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THE ORGANIC SECTOR IN DENMARK - THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

DENMARK IS A COUNTRY with high ambitions for organic production. We were the first country in the world to introduce organic farming legislation; the first country in the world to develop national organic standards; the first country in the world to launch an organic label. We were also the first country in the world to introduce a target for 60 per cent organic products in public sector kitchens.

Our ambitious organic efforts have resulted in Denmark being one of the world's leading organic nations. We're proud to have an organic sector centred around skilled and innovative organic farmers and food companies who, every day, produce quality organic food for consumers across the world.

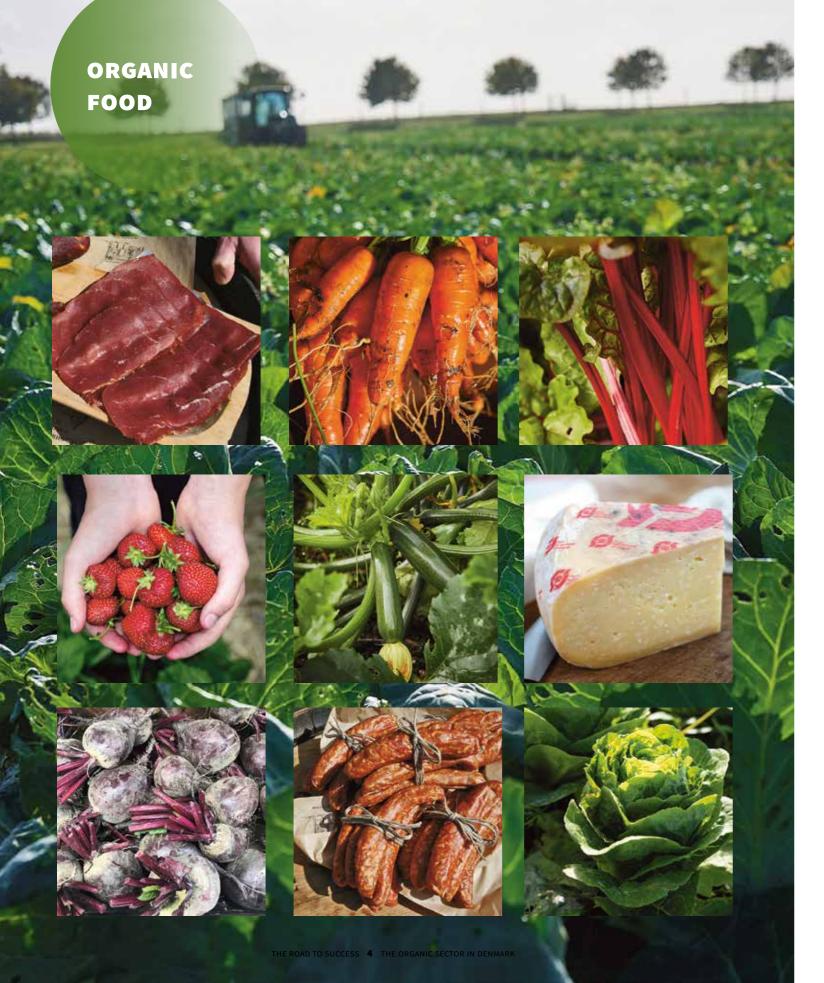
This publication examines the growth of the organic sector and the conditions that have made Danish organic food into the success it is today. It also describes the many strengths that characterise Denmark's organic sector – from farm to fork – and which constitute the recipe for its success. Success that builds on the achievements of Danish agriculture, transforming Denmark into a renowned and respected food nation that supplies high-quality food products to consumers

around the world. Products that are known for their high standards in food safety, traceability, quality and sustainability.

Collaboration underpins the success of organic production. Collaboration that has continued for no less than 35 years across the entire value chain and involves farmers, companies, organisations, official bodies, advisers and researchers, politicians, the retail and food service sectors as well as consumers. They have all contributed to advancing the market-driven development of organic production – a type of production that takes account of the environment, nature and biodiversity, animal welfare, the climate and sustainability, as demanded by increasing numbers of consumers.

We invite you to use this publication as a reference for topics of interest to you or read it page by page and gain an insight into the organic road to success. This is the story about how organic food has become one of the Danish food cluster's strengths in a world that is increasingly demanding sustainable food.

Danish Agriculture & Food Council July 2025



ORGANIC FOOD – WHAT LIES BEHIND THE ORGANIC LABEL?

Organic farming is about creating sustainable agricultural and food production, where special consideration is given to the environment, nature, the climate and animal welfare.

ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTION strives for a high degree of sustainability with particular focus on the environment, nature and animal welfare. Cultivation is carried out in harmony with the surrounding environment to minimise impact and protect habitats for wild plants and animals. Cycles, balance, diversity and working with nature are the fundamental principles of organic farming. Organic farming is also firmly focused on producing in an even more climate-friendly and sustainable way to support a balanced planet. Organic practice is founded upon a precautionary approach as nature's complexity makes it difficult to predict the consequences of human intervention. Four fundamental principles lie at the basis of the regulations and procedures applied on farms and in companies.

EU'S DEFINITION OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Organic production is an overall system of farm management and food production that combines best environmental and climate practice, a high degree of diversity, the preservation of natural resources and the application of high animal welfare and production standards in accordance with the growing demand from consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes. Consequently, organic production plays a dual role in society. On the one hand, it supplies a specific market that meets consumer demand for organic products and on the other, provides public goods that contribute to the protection of the environment, animal welfare and rural development. Source: EU Commission

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ORGANIC SECTOR

HEALTH

of the soil, plants, animals, people and the planet.

- No use of chemical pesticides
- Restrictive requirements for the use of medication
- Only natural additives.

CYCLES

Living ecological systems and natural cycles.

- Recirculation of nutrients
- Use of livestock manure
- No artificial fertiliser.

FAIRNESS

For people and animals - now and in the future.

 Livestock must have conditions and opportunities for a life that accords with their physiology and natural behaviour and ensures their well-being.

CAUTION

Look after the environment and protect the health and well-being of current and future generations.

- Avoid any risky input into production
- Avoid technologies with unpredictable consequences, e.g. genetic engineering.

Source: IFOAM

ORGANIC PRODUCTION – A CONTRIBUTION TO A BALANCED PLANET

Organic food is produced with respect for the climate, biodiversity, the water environment and animal welfare. Consequently, there so many good reasons for choosing organic food.

• Organic food is produced without the use of chemical pesticides and with less nitrogen. This makes organic food the sensible choice if you want to help safeguard clean drinking water and a healthy water environment.

THE PLANET IS UNDER PRESSURE

Six of the planet's nine planetary boundaries have already been exceeded. This applies to climate change, loss of biodiversity, land use, nitrogen and phosphorus consumption, chemical pollution, and the use of our freshwater resources. Food production is one of many human activities that puts pressure on the planet's resources.

Food needs to be produced for the world's eight billion people. But it needs to be done with care. This is where organic food production comes into play as a means of producing food with respect for nature, climate, biodiversity, animal welfare, and clean drinking water.

There are so many good reasons for choosing organic food - especially when it comes to reducing the climate footprint of what we eat.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION AND CLIMATE FOOTPRINT

Calculating the climate footprint of food is complex as it involves biological processes. For example, various factors need to be taken into account when calculating the climate footprint of one kilo of bread or one litre of milk. A scientific study* from Aarhus University shows that the climate footprint of organically and conventionally produced food is more or less the same when measured per kilogram of food produced. When calculating the climate impact per hectare, however, organic food generally has a lower climate footprint.

