

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ORGANIC FOOD MARKET DURING 2012-2022

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Abstract. Organic food is no longer considered a market niche. They are products obtained from organic agriculture in compliance with the rules on organic production, food processing and labeling, certification procedures for producers, as well as the import of these products. Organic production is a sustainable agricultural system that combines best environmental and animal welfare practices, a high level of biodiversity, conservation of energy and natural resources. Organic production is an integrated management system that includes all other stages of the food supply chain. The market for organic agri-food products is in a phase of continuous expansion. The organic food market has grown steadily, from almost 60 million euros in 2012 to 134.76 million euros in 2022, with the demand for organic food remaining concentrated in Europe and North America. The country with the largest market for organic products in Europe is Germany, with 15.31 million euros in 2022, out of total sales of 53.07 million euros. In North America, the country with the largest market is the United States with sales of 58.56 million euros in 2022 out of total sales of 64.36 million euros. This paper is based on a content analysis of statistical materials related to the organic food market in 2014-2024 period.

Keywords: organic food, market, producers, consumers, growth

INTRODUCTION

Organic farming has gained a globally popularity due to concerns about environmental health, food safety and agricultural sustainability. This farming method avoids the use of synthetic chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers, focusing on ecological practices that promote biodiversity and soil health. (MATEO-SÎRB *et al.*, 2024)

The European Union has a well-defined legislative framework for organic agriculture. Starting from January 1, 2009, Regulation no. 834 of the Council of Europe regarding organic production and labeling of organic products. The Regulation applies to the following products of agricultural origin, including those from aquaculture, when they are placed on the market or are intended to be placed on the market: live or unprocessed agricultural products; agricultural products processed for use as food; animal food; vegetative propagation material and seeds for cultivation. (***, Regulation no. 834 of June 28, 2007) Subsidies are also given to farmers who adopt organic farming, the Common Agricultural Policy supporting the transition to organic production methods.

In organic farming, one of the biggest obstacles is the cost and complexity of the certification process. The control is ensured at all stages of production, storage, transformation and marketing, all operators being subject to this permanent control officially recognized and supervised by the state. The identification of organic products (ecological or biological) takes place thanks to precise label rules, intended to provide the consumer with the best possible guarantee of their origin. (JURJESCU *et al.*, 2021)

Organic farming contributes to biodiversity conservation, improving soil quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, having also a positive impact on the environment. The main purpose of organic farming is to optimize the health and productivity of the interdependent soil communities of plants, animals and people. (ADAMOV *et al.*, 2008)

In 2022, over 96.0 million hectares in over 4.50 million farms are organically cultivated around the world, compared to 2012, when over 37.5 million hectares were cultivated in over 1.92 million farms. (WILLER *et al.*, 2024; WILLER *et al.*, 2014)

In 2022, the continent with the largest organically cultivated area is Oceania, in over 53.1 million ha, an increase of over 41 million hectares compared to 2012, followed by Europe with 18.45 million ha, an increase of over 7.27 hectares compared to 2012, Latin America – 9.53 million ha, an increase of 2.7 million ha compared to 2010, Asia – 8.83 million ha, an increase of 5.6 million ha compared to 2012, North America – 3.6 million ha increased by 615,464 hectares compared to 2012 and Africa – 2.73 million ha, increased by 1.58 million ha compared to 2012. (WILLER *et al.*, 2024; WILLER *et al.*, 2014) (table 1)

Table 1

The area cultivated organically (ha) and the number of organic farms on the continents

Continent	Organic agricultural land (ha)		Producers (numbers)	
	2012	2022	2012	2022
Africa	1,145,827	2,735,006	572,862	975,334
Asia	3,217,867	8,830,990	684,873	2,728,678
Europe	11,171,413	18,450,355	321,625	480,135
Latin America	6,836,498	9,537,387	316,583	270,217
North America	3,012,354	3,627,818	16,470	23,948
Oceania	12,164,316	53,194,639	14,605	24,466
TOTAL	37,544,909	96,376,196	1,927,018	4,502,778

Source: WILLER *et al.*, 2014; WILLER *et al.*, 2024

The situation of organic agriculture on the continents in 2012 and in 2022 is presented in figure 1. (WILLER *et al.*, 2024; WILLER *et al.*, 2014) Also, the distribution of organic agriculture in the world in 2012 and in 2022 is presented in figure 2. (WILLER *et al.*, 2024; WILLER *et al.*, 2014)

