evaluation of Organic Action Plans.

The manual summarises the key lessons learnt from more than 10 years experience of development, implementation and evaluation of Organic Action Plans throughout Europe. It has been prepared as part of the Organic Action Plan Project (ORGAP) and is based on the final Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET), which includes comprehensive information to support the Organic Action Plan development and evaluation process.

🌐 The ORGAP website (www.orgap.org) provides a detailed outline of the project and the Evaluation Toolbox.

Box 1: What is ORGAPET about?

🌐 ORGAPET is available as a CD-ROM (included with this manual) and web-based toolbox, with links between the different elements designed to make navigation easy.

ORGAPET consists of four main sections – all on the CD-ROM – providing full details and all source documents:

- Part A: Background information and context of Organic Action Plans, policy evaluation and stakeholder involvement;
- Part B: Evaluation methods relating to Action Plan development and implementation processes;
- Part C: Evaluation of Action Plan outputs and effects on the organic sector and broader policy goals;
- Part D: Approaches to deriving overall conclusions concerning effects of Action Plans.

Each section is sub-divided into a number of specific topics, with an overview document providing a guide to key issues and possible solutions, and a series of annexes providing illustrative examples, specific methodological details and useful data sources. A more detailed description is found in Annex 1 of this manual.

ORGAPET has been developed through an iterative process, involving regularly updates and modifications. The evaluation approach takes account of systems already in use by or familiar to the EU Commission and EU member states (e.g. the MEANS/*Evalsed* approach) with suggested modifications to address the specific context of organic farming policy.

Future updates to ORGAPET resulting from new research and policy developments will be made available through the web-based version

Figure 1 shows the content of ORGAPET, as it is presented on the CD-Rom and internet.

🌐 In the text reference will be made to the different sections of ORGAPET, where more information can be found, including links to background documents.

Figure 1: ORGAPET content overview

ORGAPET: The Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox Version 6, April 2008						
OVERVIEW	A	A1 Introduction	A2 Evaluation principles	A3 Development of organic farming	A4 Involving stakeholders	A5 Planning evaluations
	B	B1 Describing programmes	B2 Assessing logic and content	B3 Evaluating stakeholder involvement		
	C	C1 Defining objectives	C2 Defining indicators	C3 Key indicators	C4 Expert judgement	
	D	D1 Integrating results	D2 Evaluation examples			



ORGANIC ACTION PLAN
Overview (Home)
Updates

ORGAPET: The Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox

Part A	A1. Introduction to ORGAP	A2. Evaluation principles	A3. Development of organic farming	A4. Involving stakeholders	A5. Planning evaluations
Part B	B1. Programme processes	B2. Content and follow-up	B3. Evaluation stakeholder involvement		
Part C	C1. Defining objectives	C2. Defining indicators	C3. Key indicators	C4. Expert judgement	
Part D	D1. Integrating results	D2. Evaluation examples			

Version 6
April 2008

ORGAPET overview

[Introduction](#)

Part A: Background and context

[A1. Introduction](#)

[A2. Evaluation principles](#)

[A3. Development of organic farming](#)

[A4. Involving stakeholders](#)

[A5. Planning evaluations](#)

Part B: Evaluation programme design and implementation

[B1. Programme processes](#)

[B2. Content and follow-up](#)

[B3. Evaluation stakeholder involvement](#)

Part C: Evaluation programme effects

[C1. Defining objectives](#)

[C2. Defining indicators](#)

[C3. Key indicators](#)

[C4. Expert judgement](#)

Part D: Results

[D1. Integrating results](#)

[D2. Evaluation examples](#)

[Home](#) [Printable Version](#)







ORGAPET: The Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox

ORGAPET should be cited as: Lampkin, N., Schmid, O., Dabbert, S., Michelsen, J. and Zanoli, R. (eds.) (2008) Organic action plan evaluation toolbox (ORGAPET) Final output of the ORGAP research project (www.orgap.org) for the European Commission, Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences, Aberystwyth University, UK and Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, CH.

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Overview of ORGAPET

The Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET) is a collection of different information/data sources and evaluation tools, including participative techniques, quantitative assessments and methods to identify relevant indicators, which can be used selectively to meet the needs of a particular assessment of national or EU organic action plans.

The toolbox is structured around 'compartments' or sections containing 'tools' fulfilling different functions. Each section contains an overview document and a series of annexes detailing a range of methodological approaches (including background documents, relevant data sources and other items), as well as examples of how these have been applied in specific cases, for example the evaluations and workshops conducted as part of the [ORGAP](#) project. The structure of ORGAPET is summarised [below](#).

ORGAPET is aimed primarily at organic action plan managers/administrators and engaged stakeholders involved in action plan implementation and the commissioning (and possibly conduct) of evaluations. It does not attempt to provide the full methodological guidance that might be necessary for the training of expert evaluators, but expert evaluators should benefit from the specific organic farming policy examples presented and the information on relevant data sources (particularly in the annexes to each section).

The full version of ORGAPET is not aimed at stakeholders involved in overseeing the implementation of action plans or working with the results of evaluations, for example as participants in action plan steering groups. For this purpose, a [manual](#) for developing, implementing and evaluating organic action plans has been produced. (If using the CD-ROM version of ORGAPET, the manual referred to is the one accompanying the CD-ROM.) The manual is intended to be a tool for stakeholder involvement in future action plan development and implementation processes at national, regional and EU levels and to provide an introduction to the use of ORGAPET and the interpretation of evaluations.

ORGAPET covers all possible aspects of action plan evaluation - if at first this seems overwhelming, try a small part first!

The manual is a guide for all stakeholders, not only from the organic sector

This manual has been developed to provide an accessible guide to Action Plan development, evaluation and the use of ORGAPET, which aims also to be a tool for stakeholder involvement in future Action Plan development and implementation processes at national and regional level as well as EU level.

This manual and ORGAPET as a whole is an information source and tool, which is of particular interest for those stakeholders with strong involvement in organic food and farming. However it is important to also reach stakeholders that are important in the strategic development of the organic food and farming sector, but would not necessarily see themselves as a part of the 'organic sector'.

We recognise that the broader the interest in and involvement with the strategic development of the organic sector, the more effective the strategy will be. Government departments other than agriculture (for example departments of health and environment); conventional farming organisations; non-organic food businesses – may all have a legitimate and valued interest in the further development of organic agriculture.

Furthermore, the development and implementation of strategic Organic Action Plans depends on the active engagement of those organisations and businesses with a role in the wider food and farming sector, as well as those who are part of the organic sector.

1.2 Organic farming – origins, definition & principles

Organic farming originated at the end of the 19th century, based on the knowledge of biologically oriented agricultural science, the visions of the Reform movements in Western Europe and North America and an interest in farming systems in the Far East. A significant influence was the founding of biodynamic agriculture in the 1920s and the emergence of strongly organized movements in the United Kingdom, in France and in Switzerland in the 1940s, which led to the first organic production standards in the 1960s.

In 1980 IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (founded in 1974), developed broadly accepted private international standards for organic production. Subsequently several countries started to develop their own regulations for organic farming in 1980s (Austria, France, Denmark and Spain). In 1991 the European Union developed and implemented Regulation

(EEC) 2092/91 outlining a European wide standard for organic farming. Later many other countries in the world developed their own regulations. Guidance to governments was given by the Codex Alimentarius, a common UN-Programme of FAO and WHO, which developed guidelines for organically produced food, firstly published in 1999.

What is organic farming?

The EU Commission defines organic farming on their webpage as:

“Organic farming differs from other farming systems in a number of ways. It favours renewable resources and recycling, returning to the soil the nutrients found in waste products. Where livestock is concerned, meat and poultry production is regulated with particular concern for animal welfare and by using natural foodstuffs. Organic farming respects the environment’s own systems for controlling pests and disease in raising crops and livestock and avoids the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilisers, growth hormones, antibiotics or gene manipulation. Instead, organic farmers use a range of techniques that help sustain ecosystems and reduce pollution.”¹

What are the objectives of organic farming?

The new Council Regulation (EC) 834/2007 for organic production (in force from 2009 and that replaces the EU organic Regulation (EEC) 2092/91) states the general objectives for organic production:

- (a) establish a sustainable management system for agriculture that:
 - (i) respects nature’s systems and cycles and sustains and enhances the health of soil, water, plants and animals and the balance between them;
 - (ii) contributes to a high level of biological diversity;
 - (iii) makes responsible use of energy and natural resources, such as water, soil, organic matter and air;
 - (iv) respects high animal welfare standards and in particular meets animals’ species-specific behavioural needs;
- (b) aim at producing products of high quality;
- (c) aim at producing a wide variety of foods and other agricultural products that respond to consumers’ demand for goods produced by the use of processes that do not harm the environment, human health, plant health or animal health and welfare.

The private sector has further developed the principles and international rules of organic agriculture, primarily through the IFOAM Norms (Basic Standards and Accreditation Criteria), which are regularly updated.²

BOX 2: IFOAM Principles 2005

The Principle of Health

Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.

The Principle of Ecology

Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

The Principle of Fairness

Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.

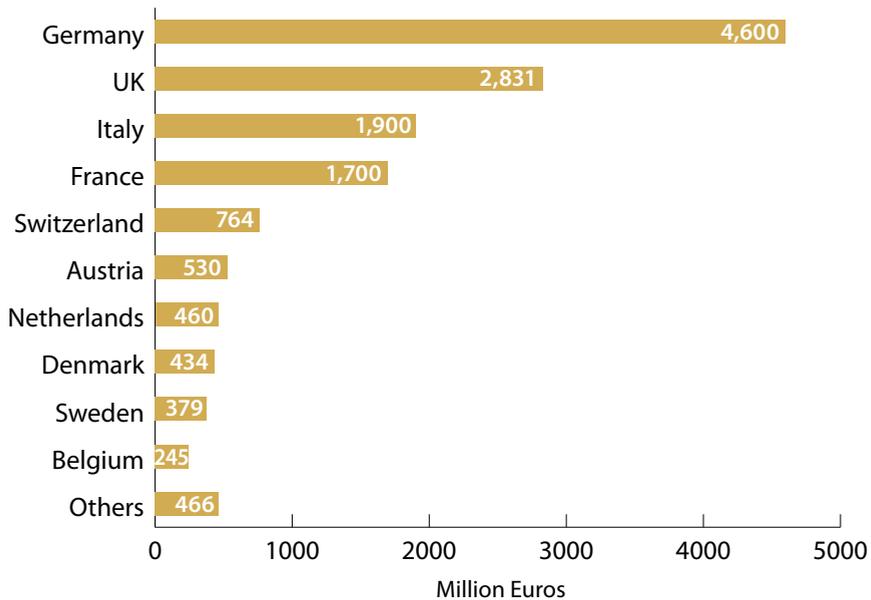
The Principle of Care

Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

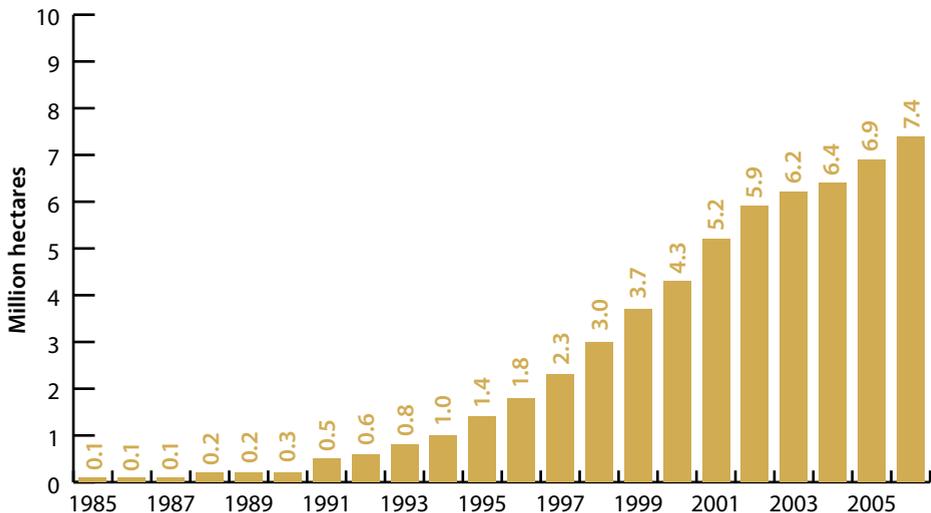
1.3 Development of organic food & farming in Europe

Today, consumers typically see organic food as healthy, safe and of high quality, which are the main reasons for their willingness to pay the higher prices in the organic market. However, consumers are less strongly motivated by the altruistic concerns of environmental protection, high animal welfare and the support for rural society – the so-called ‘public goods’ delivered by organic food and farming.³

Currently, the organic industry is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors of the food industry in many European countries. In 2006, the European organic market grew by more than 10 percent, with a total value of approximately €14 billion.^{4a} In many established European markets (such as Germany and the UK) demand is growing considerably faster than supply.

Figure 2: The European Market for Organic Food 2006^{4a}

Consumption of organic food accounts for 4.5 to 5.5% of the total food market in countries such as Denmark, Austria and Switzerland, however, the proportion varies widely with lower consumption rates reported in both 'old' as well as 'new' member states.

Figure 3: Organically managed land in Europe 1985 – 2006^{4b}

There are big differences in trends between the European countries – whether ‘old’ or ‘new’ member states. The organic land area has expanded rapidly in many old and new member states as well as in candidate and potential candidate countries with annual growth rates of up to 100%.^{4a} In Austria, organically managed land accounted for approximately 13% of the total agricultural area in 2006, whilst in some other countries the growth has only started in the recent years.^{4b} Overall, more than 6.8 million hectares were under organic management in the EU (7.4 million hectares in the whole of Europe) in 2006.

1.3.1 Organic food and farming regulation in Europe

Recognition of organic farming

Amongst the reforms to the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that began in the late 1980s came recognition of the key role that organic farming could play in meeting new objectives: reducing surpluses, promoting quality goods and integrating environmental conservation practices into agriculture.

For organic farming to enjoy the confidence of consumers, however, it was evident that stringent regulation covering production and quality was necessary, as well as measures to prevent fraudulent claims of organic status.

Today’s consumers are increasingly calling for access to information on how their food is being produced – ‘from farm to fork’ – and are looking for reassurance that due care with regard to safety and quality has been exercised at each step in the process.

Regulatory framework through Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91

Regulations have therefore been introduced to ensure the authenticity of organic farming methods, which have evolved into a comprehensive framework of standards for the organic production of crops and livestock and for the labelling, processing and marketing of organic products. They also govern imports of organic products into the EU.⁵

The first European regulation on organic farming (Regulation EEC No 2092/91) was published in 1991. Since its implementation in 1992, many farms across the EU have converted to organic production methods. Where farmers wish to claim official recognition of their organic status, the conversion period is a minimum of two years before sowing annual crops and three years in the case

of perennials. In August 1999 rules on production, labelling and inspection of the most relevant animal species (i.e. cattle, sheep, goats, horses and poultry) were also agreed (Regulation EC No 1804/1999). This agreement covers such issues as livestock feedstuffs, disease prevention and veterinary treatments, animal welfare, husbandry practices and the management of manure. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and products derived from GMOs are explicitly excluded from organic production methods.

New Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007

In June 2004 the European Commission published a European Action Plan on organic food and farming.⁶ In the Action Plan, the Commission included the forthcoming revision of the existing regulation 2092/91. In June 2007 the EU Council adopted the Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products (production and associated detailed implementation rules in force from 2009) that repeals Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91.⁷

The European Commission's intention was that this new regulation should be simpler for both farmers and consumers, in particular by including:

- objectives, principles and basic rules;
- a new permanent import regime;
- a more consistent control regime;
- a mandatory common EU organic logo.

Furthermore the regulation also makes the provision for adding rules on organic aquaculture, wine, seaweed and yeasts. Most of the detailed rules included in the original organic regulation 2092/91 are transferred to the new Regulation and the implementing rules.

The process of development and a number of the provisions of this new regulation had been heavily criticised by parts of the European organic sector.⁸ Some of the criticism was taken account of in the final version of the regulation.

1.3.2 Policy support for organic food and farming in Europe

Apart from the organic regulation there are four main policy areas which can be used to support organic farming⁹ (see Box 3 and Figure 4).

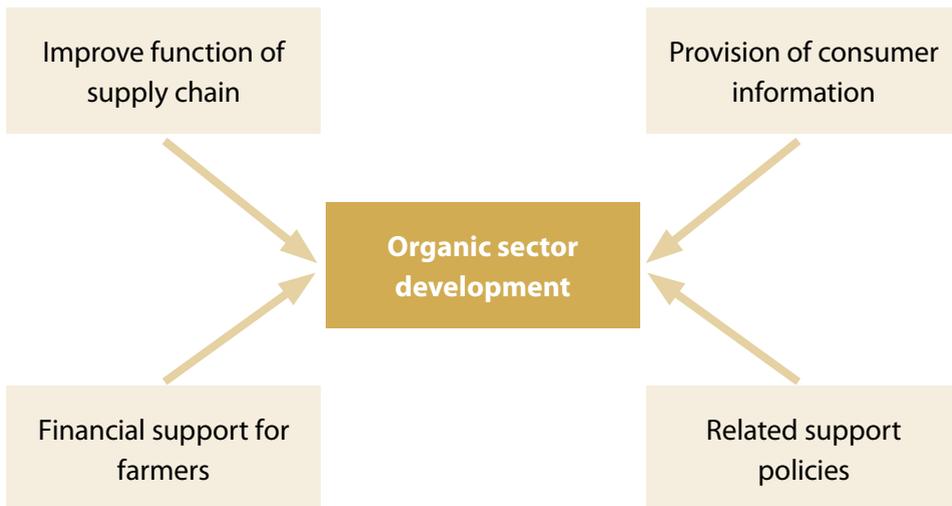
Box 3: Policy areas for supporting organic farming

- **Informing the consumer:** Developing a unified approach to a widely recognised common logo based on EU regulation 2092/91 and subsequent legislation.
- **Improving the functioning of the organic supply chain:** Production, processing, distribution within the supply chain with major emphasis on improving information, education, technology development, research and extension for organic farming and processing.
- **Supporting organic farmers financially** as remuneration for the supply of public goods.
- **Reviewing related policies** with direct influence on organic farming such as the general measures of the common agricultural policy or tax laws and others, in particular removing production constraints such as set-aside, aimed originally at conventional producers.

One of the main challenges is to support the creative conflict between conventional and organic farmers and to build as much as possible a consensus on the long term objectives of developing organic food and farming alongside the conventional food sector.

Figure 4: Policy support for organic sector development

There are 4 main policy areas of government intervention:



Support under agri-environment programmes

Government support measures for organic food and farming have largely, but not exclusively, concentrated on direct financial support to farmers. This government support for organic farming, in recognition of its wider benefits, began in the late 1980s, with national initiatives in countries like Denmark, Austria and Switzerland, as well as programmes in a few EU member states under the framework of the 1988 EU Extensification Programme. The legal definition of organic farming (EEC Regulation 2092/91) made it possible to specifically include organic farming as a policy measure in the 1994-1999 agri-environment programme. Since then, organic farming support has become widespread across Europe, in recognition of the contribution that organic farming can make to environmental policy goals.

Support under Rural Development measures

The area-based agri-environmental support to encourage the conversion to and (in most cases) continuation of organic production has continued under the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes. Now all 27 EU member states provide some form of support of this type for organic farming, which is the most important measure in financial terms (Table 1). However, payment rates, eligibility conditions and requirements vary considerably between countries.¹⁰

At the same time, the rural development programmes have enabled broader based support of the organic sector, for example investment in processing, training, marketing and promotion. This was in part a reflection of the substantial increase in the production of organic foods stimulated by the agri-environmental support, and it was recognised that these 'supply-push' policies must be complemented by 'demand-pull' policies to support and encourage market development.¹¹ The development of Organic Action Plans (see Section 3) provides a means of achieving better integration of these different measures.

Overview on main support measures in different European countries

Table 2 provides an overview of the range of support measures used in the different EU member states in 2006. It shows clearly that an Action Plan is only one way of clustering different policy measures; there are other ways of supporting the development of organic food and farming.