* Knowledge synthesis on life cycle assessments and climate efficiency in the agricultural sector, Aarhus University, February 2022.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION TO THE UN'S SUSTAINABLE **DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Organic production contributes to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals across a wide range of areas, including climate, nature, biodiversity, and the water environment.





8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

























CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION

SOIL CULTIVATION

NO USE OF FERTILISERS AND CHEMICAL PESTICIDES

Organic food is grown without using chemical pesticides and fertilisers. Production of these additives emits many greenhouse gases. The absence of chemical pesticides also helps to protect the soil's beneficial microorganisms and insects.

A HEALTHY AND FERTILE SOIL

Organic farming is all about preserving and improving the fertility of the soil. This is done by adding organic fertiliser, by planting perennial crops, by ensuring a diverse crop rotation, many catch crops and, ideally, green fields all year round. All of which helps to bind carbon in the soil.

SMALLER AMOUNTS OF FERTILISER

Organic farmers use smaller amounts of nitrogen fertiliser, and the fertiliser must be organic. This contributes to reduced emissions of nitrous oxide from the fields. Organic farmers also have many clover meadows that provide fertiliser for next year's crops. The reduced nitrogen consumption helps to reduce the discharge of excess nitrogen into the water environment.

FOCUS ON ANIMAL WELFARE

Organic animals should live a life that accords with their physiology and natural behaviour. In practice, this means that animals must have access to outdoor areas – pastures, chicken runs or, at the very least, an outdoor enclosure. Housing units must have ample space and plenty of straw. The animals must be fed organic feed and roughage daily. Certain interventions are not permitted, such as tail docking pigs. Hormones and other means to control the animals' reproduction are prohibited. Sick animals must always be treated, but there are stringent rules for the use of medicine. Veterinary medicines must not be used preventively, which requires extra attention to how the animals are cared for.

MORE BIODIVERSITY

The way in which organic farmers cultivate their land has a positive impact on nature and biodiversity. This is due, among other things, to organic cultivation practices, i.e. no use of chemical pesticides and artificial fertilisers, carbon-sequestering crops in crop rotation, the use of perennial crops such as clover grass and a diverse crop rotation. Among the organisms that benefit from the organic farming method are soil animals and microorganisms, pollinating insects and natural enemies of harmful insects and diseases.

Organic farms contain an average of 30 per cent more wild plant and animal species in the fields and nearby habitats.

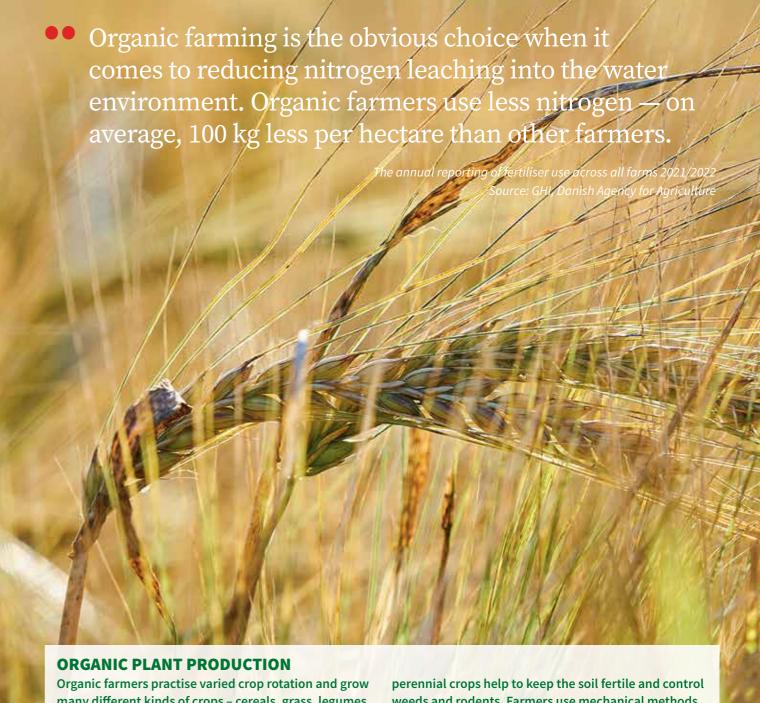
Source: Icrofs, 2015

PROCESSING OF ORGANIC RAW MATERIALS

Organic food is produced without the use of artificial flavouring, colouring and sweeteners. Processing must be as gentle as possible, and irradiation of food is not permitted. Companies that process organic food are inspected at least once a year. 55 out of 410 approved additives are permitted for use in organic food processing.

GMO-FREE PRODUCTION

The use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is not permitted in the cultivation or processing of organic food.



Organic farmers practise varied crop rotation and grow many different kinds of crops – cereals, grass, legumes, seeds and various fruit and vegetables. Some are grown for human consumption, others for feeding organically produced animals. Chemical pesticides and artificial fertilisers are not allowed. Recycled organic material, such as crop residues and livestock manure, are used as fertiliser and farmers also cultivate nitrogen-fixing crops such as clover grass, which can absorb nitrogen from the air. A varied crop rotation with a minimum of 50 per cent crops that build up carbon, and many

perennial crops help to keep the soil fertile and control weeds and rodents. Farmers use mechanical methods and modern technology, such as camera-controlled weeding robots, to combat weeds. Focus is on minimising mechanical soil cultivation in order to protect the soil's microbial life. The overall aim is to create a healthy and fertile soil for crops while protecting the water environment, biodiversity and natural resources. A farm must undergo a two-year conversion period before its products can be sold as organic.



• More organic cattle farmers are experimenting with keeping cows and calves together for three months.

ORGANIC BEEF AND MILK PRODUCTION

In organic livestock farming, it is crucial that animals are able to express their natural behaviour. Organic cattle must have access to pasture from 15th April to 1st November - when weather permits. During the winter, the animals must have access to a housing system that provides freedom of movement. Feed must be organic and most of it must be in the form of roughage and typically come from the farm's own fields. When the cow has calved, she must remain with her calf for at least 24 hours after birth. A calf must not be housed alone and must be given the opportunity to satisfy its need to suckle for at least three months. This is why calves are provided with a sucking bucket or a mounted teat in the calf pen. If an organic sick cow is treated with medicine, there are rigorous requirements for the withdrawal period (the period when the milk may not be sold to the dairy). The length of the withdrawal period depends on the type of medicine prescribed. In Denmark, the use of antibiotics critical for human health is not permitted and the use of broad-spectrum antibiotics must be limited as much as possible and may only be given based on a veterinary assessment.