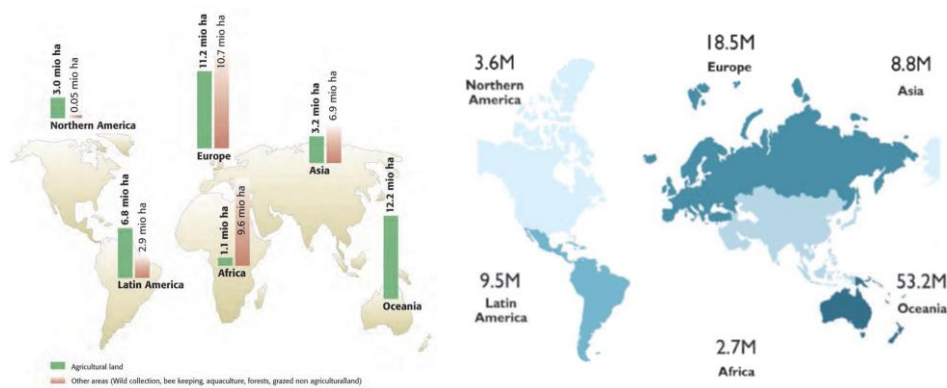


Figure 1. Organic farming in the world (M=millions), ha, (2012, 2022)

Source: WILLER *et al.*, 2014; WILLER *et al.*, 2024

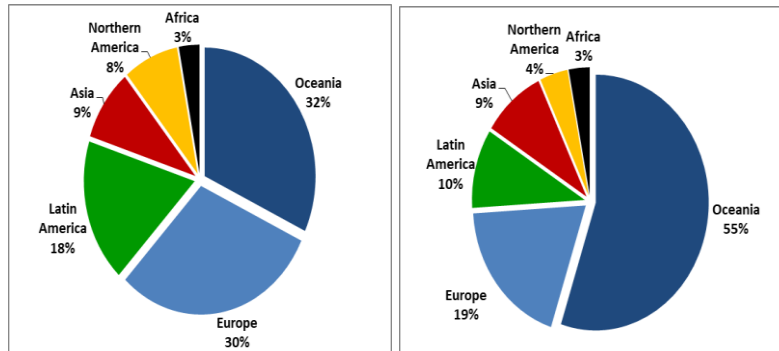


Figure 2. Distribution of organic agriculture in the world, by region, %, (2012, 2022)
Source: WILLER *et al.*, 2014; WILLER *et al.*, 2024

The increase in demand for organic products is encouraging the expansion of the sector. However, organic products are often more expensive, which may limit access for some consumers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Organic farming is gaining ground globally, representing a sustainable and ecological approach to food production. Statistical data show that organic agriculture is practiced in many countries of the world and is constantly growing. The market for organic products has grown significantly in recent years, reflecting a major shift in consumer preferences towards healthier foods and more sustainable farming practices. The market segment dedicated to organic products is characterized both by the increase in global demand and by the development of more sophisticated distribution networks, as well as an increasingly stringent regulation to ensure the authenticity of organic products. The present work is based on a content analysis of statistical materials from the period 2014-2024. (WILLER *et al.*, 2014; WILLER *et al.*, 2015; WILLER *et al.*, 2016; WILLER *et al.*, 2017; WILLER *et al.*, 2018; WILLER *et al.*, 2019; WILLER *et al.*, 2020; WILLER *et al.*, 2021; WILLER *et al.*, 2022; WILLER *et al.*, 2023; WILLER *et al.*, 2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The global organic market has experienced double-digit annual growth over the past few decades. (Figure 3) (WILLER *et al.*, 2024) The market is expected to continue to grow as more consumers become aware of the benefits of organic food.

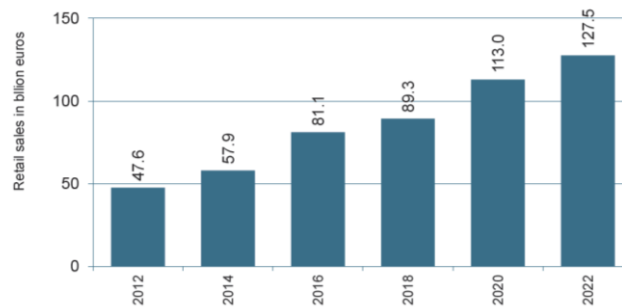


Figure 3. The global market for organic food and drink (2012, 2022)
Source: Willer *et al.*, 2024

In 2012, the countries with the largest global market for organic food products are the United States (44%), followed by Germany (14%) and France (8%). (Figure 4) (WILLER *et al.*, 2014) In 2022, the increasing trend continues, the countries with the largest global market for organic food are the United States (44%), Germany (11%), France and China (9%). (Figure 5) (WILLER *et al.*, 2024)

