

# CAN THE ORGANIC FARMING BUSINESS BE OUR FUTURE?

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### **Introduction**

It is evident that organic farming is a sector of agriculture that is becoming more popular through influencers and social media. What is organic farming? Most organic foods are farmed without GMO (genetically modified) seeds and synthetic pesticides, which are typically used in inorganic farming. Organic farmers either use organic compost or crop rotation instead of those options. The question I intend to answer would be 'Can the organic farming business be our future?'. In order to answer this question, I intend to explore the stability of the organic farming market, as well as how it might help or hinder both the environment and businesses that are affected by this. The criteria I have for a 'stable market' would be if it can help the environmental situation of climate change and if the current trends in different sectors are positive

### **Supermarkets**

Organic animals raised for dairy products, meat, and eggs are raised in living conditions that link to their natural behaviours (for example being able to feed on grassland) and fed food that is organic. The winner of the BOOM awards (Best of Organic Market Awards) in the Organic Online Retailing sector was Abel and Cole in addition, the best organic supermarket was won by Waitrose & Partners. Abel & Cole is an LTD that had a turnover increase of 40.08% compared to last year, in addition, the gross profit went up by 41.94%. During the past year, Waitrose said that its chicken sales have soared by 43%, vegetable sales have increased by 22%, and fruit sales have risen by 15%. These show a stable increase in the purchase of organic foods in these two popular markets.

## **Top countries in organic agriculture**

There are three countries that are considered the world's top producers of organic agriculture: India (1,366,226), Uganda (210,353), and Ethiopia (203'602). The data for these three countries comes from the FiBL survey 2021<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, there was an increase in producers from 15.1 billion euros (2000) to 106.4 billion euros (2019) which means that more countries are choosing to group their organic sector in order to provide support for the future.

## **Soil Association Organic Report**

The Soil Association 2021 Organic Market Report published in February (the only report summarising trends in the UK organic market today) reveals that the organic markets in the UK have grown at the fastest rate in 15 years. There was a 12.6% increase in the market which meant it has a worth of £2.79 billion (approximately 3180 million euros). Finn Cottle, trade consultant, Soil Association Certification, said to the journalist Jim Manson: "It's significant that in times of crisis, people are turning to organic products for the assurance of transparency, integrity, and quality they provide. Organic is now rightfully recognised as the cornerstone of a resilient food and farming system and a vital part of the solution to the climate, nature, and health crisis"<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the organic market's annual sales growth transcended that of the inorganic market sector reaching 12.6% in 2020, although this is a small percentage of change the organic

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<sup>1</sup> Data taken from FiBL& IFOAM - Organics International 'The world of Organic Agriculture : Statistics and Emerging Trends 2021'

<sup>2</sup> Taken from BIOECO Actual : UK Organic Market Continues to Grow – 2021 Soil Association Report Published

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market still surpassed the inorganic market. The main fuel for the growth in the organic market in 2020 was online and home deliveries due to the pandemic, sales in the market increased by 26.2%. This indicates that this channel of the market accounts for almost  $\frac{1}{4}$  of total sales additionally the sale in supermarkets of organic items increased by 12.5% in numerous categories. This report shows an overall positive view of the organic market and also shows that the organic market is now on track to reach £2.9 billion by the end of 2021, with a multitude of organic consumers expected to remain devoted to the sector to support the food/farming system which supports a safe climate.

### Land

In the UK from 2020, the area of land that was used to farm organically has increased by 3.6% to 507 thousand hectares in 2021. To add to this, There was an increase by a 12% rise in, in-conversion land compared to 2020. In-conversion land describes the process of transition from 'conventional' farming to organic agriculture, this usually takes 3 years to accomplish fully. Suggesting that, there will be an increase in organic farmland which can help support the growing population of some areas, this would also provide more jobs for farmers to take care of this land in a ethical

In spite of that, the organically farmed sector of land only represents 2.8% of the entire farmed regions in the UK which only covers a very small area of UK farming land currently. In addition, organic farming requires more land than conventional farming to produce the same amount of crop yields, although this can provide more jobs this may lead to more forest land be removed to make space for this agricultural option.

## How can organic farming help the environment?

Organic farming critically restricts the over-use of imported manufactured fertilisers, mainly chemicals. This is because by reducing the number of goods they import, they can reduce their carbon footprint." *Organic standards encourage farmers to 'close the loop', making use of what's to hand and limiting the use of imported resources"* -Soil Association. Alternatively, natural fertilisers can be used, this includes locally sourced manure and compost which can also be cheaper for farmers to acquire. Highlighting how organic farming does not need to import fertilisers in the future, they have the flexibility to used locally sourced maure to help them in farming.