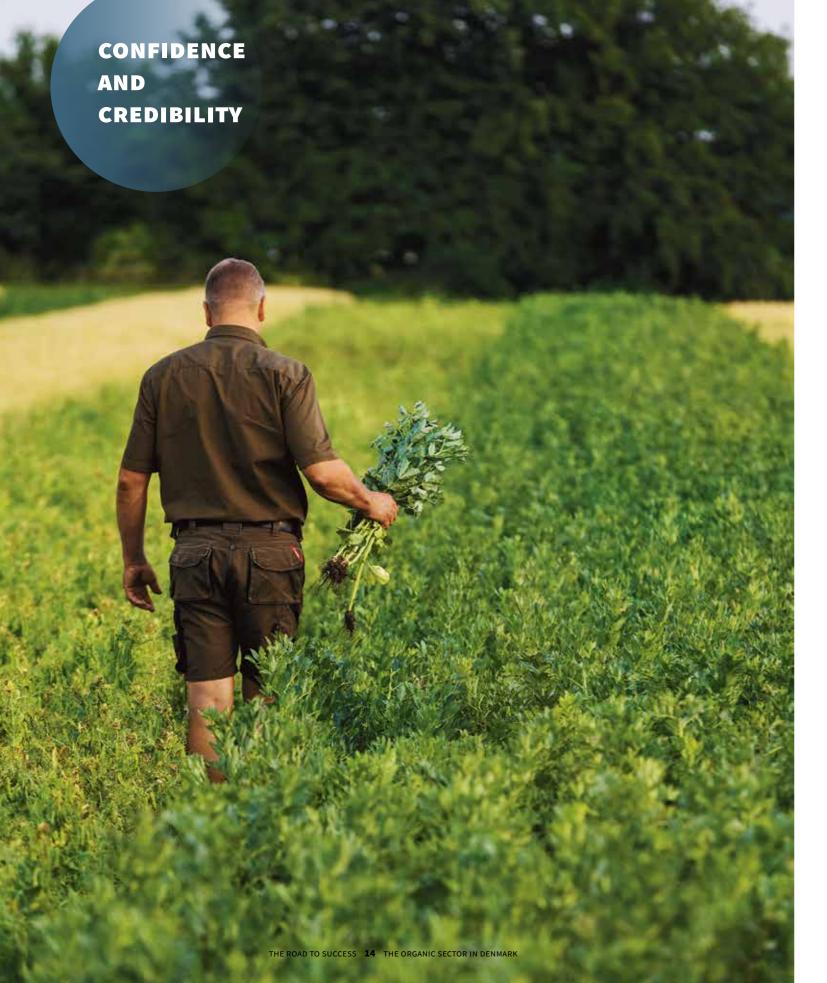
Organic pigs are born **ORGANIC PIG PRODUCTION** outdoors in huts In Denmark, organic sows farrow in huts in the field. The on the field. sow builds a nest made from straw and remains with her piglets until they are at least seven weeks old. Many producers allow the piglets to remain with the sow for even longer (8-10 weeks). In summer, sows must have access to wallows where they can roll in the mud to cool themselves. Mud also protects their skin against the sun's rays. When the piglets are weaned, they are transferred to housing units where they have plenty of space, ample straw and access to an outdoor run. Organic finishers must have more than three times as much space in their pens as the legislation requires. The pigs must have organic feed*, including roughage, which is good for their digestion and keeps them occupied. If an organic pig has been treated with medicine more than once, it cannot be sold as organic. Tail docking and teeth clipping are not allowed in organic production, but piglets are allowed to be castrated using anaesthetic and pain relief. Castration is performed to prevent entire males from developing substances that impair the taste of the meat. *Pigs must have organic feed. However, piglets may have up to 5% non-organic protein feed until 2027.





PROCESSING OF ORGANIC FOOD

The organic way of thinking follows the raw materials from farm to processing. The organic principles - health, cycles, fairness and caution - reflect the rules for processing organic food. Processing organic products involves the minimum of additives - only 55 of the 410 permitted additives listed by the EU are allowed in the processing of organic food. Synthetic flavourings, colourings, sweeteners, GMOs and irradiation are not permitted. Danish organic production does not allow the use of nitrite. Organic food must be treated as gently as possible in order to obtain a natural and healthy product.



CONFIDENCE AND CREDIBILITY CREATED THROUGH REGULATIONS AND SUPERVISION

Consumers across the world have great confidence in Danish organic food. This is largely attributable to the many rules and regulations that govern all aspects of our food production, and which are monitored by meticulous government control.

FOR MANY YEARS, DENMARK has been one of the world's leading food nations and strongly focused on food safety and traceability. For decades, the main priority has been on the production of healthy and safe food for Danish and foreign consumers.

WORLD'S FIRST ORGANIC LEGISLATION

Denmark introduced organic legislation in 1987 and was therefore the first country in the world to introduce regulations for organic production. These regulations build on general Danish agricultural and food legislation. This means that, in addition to complying with organic regulations, organic farmers and food companies also comply with all other rules and regulations that govern the environment, nature, animal welfare, traceability, hygiene, food safety, etc. in food production. Today, Danish organic food is produced in accordance with the EU's organic regulations. In addition, Denmark has a number of stringent conditions that exceed the EU's regulations. It is not permitted, for example, to use copper in organic fruit growing. Nor is it permitted to use nitrite in the processing of organic products. Moreover, we require significantly more planting at organic chicken farms than stipulated under EU regulations.

ORGANIC CONTROL FROM FARM TO FORK

Denmark was also the first country in the world to establish government organic control. This was in 1987 and remains the consumers' guarantee that all stakeholders from farm to fork comply with organic regulations. Government inspectors from the Ministry of Food, Agriculture & Fisheries check that organic production is conducted in

accordance with the regulations. Government inspectors carry out inspections at all organic farms, supply companies and food companies at least once a year to ensure that all organic rules are complied with. In addition to annual inspections, a number of farms and companies are selected on an annual basis for an additional unannounced inspection. Random cross-checks are also carried out at food companies. These ensure that the company's own information with the regard to the purchase of organic raw materials is consistent with the suppliers' reports on how much they have sold to the company in question. The effective control from farm to fork helps to safeguard the credibility of organic production and ensures consumer confidence in organic products.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Organic food production is not of a static size. In Denmark, the organic sector is focused on consistently developing and improving organic production. Organic organisations have therefore put together a range of recommendations for organic cattle and pig production that exceed EU regulations. This is because the organic sector seeks to ensure the ongoing dynamic development of organic production with a view to raising standards within welfare, nature, the environment and the climate as well as the ethics of organic production.

Random checks are a means whereby the authorities or recipient companies can check that farmers who produce in accordance with the regulations also comply with them.

LABELLING – THE CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO ORGANIC FOOD

In the EU, unified organic standards have been established through regulations. The EU's organic regulations form the basis for the production and processing of organic food throughout the EU. The regulations set out detailed provisions for the production, processing, import, labelling and marketing of organic food. Under EU regulations, it is mandatory for the EU organic label to be placed on pre-packaged organic products produced in EU countries. The EU's organic logo may be accompanied by national or own-label organic logos. Processed products, which contain more than 95 per cent of organic ingredients, can be labelled organic and make reference to organic farming in their marketing. Products that bear any reference to organic farming always include the identification number of the body that has inspected the product.

EU'S ORGANIC LOGO AND THE DANISH ORGANIC LABEL

Organic products in Denmark are labelled with both the EU's organic logo and the Danish organic label (the Ø label). The Ø label was introduced in 1990 and indicates that the organic product was grown and processed according to the organic regulations and that the product is controlled by the Danish state. Foreign products can thus carry the red Ø label if the Danish authorities have inspected the product. Almost all Danish consumers (98 per cent) are familiar with the Ø label. Both the Ø label and EU's organic logo provide the basis for maintaining confidence in organic production. The labels make it easy for consumers to identify organic products in stores.



In Denmark, organic food is easily identified by the red Ø label. The Ø label indicates that the Danish authorities have ensured compliance with organic regulations throughout the entire food chain – from farm to fork. Some 98 per cent of Danes are familiar with the Ø label and have great confidence in it. In 2025, the Ø label celebrated its 35th anniversary.



