Deliverable 3.2.
Identify and assess the educational systems related to organic farming

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Document Summary

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P	Public	X
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CI	Classified, as referred to Commission Decision 2001/844/EC	

Type

R	Document, Report	X
DEM	Demonstrator, Pilot, Prototype	
DEC	Websites, Patent Fillings, Videos, etc	
Other	(Please describe the type)	

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Executive Summary

The OrganicAdviceNetwork project aims to strengthen and expand advisory services for organic farming to support the EU's goal of achieving 25% organic farmland by 2030. This report provides an overview of education and training in organic farming and shows pathways for becoming an organic farming advisor.

Task 3.2 of the project aims to evaluate the training and education systems for organic farming advisors across Europe and make suggestion for improvement. As organic agriculture plays an increasingly vital role in food systems, the need for well-trained advisors is growing. However, the pathways to becoming an organic farming advisor vary significantly across countries, in terms of educational background, available training programs, and institutional recognition.

Between November 2024 and April 2025, insights from 14 European countries were gathered through interviews with key stakeholders of the project, including from universities, research institutions, and professional advisory organizations. An interview grid and guidelines about the organic farming training systems were distributed to the core countries of the project. The data were then organised by themes to prepare country profiles for each country and to facilitate cross country comparisons.

The report examines the accessibility, affordability, and effectiveness of these training programs identifying strengths, weaknesses, and highlighting areas for improvement. Ini addition, a comparative analysis of educational pathways, continuous professional training opportunities, and certification requirements for advisors in organic was carried out.

By mapping existing training structures and identifying gaps, this report contributes to the discussion about ways to strengthen training frameworks for advisors in organic farming in Europe. The findings will help policymakers, educational institutions, and advisory services to enhance training programs, ensuring that future advisors have knowledge about organic farming to support the transition towards organic agriculture.

This report reveals significant disparities in education and training systems for organic farming advisors across Europe, which affect accessibility, funding, and regulatory frameworks. There is growing integration of organic farming into school and university curricula. However, for empowering advisors with up-to-date knowledge and skills, continuous professional development appears to be a very important activity. The report also highlights the need for enhanced European cooperation to share best practices, develop common qualification frameworks, and align training efforts with broader agricultural and environmental policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

In summary, while progress is evident in incorporating organic farming in education, challenges remain in harmonizing training pathways and ensuring effective professional development. Strengthening collaboration among countries and embedding organic farming training within EU policies will be key to supporting a competent advisory workforce and advancing the European organic sector.

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Abbreviations

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDAF	Chambers of Agriculture of France
CECRA	Certificate for European Consultants in Rural Areas
CONSULAI	Agricultural and Agroindustrial Consulting Company (PT)
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EQF	European Qualification Framework
FIBL	Research Institute for Organic Agriculture
EU	European Union
HNEE	University for Sustainable Development Eberswalde (DE)
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
IFOAM EU	IFOAM Organics Europe
ITAB	Technical Institute of Organic Agriculture (FR)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MA /MSc	Master of Arts /Master of Science
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
ÖMKI	Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
OrganicTargets4EU	Organic Targets for Europe (Horizon Europe Project)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WP	Work Package

1 Introduction

As part of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Union has set an ambitious target: reaching 25% of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030. Achieving this objective will require the transition of approximately 700,000 farmers to organic practices in the coming years. Such a large-scale transformation demands high-quality technical support, based on a strong network of skilled advisors in organic.

The OrganicAdviceNetwork project addresses this need by building and coordinating a European network of advisors in organic across the 27 EU Member States and seven other European countries. To strengthen advisory services for organic in the EU an assessment of the national and regional educational systems for organic farming was carried out. Integrating organic farming into education programs, developing dedicated learning pathways, and strengthening continuous professional development are key levers for fostering a new generation of competent advisors and keeping existing advisors informed. By supporting these efforts, the project actively contributes to the transformation of European agricultural systems toward greater sustainability.

The objectives of Work Package 3 (WP3), "*Analyse Advisors in Organic Services and Collect Promising Business Models*," are to analyse and strengthen advisors in organic services and to inform and support public policymaking in the field of organic farming advisory services.

The task 3.2 ***"identify and assess the educational systems related to organic farming"*** contributes to that the goal of strengthening the organic farming advisory network by evaluating:

- The educational paths to provide advice in organic farming.
- The training for continuous professional development of advisors in organic.
- Institutions that provide education & training.

The assessment of education systems is carried out in 14 EU countries (AT, BE, BG, CH, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, PT, RO).

It is important to define the key terms used in this report to ensure a shared understanding of the scope. The *"educational system"* refers to the structured set of pathways, institutions, and actors involved in the transmission of knowledge, skills, and qualifications related to organic farming. It includes all kinds of education structures, such as general, vocational, technical and apprenticeships, and continuous professional development. It also encompasses private and public structures, free or chargeable.

In this report, "*educational systems*" encompasses all types of education and training. However, to improve clarity in this deliverable, a distinction will be made between **initial education pathways**, which refer to long and primarily academic programs that lead to a certain level of qualification through a diploma, and **continuous professional development (CPD)**, which includes vocational training—generally one or two days to a few weeks—designed to complement a diploma and strengthen specific technical skills.

"Related to organic farming" includes all training with at least one specific course on organic farming, but the focus is on specialized education and training. It is important to note that while educational systems appear relatively permanent, educational offers are subject to change. There is a network of active university members who are teaching organic agriculture and agroecology in European universities and colleges that aims to foster the improvement of such teaching and learning. The network meets annually and offers[1]. However, as priorities and trends shift so do university degrees, and training courses. There examples of training institutions that replaced organic agriculture with sustainable agriculture (e.g. MSc Organic Farming at SRUC in the UK now changed to MSc Sustainability in Agriculture and Business) or agroecology (see for example Degrees in ISARA). While the changes sometimes appear to be limited to the name of the program (Master Organic Agriculture now called Resilient Food Systems at Wageningen University in the Netherlands), but not the content, looking into the actual teaching content in detail is beyond the scope of this deliverable.

The following document describes and summarizes the results of our empirical research. Together with the key finding of 3.1 "Assess CAP strategic plans and support measures for advisors in organic services" claims will be developed and evaluated in national workshops and a SWOT-Analysis of the advisors in organic system (Task 3.4), which then in turn will be used for a draft for actions for actors in advisors in organic services (Task 4.1) and policy recommendation (Task 4.2). Finally, this will culminate into an Action Plan for strengthening advisors in organic services (Task 4.3).

[1] https://enoat.chil.me/

2 Context: existing data and methodology of data collection

To identify and document training pathways for advisors in organic farming in Europe, the characteristics of effective education in this field were first outlined. Data was then collected and analysed for each of the 14 participating countries (AT, BE, BG, CH, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, PT, RO). The method was based on insights provided by both national experts and key bibliographic sources, ensuring a consistent framework for understanding the different systems. This approach offers readers a structured overview of each national context, allowing independent cross-country comparisons to be made based on the compiled information later in the report. Although interesting, it is beyond the scope of this assessment to evaluate the quality of education that is delivered, instead, we focused on providing an overview on what exists.

2.1 Existing data

No major studies were found specifically on training and education in organic farming in Europe, and national studies were available only in some countries (France, Spain, Germany, Italy).

The development of the framework drew on a range of bibliographic resources, including studies carried out at the European level. They were especially valuable for deepening the understanding of national systems, particularly when focussing on specific countries (e.g., Organic Sector and AKIS Country factsheets of the project OrganicTargets4EU). This provided the basis for the subsequent analysis by compiling existing knowledge and identifying key themes in advisors in organic training across Europe and in each Member State

OrganicTargets4EU[2]

This project aims to support the achievement of the objective set by the European "Farm to Fork" strategy: to dedicate 25% of European agricultural land to organic farming by 2030. It analyses the development of the organic sector and likely future scenarios, carries out research in relation to production, markets and the knowledge and innovation system and develops recommendations aimed at policy makers and the sector (see Nagy et al..2023; Lampkin et al., 2024; Reinecke et al., 2024 and Padel et al., 2025). It offers organic sector and AKIS country profiles published by the project as well as some deliverables.

I2Connect[3]

This network promotes the development of skills and the networking of agricultural advisors in Europe, supporting innovation and developing a broader network and momentum of change enabling a new culture of bottom-up led innovation. It offers an inventory of advisory practices and facilitates the exchange of good practices around advice with some examples also from organic farming.

[2] https://organictargets.eu/

[3] https://i2connect-h2020.eu/

EU CAP Network[4]

This network structures and disseminates the opportunities resulting from the CAP and from Horizon Europe research to farmers and their advisors, including in the field of organic farming. It facilitates the implementation and testing of innovative solutions through operational groups as part of EIP AGRI. Based on an 'interactive innovation' model, bringing together project partners to turn practical problems and creative ideas into innovative solutions, including projects supporting organic farming. Overall literature on organic farming education, training and advisory services is limited. Regarding the country-specific bibliographical resources, additional literature research was also conducted by CDAF, complementing the sources provided by the European partners. The bibliographic sources for each country are cited following the results and the 14 country profiles.

2.2 Data collection: the interview grid and guidelines

Based on the literature an interview grid and guidelines were designed to further investigate the training systems for organic farming advisors in the 14 core countries of the OrganicAdviceNetwork project. The objective of the approach is to better understand:

- how agricultural training pathways are structured, with a focus on organic farming
- the level, accessibility, and affordability of training courses
- and to assess each national system through looking at its strengths and weaknesses.

Our method combines national literature and expert interviews, to capture national specificities and recent developments.

The interview grid and guidelines were co-developed in an iterative process by CDAF, HNEE, ÖMKi, and IFOAM EU through a series of collaborative meetings and exchanges. They were tested in five pilot countries (FR, DE, IT, BG, EE) between November 2024 and January 2025. Feedback helped refining both structure and content. The final version sent to all 14 countries from February to March 2025. Each national partner completed the grid using insights from national literature and expert interviews; responses were received by April 2025. Validation of data and findings was carried out by national partners in July/August 2025. We did not ask national partners to evaluate the quality of education that is delivered.

The interview grid (Appendix) is organised around five key themes:

1. Educational background before becoming an advisor in organic farming
2. Continuous professional development
3. Requirements to be recognised as an advisor in organic farming
4. General knowledge on organic farming and national education systems
5. Evaluation of training quality and system effectiveness

[4] https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/index_en

3 Results – Country profiles

The following country profiles of the education and training of advisors in organic farming were produced using information provided by the 14 Member States involved in the OrganicAdviceNetwork project, as well as additional research on the training systems in each country.

Each country profile is structured in the same way:

- An introduction including some key figures on agricultural and organic activity from 2023 (or most recent year for which data were available), based on Eurostat[5] and FiBL statistics[6]
- A figure showing the different educational pathways of advisors in organic farming, with the corresponding EQF (European Qualification Framework[7]) level indicated below each training program.
- A table listing degrees in organic farming/agroecology
- An introduction paragraph on continuous professional development
- A table listing the institutions offering continuous professional development g education in organic agriculture. Organizations that offer continuous professional development only focused on organic agriculture are shown in **green** in the respective tables.
- A paragraph describing the "typical" educational path of an organic farming advisor, and whether a certain level of training or certification is required to work as an advisor in organic.
- A short section on what the research and policy framework (including Organic Action Plans) states about training of advisors in organic (based on Lampkin et al., 2024 and national documents).
- A table summarising the strengths and weaknesses of the education and training system based on responses received from each country.

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/org_cropar/default/table?lang=en, accessed in Sept 2025

[6] https://statistics.fibl.org/europe/key-indicators.html, accessed in Sept. 2025.

[7] European Qualification Framework : The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an 8-level, learning outcomes-based reference framework that helps make qualifications more understandable and comparable across European countries by serving as a translation tool between different national qualification system

3.1 Austria

With more than a quarter of its Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) in organic, Austria is a leading country in Europe in terms of organic farmland, though not necessarily in production volume. Organic farming is well integrated into both agricultural policy and the education system. The country benefits from a nationally harmonised training framework, covering both initial education and continuous professional development, and supported by a wide network of vocational schools, universities, and agricultural chambers.

