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Organic Farming

Regionality, Quality and Sustainability

More and more consumers are looking to buy organic products: “organic” has become more than a niche category and has reached society as a whole. Organic farming is playing an important ecological, economic and social role. One in four hectares of land is now managed according to organic farming principles and one in ten foods in the shopping basket is “organic”.

Both supply and demand are increasing. Organic products are no longer sold in food retail trade only but increasingly also at inns, online or directly at the farm. We can have confidence that if a label says “organic”, an organic product is inside. Stringent annual controls from the field or stable to packaging ensure that organic products have been produced according to the legal requirements.

Each of us can actively support our committed organic farmers: Make a habit of checking regional origin, quality and sustainability while you shop!

Elisabeth Köstinger
Federal Minister for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism
What does “organic” mean?
There is much to be said for organic farming

Organic farming is the most environmentally compatible form of agriculture. Yet “organic” means more than just farming without synthetic chemicals. Organic farming is based on a holistic approach: Integrative thinking and a farming cycle as close as possible, with a diverse structure, are the principles and prerequisites of successful organic farming. Our climate is protected and the natural resources of soil and water are used in an environmentally compatible manner and preserved for future generations.

This is why you should count on “organic”:

Organic means closed farming cycles
Wherever possible, organic farming is practised in closed cycles. This means that farm waste is recycled. For example, compost is produced, dung, muck and animal slurry are used as organic manure, or legumes are cultivated to contribute to nitrogen fixation in the soil. The use of artificial fertilisers, whose production requires huge amounts of energy, is prohibited.

Organic makes use of natural self-regulating mechanisms
Diversified crop rotation, the use of beneficial species, careful soil cultivation, reduced use of antibiotics, and the use of homeopathy for animals help to ensure an ecological balance on fields and in the animal health sector.

Organic revitalises soils
Careful soil cultivation, selective crop rotations, the application of compost and well-prepared organic manure promote soil life. This, in turn, activates soil nutrients. One of the slogans of organic farming is “feed the animals in the soil, so they can work for the plants”.

Organic relies on species-appropriate animal husbandry
Farming methods are particularly animal-friendly in organic farming (no permanent tethering; free-range exercise or grazing has to be possible); no preventive veterinary drugs are used. The feed has to come from organic farming.

Organic increases biodiversity
The use of adapted plant species and animal breeds and the absence of chemical-synthetic plant protection products increase the diversity of species on arable areas of organic farms.

Organic protects our climate
Compared to conventional agriculture, organic farming saves large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions. The reasons: No synthetic nitrogen fertiliser is used and fodder (in particular soy) comes rarely from overseas. Moreover,
due to the higher share of humus in the soil, the fixation of carbon dioxide in the soil is more efficient. Of course, also in the case of organic products one should pay attention to the regional origin. For if we buy organic products from overseas, the climate balance can no longer be that favourable as a result of the long transport routes.

**Organic keeps water clean**
As no chemical-synthetic plant protection products or fertilisers are used in organic farming and in most cases fewer animals are kept per hectare, organic farming helps to keep our water bodies clean. Due to the versatile crop rotation with specific ground cover (e.g. mulch) organically cultivated soils also store more water.

**Organic is guaranteed GMO-free**
Organic products are guaranteed GMO-free. Organic food must not contain any genetically modified ingredients or processing aids; animals kept on organic farms must not be fed with genetically modified fodder like, for example, GMO soy.

**Organic is strictly controlled**
The production of organic food is subject to even more stringent controls than that of food from conventional farming. At least once a year organic farms - from production to packaging - are rigorously checked by independent control agencies.

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**Organic—a subject of controversial discussions**

In recent times more and more critical articles and books about organic food have been published. Some of the allegations raised: Organic food is not healthier, is frequently imported from overseas, and comes from industrial agriculture. Quite often even the term “eco-scam” is used. But is this criticism justified?

**Is “organic” healthier?**
Meanwhile there are countless studies dealing with the impacts of organic and conventional food on the human organism. Some of them arrive at the conclusion that organic produce contains similar quantities of nutrients and vitamins as conventional products (e.g. the “Stanford Study”). Other studies (for example the “Newcastle Study”) assume that organic foods contain more health-promoting agents.

But apart from the health aspect there are also many other advantages speaking in favour of organic products: As has been mentioned above, organic farming is better for our climate, it saves groundwater, is particularly animal-friendly and guarantees that no genetically modified organisms are used in production.