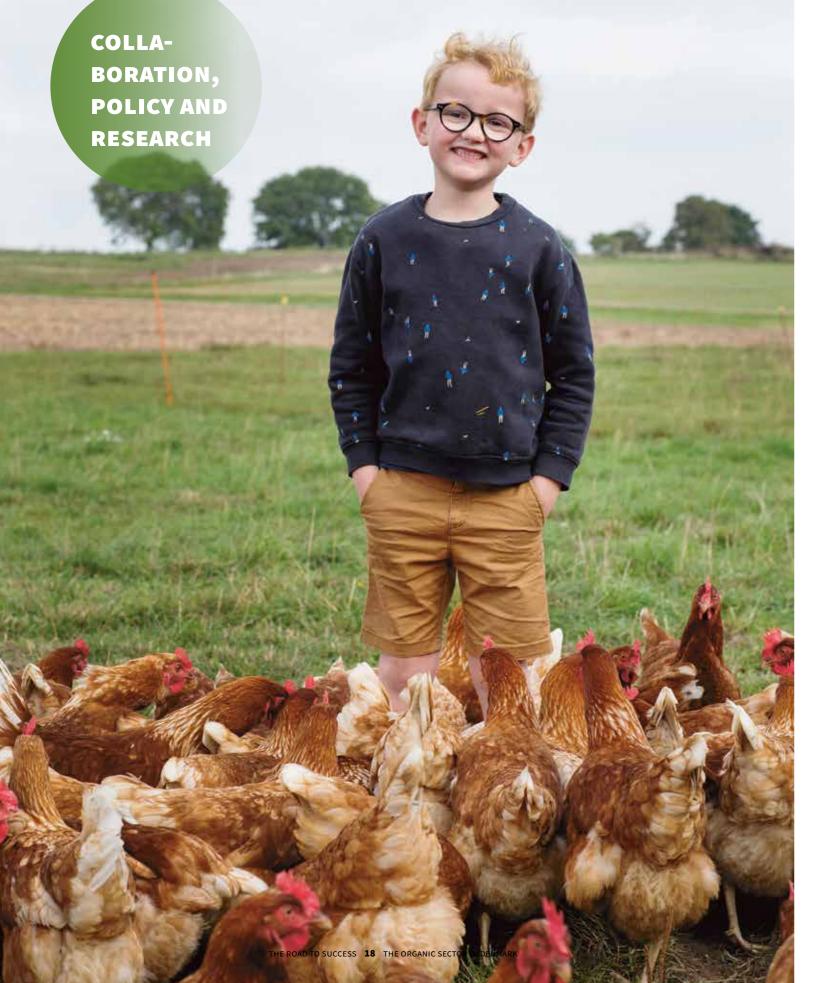
DK-ØKO-100¹ EU Agriculture²

UNDERSTANDING THE EU'S ORGANIC LOGO

The EU's organic label is always followed by two lines:

- 1) An identification number denoting the national authority/certification body controlling the organic status of the goods, e.g. DK- ØKO-100 for Denmark or ES-ECO-020-CV for Spain.
- 2) The origin of the organic products:
- EU agriculture the product has been grown in EU countries.
- Non-EU agriculture the raw material has been grown in third countries – outside the EU.
- EU/Non-EU agriculture: Some of the raw materials have been grown in EU countries and some outside the EU.





THE ROAD TO SUCCESS – COLLABORATION, POLICY AND RESEARCH

The story behind Denmark's success in organic production is a story of longstanding and strong collaboration between stakeholders across the entire value chain. Market development, strong visionary organic policies and research into organic production have paved the way for the success of organics.

UNIQUE INTERACTION between developing the market for organic food and broad collaboration in organic policy are the key factors that have paved the way for organic growth. Demonstrating great foresight, Danish political initiatives have been the catalyst for strong market growth and the dynamic development of organic farming from farm to fork. Organic production has, in turn, contributed to public goods in the form of improved animal welfare and green growth, focusing on the environment and nature.

COLLABORATION WITH THE DANISH FOOD SECTOR

The development of organic farming in Denmark has greatly benefited from the broad collaboration that has existed across the entire Danish food sector over the past 35 years, with organisations such as the Danish Agriculture & Food Council and Organic Denmark among the major stakeholders. Through this collaboration, organic food policies have been developed across the sector, and combined efforts have resulted in, for example, the establishment of advisory services, an Innovation Centre for Organic Farming, market development, and export promotion for Danish organic products.

CLOSE COLLABORATION ON ORGANIC MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Behind the success lies unique interaction between Danish supermarkets, organisations, authorities and food companies that has endured for more than 35 years. The result is that organic products are now highly visible in stores across the country. Over the years, campaigns and other initiatives have enhanced consumers' insight into what

organic production stands for and what they're getting for their money when they buy organic. The end result is that Denmark can boast of having one of the highest markets shares for organic products. More than 90 per cent of Danes buy organic products and more than 70 per cent do so every week. What's more, confidence in organic food is very high. To upskill small, organic companies in building partnerships with the retail and food sectors, courses and seminars are held throughout the year and companies receive advice on product development and the like to prepare them for supplying supermarkets.

OPEN FARMING

Transparency and organic production go hand in hand. For many years, a number of regular events have given Danish consumers the opportunity to meet organic farmers and learn about their production. Every year, organic milk producers and their dairies invite the general public to Organic Day: more than 100,000 Danes take a trip into the countryside to see organic cows being released on to the fresh spring grass after a long winter indoors. And every year, organic pig producers organise 'Sofaris' (sowfaris), to enable consumers to see how organic pigs live and what they're getting for their money when they buy organic pork. Open Farming is held on the third Sunday in September. This is a nationwide event where the public are invited to view all types of farms, including organic farms. Farm shops, where farmers sell their own and their colleagues' products, are on the increase. They also give consumers the opportunity to chat the farmer about their production.

DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC POLICY

When it comes to organic policy, Denmark is a country of firsts. Moreover, Danish organic policy is a catalyst for innovation and growth in the organic sector. Today, organic production is a recognised tool in Denmark's green transition.

DENMARK WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

to introduce a government-backed set of rules, a government-backed organic labelling scheme and government-backed inspections. Over the past 35 years, a series of organic action plans and strategies have set the course for how development and growth are created in the organic sector. An innovative organic policy has been the driving force for new knowledge, new markets and the professional development of the organic way of production.

INVOLVEMENT OF MANY STAKEHOLDERS

Over the years, despite changes in government, there has been political support for developing organic farming across the political spectrum in Denmark, which has attracted international attention. This also applies to the successful collaboration that exists between farmers and food companies and between consumers, the labour market and environmental and agricultural organisations in terms of the development of organic policy. In the Organic Forum under the auspices of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture & Fisheries, the industry's stakeholders meet with the ministry's agencies to discuss initiatives to promote Denmark's organic development.

POLITICAL GOALS FOR MORE ORGANIC FARMING

A political objective is to double Denmark's organic farmland area, organic consumption, and organic exports by 2030. This goal aligns with the EU's objective that at least 25 per cent of the EU's total agricultural area should be farmed organically by 2030. These objectives aim to create a more sustainable food system throughout the EU.

