

# The draft of the National Plan for the Development of Organic Production until 2030 is ready.

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The Ministry of Agriculture and Food has published for public consultation a draft of the National Plan for the Development of Organic Production until 2030. This is an official document that sets out the vision and general objectives of the policies for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production in the Member States of the European Union.

In connection with the Green Deal and the strategies, the European Commission (EC) has developed a Plan for the Development of Organic Production until 2030, which sets the main EU objective for increasing organic

areas, assuming that by 2030 at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land should be managed in accordance with the rules of organic farming.

Thanks to its positive impact on the environment and climate with regard to improving: carbon sequestration, soil condition, conservation of biodiversity and animal welfare, organic farming is considered to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the European Green Deal and the EU strategies. Along with the listed objectives, organic production will allow agriculture to adapt to the changing climate.

## **The strategic objectives in the National Plan for the Development of Organic Production until 2030 are:**

1. Organic food and products for all: stimulating demand and ensuring consumer confidence.
2. Stimulating the transition and strengthening the entire value chain on the path to 2030.
3. Organic production as a role model: improving the contribution of organic farming to the sustainability of the sector.

The achievement of the objectives of the National Plan for the Development of Organic Production until 2030 is envisaged through the following targeted policies and interventions:

- 1. Wider consumption of organic products**, which includes raising awareness (conducting information campaigns on the benefits of consuming organic products) and strengthening consumer confidence in the quality of Bulgarian organic products.
- 2. Better and easier access to markets**, which includes: shortening the supply chain, direct sales, association of organic operators with the aim of creating a more favourable environment for the marketing of production, conducting information and communication campaigns regarding the already existing farmers' markets and organic operators carrying out direct sales, as well as their public announcement in the organic register for the activity „direct sales of organic products from the producer“.
- 3. Promoting the processing of organic raw materials and adding value to Bulgarian organic foods.**
- 4. More favourable conditions for enhancing knowledge and skills for the establishment, development and maintenance of the organic holding**, which includes: appropriate training, exchange of information on research and innovation in the field of organic farming, promotion of research and innovation within „Horizon Europe“, with the aim of fostering the development of an intelligent bio-industry.

**5. More favourable conditions for encouraging very small, small and medium-sized enterprises/producers related to the development of the holding**, which includes: improving the production environment, optimising costs through new energy-saving machinery, increasing mobile processing facilities (slaughterhouses, mills, equipment for honey extraction, etc.), promoting the shared use of processing facilities at local level, the participation of agricultural cooperatives in the marketing and processing of organic products, including participation in public procurement for food at regional level (supplies to kindergartens).

**6. Organic farming as a key to the well-being of the environment and biodiversity**, which includes: the use of varieties and breeds suitable for organic production, increasing yields, developing effective plant protection measures and innovative solutions, as well as promoting the organic rearing of poultry and/or pigs.

The development of a Programme for compensating part of the costs of organic producers for the biological control of plant diseases and pests will also support the development of organic production. Such a measure will help increase yields and improve the efficiency of organic holdings. This should be a programme similar to those for permanent crops, compensating part of the costs for plant protection products in accordance with prepared technological cards for individual crops and the authorised products for the respective crops and for organic farming.

It is also necessary to encourage the cultivation of varieties suitable for organic production, which will inevitably have an impact on yields, which are traditionally lower in the sector compared to conventional crop production. Funding is needed for the institutes for the creation and maintenance of organic seeds (using the example of programmes for quality cereal seeds, etc.).

**Some of the identified strengths of the National Plan for the Development of Organic Production until 2030 are:**

- The Republic of Bulgaria has suitable soil and climatic resources for the development of organic farming;
- The Republic of Bulgaria is the world's largest producer of organic rose and lavender oil. This defines the country as a key producer with traditions in the production of raw materials for organic cosmetics;
- Research institutes maintain seeds of local varieties of cereals, vegetables and fruits that are resistant to diseases and pests and are suitable for our climatic conditions, as well as for organic production;
- Higher education institutions offer programmes for the educational and qualification degree „Master“ (the Agricultural University – Plovdiv and Trakia University – Stara Zagora train students in the specialty „Organic

Farming”), as well as separate elective courses or modules in organic farming (Agricultural University – Plovdiv, University of Forestry – Sofia and Trakia University – Stara Zagora). The Agricultural University – Plovdiv, through the Centre for Continuing Education, also offers specific courses in the field of organic production with different workloads according to the needs of the trainees;

- In recent years, new sales channels have been established throughout the retail network. More and more supermarkets, small shops and petrol stations are starting to sell organic products;

### **Some of the weaknesses are:**

- Although below the average European levels, the use of plant protection products has shown an upward trend in recent years;
- The increase in the use of nitrogen fertilisers per unit area creates a risk of water pollution with nitrates;
- Lower average yields from organic farming compared to similar ones in the EU and to conventional yields;
- An insufficiently developed processing sector, as well as a lack of promotion of short supply chains and organic farmers’ markets;
- Export of organic products predominantly as raw material (value added is exported);
- For part of the organic sector, a significant motive for production is the receipt of subsidies;
- Producers of organic seeds and planting material, who meet the needs of organic operators for plant reproductive material, do not receive special support for this activity, which leads to a very poorly developed market for plant reproductive material of organic seeds and planting material;
- The research institutes within the Agricultural Academy (AA) are not encouraged to develop technological cards for the cultivation of different types of crops in an organic way, to develop new methods and innovations in the field of organic production, and to maintain organic plant reproductive material;

The draft Plan has been published for public consultation on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and on the **Public Consultation Portal**.

The deadline for submitting proposals by interested parties is until **3 August 2023**.