***“IF EUROPE’S FARMLAND ALL FOLLOWED ORGANIC PRINCIPLES, AGRICULTURAL EMISSIONS COULD DROP BY 40-50% BY 2050, WITH PLENTY TO FEED THE GROWING POPULATION HEALTHY DIETS”***  
***SOIL ASSOCIATION***

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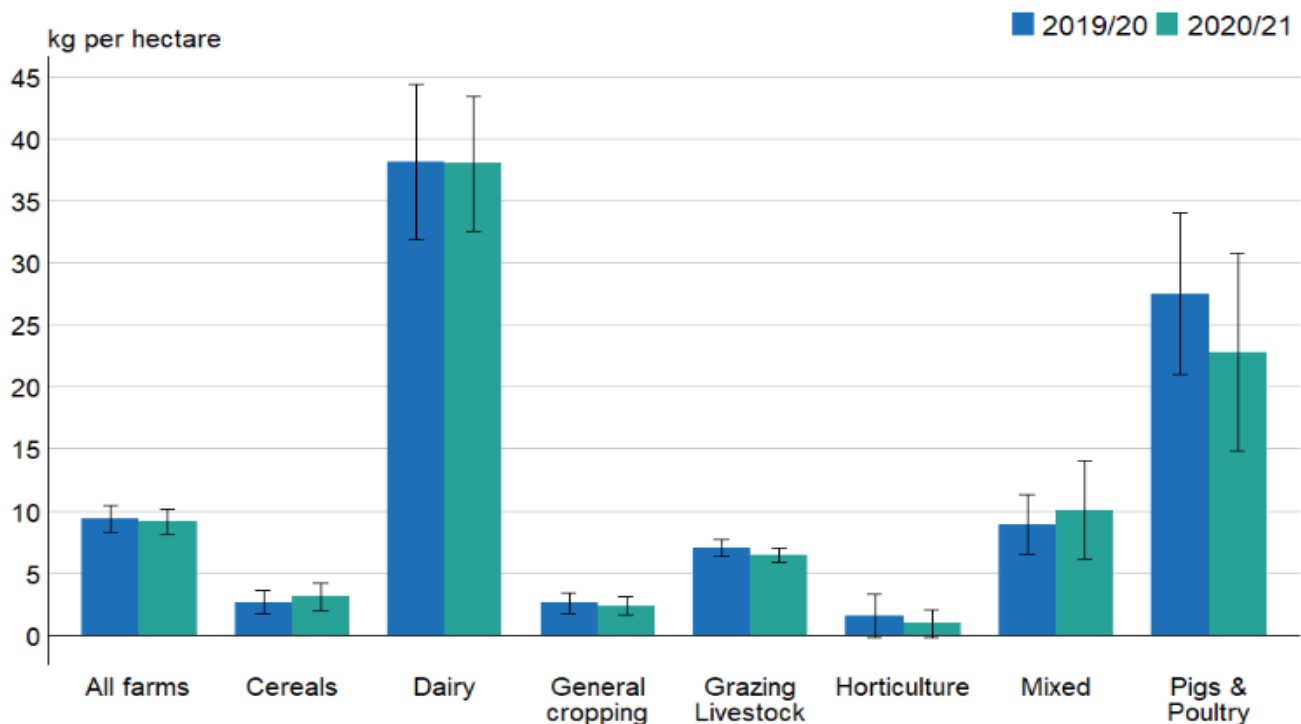
### Nitrogen Pollution

Nitrogen is an essential component of agriculture and life on earth. Nevertheless, nitrogen can become a very dangerous pollutant if excessive amounts are released.