GREEN TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT AND ORGANIC FARMING

In 2024, Denmark entered into the unique Agreement on the Green Tripartite. This historic agreement between the government, the Danish Agriculture & Food Council, the Danish Society for Nature Conservation, Local Government Denmark, etc. rethinks how we use our land and resources, and how we can combine production, nature, and climate into one coherent vision. This is to be achieved, among other things, by taking low-lying farmland out of production and setting aside areas for nature and forests, and introducing a CO_2 tax on agriculture's biological processes. These initiatives are not only beneficial to the climate but also to biodiversity and a healthier water environment. The agreement defines organic farming as a tool in the green transition and as a means to promote animal welfare.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MORE ORGANIC FARMING

Danish organic policy promotes growth through campaigns to enhance consumer awareness of organic products, expanding public procurement and implementing a range of initiatives that provide farmers with incentives to switch to organic production. This includes offering conversion assessments for farmers who are considering converting to organic production, providing training, and supporting development work. Some of the development initiatives targeting marketing, research, and agricultural expertise are supported by the Foundation for Organic Farming.

A TOOL IN THE POLITICAL TOOLBOX

One of the unique features of Danish organic policy is that organic production has been actively used as a means to achieve broader national objectives such as the protection of nature, drinking water, the climate, green growth and rural development. At local level, cities and municipalities have used organic conversion to protect drinking water resources and to breathe new life into rural areas.

ORGANIC SHARE IN PUBLIC KITCHENS

Danish initiatives to increase the share of organics in public kitchens is one example of an ambitious organic policy combined with the mobilisation of the organic sector.

These involve political objectives, i.e. 60 per cent organic in public kitchens, the use of the Organic Food label and pushing for the further training of kitchen staff.

ORGANIC RESEARCH

The development of organic production is based on knowledge and innovation. More than 30 years' targetted research into organic farming and food production has contributed to the success of organic production in Denmark – and the work continues.

DENMARK has a long tradition for research into organic farming and food production. In the wake of the first organic action plan in 1995, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture & Fisheries initiated the first national research programme in organic farming and food production in 1996. This was a four-year programme which included 11 Danish research institutions. A number of successful research programmes were launched, and Denmark gained an international reputation as one of the leading countries in organic farming. We also founded the forerunner to ICROFS - the International Centre for Research into Organic Farming and Food Systems.

RESEARCH TOPICS

Organic research supports the development of new solutions and new knowledge throughout the supply chain, from farm to fork. New knowledge that can move the Danish organic sector towards ever greater sustainability, more climate-friendly production, increased productivity and a sound economy. ICROFS' research strategy 2022-2025 has focused on research into the following:

CIRCULAR BIOECONOMY • CLIMATE AND ENVIRON-

MENT • BIODIVERSITY • HEALTH AND WELFARE • ORGANIC CONSUMERS OF THE FUTURE • ORGANIC PRODUCTION AS A WAY OF LIFE

Specifically, research and development has translated into projects such as:

 How to achieve increased yields from Danish organic grain production?

- How to extract protein from clover grass, which can be used for pig and poultry feed and produce biogas from the residual product?
- How to increase carbon bonding in the soil to benefit the climate?
- How to increase animal welfare in livestock production?

STAKEHOLDER-DRIVEN RESEARCH

A particular characteristic of organic research is that it is stakeholder-driven. Scientists, practitioners, advisers and other professionals work together to develop new solutions and opportunities that are practical and strengthen organic production. This helps to ensure a short pathway from new knowledge to practical implementation on farms and in companies.

RESEARCH ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA

The industry's organisations work with ICROFS to continually promote research and development on the political agenda. It is important that funds are regularly allocated specifically to research into the special challenges of the organic sector in order that it can continue to develop and contribute to the social good. So far, this has been rather successful with DKK 50-70 million annually from the research reserve. ICROFS also works to secure research into organic production at the national level as well as under the auspices of the EU's research programmes.

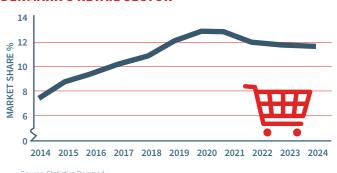


THE ORGANIC MARKET

35 years of development in the organic sector has produced a wide variety of organic products in Danish stores and has turned Danish consumers into some of the biggest consumers of organic products.

DENMARK LEADS THE WAY in terms of the market share of organic food in the retail sector. Around 12 per cent of the Danes' grocery purchases are organic and more than 35 per cent of consumers always - or often - buy organic. Organic food has also made inroads into the food service sector where sales in the past 10 years have more than doubled, bringing the market share in the food service sector to around 14 per cent. For decades, sales of organic food in Denmark have increased year by year. In 2020, however, during the Covid pandemic, sales stagnated and fell slightly due to high inflation and a decline in consumer purchasing power. Now growth is on the rise again – both in terms of volume and revenue - and the positive development is expected to continue.

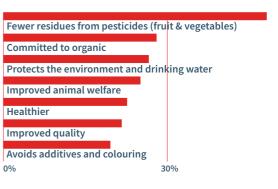
DEVELOPMENT IN ORGANIC MARKET SHARE IN DENMARK'S RETAIL SECTOR



REASONS FOR BUYING ORGANIC

When the Danes are asked why they buy organic food, the reasons they give are health-based – to avoid additives in fruit and vegetables and colouring and additives in food – coupled with a wish to contribute to the protection of the environment and drinking water. Improved animal welfare also has a role to play.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASON FOR BUYING ORGANIC FOOD?



:: Norstat for Danish Agricultural & Food Council, May 2025

WHERE DO THE DANES BUY ORGANIC PRODUCTS?

The majority of organic sales – around 80 per cent – take place through the retail sector and online shopping. In Denmark, sales of organic products are strongly anchored in both discount stores and traditional supermarkets. Supermarkets have embraced organic products and have, in their own way, helped to promote organic products to Danish consumers. Visibility around organic products has become a intentional part of the branding strategy for most Danish supermarkets. Consequently, as well as giving organic products a prominent position in stores, supermarkets also use organic products as a parameter to attract particularly high-spending consumers.

Several supermarket chains are entering into binding partnerships with larger organic farms to sell their products. The SallingGroup, which includes Netto, Bilka and Føtex, has entered into partnership with Tjele Gods, and Rema 1000 has a close collaboration with Gram Slot. A number of supermarket chains also have their own label organic brands.

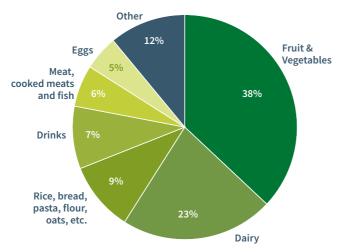
Online shopping is becoming increasingly widespread when it comes to buying groceries. At the online supermarket, Nemlig.com, organic sales account for more than 25 per cent of grocery sales. A button in the top menu of their website allows shoppers to filter all products to display only the organic options. There are no fewer than 1,400 of them – and there are plans for even more.

Buying meal boxes has also been popular for several years, especially with busy families. Some suppliers offer organic products only while others offer a mix of organic and conventional products.

Organic food is also proving increasingly popular with Danes who eat out. Around 13 per cent of organic food is sold through the food service sector, a growing sector. The spread of organic cuisine labels has contributed to this as they point the way to restaurants and cafés with a high organic content.

WHAT DO DANES BUY?

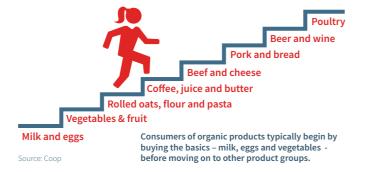
ALL PRODUCT CATEGORIES are available in one or more organic versions. Organic fruit and vegetables account for the largest market share, followed by dairy products and eggs. Consumption of organic meat, however, lags some way behind.



Source: Statistics Denmark

Studies conducted by Aarhus University and others show that once consumers start buying an organic product category, more product categories follow in line with a specific pattern: consumers tend to buy organic staples like milk, egg and vegetables first, before they start shopping for organic versions of luxury items such as wine, beer, chocolate, ice-cream and cakes. Studies also show that we remain loyal to the product groups we buy providing the price difference between organic and conventional is not too great.

THE ORGANIC STAIRS IN DENMARK



ORGANIC PRODUCTS FOR CONSUMERS ACROSS THE WORLD

Denmark is internationally known as a country that produces high quality food products and where food safety is of the highest standard.

DANISH COMPANIES have traditionally focused on food safety, which is why many countries, particularly countries in Asia, are keen to import Danish food products. In addition, Danish food products are characterised by consistently high quality. There are no quality differences from one delivery to the next.

GREAT CONFIDENCE IN DANISH PRODUCTS

Denmark is recognised across the world as having a unique organic control system. Organic inspections and the issuing of organic certificates are carried out by inspectors who are employed by the Danish government and are completely independent of organic farmers and companies. Consequently, confidence in organic food is very high, both among Danish consumers and in foreign markets. Confidence in Danish organic food is also a key reason why Danes buy the most organic food in the world. On average, Danes spend around DKK 3,000 per year on organic products across all age groups.

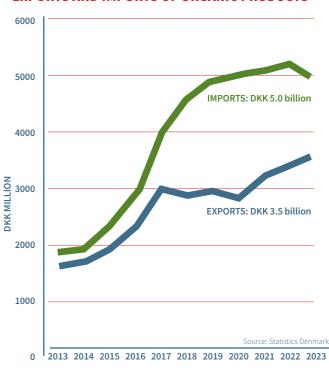
DOUBLING OF EXPORTS

A high standard of food safety, healthy quality food and a unique organic control system are the main reasons why exports of organic food products have increased significantly year on year and are currently valued at DKK 3.5 billion (EUR 475 million). Danish companies export to near markets such as Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands and to distant markets in Asia, e.g. China, the Middle East and the U.S. Germany is by far Denmark's largest export market. Denmark has many livestock production companies – both large and small – that are committed to organic production and to export. It is therefore not surprising that the largest export products are dairy products (fresh milk, cheese, butter and powdered milk for infants) and pork. Danish companies are also well placed to supply eggs and poultry as well as plant-based products such as animal feed, vegetables (including root vegetables and lettuce) as well as grocery items and drinks, e.g. juice and plant-based drinks.

IMPORTS

Denmark has a substantial consumption of organic food and consequently imports large quantities. The most significant imports are fruit, e.g. oranges and lemons, because, for climatic reasons, these cannot be grown in Denmark. The same applies to vegetables that we cannot grow ourselves during the winter. We import fruit and vegetables primarily from near markets such as Germany, Italy and Spain. Organic products from overseas, e.g. from South and Central America, arrive at the port in Rotterdam in the Netherlands and are shipped out to Danish consumers. These include bananas, coffee, tea and chocolate. Grain and feed are also imported, some of which are re-exported to other near markets. Organic imports exceed exports in value and total approximately DKK 5 billion.

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS



ORGANICS AND OUT-OF-HOME CONSUMPTION

Danes are eating increasingly more meals outside the home, and the proportion of organic ingredients used in such meals is growing. Sales of organic products in the food service sector have more than doubled over the past 10 years and currently have a market share of around 14 per cent. Experts expect the positive development to continue and have identified plenty of opportunities.

PUBLIC SECTOR KITCHENS and private canteens have been the drivers behind the development of the food service sector. Organic food has also begun to feature on the menus of hotels, restaurants and cafés where there is great potential for expanding organic products in this area. It's all about making organics an integral part of the broader sustainability agenda.

POLITICAL VISION AND TRAINING

The success of organics in the food service sector is largely down to the close collaboration between a visionary organic policy and the allocation of funding to training and information. Public sector kitchens are required to be at least 60 per cent organic and many of Denmark's municipalities are working towards being at least 60 per cent organic in public sector food services. such as kindergartens and care homes.

Over the years, funding has been allocated to help kitchens convert to organic. It's about how, by focusing on seasonal ingredients, cooking from scratch rather than using semi-processed food, opting for less meat and more plant proteins, and reducing food waste, organic food can be enjoyed without breaking the budget.

MOBILISING THE WHOLESALERS

Efforts have also focused on securing the supply of organic food via wholesalers to facilitate the ordering of organic products by public kitchens. This has now been successful and wholesale companies now offer to calculate the proportion of organic products on customers' invoices. This makes it easy for customers to document their share of organic products to accord with municipal targets or the Organic Food label. Getting wholesalers on board has succeeded thanks to targetted information campaigns.

THE ORGANIC CUISINE LABEL

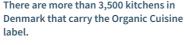
An organic option should be available to Danish consumers when dining out. In 2009, the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration launched the Organic Cuisine Label, which indicates the percentage of organic ingredients used by kitchens. The Organic Cuisine label comes in Gold, Silver and Bronze. More than 3,500 kitchens carry the Organic Cuisine label and three-quarters of them are public kitchens, such as day care centres, hospitals and care homes. One quarter have been given to private kitchens such as canteens, cafés, restaurants and hotels. The Organic Cuisine label is free of charge. Applications should be made to the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration. For more information, see www. oekologisk-spisemaerke.dk.





There are more than 3,500 kitchens in

The breakdown is as follows: 41% Silver label. 37% Bronze label.





HOSPITAL SERVES 90-100 PER CENT ORGANIC FOOD

In the kitchens of Randers Hospital, efforts have been underway since 2009 to convert to organic. In 2016, the kitchens, which cater for the hospital's patients, achieved the Gold Organic Cuisine label, as the first hospital in Denmark to do so. In 2018, Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg Hospitals followed suit, together with the other hospitals in the Capital Region of Denmark, all of which have now achieved the Silver Organic Cuisine label. The recipe for success is based on seasonal ingredients, less food waste, reduced meat consumption, and more beans and lentils as well as the phasing out of semi-processed products. The upshot is that patients are now served healthy organic food from scratch. The initiative has also resulted in greater job satisfaction among kitchen staff - all this has been achieved while staying within the same budget.

SPOTLIGHT ON ORGANIC FOOD IN PRIVATE CANTEENS

Private canteens are prominent when it comes to organic products and account for 25 per cent of sales in the food service sector. Every year, the Danish Agriculture & Food Council names a canteen that succeeds in meeting future requirements for a sustainable canteen kitchen, with a particular focus on organic products and taste. Culinary innovation, the joy of food, and an ambitious approach to using organic ingredients were among the key factors when the head chef, Sine Andersen, and her team from Compass Group, won the Canteen Prize in 2024.



ORGANICS IN GASTRONOMY

Organic food plays an important role on the menus of Denmark's gourmet restaurants and in the growth of the culinary scene.

DENMARK HAS UNDERGONE a gastronomic revolution over the past 25 years, which has put the country on the world map of gastronomy.