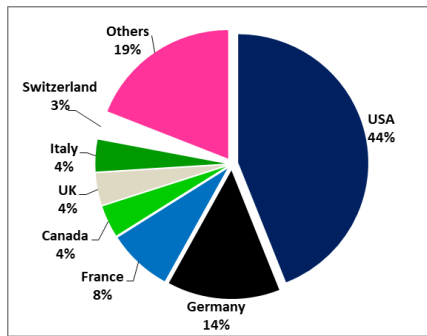


Figure 4. The global market of organic food, distribution by country, %, (2012)
Source: WILLER *et al.*, 2014

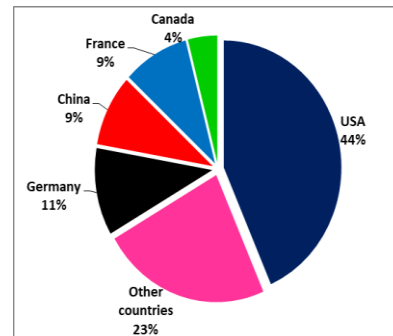


Figure 5. The global market of organic food, distribution by country, %, (2022)
Source: WILLER *et al.*, 2024

Figure 6, 7 shows the value of the organic product market in several countries.

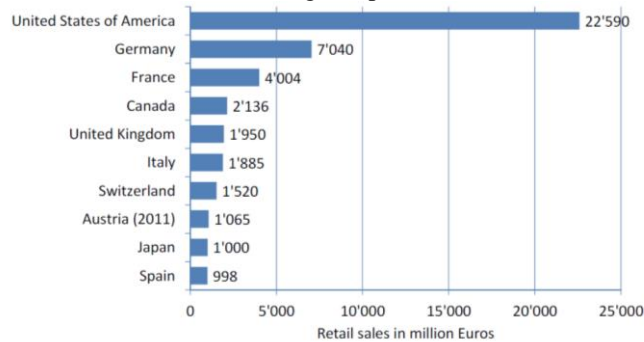


Figure 6. Top ten countries with the highest sales for organic food (Mil. Euro.)
Source: WILLER *et al.*, 2014

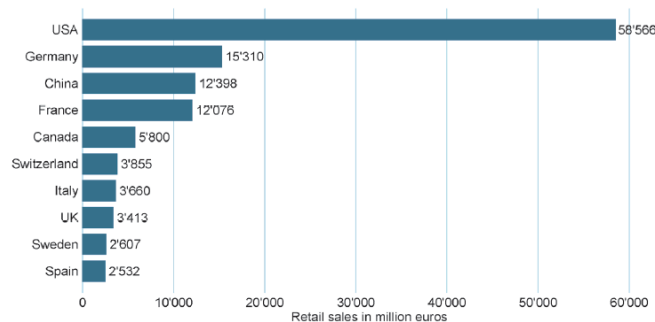


Figure 7. Top ten countries with the highest sales for organic food (Mil. Euro, 2022)
Sursa: WILLER *et al.*, 2024

Europe is the continent with the largest organic products market for North America, also being here eight of the top 10 countries with largest markets in the world. Sales of the organic products are concentrated in Western Europe; the German market being the largest market for organic products. The European country with the largest market for organic products in 2012 was Germany, with a turnover of 7.04 billion Euro, followed by France (4.0 billion Euro) and the UK (1.95 billion Euro). (Figure 8) (WILLER *et al.*, 2014) In 2022, the largest market for organic products was also Germany with a turnover of 6.6 billion Euro, followed by France (3.8 billion Euro) and the UK (1.9 billion Euro). (Figure 9) (WILLER *et al.*, 2024)

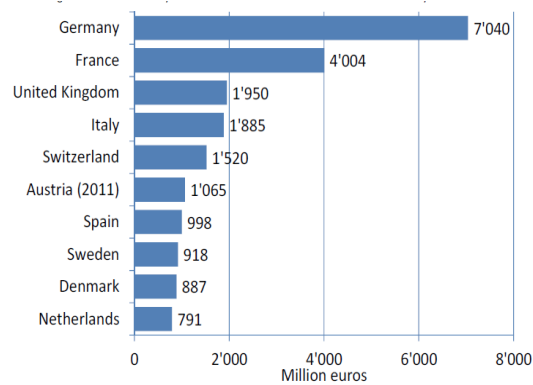


Figure 8. Top ten countries with the highest sales for organic food in Europe (Mil. Euro.)
Source: Willer *et al.*, 2014

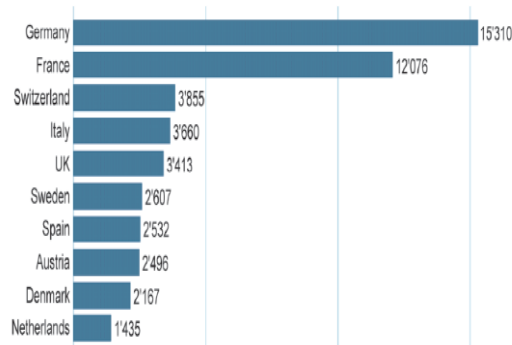


Figure 9. Top ten countries with the highest sales for organic food in Europe (Mil. Euro, 2022)
Source: Willer *et al.*, 2024