Table 1 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Austria

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	2.6 million ha - 40% of the total surface of Austria	
Number of agricultural holdings	101 040	25 530 in organic
Average farm size	23 ha	
Area under organic farming	701 161 ha	27.3% of UAA

3.1.1 Initial education pathways

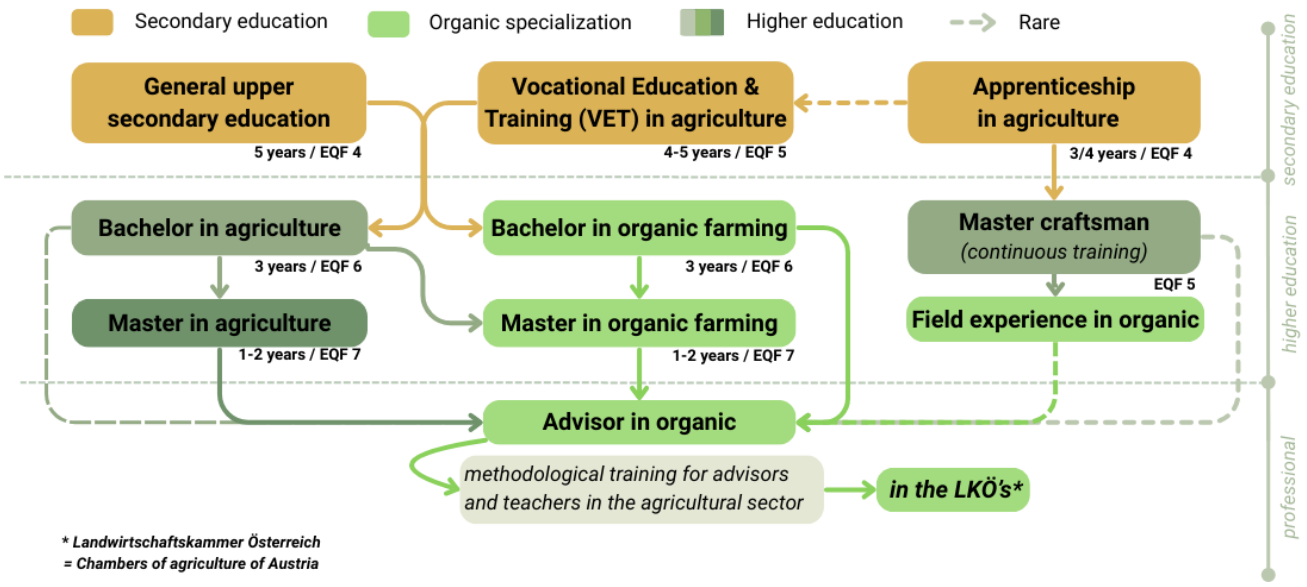

Figure 1 Education pathways in Austria

Table 2 Degrees in organic farming in Austria

Degree	University name	Degree name
Master	Boku University	Organic agriculture systems and agroecology Partner in European Master on Organic Agriculture https://www.eur-organic.eu/en

3.1.2 Continuous professional development

In Austria, the training of advisors in organic agriculture is primarily coordinated by national institutions and supported by strong governmental policies. Educational and vocational programs are offered by organizations such as Bio Austria and the Rural Training Institute (LFI), with a significant portion of training courses subsidized by public funds. These programs are designed to enhance expertise in organic farming practices, focusing on current regulations, sustainable techniques, and on-farm processing. Advisory services benefit from close collaboration between organic associations and the chambers of agriculture, ensuring a well-established network for knowledge exchange and capacity building. However, there remain challenges such as limited resources for specialized training and a need for increased integration of research and practice to further strengthen advisor competencies.

Table 3 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Austria

Status	Organisation name	Training format
Public organisations	Chambers of agriculture (LKO)	In-house training
	Rural training Institute (LFI) (affiliated with LKO)	Online courses, seminars, in-person workshops
Universities/ Schools	HAUP: University of Agricultural and environmental Pedagogy (Vienna)	Online courses, MOOCs
	BOKU University	Online courses
	Bioschule Schlägl	In-person courses, conferences
Other	BIO Austria association	Annual workshops, in-person training
Accessibility of the continuous training: Most training offers are free of charge or funded by the employer		

3.1.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

In Austria, becoming an independent organic farming advisor does not require any formal diploma. However, becoming an advisor in organic without any diploma remains marginal in practice. Most advisors work within public organizations, particularly the Chambers of Agriculture of Austria. In these structures/organizations, recruitment typically requires either a vocational agricultural diploma or a relevant university degree. Additionally, all new advisors must complete a mandatory pedagogical training delivered by the HAUP (University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy).

In some regions, such as Lower Austria, it is even compulsory for agricultural advisors working within the Chambers of Agriculture to complete a minimum number of training hours per year. In Lower Austria, at least 16 hours are required annually, with a target of 25 hours.

3.1.4 Research and policy framework

Austrian Organic Action Plan 2015–2020[1] requires advisors to be:

- Technically qualified (via vocational or university diploma).

- Pedagogically trained (trained in extension approaches) (via HAUP).
- Emphasis on professionalized, dual**-competence** advisory services.

No dedicated research was identified on organic training for advisors.

Table 4 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Austria

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Nationally regulated and harmonised training programs including consistent content, exams, and internship requirements High quality standards regardless of the training institution or region	Lack of specialists to teach in certain key areas (e.g. agroforestry, organic fruit production): reliance on foreign experts. No officially recognized diploma specifically for organic farming advisors Weak international expert networks, limiting knowledge exchange Territorial disparities in access to training opportunities

3.2 Belgium

In Belgium, organic farming has evolved in remarkably different ways between Wallonia (W) and Flanders (F). Both regions manage their own agricultural policy within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy. In Wallonia, a significant share of farms is certified organic, with a substantial portion of its agricultural land under organic cultivation. In contrast, Flanders shows considerably lower rates, with only a small fraction of farms and agricultural land certified organic. While the overall area devoted to organic agriculture in Belgium continues to grow, its pace of expansion has recently stabilized. Moreover, specialized training opportunities in organic farming remain limited nationwide.

Table 5 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Belgium

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	1.36 million ha - 44% of total surface of Belgium			
Number of agricultural holdings	36 000 (2020)		2 639 in organic	
Average size of farms	38,7 ha			
Area under organic farming	102 359 ha	7.5% of UAA	F: 1.5%	W: 13%

Flanders

Flanders has a distinct agricultural profile compared to Wallonia. While Belgium as a whole, has seen moderate growth in organic farming, the expansion in Flanders has been relatively modest. Organic agriculture represents a small but steadily growing share of the regional farming sector, supported by both EU policies and Flemish-specific initiatives. Despite its dense population and intensive conventional agriculture, Flanders has developed dedicated strategies to promote organic practices,

including subsidies, advisory services, and training programs, often in collaboration with research institutions and farmer's organizations. Continued efforts are made to improve market development, knowledge transfer, and the professionalization of the organic sector.

Wallonia

Wallonia has the most developed organic farming in Belgium. However, it does not offer any specific degree in organic agriculture, which makes it difficult to integrate new advisors in organic. Continuous professional development is relatively well developed, but the structure of support for advisors in organic farming is less well developed, with limited resources to train specialized advisors. Some initiatives have been or are being implemented to better orient advisor training toward organic practices, but they remain limited.

3.2.1 Initial education pathways

Belgium is a federal state, and the educational system is decentralized, and there are differences between Flanders and Wallonia in organic education.
In Flanders, there is no University-level training specifically dedicated to organic farming, which makes it difficult to educate future organic farming advisors. To pursue such education, Flemish students have two main options:7 either study in the Netherlands, where the language is the same, or in the French-speaking Walloon region, with only one degree on agroecology.
In Wallonia, organic farming is more widespread, but specialized education in organic agriculture remains limited. There is not any focused educational program in organic farming, but there is an inter-universitymaster on agroecology at the ULB (University of Brussels), ULg (University of Liège) and AgroParisTech, University in France. The program only includes a few courses focussing on organic practices. Most advisors in organic follow a practical path: they often come from organic farming families, which helps build trust with farmers and complete a degree (bachelor level). To increase awareness and integration of organic topics in education, Biowallonie together with the government support, launched an initiative to connect students and teachers with organic farms—through internships, teacher training, and networking with organic experts.

Table 6 Degrees in organic farming in Belgium

Degree	University name	Degree name
Master	ULB (University of Brussels), ULg (University of Liège) and AgroParisTech (Paris, France)	Agroecology

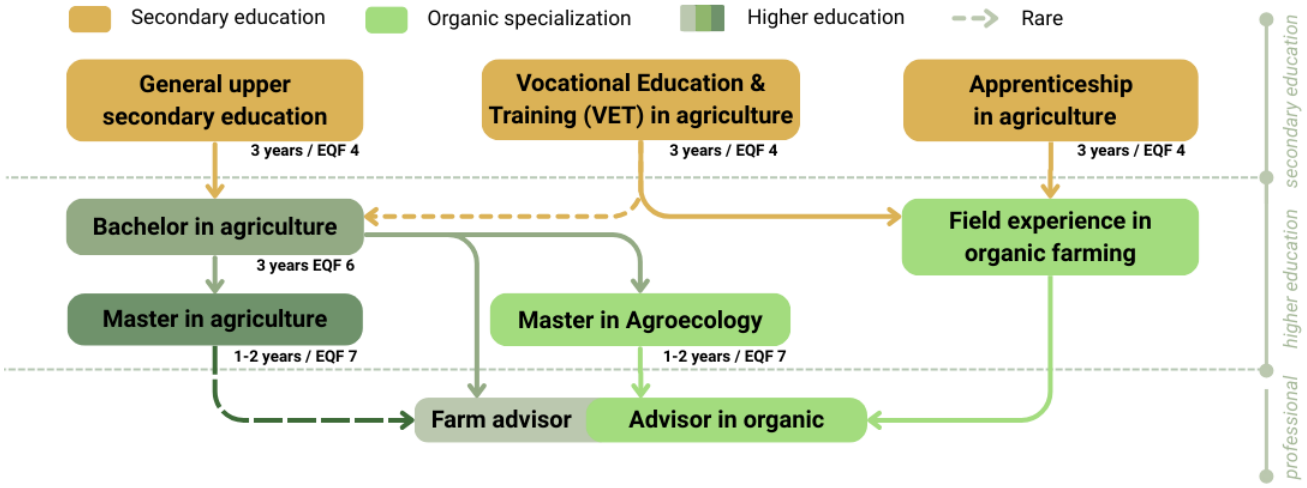

Figure 2 Education pathways in Belgium

3.2.2 Continuous professional development

There is no mandatory training requirement for advisors in organic in Flanders. However, this will change in **2025** with the introduction of the "Kennisportefeuille" system, which will link **subsidised advisory services to accreditation** by the Flemish government. Although training is not yet compulsory, this reform will encourage advisors to follow recognised training to remain eligible for public funding.

In Wallonia, there is also no mandatory training required for organic farm advisors. Biowallonie provides a platform listing all available training programs in organic agriculture [8]. However, the overall training offer remains limited, and some advisors choose to pursue training in France, where there are more options available and no language barriers.

Table 7 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Belgium

Region	Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility
F	Independent training organisation	Landwijzer (Organic and Biodynamic Farming Training Centre)	Thematic training for organic farmers (e.g., phytolicense)	Paid, sometimes reimbursed via training funds
		Agrosymbio	Training in agroecology / regenerative farming for farmers and other professionals	Paid (varies by program), reimbursement possible
F	Research organisations	Inagro, Viaverda, PSKW, pcfruit, ILVO	Workshops, seminars, webinars, field visits (sometimes specifically for organic farmers)	Generally free or partially subsidised
F	Organic coordination centre	CCBT (Coordination Centre for Organic	Workshops, seminars, webinars, field visits, study trips abroad	Mostly subsidised, small participation fee

[8] https://formations.biowallonie.net/etablissement/

		Agriculture and Horticulture)		
F	Umbrella organization	Bioforum	Cross visit	
W/F	Public training	IFAPME	organic market garden	280 euros
W	Association	Biowallonie	Reglementation booklets, seminars	Varied costs
W	Association	CRABE (Research and Outreach Cooperation of Eastern Walloon Brabant)	Short term courses	
F means Flanders and W means Wallonia				

3.2.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

In the two regions of Belgium, different systems exist. In Flanders, there is currently no formal accreditation or minimum educational requirement to become an agricultural or advisors in organic. However, from 2025 onwards, the new system called *"Kennisportefeuille"* (see above) will be introduced. It will allocate each farmer a fixed budget for training and advisory services (2,000 euros for 2 years), which farmers can use for advice and training of their choice from a range of approved services. To be eligible for this subsidy, advisory providers and their services must be officially accredited by the Flemish government, and non-impartial companies will be excluded from this framework.

In Wallonia, advisory providers can obtain official recognition (agrément) from the regional government. This recognition requires relevant qualifications or professional experience and is granted for a renewable five-year period. In addition, regular calls for training projects are launched by the Walloon authorities, providing funding for programs that meet quality criteria and address sector needs.

3.2.4 Research and policy framework

FORK-network: Flemish Organic Research & Knowledge network

This is a coordinated initiative led by Bioforum, CCBT, and ILVO's Living Lab for Organic Farming & Agroecology. The aim is to strengthen the organic farming knowledge network and to promote research on organic agriculture within universities. The project fosters collaboration between farmers, researchers, advisors, and policymakers to support innovation and sustainability in the organic sector.

Development Plan for Organic Production in Wallonia by 2030

This ambitious regional plan aims to achieve 30% of Wallonia's utilized agricultural area under organic control by 2030. Biowallonie serves as the central coordinating body within this framework, tasked with professional support, sector development, information dissemination, and the implementation of a dedicated "Professional Bio Training" public contract awarded in 2023 to Biowallonie, CRABE, and FormaForm. However, the plan does not specifically address the training of organic farming

advisors as a distinct professional category, focusing instead on broader professional development across the entire organic value chain - from producers to distributors and catering professionals.

In this organic farming development plan, training-related actions are outlined under the section titled "Actions under the Education and Vocational Training levers":

- Generalize the inclusion of organic production methods in vocational programs
- Train and equip instructors and internship supervisors in organic production
- Promote awareness of training opportunities in organic production

Table 8 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Belgium

Strengths	Weaknesses
Initiatives for the organic research & knowledge	No officially recognized diploma specifically for organic farming advisors Very little/no space for organic farming in educational degrees Territorial disparities in access to training opportunities

3.3 Bulgaria

Bulgaria has one of the lowest shares of organic agricultural area in the EU, but it has shown growth of 34% since 2022. The country stands out for having the EU's lowest pesticide and fertilizer use, reflecting both less intensive traditions and strong environmental priorities. Education in organic farming remains limited: several specialized degree programs have been discontinued due to insufficient student interest, and currently only one master's program in Organic Agriculture is available at Trakia University. Most advisors come from general agricultural backgrounds rather than specialized organic education. Nonetheless, the sector is gradually expanding, with national policies beginning to promote better training and knowledge exchange, while consumer demand for organic products continues to rise. Bulgaria is also a leader in organic honey and aromatic plants, showing potential for future growth, even as education and advisory systems are still developing.