#### Source A<sup>3</sup>:

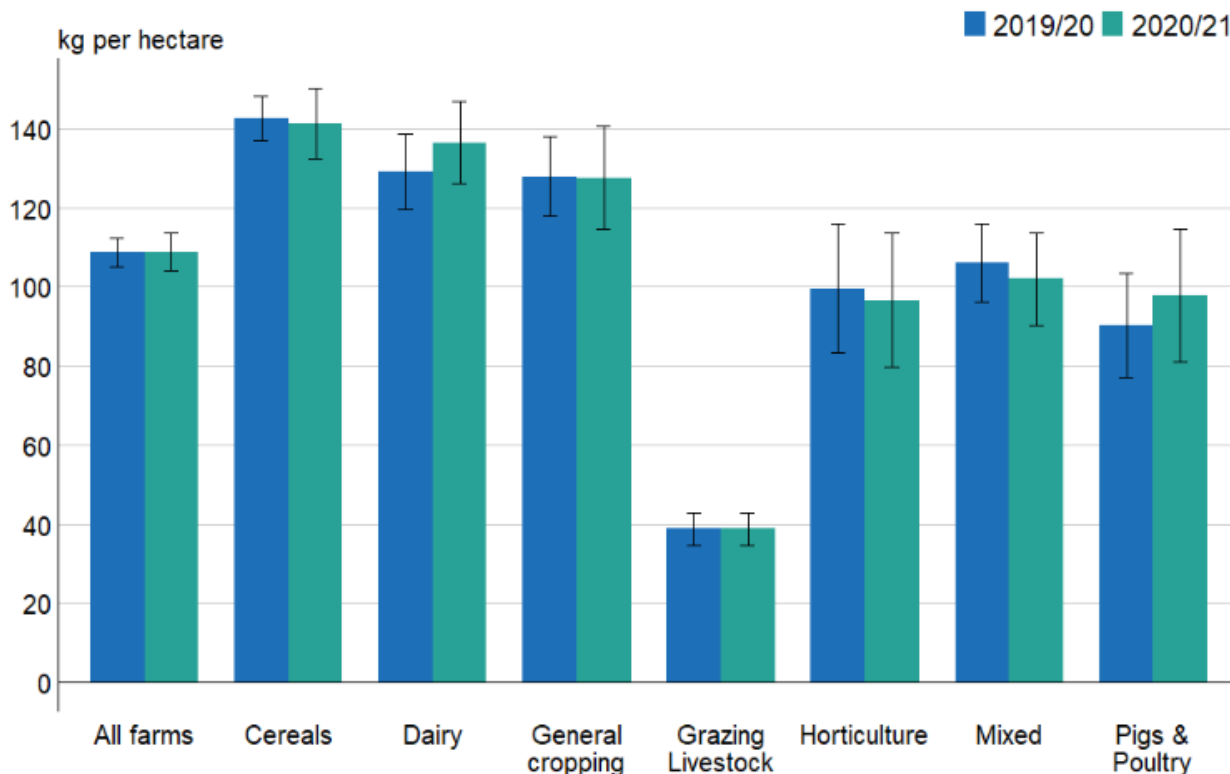
	2019/20	2020/21	95% Confidence interval 2020/21 (+/-)
Manufactured Fertilisers	109	109	5
Organic Fertilisers	9	9	1

#### Source B : Overall organic nitrogen application rates per hectare of farmed area (excluding rough grazing) by farm type, England 2019/20 to 2020/21



<sup>3</sup> Taken from Farm Business Survey, main source: National statistics Fertiliser usage on farm, England 2020/21 - Statistics Notice

**Source C: Overall manufactured nitrogen application rates per hectare of farmed area (excluding rough grazing) by farm type, England 2019/20 to 2020/21**



'Source A' shows the general application of nitrogen, manufactured and organic fertilisers, both organic and manufactured fertilisers remain the same at 109 Kg/ha and 9 Kg/ha. Although it is clear to see the major gap in how much is used in each type of fertiliser, there is a significant 100 Kg/ha. This means that organic fertilisers endeavour to lower the risk of nitrogen pollution which in turns help decrease the chance of climate change escalating in the future. However, using nitrogen in farming, manufactured fertilisers can help boost crop yields.'Source B and Source C' also supports the points I have previously mentioned.

## Personal Data

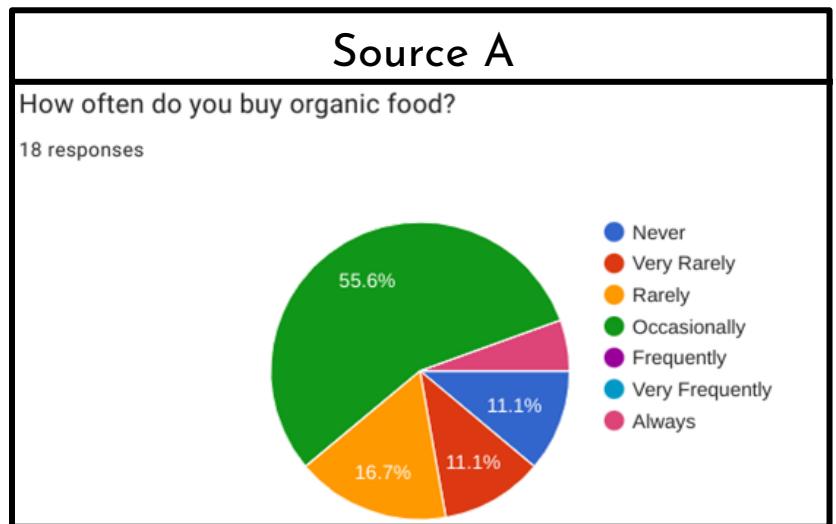
This is a primary source of data that I have collected through Google Forms by sending