**Is big bad?**
Another allegation is that organic products are meanwhile produced in as industrial a manner as conventional food (conventionalisation), and that the connection with the small farm structure that is so highly esteemed by consumers no longer exists. This criticism may be true for other countries, but is clearly wrong for the Austrian agriculture. In Austria, both conventional and organic farms are in most cases still run by families. This is also due to the fact that Austria has many mountain areas.
In Austria the average size of utilised agricultural area on a farm is 18 hectares. Organic farms are a little larger. They own 22 hectares on average. While on an average Austrian cattle farm 32 heads of livestock are held, 28 heads of livestock are kept on an average organically managed cattle farm. This also explains the lower livestock density on organic farms.

Doubtlessly, the expectations of consumers are strongly influenced by promotion, which quite often draws an idyllic, idealistic picture of life on farms as it used to be in the old days. But nobody can expect organic farmers to work as farmers did hundred years ago. This would inevitably make modern organic farming a niche sector. The size of a farm alone does not say anything about the quality. Big organic farms, too, practice sustainable farming and ensure diverse cultivated landscapes. Smaller farms are traditionally located in the high mountain areas.

**Organic always seasonal and regional?**

Organic pears from Argentina, organic garlic from China, organic wine from Australia: Yes, this exists, too. For the term “organic” does not say anything about the origin of a product. It refers exclusively to the type of management. Especially if we think of climate protection it would of course be important and correct to buy only seasonal food from the relevant region. The most environmentally friendly option would be the combination of organic, seasonal and regional.

However, here, too, demand still crucially determines supply. As long as consumption patterns do not change also foods from far-away countries will be offered in our shops. On the packaging of each organic food the origin is indicated next to the EU organic farming logo – a green leaf with stars (see also page 33).

**How are organic farms managed?**

To remain true to the holistic approach of organic farming, organic farmers must decide more carefully about the procedures on their farms than their conventional fellow-farmers. Regulation (EU) no. 834/07 on organic farming and Regulation (EU) no. 889/07 as well as the Austrian Guideline on Organic Farming provide detailed rules saying what exactly is permitted. You will find more comprehensive information on EU regulations later.

**Plant cultivation**

Organic farmers are concerned with increasing the activity of soil life with various measures so as to preserve the natural equilibrium and the fertility of the soil.
They achieve this by paying attention to the diversity of species in crop rotation. For this reason it is a principle of organic farming not to grow cereals on one and the same location for years, but to let foliage plants like potato, beet or oil pumpkin follow cereals. For only where a plant which needs ample nutrients from the soil is followed by a plant with lower nutrient requirements will the soil not be exhausted and remain fertile. Before cultivating wheat, for example peas and beans are grown, which contribute a lot to soil fertility. During wintertime, or all over the year, nitrogen-collecting and humus-forming plants (e.g. lucerne, clover) are grown. In this way organic farmers can do without artificial fertilisers and, in addition, protection against erosion is provided.

**Natural pest control**

Pests, fungal diseases and weeds are not controlled by using synthetic-chemical pesticides, but are kept at bay by supporting the ecological equilibrium. The cropping system, too, is of great importance in this context. If necessary, natural products are used, like mineral powder, oils in fruit cultivation, or sulphur and copper in viticulture and horticulture. In the same manner, beneficial species such as predatory mites are used in pest control, especially in greenhouses. Outdoors, organic farmers try to create favourable conditions for the beneficial species for example by tending hedge-rows and ensuring a controlled accompanying flora.

**Fertilisation in organic farming**

Organic farmers do not apply highly soluble artificial fertilisers, but rather count on organic fertilisers like dung, muck, animal slurry or compost. In the absence of equilibrium between the soil components, also stone meals and lime and, if required, also sparingly soluble fertilisers like certain types of rock phosphates or crude potassium salts can be added.

**Weed control**

Weeds - or rather “accompanying herbage” - are not only seen as a plague in organic farming; rather, also their advantages are taken into account. Weeds serve as hiding places and living environments for beneficial animals that live of pests.

With the right choice of sites for the fields, healthy seeds, the right time for sowing, and a well-balanced cropping system heavy weed infestation is prevented in organic farming. If there should be too many weeds anyway, they are removed with machines or manually.
Animal husbandry
Animals must be given sufficient space that is dry, soft, and warm. At least half of the minimum total floor area must not be perforated: that is not of slatted or grid construction.

There must be outdoor areas which are accessible to the animals at regular intervals. Of course grazing must be possible and/or facilities for free-range exercise have to be provided.

There are many more regulations on animal husbandry, for example requirements applicable to bees, rabbits, and aquaculture (fish etc.).

Animal feed
Animals may be fed only with organic fodder – preferably from the farmer’s own production or from the region. The admixture of “in-conversion feedingstuff” (= feeding materials from areas that have been managed according to organic farming principles for less than two years) is permitted.