MICHELIN STARS

Denmark is now a gastronomic frontrunner – a power-house of taste. In just 25 years, we have risen from obscurity on the culinary world map to take our place among the international gastronomic elite. The talent of Danish chefs and their uncompromising craftsmanship are being noted – and rewarded. The number of Michelin stars has soared: from just 12 in 2010 to no fewer than 52 stars spread across 38 restaurants in 2025. It's not just food – it's a Danish breakthrough driven by unwavering focus on superb ingredients, which remain at the heart of Danish gastronomy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANICS

A decisive turning point on the journey towards gastronomic stardom came in 2004 with the New Nordic Manifesto. The manifesto is firmly embedded in nature – where local, seasonal, high-quality ingredients are brought to the fore and used in new, creative ways. It is an approach to ingredients that goes hand in hand with organics, animal welfare and the values upon which organic production is founded. Consequently, organic ingredients play a natural leading role in the Danish gastronomic scene – often in close collaboration with local producers who supply top quality raw materials tailored to the requirements of each restaurant and their particular vision.

The higher the gastronomic level, the clearer the shift towards organic products becomes. Top chefs are uncompromising in their search for quality, which is precisely the reason why they often opt for organic ingredients and value close relationships with local producers. It's not just about taste, but also about provenance – and both must be able to support high gastronomic ambitions.

Anders Nicolajsen, Head of Gastronomy and Food Service, Danish Agriculture & Food Council



THE ORGANIC FARMER

One in ten Danish farms are organic. Focusing on a high level of professionalism and quality, Danish farmers grow organic food in harmony with nature, with the utmost care for the climate, nature and biodiversity, the water environment and animal welfare.

ORGANIC FARMERS are committed to leading the way in the development of sustainable organic production. Based on the values and principles of organic farming, they are driven by a desire to constantly develop and improve their production through sound organic practices.

This includes:

- Greater focus on creating healthy and fertile soil
- Maintaining diverse crop rotations and green fields all year round
- Maintaining crops that ensure carbon sequestration in the soil
- Greater self-sufficiency, including protein crops for animals and humans
- Strengthening resource efficiency through higher yields with the same inputs
- Improving the health and welfare of organic livestock
- Looking at new organic production systems, such as forestry and strip cropping
- Creating good conditions for biodiversity both in cultivated areas and throughout the agricultural landscape.

DIVERSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Many organic farms in Denmark are highly specialised and focus on crop production or cattle, pig or poultry production. There are, however, increasing numbers of small farms that focus on the production of a diverse range of products for direct sales to the public through farm shops, online stores or through partnerships with local shops. Some farms also sell directly to catering companies and high-end restaurants.

CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY HIGH ON THE AGENDA

Sustainable food production is a top priority. Each individual farm is firmly focused on reducing climate impact, increasing biodiversity, reducing nitrogen runoff into the

water environment, and generally improving the farm's sustainability. It is difficult to provide a precise answer to how sustainable a production actually is, as sustainability assessments involve highly complex calculations.

At the EU level, work is being done on the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF). In Denmark, Seges Innovation, in collaboration with the Innovation Centre for Organic Agriculture, has developed the ESGreenTool. This is a tool that calculates a farm's sustainability. It enables the farmer to have a current overview of their farm's sustainability profile and to see how it can be developed in a more sustainable direction. It is also possible to quickly identify the climate impact of the various initiatives that are being considered on the farm. A major advantage of the ESGreenTool is that most of the data to be used in the calculations can be automatically retrieved from the records that are already available about the farm in various databases, including Mark-Online

ORGANIC REGENERATIVE FARMING

Regenerative agriculture is a farming practice that is attracting widespread attention as many soils around the world are in an unhealthy state. However, no single definition of the term exists. The regenerative movement derives from organic farming and organic farming delivers on most of the objectives of regenerative farming practices. Cultivating land according to organic and regenerative principles will achieve a number of environmental, nature and climate benefits such as improved soil quality, greater biodiversity, an improved water environment and a reduction in greenhouse gases.

HIGH-TECH SOLUTIONS FOR ORGANIC VEGETABLE PRODUCTION The development of high-tech solutions for organic without damaging the crop. Most recently, weeding vegetable production is progressing rapidly, and robots that use AI and laser technology have come new solutions are being implemented all the time on to the market. Laser technology is particularly beneficial when it comes to controlling weeds with as they achieve sufficient operational reliability and capacity. It is both labour-intensive and essential in the rows of direct-seeded crops such as onions, to keep organic vegetable fields free of weeds, carrots and root vegetables. Autonomous impleand on larger farms, modern technology plays an ment carriers are used for both sowing and weed increasingly important role as a supplement to control in onion production, for example. So far, traditional, mechanical weed control and manual however, limited capacity has been the main barrier weeding. Here, camera-controlled weeding robots to wider adoption. are indispensable tools for keeping the fields clean, Drone technology is also integrated into organic both in and between the rows. When the weeding vegetable production. Drones are used, among robot drives across the field, the camera registers other things, to monitor plants, to estimate yield, each individual plant and any surrounding weeds. determine the optimal harvest time and to assess nutrient status, disease spread, soil moisture and Based on the image analysis, a mechanical action

KNOWLEDGE AND ADVICE

Danish farmers have a long tradition for seeking professional advice to optimise their production. Advisers specialising in organic production advise organic farmers on crop cultivation, animal husbandry, nature conservation, climate initiatives, etc. The success of the sector is dependent on the development of practical hands-on knowledge, which the Innovation Centre for Organic Farming represents.

DANISH FARMERS have a long tradition for setting up cooperative businesses and agricultural associations. This has helped to strengthen Danish agriculture both professionally and commercially. Cooperatives have traditionally been responsible for processing, innovating and selling farmers' products while agricultural associations have ensured farmers' influence on farm policy and provided specialist advice.

IMPARTIAL LOCAL AGRICULTURAL ADVISERS

The Danish agricultural associations cooperate under the umbrella of DLBR (Danish Agricultural Advisory Service), which consists of 15 advisory centres. The advisory centres are owned by the associations which, in turn, are owned by the farmers.

The advisory centres provide farmers with impartial advice on everything from crop production, environmental protection, sustainable production, livestock health to welfare and finance. Local agricultural advisers usually have a college or university education and specific areas of expertise. Some are specialists in organic farming, which helps to ensure competitive organic raw materials of the highest quality.