Table 9 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Bulgaria

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	5 million ha – 45% of the total surface of Bulgaria	
Number of agricultural holdings	107 630	4 436 in organic
Average size of farms	70 ha	
Area under organic farming	147 294 ha	2.95% of UAA

3.3.1 Initial education pathways

In Bulgaria, initial education in organic farming has experienced significant changes over recent years. While several specialized education programs in organic agriculture were previously available, the

most prominent of these at the Agricultural University of Plovdiv was discontinued due to insufficient student interest. Currently, the only remaining program is the master degree in Organic Agriculture at Trakia University, as listed in the table. Most of the existing advisors come from backgrounds in general agronomy or conventional crop production, rather than with a dedicated education in organic agriculture.

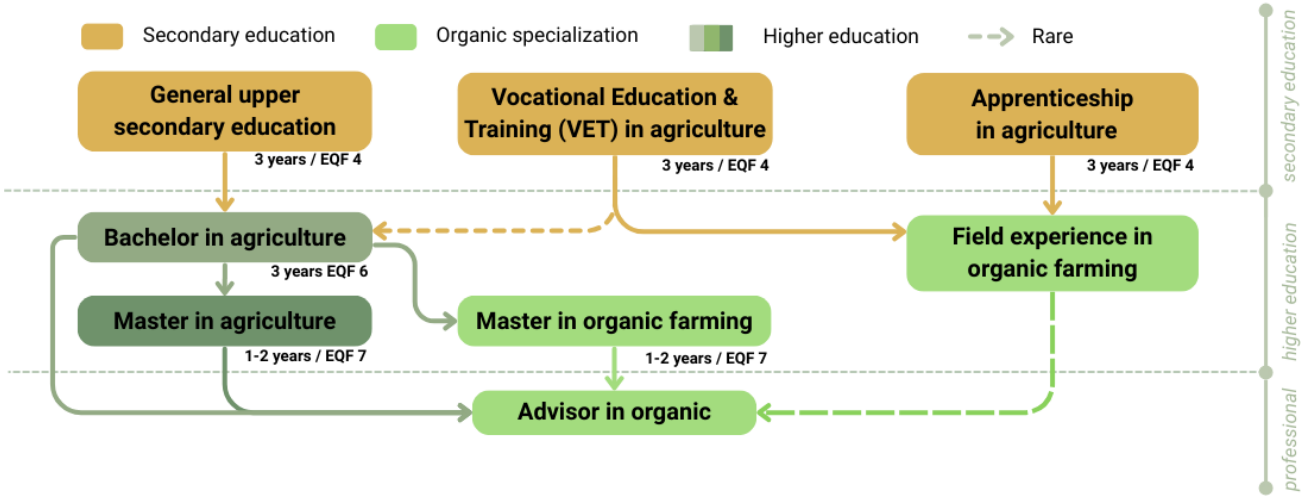

Figure 3 Education pathways in Bulgaria

Table 10 Degrees in organic farming in Bulgaria

Degree	University name	Degree name
Master	Trakia university	Organic agriculture

3.3.2 Continuous professional development

Continuous professional development in organic farming is still underdeveloped in Bulgaria. Only one major association (Bioselena) is known to provide professional training for organic farming advisors. The National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS) has a training centre for advisors but not focused on organic farming. However, the training of advisors in organic is one of the stated objectives of Bulgaria's National Organic Farming Plan (see below).

Table 11 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Bulgaria

Status	Organisation name	Training Format	Accessibility
NGO	Bioselena	Workshops, seminars, online courses	Fees
National organisation	National agricultural advisory service	Seminars and workshops Training centre	Free

3.3.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

There is currently **no formal requirement** to become an advisor in organic. Agricultural advisors commonly have at least a bachelor or master in relevant fields, such as agriculture, agricultural economics, plant or animal sciences, or veterinary medicine.

Advisors who work for the **National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS)** must have university-level degree. But NAAS mainly provides administrative advice on subsidies and regulatory paperwork, rather than specialized technical support in organic farming. Organic producers seeking more detailed technical guidance often turn to NGOs or specialized training programs outside the public advisory system.

3.3.4 Research and policy framework

National Organic Action Plan 2025–2030: Endorsed in 2025, aligns with EU goals. It includes:

- Consultancy and enhancing capacity within the framework of the intervention budget amounting 9 500 000€.
- Creation of an organic knowledge centre.
- Focus on upskilling/advisor exchanges and demonstration activities.
- Encourage training by vocational centres, NGOs, and universities.
- Integration of organic food in public procurement – all food delivery and catering services must have min. 3% organic products, increasing with 1% every year until reaching 10% in 2032.
- School milk and school fruits and vegetable schemes should offer at least 18% organic.

Table 12 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Bulgaria

Strengths	Weaknesses
Organic production is considered a priority sector in agriculture and receives extra evaluation points in funding programs for young farmers, new entrants, and small farms.	Lack of dedicated education & training is provide advisors in organic

3.4 Croatia

Supported by EU policies and national initiatives, Croatia has shown a growing interest in the development of organic farming, but it faces difficulties in the development of advisory services in organic farming, notably because 70% of the farmers cultivate less than 5 ha. The advisory network in agriculture, and especially in organic agriculture, is not enough developed and lacks training.

Table 13 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Croatia

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	1.5 Mha (2020) – 26.5% of the total surface of Croatia	
Number of agricultural holdings	146 840	6 274 in organic
Average size of farms	~11 ha	
Area under organic farming	119'873 ha	8% of UAA

3.4.1 Initial education pathways

Agricultural education in Croatia can start at the secondary level through vocational programs, and some of them include modules on sustainable agriculture or organic production. Education in organic agriculture is developed in Croatia compared to the size of the organic sector in the country. Several bachelors and masters are fully dedicated to organic agriculture.

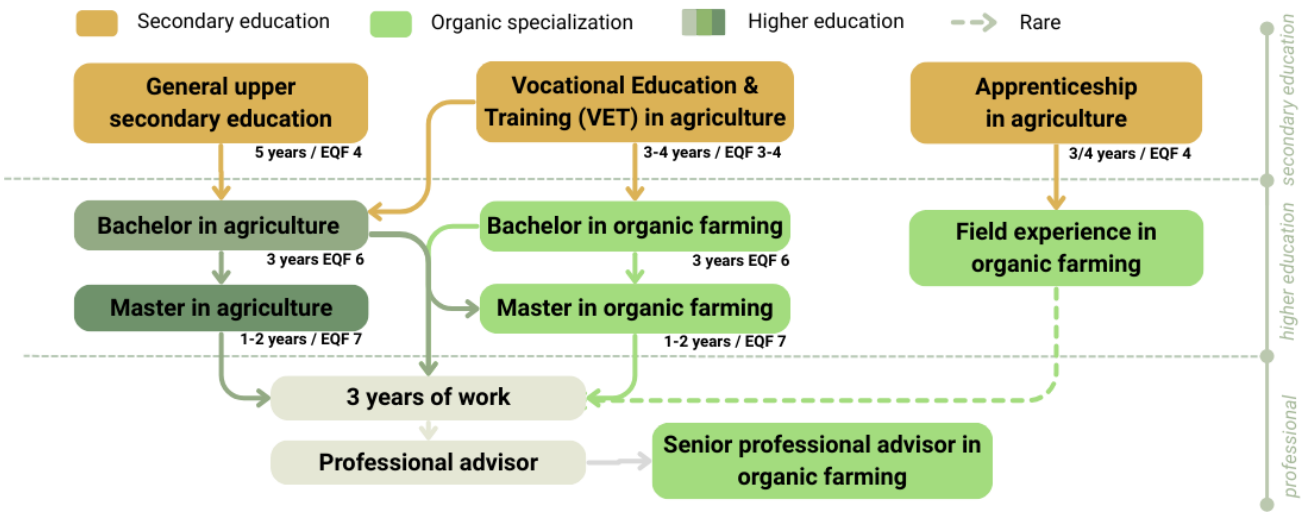

Figure 4 Education pathways in Croatia

Table 14 Degrees in organic farming in Croatia

Degree	University name	Degree name
Bachelor	University of Zagreb	Organic agriculture
Master	University of Krizevci	Agriculture/Sustainable & organic agriculture
Master	University of Zagreb	Agroecology/sustainable farming
Master	University of Zagreb	Organic agriculture with agrotourism
Master	University of Osijek	Organic agriculture

3.4.2 Continuous professional development

There is no real structure of continuous professional development in Croatia. Advisors in organic do not have a formal job title, and there is no official training program for them. A small group of general agricultural advisors created an informal working group related to organic farming, but they have many other general tasks. Organic farmers only receive training from time to time, usually through ad-hoc courses or by attending conferences and fairs on their own. Some universities and organizations like the Avalon Foundation or the Rudolf Steiner Centre sometimes offer short training, but these are not regular or coordinated.

Table 15 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Croatia

Status	Organisation name	Training Format	Accessibility
Association	SEASN (Southeast European Network of advisory services)	In person courses, workshops, seminars, other events, educational training	-
	HSEP (Croatian Association of organic manufacturers)	Network of Croatian association organizing in person training courses, events	Often free of charge
	ZMAG The Green Network of Activist Groups	Seminars, conferences on agroecology, educational booklet	Often free of charge

3.4.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

Advisors recruited to work in public institutions such as the agricultural chambers do require at least a degree in agronomy, food science or veterinary science, but there is no additional accreditation from the agricultural chamber. After a minimum of 3 years of work, they are authorized to work as professional advisors. Only a portion of professional and senior professional advisors decide to advise farmers on organic production alongside their other duties. There is no additional requirement or accreditation for advice in organic.

3.4.4 Research and policy framework

Croatia's organic farming strategy is supported by one national and some Regional Action Plans:

National Action Plan for Organic Agriculture (2023–2030):

- Targets better training for organic producers.
- 12% of the UAA under organic farming by 2030
- Plans to formalize and strengthen the advisory system with specialized advisors.

Zagreb County Action Plan (until 2030):

- Provides training through seminars, study visits, and demo farms
- Includes education for schools, municipalities, and tourism actors to support organic food use

Table 16 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Croatia

Strengths	Weaknesses
Lot of educational programs for students in organic farming	No dedicated public structure for advisors in organic Lack of specialized organic experts Regional disparities in training efforts

3.5 Denmark

Denmark stands above the European average of organic farming area, but area development has stagnated since 2020 and has even slightly declined, indicating a slowdown in the growth of the sector. Advisory services in organic mirror the general advisory structures with 29 independent advisory centres that are owned and controlled by one or several local farmers associations. All regional centres are members of the umbrella DAAS (Danish Agricultural Advisory Service). SEGES, the Danish knowledge centre for agriculture, works as the connecting link to university research and education. For the organic sector these functions are provided by ICOEL (Innovation Centre for Organic Farming) with links to research, trials and the collection and dissemination of knowledge. There is public support for organic conversion, including a conversion check service that is free to farmers.

Table 17 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Denmark

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	2.6 million ha - 60.4% of the total surface of Denmark	
Number of agricultural holdings (2022)	37 090	4 095 in organic
Average farm size	83 ha	
Area under organic farming	298 939 ha	11.5% of UAA

3.5.1 Initial education pathways

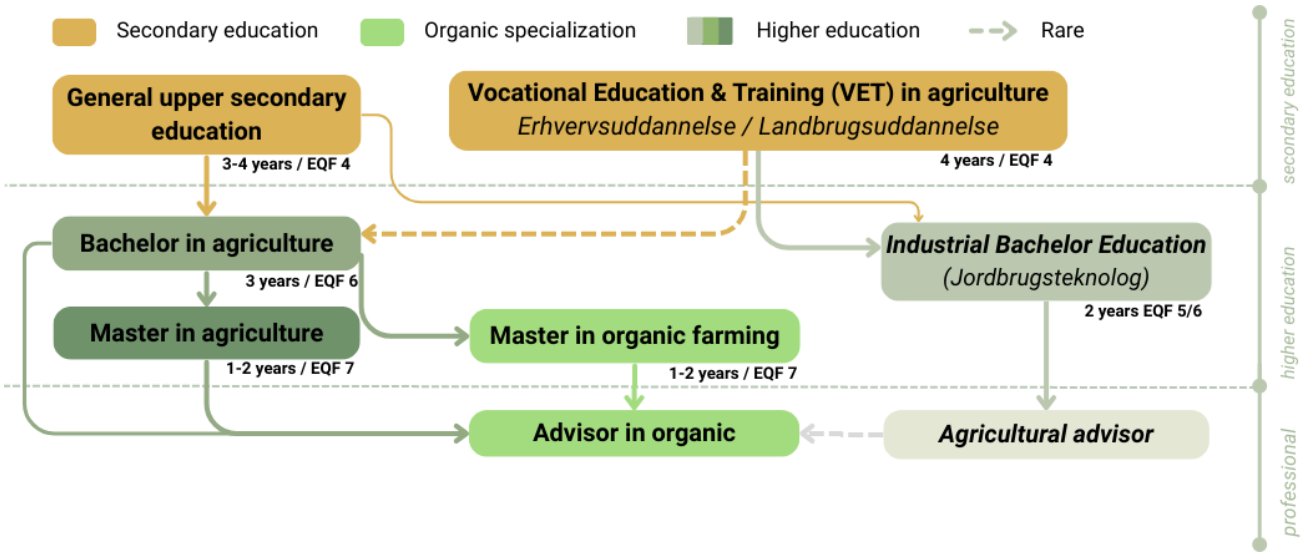

Figure 5 Education pathways in Denmark

Table 18 Degrees in organic farming in Denmark

Degree	University name	Degree name
Master	Aarhus University	Agrobiology, organic agriculture

3.5.2 Continuous professional development

Continuous professional development in Denmark is characterized by its flexibility and demand-driven nature. There is no mandatory national requirement for advisors to complete a specific number of training hours per year, but professional development is strongly encouraged and often funded by employers. Advisory organizations, such as SEGES Innovation (Danish Agricultural Advisory Service) and ICOEL (Innovation Centre for Organic Farming) regularly organize short courses, thematic sessions, and peer-learning opportunities tailored to the needs identified by advisors or advisory companies. Courses typically cost between 300 and 500 euros per day, but participation is mostly covered by the employer. Some government-supported meetings to update advisors on specific issues are offered free of charge.

