

Sharing and developing best practice for the evaluation of research in organic food and farming



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Project no. 011716

CORE Organic

Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming

ERA-NET/1/CA-SSA-B

Due date of deliverable: March 2006

Actual submission date: April 2006

Start date of project: 1.10.2004

Duration: 36 month

Project Coordinator: Erik Steen Kristensen

Dissemination Level: [enter level e.g. PU, PP, RE, CO] [click and enter level description]



The editors gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Commission of the European Communities, under the ERA-NET scheme of the Sixth Framework Programme in the project CORE Organic (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming, Project no 011716). The text in this deliverable does not necessarily reflect the Commission's views and in no way anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area.

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This publication represents the deliverable about task 5.1 in work package 5 "Sharing and developing best practice for the evaluation of organic research" of the ERA-NET/1/CA-SSA-B No 011716 "CORE Organic" (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming, Project no 011716 under the ERA-NET scheme of the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission). For further information see the project homepage at www.coreorganic.org.

Thomas Alföldi, Urs Niggli and Bertil Sylvander (2006): Sharing and developing best practice for the evaluation of research in organic food and farming (OF&F)

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1 Introduction

The aim of this survey is to provide insight into the organisation of organic food and farming research by the partners involved in the CORE organic project, in order to evaluate and improve it. This report will therefore show how *priority setting, procurement/funding and evaluation for organic farming research* are organised in the eleven participating partner countries. A questionnaire consisting of eight parts was sent to the partners. The first part is asking about the organisation of organic farming research emphasising on the question, whether an organic research programme exists or whether organic farming research is integrated in a more general scheme. Second part looks at the organisation of organic programmes and the priority setting process. Third part contains detailed questions dedicated to the different steps of open calls. Reporting and monitoring of the projects and programmes is dealt with in the fourth part. In the fifth part, the focus lays on how the ex-post evaluation is organised followed by chapter six asking for the different dissemination activities. Proposals on how the procedures could be optimised in the different countries are made in the seventh part. And the last part contains specific questions on how the eleven countries deal with interdisciplinarity, grass root research, and scientifically controversial methods.

The presentation of the results follows the order of the questionnaire. In order to make it easier for the reader, in the following text the countries are mentioned instead of the CORE organic partners. However, all statements refer to the CORE organic partners as follows:

Country	CORE Partner
Austria AT	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW)
Denmark DK	Danish Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agri Business (DFFAB) & Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF)
Finland FI	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MMM)
France FR	Ministry of Agriculture (MAAPAR)
Germany DE	Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMVEL)
Italy IT	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MiPAF)
Norway NO	The Research Council of Norway (RCN)
Sweden SE	Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Science and Spatial Planning (Formas)
Switzerland CH	Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG)
The Netherlands NL	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (MinLNV)
United Kingdom UK	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

2 Results of the questionnaire

2.1 General Questions: Frequency of open calls differs












In six out of eleven countries (DE, DK, IT¹, NL, SE, UK), organic research projects are part of an organic programme (Table 1). In four countries (AT, CH, FI, NO) organic research projects are integrated in a more general scheme². In FR both schemes are used.

Open calls exist in the Scandinavian countries DK, FI, NO and SE as well as in FR and UK³. In other countries like CH most of the grants are dedicated to institutions, and only a small part of the grants are open for calls. In NL, no open call but a semi-closed call exists. There is no correlation between the existence of an organic programme and an open call.

Three groups can be identified regarding the time period since open calls exist. The first open calls were established in the early nineties in AT, FI, NO, UK followed by DK, SE in the mid-nineties, and most recently by DE, FR, IT, NL. CH had open calls in the first and last group.

In five countries open calls are not regularly set calls (CH, DE, IT, NL, UK). FR and the Scandinavian countries DK, FI, NO, SE have regular calls with a frequency of 1 to 4 calls per year, up to 1 call every 4 or 5 years in DK. AT and IT have a system where continuous submission is possible. UK procures organic R&D through open competition regularly depending on the need.