There are also strict rules regarding the use of additives to feeding material, processing aids for silage, and cleaning agents, where only specific products are permitted. They are listed in the Annex to the EU-Eco-regulation.

Sick animals
Should animals fall ill, natural curative methods such as homeopathy should be the preferred method whenever possible. Veterinary medicinal products and/or antibiotics must be prescribed by a veterinarian. They may be used only for animals which are actually sick. The withdrawal period, after which for example the milk can be sold again or the animal can be slaughtered after the use of veterinary medicinal products, is twice as long as it is in conventional animal husbandry. This creates additional safety. Preventive treatment is prohibited in organic farming (except vaccination). Farmers are obligated to keep exact records on the treatment of animals (medicinal products administered, disease, duration, withdrawal period).

How can a farm become “organic”?
To be permitted to label their products as “organic”, farmers have to conclude a contract with an officially authorised inspection body for organic products. This inspection body registers the farm with the food authority and, after a certain conversion period, grants farmers the permission to label their products “organic” (certification).

Conversion to organic farm management takes at least 2 years
For the entire plant production sector the law provides for a minimum conversion period of two years until the production is recognised as organic (for permanent crops even three years). In animal husbandry, conversion periods can be shorter. During this period the holding must be managed according to the rules of organic farming. Under certain condition, however, parts of the farm can be managed conventionally (e.g. the vineyard).

Advisory services play an important role
Comprehensive advisory services and training play a particularly important role in organic farming. Farmers who would like to shift to organic farming are
recommended to contact an organic farming association, such as Bio Austria, or the organic farming departments of the Chambers of Agriculture for a first consultation. They offer advice directly on the farm, training and excursions. In some Provinces working parties of farmers are supported by special advisors, e.g. in organic vegetable growing, organic fruit growing or organic pig keeping.

98 percent would again switch to organic farming
A study conducted in spring 2018 shows that almost all organic farmers are happy with their decision to switch to organic farming. 98 percent of the farmers would do it again, if they had to decide anew.

Organic farming associations
Almost two thirds of the approximately 23,000 organic farms in Austria are members of one of the organic farming associations.

With their committed work in the fields of consumer information, counselling of farmers, promotion of marketing initiatives, and as representation of interest, organic farming associations have made a significant contribution to Austria being the number-1 “eco-country” in Europe today.

With the establishment of Bio Austria in 2005, the approximately 13,000 organic farmers organised in associations decided to continue the successful way of organic farming in Austria in a new, joint organisation. Bio Austria is today Europe’s biggest organic farmers’ organisation. It cooperates intensively with all participants in the eco-network and is available as a partner to consumers, politics and media as well as to processors and trade both on federal and regional level.

However, also small, partly regionally working organic farming associations (see end of the brochure) are playing an important role in advisory services, marketing and consumer information.
Legal issues
Which rules apply?

Austria is a pioneer
Austria was the first country in the world to set official guidelines for organic food production.

In 1983 the first decrees in this respect were issued by the former Federal Ministry of Health and Environmental Protection. In 1989 these were included as Chapter A 8 (“Bio-Codes”) in the Codex Alimentarius Austriacus (Austrian food codex) and in 1991 Austria was the first nation to adopt provisions for the organic production of animal products. The “Bio-Codex” has now been replaced by the Organic Farming Guideline (“Bio-Richtlinie”). The latter regulates areas not regulated under the EU-Eco-regulation, such as the keeping of rabbits or farmed game.

The EU-Eco-regulations
Ever since Austria joined the European Economic Area in July 1994, the EU Regulation on organic production of agricultural products (first enacted in 1991) has been applicable in Austria. The Regulation defines production, labelling and inspection rules as well as provisions concerning import.

Since 2009 the general Regulation no. 834/2007 has applied. The provisions on implementation, hence the details concerning practical implementation, are summarised among others in Regulation no. 889/2008. More comprehensive information on the legal provisions can be read for example on www.verbrauchergesundheit.gv.at/lebensmittel/bio (German only).

From the beginning of 2021 the new EU-Eco-regulation 848/18 is to enter into force. It promotes the harmonisation of the rules and regulations of the EU Member States and will also provide for even more stringent regulations concerning imports. Numerous discussions on the details of floor areas for stables, food additives, control systems etc. will still be conducted to enable the adoption of the individual implementing regulations.

Additional guidelines of associations and distributors
If an organic farm is a member of one of the associations for organic farming, for example Bio Austria or Demeter, it must also comply with the guidelines set by that association. Food chains, too, have additional standards for their ecolabels.

Controls

Annual inspections
The controls of organic farms are carried out by independent inspection bodies approved by the food authority. The food authority also controls the work of the inspection bodies. The competent Federal Ministry is the BMASKG (“Ministry of Health”).

