

CORE Organic

Joining resources to improve research in organic food and farming

Organic production methods are addressing a number of the challenges faced in the development of agriculture and rural areas in Europe. Most obviously in terms of reducing environmental pressure, supporting ecosystem functions, and improving food safety, food quality and animal welfare, but also in terms of maintaining activities in rural areas.

In order to make full use of the perspectives in organic farming a comprehensive research effort is necessary. CORE Organic is a European partnership supporting transnational research in organic food and farming.

This transnational collaboration developed through:

- ▶ the CORE Organic ERA-NET under the 6th Framework Programme
- ▶ the initiation of a joint research programme, with eight pilot projects launched in 2007
- ▶ the creation of a wider network of partners, the Funding Body Network, to continue and expand the collaboration.



The European challenge for research in organic food and farming

In its full perspective organic farming provides answers to many of the intentions of the agricultural policies in Europe. Most obviously in terms of sustainable production of high quality food, reduction of dependency on high energy and resource inputs, improvement of environment and nature conservation, climate change adaptation, animal welfare as well as rural livelihoods.

Moreover, as the organic production is more valuable and labour intensive than the conventional production, and organic farms more multi-functional, organic agriculture may also provide a potential in terms of supporting rural development and sustaining farm income.

The need for joining resources

Research in organic food and farming is a rapidly expanding discipline on the European research scene. One of the problems faced by authorities seeking to initiate research programmes in organic food and farming is that the present research effort in Europe is characterised by small research communities, often scattered and fragmented both geographically and institutionally. Therefore there is a need for gathering the dispersed expertise to a critical mass in order to increase the competitive quality and relevance of the research.

Essential dates of CORE Organic

- 2004-2007: CORE Organic ERA-NET
- 2007-2010: Joint research programme conducted through eight CORE pilot projects
- 2008: Establishment of the CORE Organic Funding Body Network

CORE Organic ERA-NET (2004-2007)

The CORE Organic (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming) ERA-NET was a three-year Coordination Action in organic food and farming, which was initiated by 11 countries as a part of the European Commission's ERA-NET Scheme under the 6th Framework Programme (see also www.coreorganic.org). The ERA-NET was launched in order to improve the cooperation between national research activities.

The overall objective of CORE Organic:

- ▶ was to enhance the quality, relevance and utilisation of resources in European research in organic food and farming by gathering a critical mass and establishing a joint research programme. Project activities focused on:
- ▶ Increasing the exchange of information and establishing a common, open-access web archive (Organic Eprints - www.orgprints.org)
- ▶ Coordinating existing research and integration of knowledge
- ▶ Sharing and developing best practice for launching and evaluating organic research
- ▶ Identifying priorities and initiating transnationally-funded research projects of common interest

As a result of the cooperation, the CORE Organic partners launched a pilot call for joint transnational research projects in organic food and farming, within three themes: "animal disease and parasite management"; "organic food, quality and safety"; "innovative marketing strategies". In 2007 eight research projects were selected for transnational funding by means of a virtual common pot approach.



Pilot projects initiated under CORE Organic

AGTEC-Org: Methods to improve quality in organic wheat

Objective: to identify agronomical and food processing technologies that enhance the baking quality and the nutritional value of organic wheat and reduce mycotoxin contamination.

Background: It is a challenge to organic farmers, millers and bakeries to meet consumer expectations of providing healthy and safe products without impairing yield performance. The quality of organic grain can be modified by agronomic conditions. Food processing technologies are also key factors in producing bread of high nutritional value without contaminants. Further information at <http://agtec.coreportal.org>

ANIPLAN: Planning for better animal health and welfare

Objective: minimising medicine use in organic dairy herds through active and well-planned animal health and welfare promotion and disease prevention.

Background: It is a main goal for organic livestock farming that animals should always have excellent health and welfare. However, there are indications that this is not always guaranteed even though organic standards are being followed. Further information at <http://aniplan.coreportal.org>

FCP: How to communicate ethical values

Objective: to analyse and test innovative communication strategies and arguments that are related to the concept of "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR).