Table 1: General questions

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
ORP in organic programme (org) or integrated in general scheme (int)?	int	int	org	org	int	Both	org	org	int	org	org
Open calls?	partly	partly	partly	yes	yes	Yes	partly	no	yes	yes	yes
Open calls since?	1991	1990/2004	2002	1996	1992	2001	2002	2002	1992	1997	1991
Frequency and schedule of the call?	cont	nr	nr	4-5y	1y	2y	nr	nr	1y1)	3y	nr

Abbreviations: **ORP**: Organic research projects; **Cont**: Continuous submission during duration of the programme possible; **nr**: not regularly set calls; **x y**: every x years 1) Up to four times a year

¹ Some Italian projects in 2002 have been financed under the National Research Plan on Organic Farming. In December 2005 Italy adopted a new general Action Plan and a derived Programme, indicating objectives and actions for the whole OF&F sector, but not only research (policy programme).

² „Organic programme“ means that bodies in charge of research set up a specific programme, with sign-posted funding, while the general scheme means that organic research has to compete with other research fields.

³ In UK, Defra uses also other ways to procure research.












2.2 Programme and priority setting: Different levels of formalisation

All countries, except AT IT⁴ and NO, have a specific programme committee (Table 2).

In most countries, programme committees are composed by research users and research providers⁵ (DE, DK, FI, SE, NO) In NO they are composed of research users only, and in FR they are composed by research providers only. In UK, the committee is composed of external experts, research users and research providers.

The methods for priority-setting are described by some countries as an informal consultation process involving mainly research users and in AT, FR, NO, DE also involving research providers. For AT, DE, FR, IT, NL, and SE the consultation process seems to be more formal and comprises a two-step process. DK and SE also mention a congress and a workshop respectively as an important opportunity for dialogue with research users. For CH such a workshop is planned for 2006.

Table 2: Programme and priority setting

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
Organic programme committee?	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes
Members of the programme committee?	-	RU	RU RP	RU	RU	RP	-	RU MI	RU	RU MI	RU RP EXP
Which methods for priority setting?	Cons RU RP	Cons RU	2-step Cons RU RP MI	Cons RU+ WS	Cons RU	Cons RU Input RP	Cons RU MI RP	2-step Cons RU	Cons RU RP MI	2-Step Cons +WS RU	Cons RU RP MI

Abbreviations: **RP**: Research providers; **RU**: Research users **MI**: Ministry; **Cons**: Consultation process involving...; **WS** Workshop

2.3 Open calls: No evaluation criteria specifically for OF&F

The open calls are issued in most countries by the ministries or research councils. Exceptions are DK, FR and SE where the research institutions issue the calls. Most countries give the possibility to submit a shorter pre-proposal or expression of interest and after this has been approved the full proposal can be submitted in a second step. AT, FI and NO use a one-step application procedure. Three countries use both procedures (IT, SE, UK). The evaluation expert

⁴ Italy has a consultant committee on OF&F, asked for advice to define plan and programme on OF&F.

panels are in most cases composed by research providers, research users and staff of the ministries according to the needs of the different projects. CH, FI, NO and UK use external (foreign) peers. Only DK has a permanent evaluation group.












The final decision is taken in most countries by the responsible department of the ministry or research council. Exceptions are FR and SE (DGER and Formas).

Seven countries use a combination of written form and panel discussion for the evaluation process. The duration of the evaluation process differs considerably within a range of 3 weeks (AT, CH, NL) up to 40 weeks (FR). In most countries the proposals may be modified based on the evaluation. However, some countries indicate, that this is only possible for projects which are evaluated positively.

The fact that open calls may sometimes be combined with a more specific procedure including seminars and panel discussions means that in special fields like Organic farming research open calls have some limits. One important limit is that researchers have to learn how to adapt their questions and methods to OF&F, as the research on OF&F seems to be more demanding (renewal of the methods, etc.)

⁵ Research users include farmers, advisors, policy makers, processing industry, distributors, marketing sector, and consumers. Research providers are scientists. Research users and research providers together are defined as stakeholders.

Table 3a: Open Calls

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
Who does issue the open call?	MI	MI	MI	DARCOF	MI	INRA ACTA	MI	-	RCN	For- mas	MI
1 or 2-step application procedure, with/without Expression of Interest (Eoi)?	1	2	2	2	1	2	1+2	-	1	1	1+2
Qualification of evaluation experts?	SC RU MI	SC EX MI	SC RU MI	PE ind	SC MI EX	SC RU	Ex SC	SC	EX RU	EX1) SC	EX SC RU
Who takes final decision?	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	DGER	MI	MI	RCN	For- mas	MI
Evaluation Criteria	See Table 3b										
Evaluation process in written form (w) or as a panel discussion (p)?	w	w	both	w	both	w	both	both	both	both	both
Duration of evaluation? (weeks)	3	3-16	24	12-20	9	40	n.d.	2-4	12-16	16-24	6-10
Can proposal be modified based on evaluation?	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes2)	yes	yes	partly	yes3)	no	Yes