Table 1: Overview of support policies and uptake of agri-environmental (rural development) direct payments for organic farming in European Countries¹²

Action Plan	Conversion payments	Maintenance payments	Advice, training, education	Research	Marketing and processing	Consumer promotion	State logo	Area supported 2003 (kha)	% of certified land	Expenditure 2003 (M€)	% of all agri-env. exp.
AT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	295	90	85.9	13.9
BE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	19	78	4.7	16.9
BG	-	na	na	-	-	-	✓	na	na	na	na
CH	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	109	100	19.3	5.4
CZ	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	214	84	7.3	20.3
DE	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	537	73	97.7	16.0
DK	✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	✓	111	67	8.7	45.5
EE	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	38	82	3.2	15.5
ES	(✓)	✓	✓	(✓)	✓	(✓)	✓	158	22	25.7	19.1
FI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	143	89	16.9	5.9
FR	✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	✓	208	38	42.2	7.7
GR	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	19	8	7.7	30.1
HU	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	18	62	1.7	1.0
IE	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	298	28	100.3	33.5
IT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	58	51	4.2	25.2
LT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	22	95	0.9	na
LU	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	2	75	0.4	3.3
LV	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	na	na	0.7	na
NL	✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	-	11	26	2.5	16.3
PL	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	31	62	1.3	na
PT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	28	23	3.9	5.7
RO	✓	na	na	✓	-	-	-	na	na	na	na
SE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	407	180	54.8	23.4
SI	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	19	95	2.9	29.3
SK	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	38	69	0.5	nd
UK	✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓	-	-	250	36	9.0	5.0
EU/CH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3041	49	502.4	13.5

✓ = yes, (✓) = restricted, - = no

Other support measures

Other support is also available that complements the core policy support outlined above. Provision of advice and extension services for organic farming is available in many European countries. There is significant investment at both the European and national level for research and development for organic farming. Financial and institutional support for certification bodies and quality control for organic food contributes to maintaining consumer trust in the organic label. EUROSTAT, the EU internal statistics service, provides statistical information on organic food and farming.

An important financial support measure is research for organic food and farming. Table 2 gives an overview of the support through the Research Framework Programmes by the European Commission.

Table 2: Support for organic farming projects under the EU Research Framework Programmes (FWP) from 1990-2006¹³

FWP	Period	Number of projects	Total costs (€s)	EU funding (€s)	Average EU-funding per project (€s)
1/2	1990-92	5	no data	no data	no data
3	1993-96	9	7987009	5180469	575608
4	1997-99	9	10009371	6597343	733038
5	2000-03	23	37162399	27564139	1198441
6	2004-06	19	33742569	24858162	1308324
Total		65	88901348	64200113	987694

Support is also provided from non-governmental organisations and through the investment of private businesses – this underlines the fact that the organic sector will continue to develop ‘autonomously’, but this development may be spurred on by policy initiatives.

2 Organic Action Plans – what are they about?

2.1 Why Organic Action Plans?

Organic Action Plans provide a framework for integrating policies and measures in order to encourage organic sector development. Thus Action Plans serve as a strategic instrument for governments to achieve policy goals, particularly when multiple policy areas (such as agriculture, environment, trade) and different levels of policy formulation are to be integrated. Action Plans can avoid contradictory policies whilst also ensuring that the different measures are complementary. Furthermore, Action Plans allow specific bottlenecks to be better addressed as well as enabling broad stakeholder involvement in policy formulation. They also provide the opportunity to establish forums to develop a strategic vision.¹⁴

Exploiting the potential of organic food and farming

For policy makers, organic food and farming provides the potential to contribute to a broad list of policy goals. Organic food and farming has the potential to contribute to policy goals such as minimising the negative environmental impacts of agriculture, the provision of safe high quality food, strengthening the competitiveness of European agriculture, enhancing rural development and reducing expenditures on agriculture in the long term.¹⁵ Thus, organic food and farming could play a strategic role in the move to sustainable production and consumption.

However, there is another aspect to organic food and farming which needs to be highlighted: the role of stakeholders, in particular producers and consumers. Unlike many agri-environmental and rural development policy measures, the organic farming concept was not developed by policy-makers and technical experts responding to a specific policy need. It has evolved since the early 20th century as a social movement for agricultural change, with committed individuals and producers working together to define standards and develop systems and practice, in order to achieve the movement's goals of environmental protection, animal welfare, food quality and health as well as social justice. At the same time, producers had to find solutions to ensure financial viability. In the absence of

direct policy support during most of the 20th century, organic producers turned to the market place and benefited from the willingness of committed consumers to pay a premium price, thus ensuring their financial viability.

To sum up, organic farming is neither exclusively one type of environmental social movement, nor is it simply a form of land management that follows a specific set of standards. Rather, organic food and farming incorporates both of these while providing the basis for an economically viable livelihood for organic farmers.

Against this background, it might be obvious that the views on policy goals to be achieved and organic farming's potential to contribute to these policy goals might differ between government and organic sector stakeholders. As the goals of policy-makers and the organic movement have come closer together, the opportunities to provide policy support for common societal goals have been recognised. However the challenge of doing so, consistent with the market focus of the sector, has not always been met. With increasing policy support, due to the incorporation of organic standards in legal frameworks and the involvement of major retailers and food multinationals in the organic market, there has been increasing concern about the 'institutionalisation' of the organic movement and its 'takeover' by public and private corporate interests.

To make Organic Action Plans a success, they need to take into account the complex systems and multiple objectives of the organic approach, whilst paying due attention to synergies and conflicts between objectives, and the different emphases that will be placed on these by different stakeholders. The priorities, and hence the programmes of Organic Action Plans, will thus depend on the policy goals to be achieved, the analysis of the issues that need to be addressed and the specification of clear objectives. Ideally, this would be done by integrating all relevant stakeholders.

Evaluation of early policies¹⁶ revealed that the initial emphasis on area-based direct income payments, as provided for under agri-environment measures, could distort the potential of the market also to support the development of organic farming. Consequently, a tendency among EU member states to emphasise the need to balance such supply-push policies with more market-focused demand-pull policies has emerged. They have also recognised the need for information-related measures (including research, training and advice) to improve the performance of systems and quality of outputs at both production and market levels and, thereby, to enhance the potential contribution of organic farming to broader policy goals.

The policy challenge – justification of government intervention

For policy makers, the challenge is to support a multi-functional organic farming systems approach, which can satisfy the varied goals of a diverse range of interest groups, each with different priorities. Government policy and market mechanisms must work together to meet the dual roles of organic farming:

- Organic land and farm management – providing public goods/benefits;
- Organic food market – responding directly to consumer demand.

The justification of government intervention in favour of organic farming is not just driven by vested interests of specific societal groups, but may also be supported by arguments relating to the welfare of the whole society. Especially for goods and services with a public good character, markets alone might just not do the job. In cases where the organic sector is small, government intervention might be seen as necessary to help achieve self-sustained growth (“infant industry argument”) and under certain circumstances organic farming can be a cost-efficient solution to environmental problems.¹⁷

Balance of supply-push and demand-pull measures

Land and farm management policies in favour of organic farming may have the provision of public goods (for example; environmental protection, rural development, food quality) as a main aim. However, the resulting increase in supply may be at risk of distorting the market if demand is limited. In such cases the key issue is to balance supply-push and demand-pull initiatives to achieve sustainable development of organic agriculture in support of environmental and rural development goals without undermining markets. Supportive policies are intended to change the status quo; this implies that temporary imbalances are inevitable. Hence, the policy emphasis should be on ensuring that long-term imbalances do not occur. An integrated approach is required and this is the intention of formulating Organic Action Plans.

The range of approaches in different Action Plans illustrates the specific problems and the political pressures inherent in achieving this integrated approach. Some Organic Action Plans have a more overtly market focus while others give a higher weighting to environmental issues and other issues relating to public goods.

Scope of Organic Action Plans

Organic farming Action Plans often include targets for adoption (typically in the past 5-10% by 2000/2005 or 10-20% by 2010), as well as a combination of specific measures:

- Direct support through agri-environment/rural development programmes;
- Marketing and processing support;
- Producer information initiatives;
- Public procurement initiatives;
- Consumer education/promotion; and
- Infrastructure support as well as the support of specific research for organic farming.

The more detailed plans contain evaluations of the current situation and specific recommendations to address issues identified, including measures to ameliorate conflicts between different policy measures. They are thus tailored packages reflecting regional and national and often short-term priorities.

Meeting the needs of stakeholders

A further key element of many Action Plans is the active involvement and integration of stakeholders in a partnership approach to policy development, implementation and evaluation.

Stakeholders in the organic sector – whether organic farmers, processing or marketing businesses, certification bodies or organisations – will judge the Organic Action Plan on the basis of whether they consider it to provide the ‘right’ type of support that is relevant to their specific needs.

Stakeholders outside the organic sector will also judge the Organic Action Plan. They are potentially influenced by the development of the organic sector and will view the Organic Action Plan in the context of the non-organic sector.

Consequently, with such diverse requirements any Organic Action Plan is a political compromise that aims to encourage the development and implementation of policies that are consistent with the concept of a multi-functional organic food and farming system. The Organic Action Plan should simultaneously meet the multiple objectives for agricultural sustainability and the production of high quality food in a way that builds on the capacity of the whole organic sector in respect of the conditions reigning in the conventional or mainstream food sector.

Box 4: Danish Organic Action Plans 1995 and 1999

The 1995 Action Plan for Promoting Organic Food Production

Ordered by the Danish Minister of Food against a background of undersupplies with organic food.

Developed by the Directorate for Food Industries on behalf of the Danish Organic Agricultural Council (an advisory board including the main stakeholders of the organic food sector: organic farmers' organizations, general farmers' organizations, public agencies of agricultural policy, environmental policy and health policy and others).

Includes 65 action points including both short term and long term goals aiming at

- Increasing the organic primary production;
- Improving contributions to public goods (environment protection, energy consumption, occupational health);
- Increasing activities of R&D and marketing of organic food products.

The 1995 plan only aimed at increasing Danish primary production. This goal was reached in 1999 to the extent that a new plan was developed to help the organic food sector adapt to more advanced demands in domestic and international markets.

The 1999 Action Plan II – Organics in development

Ordered by the Danish Minister of Food against a background of imbalanced supplies with organic food.

Developed by the Directorate for Food Industries on behalf of the Danish Organic Food Council (an advisory board including the main stakeholders of the organic food sector: organic farmers' organizations, general farmers' organizations, main food business firms, public agencies of agricultural policy, environmental policy and health policy and others).¹⁸

Includes 84 action points to be reached by 2003

- Increasing selected organic primary productions (to balance demand);
- Stimulating development of new products and improved product quality;
- Strengthening sales channels in domestic markets;
- Develop sales to near exports markets;
- Adapt policy instruments to current needs of the organic sector;
- Continue research in organic food production;
- Maintain credibility of national organic label.

Brussels 2004 hearing on EU Organic Action Plan



2.2 European Organic Action Plan

The development of a European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming was initially discussed at the international conference on Organic Food and Farming: 'Towards Partnership and Action in Europe' in Copenhagen in May 2001. As a result of this conference, the concept of a European Action Plan was debated by the Council of Agriculture Ministers in June 2001 and the European Commission was requested to come forward with a proposal to promote organic food and farming.

European Organic Action Plan published in 2004

In June 2004, the European Commission published the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming.¹⁹ The justification for the plan is based on the background analysis prepared by the Commission, which was the result of a three-year consultation process with sector experts and stakeholders, as well as Commission, European Parliament and Member State representatives.

The plan aims to support the development of the European organic food market

related to consumer demand and to support organic land management for its environmental and other public benefits. Its scope covers the organic regulation and standards through to promotion campaigns, research and rural development policy. With this Action Plan, the Commission provided the basis for the ongoing organic farming policy development in Europe.

21 organic action points for Europe

The European Action Plan includes 21 points under four key themes:

- 1) Consumer information and promotion campaigns:
 - EU-wide information and promotion campaign as well as introduction of an EU logo.
- 2) Improved research, market transparency and statistical data collection:
 - EUROSTAT for organic production and market statistics;
 - Strengthen research;
 - Explore the potential of using land parcel identification for monitoring;
 - Develop sampling and analytical methods which can be used in organic farming;
 - Independent technical support.
- 3) Full utilisation of the Rural Development Programme and other existing options to support organic farming:
 - Top-up support for organic fruit and vegetables;
 - Web-based menu listing all EU policy measures in relation to production, marketing and information;
 - Make full use of instruments provided by the Rural Development Programmes (Food Quality Programme, Investment Aid, Advisory and Training Support, Agri-environment Measures, LEADER projects).
- 4) Improve the transparency, scope and implementation of the regulation defining organic farming:
 - New regulation and implementing rules to improve control;
 - Internet database of private and public standards;
 - Make regulations more transparent;
 - Ensure the integrity of organic agriculture;
 - Complete and further harmonise organic standards (aquaculture, seaweed, wine, yeast);
 - Clarify the issue of GMOs;
 - Rationalise import and third country rules;

- Improve performance of control bodies/authorities accreditation;
- Achieve better coordination amongst and between the inspection bodies;
- Develop a specific accreditation system for inspection bodies;
- Require annual supervision reports of approved inspection bodies including statistics on non-compliances;
- Complete a systematic comparison between the Community standard on organic farming, Codex Alimentarius guidelines and the IFOAM standards;
- Reinforce recognition of EU organic farming standards and inspection systems in third countries.

The European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming neither contains a quantitative target for organic farming nor a designated budget. The plan is most detailed on points relating to the European organic regulation, where a key competency is at the European level. The European Commission has started to implement the actions, many have been achieved. The most significant initiatives are the publication of the new Council regulation (EC) 834/2004 on organic production and labelling of organic products²⁰ and the promotion campaign for consumers financed by the European Commission, which had contracted a media agency end of 2006.

 [For more information see ORGAPET Section A1](#)

2.3 Overview of national and regional Organic Action Plans

Analysis of eight of the national Organic Action Plans²¹ (completed as part of the ORGAP project) reveals clearly different priorities for development in different countries around Europe. Each of the Action Plans was developed differently and at different times. Some Action Plans were developed on the basis of bottom-up initiatives; i.e. the sector itself demanding political action designed by the sector itself to help solving sector problems. Other Action Plans were developed on the basis of top-down initiatives i.e. actions pursuing politically defined goals by actions designed by political decision makers. Table 3 summarises the analysis of different Action Plans.

Table 3: Development of eight Organic Action Plans in Europe²²

General information	AND	CZ	DK	DE	ENG	IT	NL	SL
Start of elaboration	2001	2002	1998	2001	2002	2001	2004	2004
Implementation	2002	2004	1999	2001	2002	2005	2005	2005
Bottom-up initiative	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Top-down initiative	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓
Stakeholder participation	high	high	high	high	high	high	high	high
AP includes evaluation and monitoring	✓	-	✓	✓	(✓)	-	✓	✓
AP has been evaluated	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Quantitative targets: OF area	-	10 %	12 %	20 %*			10 %	20 %
Target year	-	2010	2003	2010	2010	-	2010	2015

Key: ✓= yes, (✓) = restricted, - = no

AND – Andalusia, Spain; CZ – Czech Republic; DK – Denmark; DE – Germany; ENG – England; IT – Italy; NL – Netherlands; SL - Slovenia

* The percentage is not mentioned in the published draft of the Action Plan, but was an explicit political target of the government when the plan came into being.

Organic Action Plans respond to governmental policy goals and a status-quo analysis of the organic sector development in each country, which might be quite different. As a consequence, the eight Organic Action Plans reviewed in the ORGAP project vary with regard to the elaboration process, targets, objectives and the emphasis of measures on certain areas. This is due to quite different political and socio-economic conditions for organic farming in each of these countries. The Organic Action Plans of Andalusia, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Denmark address a very broad portfolio of areas and measures. In contrast to this the Dutch, Italian and English Action Plans particularly focus on measures targeted at market development and consumer information. The German Federal Organic Farming Scheme prioritises measures related to consumer information and education as well as to the support of applied research for the organic sector. Additional information on these Action Plans can be found in the ORGAP newsletters and in a project report on the project website.

Most EU Member States now have Organic Action Plans or are working on it. Further information on the development of Organic Action Plans in all these countries is available on the ORGAP website.²³

Specific policies for different areas

The eight national Organic Action Plans include a wide range of areas addressed through Organic Action Plan policies, summarised in table 4. This long list illustrates a key challenge for those involved in the development and implementation of Organic Action Plans – setting realistic priorities for development.

Table 4: Areas addressed by Organic Action Plans – overview of different Action Plan policies

Areas of concern	Organic Action Plan policies
Information	Promotion campaigns for consumer awareness
	Educational information
	Strengthening labelling and control
	Market and production data
Training and education	Farmer education for organic systems development
	Curriculum development for basic and higher education
	Advisory services for farmers and organic food businesses
Research and development	Improving the efficiency of production techniques
	Enhancing processing in line with production of high quality organic food
	Facilitating organisation and networks for research
	Benchmarking organic food and farming performance
	Analysing impact of organic farming
	Energy use and climate change

Table 4: continued

Producer support	Financial support for conversion to & maintenance of organic farming systems
	Encouraging cooperation and effective management
	Improving economic performance of organic farming and food businesses
	Support less developed sectors where there is consumer demand
Processing support	Investment for processing facilities
	Innovation and development for processing
	Development of infrastructure for improved processing and supply chains
	Identify market success factors
Market development	Promotion and support of key market channels
	Improve marketing efficiency
	Encourage product diversification
Certification and inspection	Extension of standards to cover new areas – both food and non-food
	Enhancement & development of standards in line with consumer expectations
	Improvement of the efficiency of certification and inspection systems
	Transparency of the results of inspection and certification (consistent with protection of individual privacy)
Institutional development	Support &/or promotion of stakeholder organisations
	Coordination of sectoral interests
	Development of appropriate strategies (e.g. GMO)
	Fund raising
	Policy development

Action Plan
admin and
development

Evaluation and monitoring of the Action Plan

Participation and contribution of advisory committees and expert groups

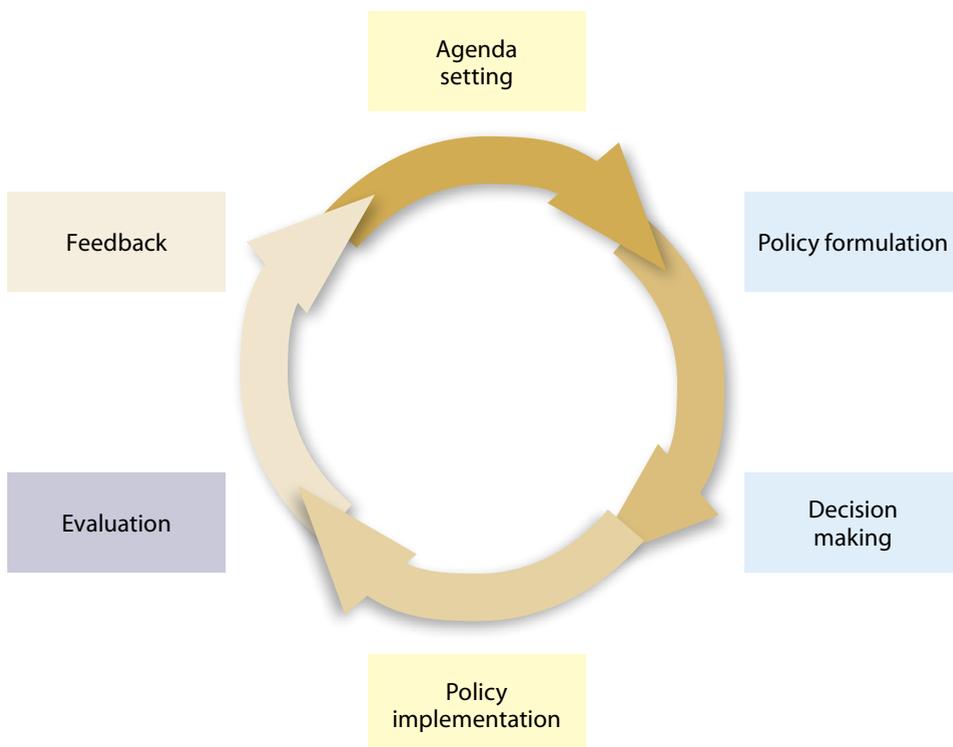
More information on how priorities for action identified in a status-quo analysis can be translated in concrete measures within Action Plans can be found in Section 3.

