

Marketing Organic

Most widely used claims - May 2024 update



How to use this document

- **Claims:** Claims themselves are featured in bold within the quotation marks
- **Asterisks:** Where there is an asterisk after the claim, there is a qualifier that must be featured “within the same field of vision” as the claim itself. (See next page on ASA guidance for further information)
- **Qualifiers:** Qualifiers are featured alongside an asterisk directly underneath the claim
- **Further context:** This is provided to offer further information and context as to how the claim was derived. This does not need to be featured alongside the claim and is provided as supporting information
- **Reference:** Featured as a footnote, the reference links directly to the study the claim is derived from. The ASA requires that brands using claims hold the evidence base for the claims and this references provides that – as they are all publicly accessible peer-reviewed publications

ASA response

On the wording of claims and qualifications

The ASA said, "Where a qualification is necessary to explain the basis of the environmental claims, the proposed wording of that qualification appears acceptable provided it is supported by robust documentary evidence that covers the entire lifecycle of that farm."

How to display qualifying text

The ASA said, "It is likely that qualifying text would need to appear in the same field of vision as the claim it qualifies so that it can be read at the same time as headline claim and therefore understood accordingly". i.e. including the qualifying text within the Instagram graphic or caption.

Commercial advantage

The ASA have highlighted the following for use of these claims by certified organic businesses.

"If these claims were used by Soil Association Certification the claims are not likely to be considered comparisons with identifiable competitors. However, if the same claims were used by businesses certified with Soil Association Certification this position may be different. This is because there would be a commercial advantage of food producers to compare their products with those produced on non-organic farms. As such, depending on the context, these claims could be considered comparisons with identifiable competitors when used by individual businesses, and the ASA recommends that certified businesses seek advice on ads that feature the claims to see if these additional rules will be triggered. The position on comparisons with identifiable competitors and verifiability is explained by the ASA [here](#) and [here](#)."

1. Wildlife

“Organic farms have on average 30% more biodiversity*”

*Biodiversity = the variety of different plant and animal species including wildflowers, soil microbes, beetles, spiders and birds

Further info for context:

Meta analysis from 94 studies published in 2013, cited +500 times

Key points from research:

- “Our analysis affirms that organic farming has large positive effects on biodiversity compared with conventional farming, but that the effect size varies with the organism group and crop studied, and is greater in landscapes with higher land-use intensity.”
- “Current studies are heavily biased towards northern and western Europe and North America, while other regions with large areas of organic farming remain poorly investigated.”
- “The information on taxonomic groups was used to create categorical covariates for different higher taxonomic units and ecological functions. For taxonomic groups, we classified species as: arthropods, birds, microbes and plants. Data on earthworms, mammals, nematodes and protozoa were excluded from this analysis due to small sample sizes ($n < 5$).”

This same 30% figure is also paralleled by the official IFOAM modelling for the EU Commission on the 25% land target published in November 2022.



2. Animal welfare

“ Organic has the highest standards of animal welfare ”

Further info for context:

Benchmarking of farming schemes by Compassion in World Farming, the leading global animal welfare charity

Animal welfare is one of the most important aspects of organic farming. Organic standards insist that animals are given plenty of space and fresh air, and that they are raised in conditions that suit their natural behaviour. Smaller flocks and herds, and more access to the outdoors means organic animals don't have to be routinely treated with antibiotics and wormers. Mutilations like beak-trimming to prevent the aggressive side effects of stress are also not needed or allowed.

Organic standards mean that farm animals:

- Must have access to pasture (when weather and ground conditions permit) and are truly free-range
- Must have plenty of space (indoors and outdoors) – which helps to reduce stress and disease
- Are fed a diet that is as natural as possible
- Graze and forage naturally on organic pasture (grasses and other crops) where only natural fertilisers are used and pesticides are severely restricted
- Must not routinely be given antibiotics

[Compassion in World Farming \(2012\): Farm Assurance Schemes and Animal Welfare: How the standards compare](#)



3. Carbon storage

“Soils in organic farms store more carbon*”

*Long term studies have shown comparing organic and conventional farming systems

Further info for context:

Research from Climate Xchange commissioned by the Scottish Government "Organic farming, net zero targets and the impact of a changing climate – an evidence review"

- Long-term studies indicate that the soil carbon in organic systems is higher than in conventional systems (Leifield and Fuhrer 2010; Gattinger et al. 2012; Colombi et al. 2019).
- The Scottish Government is committed to support the transition to net zero, whilst restoring and regenerating biodiversity. Organic farming practices have the potential to deliver to both agendas.
- This Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) and stakeholder engagement assesses the evidence for organic farming practices that contribute to the Biodiversity Strategy targets, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and making Scottish agricultural systems more resilient to the projected climatic conditions of 2045 (adaptation).
- Conclusions: The wider adoption of organic farming practices will benefit the environment.
- Gaps:
 - There is lack of evidence on the trade-offs between the individual organic management practices and the ecosystem services delivered.
 - Although there is evidence that organic management practices can increase soil carbon, there is a need for better quantification of the long-term potential.
 - Continual development of carbon calculators to better incorporate updated science and data is required to help support the farming community make informed decisions.



4. Healthy soils

“ Organic farms have healthier soils* ”

*Long term studies have shown higher levels of soil microorganisms compared with conventional farmland

Further info for context:

Long-form soil sampling study, 14 years. Based in Versailles, France. 2015. cited 230+ times.

Key points:

This study found that both conservation and organic systems increased the abundance and biomass of all soil organisms except predaceous nematodes. For example larger soil organisms increased from 100 to 2,500 %, nematodes from 100 to 700%, and microorganisms from 30 to 70%.

Henneron, L et al. (2015) '[Fourteen years of evidence for positive effects of conservation agriculture and organic farming on soil life](#)', *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*, 2015, 35:1 169 – 181
doi:10.1007/s13593-014-0215-8.



For more information or to check any claims, please email marketingsupport@soilassociation.org.

You can also use the ASA's bespoke copy advice if you'd like to have the ASA assess the placement or context of claims directly.