Abbreviations: **MI**: Ministry department; **PC**: Programme Committee **PE**: Permanent evaluation committee; **EX**: External peers; **ind**: independent; **SC**: Scientific experts; **RU**: Research users; **ID**: Industrial experts

- 1) Between 30 to 50 percent of experts are recruited from outside Sweden.
- 2) Only if budget is cut.
- 3) The PC may suggest modifications and provide funding on the basis of recommendations from the evaluators.

Scientific excellence is the only ex-ante evaluation criteria mentioned by all countries. High scores are also reached by criteria like relevance, innovation, specific competence of applicants, project management, and knowledge transfer. Table 3b shows, that no specific organic criteria are being used. This is explicitly mentioned by FI and NO. Only SE points out, that participatory research methodologies are promoted.

This analysis shows that evaluation criteria for organic research are quite close to the ones implemented in general research programmes. This may show that OF&F is on the way to get a global recognition. The fourth criteria (specific competence) is however more linked with the necessity for the researchers to know sufficiently about OF. Innovation appears to be quite important, which means that OF is not defined once for all and has some margin of progress, which makes the research more legitimated. Innovation may also be interpreted as innovation of new food products.

Table 3b: Ex-ante evaluation criteria in ranking order























Criteria	Sum	AT	CH	DE	DK	FI	FR	IT	NL	NO	SE	UK
												
SE: Scientific excellence, adequate methodology	11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
RE: Relevance of the problem for organic farming	9	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
IN: Innovation value	9			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CA: Specific competence of the applicants	7				X		X	X	X	X	X	X
PM: Project management	7	X		X			X	X		X	X	X
KT: Knowledge transfer of the expected results	7	X		X	X			X	X	X		X
SN: Use of scientific networks on national and international level	7	X	X		X	X		X		X		X
AS: Appropriate project size and duration	7	X	X	X	X			X	X			X
CC: Coherence with call objectives overall research strategy	5					X		X	X	X		X
CV: Clearness and verifiability of objectives and results	5			X				X	X	X		X
SO: Contribution of the project to solve the problem	4	X		X		X						X
IO: Input/Output relation	4				X		X	X				X
UR: Urgency of the problem solving	3	X	X					X				
NOC: No specific organic criteria	2					X				X		

Table 3c shows that the evaluation is carried out in eight countries anonymously, that means that the evaluation experts are not known to the applicants (AT, DE, DK, FI, FR, NL, NO and UK). The evaluation experts are usually paid somewhat above 100 Euro per proposal, with the exception of four countries (AT, CH, FR, and NL). To avoid potential conflict of interest, most countries exclude experts with personal interests or at least they have to leave the room when

proposals with potential conflict of interest are being discussed.⁶ In IT and UK experts have to sign a statement, declaring the absence of their personal interests. In CH, potential conflicts are avoided by open discussion and transparency. Feedback to applicants is sent in most countries in form of a written summary of evaluators comments. DK gives feedback on all steps of the evaluation process with the possibility for comments and NO sends a copy of the reviewers form and the conclusion of the programme committee. Co-funding is only required in FI and NO. In IT permanent personnel salary represents a co-financing item by the research institution. In FI “own funding” is required, and this can also be external. However, in most other countries co-funding is encouraged and seen as a sign for the relevance of the project (CH).

Table 3c: Evaluation process

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
Is the evaluation anonymous?	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes1)	no	yes	yes	no	yes
Are the evaluators paid?	no	no	350E day	150E Prop	15E Prop	no	yes2)	no	100E Prop 3)	yes	100E Prop 4)
How to avoid conflicts of interest?	Conf Sel Min 3 Exp	Disc Trans Comp	Excl from disc	Excl as Exp	Excl as Exp	Excl from disc Comp	Excl as Exp	-	Excl as Exp	Excl as Exp/disc	Excl as Exp
Feed-back to applicants?	Sum	Sum	Sum	Detail	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Detail	Sum	Sum
Is matching funding required?	no	no	no	no	often	no	no	no	yes	no	no

