

Organic Farming

The issue

There is growing recognition by international scientific and policy bodies that 'agroecological' or nature-friendly farming, including organic, can help address climate change, protect biodiversity, and improve food systems¹. Organic is the best known and only legally defined form of agroecological farming. It's a whole farm approach that avoids synthetic fertilisers and most pesticides, instead relying on natural processes to build healthy soils, support biodiversity, and produce food sustainably.

Demand for organic food is strong in the UK, with 14 years of consecutive market growth, but the share of farmland has remained static and is declining in Wales. Organic covers 3.8% of Welsh farmland and 3% across the UK. Cost of living is not necessarily a barrier - research shows that lower-income shoppers often purchase organic products more frequently.²

Why it matters to Wales

Wales has led the UK organic movement for over 40 years and has the highest proportion of organic farmland by nation. In 2024 there were 570 organic producers and processors managing 68,300 ha (3.8%)³.

Organic sales outperform non-organic by four times in major retail. Consumers are concerned about pesticides, ultra-processed foods, and nutrient density - and supply is not keeping pace with demand. Evidence also shows that investment in public procurement of organic food delivers economic, environmental and health benefits⁴. The Welsh Veg in Schools initiative⁵ is proving the value of organic in public sector catering.

But without a clear vision and commitment from government the Welsh organic sector may miss a crucial opportunity for sustainable growth. A decline in organic production and likely agricultural intensification would be a setback for climate, nature and food security.

Alignment with Welsh policy context

Organic farming supports all four Sustainable Land Management objectives under the **Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023** and its holistic approach aligns with the **Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015**. Organic certification is well placed to support socially responsible public procurement as required by the **Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act (Wales) 2024**.

Our perspective

The Soil Association promotes a shift to agroecological farming and healthy and sustainable food. Organic farming is a key part of this approach.

Organic farming is the only system that bans artificial nitrogen and tightly restricts pesticides. Studies show nitrogen losses are on average 28% lower than non-organic systems⁶. Organic farms also support around 50% more wildlife, helping address biodiversity loss linked to intensive pesticide use.

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The EU is aiming for 25% organic land. A decline in organic production in Wales would weaken the sector and allow competitors to gain market share at home and internationally.

What we're doing about it

- We are founding members of the Welsh Organic Forum, the representative body for the organic sector in Wales. We were instrumental to their campaign to reinstate Welsh Government support for organic farming in 2023.
- Soil Association Certification inspects and certifies around 1/3 of the organic farms in Wales.
- Soil Association's farming advisers provide support, advice and training to farms in Wales.

What we want Welsh policy makers to do:

- **Invest in the sustainable growth of the organic sector:** Co-produce a funded Organic Action Plan to scale up organic production, meet demand, and strengthen resilience in the sector. Set a target of 10% organic land by 2030, supported by Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) payments for organic conversion and maintenance. Promote Welsh organic food through Food and Drink Wales campaigns.
- **Secure an increased multi-year agricultural budget:** Provide a ring-fenced, multi-year budget to support the transition to climate-resilient, nature-positive farming through the SFS.
- **Ensure effective delivery of the SFS:** Invest in digital systems for applications, monitoring, and payments. Integrate advice services through the SFS and Farming Connect, expanding access to whole-farm planning and guidance.
- **Support the growth of small-scale organic horticulture:** Strengthen production and consumption of Welsh-grown fruit, vegetables, and pulses. Use the SFS, public procurement, and retail promotion to expand opportunities for small-scale organic horticulture.

Evidence/references

- 1 [IPCC Report: Climate Change and Land](#)
- 2 [Soil Association Certification: Organic Market Report](#)
- 3 [Organic Farming Statistics 2024 \(UK Gov.\)](#)
- 4 [Bridging the Gap: How to fix the food system for everyone](#)
- 5 [Food Sense Wales: Welsh Veg in Schools](#)
- 6 [Frontiers in Agronomy: Comparison of organic versus conventional farming](#)

- Welsh Organic Forum - The Business Case for organic support in Cynllun Cynefin Cymru / Habitat Wales Scheme and the Sustainable Farming Scheme (available on request)

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