3 Planning and implementing Organic Action Plans

3.1 Policy development

Organic Action Plans aim to define a range of policy measures in support of the development of the organic sector to meet the needs of the sector and of policy-makers. The Action Plans therefore seek to solve a wide range of problems and to address the priorities for development in ways appropriate to the particular situation and stage of organic sector development.

Figure 5: Policy cycle – stages in policy development²⁴



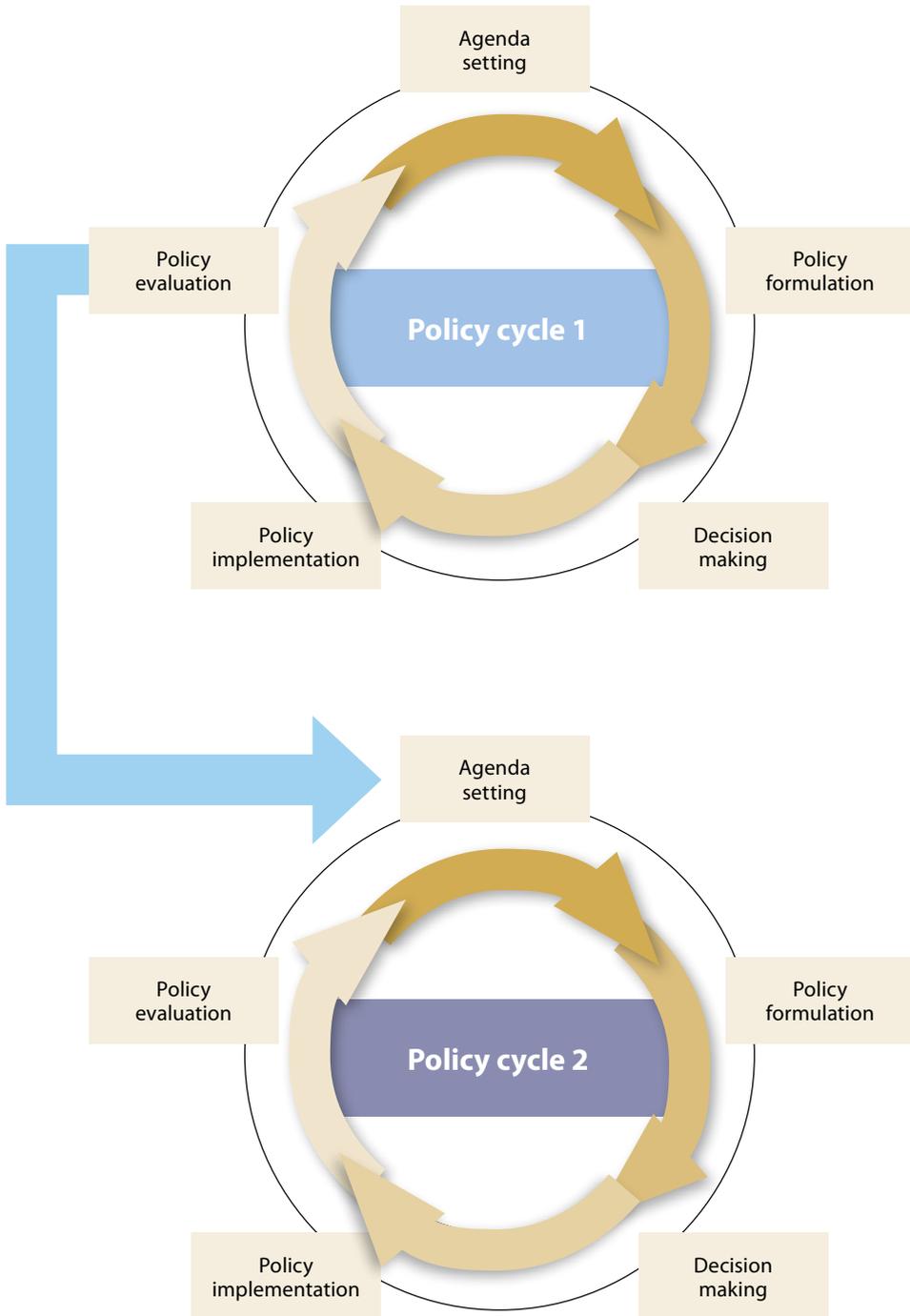
As illustrated in Figure 5, policy development involves a series of linked phases or stages from design of the policy or setting the agenda, via policy formulation, decision making, implementation to evaluation, following a “policy cycle”. This is a theoretical model, in reality the stages do not necessarily appear in an orderly sequence. The ideal is that the policy cycle should involve learning processes by which policy makers and organic sector stakeholders develop policies that are ever more effective in achieving the policy goals. In practice, although all stages may be intermingled, an awareness of the policy cycle can help inform actors in the policy process as to where to direct their attention and efforts. In practice, the policy making process is iterative, with one policy cycle informing the next in a continuous process of learning (Figure 6).

A key element in the development of any Action Plan is to obtain a status quo analysis of the current situation of the organic sector, its development needs and potential solutions. Then appropriate policy measures need to be identified based on sound reasoning concerning how the policy measures might influence the issues needing to be addressed. Finally, actions need to be prioritised taking account of needs, opportunities for action and the available resources.

Regarding decision making, there is likely to be a trade off between stakeholder acceptance and ambiguity of policies. When decision makers aim for consensus amongst all stakeholders, then the Organic Action Plan (and the policy measures it includes) will have to be ambiguous in order to become accepted by the various interests. In contrast, when policy makers aim for clear policies, this will release conflict with and limited acceptance of the Organic Action Plan from certain groups of stakeholders. Action Plans by definition involve ambiguity since they combine several purposes or outcomes, for example environmental, market or rural development outcomes.

 For more information see [ORGAPET Section A4 and B1](#).²⁵

Figure 6: Learning through development of policy cycles²⁶



3.2 Defining organic sector development needs and potential

The basis for any Organic Action Plan is a definition of the various development needs of the organic sector. They may originate from the perspectives of both policy-makers (e.g. environmental protection/enhancement, rural development, food safety) and intended beneficiaries (e.g. organic farmers, food businesses and consumers). A reasonable starting point for identifying these needs is to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the organic sector and the opportunities and threats that impact on the current state and future development of the sector – i.e. to make a SWOT analysis²⁷. Strengths (and weaknesses) are those features of the organic sector that distinguish it positively (or negatively) from other sectors in the economy (such as conventional agriculture) or from organic sectors in other countries. Opportunities (and threats) are developments outside the influence of those seeking to develop the organic sector and likely to influence organic farming. A SWOT analysis can help to generate possible ideas on suitable policy actions. Table 5 illustrates this process with examples taken from some Organic Action Plans.

Table 5: Assessing the organic sector and its policy needs by SWOT analysis

Organic sector		Example for organic sector	Organic Action Plan - focus areas for action
Strengths	Internal, present	Environmental advantages in the region, demonstrated for birds	Implement agri-environmental programme with special impact on bird populations
Weaknesses	Internal, present	Low level of organisation amongst organic farmers	Provide opportunities for networking and start-up support for organic farming organisations
Opportunities	External, future	Growing social interest in biodiversity, especially birds	Implement communication programme to society that stresses the advantages of organic farming with respect to birds
Threats	External, future	Legislation is introduced that allows unavoidable GMO contamination of organic food that marketing as organic is not possible anymore	Influence legislation towards more strict standards, support the development of a scientific basis that allows coexistence

A reasonable criterion for selecting policy measures for an Organic Action Plan is that they should respond to the needs – as defined by the weaknesses (internal to the sector) and the threats (external to the sector). Similarly, it is reasonable, that the Action Plan attempts at the same time to exploit the potentials – as defined by the strengths (internal to the sector) and the opportunities (external to the sector).

The motivations behind and the mechanisms of the policy instruments included in the Organic Action Plan might relate to:

- **the social processes to be influenced**
e.g. the processes by which organic food and farming is expected to be able to grow within the food and farming sector as a whole
- **the impact of distinct policy instruments on outcomes**
e.g. a certain level of financial support will increase the organic food and farming sector
- **the definition of development or improvement**
e.g. subsidies paid to farmers for environmental protection reducing environmental degradation rather than optimising organic food supplies

An example of how a SWOT analysis has been used to develop Organic Action Plan policy measures, concrete actions and targets in Andalusia, Spain is provided in Box 5.

Consideration of different socio-cultural context and institutional preconditions

Similar Organic Action Plan measures will operate differently in different socio-cultural contexts. This is very clear when comparing EU member states where a single regulation has been adopted in very diverging contexts, with different results. What might work in one context (such as new member states) might not work in another context (such as old member states). Hence it is important to carefully consider the social and institutional preconditions under which the Organic Action Plan will operate. These conditions may include the peculiarities of the organisation of the food market, farmers and food processing firms, agriculture policy priorities in relation to specific policy areas, for example policies relating to food, environment, health, industrial development or consumer expectations.

Box 5: Andalusian Organic Action Plan (AOAP): Local initiatives for sustainable development of organic sector²⁸

One of the main aims of the Andalusian OAP was to help farmer's organisations to market their organic products in local markets and to improve farmers capacity building organic farming and organic industry cooperatives.

Weaknesses	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence on public subsidies not accompanied by a corresponding increase in market; • High costs for small and medium farmers (e.g. certification); • Lack of adequate organic inputs (seeds, manure, feed, etc.); • Lack of organic industries (feed production, slaughterhouses, etc.); • Low local consumption of organic products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion from conventional intensive farming systems to organic production e.g. glasshouses, organic cotton and organic aquaculture, etc.); • Extensification of livestock (pigs and sheep); • Organic farming in protected natural areas; • Increase of local consumption.

Andalusian Organic Action Plan

In 2000, the Andalusian Organic Action Plan (AOAP) was formulated for a six year period (2000-2006) with a budget of € 93.8 Million, to address the most urgent needs and structural problems of the organic sector

One of the principal aims was to promote conversion to organic farming in natural protected areas (e.g. natural parks) including in the Environmental Conservation Plans and complying with national and international policies (Kyoto Protocol, EU Water conservation Directive, Nature 2000 network, etc). Other aims include:

- Integrating production and local consumption by promoting farmers agreements with hospitals, schools and other public institutions;
- Development of local organic food chains, increasing food supply of fresh and processing foods in quantity and diversity (e.g. by subsidies for investment);
- Supporting small companies and family farms, preserving traditional food;
- Supporting inputs supply and rescuing local knowledge for organic farming;
- Supporting research more strongly;
- Supporting market promotion (e.g. by supporting campaigns of farmers' associations and marketing initiatives).

Table 6 provides an example of how different priority areas for development of the organic sector can be translated into desired outcomes.

Table 6: Organic Action Plan – priorities for development and desired outcomes

Priority for development	Desired outcome
Organic food and farming grows within the overall food and farming sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage consumer demand for organic food • Local and export markets supplied • Improving livelihoods in the organic sector
Positive impact of government policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for conversion to and maintenance of organic farming encourages more production • Increase in the production base is matched by consumer demand
Effective and efficient delivery of 'public' goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing pollution from conventional agricultural chemicals • Enhancing biodiversity and reversing the declines caused by conventional farming • Animal welfare improved to meet social demands • Protecting farm livelihoods – supporting rural development
Consumer demand for organic food increases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased market share for organic food • Respond to consumer demand • Meeting the demand for high quality food products • Matching taste with values • Fair price to farmer meeting the true cost of production

3.3 Defining policy goals and objectives

When the needs for developing the organic sector, relevant to policy makers and the beneficiaries (organic farmers, food businesses and consumers) have been defined, it is possible to define the objectives of the Action Plan ([🌐 for more information see ORGAPET sections B2/C1](#)). We assume here that the process of defining objectives is based on wishes to meet sector needs although in reality the policy process may include “hidden agendas” or it may be difficult to establish clear and systematic connections between the objectives and the measures to achieve them. This is part of the ambiguity of policy processes. However, formulat-

ing clear and open objectives is a very useful start to devising suitable actions and measures and a useful basis for evaluations.²⁹

The overall objectives of an Organic Action Plan and the specific objectives of each individual policy measure should be agreed at the outset. Ideally, well-defined objectives include the key information required for their evaluation. Obviously, successful achievement of an Organic Action Plan depends on achieving the Action Plan objectives.

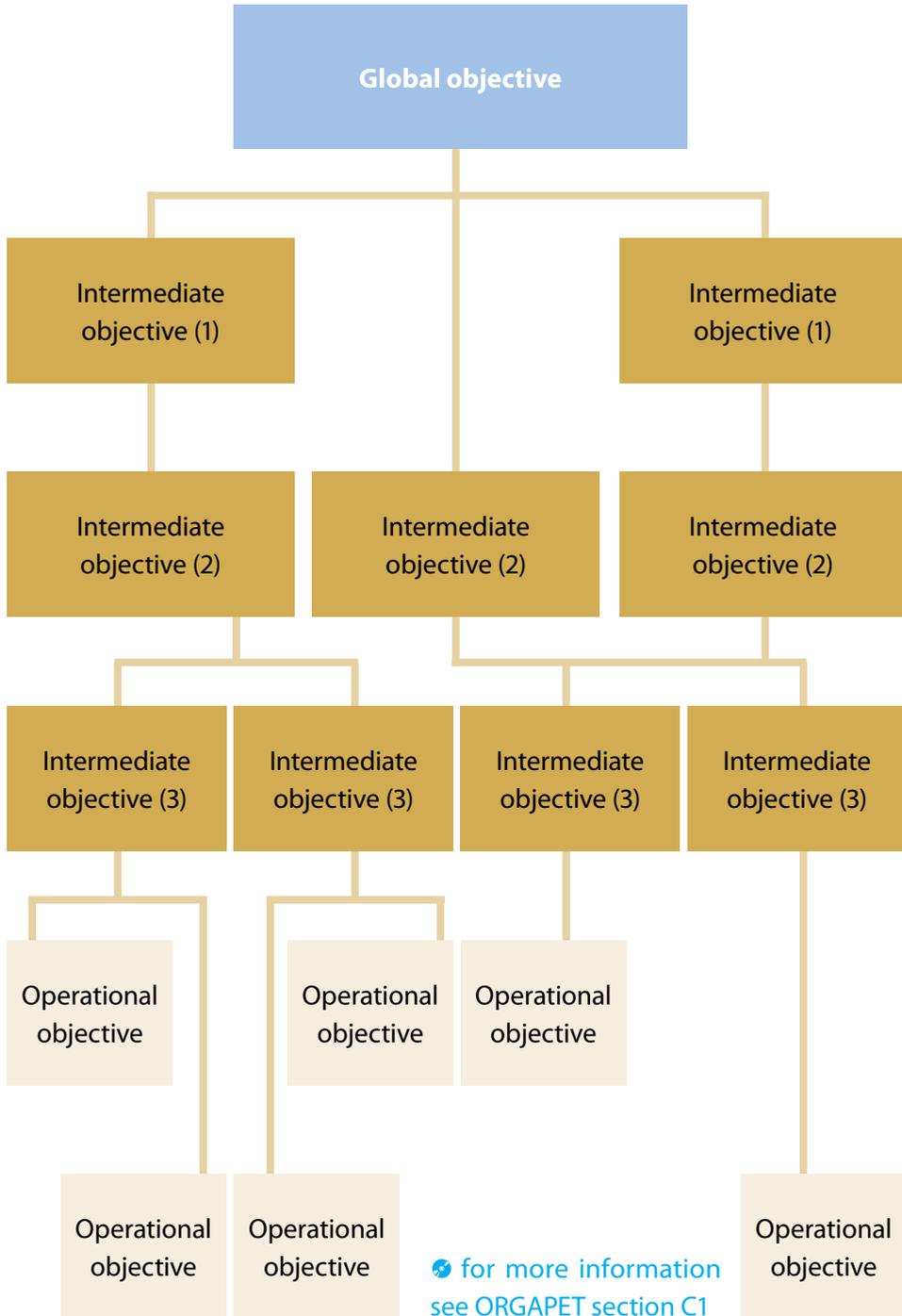
Objectives should be SMART

A common recommendation regarding policy objectives is summarised in the abbreviation SMART:

- **S**pecific:
Objectives should be precise and concrete enough not to be open to varying interpretations.
- **M**easurable:
Objectives should define a desired future state in measurable terms, so that it is possible to verify whether the objective has been achieved or not. Such objectives are either quantified or based on a combination of description and scoring scales.
- **A**ccepted:
If objectives and target levels are to influence behaviour, they must be accepted, understood and interpreted similarly by all of those who are expected to take responsibility for achieving them.
- **R**ealistic:
Objectives and targets should be ambitious whilst realistic – setting an objective that only reflects the current level of achievement is not useful.
- **T**ime-dependent:
Objectives and target levels remain vague if they are not related to a fixed date or time period.

The 'SMART' objectives can be grouped in a hierarchy, from the global to the operational objectives. When considering the objectives in the hierarchy, you should be able to move 'up' the hierarchy by asking 'why?', whilst you should be able to move down the hierarchy by asking 'how?'

Figure 7: Hierarchy of objectives³⁰



Organic Action Plans can include a multitude of objectives, and the process of agreeing objectives will inevitably involve compromise between the varying and sometimes competing interest of stakeholders according to their needs, the internal strengths/weaknesses and the external opportunities/threats.

Objectives at the sector, societal and global level

From the experience of Organic Action Plans, two levels of objectives should be considered:

- **Organic sector-level objectives:**

Focus on the development (growth and improvement) of the organic sector.

- **Societal-level objectives:**

Focus on broader policy goals where the expectation is that growth and improvement of the organic sector will make a positive contribution.

During a series of EU member state national workshops, conducted as part of the ORGAP project, participating stakeholders were asked to comment on the relevance of a set of generic objectives based on their experiences of policies in different European countries. From these workshops, the following global and intermediate (strategic) objectives were formulated ([🌐 for more information see ORGAPET Section C1](#)). While these may be useful as a guide, each Organic Action Plan may require global and intermediate objectives that are specific to the particular context, while the operational objectives (specific action points) will in almost all cases be unique to a specific Action Plan.

Global objectives:

- Delivery of public goods (organic land and supply chain management for environmental protection, rural development, food quality);
- Meet consumer demand (organic food available through a range of channels).

Intermediate (strategic) objectives:

1. a) Maintaining and enhancing the technical and financial performance of organic farms and related food-sector businesses;
- b) Maintaining and enhancing the technical performance and financial viability of organic processing, marketing and related food-sector businesses;
2. Increasing the scale of the organic sector (land under organic management,

- number of businesses and quantity of products available and sold in the market place);
3. a) Meeting consumer demands for choice and quality of safe and affordable food, fibre and other agricultural products;
 - b) Maintaining and enhancing consumer awareness and trust in organic food, fibre and other agricultural products;
 4. Better regulation, i.e. improving transparency of organic farming regulation, ensure a common level playing field in market place (harmonisation), integrate 'public good' standards (social, environmental etc.) and reduce bureaucracy;
 5. Maintaining and enhancing the integrity of organic principles and organic food;
 6. Promoting and developing understanding of the concept and potential of organic food and farming in society based on sound evidence;
 7. Promoting the sustainable use of natural resources;
 8. Maintaining and enhancing the environment (including biodiversity, pollution and climate change issues);
 9. Maintaining and enhancing animal health and welfare;
 - 10.a) Maintaining and enhancing the social, employment and economic wellbeing of rural communities;
 - b) Preserving threatened traditional and authentic craft skills and food production and processing systems with their associated local cultures;
 11. Maintaining and enhancing the competitiveness of European agriculture;
 12. Promoting public health, food safety and food security.

From a policy-maker's perspective, the development of the organic sector is more a means to an end in pursuit of societal level objectives, not an end in itself, whereas organic sector stakeholders are more likely (but not exclusively) to see the development of the organic sector as an end in itself. Thus, reconciling the interests of different stakeholder groups is central to the development of Organic Action Plans. Box 6 provides an example of the policy goals of the England Organic Action Plan.

Regionalisation of Action Plans

The examples described in Box 7 show how, at a country level, concrete measures have been adapted to the regional context.