Each organic farm – that means: all organic farmers, but also all processors and marketers of organic products (if marketing unpacked organic products) - is subject to comprehensive inspection at least once every year. In addition, the control body also performs inspections without notice.
The following is inspected

Inspection bodies check for example whether unauthorised fertilisers or pesticides are used, whether animals are turned out frequently enough for exercise, or farmers purchased unauthorised seeds. At processing enterprises special controls are carried out to check the origin of the organic products and to verify that the additives, for example those used in fruit yoghurt, are permitted according to the Eco-regulation. Importers of organic produce have to furnish proof by means of a recognised control that the quality of the imported organic products is equivalent to that of organic products traded in the European Union.

So inspections in the organic farming sector comprise the entire production and processing procedure. This means that not only organic farmers but also processing companies (e.g. slaughterhouses, mills, dairies, and packaging enterprises) are scrutinised.

For example, in the production of yoghurt not only the organic farm providing the milk, but also the dairy is scrutinised. The latter must also prove that, for instance, strawberries in the yoghurt come from a farm which was checked by an authorised control body. If the yoghurt was packaged (bottled) by yet another company, this company will be inspected as well.

Naturally, both farmers and processing enterprises must keep records of their activities: Farmers, for example, must record all inputs and medicinal products they purchased and must present cultivation plans for the subsequent year. Processing companies must keep account of purchases and sales (= flow quantity control).

AMA controls concerning subsidies

Farmers receiving a subsidy for organic farming (Austrian Agri-environmental Programme, ÖPUL) - about 90 percent of Austria’s organic farmers - are more often than conventional farms checked for compliance with the subsidisation guidelines. The competent body is Agrarmarkt Austria (AMA), the BMLRT’s agency in charge of handling subsidies.

Organic farming associations and commercial chains

Almost two thirds of the organic farms are members of organic farming associations (in particular of Bio Austria). Being a member of such an association, a farmer is also subject to the guidelines of that association, which may be even stricter than those stipulated in the corresponding EU-Eco-regulation and in the national Organic Farming Guideline (e.g. Demeter). This gives the farmer the right to use the association’s label for his or her products. In such a case, the control agencies mentioned above also check the farmer’s enterprise for compliance with the specific guidelines of the association. If a product also bears the organic brand of a specific chain, this guarantees that additional measures were taken to assure good quality and often also that additional requirements had to be met.

Sanctions

In case the control officials really detect irregularities with a farmer who does not comply with the regulations governing organic farming, rigorous sanctions will follow, depending on how serious the violation is: Organic farmers may lose the license to sell the lot in question or the general permission to label all products as “organic”. Moreover, they must perhaps repay the subsidies that were granted, which may cause severe financial loss.
Which ingredients are permitted in organic products?

All ingredients of an organic food must come from organic farming, with a few exceptions which are listed in the Annex to the EU-Eco-regulation no. 889/2008. At the moment, these comprise for example (dried) raspberries, gooseberries or safflower blossoms from conventional agriculture. Furthermore, the Eco-regulation features a small list of ingredients of non-agricultural origin which can also be used. These include for example pectin as a jellying agent, or guar gum as thickener. Flavourings or synthetic colour additives are forbidden.

Labelling

In Austria, organic products can be identified by the following indication: “aus biologischer Landwirtschaft” (from organic farming). Instead of “biologisch” (organic), producers may also label their goods as “organisch-biologisch” (organic-biologic), “biologisch-dynamisch” (organic-dynamic), or “ökologisch” (ecological). In addition to these labels, simply the term “Bio” (organic) can be used. The term used in Germany is “aus ökologischem Landbau” (from ecological farming). However, there is also for example organic cotton (raw product) but no organic sweater that is subject to the control scheme. In this case the correct term would be “sweater made of organic cotton”.

Attention:

Products with the following indications are NOT organic: “naturnah” (close to nature), “umweltschonend” (environmentally friendly), “kontrolliert integriert” (controlled-integrated), “chemiefrei” (not containing chemicals), “alternativ” (alternative), and others!

Apart from the label “aus biologischer Landwirtschaft”, the packaging must also feature the number of the inspection body and, since 2009, also the EU organic farming logo (green leaf with stars) as well as the information whether the food was produced in a specific EU Member State, in or outside the European Union.

An organic product may bear the label “aus biologischer Landwirtschaft” only if 100 percent of its ingredients originate from organic farming. However, as not all raw materials are available in organic quality, up to 5 percent may be from conventional farming (specific products listed in the Annex to the EU-Eco-regulation no. 889/08). If less than 95 percent of the food consists of organic products, the indication “organic” may be given exclusively in the list of ingredients (mostly on the pack’s back). Example: In
In the case of a muesli containing fruit and sugar from conventional farming the pack’s back could feature: “oats – from organic production”. The front side of the package must not show the word “organic”.