Background: The market for organic products and the cultural and behavioural backgrounds of consumers vary throughout Europe. Is it possible to develop communication strategies for organic companies and farmers that can be successful in all those different contexts and varying consumer approaches? Which are the most convincing arguments when communicating added values such as higher social responsibility? Which are marketing and communication strategies by which organic farmers try to include ethical values in their production methods that are higher than those set out in the governmental standards for organic production? Further information at <http://fcp.coreportal.org>

COREPIG: A tool to prevent diseases and parasites in organic pig herds

Objective: to promote animal health and welfare in organic pig herds in Europe.

Background: The health of pigs varies a lot between different organic pig herds, likely due to different management routines. It is important to acquire knowledge of the correlation between management routines and disease incidence in organic pig production and convert this knowledge into a management tool that the indi-

vidual farmer can use to improve livestock health on the farm. Further information at <http://corepig.coreportal.org>

iPOPY: More organic food for young people

Objective: to suggest efficient policies and instruments for increased consumption of organic products in public food serving outlets for youth.

Background: Governments, companies, producers and caterers are increasingly committed to public procurement of organic food, but many challenges remain. Further information at <http://ipoppy.coreportal.org>

PathOrganic: Assessing and Reducing Risks of Pathogen Contamination in Organic Vegetables

Objective: to address the quality and safety of organically produced vegetables throughout the production chain, and examine how factors such as environment, plant genotype, fertilizer application technique or soil buffering affect pathogen spread and persistence in organic vegetable products.

Background: consumers show an increasing demand for uncooked and minimally processed vegetables preferentially from organic production lines. But outbreaks of disease have been traced back to the consumption of fresh plant produce contaminated with enteric pathogens. Further information at <http://pathorganic.coreportal.org>

PhytoMilk: What makes organic milk healthy?

Objective: to increase the knowledge of the nutritional and salutary quality of organic milk and of the relationship between production systems, environmental conditions and milk properties.

Background: Due to a higher proportion of forage in the organic ration, organic milk quality is more and differently affected by the forage than conventionally produced milk. But the knowledge of the chemical and sensory characteristics of organic milk is limited, and not much research has been carried out on organic grassland management and milk salutary properties. Further information at <http://phytomilk.coreportal.org>

QACCP: How to assure safety, health and sensory qualities of organic products

Objective: to improve product-related quality management in farming and processing.

Background: Consumer demand for healthy, safe and high quality food is increasing. Against this background, the demand for organic food has been rapidly growing. But health effects and sensory qualities of organic products need to be assured. Further information at <http://qaccp.coreportal.org>

Towards an efficient and lasting collaboration: the Funding Body Network

The partners of the CORE Organic ERA-NET formed the CORE Organic "Funding Body Network" in 2007 in order to monitor and evaluate the eight CORE Organic pilot projects, to broaden the collaboration and to pursue efforts towards a long-term collaboration in organic research. Since then, the Funding Body Network has continued to work towards these objectives, with the monitoring of pilot projects, the development of a strategy and the further enlargement of the network to 22 partners, with some additional countries considering joining.

In 2008-2009, the 22 countries have formulated a proposal for a second CORE Organic ERA-NET under the 7th Framework Programme, with the aim to carry out a second phase of transnational calls to give momentum to a flow of transnational calls and projects in the long term, and to develop a framework for a strategic research agenda securing the long-term collaboration.



Follow the progress of CORE Organic

The CORE Organic website
www.coreorganic.org informs on activities
and research in CORE Organic.

The partners in the FP6 CORE Organic ERA- Net ...

- Austria** - Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
- Denmark - Coordinator** International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS, formerly DARCOF) / Danish Food Industry Agency
- Finland** - Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with Agri-food Research Finland (MTT)
- France** - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries / Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA)
- Germany** - Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture / Federal Agency of Agriculture and Food (BLE)
- Italy** - Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
- The Netherlands** - Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
- Norway** - The Research Council of Norway
- Sweden** - Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Science and Spatial Planning
- Switzerland** - Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture, with Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL)
- United Kingdom** - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



... have been joined by new partners in the CORE Organic Funding Body Network

- Belgium** - Flemish Government Department of agriculture and fisheries / Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO)
- Czech Republic** - Ministry of Agriculture, National Agency for Agricultural Research
- Estonia** - Ministry of Agriculture
- Ireland** - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- Latvia** - Latvian State Institute of Agrarian Economics (LSIAE)
- Lithuania** - Ministry of Agriculture
- Luxembourg** - National Research Fund
- Poland** - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Slovenia** - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
- Spain** - National Institute for Agriculture and Food Research and Technology
- Turkey** - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs

