

THE SITUATION OF ORGANIC FARMING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND HUNGARY – GENERAL SITUATION

On March 25, 2021, the European Commission issued the Organic Farming Action Plan, which fits into the EU's sustainable agricultural strategy. Among other things, the plan includes the guidelines and specific measures necessary for the organic transition of 25% of the agricultural areas of the European Union (by 2030), as well as for the further expansion of the supply and demand market for organic products. The Commission allocated a budget of 49 million Euros from the tender sources for the financing of agricultural promotion campaigns to promote organic farming and to further boost the growing demand for organic products. The procurement of organic products is one of the basic conditions of sustainable public procurement processes. At least 30% of the budget of the Horizon Europe research framework program aimed at agriculture, forestry and the development of rural areas is devoted to topics that also affect ecological farming. Furthermore, a study is being prepared on the real pricing of food, which also takes into account the costs of negative environmental effects, and the role of taxation in the sustainable agricultural transition. In order to monitor progress and reward good practices, the EU organizes an annual 'Ecology Day' for sector actors to monitor the performance of the action plan.

In 2020, there were a total of 14,725,051 ha of ecological and ecological areas under transition in the territory of the 27 countries of the European Union. The largest ecoregions are located in Spain (2,437,891 ha), France (2,517,478 ha), Italy (2,095,364 ha) and Germany (1,590,962 ha) (Figure 1).

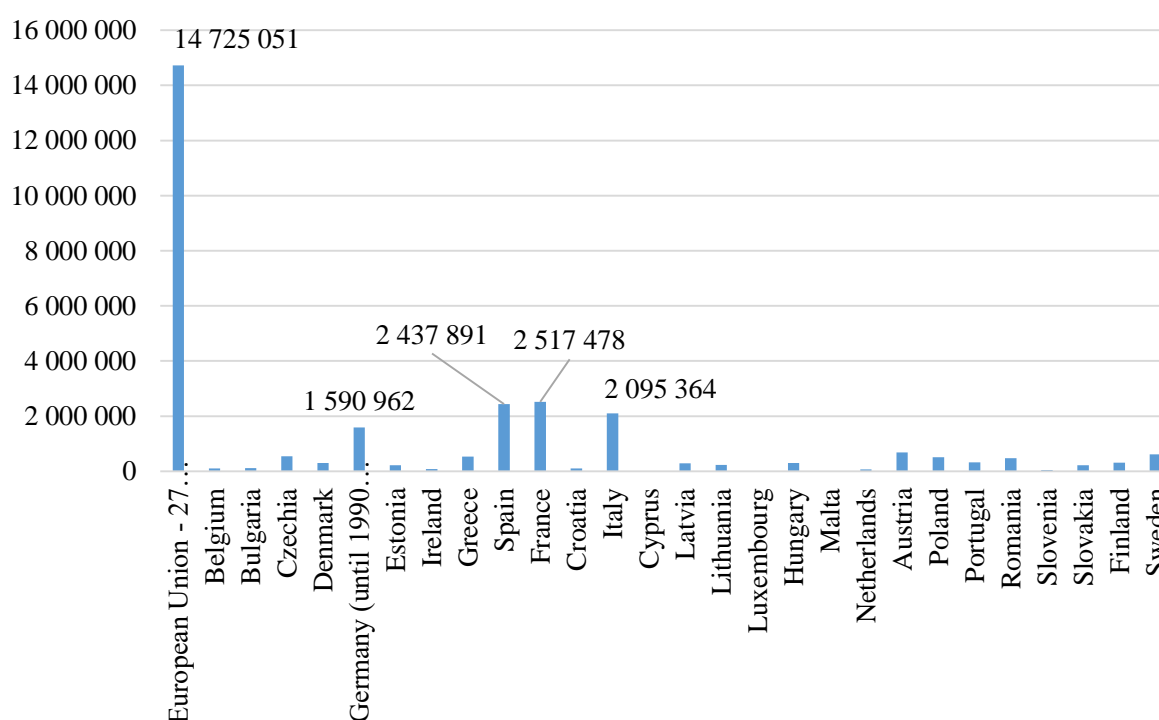


Figure 1.: The size of the areas involved in organic farming in the European Union and in the member states (ha)

Source: Eurostat (online data code: org_cropar), 2022

In Hungary, the production volume of organic farming did not change significantly between 2005 and 2014. The number of producers engaged in organic farming was between 1,429 and 1,672, and the size of agricultural land involved in organic farming varied between 116 and 141 thousand hectares. The National Action Plan for the Development of Organic Farming, published in January 2014, recorded the most important actions and subsidies for the development of domestic organic farming until 2020 in 6 action programs. Within the Rural Development Program adopted for the 2014-2020 EU budget period, the tenders for the transition to organic farming and the maintenance of organic farming (closed in the meantime) contributed to the realization of the objectives of the action plan and to the rapid growth of the production volume of organic farming.

