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[home](#)[country reports](#)[address database](#)[europe & eu](#)Research Institute of  
Organic Agriculture[search](#)

[Albania](#)  
[Austria](#)  
[Belgium](#)  
[Cyprus](#)  
[Czech Republic](#)  
[Denmark](#)  
[Estonia](#)  
[Finland](#)  
[France](#)  
[Germany](#)  
[Great Britain](#)  
[Greece](#)  
[Hungary](#)  
[Iceland](#)  
[Ireland](#)  
[Italy](#)  
[Latvia](#)  
[Liechtenstein](#)  
[Luxemburg](#)  
[Macedonia, FYROM](#)  
[Montenegro](#)  
[Netherlands](#)  
[Norway](#)  
[Poland](#)  
[Portugal](#)  
[Slovenia](#)  
[Slovakia](#)  
[Spain](#)  
[Sweden](#)  
[Switzerland](#)  
[Turkey](#)  
[Ukraine](#)

**Further info on  
organic farming  
in Latvia**



[General Country  
Information about Latvia  
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Homepage](#)

## Organic Farming in Latvia 2005

**Livija Zarina**

*Update of October 25, 2006 (not incorporated into the text below):  
According to the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture the number of organic farms continued to grow in 2005 and compared to 2004 the figure has doubled. At the end of 2005 in Latvia there were 2873 certified organic farms with 104'235 hectares (around 43'000 in 2004). Growth of organic agricultural land has been fostered by the support provided under the „AgriEnvironment” programme within the Rural Development Plan. Further information on the current situation of organic farming is documented in the [annual report on rural development in Latvia](#) by the Ministry of Agriculture (page 115).*

**Although there is an increased consumer awareness of food safety issues in Latvia, and a general societal consensus that agricultural production should be in balance with the ecosystem as a whole, there are important problems related to the development of the organic sector: processing and marketing are poorly developed; there is a lack of certified organic seed, and the levels of research, education and knowledge among farmers and consumers are low. Recently, however, there has been a major increase in the number of organic farms, mainly due to increased state support, including an action plan for organic farming.**

### 1 Current Statistics and Production Structure

In Latvia, organic farming started in 1989. An inspection system according to EU Regulation 2092/91 has been in force since 2001.

Since then, organic farming has been growing substantially, supported by direct payments. In 2003 an action plan was launched which has stimulated farmers' interest in converting to the organic system.

In 2004 the number of organic farms was as high as 1043 (ca. 1% of farms), and the organically cultivated area was 43'982 hectares (ca. 2% of agricultural land). This means that the area of organic farmland almost doubled between 2003 and 2004.

The size of an organic farm ranges between 1.5 and 595 hectares, the average farm size being around 40 hectares. 48% of certified farms fall within the range of 20 to 100 hectares, while 44% of farms have less than 20 hectares of land.

The main production areas are crop production, including cereals and vegetables, and dairy farming. Cereal farms specialise in rye and wheat for bread baking, while oats and barley are produced for fodder, thus securing the domestic demand for organic feedstuffs. In total 5002.8 tons of organic cereals were produced in 2004 (Klavinska, 2005).

[1 Current Statistics and  
Production Structure](#)

[2 Processing](#)

[3 Organic Farming  
Organisations](#)

[4 Training & Advice](#)

[5 Training at the Latvia  
University of Agriculture](#)

[6 Market](#)

[7 State Support for  
Organic Farming](#)

[8 Action Plan for Organic  
Farming](#)

[9 References](#)

[10 Author](#)

[11 Links](#)

[top of page](#)

Consumer demand is highest for vegetables and fruit. Here the main crops are potatoes, onions, carrots and beet and, in terms of early vegetables from greenhouses, cucumbers, tomatoes and sweet peppers. The main types of livestock are dairy cows, beef, pigs and poultry. Different types of honey, pollen and beeswax products are also popular.

[top of page](#)

## 2 Processing

In Latvia there are only eight certified processing enterprises: two slaughterhouses, three bakeries, two milk processors and one honey producer.

[top of page](#)

## 3 Organic Farming Organisations



The organic sector is represented by the Association of Latvian Organic Agriculture Organisations (ALOAO), founded on April 7, 1995. It is a professional organisation for organic producers, as well as being open to other supporters of the organic movement.

