

Farmers' perspectives on the use of organic seed in European organic agriculture

Problems

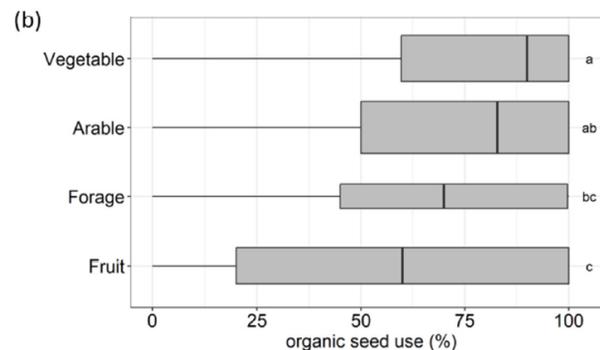
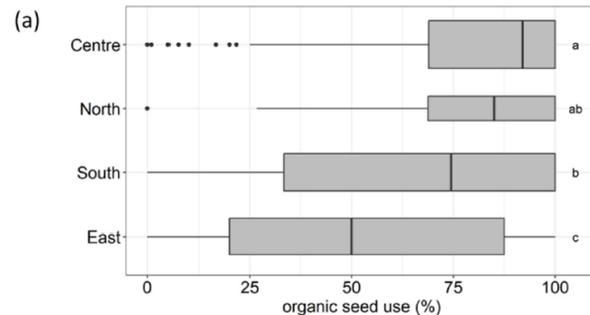
The European Organic Regulation 2018/848 aims to phase out derogations for the use of untreated non-organic seed by 2036, the use of organic seed by farmers in Europe is still low. How realistic is this target and what factors drive seed choice?

Solutions

A survey was conducted to identify the factors affecting the use of organic seed, with a sample of about 750 organic farmers in Central, Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe.

Our results show that:

- Farmers in Central Europe use more organic seed than in the other regions (Figure a).
- Farm saved seed plays an important role in the coverage of organic seed, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe.
- Organic seed use is highest in the vegetable sector, followed by the arable, forage and fruit sector (Figure b).
- Organic seed is mainly used by farms in short and specialised supply chains.
- Organic seed use decreases as farms get larger and more recently converted.
- The main issue reported by the farmers is the availability of organic seed for the varieties they need.
- Decision to use organic seed is influenced by perception of societal expectations, particularly from the consumer and the organic certifier.



Practical recommendations

The supply of organic seed for a large range of crops species and cultivars should be improved to meet farmers' demand, so that crop and market diversification is not at risk. From the demand side, the communication of societal expectations in the public discourse can stimulate organic seed use.

Further information

1. Orsini S, Costanzo A, Solfanelli F, Zanolli R, Padel S, Messmer MM, Winter E, Schaefer F (2020) Factors Affecting the Use of Organic Seed by Organic Farmers in Europe. *Sustainability*, 12(20), 8540 <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12208540>

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LIVESEED: Boosting organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. LIVESEED is based on the concept that cultivars adapted to organic systems are key for realising the full potential of organic agriculture in Europe. Research project 2017-2021.

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PRACTICE ABSTRACT No. 63

*Target audience: national authorities, expert groups,
seed producers, farmers*

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