Abbreviations: **Prop**: Proposal; **Conf**: Evaluators should treat proposals confidentially; **Sel**: Avoiding conflicts when selecting experts; **Min 3Exp** Minimum 3 experts; **Disc**: Discussion; **Trans**: Transparency in the process; **Comp**: Compromises; **Excl from disc**: Involved evaluators have to leave room when proposal with potential conflict is discussed; **Excl as exp**: Involved experts are excluded as evaluators; **Sum**: Summary of the evaluation; **Detail**: Detailed feed-back

- 1) If experts are associated in monitoring process and/or final ex-post evaluation, anonymity is cancelled.
- 2) Individually according to the amount of proposals and for members of the permanent committee also in relation to the number of meetings.
- 3) Panel members 40 Euro per hour
- 4) Reviewers who are employed in the public service are not paid.












2.4 Reporting and monitoring: Based on annual and final reports

Reporting and Monitoring is very similar in all countries and consists of an annual report and a final report. Only in FI and NO reporting is semi-annual. DE and FR require a scientific collo-

⁶ Concerning the conflicts of interest, we do not deal here with the possible divergence of opinions between the experts and the research users about the relevance of the projects. This kind of question is

quium. DE, FR and NO require publication of the report and other relevant publications (NO) on www.orgprints.org, and summaries on websites of the ministry/research council. Monitoring during project elaboration is taking place in all countries except NO and SE. However, the intensity ranges between more dialogue-based monitoring (AT, CH, DK, UK) to more formalised monitoring concepts with steering groups (FI, NL) and internal and external monitoring (IT).

Table 4: Reporting and monitoring

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
Requirements for Reporting?	AR FR	AR FR	AR FR Coll online	AR FR online	AR FR	AR FR Coll online	AR FR	AR FR	AR FR PS	FR PS	AR FR
Monitoring?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes












Abbreviations: **AR**: Annual report; **FR**: Final report; **Coll**: Scientific Colloquium; **online**: Publication of the FR on www.orgprints.org and other websites; **PS**: Popular science summary

2.5 Ex-post evaluation: Little research user involvement

Some form of ex-post evaluation is taking place in all countries except AT, CH and NO. It is not always clear whether the evaluation is carried out on a project level like in DE, or on a programme level like mid-term evaluation in DK. The criteria are very similar to those used for the ex-ante evaluation, but they are more focussed on the achieved goals and products. The evaluation is carried out by different actors: internal and external experts, steering committees, ministry staff and specialised institutions. Research users are involved in the ex-post evaluation in FI, NL, and SE. In UK scientists, experts, research users and other stakeholders are all involved in the post evaluation at the programme level.

faced by the political decision.

Table 5: Ex-post Evaluation

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
Ex-post Evaluation in place?	no	no1)	yes PjL	yes PrL	yes	yes	yes	yes	no1)	yes	yes
Criteria for ex-post evaluation?	-	-	Goal FR Costs Diss	Goal Costs Publ Prod Self	Self	Goal FR Publ	= ex-ante	= ex-ante	-	Publ Diss	Goals Diss
Who does the ex-post evaluation?	MI	MI	MI	DARCOF	Steer	INRA	PC Exp	PC	Exp	Exp RU	MI RP RU Exp
Are research users involved?	-	-	no	no	yes	no	no	yes		yes	yes












Abbreviations: **PjL**: Evaluation on project level; **PrL**: Evaluation on Programme level; **Goal**: Were planned project goals achieved; **FR**: Final report acceptable; **Costs**: In relation to project results; **Diss**: Dissemination of project results; **Publ**: Scientific publications; = **ex-ante**: same criteria like in ex-ante; **Prod**: other products from the project; **Self**: Self-assessment of the project leader; **MI**: Ministry department; **Steer**: Steering group; **PC**: Programme committee; **Exp**: External experts; **RP**: Research providers; **RU**: Research users

1) Research for organic farming is evaluated occasionally.

2.6 Dissemination: Similar tools in all countries

Dissemination activities are part of the contract in all countries except FR and SE. The required activities for the project can be distinguished in two groups: the first group is requested to publish the results on www.orgprints.org (DE, DK, NO). In the second group, the contractors have to choose the best suited communication tools to deliver the results to research users (CH, NL, NO, FR, IT). As further tools for dissemination, all countries mention similar ones like: conferences, workshops, different types of publications, internet and CD-ROMs. Field-demonstrations are mentioned only by CH and DE. Those tools involve often research users' organisations who may have followed up the work.