Box 6: Policy goals of the England Organic Action Plan

The first English Organic Action Plan 2002 had a significant impact on the development of organic farming and food in the UK. It provided, for the first time, a clear, Government-supported statement of the major environmental benefits of organic farming, including more farmland wildlife, less pollution, more jobs and high standards of animal welfare.

The objectives defined illustrate how Action Plans can adopt different approaches reflecting local conditions:

Main aim:

To promote the organic farming sector in England by encouraging our producers to supply a greater proportion of the organic primary produce consumed domestically. A target of 70% of the English organic market being supplied from the UK was set, which contrasts with the land area targets set in other Action Plans. At the time, the UK was around 40% self-sufficient in organic products - the target helped increase the level of self-sufficiency to more than 60% in 2006.

Priority areas (intermediate objectives)

- Maintain consumer confidence in the integrity of home-produced organic food through the continuing implementation of robust standards;
- Develop effective partnerships and improving performance throughout the food chain in order to help the organic sector to develop in line with consumer demand;
- Encourage sustainable procurement of food, including the role that procurement of organic food can play;
- Provide organic farmers, growers and processors in England with the research market information they need to develop their businesses successfully;
- Provide appropriate financial support to farmers in recognition of the environmental public goods delivered, while ensuring that consumer demand for organic produce results in tangible benefits for the English countryside and English wildlife, by increasing British farmers' share of the organic food market.

Box 7: England Regional Organic Action Plans

National Organic Action Plans have been produced in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, a series of Regional Organic Action Plans have also been developed to provide a greater degree of regional focus to respond to the specific needs of the very different regions of England.

The development of the Regional Organic Action Plans was led by the Soil Association and supported under the national Rural Development Plan of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. They each include specific action points appropriate to each region, e.g. for the South West of England are given below.

Box 7: continued

South West Organic Action Plan

The consultation process for the SW organic Action Plan (OAP) involved a large number of key stakeholders in the region and has helped to place the needs and aims of the organic sector firmly within the regional framework; just at the time when the next funding programs were being developed and commissioned. Following the publication of the South West Regional Organic Action Plan, the regional centre, Organic South West, has been commissioned to carry out more detailed organic sector engagement work in Cornwall, to help identify strategic development needs which might be then be delivered through the next Rural development program.

3.4 Involving stakeholders

3.4.1 The case for stakeholder involvement

The process of defining the development needs of the organic sector along with the associated policy goals and objectives clearly involves a broad range of stakeholders including politicians, policy makers, expert groups, associations of organic farmers, businesses and individuals. All of these stakeholder groups are interested in the development of the organic sector. However, not all of these stakeholders will be directly involved in the organic sector (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section A4](#)) – indeed, some important stakeholders will possibly oppose the development of the organic sector, but may be important ‘gatekeepers’ to policy or implementation. It is thus an important issue for politicians and policy makers to find effective ways to engage with those stakeholders considered relevant for defining and prioritising developmental needs and policy objectives. This may contribute to ensuring that the policy measures are effectively met.

The selection of stakeholders to involve may refer to the principles of good governance outlined by EU Commission. Their objective is to “open up policy making to make it more inclusive and accountable”.³³ The way stakeholder involvement (active participation) in the policy process is carried out may vary between policy sectors and between member states, but the following sections include guidelines for identifying stakeholders for Organic Action Plans and methods for working with them.

Stakeholder Workshops – agreeing policy goals and Organic Action Plans



3.4.2 Identifying relevant stakeholders

The identification of stakeholders relevant to involve in Organic Action Plans may rest on the recognition of the dual societal role for organic farming that is the basis of the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming :

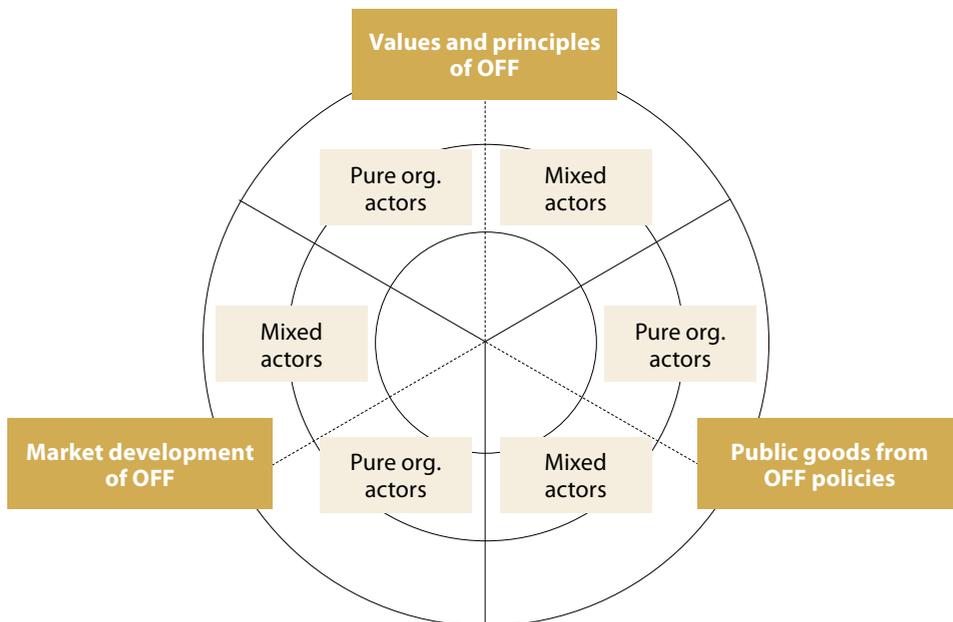
- As a response to consumer demand and hence governed by market rules;
- As a supplier of public goods (environmental goods, rural development, improved animal welfare).³⁴

The dual role of organic food and farming leads the EU Organic Action Plan to concentrate on policy measures that emphasize three key perspectives of organic food and farming:

- **organic values perspective** which implies the definition of the basic principles of organic food and farming;
- **market perspective** which is seen as the main driver of the development;
- **public goods perspective** which is seen as the main reason for promoting organic food and farming by means of public support.³⁵

Each of these perspectives involves separate groups of stakeholders as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Stakeholder perspectives in Organic Action Plans³⁶



Proposals regarding the organic values perspective cannot be substantiated or implemented without involving (some of) the stakeholders who are the legitimate bearers of these values such as associations of organic agriculture or organic farmers. But even with regard to the market or public goods perspectives it may be relevant to involve stakeholders that possess or have access to information or influence relevant to any of the stages of the policy cycle leading to the development of an Organic Action Plan (the design, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation).

Which stakeholders to involve?

When deciding on which stakeholders to involve in any stage of the policy process it may be worth initially identifying all stakeholders considered relevant to the issue and to clarify for each of them which perspective they represent as a first priority. Relevant stakeholders may include purely organic stakeholders as well as stakeholders not engaged in organic activities, or those that combine organic food and farming activities with non-organic activities:

- Government departments;
- Public representative bodies;
- Non-governmental organisations;
- Private businesses and associations – for profit;
- Private businesses and associations – not-for profit.

Each of these groups and each member of the groups may have legitimate interests in the Organic Action Plan and may help in development of the plan. It is possible, however, to distinguish between group members that are more (directly or indirectly) affected by the Organic Action Plan policy measures than others. Although it is worth involving a comprehensive range of stakeholders it is necessary to give priority to those affected the most.

An additional distinction can be drawn between those actors considered central to organic food and farming (like organic farmers), actors at the interface (like firms delivering inputs) and a third group that are considered part of the external or peripheral environment that establish the framework of conditions for organic food and farming such as non-organic parts of public administration. This analysis of stakeholders' centrality with regard to the Action Plan or components of the Action Plan in question provides a good basis for selecting stakeholders to involve at any stage of the policy cycle, but the selection of stakeholders may also be

based on an assessment of the resources that various stakeholders have at their disposal in terms of information, legitimacy and influence.

There is a risk that the policy process can be delayed if too many stakeholders are involved, consequently policy makers should ensure that those most likely to contribute to reaching a result, for instance in terms of political power or positive attitude and interest are selected.

Stakeholder involvement needs good preparation, sufficient time and suitable methods

The mechanism behind stakeholder involvement involves the exchange of “goods” such as information, legitimacy and influence between policy makers and other stakeholders. The exchange is based on reciprocity, and therefore stakeholders with nothing to contribute cannot be expected to be involved. There is no certain outcome of stakeholder involvement since it will depend on how political conflicts between different stakeholder groups are handled, in addition to the general political interest in organic farming.

Stakeholder involvement thus demands careful preparations and sufficient time, for example, for preparing the consultation at any stage of the policy process and of appropriate methods used to initiate and promote participation. An example on stakeholder involvement is described in Box 8 from The Netherlands.

3.4.3 Participatory approaches for stakeholders involvement

Involvement may be understood and implemented in many different ways, including the provision of information, facilitating opportunities to comment on proposals, and empowering stakeholders to implement their own choices and concepts.

From the analysis of existing Action Plans and policy programmes for organic agriculture, in some cases involvement was limited to certain stages of the process only.³⁸ Involvement could be on a permanent basis (e.g. through the establishment of a permanent expert group or an advisory committee for organic agriculture, as is the case in the Danish Organic Food Council) or on a temporary/ad hoc basis (e.g. ad hoc expert commission for the design of the German Action Plan, or the expert and stakeholder consultations held during the development of the European Organic Action Plan).

Box 8: Stakeholder involvement in the Dutch Organic Action Plan³⁷

In The Netherlands there is a long tradition of involving stakeholders in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of organic actions plans. The results of the ex-post evaluations are directly used as input for the next policy cycle.

Based on the ex-post evaluation of the Action Plan Organic Agriculture 2001-2004 and recommendations by organic entrepreneurs and organizations, in the Action Plan Organic Agriculture 2005-2007 two major action points were:

1. Stimulation of the demand for organic products;
2. Development and dissemination of knowledge on organic agriculture.

The demand oriented approach is further developed and implemented by the Task Force Market Development Organic Agriculture, a cooperation of private enterprises, banks, non governmental organizations and the government. The main objective was a market share of 5% by organic consumption in 2007 in order to achieve a 10% share by organic production in 2010. Every year, intermediate results are published by the organic association Biologica in the Bio Monitor.

In order to enhance the innovativeness and sustainability of organic agriculture (and as spin off to conventional agriculture) a knowledge network has started, involving all stakeholders in organic agriculture. This network called Bioconnect is responsible for setting the research agenda for organic agriculture, coordination of research activities and research guidance by stakeholders, as well as dissemination of the results by education and extension. The Dutch government supplies a major part of the funds and has reserved 10% of the budget for agricultural research specially for organic agriculture. In 2007 good practices on innovation and sustainability were published and widely spread.

Based on the ex-post evaluation of the Action Plan Organic 2005-2007 both major action points returned in the new Action Plan Organic Agriculture 2008-2011.

Ad hoc involvement is likely to be relevant in cases where only limited resources or little information are available to public administrations as well as to the main interest groups and practitioners whether organic farmers or organic businesses.

Using different participatory methods

Stakeholder involvement is more likely to become successful if it uses several methods and runs throughout the policy cycle of an Organic Action Plan (design, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation). Table 7 outlines different approaches and suggests appropriate timing for stakeholder involvement. Successful stakeholder involvement depends on exchange of communication i.e. on achieving a two-way communication flow.

Table 7: How and when to involve stakeholders

How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of groups or committees • Systematic accessing of networks • Active data gathering and surveying • Electronic and written sources – “what are they/we thinking” • Involvement in events • Sponsorship of events • Links with advisory bodies • Workshops • Focus Groups • Thematic seminars • Electronic consultation and on-line forum • Direct interviews • Participation in research and extension
When?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification of impact goals and indicators • Development and formulation of policy - Decision making • Implementation • Evaluation

The degree to which participatory methods realise their potential depends critically on how they are used and in what context. There is not one set of techniques to be mechanically applied in all contexts for all participants. Rather a diverse range of possible techniques should be deployed that need to be flexibly adapted to particular situations and needs.

In applying participatory approaches, particularly in workshops or steering group contexts, a key issue is to ensure active as opposed to passive participation. A wide range of different specific methods can be applied, which cannot be described in detail in this manual. Some of these methods are well known such as brainstorming, rapid appraisal, SWOT-analysis, focus groups, etc. One of the less known techniques, that of lateral thinking, is described as an example in Box 9.

 [More information about different participatory methods is provided in ORGAPET Section A4 – 4.4](#)

3.5 Decision making: selecting, integrating and prioritising relevant measures

Effective decision making is critical during the formulation of an Organic Action Plan. Decisions required concern the content (aims, objectives and action points),

Box 9: Lateral thinking method – creativity by provocation

In order to translate objectives into policy goals, it might be useful to use unconventional techniques, such as the lateral thinking method. Lateral thinking³⁹ can help change our concepts and perceptions and generate new ideas. Since concepts, perceptions and ideas are involved in every activity that requires thinking, every person needs some lateral thinking skills. Creative ideas may not emerge spontaneously; formal and systematic techniques of lateral thinking may help to escape the restrictive effects of judgment.

Provocation involves a ‘jump’ from established patterns of thinking and experience, and thus can open up a whole new avenue of thinking.

For example, the provocative statement could be ‘food scandals in the organic sector’:

- **Consequences:** consumers would not buy organic products since it would be much safer to buy conventional products. More organic products would pass through the conventional channel. Organic products would be cheaper and organic shops would close.
- **Circumstances:** farmers’ associations would ask for effective controls in order to guarantee organic quality to consumers; public information and promotion campaigns for the certification system and organic product quality would increase. Farmers would transform their farm so that consumers do not only buy organic products, but also eat local and typical products or make vacation.
- **Solution:** policy goals, developed to deal with the provocative statement “food scandals in the organic sector”.

resource availability and prioritisation, implementation (processes and organisation), desired outcomes and methods of evaluation. It is often the case that the policy measures and implementation take place in the absence of any visible basis in policy decision making (at either official or political levels, and regardless of stakeholder need). Effective decision making requires planning, participation and transparency (openness).

3.5.1 Deciding on policy instruments and action points

Section 3.3 of this manual outlines issues relating to the specification of Action Plan aims and objectives, which should reflect the needs of stakeholders (including both beneficiaries and policy makers).

Clarity of aims and objectives is an important first stage. The final content of an Organic Action Plan will be the result of political decisions that will have been made subject to the prevailing political agenda, the range of policy options introduced, the general history of the policy area (how problems and solutions

were perceived in the past), the level of political conflict in the area and how conflict has been coped with in the past.

For example, the key policy driver for an Organic Action Plan may be ‘environmental led’ (public good/supply push), or it may be ‘market led’ (demand pull), where the main drivers are consumer demand and market signals.

Initial perception can become fixed

The initial perception of problems and solutions tends to define the future perception, therefore, if the environment has always been seen as the driver, then it will stay that way – making it more difficult to re-orientate to a market driver later – and vice versa.

In each case, the policy instruments selected, action points prioritised and the effects on beneficiaries will be different. The nature of stakeholders targeted may also be different, with a possible focus on public (government and non-government), or on both public and private stakeholders. A focus on the ‘public’ avoids the risk of policy capture by private interests but may limit the impact on the market and consumer demand.

Content needs to be logical

Once the aims and objectives have been determined, the second stage is to decide on the individual action points and policy instruments to be included. The danger at this stage is that a very long ‘shopping list’ of possible actions can be identified, which needs to be coherently structured and prioritised. Logical analysis (🌐 [see also ORGAPET Section B2-2](#)) provides a means of doing this.

The first step is to identify possible actions/policy instruments that might be used to achieve the objectives, by extending the hierarchical objectives structure outlined in section 3.3 (🌐 [see also ORGAPET Section B2](#)). At this stage it might be possible to eliminate any redundant actions/instruments that do not contribute anything to the aims and objectives. Equally importantly, it will be possible to identify aims and objectives that are not supported by any actions.

The second step is to consider whether the policy instruments chosen are the most effective possible (🌐 [see also ORGAPET Section A3](#)), and whether there might be any unintended consequences (for example conflicts or contradictions between instruments), or unnecessary duplication. The aim should be to get the maximum effect for the (always limited) resources available and to avoid wasting resources.

For example, will financial support for farmers converting result in over-production, resulting in lower prices that ultimately reduce the incomes of, rather than help, the target beneficiaries? Alternatively, will limiting support to producers, who market their products as organic, reduce the potential to get environmental benefits from organic land management? Could the eligibility conditions for one instrument result in other instruments being impossible to utilise?

Assessing synergies and conflicts with a cross impact matrix

The potential synergies and conflicts between individual action points and policy instruments can be assessed using a cross impacts matrix (🌐 See [ORGAPET Section B2-3](#)), using a scoring system ranging from ++ for very positive to -- for very negative. Normally, only the lower half of the matrix would be completed. Where serious potential conflicts are identified, changes to the proposed actions will be required, while actions involving significant synergies may be preferred in the prioritisation stage. An example is given in Box 10 for the European Organic Action Plan.

Box 10: Cross-impact matrix for the European Organic Action Plan

EU AP	Action 1: Develop an information and promotion campaign by amending Reg. 2826/2000	Action 2: Establish and maintain an internet database listing various private and national standards	Action 3: Improve the collection of statistical data on both production and marketing of organic products
Action 1: Develop an information and promotion campaign by amending Reg. 2826/2000			
Action 2: Establish and maintain an internet database listing various private and national standards			
Action 3: Improve the collection of statistical data on both production and marketing of organic products			

3.5.2 Priorities for action – allocating resources

Once the list of possible actions has been simplified and checked for completeness and logical coherence, prioritisation is essential as resources will not be unlimited (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section B2-4](#)).

Several methods may help the process of prioritisation, such as non-secret voting (choosing options according to resources), budget allocation exercises (distributing limited budgets) and anonymous electronic voting techniques. Some of these methods or tools were applied and developed in the context of organic policy development as part of the EU-CEE-OFP Project (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section A4-4/5](#)).⁴⁰

Non-secret voting for policy priorities

Voting can help in the selection of options. A non-secret system of voting allows participants to behave in a strategic way, since intermediate results are visible to all involved in the voting. This can allow stakeholders to change their choices if they notice that a policy goal has not been voted for, or to strengthen a group decision.

Voting using electronic systems can also be used where all participants are allocated a remote control linked to an appropriate computer software programme. A variation of Nominal Group Technique (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section C4](#)) might also be used to achieve consensus on priorities through an iterative process requiring outlying participants to explain their preferences.

Budget allocation (priority evaluator technique)

Budget exercises allow for the distribution of a certain budget to different spending options in a group decision process. As the group making the decisions may not be the group that actually allocates and spends resources, a national budget might be used, with each participant indicating how it should be spent taking account of the extent to which each activity might be supported. For example, respondents could be offered five 'goods' in three different quantities (say 1, 2 and 3 units) at certain prices. The method allows the trade-offs by moving from one level of each attribute to another to be identified, with the respondent choosing the best package, given a fixed budget to spend. The exercise can be repeated for each individual with different relative prices until the desired result is achieved (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section B2-4](#)).

Group scoring exercise from Brussels workshop with a budget allocation



3.6 Implementing Organic Action Plans

Successful implementation of an Organic Action Plan depends on the right policies, defined to meet clear objectives that reflect the needs of the organic sector as well as policy-makers. Clarity, openness and transparency of decisions and objectives foster successful implementation. Ambiguous objectives or hidden agendas, which might be the result of conflicts (or tacit misunderstandings) during prioritisation and decision making, may hamper implementation.

However, implementation also depends on the engagement of both target beneficiaries and the officials that are implementing or administering the programme. Street level administrators may not be sufficiently engaged in the process to promote or prioritise the actions that have been decided at a higher level, or may lack understanding of the specific issues that led to the formulation of the Action Plan in the first place. Institutional or departmental structures may also work against implementation, if the scope of the Action Plan crosses departmental boundaries. Officials may only consider their specific individual or departmental area of responsibility, thus losing the synergistic benefits of integration that the Action Plan was designed to achieve.

 The issues summarised here are discussed in further detail in [ORGAPET Section B1](#).

