

## IS ORGANIC FARMING A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN WALLONIA?

Burny, Ph.\* and Debode, F.

*Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, University of Liege, Belgium  
And Walloon Centre for Agricultural Research, Gembloux, Belgium*

\*Corresponding author, e-mail: philippe.burny@ulg.ac.be

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**Introduction:** Organic farming is considered today to be a serious alternative to conventional agriculture, while avoiding soil, water and air pollution and providing healthy food to people. It has developed during the last years in Wallonia (South of Belgium) and plays now a non negligible role in the agricultural economy.

**Aims:** The goal of the paper is to show the evolution of organic farming in Wallonia and to examine the situation of organic products processing and consumption. The political environment is also taken into account in order to see if organic farming could become a tool to contribute to sustainable development in Wallonia.

**Materials and methods:** The paper is mainly based on official statistical data and on the regional strategic development plan for the organic sector.

**Results:** Organic farming in Wallonia mainly developed during the last decade thanks to specific financial support. Today, 7% of the Walloon farmers are involved in organic farming and manage 7% of the agricultural area. They mainly produce bovine meat, milk and cereals. The number of organic products processing units reaches 250, of various size. The market share of organic products in Belgium reaches 1.4% and is slowly increasing. In June 2013, the Walloon regional government adopted an ambitious strategic development plan for the organic sector, aiming to reach 14% of the agricultural area in 2020, 1,750 farmers, 500 processing units and 3.0% of the households food expenses. Research, extension, information and financial support are strengthened.

**Conclusion:** Though limited by technical and economical aspects, organic farming is considered in Wallonia as a tool for sustainable development and is expected to grow in the future, notably thanks to public support.