



UNISECO



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Improving soil properties on arable land by maintaining organic dairy farming in the Vysočina region

Photo: A. Hrabalová

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

POLICY BRIEF

Specialised organic dairy farms introduced several farming practices improving arable soil properties in order to produce organic fodder for cows. This changed substantially the crop structure, but farms became more fragile economically.

Policy can help farmers to cope with these new challenges.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Organic dairy farms in the Vysočina region eliminated pesticides and inorganic fertilisers, introduced more soil improving perennial crops while cash crops were reduced. Farms became nearly fully dependent on milk production, resulting in economic vulnerability.

One of the reasons is the immature market for organic products. Farmers created a sales cooperative to be able to enter the market, but the fragility remained.

During the stakeholders discussion, it became clear that farmers can improve their economics by more effective knowledge transfer, by adding value in milk production, and more strategic acting on the milk market. All those steps need improved cooperation between farmers.

Despite the old tradition in the farming cooperative movement between mid 19th to mid 20th century, the willingness to cooperate closer is rather low now. Farmers recognise the value of cooperation but they are waiting for someone else to initiate it.

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Country:

Czech Republic

Related to the UNISECO case study:

[Improvement of soil properties on arable land.](#)

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The weeder harrows - the main assistant for mechanical weed control in organic farming

Photo: Martin Matěj

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Farmers recognised the need for increased cooperation in the area of knowledge transfer/sharing and more strategic common actions on the market. But they lack the good experience with cooperation and do not know how to carry out successful common action, resulting in and perpetuating a reluctance to mobilise.

The policy role should be in training of advisors in facilitation of farmers' cooperation to be able to cope with market conditions and also to share knowledge on the more effective organic farming. National policies should ensure well-targeted support of specific advisory services addressing the weaknesses of this farming system and other farming systems introducing agro-ecological farming practices. Also measures supporting cooperation (e.g. EIP, machinery sharing) should be adjusted in order to overcome barriers in cooperation, and to increase uptake of these measures.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Case study page: <https://uniseco-project.eu/case-study/czech-republic>

Improvement of soil properties on arable land (Story map): <https://arcg.is/PbLLG2>

Start page of case study story map.



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>

<https://zenodo.org/communities/uniseco-h2020/>

UNISECO in the EIP-Agri projects database:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/understanding-and-improving-sustainability-agro>

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