Comprehension, capability and willingness of the beneficiaries are decisive

If the support and opportunities made available through the specific action points in the Organic Action Plan are not exploited by intended beneficiaries, then the Organic Action Plan will fail at implementation. There are three characteristics of the beneficiaries of the Organic Action Plan that define the extent to which they will take advantage of the policy measures included in the Action Plan:

- **Comprehension** – the policy measures should be understandable by the beneficiary.
- **Capability** – the beneficiary should be able to take advantage of the measures, which must be relevant to them.
- **Willingness** – the beneficiary should be ready to take up the concrete opportunities.

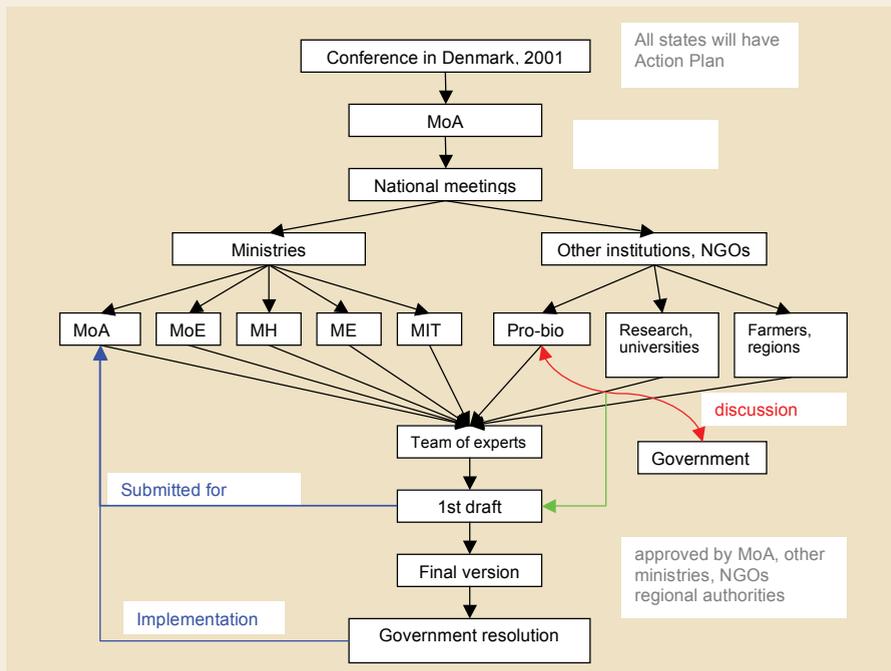
The policy makers responsible for the development of the Organic Action Plan may enhance all three aspects by:

Box 11: Development and implementation of the Organic Action Plan in the Czech Republic⁴¹

Following the Conference in Denmark in 2001, where it was agreed that all states should have Organic Action Plans, the Czech Republic Summer Academy for Organic Farming in 2001 involved the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and NGO representatives and initiated the preparation of the Organic Action Plan of the Czech Republic. During 2002 and 2003 working meetings were held between ministries (mainly MoA and Ministry of Environment, but also with the involvement of the Ministries of Health (MH), Education (ME), Industry and Trade (MIT)), non-governmental and other organisations involved in the organic sector (inspection body KEZ, Research Institute of Agricultural Economics, union of organic farmers PRO-BIO, universities and organic farmers).

After many meetings, the MoA presented the new Organic Action Plan in 2003, which was followed by discussion between Committee for Environment of Chamber of Deputies in the Parliament and union of organic farmers PRO-BIO. The draft Organic Action Plan, submitted to the MoA for approval was prepared by a team of experts (interested mainly in area of welfare, marketing, research, education or relation of organic farming and environment). By the end of 2003 the Organic Action Plan was approved by MoA, other ministries, regional authorities and NGOs. The Organic Action Plan came into force in March 2004 on the basis of resolution of the government of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment. The Action Plan is implemented by the MoA.

Policy process of preparing of Action Plan in the Czech Republic



- **Influencing** senior officials to provide resources appropriate to the specific actions points in the Plan.
- **Encouraging** junior officials responsible for implementation to maximise uptake relative to available resources).

Public private partnership important for success of Action Plan

Successful implementation depends to a large extent on stakeholders' involvement – involving the public agencies and their employees and the target groups of the various measures included in the Organic Action Plan. Farmers and food businesses need to be motivated by the opportunities provided for in the policy measures.

Organic Action Plans may be developed through either 'top down' or 'bottom up' approaches. The implementation phase may primarily involve government departments at a national or regional level delivering the policy measures. More often, delivery will involve a partnership between public and private interests, possibly working with non-governmental organisations and public interest bodies. Thus the implementation of a policy or an Action Plan is initiated through interaction between a diversity of public and private organizations and individuals. Successful implementation depends on getting stakeholders involved in the delivery of an Organic Action Plan.

Behaviour of different groups determines success

There are three types of behaviour which will determine the success of the Organic Action Plan during the implementation phase.

- **Organizational and inter-organizational:** This involves interaction between organizations of distinct policy sectors such as environmental and agriculture ministries, and regional/local governments, or within one policy sector such as various agencies of the ministry of agriculture. This type of interaction may be shaped by bureaucratic power games concerning financial 'survival' or expansion of the organizations involved and the implementation of any policy decision may be influenced positively or negatively by these power games.
- **Front office staff:** This is the behaviour of so-called 'street level bureaucrats' i.e. the people in direct contact with target groups. The behaviour of front office staff may be influenced by their individual preferences and working

conditions as well as by intentions of policy decisions/programmes to be implemented.

- **Beneficiaries:** This aspect concerns the behaviour of the target group. Their actions may be more or less in line with the aims of the policy decision/programme and their reactions to policy decisions/programmes may depend very much on their reliance on policy support and the types of incentives involved.

Box 12: “Organic foods for social consumption in Andalusia” – Example of private public partnership in Andalusian Organic Action Plan⁴²

The main goal is to improve the nutrition of school students, elderly and sick people with organic food. The programme aims to offer organic foods in balanced, diverse and healthy diets, combined with traditional dishes and seasonal products. This will reduce consumption of pre-processed and fried foods, as well as foods not recommended for children. It is expected that there will be an improvement in human and animal health as well as the preservation of cultural traditions and meeting social needs.

The Programme supports the creation of new farm businesses and cooperatives of organic farmers from different parts of Andalusia so that, together, they can offer a broad diversity of organic foods to schools and other public canteens.

The Programme promotes the development of local organic markets, ensuring the future increase of the organic market sector and stable foods chains facilitating sell opportunities and consumers access at adequate prices

The Programme links rural development with environmental preservation so that students and their families work together with those involved in education, health and preparation of food. Health, education, environment and agriculture are the basic themes of the programme which aims for a high degree of social responsibility.

The Programme is one of the main actions of the Andalusian First Organic Action Plan, and is a result of an agreement among five different Regional Government Departments (Agriculture, Environment, Equality, Social Welfare and Health). It started in October 2005 in school canteens providing organic food to nearly 3,000 students, involving four organic farmers’ groups supplying local canteens of 16 elementary schools, five nursery schools and one home for the elderly. In year 2007 the Programme has involved 56 schools with 7,400 students with a turnover of €208.000. A handbook has been produced describing the programme in detail and including recipes (see book cover).

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Early assessment of potential risks and problems associated with implementation

In order to provide an early assessment of potential risks and problems associated to the implementation of an Action Plan, an adapted version of the Failure Mode and Effect Analysis (FMEA) process could be used, combining internal and external expertise.

FMEA is an engineering technique used to define, identify, and eliminate known and/or potential failures, problems, errors and so on from the system, design, process, and / or service before they reach the customer. This can be usefully applied in the context as a way to help ensure successful implementation of Organic Action Plans. This involves:

- Generating a list of potential implementation problems that may arise;
- Identifying a logical cause-effect explanation for the potential failure;
- For each failure modes, estimating the risk priority number (RPN), which is the product of likelihood (probability) of occurrence, the severity of impact if it did occur, and the probability of detection of the failure;
- Ranking the most relevant problem areas using the RPN;
- Providing for problem follow-up and corrective action.

This method could also be used for evaluation purposes (see Section 4).

[🌐 For more detailed information and references see ORGAPET Section B2-5](#)

3.7 Including monitoring and evaluation of Organic Action Plans from outset

Monitoring and evaluation is too often seen as an annoying administrative burden involving the collection of large amounts of data for little purpose. However, evaluation plays a fundamental part in improving understanding of the issues that are being addressed and in designing better policies. Its role can therefore be formative (developmental) as well as summative (judgemental). This can be particularly helpful in the design (e.g. status quo analyses) and implementation phases of an Action Plan, allowing for better targeting of measures from the outset, and for fine tuning and early remedial action as implementation progresses ([🌐 for more information see ORGAPET Section A2](#)).

Evaluation takes place in order to improve programmes, not to undertake evaluations for their own sake. Programme managers need to think of evaluation as

a resource: a source of feedback, a tool for improving performance, an early warning of problems (and solutions) and a way of systematising knowledge. Closely aligning evaluations to the relevant stages of the policy cycle will make them most effective – if the relevant window of opportunity is lost, the evaluation becomes only of historical interest.

The goals and views of different interest groups, not just those commissioning the evaluation, need to be taken into consideration. If a major stakeholder interest is ignored, this is likely to weaken an evaluation, either because it will be poorly designed and/or because its results will lack credibility. Involving policy-makers and those responsible for programmes will ensure they take results seriously. Equally, the intended beneficiaries should be actively involved in the evaluation process, incorporating their criteria and judgements into an evaluation and accepting that their experience and benefits are the justification for programme interventions.

Despite this, the evidence gathered in the ORGAP project suggests that most Organic Action Plan evaluations were planned only some time after the programme had been implemented. This often means that the opportunity to define key indicators and collect data from the start of the programme is lost, and the basis on which an evaluation can be made and conclusions drawn is limited.

Evaluations should therefore be fully integrated into programme planning and implementation from the outset, including the early definition of key indicators and the allocation of resources to monitoring uptake and collection of statistical data ([🔗 for more information see ORGAPET Section A5](#)).

Box 13: Monitoring Organic Action Plans

Danish Organic Action Plans

The two Danish Organic Action Plans of 1995 and 1999 (See box 4) were monitored by the Ministry of Food on an annual basis. For each action point in the plans, it was assessed:

- whether any action had taken place;
- whether the action point was considered and realised;
- any further actions were prepared, or
- reasons for not realising the action point were given.

The size of the annual report was 2-5 pages.

3.8 Managing communication

Communication during the whole policy cycle

The development and implementation of an Organic Action Plan requires the involvement of stakeholders from within and outside the organic sector. Thus, a clear communication strategy is essential. Communication is necessary at five stages:

- **At the initiation phase of the Organic Action Plan process** – to ensure that all stakeholders know about the Organic Action Plan so that they can get involved if they wish;
- **During the development** – to maximise participation, particularly to help inform those stakeholders who are not actively involved in the development of the Plan;
- **At the launch** – when the concept of an Organic Action Plan is finalised and the measures are launched so that the beneficiaries can be made aware of the opportunities available through the policy measures included in the plan;
- **During the implementation** – advisory boards or steering groups used to control the implementation of the Organic Action Plan should also include representatives of relevant stakeholder groups. These may transport the information concerning the new implemented plan back to the stakeholders left outside;
- **During evaluation** – to enable feedback on the successes and failures of the policy measures from interested stakeholders and beneficiaries;
- **After the evaluation** – to disseminate the findings of the evaluation to all stakeholders and public in general.

If there is little or no communication about the presence of an Organic Action Plan, then there will be inadequate involvement and poor implementation of the measures. As a consequence it is not sufficient to merely announce the launch of an Action Plan, but to carry on with a clear communication strategy.

Sufficient resources for communication measures

Since communication is so essential for the acceptance and success of the Organic Action Plan, sufficient resources should be allocated to communication throughout the policy design and formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation phases of the Action Plan policy cycle. Some of the measures will be more

readily communicated (for example the availability of payments to encourage conversion, or the grants for research and development). Others may present more of a challenge, particularly where the Organic Action Plan policy measure relates to a larger programme which is available as part of the national or EU agricultural policy (for example the investment support for organic businesses under a national Rural Development Plan).

Box 14: Examples of good communication of Organic Action Plans

In Scotland, an annual report of progress of the Scottish Organic Action Plan is made. This summarises the achievements of the past year and proposes new directions.

<http://openscotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/166641/0045438.pdf>

In Germany an outcome of the national Organic Action Plan was an internet platform including all relevant information on organic farming topics (from education to research projects with tailored sections for e.g. processors, journalists, teachers, consumers).

The website has since become the most important source of information and an important interface for the German organic sector. <http://www.oekolandbau.de/>

3.9 Development of Action Plans in countries that joined the EU in 2004 and later

In the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and later, there are some issues in relation to the Organic Action Plan development which have to be taken more specifically into account. In most of these countries, Organic Action Plans have an even shorter tradition than in the rest of Europe. Several Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries started to develop Organic Action Plans after joining the EU or shortly before.

The organic sector in the CEE countries is generally less developed, although some new EU member states have a share of organic area above the EU-27 average. This also means that the stakeholders, both from within and outside the organic sector, have less capacity (staff and financial resources as well as knowledge and information) necessary for participation in the process of setting up an Action Plan.

Another issue is a lower level of experience and tradition in active stakeholder involvement, although there are major differences in this respect also between the other EU member states (such as north/south etc.).

Developing Organic Action Plans

The experiences have shown, also in the ORGAP project, that in some CEE countries, it might be difficult to ensure a satisfactory level of involvement of non-governmental organisations, in spite of the fact that these stakeholders are usually very interested in development of an Organic Action Plan. It is therefore desirable to give sufficient emphasis to the following questions and issues already in the preparation of an Organic Action plan:

- What is the personnel-related and financial capacity of relevant NGOs? If necessary, ensure targeted financial support for key NGO stakeholders to enable their active participation (this could be in the form of a project, or similar).
- How well informed are stakeholders about the development of an Organic Action Plan and associated relevant issues, what is the level of their knowledge? If necessary, organise training on key issues (also possible through another well-informed expert NGO).
- In case there are no or very few specifically organic consumers', farmers' etc. NGOs, identify other NGOs with shared interests relevant to the Action Plan.
- Ensure involvement and co-operation of relevant government departments: As for NGOs, seminars and/or training can be organised to improve the level of knowledge of relevant people.
- Where there is a problem of staff capacity, adequate prioritisation of the Action Plan at the level of government is very helpful. A bigger challenge may be to achieve effective coordination between different ministries and their specific sectors.

Further issues which may need special attention, both during the initiation and the evaluation phases of an Organic Action Plan are the following:

1. Development of domestic demand for organic products should preferably not lag behind production. In many CEE countries, the initial large increase in organic production was related to export since the domestic market was underdeveloped. Even in those countries where export is relatively limited, the market demand for organic products is still weak.
2. Appropriate encouragement of co-operation between producers in relation to marketing, as the farmers usually feel strong aversion towards co-operation due to the experiences with forced co-operation in the former political systems.
3. Strengthening of organic farming NGOs' capacities, especially if their weakness is apparent.

4 Evaluating Organic Action Plans

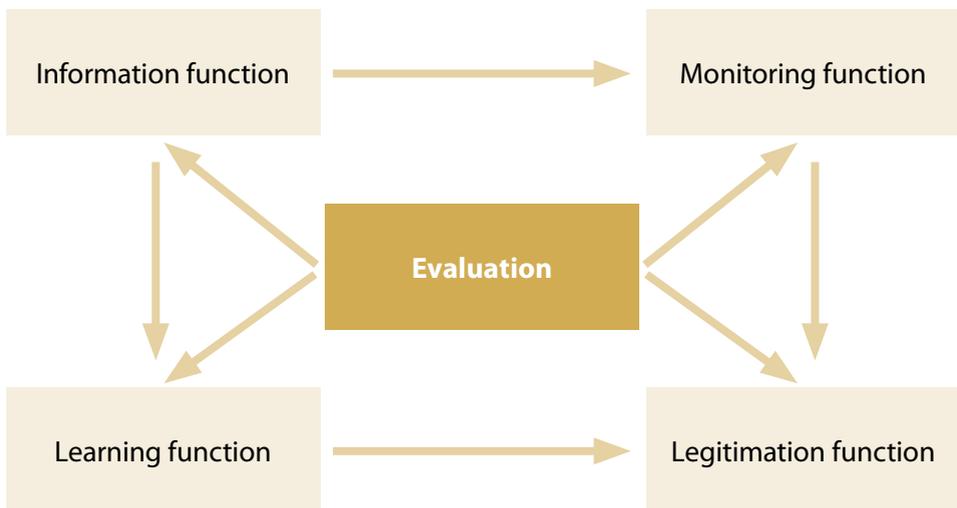
4.1 Principles of evaluation

Organic Action Plan evaluation is a vital part of the policy cycle and a helpful tool for future development of the plan ([for more information see ORGAPET Section A2](#)). The aims of programme evaluation are illustrated in Figure 9. Evaluations may be used to:

- Improve the planning of a programme or single measures (ex-ante evaluation, before starting the plan)
- Monitor implementation processes (ongoing evaluation, during implementation phase)
- Assess effectiveness and sustainability (ex-post evaluation, after termination of the plan)

A classical ex-post evaluation involves the careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth and value of the policy measures in terms of the outcome of the Organic Action Plan. Ideally monitoring and evaluation are included from the outset.

Figure 9: Aims of programme evaluation⁴³



Purpose of evaluation

Evaluation can have two purposes; either formative (developmental) or summative (judgemental). The formative evaluation is process-orientated, constructive and communication-promoting. The summative evaluation is result-oriented, concluding and accounting. Evaluations may also be conducted at different stages in the policy cycle, with different emphases on the formative or summative roles:

Ex-ante – before the implementation of the policy or programme

Outcomes of this formative evaluation should be included in the Organic Action Plan. An evaluation could be undertaken to categorize policy options, identifying which option is best aligned to stakeholder goals and objectives. At this stage, policy shortcomings can be identified and addressed. This analysis may draw on ex-post evaluations of previous policy.

Mid-term – (formative or summative) to improve implementation of Organic Action Plans during implementation phase

This assesses the ongoing relevance of the policy or programme and highlights changes in the general economic and social context affecting the policy. It draws on the ex-ante evaluation of the policy and ex-post evaluations of previous policies.

Ex-post – (summative) to inform future policy and programme development.

Undertaken after the Organic Action Plan has finished, thus allowing for the outcomes to become evident. An ex-post evaluation may inform the ex-ante evaluation of the next policy cycle.

Ongoing evaluations – ex-ante – mid-term – ex-post evaluations

Successive policy cycles should, if managed well, be integrated so as to minimise overlap and repetition of evaluation and data collection. New programmes and policies should be developed according to the performance of recent policies and programmes.

Except in the ex-ante case, evaluations may permit observation of operational processes and the identification of programme problems, such as:

- Acceptability of measures to stakeholders;
- Conflicts of interest;
- Availability of qualified personnel for implementation of measures;
- Effectiveness of communication and co-ordination with target group;

- Whether innovations in the programme meet programme objectives.

Policy evaluation involves the assessment of a programme according to specific criteria in order to make judgements about the value of the programme according to the goals of the stakeholders including policy-makers, beneficiaries and third parties. In this sense, evaluation takes place in order to improve programmes, it is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Stakeholder expectations of evaluation

Different stakeholders (e.g. policy-makers, professionals, managers, consumers of organic food and citizens) have different expectations of evaluation. If a major stakeholder interest is ignored, this is likely to weaken an evaluation, either because it will be poorly designed and/or because its results will lack credibility. Involving policy-makers and those responsible for programmes will ensure they take results seriously. Particular prominence needs to be given to the active participation of intended beneficiaries of the Action Plan, consistent with the logic of bottom-up, participative and decentralised approaches that are now much more widely used in policy development and evaluation ([see ORGAPET Section A4](#)).

Within the political process, it may be the case that some stakeholders are not interested in evaluation. Reasons for this might be that they think they would know the results anyway, so it would be a waste of resources in their view. It could also happen that stakeholders involved in or benefiting from the programme might be interested in avoiding the additional public interest and transparency of the programme often associated with well performed evaluations. However, in most cases the commissioning agency or institution is a public agency and public interest in transparency and openness should override any partial interest.