In our country, between 2015 and 2019, more than twice as many people became involved in organic agricultural production than in previous years combined. In 2019, 2.6 times more than in 2015, a total of 5,136 producers engaged in organic farming. Despite the growing popularity of organic farming, it affects a narrow group of producers. Based on the 2016 farm structure census, only 0.8% of the 431,000 farms engaged in agricultural production switched to organic farming.

As a result of the support framework increased from 2014, the size of the agricultural area involved in organic farming increased by 2-3 times (by 173 thousand hectares) between 2015 and 2019 (Figure 2). As a result, at the end of the decade, 5.7% of all agricultural land, 303,000 hectares, was under organic farming. In 2019, 61% of the total area was transitioned in a controlled manner, 39% was transition area. In the latter, the regulations for organic farming must be observed, but the crops here are not yet considered organic farming.

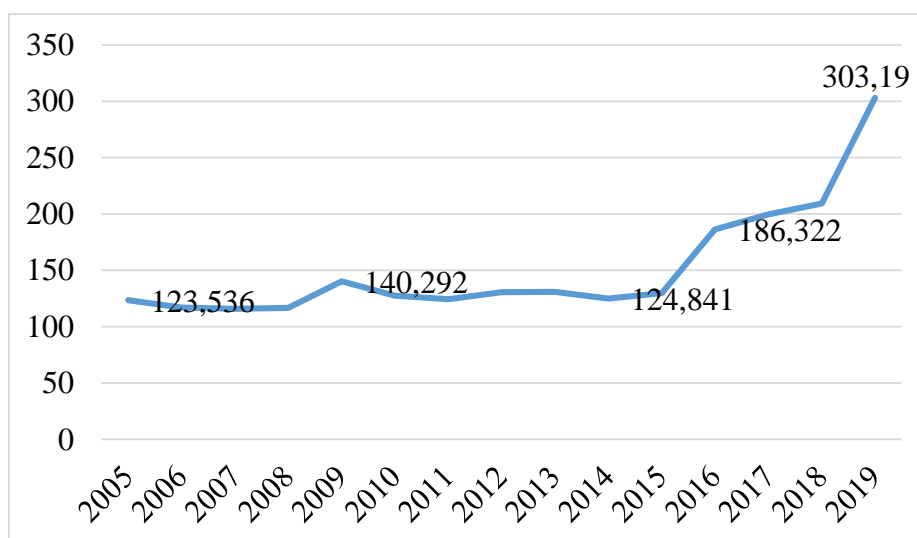


Figure 2.: The size of the areas involved in organic farming in Hungary (thousand ha)

Source: Central Statistical Office

From the point of view of disbursement of subsidies, the length of the transition period is maximum 2 years for arable and lawn areas, and 3 years for plantations.

Since 2005, the size of meadows and pastures, which make up 61% of the ecological areas, has increased to a greater extent than the the average (by 2.8 times). Their share has increased from

the previous 54 to 61%. The area ratio of arable crops decreased by 10% to 32% due to the more moderate growth (1.9 times). Among the latter, the occurrence of cereals (42%) and industrial crops (14%) has decreased since 2005, primarily in favor of green fodder, which occupied 34% of the arable land in 2019. Despite the significant expansion (5.6 times), fruit plantations covered only 4.8% of the ecological areas.

The number of main animal species kept in organic farming fluctuated between 2008 and 2018. However, in 2019, there was a significant increase in the number of all animal species, approaching the highest values so far. Despite this, their share within the total herd remained low, 3.0% of cattle, 1.1% of sheep, 0.3% of poultry, and only 0.2% of pigs were cared for organically (KSH).

CAPTIVATE project, funded under the Erasmus+ program of the European Union, is dedicated to knowledge transfer and vocational training of farmers and agricultural advisors related to the current EU strategic lines, such as the Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy and Organic Action Plan. One of the CAPTIVATE's main objectives is that farmers better understand conditionality, eco-scheme and rural development regulations, they choose and participate in the certain schemes with more responsibility and awareness, carrying out the new CAP measures more effectively.

The article primarily provides farmers and consultants with basic information about the current situation of organic farming. Within the framework of the CAPTIVATE program, it provides information on the topic of sustainable and organic farming.

References

<https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/stattukor/okogazd/index.html#abiogazdlkodshelyzetemagy arorszgon>

Eurostat (online data code: org_cropar), 2022



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