Table 19 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Denmark

Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility
Research and knowledge centres	ICOEL (Innovation Centre for Organic Farming)	Thematic workshops, peer learning	~300–500 EUR/day; paid by advisory companies. Not state-funded.
	SEGES Innovation (Danish Agricultural Advisory Service)	Courses, demand-based internal sessions, workshops	Some free public sessions, or usually paid by the employer

3.5.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

Even though there is no specific requirement or accreditation to become an advisor in organic in Denmark, it has long been preferable to hold at least a bachelor or master in agriculture. Today, an increasing number of advisors in organic come from industrial bachelor programs in agriculture (*jordbrugsteknolog*) that provide strong technical training, and students complete practical field projects over two years.

3.5.4 Research and policy framework

Denmark has been working with Organic Action Plans since 1995, longer than any other country. The Organic Action Plan for 2011–2020 was updated in 2015. It encouraged the inclusion of organic farming topics in both primary schools and agricultural training programs.

The current **National Growth Plan for Organic** (2020–2030) has many objectives. Several of them support training, advisory services, and skill development in organic farming. Public subsidies help fund continuous education and conversion support.

Table 20 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Denmark

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong emphasis on education and training in organic farming in the National Action Plan	Graduates from the universities too theorical, lack of practical experience Too few additional training opportunities for advisors

3.6 Estonia

Estonia is a small country having one of the highest shares of organic farming area in the European Union, with strong growth from less than 1% of UAA in organic in 2000 to 22,8% in 2023. However, growth has stagnated in the past four years. at the same time, Estonia does not offer any degrees related to organic farming in the general educational system. Opportunities for continuous professional development are available, though.

Table 21 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Estonia

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	987 790 ha - 21% of the total surface of Estonia	
Number of agricultural holdings	10 700	1 968 in organic
Average farm size	91 ha (highest size after Czech Republic)	
Area under organic farming	225 256 ha	22.8% of the UAA

3.6.1 Initial education pathways

Although Estonia has one of the highest shares of organic agricultural land in Europe, there are no formal degree programs specifically dedicated to organic farming. Organic agriculture is covered as a topic in curricula of Estonian University of Life Sciences (EULS) and vocational schools, but it is not

the main subject. Agricultural advisors working with organic farmers are trained through general agricultural faculties, such as those at the EULS or gain their expertise through practical experience following technical education. Most organic advisors work with both conventional and organic farms. In addition, some researchers and experienced organic farmers provide organic advice, reflecting the integrated structure of agricultural training and advisory services in the country.

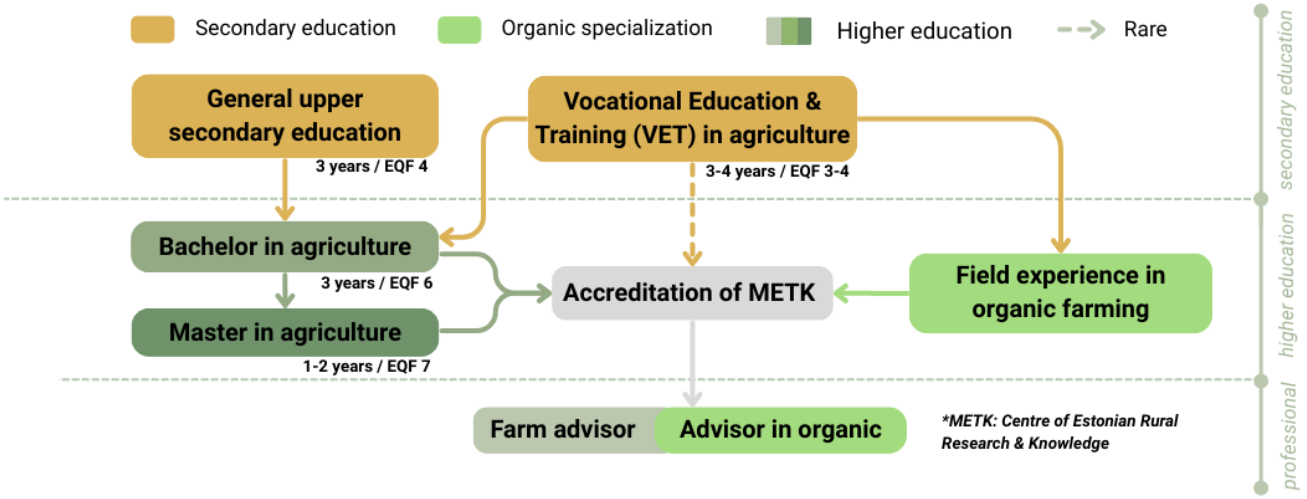

Figure 6 Education pathways in Estonia

3.6.2 Continuous professional development

There is a lack of dedicated training for advisors in organic farming. Most continuous professional development takes place through CAP supported knowledge-transfer activities which are open to both organic farmers and advisors. These trainings have been implemented through organic farming knowledge-transfer program for 2016–2019. From 2021 to 2024, organic farming knowledge-transfer activities continued under the Knowledge Transfer Program for Agriculture, Food and the Rural Economy, with the organic component coordinated by the Organic Farming Platform. From 2025 there is a new program. Advisors also attend general trainings offered by METK (Center of Estonian Rural Research and knowledge) and EULS, including sessions on soft skills. These trainings are generally free and accessible but are not tailored to the specific needs of organic advisors.

Table 22 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Estonia

Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility
Association	**Estonian organic farming platform** (in cooperation with its member organisations: Estonian organic farming foundation & the centre for ecological engineering)	Courses, seminars, workshops, study trips	Free, supported by EU CAP, except for study trips
Delegation of the minister of rural affairs and Agriculture	METK (Center of Estonian Rural Research and knowledge)	Training programs, courses, workshops, study trips	
University	Estonian University of Life Sciences – Open University	Courses, non-formal modules, micro-degrees	Some support from EU CAP, or paid by participants

3.6.3 Requirement to become an advisor in organic

Organic farming is not recognized as a distinct specialty under Estonia's agricultural advisor qualification standards (levels V–VII). To provide CAP-supported services, advisors must be accredited and listed by METK (Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge), under the Ministry of Rural Affairs, in a national list of advisors[9]. Since 2025, experienced sector professionals (such as farmers, scientists and lecturers) have also been eligible for inclusion in this national list. This change has broadened the pool of experts who can provide CAP-supported advice. All who are in the national list of advisors must complete 24 hours of training annually.

3.6.4 Research and policy framework

Estonian National Action Plan for organic farming

The plan highlights the need to develop training for advisors in organic farming and to establish a mentoring system for both producers and advisors in the sector. It also sets a target of having at least 20 mentors/advisors in organic farming by 2030. However, no concrete steps have yet been taken to develop such training for advisors.

Training Program for Developing the Next Generation of Advisors[10]

This program, not specific to organic farming, was carried out by the METK from October 2024 to June 2025, designed to train a new generation of rural and agricultural advisors. It is not specific to organic farming. It combines group and individual learning, including modules on advisory methodology, environmental protection, digital skills, innovation, entrepreneurship, circular bioeconomy, and cooperation. Participants complete 20 days of practical training with a personal mentor and take part in study visits. The program concludes with the submission a final portfolio and an oral defence.

Table 23 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Estonia

Strengths	Weaknesses
Professional accreditation Farmers and researchers can be listed in the national list of advisors (eligible for CAP supported advice) 22% of the UAA under organic farming Soft skills training available	Lack of dedicated education and training system for advisors in organic Advisors must rely on the training programs designed for farmers No special accreditation or recognition for advisors in organic Very small number of farmers using the advisory services

[9] https://metk.agri.ee/en
[10] https://metk.agri.ee/noustajate-jarelkasvu-arendamise-koolitusprogramm#programmi-ajakava-20

3.7 France

With the largest Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) in the European Union, France plays a key role in achieving the EU's goals for organic farming. After years of lagging behind, it has nearly caught up with the European average share of organic area . However, growth has now stalled. France has a well-developed network of institutions, offering training in both conventional and organic agriculture, including vocational schools, universities, and advisory centres. The advisory system for organic farming is relatively strong, especially within the Chambers of Agriculture, which remain the main employers of agricultural advisors.

Table 24 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in France

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	27.6 Mha – 50% of the total surface ofFrance	
Number of agricultural holdings	360 419	61 167 in organic
Average farm size	~70 ha	
Area under organic farming	2.8 Mha	10% of the UAA

3.7.1 Initial education pathways

In France, most organic farming advisors have a master's degree, often graduating from agronomy engineering schools, but other paths also exist. Some advisors follow specialized training in organic farming or in advisory work, such as the Bachelor ABCD (*Organic Farming, Consulting and Development*), among others. While early specialization in agriculture often starts before the baccalaureate, these programs rarely focus on organic farming specifically. Nevertheless, a growing number of training options now incorporate organic and agroecological content at various levels.

Today, there are over 130 programs in organic farming available, ranging from EQF level 3 and 4 (Certificate of Professional Aptitude in Agriculture, Agricultural Vocational Certificate) to level 6 and 7 (Master degree) (Formabio, 2021).

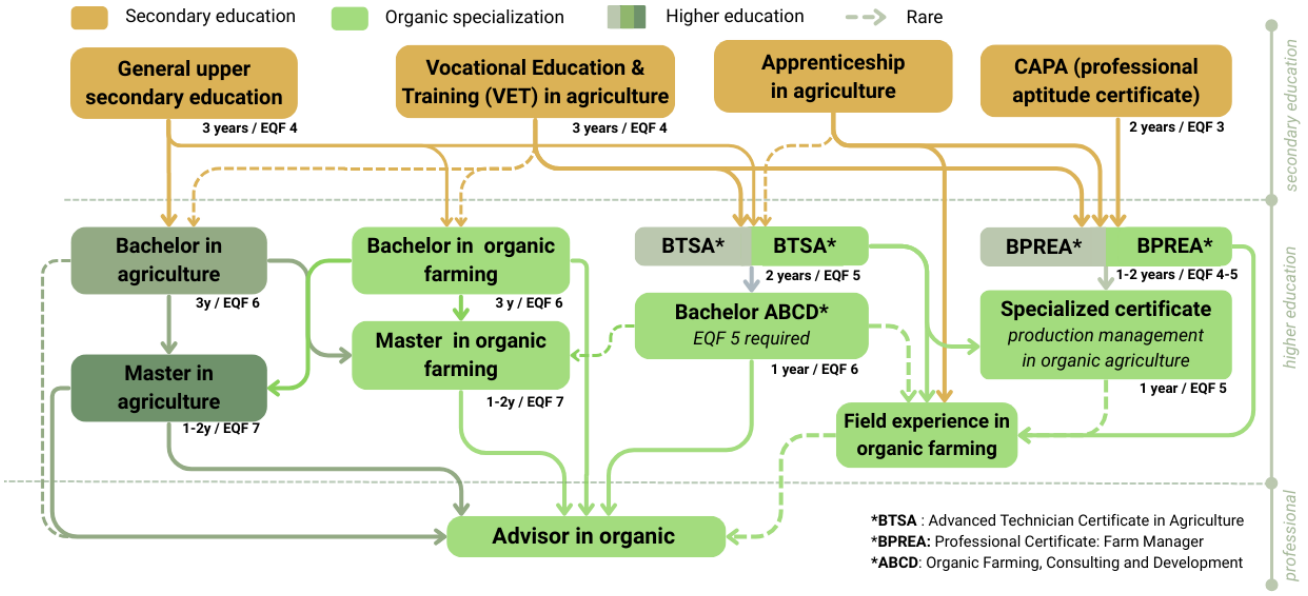

Figure 7 Education pathways in France

Table 25 Degrees in organic farming in France

Degree type	EQF	University name/ school	Degree name
Specialized certificate	5	College of Lomme	Organic farming and commercialization
CS#	5	3 centres in France (Lille, Rivesaltes, Saint Benoit)	Management of organic farming production
BTSA ACSE*	5	ESA (superior agricultural school), Angers	Advanced Technician Certificate in Agricultural oriented in organic farming (Distance learning)
Bachelor in 1 year	6	University of Clermont Auvergne (UCA) & VET Agrosup, Montpellier (6 centres in France	ABCD (Agriculture Biologique, Conseil et Développement - Organic farming, advice and development)
		13 centres in France (universities, colleges, agricultural training centres)	Organic agriculture: production, consulting, certification and marketing
Bachelor	6	ESA (superior agricultural school), Angers	Agroecology and food systems
Master	7	University Paris Saclay	Agroecology, knowledge, territories and society
Master	7	ISARA Lyon (Rhône-Alpes Higher Institute of Agriculture)	Partner in European Master on Organic Agriculture https://www.eur-organic.eu/en

#CS: Specialization Certificate
*BTSA ACSE: Advanced Technician Certificate in Agricultural Management and Strategy

The ABCD Bachelor is a unique French program dedicated exclusively to training advisors specialized in organic farming. This one-year professional degree is designed for students having completed two years of any Bachelor program, and focuses on developing expertise in organic agriculture, sustainable development, and advisory skills. What makes ABCD distinctive is its targeted approach for preparing skilled advisors who support organic farmers in implementing environmentally friendly

practices, ensuring compliance with organic standards, and promoting sustainable agricultural development. This specialization reflects France's commitment to advancing organic agriculture through professional and tailored advisory services.

3.7.2 Continuous professional development

Continuous training in France is supported by a well-structured and nationally coordinated system, particularly for organic farming advisors. While there is no legal obligation for advisors to complete a specific number of training hours annually, professional development is strongly encouraged by advisory organizations and agricultural networks. Numerous institutions—such as CFPPA centres (Centre for Professional Training and Agricultural Promotion) and Resolia (linked to Chambers of Agriculture)—offer short courses, specialization modules, and thematic updates focused on organic practices, certification, and agroecological practices. Training formats include in-person sessions, online modules, and blended learning, often from one to six days long. The cost of participation varies but is frequently covered by public training funds such as VIVEA, OCAPIAT, or the CPF (Personal Training Account), especially for advisors affiliated with farm organizations.

Table 26 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in France

Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility
National training network	**Formabio**	National catalogue: short sessions, online or on-site	CPF*, Pôle Emploi
National association	**FNAB** (National Federation of Organic Agriculture)	On farm experimentations, cross visits, courses & workshops	Free or low cost
Private with public funds	Resolia (training centre of Agricultural Chambers)	In-person & online short courses (1 to 6 days)	Eligible for refund (OCAPIAT*)
Public centre	CFPPA (*Centre for Professional Training and Agricultural Development)*	In-person training (BPREA, CS (specialization certificate in organic.	Eligible for CPF, OPCO*
E-University	France Numeric University (Fun)	MOOCs from French universities	Generally free
Ministry	Ministry of Agriculture	MOOCs and policy-related training	Free
Private company	**Ecocert Formation**	Online or hybrid training (certification, regulations)	Fee-based, may be covered by OPCO
NGO / Farmers' network	FNCIVAM (National federation of Centres for Initiatives to Promote Agriculture and Rural Areas)	Technical field training (soil, certification, advice)	Funded by or local authorities
Formation centre	CNPH (national promotion of horticulture centre)	In person & sistance learningl courses	Fee-based, Eligible for CPF
NGO / Regional associations	AgroBio Périgord / Bio Centre / Terre & Humanisme	Short practical modules (soil, agroecology, local sales)	Pôle Emploi, self-funded, VIVEA*

Notes to Table 26
CPF: Personal Training Account: French government scheme allowing workers to accumulate training rights
OCAPIAT: French skills operator for the food & agriculture sectors, financing vocational training for employees.
VIVEA: French training fund for farmers and self-employed workers in agriculture, supporting skills development and lifelong learning.
OPCO: Skills operator, national bodies in charge of funding and supporting vocational training across different economic sectors in France.

3.7.3 Requirement to provide advice in organic farming

There is no specific requirement in France to provide advice in organic farming. Anyone can technically exercise advisory activities in this field. However, candidates seeking employment in public institutions such as the Chambers of Agriculture are generally expected to have a minimum level of education, typically a degree in agronomy, agricultural sciences, or a related field. Specialized training in organic agriculture can be valued, but most of advisors providing advice in organic farming come from a general degree in agriculture. Professional experience in the sector is also considered an advantage, and it is possible for someone with a long-term experience in organic farming to provide advice, in organic, even without any degree in agriculture.

3.7.4 Research and policy Framework

Successive National Organic Actions Plans have included agricultural education since 1998, but the first one to introduce compulsory courses on organic farming began in 2008targeting farmers engaged in converting to or maintaining organic certification, rather than advisors.

National Organic Action Plan – Ambition Bio 2027

The current National Action Plan includes a strong focus on organic farming education and training. Under Axis 2 *"Consolidating and Developing Resilient Organic Sectors Embedded in Local Areas",* the objectives include:

- "Better distribution of continuous professional development g education and apprenticeships in organic farming across the territory, using national recognition systems (e.g. Enseigner à Produire Autrement 2 framework) and the national FORMABIO coordinator."
- 'Promotion of exemplary agricultural education institutions in organic farming to foster research, development, and knowledge transfer, through regional tenders issued by OPCOs (training fund operators).
- Training staff in collective and commercial catering in the use of organic products.

Formabio Network

Created by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2006, this network supports agricultural education in organic farming across France. It lists all specialised or related organic farming training programs and makes them accessible to the public. It is the main dissemination tool for organic farming training offers at the national level.

Table 27 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in France

Strengths	Weaknesses
Dedicated training for organic farming advisors (ABCD Bachelor) Continuous professional development easily accessible, many funds available for advisors Strong network of advisors, strengthened by the public authorities	Lack of degrees dedicated to organic farming (compared to the size of the country) No specific accreditation to become an advisor in organic

3.8 Germany

The organic farming sector in Germany is among the most developed in Europe, with steady growth over the past two decades. The organic sector is supported by numerous federal and regional policies, as well as key associations that contribute to the training of both farmers and organic agriculture advisors. Education and training are in the responsibility of the federal states. Initial training is integrated into both vocational and higher education programs. Continuous professional development is also well established, with regular courses, seminars, and field-based trainings provided by organic associations, governmental advisory services, and chambers of agriculture, which have a huge role to play in the advisors in organic, but also in the training of its advisors.

Table 28 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Germany

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	16.6 million hectares - 48% of total surface in Germany)	
Number of agricultural holdings	255 010	36 486 in organic
Average size of farms	64 ha	
Area under organic farming	888 999 ha	11.3% of UAA

3.8.1 Initial education pathways

In Germany, the initial education pathways to become an advisor in organic farming builds on a foundation in agricultural sciences. Students may start with a vocational qualification or a general baccalaureate, followed by specialized studies at universities or universities of applied sciences. Several German universities offer bachelor and master focused on organic agriculture or sustainable food systems, combining scientific knowledge with practical experiences such as internships or on-farm projects. Further specialization often includes participation in targeted training. The one-year trainee program (*"Traineeprogramm Ökolandbau"*) is probably the most important program for on-the-job training, designed to prepare future advisors for the specific requirements of advisors in organic work. This combination of formal education and hands-on experience ensures advisors develop both technical and advisory skills tailored to the needs of the organic sector.

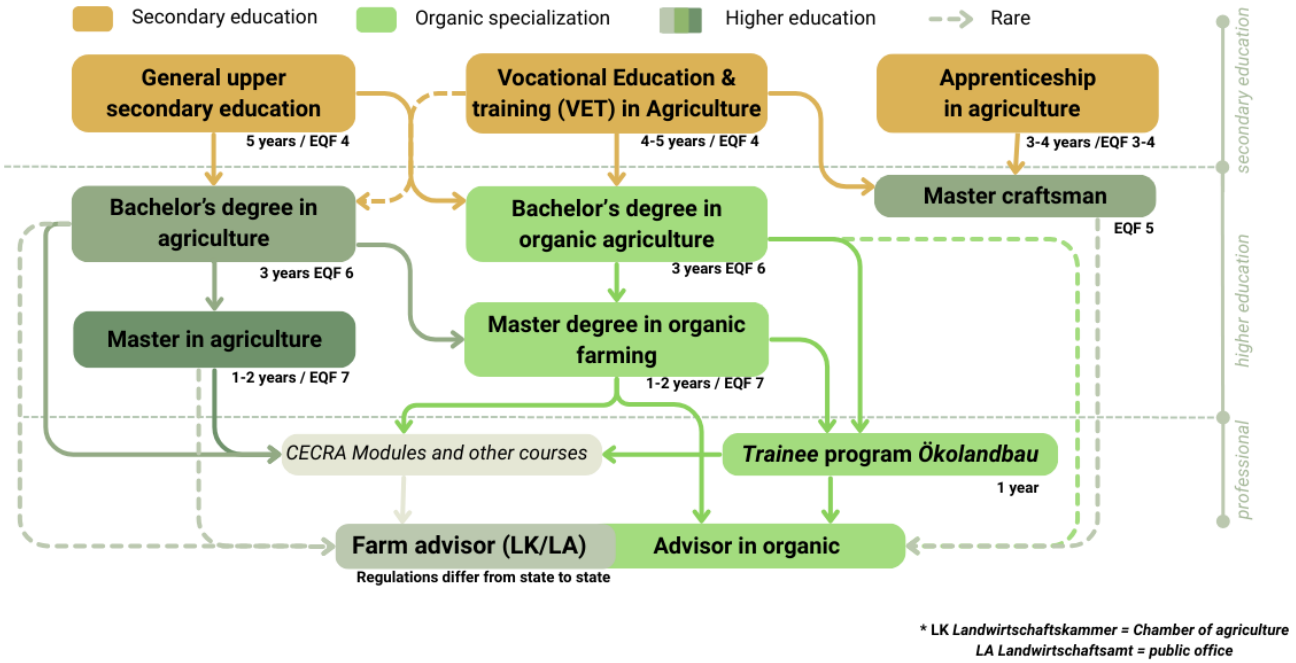

Figure 8 Education pathways in Germany

Table 29 Degrees in organic farming in Germany

Degree type	University name	Degree name
Bachelor	HNEE University of Eberswalde for sustainable development	Organic farming and marketing
Bachelor	University of Kassel, Witzenhausen	Organic farming
Master	University of Kassel, Witzenhausen	Organic farming
Master	University of Hohenheim (European joint program	Organic agriculture and food systems Partner in European Master on Organic Agriculture https://www.eur-organic.eu/en
Master	University of Eberswalde for sustainable development	Ecological agriculture and food systems

3.8.2 Continuous professional development

Continuous professional development in organic agriculture in Germany is well established, with a diverse range of training offered by both public and private institutions. Most training programs are part-time to accommodate advisors' schedules and include theoretical courses, mentoring—especially for new or transitioning advisors—and recognized certifications. Despite this broad availability, regional access and affordability remain uneven. In addition to technical knowledge, advisors also receive training in business management and advisory skills to better support farmers undergoing the transition to organic farming. This system enhances the expertise of advisors in organic and helps address the specific and evolving challenges of the organic sector.

Table 30 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Germany

Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility
University of applied Science	Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung Department Landschaft-Gesellschaft-Wirtschaft Master of Science "Ecological Agriculture & Food Systems"	Elective module "Guidance in organic farming concepts, methodology and organisation" (6ECTS)	Matriculated students Guest students
Organic Farming Association	**Naturland,**	Technical workshops, short courses, seminars	Often reserved for members; moderate to high costs; possible support from public programs, depends on the landers.
	Bioland	Cross visits, seminars	
	Demeter	(Biodynamy) internships, workshops	
Public institutions	Landwirtschaftskammern and Landesämter (LK, Regional Chambers of Agriculture and public offices)	Continuous professional development g education, workshops, field visits, seminars, mostly in-person	Reasonable fees; possible coverage through national or regional training programs
Research institute /NGO	**FIBL Germany** (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture)	Continuous professional development education online and in-person, workshops, webinars	Many free or partially funded training; generally open access; practical online resources
European program	CECRA (Certification for European Consultants in Rural Areas)	Modular certification, workshops, seminars, combined in-person/virtual	Certification training; cost depends on modules; possible regional funding programs

3.8.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

There is no uniform national requirement to become an organic farming advisor in Germany. The requirements vary depending on the type of organization and the federal states (Länder). Practical experience and/or a relevant degree are generally valued according to the employer's needs.

In public or semi-public institutions, a university degree is commonly required, sometimes accompanied by specific training (e.g., business management in Lower Saxony, inspector training programs in Saxony and Bavaria). Some Länder may instead require a "Master of Craftsman" as the qualification (=advanced professional qualification). The chambers of agriculture can also offer CECRA modules to new advisors.

In contrast, private organizations, associations, or advisory firms generally do not impose strict academic criteria and prioritize practical experience and technical skills, particularly in organic farming or specialized fields. As they also offer in-job training, there is no mandatory requirement to become an advisor for organic.

3.8.4 Research and policy framework

Germany's policy framework for organic agriculture includes support for education and training of advisors in organic.

- **Biostrategie 2030** sets a target of 30% organic land by 2030 and emphasizes research, knowledge exchange, and continuous professional development for advisors.
- Regional Action Plans, such as in Hessen, Lower Saxony, and Bavaria also mention advisors in organic training.