Table 6: Dissemination

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
Are dissemination activities part of contract?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Dissemination activities required for the project?	FR APJ	Ind3)	Int 1), 2)	Int 1)	Ind3)	-	Ind3)	Ind3)	Ind3) Int	Int4)	Ind3) Int
Tools for dissemination?	SJ APJ PM Int	Int APJ TL WS FD Conf	Int NL PJ NW Conf FD	Int NL PJ NW Conf FD	SJ APJ WS Conf CD SG	Int WS APJ NW	WS APJ SJ Conf	SJ APJ WS Conf	Int SJ APJ PM WS Conf Pat	Int	Int FR WS Conf SP APJ TL SG PM

Abbreviations: **FR**: Final report; **SJ**: Scientific journal; **APJ**: Agricultural professional journal; **PM**: Public media; **Int**: Internet, mainly www.orgprints.org; **NL**: Newsletter; **TL**: Technical leaflets; **FD**: Field demonstration; **WS**: Workshop; **NW**: Networks; **Conf**: Conferences; **CD**: CD-ROM programmes; **SG**: Steering group as a multiplier; **PM**: Public media (including newspapers, radio, TV for consumer related topics); **Pat**: Patents







- 1) All results need to be published on www.orgprints.org
- 2) Journalistic expertise for further publication is offered by the ministry
- 3) Individual: Each contractor has to choose the suited communication tool to deliver the results to research users
- 4) Centre for sustainable agriculture (CUL) is responsible for communication with research users.







2.7 Gaps: How procedures should be improved

The open question on how procedures should be improved provides a few aspects which are summarized in table 7. AT and IT⁷ wish more external experts for evaluation. DK and DE find the evaluation process very time consuming, whereas FR wants to optimise the priority setting process and FI the dissemination activities. For CH the challenge is to have a transparent process and to keep administration load to a minimum at the same time.

⁷ Especially for those projects particularly oriented to a transnational approach.

Table 7: Gaps: How procedure should be improved

Country/ Summary of remarks	Remarks on improvement on own procedure
 AT More external experts for evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rely to a greater extent on external experts for proposal evaluation ▪ Make full use of the internet based tools for research procurement ▪ Intensify discussions on possibilities and options for improvements in programme development
 CH Stay flexible, keep administration to a minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is important to have transparent and well-structured processes. But there must be possibilities to act fast and flexibly when new tasks or project proposals are coming up. –This is a continuing optimisation process. ▪ FOAG's funding is mainly an institutional funding. Additional research resources are small. This approach leads to a system with a minimum of administration. The goal must be to use the resources for research.
 DE Simplify workflow and administrative issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Splitting of responsibilities between the case decision in the profession at the Office of the FOFS and the compliance at the BMVEL at different levels of the evaluation process is taking a lot of time. ▪ Workflow could be improved by having a timely unlimited program to prevent the work pressure appearing in "waves". Administrative issues could be simplified.
 DK Very time consuming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The major problem is that it is very time consuming
 FI Improve dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dissemination of results should be even better. Evaluation process should include special 'organic' evaluation, too.
 FR Improve priority setting Organic ideology versus pragmatic approach Improve information to research teams Programme should be longer and projects better financed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the priorities set up by the professional organisations should be the outcome of a more general procedure stating the organic farming's development strategy. On this way, the research agenda could be built up on a more clear basis (goals, pathways to go, etc.) ▪ the priorities must reflect a wider range of expectations from different research users. The farmers organisations' views must be completed with the ones from the consumers, the processors, the environmental movements, etc.. ▪ the different generic calls of offer (ADAR, Ministry of research) not exclusively devoted to OF should be encouraged to put the organic theme as a priority ▪ the projects are more and more of systemic kind. This can be improved even more. ▪ The projects are often managed in partnership, but the partners have not enough means to really follow up the project. A significant financial incentive bonus could be paid. ▪ The interest of the teams for organic farming must be enhanced, through a better information ▪ The research program should be longer than 3years, as this duration doesn't allow for long term investment. ▪ Ideally, a research centre (from the DARCOF model), able to coordinate the institutions' programs on OF, is necessary at the national level ▪ Many prioritisation problems come from a lack of development strategy in the Organic sector. Two examples are given on divergence of views are given: protein quantity <i>versus</i> protein quality for bred making and fertilisation in OF with focus on crop rotation vs monitoring mineral element dynamics. As those two thesis are in conflicts, often on ideological basis, the research system is "in between" and has some difficulties to run and take part in the

