



UNISECO



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Differentiation of support for organic farming based on the complexity of agro-ecological farming practices and performance of agro-environmental measures in Latvia

Photo: M. Štubē

Understanding and Improving the Sustainability of Agro-ecological Farming Systems in the EU

POLICY BRIEF

The transition from conventional to organic dairy farming practices is associated with additional costs and decreased milk production and crop yields. Dairy farmers have readily adopted organic farming practices incentivized by EU CAP and national support payments that compensate for reduced productivity and farm income during the transition.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Following transition to organic dairy practices farmers can continue to receive support payments for the maintenance of organic dairy practices in accordance with the EC Organic Regulation without additional conditions. This produces dependence on farm subsidies and does not incentivize farmers to improve their economic viability and environmental performance, to the detriment of biodiversity, habitat and water conservation and soil fertility.

The growth and acceptance of organic farming practices and food by EU farmers and consumers makes organic farming a good point of departure for a transition to more sustainable farming practices and food systems. Differentiation of support payments commensurate with the complexity of agro-ecological farming practices and the performance of agri-environmental-climate measures can incentivize organic farmers to increase productivity and the provision of public goods. Ongoing differentiated support to organic dairy farms could be provided for on-farm production of roughage and grain feed, implementing complex crop rotations with legumes, intercropping, green manure and performance-based landscape measures enhancing biodiversity, habitat and water conservation and soil fertility.

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Related to UNISECO case study:

[Improving the sustainability of grassland-based organic dairy farming in Latvia](#)

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Agro-ecological farming practices
*Intercropping organic oats and peas;
complex crop rotations with buckwheat
and hay production.*

Photos: BEF LV archive, I&A Liepnieki

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Existing policy frameworks supporting sustainable agriculture practices largely consist of non-integrated short-term measures addressing narrowly defined environmental, social and economic issues. Instead, a more comprehensive, integrated and long-term framework approach is required one that supports and enables farmers to progressively transition to more sustainable farming approaches such as agro-ecological practices less reliant on external inputs. EU CAP and national policy instruments supporting organic dairy farming practices should provide differentiated premium support to transitioned organic dairy farms if the complexity of agro-ecological farming practices and the performance of agri-environmental-climate measures are increased.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Improving the sustainability of grassland-based organic dairy farming in Latvia:
<https://uniseco-project.eu/case-study/latvia>

ABOUT UNISECO:

UNISECO is a European research project aiming to develop innovative approaches to enhance the understanding of socio-economic and policy drivers and barriers for further development and implementation of agro-ecological practices in EU farming systems.

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<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/773901>

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UNISECO in the EIP-Agri projects database:

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