### In a few words: This is how to identify organic products:
1. Label “aus biologischer Landwirtschaft” (from organic farming).
2. The abbreviation “BIO” (organic) may be printed on the pack.
3. The code number (e.g. AT-BIO-301) of the inspection body must be given.
4. The product must bear the EU organic farming logo (Green Leaf with stars) including the origin of the product (see below).
5. In addition, on a voluntary basis also the ‘AMA Biosiegel’ (AMA ecolabel) or the brands of the producers of the organic product.

### AMA-Biosiegel—security at first glance
In order to make sure that consumers can identify foodstuffs from organic farming at first glance, Agrarmarkt Austria Marketing GesmbH created the ‘AMA Biosiegel’ (AMA organic quality label). The AMA Biosiegel exists in two designs. For both of them the product has to be made completely of raw materials from organic farming.

The AMA Biosiegel without indication of origin does not give any reference to the regional origin. This is for example the case with organic products which consist of various components of raw materials from different countries. This quality label is often used also for organic products - in particular for fresh products like fruit and vegetables - which in different seasons originate from different countries.

In the case of the AMA Biosiegel with the indication of origin “Austria”, all raw materials must originate entirely from Austria, if they can be produced in our country. If this is not the case, the share of components of raw materials which cannot be produced in Austria must not exceed the tolerance limit of one third. An example: For banana yoghurt the organic milk must always originate at 100 percent from Austria, whereas the organic bananas, which account for about seven percent, may come from another country.

### EU Organic Logo
Since July 2010 the placement of the EU organic logo has been mandatory for all packaged organic foods in the European Union. Unpacked organic products can be labelled with the organic logo on a voluntary basis. By means of this logo also organic products from other EU countries can be easily identified.

If the term “BIO” (ORGANIC) appears on the food package and the logo is used, also the place where the agricultural raw materials of which the product is composed were produced has to be indicated by placing on the pack one of the following terms:

- “EU Agriculture”, if the agricultural raw materials were produced in the European Union;
- “non-EU Agriculture”, if the agricultural raw materials were produced in third countries;
- “EU/non-EU Agriculture”, if the agricultural raw materials were produced partly inside the Community and partly in a third country.

If all agricultural raw materials of which the product is composed come from the same country, the name of this specific country can be given instead of the indication “EU” or “non-EU” or can be added.
Facts and figures
Organic farms in Austria

There are presently more than 23,000 organic farmers in Austria. That is 20 percent of all farmers.

24 percent of the utilised agricultural area (600,000 hectares including Alpine pastures and mountain meadows managed according to organic farming criteria) are managed according to the criteria of organic farming.

With 22 hectares the average size of (subsidised) organic farms is a little above the average of all Austrian holdings (18 hectares). If Alpine pastures are considered as well, the average size of organic farms is 27 hectares, that of conventional farms is 21 hectares.

About 20 percent of the livestock farms are managed according to organic farming principles, 38 percent of all suckler cows and 20 percent of the dairy cows are kept in organic farms. Half of the goats held in Austria are organic. In sheep keeping the organic share amounts to about 28 percent. Also organic bees are popular and their number is steeply rising: About 500 organic farms care for approximately 20,000 beehives.

The development of organic farming

Austria is the EU’s number-one organic farming country; it ranks first both as regards the percentage of organic farms and with respect to the share of area under organic farming. Also with respect to the value of organic purchasing Austria is on the front line.

Organic farming has a long history: The first organic farm in Austria was established as early as in 1927. Until well into the eighties, however, only few farmers applied organic methods. The big boom in organic farming started in the early nineties. Between 1990 and 1994 the number of organic farms increased more than eight-fold. In 1995 more than 5,000 farmers switched to organic farming.

At the start, the fast development of organic farming took place primarily in western Austria and thus in grassland areas. The reason behind this is obvious: Grassland management is traditionally very extensive in Austria, making it more easily convertible to organic management than holdings with intensively managed arable land or specialised crops.

As from the year 2000, Austria’s arable areas experienced an organic boom. Between 2000 and 2005 Austria’s arable land under organic farming
increased from approximately 70,000 hectares to more than 140,000 hectares, and thus more than doubled. Since that time the area increased continuously and in 2017 as many as 230,000 hectares of arable land were already managed according to the principles of organic farming, that is 18 percent of Austria’s total arable land.

 Particularly high increases were recorded in organic winegrowing. Whereas in the year 2000 only 749 hectares were recorded, organic winegrowing areas covered as many as 6,000 hectares in 2017.

