

Organic Knowledge Update

Trees

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Organic tree sector in the Netherlands

The Dutch organic tree sector is quite small. The main issues for this sector are extending the market share of organic tree nursery products and improving mechanical weed control. To facilitate organic tree growers, Wageningen UR and the Louis Bolk Institute carry out a variety of research aimed specifically at the sector.



Organic tree growers use precision tools for weeding between rows

Dutch organic tree sector

Currently there are about 50 organic tree and perennial plant nurseries in the Netherlands. This number includes growers that produce fruit trees, roses and shrubs. The total acreage is about 120 hectares, which amounts to 1% of all land dedicated to tree and perennial crops in the Netherlands. Street trees and fruit trees are the most important crops in terms of acreage.

Currently, the market share of organic trees is limited. This market share is expected to grow as public institutions such as city councils and provincial governments are now dedicated to sustainable procurement. Organic nurseries have the so-called EKO-label, which is one of the labels that complies with the sustainable procurement criteria that are used by local and provincial governments.

→ Aspirations

The current supply of organic tree nursery products is relatively small. Many organic trees and shrubs are sold on the conventional market. The sector wants to develop a broad assortment of organic trees and needs new organic growers to achieve this goal. Also, some difficulties in the cultivation process still need to be addressed. Research and education play a vital role. To stimulate demand, the sector needs more support from buyers of public green, at city council and provincial level. The sector also needs to explain the benefits and availability of organic trees to the general public. The sector works on promotion, marketing and cooperation.



Current affairs

The added value for the consumer of organically produced trees and shrubs is an important issue. Explaining this added value is essential to the market development of organic nursery stock products.

Weed control is a major factor in the cost of organic trees. Research into the possibilities and techniques for mechanical weed management remains important.



Flower beds between tree rows provide habitat for natural enemies of pest insects

Research projects

- **Comparing the performance of conventional and organic hardy nursery stock**

This project aims to assess organic and conventionally grown products on location, especially for public green. This comparison is made in order to study the added value of organic nursery stock.

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- **Weed management in organic nursery stock** Weed control requires much labor and is therefore costly. This project tests and applies new technologies for weed control in tree nurseries. The aim is to reduce labour and costs.

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GPS systems are important to precision sowing and weeding

Bioconnect aims to further develop and strengthen the Dutch organic sector by initiating and implementing research projects. Within Bioconnect organic entrepreneurs (from farmers to shop-keepers) work together with research institutes, colleges and universities and consultancy organisations. This leads to demand-driven research that is unique to the Netherlands.



The Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation sponsors these research projects.



Ministry of Economic Affairs,
Agriculture and Innovation

Wageningen University and Research Centre and the Louis Bolk Institute together carry out these research projects. About 140 projects dedicated to organic agriculture are currently under way.



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