it out online, the main participant age ranged from 13-20 (77.8%), 20-25(16.7%), and 25-30 (5.6%) . The first question and its response are shown in **Source A** (18 people in total completed this form).

These statistics show that most people (55.6%)

'Occasionally' buy

organic food. Although, only 5.6% 'Always' buy organic food. This highlights the fact that most people today understand the consequences of buying organic food and choose to buy it as often as they can.

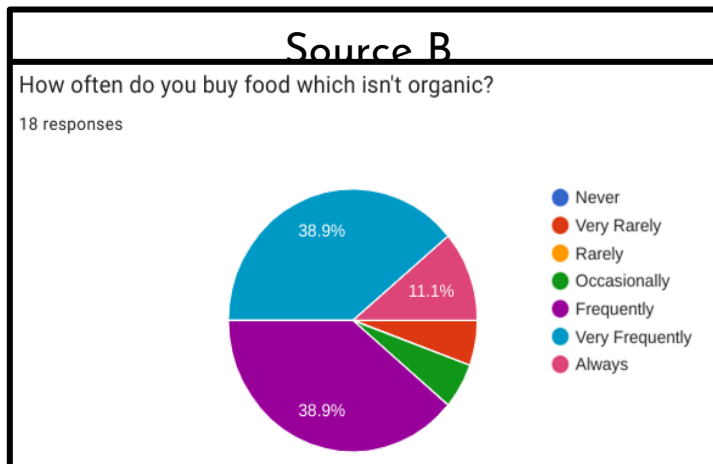


The main reason for this according to the survey is that 38.9% say it has better quality and it is more ethical in addition 27.8% say it tastes better and 5.6% say they buy organic food because it is more on-trend (this sector of the questionnaire was a multiple choice). Demonstrating how, more people are choosing to purchase



organic foods which can lead to a high demand due to the increasing popularity and popular social media.

As you can see in **Source B** when asked the opposing question



there was a tie between 'Frequently' and 'Very Frequently' with 38.9%, 'Very Rarely' and 'Occasionally' with 5.6% of respondents choosing this. This is because 83.3% of respondents find that it is cheaper and easier to find (72.2%). This means that if organic food was made more

accessible and less expensive, more consumers would choose to switch to mainly organic food.

## Conclusion

To conclude I think that organic farming can fulfil and provide us with a stable future to some extent. Organic food has had a significant increase in popularity due to social media and people having more access to it during the pandemic due to an increase in online shopping. More people can gain access to this in developed areas. This helps stabilise the organic farming sector since more people around the globe know about it and how it can help the environment.

To add to this organic farming uses fertilisers that do not contribute to the rise in greenhouse gases into our atmosphere by using locally sourced waste to help them which typically uses a lot less nitrogen than conventional farming. This means that it helps reduce the risk of the rising temperature of our globe due to climate change.

However, due to organic agriculture is against using nitrogen in its farming, it could have some difficulties producing enough food to sustain around 8 million people (November 2022). This could lead to problems in developing and emerging countries as they might not be able to handle the costs of producing the amount of food they need to produce for their citizens.

### **What should we do next?**

To make organic farming have the ability to support us in the future, we have to provide solutions to the disadvantages listed above.

As a government, they could help promote and provide access to organic food to consumers more easily in order to support the growing population and support smaller organic companies.

Organic food companies can help reach out to other companies which aren't as organic and help them create other pathways they could take in becoming more eco-friendly such as creating a merger in order to boost sales and grow both businesses.

### **Personal Reflection**

If I could do something differently next time, I would record my sources as I incorporate them into my project, so I could use them fully instead of logging most of them in. However, something I would do again if I did an HPQ or EPQ in the future would be to use triangulation, which means I would use a wider range of research methods that could give me quantitative or qualitative data that I could use to aid me. In this HPQ, I used mainly secondary sources and 1 primary resource.