The reasons for success
One of the reasons for the rapid increase was the subsidy for organic farmers which was introduced in Austria in 1991 and extended as of Austria’s accession to the EU in 1995. Also the committed work of the organic farmers contributed to the strong upward trend. For practicing organic farming means more work, higher risk and lower yields - but also higher prices for the products.

Another impulse was given when the large chains began marketing organic products in 1994. With this step for the first time large portions of the population had access to products of organic farming. Exactly this is another secret of success: The ecological awareness of consumers. It was their willingness to contribute to preserving a healthy environment and to accept higher prices for organic products that encouraged the chains to begin selling organic products in the first place.

Austria in comparison
In relative terms, Austria ranks first among the EU countries in the organic farming sector (2017: 20 percent organic farms, 24 percent area under organic farming).

In absolute terms, Spain with 2 million hectares of land under organic farming (3 percent of the utilised agricultural area) is leading in Europe. The highest number of organic farms is found in Italy (50,000), where 9 percent of all agricultural holdings are organic farms.

Organic is gaining ground worldwide
Organic farming is practised in about 180 countries. 44 million hectares of agricultural land (1 percent of the agricultural area) are managed organically by about 2 million farmers. In 2016, the global sales of organic food and beverages reached € 70 billion.
The market for organic products—sales figures and purchasing behaviour

Why do consumers buy organic products?

Presently, almost each Austrian buys organic products at least now and then. As many as 15 percent consume organic food daily. Asked for the reasons why they buy organic products, 30 percent of the consumers mention “health and a healthy diet” and 16 percent “no chemicals, artificial fertilisers, insecticides, toxic agents” as important motives to buy “organic”. Other buying motives

are regionality, environmental protection, climate or species-appropriate animal rearing.
Organic food sales & where do consumers buy?
Over the past five years organic food sales increased by 50 percent. Since 2003 the share of organic products has more than doubled. In 2017 the share of organic food in total food sales in the fresh-food sector of supermarkets (not including cereals products) amounted to about nine percent in Austria and is thus further increasing.

According to expert estimates, altogether about 1.8 billion euros/year are spent on organic food. 70 percent of the turnover is earned in the food retail trade, 13 percent in specialised organic food shops. Industrial kitchens and the gastronomy account for 3 percent, direct marketing for 10 percent, and the remaining organic sales are generated from exports.

The most commonly purchased organic foods are dairy products, eggs, potatoes, fruit, vegetables and, in particular, cereals (bread, flour etc.). For organic meat and sausages, sales are still low and stagnate.

Supply and demand
The supply/demand ratio differs with the individual product groups. Whereas in the case of organic milk the supply of Austrian products still slightly exceeds demand, the reverse is often true for organic pork and poultry meat as well as for many organic plant products (in particular for vegetables). In other words: Demand partly exceeds supply in these sectors. It is therefore important to continuously develop the supply side, as has already been done for organic apples from Austria.

How is organic farming supported?
Austrian politics guarantee framework conditions which ensure the growth of organic farming. For example, the Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism regularly adopts an Organic Farming Action Programme which sets out the measures taken to support organic farming.

Objectives
Also in the current Organic Farming Action Programme, which was prepared in 2015 and will apply until 2020, Austria sets itself ambitious goals. For example, Austria is to remain the EU’s number 1 organic farming country. The target of increasing the share of land under organic farming in the total utilised agricultural area to 20 percent has already been reached; presently (2017) we have an organic share of 24 percent, which corresponds to almost a quarter of the area – with figures continuing to rise.

Another objective is that all products produced according to organic farming criteria are marketed as organic products. Capacities are to be created which enable us to cover the demand for organic foods predominantly from Austria. The market share is to be further raised especially for the organic products less demanded so far (meat, sausages).

Yet another objective is to inform the public better about the environmental services provided by organic farming (protection of climate, water, soil, preservation of biological diversity etc.) and to provide students of agricultural schools with more comprehensive knowledge about organic farming.
The measures of the organic farming action programme
The production of organic products is more labour-intensive, the costs of feeding and stables are higher, and yields are lower – all this makes the production of organic products more expensive. It is therefore very important to compensate organic farms for their higher costs and lower yields.

The Austrian Agri-environmental Programme (ÖPUL)
The most important funding channel for organic farms is Austria’s Agri-environmental Programme, ÖPUL. In 2017 more than 22,000 organic farmers received compensations under the national measure “Organic farm management” of the Austrian Agri-environmental Programme; they amounted to about 115 million euros.

From the overall ÖPUL about 180 million euros were paid to organic farms (among others to natural conservation areas, the preservation of rare animal species as well as mountain grazing and herding. In other words: Organic farms, which account for 20 percent of all agricultural holdings, received 40 percent of the total ÖPUL funds.