Integrate evaluation into the development of the Organic Action Plan

As argued in the previous section, evaluation should be integrated in Action Plans from the outset. This means careful planning of the evaluation ([see ORGAPET Section A5](#)), identification of key objectives and indicators, and the implementation of a monitoring programme from the start to ensure that the data is available when needed. Data dredging – that is collecting anything that might possibly be useful at a future date – is nearly always inefficient. By being clear about assumptions at an early stage, by drawing on available theory about

likely impacts of actions and being clear about the type of evaluation that is needed, evaluations can be more focused and offer a greater benefit for the resources expended.

Consideration of the policy context of an evaluation

The policy context is an important framework within which evaluations need to be located. Of course, policies change or are being constantly restated in different terms and with subtly changing priorities. In some cases even major changes in policy priorities may occur during the lifetime of an Organic Action Plan. These may either be due to changed conditions (e.g. changes in demand for organic products) or due to changed political majorities, or both. Thus it is always necessary to keep one eye on policy debates and decisions in order to ensure that evaluations are sensitised to policy priorities. The broader criteria that need to be designed into evaluations usually derive from the wider policy framework.

Organic Action Plan and organic farming policy evaluations need to take account also of the complex systems and multiple objectives inherent to the complexity of the organic farming framework and approach, with due attention to synergies and conflicts between objectives, and the different emphases that will be placed on these by different stakeholders.

Implementing evaluations from scratch can however be challenging and time consuming, particularly where information is limited and monitoring systems are lacking. In the absence of any existing framework, even small steps can help – the evaluation does not need to match the perfect ideal. However, a key purpose of the development of the ORGAP evaluation toolbox is to provide support and ideas for the evaluation of Organic Action Plans, including checklists for different steps in the evaluation process, and easy links to useful information and data sources.

4.2 Conducting an evaluation

This section outlines the practical steps that need to be taken to initiate and manage an evaluation ([🌐 for more information see ORGAPET Section A5](#)). Planning an evaluation of an organic action plan must take account of the right time for an evaluation and the types of evaluation questions. These may include:

- Programme process;
- Programme outcomes;
- Attributing outcomes to the measures;

IFOAM EU group debating the EU action plan



- Links between programme and process;
- Explanation of link between measures and outcomes.

As outlined in the previous section, evaluation of an Organic Action Plan may be formative or summative and can be undertaken at three stages within the policy cycle: *ex-ante*, mid-term (or *on-going*) or *ex-post*.

What is needed for a successful evaluation?

A successful evaluation of an Organic Action Plan has to be carefully prepared.

The following key questions might be useful:

1. What is the purpose (aims, objectives, desired outcomes) of the evaluation?
2. Is the scope defined as specifically as possible (e.g. the nature of the programme and the period to be evaluated)?
3. Is an evaluation planned from the outset, with an appropriate monitoring programme and baseline data in place?
4. When and at what the stage of the policy cycle has the evaluation to be

- carried out (ex-ante, mid-term, ex-post)?
5. What the type of evaluation is needed (formative – to assist future planning; summative – to evaluate past actions; or both)?
 6. Who is the agency/organisation who will commission the evaluation and who will conduct the evaluation (consultants, stakeholders, others)?
 7. What is the appropriate timescale (schedule) over which the evaluation should be conducted?
 8. How and by whom can the results of the evaluation be used (dissemination, management and decision making)?
 9. Have any relevant evaluations or reviews previously been conducted?
 10. Will the evaluation meet the quality assurance guidelines (e.g. SEVAL or MEANS or other)?
 11. Have clearly defined terms of reference for the evaluation been defined?

 For more information see [ORGAPET A5 checklist](#).

Steps in preparing an evaluation

There are a number of clearly defined steps required in preparing for an evaluation; these are outlined in Table 8.

Table 8: Steps in preparing an evaluation⁴⁴

Type	A	B	C	D
	Formative		Summative	
Timing with respect to Action Plan implementation	Before (ex-ante)	Mid-term	Mid-term	After (ex-post)
Who commissions the evaluations?	Action Plan groups, administrations	Action Plan groups, administrations	Action Plan groups, administrations	Administrations, researchers, auditors
Deciding on the evaluation				
Defining the scope	What will be evaluated? Define: geographical, temporal and funding limits and interactions with the ongoing policy cycle.			

Specifying the motives	e.g. identifying relevant policy goals and/or measures; improving programme relevance and coherence; identifying baseline/status quo	e.g. proposing reallocation of resources, modifications to (fine tuning of) measures	e.g. preliminary evaluation of outputs, results, impacts; trend analysis	e.g. validating best practice; determining cost effectiveness; basis for future policy choices
Planning the participation of the main partners in a steering group	Include: policy-makers; beneficiary representatives, researchers, other affected stakeholders etc.	Include: as A and managers of measures, implementation officials and others working with beneficiaries (e.g. consultants)	Include: as B	Including spokespersons of concerned groups (stakeholders – those affected and affecting)
Drawing up terms of reference				
Asking partners to express their expectations; selecting evaluative questions and judgement criteria	Rationale, relevance and coherence	Coherence effectiveness and efficiency	Coherence effectiveness and efficiency	Effectiveness and efficiency of results and impacts
Recalling the regulatory framework and describing the programme	Programme proposal	Review and amend programme	As D	Describe the programme as it was applied
Listing available knowledge	Including evaluations of previous programmes	Including <i>ex-ante</i> evaluations	Including <i>ex-ante</i> evaluations	Including mid-term evaluations
Checking feasibility of evaluation methods and questions	Checking the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and utility of the evaluation.			
Defining rules of conduct, schedule and budget	Including constraints on the scheduling of the evaluation, especially regarding the decision-making schedule			
Launching the evaluation				
Defining skills requirements for the evaluation team and select team	Often a mixed team with specific knowledge of the programme area and evaluations. Independent of the commissioner			
Planning evaluation work, particularly quality control measures	Define and implement quality assurance process			

Steps in performing an evaluation

There are three clear steps in performing an evaluation, presented in Table 9:

- Examining the logic of the Plan;
- Examining the effects of the Plan;
- Formulating, validating and utilising the conclusions.

Table 9: Steps in performing an evaluation⁴⁵

Type	A	B	C	D
	Formative		Summative	
Timing with respect to Action Plan implementation	Before (ex-ante)	Mid-term	Mid-term	After (ex-post)
Examining the logic of the programme (see ORGAPET Section B1 and Section B2)				
Analysing the strategy and assessing its relevance, including clarity and coherence of objectives	Highly important	Is strategy still relevant in light of changing context? Are objectives understood by managers and operators	Is implementation consistent with original strategy?	What objectives were actually followed and how do they differ from planned strategy?
Examining coherence between objectives, resources and action points (measures)	Assessment necessary for forward planning	Need to ensure continued compatibility to avoid implementation failure		Does coherence explain success/failure of programme?
Identifying results and expected impacts	Projections, target-setting, cross-impacts matrix	Are projections, targets still appropriate?	How does actual uptake compare with targets?	How well have results and impacts been achieved?
Examining quality of the monitoring system	Are proposed indicators appropriate? Does baseline data exist?	Is monitoring system capturing useable data?		Is data capable of assessing effects?
Examining programme effects (see ORGAPET Section C)				
Selecting and using existing information	To define baseline situation (status quo analysis)	To review progress and redirect resources, including monitoring data		To provide basic assessment of uptake, outputs, results and context
Carrying out additional surveys	To define status quo situation	May be needed where data not available from monitoring system		Provides more in-depth knowledge of specific results and impacts

Estimating results and impacts	Extrapolation from impacts of similar interventions	More in-depth analysis of specific result and impact mechanisms		Integrating full range of data sources, including research, and expert judgement
Formulating, validating and utilising the conclusions (see ORGAPET Section D)				
Interpreting results of surveys and analyses; preparing impartial judgement	Judgement on ambition of objectives and probability of achieving them	Judgement on progress of different measures and their contribution to success of the programme		Judgement of overall success of programme and cost effectiveness
Writing up an evaluation	Formulating real conclusions by clearly answering evaluative questions			
Reflecting and acting on results, in appropriate stakeholder context	Adjusting objectives, monitoring system etc.	Improving measure and retargeting resources		Highlighting best practice and general lessons learned
Disseminating results	e.g. seminar for partners involved in design of next programme	e.g. publication of interim evaluation		e.g. seminar for authorities responsible for programme, publication of final evaluation
Monitoring actions taken, including defining who is responsible.	Integrating status quo analysis in Action Plan document	Integrating conclusions in programme management and resource allocation		Integrating conclusions in determination of future policy directions

Aligning the time cycles of evaluations with the time cycles of programmes and policies can help ensure evaluations make their maximum contribution. It is better to deliver an incomplete or imperfect evaluation on time than to achieve a 10% improvement in evaluation quality and miss the window of opportunity when policy-makers and programme managers can use evaluation results and incorporate the findings into the design of new programmes and policies.

Practical experiences with the evaluation of Organic Action Plans

A meta-evaluation of Organic Action plan evaluations (DE, DK, England and The Netherlands) done in the ORGAP Project showed that in a few cases a systematic evaluation has been done (see Box 5: example of Germany).

 For more information on evaluations of national action plans see ORGAPET D2

Box 15: Evaluation of the German Organic Action Plan⁴⁶

The evaluation of the Federal Organic Farming Scheme (German Organic Action Plan) was fixed from the outset. An evaluation concept with specific and relevant questions for the evaluation was defined in the preparatory phase of the plan (2001). Then a public call for tender for conducting the evaluation was prepared and published. According to the call for tender the evaluation should answer the following questions:

1. Is the combination of measures used by the Federal Organic Farming Scheme adequate for achieving the scheme's specific objectives?
2. Have the scheme's objectives been achieved?
3. Which measures should be continued (in modified form if need be)?
4. Was the (relative and absolute) amount of funding adequate for the measures?
5. Did the Office for the Federal Organic Farming Scheme implement the scheme (tender and award of contract) effectively?

In the case of the German Organic Action Plan its evaluation was planned not only as one important tool giving a direct input to the program managers during the implementation phase, but also the financial component was taken into account from the beginning: The funds for the evaluation were budgeted and fixed from the beginning as an important part of the financial program planning.

4.3 Evaluating Action Plan design and implementation

Many of the techniques proposed to improve Action Plan design and implementation in Section 3 of this manual can also be applied to the evaluation of these issues (🔗 for more information see [ORGAPET Part B](#)). There are three key areas to consider:

1. The **process** of designing and implementing the plan, including the reasons for potential problems that may arise/have arisen;
2. The logical structure (coherence) and failure risks of the **plan itself**;
3. The level and effectiveness of **stakeholder engagement**.

4.3.1 Evaluating programme design and implementation processes

The evaluation of the design and implementation process concerns the extent to which relevant information was obtained and utilised to support the process, whether best practice procedures were used in programme design; and whether effective communication strategies were used to support programme implementation.

Key useful questions include:

1. What was the extent (type, scale and policy orientation) of prior policy initiatives in support of organic food and farming (if any)?
2. How was the agenda for the policy process defined and what were its characteristics (describe the policy process adopted)?
3. What was the specific occasion/problem leading to the policy initiative, if any?
4. What kind of analysis (if any) of the organic food sector and its needs was carried out in preparing the decision?
5. Were results of previous evaluations available? If so, how were the results of these evaluations applied?
6. What is the programme content (e.g. Action Plan action points) and relevant regulatory (legislative) framework?.
7. Were clear and specific (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound) objectives defined (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section C1](#))?
8. Was an appropriate theoretical basis developed to justify and assess the potential impact of the policy measures proposed (see also [ORGAPET Section A3](#)) and was it relevant in solving the original problem?
9. Was an analysis of conflicts and synergies (coherence) and risks of implementation failure carried out (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section B2](#))?
10. What were/are the relevant alternative (complementary or exclusive) policy options that could have been implemented (could the desired results have been achieved by different or additional policies, such as a prohibition on nitrogen or pesticide use, by supporting integrated farming or by taxation)?
11. What kind of changes in public or private organisations within the agricultural sector were required and/or made with specific relevance to organic food and farming?
12. Was the strategy/programme finally developed relevant to the original problem and for how long did it remain relevant? If no longer relevant, what factors have changed to cause this?
13. Who were the main actors involved in decision-making (🌐 see [ORGAPET Section B3](#))?
14. What was the level of political conflict? What were the main discussion points? What proposals were rejected and why?
15. How strong was the level of political commitment to the plan (very low, low, moderate, high, very high)?

16. Which institution(s) was (were) responsible for the implementation of the plan (describe type and affiliation, e.g. governmental/non-governmental, and main characteristics of the institution(s), and assess the institution(s) comprehension, willingness and capabilities regarding policy objectiveness)?
17. Were a separate budget and staff resources allocated to the Action Plan (🌐 see ORGAPET Section C3)?
18. Which specific administrative issues/constraints could have influenced the implementation?
19. Were monitoring and evaluation issues addressed appropriately from the outset (🌐 see ORGAPET Section A5)?
20. Was an effective communication plan implemented, covering both administrators and beneficiaries?

🌐 for more information see ORGAPET Section B1

4.3.2 Evaluating programme coherence

The basis for this part of an evaluation is the best practice guidelines set out in Section 3.5 of this manual (🌐 see also ORGAPET Sections B2 and C1).

First step: identification of objectives

The first step is to identify both the implicit and explicit objectives (ideally formulated in a SMART form) and to structure them in a hierarchical framework so that the link between aims, objectives and individual action points can be clearly seen. At this point, inadequacies in objective specification or logical structure should become obvious.

Where aims and objectives are not clearly specified, the following questions may be helpful in terms of specifying aims and objectives that can be evaluated:

1. Do the global (top level) objectives set out in Section 3.3 (of this manual) correspond to the Action Plan to be evaluated? If not, which should be added or deleted?
2. Do the generic intermediate objectives set out in Section 3.3, supplemented by any published Action Plan aims, reflect the implicit as well as explicit objectives of the Action Plan? If not, which should be added or deleted?
3. In the context of the Action Plan and specific regional, national or international situation to be evaluated, to what extent (e.g. not at all, partly,

highly, completely) are the defined objectives SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound)

4. Can the Action Points and the defined global/intermediate objectives be structured in an hierarchical objectives' diagram, identifying cause and effect relationships and, where relevant, additional implicit objectives.

 [for more information see ORGAPET Section C1](#)

Second step: identification of synergies and conflicts

The second step is to evaluate the degree of synergy and conflict between objectives/action points, which can be done using the cross-impact matrix approach outlined in Section 3.5.2 ( [see also ORGAPET Section B2-3](#)). Experts involved in this evaluation process (the evaluation team) should identify any synergy which may exist between pairs of measures and be asked to match quantitative evaluations on conflicts and synergies with qualitative comments and explanations of the ratings given.

Depending on the structure of the programme concerned, it will be more relevant to analyse synergy between the axes, the measures, the actions or the projects. The level of analysis chosen obviously depends on the number of programme components at each level. Some programmes consist of only a few projects, which makes it possible rapidly to analyse synergy at their level. If the number of projects is very high, it may be preferable to analyse synergy at the measures level. The choice of a level of analysis can be made by referring to the objectives hierarchy.

Third step: identification of implementation failure

The third step is to evaluate the potential for implementation failure, taking account of the possible failure mode cause and effects, the likelihood of a particular failure mode occurring, the probability of its detection and the severity of impact, as discussed in Section 3.6 ( [see also ORGAPET Section B2-5](#)).

Table 10 illustrates the application of part of this process to the EU Organic Action Plan ( [see Annex to ORGAPET Section B2 for further details](#)). Each of the cases is ranked from that with the highest Risk Probability Number (lack of stakeholder involvement) to the lowest (different interests between member states). Thus, inadequate stakeholder involvement has the highest likelihood of occurring and being detected and the most severe impact.

Table 10: The failure mode applied to the European Organic Action Plan⁴⁷

Cause	Effect
Lack of stakeholder involvement	Lack of capacity building
Inadequate information and promotion	Lack of knowledge/awareness on OF
Lack of information	Lack of political interest to support OF
Weak lobbying for OF	No mandatory implementation of AP
Research not developed enough	Insufficient importance given to OF
Conventional interests against organic lobby	Lack of financial resources
Different priorities among MS	General implementation problems
Different interests between EU and MS	Inadequate rules/procedures

OF = OF Farming AP = Action Plan

4.3.3 Evaluating stakeholder involvement

Stakeholders may be involved at any stage of the policy cycle (agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation). As part of an evaluation of Organic Action Plans it may be worth assessing the level and nature of stakeholder involvement: which stakeholders were involved at each stage, to what extent were they involved by policy makers, did stakeholders themselves seek involvement, and what came out of their involvement ([see ORGAPET Section B3](#))? These and other questions may be relevant as part of any evaluation assessing the conditions for successful implementation since a high level of stakeholder involvement may be expected to result in a high level of successful implementation. However, stakeholder involvement may even be an end in itself and hence evaluation may be part of assessing the extent to which this goal has been reached.

Grouping the stakeholders for the evaluation

There are numerous stakeholders in Action Plans on organic food and farming. Therefore, stakeholders must be grouped according to the kind of stakes/interests they represent with regard to organic Action Plans. One type of grouping is mentioned in 3.4.2 regarding the three key perspectives of the EU Organic Action Plan: organic values perspectives, market perspectives and public goods perspectives. Some stakeholders are central to all perspectives while others are central only to one perspective and still others have peripheral involvement,

Box 16: Involvement of supermarket chains in the Danish Organic Action Plan

Coop Denmark has been involved at all stages of the 1999 Danish Organic Action Plan as member of the Danish Organic Food Council and has been an important actor in implementing various public campaigns in support of organic food. For many years, however, it was a supermarket chain under Danish Supermarket that realised the highest turnover of organic food. It is part of the strategy of Coop Denmark to represent consumers in politics, while Danish Supermarket does not intend to serve consumers' political interests.

possibly only to one perspective. Moreover, some stakeholders represent purely organic activities while others represent mixed or purely non-organic activities. On the basis of the grouping of stakeholders it is possible to assess the balance of stakeholders involved at any stage of the policy cycle. Are all central stakeholders involved equally in all stages, are some peripheral stakeholders involved more than central ones or are certain types of stakeholders left out from certain stages? There may be good reasons for involving various stakeholders to different extents in various stages of the policy process. These reasons may be very important for understanding the Action Plan, but the reasons can only be asked for on the basis of the assessment of stakeholder involvement.

Assessing resources and level of conflicts

Having categorized the stakeholders involved and the level of involving them, it may be worth identifying the type of resources exchanged between stakeholders within the policy cycle and what impact on policy contents came out of these exchanges. The three main resources are information, legitimacy and power/influence. Which types of stakeholders delivered which kind of resources and what did they get in exchange? This kind of questions may be asked to key actors at every stage of the policy process and may help explaining the content of the Action Plan and why certain parts of it were implemented more successfully than other parts. Finally, the assessment may include the level of conflict and the level of communication between stakeholders in attempts to explain outcomes.

What has to be considered for the evaluation of stakeholder involvement?

For each relevant stage of the policy cycle (agenda setting, policy formulation/

Box 17: Levels of conflicts related to organic food and farming policies – examples from different countries⁴⁸

Four levels of conflict can be defined that have had a clear impact on the outcomes of organic food and farming policies in both old and new member states, whilst at the same time illustrating that a high level of interaction between as many types of stakeholders as possible appears to have a positive impact on the outcome of organic food and farming policies:

- The high proportion of organic farms in Austria is explained by a low level of conflict between organic and non-organic farming in terms of economic interests, because conversion to organic farming was backed up by the farmers' union as a way to preserve traditional Austrian farms under the auspices of the EU Common Agricultural Policy.
- The very low proportion of organic farms found in Greece and some of the new member states of 2004 is explained by a low level of conflict between organic and non-organic farming based on values. Although both parties opposed the values of the other, the conflict has only manifested itself in ignorance on both sides with regard to attempts of cooperation.
- The low proportion of organic farms found in Belgium and the UK is explained by a high level of conflict, whether arising from different economic interests or values. In both cases organic farming had a long history of high profile values, which provoked overt opposition or reluctant cooperation from general agricultural organizations.
- ^a The medium proportion of organic farms in Denmark and the Czech Republic coincides with a medium level of conflict between organic and non-organic farming, implying partly acceptance of values and of common economic interests as the basis for cooperation in some areas and conflict in others.

decision making, implementation and evaluation), the following questions should be addressed, where necessary taking account of the perspectives of different informants (e.g. government, organic sector, research):

1. With respect to ALL relevant stakeholders (whether involved or not), identify the following information for each stakeholder in tabular form:
 - a. The identity and type of the relevant stakeholders/stakeholder groups
 - b. Their specific areas of interest (e.g. agriculture, food, environment, consumer, health, animal welfare);
 - c. Their level of expertise with respect to the policy area;
 - d. Their priorities, objectives and 'authority';
 - e. Their involvement in the policy process – where appropriate give reasons;
 - f. The degree of impact of the proposed policy on the different stakeholders;
 - g. Their orientation to the policy;

h. Their influence on the policy – explain why?