ORGANIC ADVICE

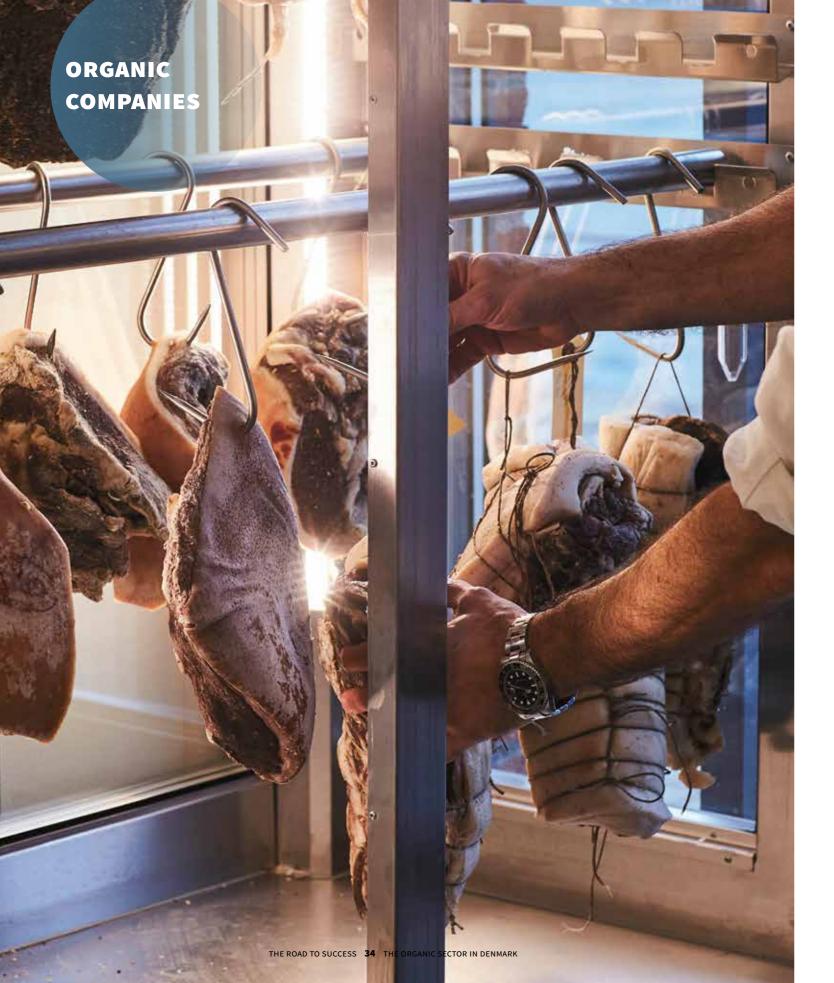
Some centres have brought organic advisers together in one organic office where they exclusively offer advice to organic farmers. At other centres, the advisers are involved with organic and conventional production. There is also an independent advisory company that exclusively provides advice on organic production. This is jointly owned by an advisory company, which is backed by four agricultural associations and Organic Denmark. Local organic advisers keep farmers updated on the latest knowledge - knowledge contributed by the Innovation Centre for Organic

INNOVATION CENTRE FOR ORGANIC FARMING

The Innovation Centre was founded in 2021 to pool resources and strengthen organic knowledge and development. The centre is supported by the Danish Agriculture & Food Council and Organic Denmark. The purpose of the Innovation Centre is to generate and gather new knowledge within all branches of organic production and to professionally document the effects of organic farming on the climate, nature, biodiversity, etc. This happens through development projects and research, often in collaboration with universities and farmers. Wherever it makes sense to do so, collaboration also takes place with Seges Innovation, agriculture's independent research and innovation company, which administers a number of databases that collect data from the various branches of production, which can be used to drive development, traceability and quality in Danish agricultural production. The latest insights into organic farming can be found at www.icoel.dk.

much more.

is performed that precisely removes the weeds



LARGE AND SMALL COMPANIES WITH STRONG ORGANIC CREDENTIALS

Developments in organic food production in Denmark have been driven by large companies with strong organic credentials and a diverse network of small, innovative companies.

Innovation and responsiveness to consumer trends have transformed Denmark into one of the leading nations within organic food consumption.

THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT has played a major role in the success of Danish agriculture – including the success of organic production. Typically, cooperative companies have been responsible for product development, the processing and sales of agricultural products to enable the farmers to focus on production of raw materials from crops and livestock. Both large and small cooperative companies have played a key role in the development of organic food production.

MILK PRODUCTION - A DRIVER FOR ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT

Milk production has been the driver behind organic development. One of the largest cooperative dairies focuses on organic dairy products as well as conventional milk. Other cooperative dairies have chosen to focus exclusively on organic dairy products for consumers at home and abroad, and have done so with great success. Today, Danish dairies are among the leaders in organic export markets: from Germany in the West, to the Middle East in the South and China in the East. Danish dairies were among the first in the world to be allowed to export organic products to China.

ORGANIC MEAT AND EGGS TO CONSUMERS ACROSS THE WORLD

Denmark is also at the forefront of the organic meat sector, with largescale exports to consumers in Europe and Asia who are supplied with organic poultry, beef and pork. The same applies to Danish organic eggs for the Middle East.

PLANT-BASED PRODUCTS

Danish companies are active in the global market not only in animal production but also plant-based production. Major Danish feed and grain companies buy and sell organic grain and feed in many countries, both grain for animal feed and for bread production.

Danish companies also possess expertise when it comes to other plant-based products, such as organic potatoes, root vegetables and lettuce. Denmark is one of the leading countries in the production of organic carrots, which are consumed in large quantities on the domestic market and exported to a number of near markets. There is also a current increase in the production and demand for organic protein crops such as peas, lupins and broad beans. Protein crops are in demand both as a substitute for imported soy for animal feed and for human consumption to be used in the growing market for plant-based foods.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there are also many companies producing organic grocery and drink products that have developed into success stories in recent years. These companies focus on production for the domestic market and for nearby and slightly more distant export markets.

• Organic companies as trendsetters for new products.

ORGANIC AND NON-ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Some companies focus exclusively on organic production, while others produce organic and conventionally produced products. If a company runs both organic and non-organic production lines, there are strict rules and procedures for how production is managed. And the company must be able to document their actions to the authorities. This is important to protect the credibility of organic production.

STRONG INNOVATION AMONG SMALLER ORGANIC COMPANIES

In parallel with the larger companies, a number of smaller organic food companies have contributed to the development of organic food production and have helped to ensure a rich and varied supply of organic products - both basic and luxury. Through creative thinking, innovation and a high level of responsiveness to consumer trends and requirements, they have been instrumental in ensuring that a rich diversity of organic food is readily available in all product categories.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

From the very start of organic production, organic companies have been characterised by superb innovation and the ability to quickly adapt production. Smaller companies, in particular, have been adept at producing small quantities of new products for organically-focused retail chains to

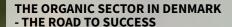
sell. If consumer demand was strong enough, production was increased. If not, production was stopped before the company suffered any significant losses. Organic companies have often been trendsetters for new products that have subsequently been produced in conventional versions. The best example of this is the dairy product known as 'Skyr', which is characterised by its high protein content. Another example is the meal box concept, where consumers can order weekly deliveries of food boxes on line. The pioneer in this case was an organic company focusing on organic vegetables. Organic production also plays a key role in plant-based food – the latest trend – in that many of the raw materials are of organic origin. This applies to both oat drinks and plant-based meat substitutes.

LOCAL ORGANIC FOOD

The number of small-scale producers has grown significantly in recent years. This is driven by the desire for local connections, close customer contact, sustainable food – most often organic – combined with good culinary craftsmanship and storytelling. Smaller producers often focus on quality rather than quantity, e.g. the production of a wide variety of organic vegetables, meat from organic animals raised with particular attention to animal welfare, stone-ground flour from ancient grain varieties, microdairies with speciality cheeses or fermented products.



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DANISH AGRICULTURE & FOOD COUNCIL

The Danish Agriculture & Food Council is a trade organisation that represents Denmark's food cluster, including all types of farmers, food companies and the agricultural industry. The organisation has 1,200 organic farmers as members and represents the majority of organic food production and processing.

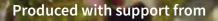
The Danish Agriculture & Food Council seeks to create a supportive framework for organic production in Denmark and the further development of the organic sector. The Danish Agriculture & Food Council, therefore, is focused on organic policy, organic regulations and principles, sales and market development as well as professional development to create value for organic production and organic consumers in Denmark and beyond.

Read more at www.lf.dk



THE ORGANIC SECTOR IN DENMARK - THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

looks at the reasons behind the success of the organic sector and examines the factors that have made Danish organic food into the success it currently enjoys in Denmark and in the rest of the world. We invite you to read about the many strengths that characterise the organic sector - from farm to fork - and which constitute the recipe for its success in Denmark.



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