Bio-bonus
In addition, subsidies are granted also for other areas of support. For the construction of particularly animal-friendly stables that comply with the principles of organic animal rearing and for other facilities at the organic farm, a “bio-bonus” of five percent is paid in addition to the investment grants and also young farmers benefit of higher grants if they are organic farmers. For example, organic farms get approximately 20 percent of the funds from the investment aid for particularly animal-friendly stables.

The compensations for services rendered under the Rural Development Programme are funded by the European Union (50 percent), the Federal Government (30 percent) and the Federal Provinces (20 percent).

Advisory services and education
A focal point of the Action Programme is enhancing the efficiency and profitability of organic farming. For this purpose, particular attention is paid to advisory services, education and training (courses, brochures, further training...
of teachers, advisory services at the farm etc.). An important matter of counselling by the chambers of agriculture and the organic farming associations is to support farmers when they switch to organic farming.

**Teaching and research**
Organic farming is also an important topic in (agricultural) schools in order to inform both future consumers and future farmers in the best possible way about organic farming. Schlägl already has an agricultural secondary school where exclusively organic farming is taught. Organic food is offered at many schools; some manage the agricultural estates of their schools according to organic farming criteria. At secondary agricultural schools the teaching subject “Organic farming” has been obligatory since 2016.

Research should aim at providing additional impetuses to widen the scientific basis for the expansion of organic farming. For example, the European Union supports the coordination of international organic farming projects (ERA-NET platform CORE Organic).

Particularly important research institutions are located at the Federal Research and Education Centre Raumberg-Gumpenstein, at the Federal Institute for Less-favoured and Mountainous Areas, at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, at Bioforschung Austria, and at the Vienna University of Veterinary Medicine. Some information about the implementation of research results is available at [www.bio-net.at](http://www.bio-net.at) and at [www.dafne.at](http://www.dafne.at).

**Public relations and marketing**
Another priority of the Action Programme is the promotion of marketing. Aids are paid to establishments which belong mainly to the farmers, like dairies or farm shops. Support is granted for staff expenses, operating expenses and investments like the furnishing in farm shops, equipment in dairies, the preparation of organisational and marketing plans, information materials for consumers, etc.

Attractive public relations work (consumer information) is playing an important role in this context which is taken on by Agrarmarkt Austria, the European Commission and organic farming associations. In the current AMA Programme in particular the following measures are implemented: “Bio-Aktionstage” (organic farming action days), brochures, posters, internet presence (bioinfo.at), presentations at trade fairs, etc.

Consumers, too, must be aware of their responsibility. Only if they buy organic products also in the future will it be possible to continue on this successful way.
How can I find an organic farm in my vicinity?
How can I find an organic farm in my vicinity?

**Biomaps.at**
If you are interested, you will find information at [www.biomaps.at](http://www.biomaps.at).
Of course you can also contact organic farming associations directly. Some addresses:

**Bio Austria Wien**
Theresianumgasse 11/1, A-1040 Vienna
Phone: +43 14037050

**Bio Austria Büro Linz**
Auf der Gugl 3, A-4021 Linz
Phone: +43 732 654884
Email: office@bio-austria.at
[www.bio-austria.at](http://www.bio-austria.at)

Bio Austria is with 13,000 members Austria’s biggest organic farming association. It cooperates intensively with all participants in the eco-network and is available as a partner to consumers, politics and media, as well as to processors and trade both at the federal and, in the associations of the Federal Provinces, at the regional level.

**Biolandwirtschaft Ennstal**
Nikolaus Dumba Straße 4, A-8940 Liezen
Phone: +43 3612-22531-5125
Email: office@bioland-ennstal.at
[www.bioland-ennstal.at](http://www.bioland-ennstal.at)

“Biolandwirtschaft Ennstal” was established in 1989 as a regional initiative in the Styrian city of Liezen. With 535 members Biolandwirtschaft Ennstal is Austria’s second-largest organic farming association and, as a network partner, closely cooperates with BIO AUSTRIA. The objectives of the association are the promotion of the “eco-philosophy” and awareness raising in the region as well as the support of its members. Member farms produce mainly organic milk and organic meat and sell these products almost exclusively via the Ennstal dairy and Landena KG in Stainach.

**B. A. F. – Biologische Ackerfrüchte**
Loosdorf 1
c/o Peter Krischke Lainzerstraße 85–87, A-1130 Vienna
Phone: +43 676 544 7026
Email: peterkrischke@dre.at
[www.bioackerfrucht.at](http://www.bioackerfrucht.at)
The association “Biologische Ackerfrüchte aus Österreich”, B.A.F. (Organic Arable Crops from Austria), is an association of big organic arable farms. BAF was founded in 1986 and is a regional association located in Lower Austria. The association has a cooperation contract with BIO Austria.

**Demeter**
Theresianumgasse 11, 1040 Vienna
Phone: +43 1 8794701
Email: info@demeter.at
[www.demeter.at](http://www.demeter.at)
Demeter is the oldest organic farming association and the only one that is active all over the world. It goes back to the agricultural course held by Rudolf Steiner in 1924. DEMETER Österreich was established in 1969. Making the farm a self-sufficient living organism with its own compost, working with the biodynamic products and cosmic rhythms are the pillars of the far-reaching biodynamic management. The objective is to strengthen the vitality of the soil.
and the health of plants and animals in order to produce modern foodstuffs for body, mind and soul.

**Erde und Saat**
Ritterstraße 8, A-4451 Garsten  
Phone: +43 7252 21221  
Email: kontakt@erde-saat.at  
www.erde-saat.at

The organic farming association “Erde & Saat” (Earth and Seed) aims at promoting the harmony between humans, animals and plants and at improving food quality. A holistic, interrelated way of thinking and a farming cycle as closed as possible, with a diverse structure, are the principles and prerequisites of successful organic farming. Erde & Saat is a non-profit organisation with executive board, managing board, and regional working groups. The association is active in the Federal Provinces of Upper Austria, Lower Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Carinthia, Burgenland, and Vorarlberg.

**Freiland**
Doblhoffgasse 7/10, A-1010 Vienna  
Phone: +43 1 4088809  
Email: office@freiland.or.at  
www.freiland.or.at

Freiland, the Association for species-appropriate animal husbandry and wholesome nutrition, is the specialist in animal husbandry in the field of organic farming. The triangular yellow label of the working group “Kritische Tiermedizin” (critical veterinary medicine) guarantees excellent conditions in animal husbandry, e.g. loose-housing in small groups, access to open-air runs at any time and short transportation routes. Freiland sells first and foremost high-quality meat products and eggs via home delivery and specialised organic food shops, primarily in and around Vienna.

**Arche Noah**
Association for the maintenance and enhancement of crop diversity  
Obere Straße 40, A-3553 Schloss Schiltern  
Phone: +43 2734 8626  
Email: info@arche-noah.at  
www.arche-noah.at

Arche Noah's multifarious activities comprise the establishment and permanent extension of archives of varieties, the cultivation of several hundreds of varieties for seed generation, characterisation and research, PR and training, expert advice on, and the provision of species, the annual preparation of the handbook of heirloom varieties, and the running of a baroque garden.

**ORBI Förderungsgemeinschaft für gesundes Bauerntum**  
(Association for the promotion of intact farms)  
Nöbauerstraße 22, A-4060 Leonding  
Phone: +43 7326 75363  
Email: anfrage@orbi.or.at  
www.orbi.or.at

ORBI is the pioneer among Austria's organic farming groups and practises the true organic farming method of Müller-Rusch. The method is based on the promotion and maintenance of viability and intactness of the soil by means of composts and rock meals. Established in 1959, it has about 1,300 members, approx. 70 of them farmers, and many garden owners and idealists; in this way the objective of the association – a communication between cities and rural areas – is achieved. The association publishes the magazine “Der Bäuerliche Pionier” (farmers as pioneers) and maintains a laboratory for the implementation of redox potential measurements (measurement of electrons in food).
Selected links

Organic Information
www.bmlrt.gv.at/land/bio-lw.html
www.verbrauchergesundheit.gv.at/lebensmittel/bio/bio_produkte.html
(page of the legally competent BMASKG “Ministry of Health”)
www.bioinfo.at (bio-info by Agrarmarkt Austria)
www.bio-austria.at (info portal of AMA Marketing GmbH)
www.raumberg-gumpenstein.at (info by the Organic Farming Institute of the Federal Research and Education Centre Raumberg-Gumpenstein–among other things, you will also find the EU- Eco-regulations there)
www.nas.boku.ac.at/ifoel (Institute of Organic Farming at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (“Universität für Bodenkultur”))

Bio-shopping, vacation, tips & more
www.biomaps.at
www.bioferien.at
www.biohotels.at
www.biokueche.at
(organic farm shops, organic supermarkets, holidays at organic farms, recipes, tips for the hotel and catering industry and many more provided by the environmental consulting services and Bio Austria)

International affairs
www.organic-farming.europa.eu
(On this website the European Commission offers information on organic farming.)

Interesting statistics material
www.organic-europe.net
(FiBL – Research Institute of Organic Agriculture)