Based on this tabulated information and other relevant sources, consider:

2. The overall result concerning involvement of stakeholders:
 - a. What priority was given to the involvement of stakeholders?
 - b. How well, and by which stakeholders, were the main stakeholder perspectives (organic values/principles, market/business and public goods (environment etc.) covered?
 - c. To what extent can the process of stakeholder involvement be considered to be unbiased?
 - d. How well did the process balance desirable inclusion, engagement, legitimisation and knowledge on the one hand against undesirable promotion of personal, business or institutional interests on the other?
 - e. How satisfied were the stakeholders with the process?
3. The actual engagement by stakeholders in the policy process and with each other:
 - a. What influence (effect) did the decision to implement the policy process have on stakeholders;
 - b. Which stakeholders promoted which ideas?
 - c. What was the fate of their suggestions and for what reasons?
 - d. Who supported/opposed them and for what reasons?
 - e. What conflicts, if any, arose between different types of stakeholders?
 - f. What was the degree of conflict?
4. The level of communication and understanding of the policy process and outcomes:
 - a. What mechanisms were used to promote two-way communication with stakeholders (🌐 see [ORGAPET Sections A4 and C4](#))?
 - b. How were the plans and activities for involving stakeholders documented and communicated?
 - c. How well did stakeholders understand the policy and have the capability and willingness to act and affect policy change?
 - d. To what extent did involvement in the policy process lead to learning and understanding by stakeholders?

🌐 for more information see [ORGAPET Section B3](#)

4.4 Evaluating Action Plan effects

It is one thing to evaluate the way in which an Action Plan has been developed and implemented, and another to evaluate the effects or outcomes of that Action Plan. Most evaluations will seek to quantify the effects as far as possible, in order to determine the scale of the benefit relative to the resources invested. In the case of complex policy programmes such as Action Plans, this usually involves the definition and measurement of a system of indicators ([🌐 for more information see ORGAPET Sections C2 and C3](#)) that can be evaluated using techniques such as multi-criteria analysis.

However, this may not always be possible, either because there is inadequate data or other evidence to determine the size of the effect, or because causal relationships between the policy measure and the effect observed are difficult to specify. In such cases, it might be necessary to rely on expert judgement approaches ([🌐 for more information see ORGAPET Section C4](#)).

4.4.1 Developing and using indicators for evaluation

Indicators provide a means of measuring the effect of an action or policy measure on an objective, and are usually accompanied by criteria (of a pass/fail or score type) that allow a judgement to be made as to whether or how well an objective has been achieved. The choice of indicators will therefore be based on the defined objectives of an organic Action Plan, as well as any additional implicit objectives that may be derived as part of the evaluation process outlined in Section 4.3.2.

[🌐 ORGAPET Section C2 provides further guidance on the process of developing indicators, while Section C3 provides details of generic indicators that have proved relevant to organic Action Plan evaluation.](#)

What makes a useful indicator?

Indicators are often chosen to represent complex issues in a simple way that can be easily quantified or described in qualitative terms. “A good indicator must provide simple information that both the supplier and the user can easily communicate and understand.”⁴⁹ Indicators should be policy-relevant, analytically sound, measurable and easy to interpret.

Indicators must be relevant for decision-makers and should be closely linked to the goals and objectives of stakeholders. For the indicators to be accepted widely, stakeholders must include a wide range of people who have the power to affect

policy development and those who will be affected by the policy.

However, their choice is also influenced by the costs of obtaining data relative to the benefits that the data will yield. An indicator that is exact and close to a problem (e.g. soil analyses to measure actual nitrate leaching) may be very expensive for the purpose of assessing pollution from agriculture on an EU-wide scale, whereas an alternative indicator (such as the area of organically-managed land, based on the assumption that organic farming leads to reduced pollution) might be much easier to obtain, but also much less precise in terms of cause and effect relationships.

Linking indicators to objectives

In addition to questions of data availability, precision and cost/benefit relationships, indicators need to be relevant to be effective, i.e. clearly *linked to specific objectives* on the basis of a clear concept of the effect that a particular policy or action will have on that objective (i.e. an *impact statement* derived from the policy measure included in the Organic Action Plan). There should also be a clear understanding of how an indicator result can be used to indicate performance with respect to the objective – *criteria* are required to determine whether the indicators show a) positive or negative changes over time, b) success or failure or c) degree of success (a grading or scoring system). In this context, the SMART criteria for defining objectives are relevant.

The precise definition and quantification of indicators may not be possible in all or many cases, and a judgement-based evaluation may need to be undertaken. Such evaluations may involve the judgement of an individual assessor or a group of assessors. In these situations, a process for eliciting expert opinion will be required.

The choice of indicators requires careful consideration, they must be appropriate for decision-making and evaluation for each situation. In each case, thought must be given to the temporal, geographical and organisational scale at which the indicator will be measured and evaluations will be made.

Different types of indicators

Appropriate indicators for Organic Action Plan evaluation will also reflect the different hierarchical levels of objectives. A classification of indicators is outlined in Box 17. Indicators must identify:

Box 18: Classification of indicators

There are different types of indicators, each of which serves different purposes:

- **Design process indicators** provide information on the nature of the design process, including the degree and quality of stakeholder involvement and the relevance (nearness) of the process to the target beneficiaries.
- **Programme or context indicators** provide information on the business, social and environmental characteristics of the organic sector, including its position relative to agriculture and the food industry overall.
- **Resource and implementation process indicators** provide information on the resources used by operators in implementing a policy or programme (financial, human, material, organisational and regulatory resources), including stakeholder involvement in the implementation process.
- **Output indicators** represent the direct effect of the programme on the immediate beneficiaries, for example the number of hectares supported or the number of farmers participating in a scheme, or other measures of uptake with respect to specific actions in an Organic Action Plan.
- **Result indicators** represent the immediate advantages for direct beneficiaries of the programme that are indirectly a result of programme activity, for example the increase in farm incomes or market share – these are most likely to relate to the sectoral-level objectives focused on the performance of a sector against a defined set of goals and the programme's beneficiaries.
- **Impact indicators** represent the effects of the changes made by beneficiaries as a result of the programme on wider public policy goals, for example environmental protection or animal welfare goals – these are most likely to relate to the societal-level objectives and 'state' indicators (impacts on the environment) and 'response' indicators (changes in policy in response to changes in the environment).

- The immediate ability of the Organic Action Plan to develop the organic farming and food sectors – **output** and **result** indicators are particularly relevant.
- The wider effects of organic sector development as a result of the Organic Action Plan with respect to agri-environmental and rural development policy goals - here the **impact** indicators are relevant.
- The process of design and implementation, including stakeholder involvement – here **process** indicators are relevant.

Organic stakeholders are more likely to be interested in the output and result indicators. These reflect the effect of the Organic Action Plans on the organic community. Policy-makers may have more interest in the impact indicators. Thus the selection of indicators can lead to conflicting policy evaluation results. Nevertheless the needs of all the different groups interested in the outcomes of evaluations should be considered in the choice of indicators.

Indicators have to be linked to the evaluation types

Table 11 shows where particular types of indicators may be relevant in the different types of evaluation.

Table 11: Linking indicator and evaluation types

Type	A	B	C	D
Nature	Formative		Summative	
Timing with respect to Action Plan implementation	Before (ex-ante)	Mid-term	Mid-term	After (ex-post)
Design process	Yes	Yes		Yes
Programme/context	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Resources and implementation process	Budgets and planned procedures	Compare budgets with actual and revise		Yes
Outputs	Predicted, baseline	Key to review implementation progress	Yes	Yes
Results	Predicted, baseline		Preliminary assessment	Final assessment
Impacts	Predicted, baseline		Preliminary assessment	Final assessment

Defining indicators using impact statements

The MEANS approach⁵⁰ and the Evalsed update contains useful suggestions on methods of producing and using indicators. In particular, they highlight that a system of indicators has more chance of functioning when the suppliers and the users of the information have been involved in its creation, suggesting that a closed group of specialists will be tempted to construct an expensive, technically ideal system which may never be operational. To solve this problem, it is suggested that a steering group including data suppliers and users should be established, which should take responsibility for defining the indicators. This group may be very similar to the group that might be responsible for conducting the evaluation. Broader public or stakeholder involvement could be achieved through a series of workshops or interviews to provide input into the steering group discussions.

The following seven step process is recommended to define appropriate indicators:

Box 19: Example of how to derive impact statements and indicators from Action Plan objectives

Action (Objective) 1: Provide direct financial support for organic land management

Action 2: Provide financial support for conversion-related advice

Impact statement 1: The provision of direct financial support will increase/increased the area of land under organic management (e.g. hectares).

Impact statement 2: The support for conversion advice will increase/increased the area of land under organic management (could also consider the quality of that management).

Indicator (combining linked impact statements): Area under organic management

These impact statements and indicators could be linked, in turn, to higher-level objectives (aims/goals):

Aim (top-level objective): Maintaining and enhancing the environment

Impact statement: Research shows that organic management generally has a positive (how big?) impact on the environment, so that an increase in land area under organic management benefits the environment.

Indicator (as for lower-level objectives): Area under organic management

Using this approach, area under organic management can serve as an indicator for several objectives and is a relatively easy indicator to quantify at reasonable cost. However, it could be argued that the area under organic management indicator is too imprecise to measure the environmental impact, and that a more closely related indicator, such as nutrient balances, would be preferable, provided that the data can be obtained/estimated at reasonable cost. This needs to be considered in the context of individual evaluations, depending both on priorities and the resources (expertise as well as financial) available locally.

1. Specify or clarify the objectives (or small number of objective groups) as described earlier in the manual;
2. Define impacts statements (based on literature or experts views, see example in Box 19) and structuring them in an effects diagram (see Figure 9);
3. Use the effects diagram to cluster impact statements to identify a few key impacts and reduce the potential number of indicators;
4. Using the clustered impact statements and the generic indicator list in ORGAPET Section C3 as a guide, identify a parsimonious list of indicators relevant to the specific programme to be evaluated;
5. Quantify and describe the indicators using appropriate data sources (🌐 for examples see ORGAPET Section C3);

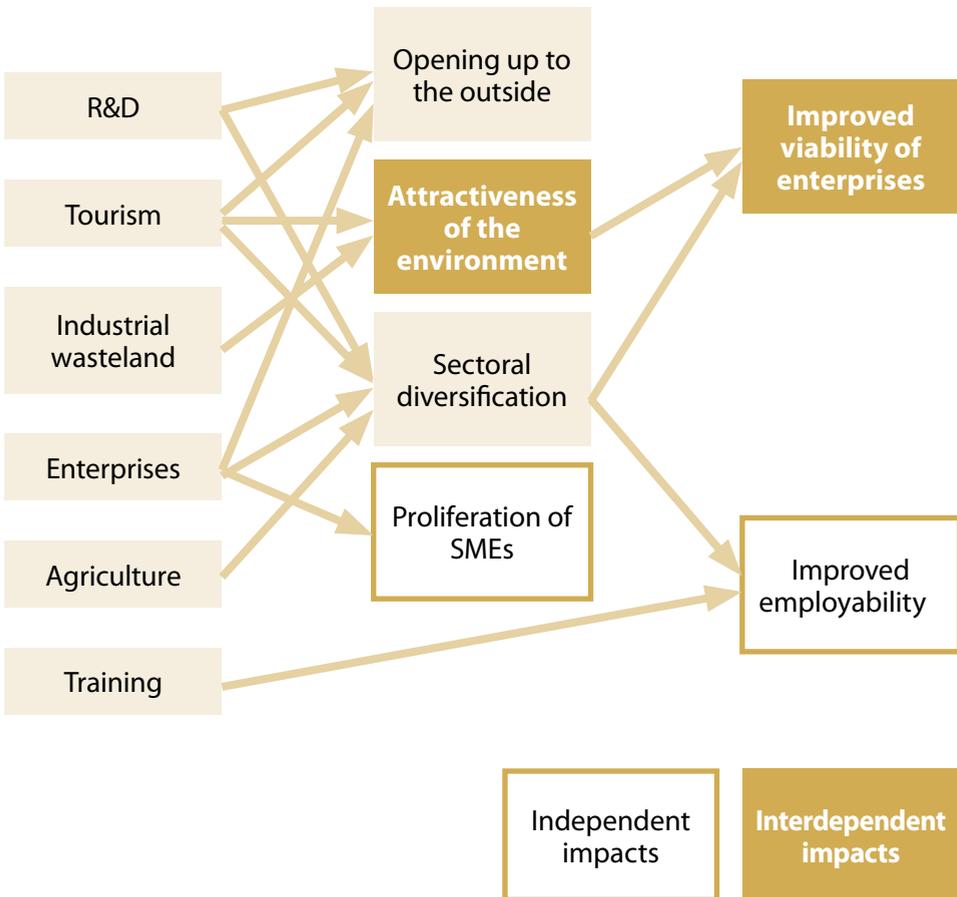
6. Define performance criteria for specific indicators, e.g do they show success or failure and to what degree (🌐 see ORGAPET Section C3 for examples);
7. Conduct a quality assessment of the individual indicators and the indicator system (🌐 see ORGAPET Section C2-7).

🌐 For more information see ORGAPET Section C2

Visualising effect relationships and impacts

The process of identifying and structuring cause and effect relationships and impact statements can be facilitated using effects diagrams. An example of an effects diagram is provided in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Example of an effects diagram showing the links between policy measures/action points and impacts⁵¹



Simplification and reduction of number of indicators

In complex, multi-objective/multi-policy programmes, the temptation is to measure everything, including the output and results for each action, but if an Organic Action Plan has 20 or more actions, the number of indicators would quickly grow out of control. Simplification can be achieved by distinguishing between the needs of operators monitoring delivery, and the indicators needed for programme evaluation, which may require the input of only a part of the monitoring data collected by operators.

Key generic indicators for Organic Action Plans

On the basis of national and European level consultation in the ORGAP and other research projects, Table 12 provides a list of key generic indicators that have been defined.

Table 12: List of key generic indicators for Organic Action Plans

Generic indicators

A: Design process indicators

- A1 Programme content
- A2 Programme design scoring
- A3 Programme design qualitative assessment
- A4 Stakeholder engagement (qualitative assessment)

B: Resource and implementation process indicators

- B1 Budgeted/planned expenditure for individual actions or plan in total
- B2 Number of staff months allocated to implementation for individual actions or plan in total
- B3 Legal framework for programme
- B4 Monitoring/evaluation implemented from start of programme
- B5 Stakeholder engagement (qualitative assessment)

C: Output indicators

- C1a Number (or proportion) of action points achieved/ completed with description
- C1b Number (or proportion) of action points started/ in progress with description
- C2 Actual expenditure on individual actions or plan in total

- C3 Area/ holdings/ businesses/ people/ animals/ projects/ events supported by individual action points
- C4 Availability of statistical data to meet business and policy evaluation needs by topic/indicator

D: Result indicators

- D1 Number of certified organic and in-conversion holdings
- D2 Area of certified organic and in-conversion land
- D3 Organic farm incomes
- D4 Number of certified market operators
- D5 Organic market size (retail sales value and/or volume) by region
- D6 Consumer confidence and trust
- D7 Business confidence
- D8 Number of control organizations
- D9 Number of inspection visits
- D10 Number/frequency of revisions to key regulations
- D11 Regulatory burden on businesses
- D12 Number of research and extension organisations supporting organic food and farming

E: Impact indicators

- E1 Overall environmental impact
- E2 Overall animal health and welfare impact
- E3 Overall social impact
- E4 Overall economic/rural development impact
- E5 Overall food quality/safety/security impact

 Full details of the use of these indicators, and secondary supporting indicators, can be found in [ORGAPET Section C3](#).

4.5 Overall evaluation of Organic Action Plans – judging success

Many of the evaluation tools presented in this manual and (in more detail) in ORGAPET have been developed in the context of relatively simple programmes where the use of one or a few indicators presents no major problems. The challenge with complex policy programmes, such as Organic Action Plans with their multiple objectives, multiple action points and policy instruments and multiple stakeholders and beneficiaries, is to reach a conclusion that reflects all the different elements fairly and appropriately

Key questions that need to be asked at this stage include:

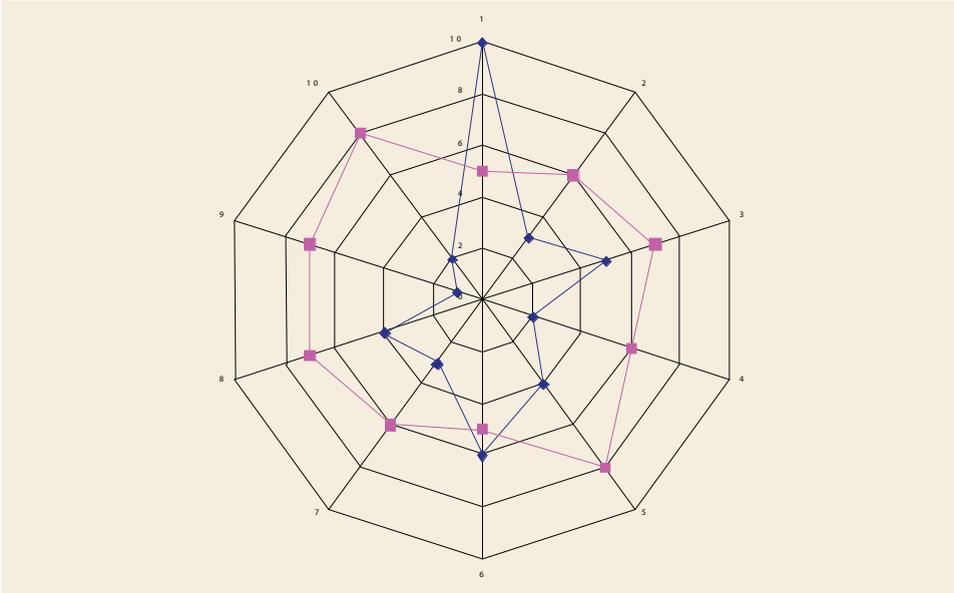
1. Is the quality of the evaluation acceptable so that it can provide a sound basis for learning and future actions?
2. How can the indicator results be interpreted and do all stakeholders perceive the results in the same way?
3. Can combinations of indicator results provide greater insights? For example if planned expenditure, committed expenditure and actual expenditure are looked at together, is there evidence of implementation failure that might not be seen if the indicators are looked at individually.
4. Were certain policy instruments more cost-effective than others (i.e. would the same amount of resources achieve greater results used in another way?)?
5. Were the overall environmental and economic benefits positive?
6. What external factors (economic or policy shocks, animal health epidemics) might have influenced the outcomes significantly?
7. What would have happened if there had been no Action Plan in place (the counter-factual situation)?
8. Are there unmet needs that still need to be addressed?

 [for more information see ORGAPET Section D1.](#)

Integrating results from several indicators

Whilst it might be tempting to combine the results from several indicators into a single overall score or index, this is not advisable, as important details may be lost, and the weightings used (if any) are likely to reflect only one particular perspective amongst many.

An alternative way of dealing with multiple indicators is to visualise them using radar or 'cobweb' diagrams, especially when comparing different options (Figure 11). One option may perform very well with respect to one objective, but relatively poorly on the others, while another option may not score so well on that one objective, but the higher score achieved for the others gives a better rating overall.

Figure 11: A hypothetical radar or 'cobweb' diagram

Using multi-criteria analysis

A more formalised approach is to use multi-criteria analysis, a decision-making tool used to assess alternative projects taking several criteria into account simultaneously in a complex situation. The method is designed to reflect the opinions of different actors – their participation is central to the approach. It may result in a single synthetic conclusion, or a range reflecting the different perspectives of partners.

Many of the stages in the multi-criteria analysis approach are similar to the procedures outlined here and in ORGAPET for structuring objectives and defining indicators. The key issue at the synthesis stage is how the weightings for (and trade-offs between) performance criteria are determined (by the evaluators or by the stakeholders).

[Further details on multi-criteria analysis are outlined in ORGAPET Section D1-4](#)

Other techniques suitable for evaluating Organic Action Plans

Other formalised techniques that might be relevant include cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis, benchmarking, environmental impact analysis ([see also ORGAPET Section D1](#)). Some of these involve the allocation of monetary

values to outcomes that normally are unpriced, potentially making them more difficult to apply. However, if it can be done, then a measure of return to the resources invested in the Action Plan might be determined.

Use of expert panels

An alternative approach to synthesising judgements is to use expert panels, similar to the procedures described in ORGAPET Sections A4 and C4. In this context however, the expert/ stakeholder panel is not being used to develop policy proposals or evaluate impacts in the context of individual indicators, but to collectively produce a value judgement on the programme as a whole. Expert panels are used to reach consensus on complex and ill-structured questions for which other tools do not provide univocal or credible answers. It is a particularly useful tool in relation to complex programmes, when it seems too difficult or complicated, in an evaluation, to embark on explanations or the grading of criteria in order to formulate conclusions. Expert panels can take account of the quantitative and qualitative information assembled as part of the evaluation, as well as the previous and external experiences of the experts.

The experts are chosen to represent all points of view, in a balanced and impartial way. These experts are independent specialists, recognised in the domain of the evaluated programme. They are asked to examine all the data and all the analyses made during the evaluation, and then to highlight consensus on the conclusions that the evaluation must draw, and particularly on the answers to give to evaluative questions. The panel does not fully explain its judgement references nor its trade-off between criteria, but the credibility of the evaluation is guaranteed by the fact that the conclusions result from consensus between people who are renowned specialists and represent the different “schools of expertise”. The advantage of this type of approach is that it takes account of the different possible interpretations of the results that might be made by different experts.

 Further guidance on the use of expert panels can be found in ORGAPET Section D1

Making the most of the evaluation

It is pointless completing an evaluation if the report is then filed away and nothing is done with it. There is a need to reflect and act on the results, in an appropriate stakeholder context such as an Action Plan steering group. In an

ex-ante or mid-term review, this may involve adjusting objectives, improving monitoring procedures, refining the measures or retargeting resources. In an ex-post, summative context the emphasis might be more on highlighting best practice and the general lessons learned (see ORGAPET Section A5, see Tables 8 and 9 in section 4.2 of this manual).

The results then need to be communicated effectively, for example through seminars and publications, to a range of groups:

- Programme administrators, particularly where adjustments to programmes are required or lessons need to be learned to avoid implementation problems that may have arisen;
- Beneficiaries and other industry stakeholders, to demonstrate that lessons have been learned, and that feedback has been taken seriously and acted upon;
- Policy-makers who may be involved in the design of future programs.

Finally, there is a need to be clear about who is responsible for taking actions arising from the evaluation, and for monitoring that the actions have been taken.

4.6 Evaluating Action Plans in countries that joined the EU in 2004 and later

As already described in Section 3.9 there are some specific challenges in Central and Eastern European countries related to Action Plans for organic food and farming.

In the case where evaluation of the Action Plan relies on stakeholder input, it might be necessary to provide sufficient support to ensure a satisfactory level of involvement of non-governmental organisations, if their involvement is likely to be hampered by a lack in capacity (weak staffing, weak financial situation etc.). It might be useful to give special attention to:

- Targeted financial support for key NGO stakeholders to enable their active participation;
- Organise training for stakeholders as well as for governmental departments on key issues relevant for the evaluation process.

Some further questions, which may need special attention in the evaluation of an Organic Action Plan, are outlined below:

1. Has the Organic Action plan contributed to a satisfactory development of domestic demand for organic products?

2. Does the Action Plan provide feasible measures for encouragement of co-operation between producers in relation to marketing (due to their bad experiences with forced co-operation in the past)?
3. Does the Action Plan deal adequately with potential low capacity of organic farming NGOs and other relevant NGOs?

Action plans stimulate local organic food markets



5 Organic Action Plans – the Golden Rules

The work of the ORGAP project can be summarised by highlighting the key elements of Organic Action Plan development and some “Golden Rules” that can help ensure a successful outcome and enable effective evaluation.⁵²

5.1 Key elements of Organic Action Plan development

At the outset of Organic Action Plan development, the key elements listed in Box 20 should be taken into consideration. Some of the key elements apply generally to Action Plans, whilst others are specific to organic agriculture.

Box 20: Key elements of Organic Action Plan development – an overview

Phase 1: Agenda setting	<p>The characteristics of the process for setting the agenda of the policy making process, in particular the definition of the specific issues/problems leading to the policy initiative, if any.</p> <hr/> <p>The extent of prior policy initiatives in support of organic food and farming (if any) should be taken into account - including the outcome of completed evaluations.</p> <hr/> <p>The findings of status-quo analysis (if any) of the organic food and farming sector. A status-quo analysis of the organic sector is the precursor to the definition of objectives.</p> <hr/> <p>Summary of relevant regulatory (legislative) framework such as the new EU Council Regulation (EC) 834/2007.</p>
Phase 2: Policy formulation	<p>Setting clear and unambiguous objectives, which should be ‘SMART’ (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound) but also take into account the complex systems and multiple objectives inherent to the organic farming system. These should be differentiated between global, sector level and societal objectives.</p> <hr/> <p>Definition of the motivations and mechanisms of the policy objectives and measures (the ‘programme theory’) and their relevance to reaching specific objectives.</p> <hr/> <p>An assessment of the relevant alternative (complementary or exclusive) policy options to be implemented.</p>

Box 20: continued

An analysis of the conflicts and synergies (coherence) of the possible policy measures and risk of failure, including due attention to the different emphases that will be placed on these by different stakeholders (e.g. ethical value orientation versus purely market orientation) – results may imply adjustments of objectives and policy measures.

Indicators should be chosen that are relevant to decision-makers. They may be developed by defining and clustering impact statements in a participatory process and need to be closely linked to the goals and objectives of stakeholders. They need to be described and possibly quantified. However, their choice is also influenced by the costs of obtaining data relative to the benefits that the data will yield. ORGAPET includes a list of indicators relevant to organic food and farming policies.

Ensure that monitoring and evaluation issues are addressed appropriately from the outset and are fully integrated into programme planning and management.

**Phase 3:
Implementation**

Definition of the institution(s) responsible for the implementation of the Action Plan (describing the type and affiliation, e.g. governmental/non-governmental) and main characteristics of the institution(s) in terms of their comprehension, willingness and capabilities regarding the agreed policy objectives.

Allocation of a separate budget and staff resources for the implementation of the Action Plan.

Understanding the specific administrative issues/constraints which may affect implementation.

Finding solutions for public-private partnership for effective implementation with all involved stakeholders.

**Phase 4:
Evaluation**

Use both a generally accepted evaluation standard but also develop specific indicators (standards) appropriate to the national Action Plan; ORGAPET provides a procedure for selection of indicators and examples.

Clearly differentiate between facts and areas more open for interpretation through inclusion of stakeholders and ensure sufficient data availability and resources for data collection.

Review the main actors who were involved in decision making and implementation.

Assess the level of political commitment to the plan (very low, low, moderate, high, and very high).

Consider the situation that might have existed if the Action Plan or other policies had not been implemented ('counter-factual' analysis).

Evaluate whether the Action Plan was relevant to the original problem, if no longer relevant - review the factors that have changed.

5.2 The Golden rules for Organic Action Plan development

1. EU rules of good governance require stakeholder participation and transparency. Thus, stakeholders such as decision-makers, policy-makers, related administrations, programme managers, and stakeholders from organic sector and neighbouring sectors, as well as potential beneficiaries should participate in the Action Plan development process as early as possible and preferably from the very beginning. The development of the Action Plan will benefit from a participatory approach to stakeholder integration, as this approach will integrate the varying values and perspectives on the subject from the very outset and will help ensure high degree of acceptance of the outcome of the process. As stakeholder processes bear the risk of putting the brake on policy development, efficient procedures of stakeholder integration must be used. The ideal stakeholder is legitimated by a powerful group of actors, can make substantial contributions to the issue, is interested and has the required resources at his/her disposal (time, money, information).
2. Good communication is essential to the acceptance and the success of the Action Plan, thus an effective strategy and sufficient resources for its implementation, covering the entire period of the Action Plan development, must be allocated. Communication helps legitimise the Action Plan and allows for the exchange of information and support.
3. An Organic Action Plan is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Thus Action Plans serve as a strategic instrument to achieve the policy goals of a national or regional government. The views on the desired policy goals to be achieved and organic farming's potential to contribute to these policy goals might differ between government and organic sector stakeholders. The Action Plan therefore needs to make explicit the strategic view of the role organic farming should play in the general context of agricultural policy.
4. In order to ensure a targeted and tailored policy design, the objectives underlying an Action Plan need to be precisely formulated at the outset. Operational objectives are specific, measurable, accepted, realistic and time-dependent. As Organic Action Plans tend to be an instrument addressing a multitude of objectives, it is essential to prioritise the objectives and to find compromises between divergent and sometimes conflicting interests of the various stakeholders. Vague objectives may be supported by all influential stakeholders, however precisely formulated objectives allow for better monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan.

5. Prior to any formulation of Action Plan steps and measures, the potential as well as the obstacles of the organic sector must be identified during a status-quo analysis against the background of the Action Plan objectives. Using structured approaches like the SWOT Analysis allows for responding directly to the identified weaknesses and strengths.
6. Parallel to the status-quo analysis, policy areas related to the Action Plan and their impact to organic agriculture must be reviewed. This review helps identify potentially conflicting or supportive policy areas.
7. The steps, action points or measures of an Action Plan directly respond to the results of the organic sector status-quo analysis, taking account of the prioritisation of the objectives. Steps, action points and measures are targeted and tailored to the respective problems in a way that is effective, efficient and feasible.
8. A good implementation plan will help in the successful delivery of the action points. The plan must take account of the different administrative levels involved and the competence at each level necessary for implementation. The action points must be matched with sufficient financial and personnel resources.
9. A successful Action Plan will involve a range of relevant government departments and ministries, including for example: Health, Education, Sustainable Development, Environment and Research as well as Agriculture and Food.
10. The main focus areas of Action Plans and other policies for organic food and farming should consist of a balanced mix of 'supply-push' and 'demandpull' policy measures through integration of market and provision of public goods support mechanisms. Such a broad approach also implies a focus on specific issues that need to be addressed with tailored measures at national or regional level.
11. Countries with a short tradition in Action Plan development and countries with emerging organic sectors should consider following questions:
 - a. Does the personnel and financial resources of NGOs allow for active participation?
 - b. Are relevant stakeholders experienced in stakeholder processes?
 - c. What is the level of knowledge of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders about Action Plans as well as about organic food and farming?

- d. Are training and seminars required to provide stakeholders with the basic knowledge required for Action Plan development?
12. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are to be included from the outset. A central part of an Action Plan is the definition of indicators for evaluation and the establishment of appropriate systems for capturing relevant data for evaluation.
13. Action Plan evaluation is a vital part of the policy cycle and a tool for further development of the plan. Evaluation procedures should therefore be an integral part of the Action Plan.
14. Successful evaluation will have a clearly defined purpose and scope and must be planned from the outset in accordance with the state of organic sector development. The type of evaluation required, and a definition of how and by whom the results are to be used is necessary. Evaluation procedures should aim to meet appropriate international evaluation standards.

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Annex: Detailed synopsis of ORGAPET

Below is a more detailed description of the content of ORGAPET, which can be found on the CD-ROM included in this manual, as well as on the ORGAP website at www.orgap.org/orgapet.

The Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET) is a collection of different information/data sources and evaluation tools, including participative techniques, quantitative assessments and methods to identify relevant indicators, which can be used selectively to meet the needs of a particular assessment of national or EU organic action plans.

The toolbox is structured around ‘compartments’ or sections containing ‘tools’ fulfilling different functions. Each section contains an overview document and a series of annexes detailing a range of methodological approaches (including background documents, relevant data sources and other items), as well as examples of how these have been applied in specific cases, for example the evaluations and workshops conducted as part of the ORGAP project. The structure of ORGAPET is summarised below.

Part A: Background and context provides:

- an introduction to the EU and other organic action plans and to the mechanisms by which policy instruments affect the development of the organic sector,
- an outline of the principles behind policy evaluation and the steps to take in planning evaluations,
- a guide to the importance of engaging stakeholders at all stages in the policy process, and ways of doing this effectively.

Section A1: Introduction to organic action plans and the ORGAP Project covers:

- the policy context for the EU Organic Action Plan and national action plans,
- the rationale for evaluating these plans, as well as
- the background to the ORGAP project and the organic action plan evaluation toolbox (ORGAPET); supported by
- details of the EU organic action plan, information on its implementation

- progress, responses to the plan from key stakeholder groups, and
- a comparative assessment of national action plans conducted as part of the ORGAP project.

Section A2: Principles of policy evaluation with reference to organic action plans includes:

- an introduction for policy-makers and other stakeholders to the nature and principles of policy evaluation,
- examples of European policy evaluation frameworks, including the MEANS/Evalued approach that is used by the European Commission for the evaluation of socio-economic programmes, and that has been used as the basis for ORGAPET,
- a review of the special characteristics of organic action plan evaluations and their implications for the design of ORGAPET,
- further in-depth information on evaluation principles and organic farming policies from academic and governmental sources.

Section A3: How does policy influence the development of organic farming? considers:

- how a sound theoretical understanding of the mechanisms by which policy interventions impact on a sector (programme theory) can help make policy interventions more effective; and
- what specific programme theories might be applicable in the context of organic farming policy and action plans, supported by examples in the annexes from previous research on organic farming policy development in Europe.

Section A4: Involving stakeholders in programme design, implementation and evaluation covers:

- the role of and need for the inclusion of stakeholders at all stages in the policy process,
- issues relating to the identification of appropriate stakeholders,
- ways to ensure effective stakeholder involvement, including examples of participatory approaches used in the context of official action plans and in research workshops,
- significant additional supporting material relating to official perspectives on stakeholder engagement and examples of stakeholder involvement in practice.

Section A5: Planning an evaluation details:

- the issues that need to be considered and the practical steps that need to be undertaken in preparing for and conducting an evaluation,
- ways of ensuring the quality of an evaluation, and
- a checklist summarising the issues that need to be addressed.

Part B: Evaluating programme design and implementation

focuses on methods for evaluating:

- the process of designing and implementing action plans, including the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement, and
- the logic, synergies, priorities and failure risks of action plan content.

Section B1: Evaluating the process of programme design and implementation addresses:

- the process of policy design and decision-making, including the potential for conflict or collaboration and the need for integration of good governance principles,
- the process of policy implementation, including specific issues relating to the implementation of EU policy in member states and the potential for implementation failure; supported by
- a checklist summarising the main issues to be considered and extensive references providing academic background to the issues as well as lessons learned from organic policy research.

Section B2: Assessing coherence and failure risk of action plans covers:

- the use of logical analysis to structure programme objectives and assess programme coherence,
- the assessment of synergies and conflicts within programmes,
- the prioritisation of activities, and
- the assessment of the failure risk of individual measures; supported by
- a checklist summarising the main issues to be considered and annexes illustrating the application of these techniques in the context of the ORGAP project and the EU action plan.

Section B3: Methods for evaluating the level and nature of stakeholder involvement covers:

- stakeholder perspectives and how they influence potential involvement at different stages,
- issues to consider in evaluating stakeholder involvement, summarised in a checklist, and
- examples of techniques such as network analysis that can be used to support evaluation.

Part C: Evaluating programme effects focuses on:

- procedures to support the identification and measurement of the effects of organic action plans on the organic sector and on wider policy goals; including
- definition of relevant objectives, indicators and criteria for assessing performance,
- suggestions for generic indicators with links to data sources and methods, and
- the use of expert judgement techniques in situations where data is poor, or cause/effect relationships are unclear.

Section C1: Methods for identifying objectives to be evaluated considers:

- how both implicit and explicit objectives can be identified and clarified as a basis for assessing the actual achievements of actions plans, using the logical analysis approach set out in Section B2,
- how differentiating between hierarchical levels of objectives can reflect the goals of different stakeholder groups,
- possible generic objectives that might be applicable to action plan evaluation, illustrated with reference to the EU organic action plan, the IFOAM principles and the Commission's strategic guidelines for rural development.

Section C2: Methods for defining indicators considers:

- the nature and classification of indicators to reflect different types of programme effects,
- how appropriate indicators can be identified using impact statements and

- effects diagrams to make the link between policy actions and objectives,
- how to ensure indicator quality, using the EU organic action plan as an example, and
- examples of indicators used in other contexts (rural development, environmental impact).

Section C3: Generic indicators lists:

- a set of key indicators reflecting different categories of effect and different objectives; with a distinction made between
- primary indicators that are likely to be relevant and possible to quantify with respect to most action plan evaluations, and
- secondary indicators that may be relevant only in specific circumstances or may be more difficult to quantify; supported by
- methodology and data fact sheets, data sources and examples of relevant indicators used in other contexts.

Section C4: Using expert (including stakeholders) judgement covers:

- techniques that can be used where indicators are difficult to quantify, or causal relationships between policy actions and the final impacts are difficult to establish, due to the number of intermediate effects or the complexity of interacting elements; including
- stakeholder feedback, focus groups and more formal expert judgement methods such as Delphi and Nominal Group technique; supported by
- examples of how the techniques have been applied in organic policy research contexts and guidelines for their application.

Part D: Synthesis covers:

- techniques for integrating and interpreting results from complex evaluations; and
- examples of evaluations of organic action plans that have previously been conducted.

Section D1: Integrating and interpreting results covers:

- the range of issues that need to be addressed when interpreting results, including how to interpret results from multiple objectives, allowing for trade-offs

- and conflicts and the priorities of different stakeholders;
- utilising experts (including appropriate stakeholders) to make judgements based on their direct knowledge and understanding of specific issues;
- formal methods such as multi-criteria analysis and cost-benefit analysis that can be used to support the synthesis process.

Section D2: Examples of existing evaluations covers:

- evaluation experiences from Germany, Denmark, Netherlands and England, as well as
- an assessment of the lessons to be learned from these evaluations prepared as part of the ORGAP project.

ORGAPET should be cited as: Lampkin, N.; Schmid, O.; Dabbert, S.; Michelsen, J. and Zanolli, R. (eds.) (2008) Organic action plan evaluation toolbox (ORGAPET). Final output of the ORGAP research project (www.orgap.org) for the European Commission. Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences, Aberystwyth University, UK and Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, CH.



Organic Action Plans

Development, implementation and evaluation

A resource manual for the organic food and farming sector

In 2004, the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming has been launched. Many European countries have also developed national Organic Action Plans to promote and support organic agriculture.

As part of the EU funded ORGAP project ("European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming - Development of criteria and procedures for the evaluation of the EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture") a toolbox to evaluate and monitor the implementation of national and European Action Plans has been developed.

In order to communicate the results of this project as widely as possible, a practical manual for initiating and evaluating Organic Action Plans has been produced.

This manual has been created to inspire the people, organisations and institutions involved, or with an interest, in the organic food and farming sector to engage in the initiation, review, revision and renewal of regional, national and European Organic Action Plans.

The objectives of the manual are to provide:

- a tool for stakeholder involvement in future Action Plan development and implementation processes at EU, national and regional level
- a guide to the use of the Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET) developed through the project

The manual summarises the key lessons learnt from more than 10 years experience of development, implementation and evaluation of Organic Action Plans throughout Europe.

The Organic Action Plan Evaluation Toolbox (ORGAPET), which includes comprehensive information to support the Organic Action Plan development and evaluation process is included with the manual as a CD-ROM, and is also accessible on-line at www.orgap.org/orgapet.

The ORGAP website www.orgap.org provides a further information on the project and the European and national organic action plans.

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