Country/ Summary of remarks	Remarks on improvement on own procedure
 FR	<p>debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More generally, the “organic ideology” doesn’t make easier the implementation of a sound and pragmatic way to go.
 IT More external experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation and monitoring could be carried out also including experts from different countries in the panel, especially for those projects particularly oriented to a transnational approach, even if carried out at national level.
 NL Improvement is continuous process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are continuously refining and revising our procedures in the light of changes in our needs and in the light of circumstances in the research community.
 NO Too early for conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have lately introduced some new procedures and we need to experience how they work in practice before we know how they may be improved.
 SE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -
 UK Improvement is continuous process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are continuously refining and revising our procedures in the light of changes in our needs and in the light of circumstances in the research community. In general, Defra experience supports the great value of the programme owner (i.e. Defra) maintaining an in-house intelligent customer function in research procurement and funding. This is key to the development and delivery of effective research investments, and healthy interaction with the science base. This involves using internal science teams that are independent of policy to understand the research needs (policy and external needs) and convert these into effective researchable questions, considering the wider science base.

2.8 Specific questions: Important differences between countries

In all countries all or most of the projects are embedded in an organic context.

In DK and FI most of the projects take place in a practical or commercial context, which includes on-farm-research and research in real organic food chains, with active research user involvement. AT, CH, DE and FR consider half of their projects to be in a practical or commercial context. Four countries (IT, NL, NO, SE) see only some of their projects in a practical or commercial context, but in NO the user involvement will increase significantly in coming years. UK procures its own projects that respond to policy needs and are not just commercially driven. UK also uses a grant scheme (LINK) designed to bring academia and industry together and thus funds commercially driven research through this.

The answers and comments regarding the percentage of inter- and multi-disciplinarity show important differences in numbers and understanding.⁸ Whereas SE considers only 10% of their

⁸ **Interdisciplinarity** is defined as a type of academic collaboration in which specialists drawn from two or more academic disciplines work together in pursuit of common goals. There are varying degrees of interdisciplinarity. In **multidisciplinary projects**, researchers from two or more disciplines work together on a common problem, but without altering their disciplinary approaches or developing a common conceptual framework. True interdisciplinarity occurs when researchers from two or more disciplines pool their approaches and modify them so that they are better suited to the problem at hand.

projects to be interdisciplinary, AT, NL and UK consider 100% of their projects to be interdisciplinary. NL and UK both find that all agricultural R&D is multi-disciplinary by its very nature. CH and IT underline that interdisciplinarity is not a goal “per se”. Scientists have to engage those disciplines that are required to answer the actual research questions in the best way. However, several countries have proposals how to stimulate interdisciplinarity: By encouraging participation of social scientists and economists (AT, FI), by continuous confrontation of scientists with needs of research users (DE) and debates on research methodologies (DK) and also by bringing conventional and organic researchers together (FI, CH). See also comments 1-8 in Table 8.












The majority sees its research mainly driven by researchers (DE, FI, DE, IT, NO, SE) whereas AT and DK answer with fifty-fifty. CH, NL and UK see their research mainly as research user driven. UK comments that this question is irrelevant, because its research is driven by Defra and the users’ needs (including scientists) and the resulting research questions.

None of the countries have criteria to make “grass root research” and “scientifically controversial topics” eligible. But in most countries they are eligible, if methodologically sound. AT says that they could be funded with a lot of reservations. UK finds this question irrelevant because all their research uses scientific methods and all researchers are observers.⁹ Participatory R&D is used where appropriate.

In DK “Grass root research” is funded in another programme, which should be initiated and headed by farmers. FR points out, that grass root experiences are sometimes useful to form the correct hypothesis. FR also uses a specific design to deal with scientifically controversial methods called “the Herody method”.

⁹ Defra’s research programme covers all its needs, which includes research needs identified by end users (grass-roots research), including participatory R&D, and also scientifically controversial research where needed.