Since 2001, the federal BÖL program supports organic R&D with a focus on knowledge exchange, although funding levels vary; EIP-AGRI projects also address organic topics nationwide. While the CAP strategic plan's AKIS section does not single out organic farming, networking among advisory actors is promoted. National information hubs like Ökolandbau.de aimed at farmers also facilitate advisor access to knowledge. Overall, advisor training is a recognized and integrated part of Germany's Organic Action Plans at federal and regional levels.

Table 31 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Germany

Strengths	Weaknesses
Nationwide exchange and networking of advisors via FIBL DE events Flexible design of the training, due to Federalism, no fixed training regulations The basic modules of advisors training (CECRA) are well organised, providers such as Entra work at a high level Wide range of courses on offer, both vocational training and at universities Many subsidised offers from various providers, including online events.	Advisors do not have enough time for continuous professional development No complete overview of further training opportunities for advisors No accreditation/certification for advisors Too few CECRA modules and disparities of accessibility in the country Not enough demand for advice

3.9 Hungary

Hungary, with a vast arable land, has shown increasing interest in organic farming, particularly since EU accession. While the total share of organic land remains below the EU average, recent national strategies have aimed to boost both production and advisory services in organic agriculture. The educational and advisory landscape is still under development, with a mix of university programs, vocational schools, and private actors involved in educating and training future advisors.

Table 32 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Hungary

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	5.1 M ha	
Number of agricultural holdings	189 180	5 983 in organic
Average farm size	25,6 ha	
Area under organic farming	320 251 ha	6.4% of UAA

3.9.1 Initial education pathways

In Hungary, advisors in organic often come from higher education institutions offering agricultural degrees, such as Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences - MATE (formerly Szent István University, or Debrecen University). While organic farming is generally included as part of broader agricultural or environmental studies, dedicated degrees in organic agriculture remain rare. Students can also pursue vocational secondary education through agricultural VET (Vocational Education and Training) schools, which typically prepare for conventional farming, but some may offer some modules on organic production depending on the institution. Agricultural studies are available from EQF level 4 (vocational school) to EQF level 7 (Master's degree), with opportunities to specialise during the bachelor or master level through elective courses or research.

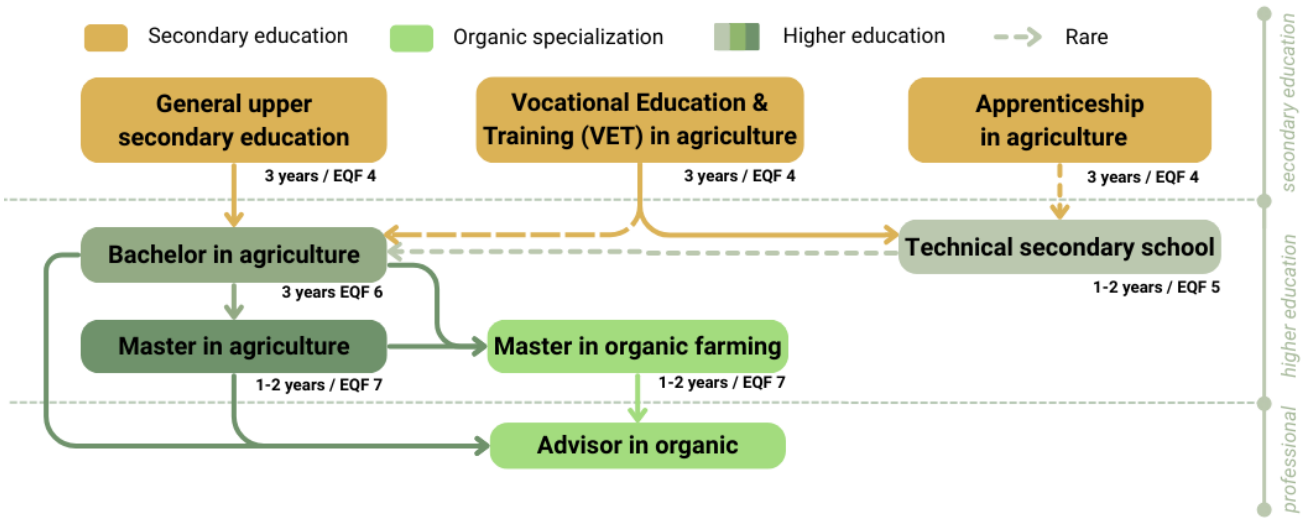

Figure 9 Education pathways in Hungary

Table 33 Degrees in organic farming in Hungary

Degree type	University name	Degree name
Master	Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences	Postgraduate specialist program in organic agriculture
Master of Science	University of Debrecen	Postgraduate specialist program in organic agriculture

3.9.2 Continuous professional development organizations

Continuous professional development in Hungary is more structured than in some other European countries, particularly due to a mandatory training system for agricultural advisors. All advisors are required to follow a basic training program, partly available online, and to pass an exam to obtain certification and credits. While this training covers a broad range of topics—including organic farming and agri-environmental measures—it is not exclusively dedicated to organic agriculture. However, training opportunities specifically targeted at advisors in organic are expanding: 139 accredited events related to organic farming were registered in 2024 alone. These include farm visits,

workshops, online courses, and soft skills training, organized by a wide variety of actors such as universities, research institutes, NGOs, agricultural chambers, and private stakeholders.

Table 34 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Hungary

Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility
NGO-s	Kelet-Magyarországi Biokultúra Assotiation	Workshops, Exhibitions, farm visits	Free or affordable Advisors collect points
Research Institute	ÖMKi Research Institute of Organic Agriculture	In-person event, workshops, farm-visits	Free or affordable Advisors collect points
National public institution	National Agrar Chamber	MOOC, workshops, Exhibitions, farm visits, soft skills training, online courses	Free or affordable Advisors collect points

3.9.3 Requirement to become an advisor in organic

In Hungary, independent advisors must be officially registered under national legislation aligned with CAP Regulation (EU/2021/2115). The minimum educational requirement is typically a bachelor or master degree in agriculture or veterinary sciences. Organic expertise can be demonstrated through university courses or work experience. After registration, advisors are required to undergo continuous professional training.

Non-independent advisors, mainly such as those from input companies (Biocont Kft, Danuba Kft) typically hold a bachelor or a master in science in agriculture, often with a focus on plant protection.

3.9.4 Research and policy framework

Hungary's National Organic Action Plan (2022-2027) recognized the need to improve advisory and training systems for organic farmers. Its objectives are partially reflected in the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027, which includes measures to support advisors in organic services through cooperation projects and knowledge transfer actions. Research institutions such as ÖMKi play a key role in connecting scientific expertise with training activities.

Table 35 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Hungary

Strengths	Weaknesses
Mandatory basic training and continuous professional development for registered advisors Diverse training formats: online, in-person, farm visits, workshops, soft skills sessions Multiple actors involved in training (universities, National Agrar Chamber, NGOs, private companies) Good mastery of agronomic fundamentals Adequate understanding of crop protection	No formal specialization or certification specifically for advisors in organic Knowledge of organic farming regulations varies depending on the institution Poor knowledge of market, post-harvest and processing technologies.

3.10 Italy

Italy is the third largest agricultural producer in the European Union in terms of the total economic value generated by all its agricultural products, after France and Germany. Organic agriculture has grown by more than 75% since 2001, supported by EU policies and regional initiatives. While the educational system for agriculture, including technical institutes and public universities, is organized at the national level, regions play an important role in implementing specific measures, especially through the flexibility allowed under the CAP Strategic Plan. This includes supporting advisory services and promoting organic farming. Some regions, such as Emilia-Romagna, Trentino, and Tuscany, are particularly active in organic agriculture and related training initiatives.

Table 36 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Italy

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	13M ha - ~40% of the total surface of Italy	
Number of agricultural holdings	1.13 million (2022)	84 191 in organic
Average size of farms	~11 ha	
Area under organic farming	2 455 586 ha	18.8% of UAA

3.10.1 Initial education pathways

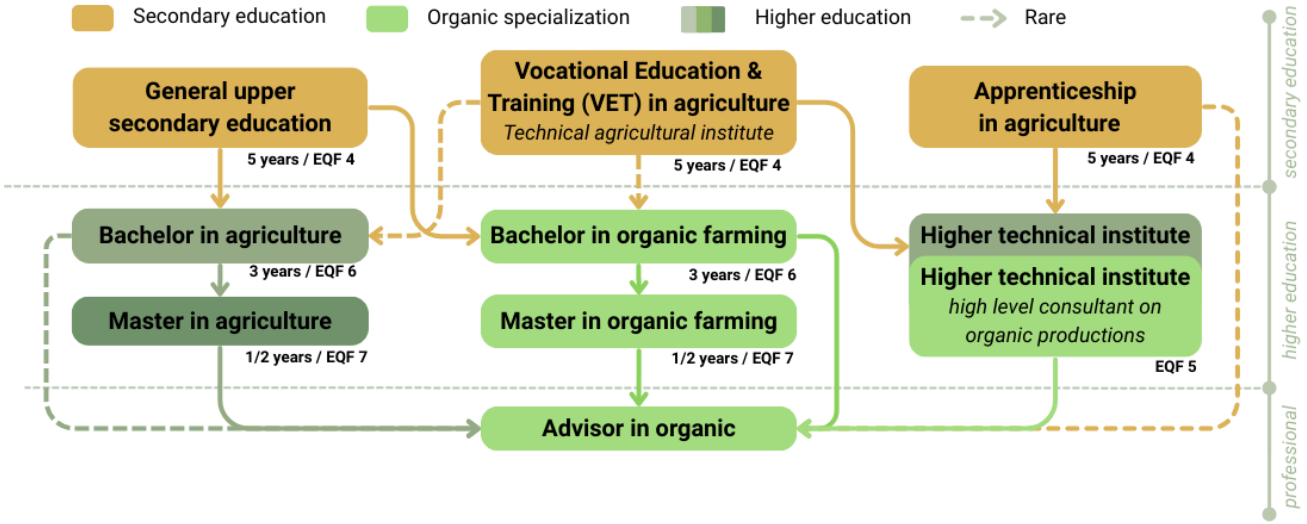

Figure 10 Education pathways in Italy

Table 37 Degrees in organic farming in Italy

Degree type	University name	Degree name
Higher technical institute	ITS Academy Apulia	Technician in organic farming
Bachelor	University of Pauda (UNIPD)	Organic farming production
Master	University of Gastronomic Sciences (UNISG)	Agroecology and Food Sovereignty
Master	University of Bologna (UNIBO)	Master in organic farming production and agroecology

Master	Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari	Mediterranean organic agriculture

According to Milardo and Bertazzoli (2024) approx. 70% of 117 respondents on a survey of education of advisors for organic farming have a Master, 6% a PhD, 5% a Bachelor, 16.4% a high school degree and 1.7% other qualifications.

3.10.2 Continuous professional development

There is a mandatory requirement for 24 hours of training per year for professionals registered with their respective professional orders, such as agronomists, agricultural technicians, and veterinarians, in order to maintain their license to practice. However, this obligation does not specifically target organic farming, and the availability of organic-specific training varies widely by region. Most advisors build their own learning path by combining regional training programs (often funded through the Piano di Sviluppo Rurale (Rural Development Program)), short courses offered by associations like AIAB (Italian Association for Organic Agriculture National & Regional) or DEAFAL (European Delegation for Family Farming in Asia, Africa and Latin America), and occasional workshops organized by professional bodies such as CONAF (National Council for Agronomists and professional Foresters Order). Agronomists interested in organic farming often use part of this mandatory training to update their knowledge in organic production.

Table 38 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Italy

Status	Organisation name	Training Format	Accessibility
National organizations	CONAF National Council for Agronomists and professional Foresters Order	Workshops, webinars (in-person & online)	Often free for registered agronomists (24h/year CPD requirement)
	FNOVI National Federation of Veterinary Doctors	Webinars, workshops (mainly in-person)	Free or subsidized for members
	CNAAL National Order of Agrotechnicians and Graduate Agrotechnicians	Accredited training via third parties	Varies, often low-cost or free if accredited
Association	**AIAB** Italian Association for Organic Agriculture National & Regional	Workshops, short courses, field visits	Low cost, sometimes free via Rural Development Program [1] regional funds
NGO	DEAFL (European Delegation for Family Farming in Asia, Africa and Latin America)	Part of the NGO dedicated to the training of the farmers) Field based courses, online modules	Low to moderate cost, eligible for funding
School	Scuola esperianzale di Agricoltura	Itinerant practical school	Participation fee required, (500-1600€)
National federation	**FederBio**	Webinars, events, courses (not regular)	

3.10.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

Registration with a professional order is mandatory for all advisors, but here is no specific requirement to provide advice in organic farming in Italy, and there is no official recognition for "advisors in organic. In addition, in some regions, such as Friuli Venezia Giulia, a minimum number of training hours is required to be eligible for Rural Development Plan (RDP) funding.

3.10.4 Research and policy framework

There is an Italian National Organic Action Plan, launched by the Italian Minister of Agriculture (2023) that recognizes the strategic importance of advisory services in the development of organic agriculture. It fosters the continuous professional development of advisors, especially through the Rural Development Programs, and supports the creation of an advisors in organic network.