In 2012, the highest consumption per capita was in Switzerland (189 Euro), followed by Denmark (159 Euro) and Luxembourg (143 Euro). (Figure 10) (WILLER *et al.*, 2014) In 2022, the highest consumption per capita was also in Switzerland (437 Euro), followed by Denmark (365 Euro) and Austria (274 Euro). (Figure 11) (WILLER *et al.*, 2024)

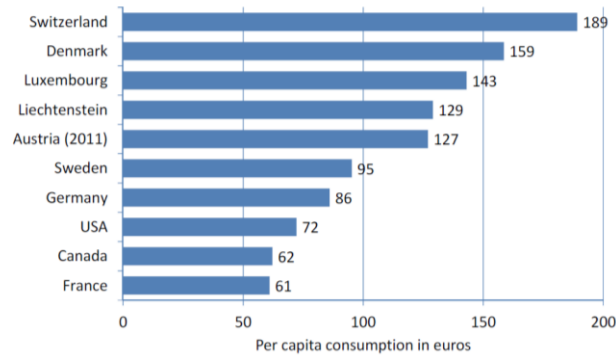


Figure 10. The countries with the highest per capita consumption (Euro) (2012)
Source: Willer *et al.*, 2014

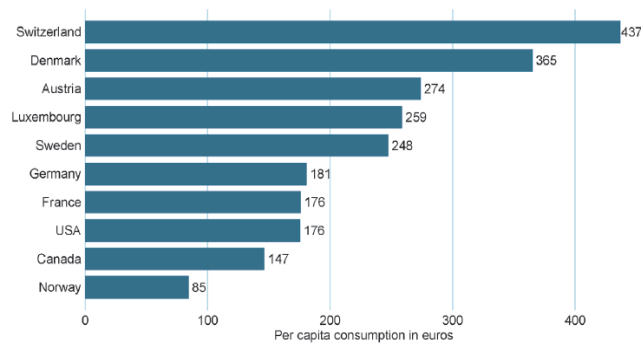


Figure 11. The countries with the highest per capita consumption (Euro) (2022)
Source: Willer *et al.*, 2024

The factors which lead to the growth of the organic food market are: awareness of the health of the population, environmental sustainability, as well as regulations and certifications in the field. These factors have contributed to the growth of this market by: increasing interest in healthy eating and the benefits of organic food in terms of avoiding pesticides and other harmful chemicals; an increased concern for the environment and a desire to support agricultural practices that protect soil, water and biodiversity; the increase in the number of organic certifications and the rigorous standards imposed by regulatory bodies what ensures consumers of the authenticity of organic products.

The challenges of the organic food market are: high costs, distribution and logistics for these products, as well as competition. These challenges come from the fact that: organic farming has higher costs due to labor-intensive methods and required certifications, which is reflected in higher prices for consumers; the need for more sophisticated supply chains to preserve the freshness and quality of organic food products; cheaper conventional agricultural products are a challenge to the growth of the market for organic agri-food products.

In terms of opportunities for the development of this sector, it would be through: technology and innovation, expanding markets and educating consumers. These opportunities would be possible through: the development of new agricultural technologies that can reduce costs and improve yields in organic farming; increasing demand in emerging markets and access to new distribution channels such as e-commerce; awareness and education campaigns

to inform consumers about the benefits of organic products and the positive impact on the environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Organic farming is a sustainable and ecological approach to food production that is gaining ground globally. Despite the challenges of certification, cost and education, the environmental and human health benefits make it an attractive option for the future of agriculture. The continued development of support policies and markets will play a crucial role in the expansion of organic agriculture.

The market for organic food products has grown steadily, from 64 million USD in 2012, to 134.76 million EURO in 2022. (WILLER *et al.*, 2024; WILLER *et al.*, 2014) Demand for organic food remains concentrated in Europe and North America. The country with the largest market for organic products in Europe is Germany with 15.31 million EURO in 2022 from the total sales of 53.07 million Euro and in North America, the country with the largest market is the United States of America with sales of 58.56 million Euros in 2022 out of total sales of 64.36 million Euros. (WILLER *et al.*, 2024; WILLER *et al.*, 2014)

The market for organic agri-food products is in a phase of continuous expansion, being supported by global health and sustainability trends. Despite the challenges, the opportunities for growth are significant, especially in the context of growing demand and technological innovations that can make organic farming more efficient and affordable. The strict regulations and standards will continue to play a crucial role in maintaining the integrity and authenticity of organic products in the global market.

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