It cooperates with the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment and specialists from other ministries and organisations, and with the media. In collaboration with scientists and educational specialists, research is conducted on methods used in organic agriculture. Further activities include the promotion of organic farming methods, the establishment of demonstration and training farms and the organisation of seminars and conferences.

[top of page](#)

## 4 Training & Advice

A training programme for raising professional skills in organic agriculture is offered by the Latvian Agricultural Advisory and Training Centre. The aim of the programme is to inform participants about the organic system, legislation and the state support policies in organic agriculture. The course gives basic knowledge on the following themes: use of organic fertiliser, crop rotation peculiarities in organic agriculture, prevention of diseases, pest and weed control, livestock production, soil tillage system, farm mechanisation, use of farmyard manure.

In the course of teaching, farmers have the opportunity to meet the teaching staff of the Latvia University of Agriculture, and extension workers from the Latvian Agricultural Advisory and Training Centre and the Association of Latvian Organic Agriculture Organisations.

[top of page](#)

Successful fulfilment of the programme requirements results in a state-approved certificate, which is evidence of the enhanced professional qualification obtained. In the process of training, a significant level of information-exchange goes on between researchers and extension workers. Completion of the study course leads to the right to receive subsidies.

The Latvian Agricultural Advisory and Training Centre has several experts that provide advice on organic farming. A list of these experts is available at the [internet site of the Latvian Organic Farmers Association](#).

## 5 Training at the Latvia University of Agriculture

The Faculty of Agriculture of the Latvia University of Agriculture offers a professional study course in "Organic agriculture", including theory and practical training in Latvia or abroad. Completion of the course results in a certificate attesting that all theoretical and practical aspects of organic farming have been mastered.

[top of page](#)

## 6 Market

The main export products are plant products. The majority of organic products are, however, sold on the domestic market at prices that are not much higher than those for conventional products (Rippin 2005).

## 7 State Support for Organic Farming

To develop organic farming, several support systems and development programmes exist:

[top of page](#)

According to the rural development plan organic farms receive a support of 82 Euros per ha. For farms in conversion the support is 139 Euro per ha. In 2004 996 farmers received support with a total amount of 6'959'306 Euros.

Farms that developed and implemented projects for the production, pre-processing, processing and marketing of organic products received support from the state subsidy programme, totalling 242'136 Euro. Furthermore support under the rural development plan for organic farming includes an action plan for organic farming.

## 8 Action Plan for Organic Farming

To promote organic farming, the action plan for organic farming was prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture for the period 2003 to 2006. This programme defines the main targets and tasks of organic farming:

- To increase the area of organic farmland to 3% (= 56,000 hectares) by 2006
- To stimulate the diversity of organic farming products within 8 product groups (cereals, milk, meat, eggs, vegetables, food supplements, honey) and to raise the total sales volume to 2% of total agricultural production sold on the domestic market;
- To ensure that in 2006, 10% of the consumers regularly purchase organic farming products;
- To improve the certification system and to have it accredited;
- To create a system of education, research and consultation in organic farming;

## 9 References

- Agriculture and Rural Area of Latvia (2004) Ministry of Agriculture Republic of Latvia
- Klavinska, I. (2005) Surveillance results of organic and

conventional food in Latvia. Food and Veterinary Service.

- Rippin, Markus (2005): Lettland: 80 Prozent Flächenwachstum in 2004 [Latvia: 80 percent increase in organic farmland in 2004]. Download of October 7, 2005.
- Homepage [www.ekoprodukti.lv](http://www.ekoprodukti.lv)

## 10 Author

- Livija Zarina, Priekuli Plant Breeding Station

## Links

- Latvijas Republikas Zemkopības ministrija / Ministry of Agriculture Republic of Latvia: Latvijas lauksaimniecība un lauki / Agriculture and Rural Area of Latvia 2006, page 115
- Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Latvia: Latvijas lauksaimniecība un lauki / Agriculture and Rural Area of Latvia. Section on Organic Farming page 101. 2005

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Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL  
Ackerstrasse, CH-5070 Frick  
Tel: +41 62 865 72 72 Fax +41 62 865 72 73  
Internet <http://www.fibl.org>  
Contact: Helga Willer