Specific objectives of the Action Plan for the period 2024-2026 are:

- increase the number of final recipients of AKIS organic actions financed by rural development with respect to the 2014-2020 programming period, with a special focus on new farms
- set up a platform dedicated to training and advisory activities within SINAB
- set up a round table on continuous training with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies
- envisage a multiannual training plan to improve the level of skills on inspections for those who provide advice and assistance to operators, those who carry out inspections and those who carry out supervision
- support knowledge transfer and information actions to improve professional training and skills acquisition
- support advisory services aimed at helping farms, supply chains and organic farming districts to improve economic and environmental performance, also through special memoranda of understanding with professional bodies

Milardo & Bertazzoli (2024) emphasise the importance of continuous professional development for advisors, and the need for better professional and technical support.

Table 39 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Italy

Strengths	Weaknesses
Some high-quality short courses and workshops are available Free public training programs exist (e.g > 25h per session, 1600h for ITS Academy Apulia programs	Lack of coordination: fragmented training system at regional level; no national coordination No formal entry requirements for becoming an advisor in organic, making it difficult to design targeted education or career paths No accreditation system for advisors in organic training Absence of integrated training: few programs combine technical skills with communication, research evaluation, and field methodology

	No training in organic livestock management University degrees are too theorical, lacking practical knowledge. Limited and poorly timed farm internships Inconsistent training content: some high-quality trainers exist, but many courses rely on conventional approaches lacking systemic thinking

3.11 Portugal

The organic agriculture sector in Portugal has experienced an astonishing surge between 2012 and 2022, with the organic agricultural area increasing by more than 270%. The expansion is largely concentrated in regions such as Alentejo and Beira Interior, and the utilized agricultural area continues to expand rapidly. This dramatic increase is supported by EU and national programs, including from certification bodies and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) schemes, which have played a pivotal role in driving this growth. Portugal's rapid rise in organic farming creates a valuable case study for evaluating the impact of organic agriculture policies and training programs implemented in recent years.

Table 40 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Portugal

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	3.83 M ha - ~39% of total surface of Portugal	
Number of agricultural holdings	261 500	16 028 in organic
Average size of farms	~15 ha	
Area under organic farming	860 878 ha	~22% of UAA

3.11.1 Initial education pathways

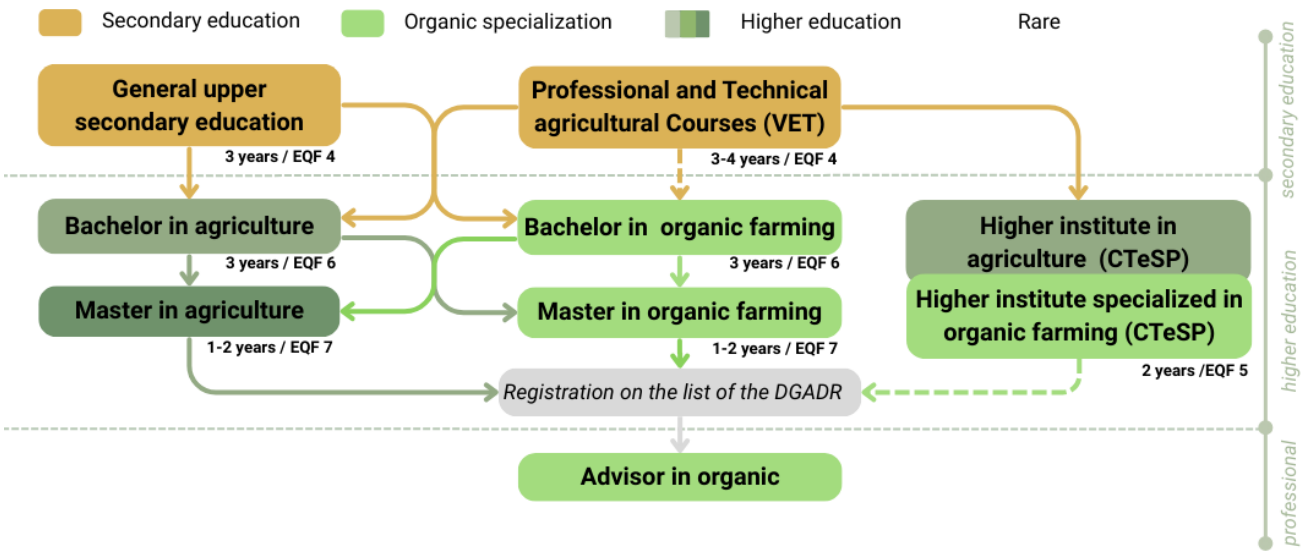

Figure 11 Education pathways in Portugal

Table 41 Degrees in organic farming in Portugal

Degree type	University name	Degree name
CTeSP[11]	ESAV (Higher Agrarian School of Viseu)	Organic Farming
CTeSP	University of Madeira	Organic Farming
CTeSP	Higher agrarian school of Coimbra	Organic production
Bachelor	Higher agrarian school of Coimbra	Organic farming
Master	Higher agrarian school of Coimbra	Organic farming
Master	University of the Azores	Organic agriculture and rural development
Master	University of Madeira	Organic agriculture and rural development
Master	Viana do Castelo School of Agriculture	Organic farming
Master	Higher agrarian school of Bragança	Agroecology

3.11.2 Continuous professional development

In Portugal, continuous professional training in organic farming is supported by both the public and private actors. Some organizations offer financial support to farmers transitioning to organic farming, mainly through CAP-related subsidies, which require them to complete certified training to qualify for funding. This has encouraged many farmers to pursue accredited courses to meet certification standards. While some programs focus on technical skills, there is growing attention to soft skills such as communication, leadership, and project management. Training courses are generally affordable, with many co-financed or low-cost options, and increasingly accessible online. However, challenges remain for those in remote areas due to uneven digital access and infrastructure.

Table 42 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Portugal

Status	Organisation name	Training Format	Accessibility
National institutions	IFAP (Agricultural and Fisheries Financing Institute)	Workshops, webinars (in-person & online)	
	Academia Zona Verde	E-learning, Moocs on agriculture, with specific courses on organic agriculture	~100-1000€, no funds
	CCDR (Regional Coordination and development commisions)	Courses	Varies, often low-cost or free if accredited
	DGADR (General Directorate of Agriculture and Development commissions)	One module of organic production	Accredited
Association	**Agrobio**	E-learning (*modo de Produçao Biologico)*	Accredited
E-School	Espaço visual - AgroB Business school	E-learning platform	70-500€
Certification organisation	Agricert	E-learning platform, in person training	Accredited

[11] *Cursos Técnicos Superiores Profissionais* (Professional Higher Technical Courses)

Association	Confederation of farmers of Portugal	Presential or e-learning, 3 training centers	Free for some farmers

3.11.3 Requirement to provide advice in organic farming

In Portugal, to provide advice in organic farming, advisors must meet specific educational and accreditation requirements. They must hold a higher education degree in agriculture or a related field and complete specialized training in organic farming and advisory practices. Advisors must also be officially registered on the national list managed by DGADR[12].

Advisory organizations, both public and private, are responsible for ensuring their advisors maintain up-to-date skills through continuous professional development. Farmers seeking PEPAC support must work with approved advisors to comply with program requirements.

3.11.4 Research and policy framework

In Portugal, organic education and training are highlighted in national initiatives such as the National Organic Action Plan (PAN-Bio 2021–2027) and the CAP Strategic Plan (PEPAC). These plans aim to strengthen the skills of advisors and farmers, offering targeted training, workshops, and capacity-building to support the adoption of organic and agroecological practices and ensure compliance with certification processes.

Table 43 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Portugal

Strengths	Weaknesses
Diverse range of training programs Co-financing of training initiatives Increasing Relevance in Public policy Growing awareness of organic product quality	Lack of degrees specialized in organic farming Fragmented training opportunities, lack of centralized information Unequal access in remote regions Need to strengthen soft skills and participatory approaches for advisors Lack of awareness and peer-to-peer learning for conventional farmers Maturity of the market

3.12 Romania

Romania is one of Europe's largest agricultural countries, with over 12 million hectares of farmland. Yet, organic farming remains underdeveloped, with one of the lowest adoption rates in the EU. Key challenges include fragmented land, limited awareness, and insufficient training and advisory services. However, interest in organic practices has been growing, supported by national and EU initiatives. Romania has strong potential for organic agriculture, as much of its farming is still traditional and low-input (practices that are often close to organic, though not always certified). Education and advisory systems are gradually evolving to support this transition.

[12] General Directorate of Agriculture and Development commissions

Table 44 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Romania

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	12.7 M ha - 54% of the total surface of Romania	
Number of agricultural holdings	2.8 million	13 413 in organic
Average size of farms	3.7 ha (the lowest among European countries)	
Area under organic farming	693 998 ha	5.1% of UAA

3.12.1 Initial education pathways

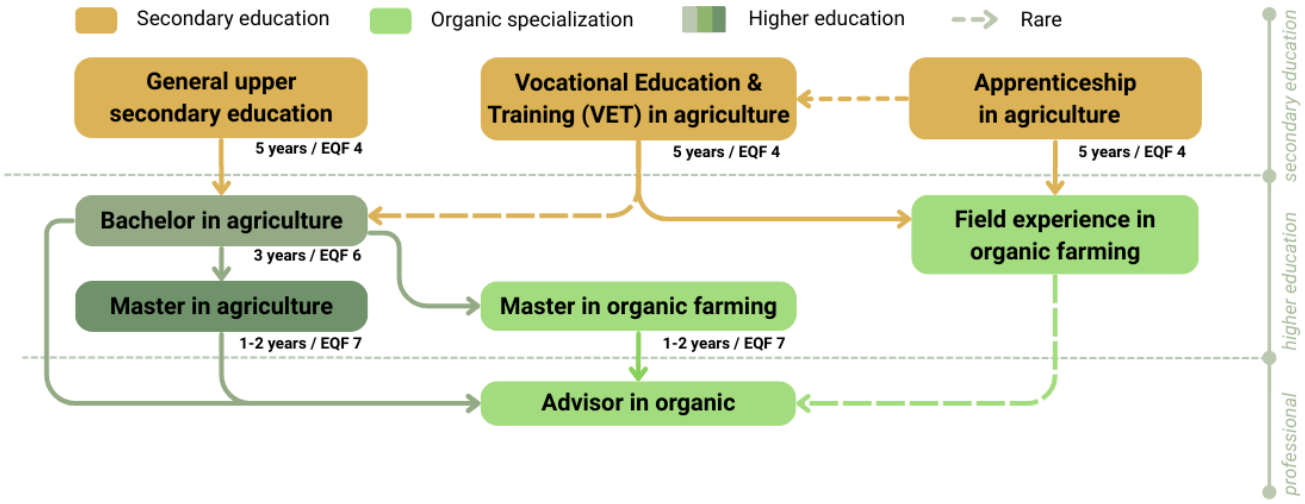

Figure 12 Education pathways in Romania

Table 45 Degrees in organic farming in Romania

Degree type	EQF	University	Name of the training
Master	7	Faculty of agriculture, Timisoara	Ecological agriculture (organic farming)

3.12.2 Continuous professional development

Continuous training in Romania is less structured compared to other countries, but efforts have been made in recent years to improve the system, especially for agricultural advisors. While there is no national obligation for a minimum number of annual training hours, professional development is encouraged through various programs supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and EU funding. Training is often organized in collaboration with research institutes, universities, associations, and agricultural advisory centres. Participation remains mostly voluntary, and the frequency and quality of training can vary significantly depending on the region and the institution involved.

Table 46 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Romania

Status	Name of the farming organisation	Training format	Accessibility
Association	Bio Romania	Events, conferences	Free
Universities	Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj Napoca	Online courses, MOOC	500-2000€

	University of life sciences King Mihai I, Timisoara	Presential courses, conferences	~500€
Association	**Inter bio, Bio Terra**	Training courses, conferences	Free, funded by private
Research institute	**Innovation Hub Bio Danubius**	Events, conferences, training, protocoles	Free
Public institution	**INCDA (National agricultural Research and development institute)**	Centre of research & training in organic agriculture	Free, or low cost
Public organisation	RNDR (national network of rural development)	Courses, workshops (not necessary organic)	Free
Public	RO AKIS *(under construction)*	(in construction – workshops)	Free

3.12.3 Requirements to provide advice in organic farming

In Romania, there is no specific requirement to become an agricultural advisor, whether in terms of education level or accreditation. However, a background in agriculture or advisory services is often required to apply to the various advisory organizations.

3.12.4 Research and policy framework

National Organic Action Plan (2023-2030)

Romania's inaugural National Organic Action Plan for 2023-2030 emphasizes several key objectives to bolster the organic sector, including market development and information and dissemination, both considered important to support the growth of organic farming. Resources are allocated to consultancy in agriculture.

Table 47 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Romania.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Growing institutional support: Public institutions, agricultural colleges, Universities, clusters of farmers, IH Bio Danubius (living lab), business associations and private organisations are increasingly focusing on organic farming Increasing access to e-learning platforms: this allows farmers to have access to learning in areas not accessible Collaborative networks and knowledge sharing: regional programs, like northwest development region Organic Action Plan	Limited practical training opportunities: internships and hands on farms experiences Lack of coordination between private and public sectors Insufficient continuous professional development g professional development: ongoing professional development programs for organic farming advisors are insufficient Low awareness among farmers about the role of advisors. results in low demand.

