

FICHE – ORGANIC FARMING CASE

“ECOPIONET: INNOVATION AND BIOECONOMY IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT”

Data extracted in February 2022

Note to the reader: This set of *fiches – organic farming case* is offering additional information to the meta analysis literature review summarised in *general fiche* and set of *fiches* on the environmental aspects of ORGANIC FARMING SYSTEMS. Each individual case describes an initiative in different parts of organic food systems within the European Union, delivering more detailed information on possible ways to help develop organic systems.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIC SYSTEM

Geographical location	Spain
Geographical level	Region
Description	ECOPIONET is an EIP-AGRI Operational Group that introduces an innovative knowledge exchange methodology based on building a network of diversified actors to improve the actors' knowledge of agroecosystems, new technologies, farm management and commercialisation. It supports farmers to increase their farm profitability whilst simultaneously promoting organic and/or more environmentally-friendly practices that protect the environment and increase the farmers' capacity to adapt to climate change.
Key descriptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of organic farming practices, conversion and marketing to increase farm business profitability • Sharing of knowledge and opinions to support climate adaptation. • Farmer empowerment and capacity building
Production system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive, in the dryland cereal area in Spain's interior, where production has been abandoned massively for various reasons, i.a. climate change. • Pulses (chick peas, lentils, peas), cereals (wheat, maize, oats, buck wheat), grass-fed meat: cows, sheep, goats, chicken
Actors involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 pioneers (conventional farmers that commit to converting to organic farming with help from the ECOPIONET project), 5000+ hectares • 6 technicians of different agricultural professional organizations • 9 tutors (5 to 30 years of experience in organic production and commercialization) • 8 experts from different areas of production and commercialization
Project type	EIP-AGRI Operational group, funded by the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (80%), together with national/regional funding (20%).
Project status/ date of report	2020

2. VISUALS ASSOCIATED TO THE ORGANIC INITIATIVE



3. ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVMENTS OF THE ORGANIC INITIATIVE

Rationale / Motivation for the project	
<p>The development of organic farming was seen as a solution to help address major social and environmental issues faced in cereal-producing areas in Spain's interior : farming abandonment and rural depopulation because of the lack of farm profitability due to factors such as costs of production or climate change, nutrient pollution, drought conditions, increasingly frequent torrential rains, soil degradation...</p>	
Actions	
Knowledge transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a multidisciplinary knowledge exchange network • Organisation of specific training for technical advisors on advanced organic farming concepts • Continuous individual advice for pioneer farmers about production, administrative tasks (certification and subsidies) and commercialisation • Periodic courses, including about the marketing of organic products. • Individual meetings of tutors and pioneers • Technical workshops • Demonstration trials on experimental farms
Creation of producers group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a producers organisation for organic crop, key to achieving greater margins for the production • Creation of a producer association for the marketing of the organic production, to increase member's power in the food chain
Dissemination of the project results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a website • Social media profiles of the project • Articles through media channels • Participation in fairs in Germany and Spain • Drafting of a final report and organisation of a conference
Lessons	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective collaboration amongst different actors requires knowledge, experience and ideas to flow multi-directionally within the network and their contribution must be recognised and valued • Building capacity amongst technical advisors as well as farmers new to organic production or interested in methods to enhance the sustainability of their operations allows for a broad influence and transition within the sector rather than simply enhancing the organic operations that already exist. • Through the network, technical advisors and researchers can provide better and tailored services, responding to the needs of farm holdings and specific sectors. • The creation of producer organisations and associations contributes to improved farm financial performance by providing farmers with greater collective bargaining power when selling or buying their products to intermediary of the supply chain. • Adding value to the sector and providing viable livelihoods from farming help facilitate generational renewal in areas suffering from rural depopulation. 	

4. SOURCES, PROJECT WEBSITE OR DATA COLLECTION ON THE CASE STUDY

ENRD fiche https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/projects-practice/ecopionet-innovation-and-bioeconomy-rural-environment_en

EIP fiche https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/default/files/ecopionet_info_raquel_arroyo_09sept2020-ii.pdf

ECOPIONET project's website <https://pionerosecologicos.net/>

Final report of the ECOPIONET project <https://pionerosecologicos.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Final-Report-of-the-Results-ECOPIONET.pdf>