

EU rules on producing and labelling organic products (from 2021)

SUMMARY OF:

[Regulation \(EU\) 2018/848 — rules on organic production and labelling of organic products](#)

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE REGULATION?

It aims to revise and strengthen the [EU](#)'s rules concerning organic production and the labelling of organic products in relation to:

- the control system;
- the trade regime;
- production rules.

In this way, it seeks to:

- create a level playing field for operators;
- harmonise and simplify rules;
- improve consumers' confidence in organic products and in the EU's organic production logo.

KEY POINTS

The regulation broadens the scope of the existing legislation on the [production and labelling of organic products](#) (Regulation (EC) No 834/2007) to cover products closely linked to agriculture such as cork, salt, essential oils, cotton or wool.

It reviews the livestock organic production rules taking into account the experience gained and introduces production requirements for new species such as rabbits.

Principles

Organic production should:

- respect natural systems and cycles and maintain and improve the state of soil, water and air, plant and animal health, and the balance among them;
- preserve the elements of natural landscapes;
- use [energy](#) and natural resources responsibly;
- produce a wide variety of high-quality products to meet consumer demand;
- ensure the integrity of organic production at all stages of the production, processing and distribution processes of food and animal feed;
- exclude the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)*, products produced from or by GMOs*, other than veterinary drugs;
- restrict the use of external inputs;
- design and manage biological processes using methods based on risk assessment and the use of precautionary and preventive measures;

- exclude animal cloning;
- ensure a high level of [animal welfare](#).

Requirements

Among other things, organic farming must:

- maintain and enhance soil life and its natural fertility, stability, water retention capacity and biodiversity;
- use seeds and animals with a high degree of genetic diversity, disease resistance and longevity;
- choose plant varieties, taking into account the characteristics of specific organic production systems, focusing on agronomic performance and disease resistance;
- choose animal breeds to take into account their genetic value, longevity, vitality and resistance to diseases or health problems;
- practise site-adapted and land-related breeding.

Production

To avoid adverse effects on the [environment](#) and on animal and plant health, producers must:

- take preventive measures at each stage of production, preparation and distribution to
 - preserve biodiversity and soil quality
 - prevent the occurrence of pests and diseases
 - control these pests and diseases;
- take proportionate and precautionary measures to avoid contamination with products or substances not authorised for use in organic production.

Conversion period

When a farm wishes to produce organic products, it has to go through a conversion period during which it must be managed according to organic production rules, although its products at this stage are not considered to be organic. It can only place its products on the market as organic products once this conversion period has elapsed and has been checked.

Following the conversion period, any EU farm wishing to move to organic production must be fully managed in line with organic production requirements.

The regulation also allows mixed farms (i.e. non-organic, in-conversion and organic) provided that these activities are clearly and genuinely separated.

Certification

Operators (producers, processors and distributors) must notify their activities to the competent authorities to become officially certified that they comply with the organic production and labelling rules.

The regulation introduces a new system of group certification for small farmers making it easier for them to switch to organic farming.

Official controls and labelling

The control system is strengthened by means of stricter precautionary measures and more robust risk-based controls of the supply chain. There are on-the-spot checks on operators once a year or every 2 years if no fraud has been detected over the previous 3 years.

If a control body suspects an operator of trying to place a non-authorized product on the market as 'organic', it must formally investigate and temporarily ban the placing on the market of that product pending the investigation's outcome. In the event of serious or repeated infringements, operators may be prohibited from selling products described as organic for a given period or may have their certificate withdrawn.

Specific controls on organic farming will be complemented by the EU's [general rules on official controls along the agri-food chain](#).

Imports

A product may be imported from a non-EU country to be sold in the EU as an organic product if certain conditions are met. It must:

- comply with production and control rules of the non-EU country recognised under an international agreement as equivalent to those in the EU;
- have a certificate issued by the relevant control authorities or control bodies in non-EU countries confirming the product complies with EU standards.

FROM WHEN DOES THE REGULATION APPLY?

It applies from 1 January 2021. As of 31 December 2020, it replaces and repeals Regulation (EC) No 834/2007.

BACKGROUND

For more information, see:

- [Organic farming](#) (European Commission).

KEY TERMS

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs): plants or animals bred by modifying their cellular and genetic make-up, for example, to have higher yield or to resist disease. Products produced from or by GMOs:

- (a)

products produced from GMOs are derived in whole or in part from GMOs, but do not themselves contain or consist of GMOs (e.g. potatoes produced from GMO seed potatoes);

- (b)

products produced by GMOs are derived using a GMO as the last living organism in the production process, but do not themselves contain, or consist of GMOs, nor are they produced from GMOs (e.g. sugar and starch manufactured from a GMO vegetable source).

MAIN DOCUMENT

Regulation (EU) [2018/848](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 (OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, pp. 1-92)

Successive amendments to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 have been incorporated into the original text. This [consolidated version](#) is of documentary value only.