

# Policy Brief EU Access



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## Organic vegetable production in new and candidate Member States

The acreage of certified organic vegetable production in new and candidate EU Member States is still very small. There are great opportunities but also large constraints for the development of organic vegetable production.

Despite these constraints, there are committed groups and individuals in all new and candidate Member States that are determined to develop organic farming. These groups will play a crucial role in the success of organic farming.

Institutional support from the old EU Member States is strongly appreciated. This support is valued as mental support in the struggle with traditional systems and against scepticism both in the public and private domain.

Projects like 'Organics' as a part of the Dutch EU Access Programme provides a valuable source of contacts, information and support for the national initiators of organic (vegetable) production.

### Market chances

A number of production factors favour vegetable production. There is a huge reservoir of fertile and relatively cheap land while labour costs are low. Furthermore, climatic conditions in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus enable production of vegetables and fruits that cannot be grown in, e.g., West European countries. This creates opportunities for exporting products with a high labour demand and products that need a warm climate like melons, peppers and tomatoes. There are scattered examples of organic production of these crops in different States, some on a very large scale after foreign investments. Cyprus is starting to export organic early potatoes. In Bulgaria a 200 ha organic vegetable farm has recently been set up for the production of strawberries for processing (50 ha) and vegetables for the freezing industry. In the Slovak Republic an 80 ha farm close to the Austrian border is successfully exporting large quantities of organically produced asparagus (to Austria, Germany, Switzerland).

### Constraints

Despite the opportunities for organic vegetable produce from new and candidate Member States on the European market, there are many weak points and setbacks to overcome for the development of a sound organic production sector.

Mostly, legislation and certification is organised and in line with EU standards.

The actual organisation and implementation of this, however, is still in its early stages. Major constraints on the development of organic vegetable production are the lack of capital for investment, available knowledge and the organisation of the knowledge system, insufficient organisational and physical infrastructure and the very limited development of the home market for organic produce. Cooperation between farmers is also a necessity, but farmers are very reluctant to cooperate under the ghosts of the former way of cooperation under the communist regimes.

### National action plans

The EU Action Plan for Organic Farming is a source of inspiration for the development of organic farming in new and candidate Member States. National action plans can be a big incentive for the development of organic farming. Drawing up of such national action plans should therefore be supported. They provide a framework in which public and private organisations can work on the development on organic production. Countries like the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic already have formally established such action plans. Poland, Bulgaria and Romania will very soon be drawing up such action plans. Policy makers and stakeholders feel the need to learn from the experiences in other EU Member States in drawing up such action plans.



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## Slovak Republic

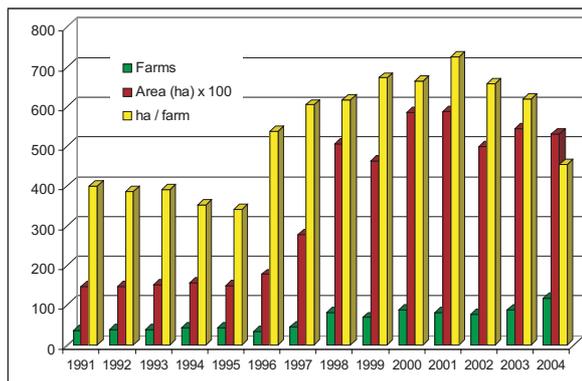
Organic farming has been developing in the Slovak Republic since 1991. Organic farming is realised in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 after Slovakia became part of the European Union. Financial support is provided over the entire organic farming period and covers the conversion period and the period after conversion. Payment for organic farming is 6,000 Sk/ha for arable land, 4,000 Sk/ha for permanent grass cover, 8,000 Sk/ha for orchards and vineyards, and 10,000 Sk/ha for vegetable and aromatic plants during the conversion period; thereafter payment is lowered by half.

On 31 December 2003 54,479 ha (2.23 % of all agricultural land) was farmed organically of which 16,707 ha arable land (cca 620 ha of vegetables and aromatic plants), 124 ha vineyards, 231 ha orchards and 37,417 ha permanent grass cover.

In order to provide an incentive for the further development of organic production and the market for organic produce, the Ministry of Agriculture has prepared an Action Plan for the Development of Organic Farming, running up to 2010. This will support, in particular, those organic farming areas that have insufficiently been developed. These areas include, e.g., research and education of

farmers as well the support of the domestic market for organic farming products. The necessity of such an Action Plan also resulted from the "EKOMIT" international conference on organic farming held in 2004 in Piešťany. EKOMIT was organised by the Research Institute of Plant Production in Piešťany and the Dutch Organics Project.

*Development of Organic Farming in the Slovak Republic*



source: UKSUP

This is the second issue of the Policy Brief of the EU Access programme, a co-operation programme on sustainable agricultural supply chains in pre- and post-European Union accession countries. This programme started at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Netherlands and is now running in co-operation with partners from Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Cyprus.

This Policy brief intends to inform you about a specific theme that follows from the EU-Access programme. A Newsletter is also published and informs you about new developments around the various projects of the programme.

For more information about programme, projects, newsletter or policy brief please contact us (arij.everaarts@wur.nl; phone +31 320 29 11 11).

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Three institutes of Wageningen University and Research Centre are involved in this programme: Applied Plant Research (PPO), International Agricultural Centre (IAC) and Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI)

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