Table 8: Specific questions

Question	AT 	CH 	DE 	DK 	FI 	FR 	IT 	NL 	NO 	SE 	UK 
Are the projects embedded in an organic context?	All	Most	All	All	Most	All	Most	Most	Most	Half	All
Do projects take place in a practical context?	Half	Half	Half	Most	Most	Half	Some	Some	Some	Some	Some
What's the percentage of inter- and multidisciplinary projects?	100	60	?	80	40	50	90	100	?	10	100
How do you stimulate interdisciplinary?	1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	-	6)	7)	-	8)	7)
Are the driving forces behind the projects research providers (RP) or by research users (RU) ?	50:50	Mainl RU	Mainl RP	50:50	Mainl RP	Mainl RP	RP	RU	Mainl RP	RP	RP RU
Do you have criteria which make "grass root research" eligible?	no	no 8)	no 8)	no9)	no	no10)	no8)	no	no	no	no11)
Do you have criteria which make scientifically controversial topics eligible?	no	no 12)	no 12)	no 12)	no	no 13)	no	no	no 12)	no 12)	yes

- 1) The ministry encourages participation of social scientists and economists.
- 2) Interdisciplinary is not a goal "per se". Scientists have to engage those disciplines in order to answer the research question in the best way.
- 3) Confrontation of scientists with the needs of extension service, farmers, political partners and other research users in seminars, workshops, conferences,
- 4) Through debates on research methodology and what is O F & F
- 5) Bringing together organic and conventional researchers, underpin networking of researchers in biological and social sciences
- 6) Not specific, it is a pre-requirement for project proposals
- 7) Irrelevant question, all agricultural R&D is multi-disciplinary
- 8) No criteria, but "grass root research" is eligible if methodologically sound
- 9) "Grass root research" is funded in an other programme, which should be initiated and headed by farmer
- 10) Grass root experiences are sometimes useful to form the correct hypothesis
- 11) Irrelevant question – the research is driven by the users' need/problem and resulting research question. All our research uses the scientific method and all researchers are observers. Participatory R&D is used where appropriate.
- 12) No criteria, but eligible if methodologically sound
- 13) Specific design for such questions called "Herody method"

3 Summary and conclusions

- Four countries have their organic farming research integrated in a general scheme and have no **specific organic programme**. Specific calls are issued just occasionally. Another important difference between the countries is the **frequency of the calls**. Five partners issue their calls not regularly. The Scandinavian countries and France launch calls regularly. However the frequency varies between once every five years (DK) up to four times a year (NO).
- The description of the **priority setting process** and of the actors involved is very similar in the participating countries. There might be a difference in the level of formality. Some countries describe the process as rather informal, others use a more formal approach (two-steps-consultation).
- At the first sight, there seems to be no big difference on how the countries handle the **organisation of open calls**. With some exceptions, most countries know the possibility to submit a pre-proposal and the evaluation process includes also a panel discussion. However there is an important difference about the duration of the evaluation, which lasts between 3 and 40 weeks. This indicates that there might be more differences in the organisation of the open calls, than it appears from this survey. This shows that research on OF&F currently is becoming a field where the rules are close to the general ones. This contributes to legitimate the research on OF&F.
- The most frequently named **criteria** is scientific excellence. Furthermore specific competence of the applicants as well as relevance and innovation for organic farming are important criteria for the ex-ante evaluation. None of the partners uses specific criteria for organic farming or suggests criteria that could be used. Also nobody expresses the need to enlarge the set of criteria specifically suited to evaluate organic farming projects.
- The countries deal differently with anonymity and payment of the **evaluators**. Potential conflicts are avoided in different manner ranging from open discussion to the exclusion of experts. Matching funding is requested by some partners and is regarded by most partners as positive.
- The requirements of **reporting and monitoring** are similar in all countries.
- The **ex-post evaluation** follows basically the same criteria as the ex-ante evaluation.
- **Dissemination activities** are part of the contract in nearly all countries. Publishing in Organic Eprints is compulsory for some countries, whereas others leave it to their researchers to choose adequate dissemination tools.
- Participants make only a few suggestions on how to **improve the procedure**: simplify workflow, to minimise administration load and to have more external experts are the most important aspects. Developing specific criteria for the evaluation process are not mentioned. UK suggests to reinforce the internal expertise of the programme owner, i.e. to develop an internal intelligent customer function.
- The opinion on whether and how to **stimulate inter-disciplinarity** is controversial. Some participants see all agricultural research as multi-disciplinary, whereas others stimulate it through methodological debates and encourage the inclusion of social scientists. None of the countries uses explicitly criteria which makes grass-root research and scientifically controversial methods eligible. However, nearly all say that such research may be accepted if methodologically sound.