

Organic Food and Farming in Scotland

Realising potential

Scottish Organic Stakeholder Group *Proposition for Action* to Scottish Government
May 25, 2021

Context

Organic farming has the potential to make a significant contribution to key Scottish Government policy objectives for climate change, biodiversity, the rural economy and post-COVID recovery.

While demand for organic food continues to rise significantly in Scotland, the UK and Scotland's main export markets, the amount of land managed organically in Scotland has been falling for a decade. This represents market failure. Scotland has an opportunity to address key policy objectives and reach new high-value markets by supporting organics.

The EU in its [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) recognises organics as a key opportunity that enables farmers to profit directly from citizens' increased expectations on sustainability. The EU has set a target of at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land to be under organic farming by 2030, and has produced a Communication on [An Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production](#).

This describes organic farmers as "the pioneers of the sustainable agriculture of the future", and covers a wide range of key benefits, including that "land farmed organically has about 30% more biodiversity than land farmed conventionally." All member states are required to produce an Organic Action Plan, and report on progress.

COP26 will be an opportunity for Scotland to show that it is taking up the potential of organic food and farming for addressing climate change.

Demand and supply

Between 2012 and 2019, organic land in Europe increased by 45% to 13.8mha, with the area in France growing by 117%, with 8.5% now under organic management across EU27 ([Organic farming statistics - Statistics Explained](#))

In the same period, the area of organic land in the UK decreased by 22%, and in Scotland by 40% (<https://bit.ly/3udznKQ>). Only 1.6% of Scottish land is now organic, compared to 3.3% in England and 4.8% in Wales. In 2019, although a small amount of land came into conversion in Scotland the number of certified producers and processors fell by 3.1% ([Soil Association Market Report, 2021](#)).

Organic farming is increasingly profitable. Net farm income in the UK has continued to increase for organic cropping farms relative to non-organic (£690/ha compared to £288/ha; [Organic Farming and Growing – does it stack up?](#)).

The market for organics in the EU increased by 128% between 2009 and 2019, reaching €41 billion and an average spend per consumer of €84 ([EU Action Plan](#)). The [Soil Association's 2021 Organic Market Report](#) reveals the highest year-on-year growth in 15 years for UK sales of organic produce, at 12.6%, with the market worth £2.79bn at the end of 2020.

Proposition for Action

The stakeholders listed below have worked together to identify the following priorities for action and are keen to work with the Scottish Government to realise the potential organic farming holds for Scotland. We encourage the Scottish Government to:

1. By the end of 2021, develop and publish a Government-led Scottish Organic Action Plan for the period to 2030. This plan should cover both “pull” initiatives (increasing the demand for Scottish organic produce) and “push” ones (increasing organic land, and the production, processing and availability of Scottish organic food to all). In developing and implementing the plan, the Government should convene and support broad-based stakeholder involvement, building on the [Scottish Organic Action Plan](#) which ran to 2020.
2. Set a target for the percentage of land in Scotland to be organic by 2030, aligned with other policies such as Ambition 2030, emissions reductions targets in the Climate Change Plan, the new agricultural support arrangements from 2025, the Biodiversity Strategy to 2030; and taking into account the EU target of 25%. Ensure that funding, policy, research, training and advice post-CAP support this transition, including for example the work of the Regional Land Use Partnerships.
3. Maintain organic certification equivalence with the EU, which will implement a revised standard at the end of 2021.
4. Set targets with timelines for increasing Scottish organic food in public procurement for schools, hospitals and other public sector catering.
5. Actively recognise the potential contribution that organic food and farming can make when developing relevant policies, for example on climate change, biodiversity, soil, water, air quality, food, the rural economy and the marine environment.
6. Encourage food and farming bodies including Scotland Food and Drink, Quality Meat Scotland and Food Standards Scotland to bring organic food and farming into their mainstream activities.

7. Ensure that advice on organic farming forms a significant element in new contracts for farm advisory services.
8. Integrate organics as a key component of any future Good Food Nation Bill, including the development of short supply chains, markets, e-commerce platforms and shops to link local farmers with consumers in ways which are financially viable.
9. Forge an organic collaboration between consumers, farmers, producers, retail, Knowledge and Education institutions, research and relevant public authorities to inform the Scottish Organic Action Plan and support the development of the organic sector in Scotland.

Supported by:

Agencies and NGOs

Argyll & Bute Council	Scotland Food & Drink
Biodynamic Association	Scottish Agricultural College Consulting (SAC Consulting)
Denholm Consulting	Scottish Agricultural Organisations Society (SAOS)
Farm Stock (Scotland) Ltd.	Scottish Badgers
Garden Organic	Scottish Crofting Federation
Highland Good Food Partnership	Scottish Dairy Hub
Landworkers' Alliance (LWA)	Scottish Land and Estates
MOO (Muir Of Ord) Food	Scottish LINK Food and Farming
National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS)	Scottish Organic Milk Producers (SOMP)
Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN)	Seed Co-operative
Nourish Scotland	Soil Association Scotland
OMSCO – The Organic Dairy People	RSPB Scotland
Organic Growers Alliance	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
Pasture Fed Livestock Association	
Propagate	

Producers/retailers

Auchlea Farm Kingswell	Howemill Aberdeenshire
Auchencairn Dairy Farm	Hugh Grierson Organic
Balcaskie Estates East Neuk	Knockfarrel Produce
Bankhead Farm	Locavore
Beecroft Organic World	Loch Arthur Creamery
Brewsters Farm	Mossgiel Organic Farm
Caldwells Veg	Myreside Organics
Chapel Farm	Peelham Farm
East Coast Organics	Scotland The Bread
Edinglassie Farm Huntly	Skea Organics
The Ethical Dairy	Vital Veg
Green City Wholefoods	Woodside Arran Farm