

ORGANIC FARMING

When carried out intensively, agricultural activity causes various pressures on the environment: water pollution, soil erosion, loss of habitat for various species, etc. Organic farming acts as a showcase for ecologically intensive agriculture, and helps to limit these pressures.

The rise of organic farming

Between 1990 and 2015, the number of farms converted to organic farming increased 29-fold to 1,347 in 2015, or 10.5% of the total number of farms in Wallonia. The areas in question increased by a factor of 84 and covered 63,437 ha in 2015, or 8.8% of the utilised agricultural area (UAA). At the European level (EU-28), organic farming accounted for 5.9% of total UAA in 2014. Grasslands accounted for 79.4% of the Walloon organic UAA in 2015, or 50,378 ha. This large area is linked to low herd density¹ and the ban on landless livestock production.

Between 2003 and 2015, the organic livestock population increased from 543,800 heads to 2,060,122 heads an increase of 279%. However, the evolution of the livestock population varied according to the species under consideration. As such, poultry increased from 502,510 heads in 2003 to 1,956,918 heads in 2015 (an increase of 289%). In terms of head count, they accounted for most of the organic breeding in 2015 (94.99%). The proportion of organic poultry in the Walloon poultry flock was 35%. Between 2003 and 2015, cattle increased from 30,270 heads to 77,704 heads (or an increase of 157%) and accounted for 3.77% of the organic livestock in 2015, corresponding to 6.6% of the Walloon livestock herd.

Organic by 2020

The recent increase in the organic sector is mainly due to the introduction of a more attractive regional support scheme (conversion aid, recurrent direct aids) and growing consumer interest. The Strategic Plan for the Development of Organic Farming in Wallonia for 2020 (*Plan stratégique pour le développement de l'agriculture biologique en Wallonie à l'horizon 2020*), adopted on 27 June 2013 by the Walloon Government, has the aim, *inter alia*, of increasing the proportion of UAA allocated to organic farming to 14% by 2020. This objective could be achieved by 2019 if the average annual growth rate over the period 2011-2015 is maintained². However, taking into account the growth rate over the years 2013 to 2015, this target will not be reached until 2021. The main strands of this plan have been implemented: the funding of a specific research unit within CRA-W, the promotion of organic through APAQ-W, supervision and training by the non-profit association Biowallonie (created at the end of 2013). This plan will be evaluated for the first time in 2017.

^[1] Number of animals per hectare equivalent at 170 kg N/(ha. year) (Walloon Government Decree of 11/02/2010) or 2LSU/ha | ^[2] SPW - DG03 - DEMNA, 2016

Fig. AGRI 4-1 Means of production of organic farming in Wallonia