3.13 Spain

Organic farming has grown significantly over the past two decades, making Spain the country with the largest organic area in hectares but just above average in terms of organic share of UAA. This growth is driven by national and regional policies, with Andalusia as the clear frontrunner, holding

over 1.5 million hectares under organic management in 2023. Together with Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, and Extremadura, Andalusia accounts for the majority of organic farmland (almost 80%), though its surface area is considerably larger than the rest. Organic exports have risen by 105%, strengthening Spain's role in global markets. Educational pathways to support advisors in organic are available and affordable. However, advisors in organic systems are still scarce and scattered. Ongoing efforts aim to enhance farmer support, professional development, and integration of organic practices into broader policies.

Table 48 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Spain

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	**24.9 M ha - 40% of the total surface of Spain**	
Number of agricultural holdings	802 480	57 799 in organic
Average size of farms	26.4 ha	
Area under organic farming	2.9 M ha	12.2% of UAA

Spain is a decentralised country where agricultural policy and education are largely managed by the autonomous communities, leading to regional differences in training offers, certification, and public support, particularly organic farming. However, the overall structure of the education and training system remains consistent nationwide, as national curricula and qualifications ensure broadly similar learning paths and certification frameworks across all regions.

3.13.1 Initial education pathways

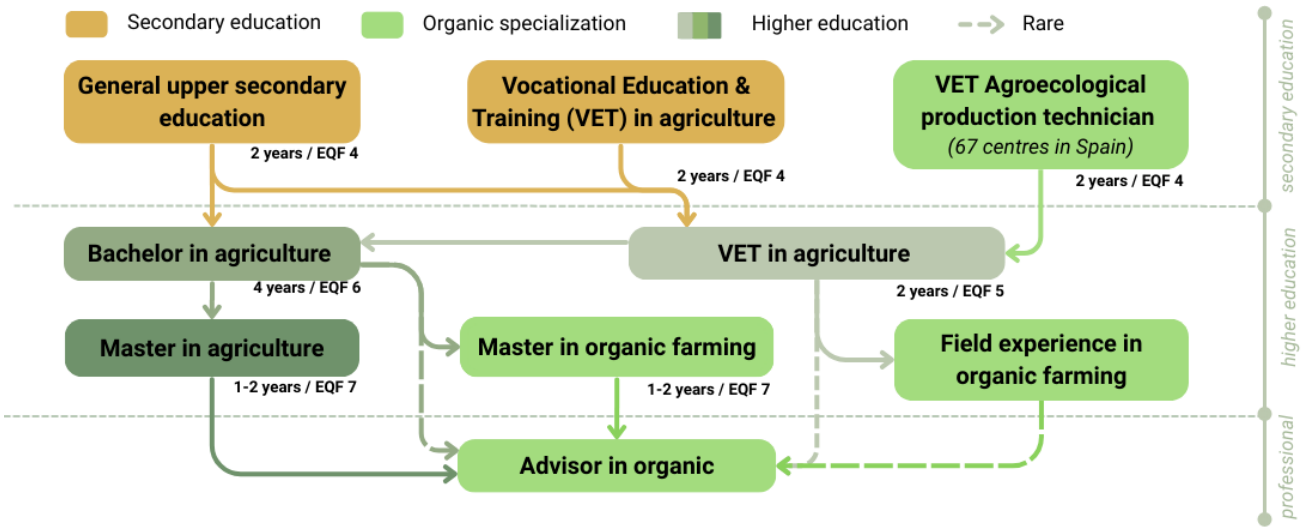

Figure 13 Educational pathways in Spain

Table 49 Degrees in organic farming in Spain

Degree type	EQF	University	Degree name
Master	7	Pablo de Olavide University / International University of Andalusia (Seville)	Organic Agriculture and Livestock
Master	7	University of Barcelona	Organic Farming
Master	7	University of La Laguna	Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, Urban Ecology and Cooperation for Rural Development
Master	7	Miguel Hernández University	Agroecology, Rural Development and Agritourism
Master	7	Comillas Pontifical University – INEA (Institute of Agricultural Education) University School of Agricultural Engineering of Valladolid (private)	Organic Agriculture Production and Management

3.13.2 Continuous professional development

In Spain, continuous professional training in organic farming is structured around a dual vocational system offering both intermediate and advanced level programs. Additional training is often required to specialize in organic practices. The Ministry of Agriculture provides a national training plan for rural advisors, including courses on organic farming. Private organizations such as Ecovalia, Spanish Society of organic farming, and Ecognitio also offer flexible, specialized online and in-person courses. While technical training is well developed, soft skills training for advisors in organic is only available through private initiatives.

Table 50 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Spain

Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility /cost
Ministry of Agriculture	Continuous Training Plan for Rural Technicians	Online courses, MOOC, in person	Free of charge
University	International University of Andalusia + Pablo de Olavide University	Presential /online (seminaires)	2500- 3000€ (possibility of regional scholarship)
Association	**ECOVALIA**	Online courses, MOOC	50-200€
	SEAE (Spanish Society of organic farming)	Presential, in person, mix, seminaires, workshops	50-300€ (possibility of being funded)
Private school	**Ecognito**: International School of Agro-Environmental Knowledge	Online certification courses	150-500€ (non-funded)
Regional Institute of Andalusia	IFAPA (Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Training and Research)	In person, online platform SERVIFAPA (Platform for Advisory Services and Knowledge Transfer in Agriculture and Fisheries in Andalusia)	Free of charge (Regional government or CAP)

3.13.3 Requirements to become an organic farming advisor

There are no national or regional regulatory requirements to become an organic farming advisor. However, certain specific activities, such as the use of phytosanitary products, require specific

qualifications. For certain technical positions, a bachelor degree or master degree may be required depending on the field, for example in livestock farming.

3.13.4 Research and policy frameworks

Some studies examine knowledge management and organisational learning in organic and agroecology at regional or national level. Rigid academic structure and the dominance of a productivity-focused approach in agricultural sciences can hinder the adoption of such themes (Moreno 2016). There is a need to teach students critical thinking and to include farmers' experience to adapt to changing agrarian and socio-political realities (Aguirre 2016, Los Rios 2017).

Regarding the policy framework, Spain does not have a National Action Plan for the training of organic advisors, but some regions have established their own plans. For example, **Catalonia's Organic Production Action Plan (2024–2027)** promotes vocational training in agroecology and rural landscaping and provides career guidance related to organic production. Similarly, the **II Valencian Plan for Agroecological Transition (2021–2025)** identifies training and knowledge transfer as key tools for achieving agricultural policy objectives, highlighting the demand for organic production courses and innovative training models, including online courses and a "School of Shepherds".

Table 51 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Spain

Strengths	Weaknesses
Good theorical base with agricultural diplomas Diversity of actors implicated (NGOs, Cooperatives, Universities, Regions Increasing continuous training offer and various	Limited practical training integrated into the curricula. Organic farming training is often optional or absent from major degree programs. Lack of structured and up-to-date continuous professional development g education opportunities for experienced advisors. Regional disparities (strong dependence on regional policies)

3.14 Switzerland

Switzerland has a particular model. As this country is not member of the European Union, it does not any CAP funds. Instead, organic farmers are supported through direct payments financed by the Swiss federal budget. Switzerland is among the European leaders in organic farming, with 18.23% of its agricultural land managed organically in 2023. Over the past 20 years, both organic surface area and the number of organic farms has steadily increased: the organic UAA grew from around 100,000 hectares in the early 2000s to over 190,000 hectares in 2022. This growth has been accompanied by the gradual integration of organic topics into agricultural education and training at vocational level but limited at higher education levels.

Table 52 Overview of agriculture and organic farming in Switzerland

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA)	1.493 million hectares - ~25% of total surface of Switzerland	
Number of agricultural holdings	49 360 (2020)	1 939 in organic
Average farm size	~21 ha	
Area under organic farming	188 846 ha	18.2% of UAA

3.14.1 Initial education pathways

Most Swiss advisors follow general agricultural education, either through vocational training (CFC) or higher education at universities of applied sciences or ETH Zurich. There is no formal education for advisors as such. Advisory skills are typically acquired later, through practical experience or continuous professional development and education provided by institutions such as School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL) or Swiss Centre for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (AGRIDEA). Specific knowledge about organic farming is provided by Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FIBL), the agriculture schools or Bio Suisse.

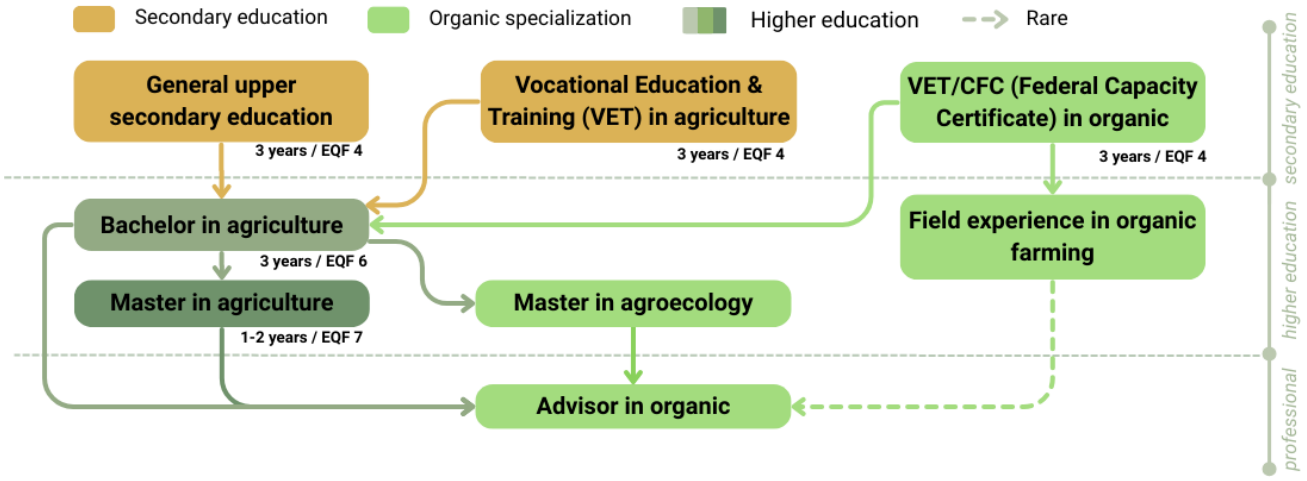

Figure 14 Education pathways in Switzerland

3.14.2 Continuous professional development

In Switzerland, continuous professional development for organic agriculture advisors is well-organized and evolving, with a strong emphasis on both in-person and online training. One of the key institutions in this field is the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FIBL CH), recognized as a leading centre for research, education, and advisory services related to organic farming. FIBL CH regularly offers courses and technical advice for current and aspiring advisors in organic, working closely with other educational centres and governmental institutions. FIBL is a major partner in developing the comprehensive online basic course about organic farming and advice adviceof the OrganicAdviceNetwork, addressing both theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for supporting organic farmers in Switzerland and across Europe.

Table 53 Providers of continuous professional development in organic in Switzerland

Status	Organisation name	Training format	Accessibility
Research Institute	**FIBL Switzerland**	e-learning, videos, podcasts, tech sheets, farm visits, working groups, conferences	Fee-based but affordable
Association	**Bio Suisse**	training for advisors, Moderated working groups for Farmers	Some free
Association	**Demeter Switzerland**	Courses in biodynamic agriculture	Fee-based
Association	**Organic Advisors Association (BBV)**	Events, cross visits and networking	Moderate fees, often employer-paid
Private	**Technical groups Organic**	Events and networking	
Public	AGRIDEA (Swiss Centre for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services)	Workshops, seminars, webinars, learning exchanges, farm seminars	Moderate fees, often employer-paid
Public	Strickhof, example for an Agricultural Schools	Courses and conferences/meetings for professionals, farm visits	For farmers

3.14.3 Requirement to become an advisor in organic

There is **no national legal requirement** to become an advisor in organic. However, in practice, a bachelor or master degree in agronomy is often required. Some positions accept **vocational agricultural diplomas** combined with long professional experience.

Most advisors are hired by cantonal advisory centres or private research institutes like FIBL, and they have some expectations:

- FIBL requires a bachelor or master in agronomy.
- **Strickhof,** an agricultural school requires an agronomy degree (University or UAS - University of Applied Sciences), with organic specialization or experience.
- **Demeter** emphases mentoring on farming experience over formal education.

3.14.4 Research and policy framework

As a non-member of the European Union, Switzerland does not have a National Organic Action Plan aligned with the CAP framework. However, the government supports the organic holdings with other measures, such as direct payments for the organic production system, or targeted research in organic agriculture.

Table 54 Preliminary evaluation of education and training for organic farming in Switzerland

Strengths	Weaknesses
Good access to informational resource and institutions Practical training opportunities available	Lack of specific training program for advisors in organic; training is often self-organized or learned on the job Lack of standardized practical training; existing programs are mostly theoretical No accreditation system

4 Comparative analysis of the education and training systems

This section proposes a comparative analysis of organic farming educational systems of the 14 European countries already presented through their own country profile. The aim of this part is to identify shared trends, show innovative initiatives, and to obtain actionable insights for policymakers seeking to enhance the structuring and harmonization of advisor education for organic farming at the European level.

4.1.1 General overview: organic sector development comparative analysis of organic farming education and its potential Impact on organic land expansion

Organic farming has developed significantly over the past twenty years in the Europe, supported by public policies, CAP subsidies, and the gradual development of specialized training programs. In this context, it is possible to hypothesize that the development of the organic farming education system in each country could be linked to the expansion of organically farmed land. This section examines this hypothesis by comparing the distribution of organic farmland with the characteristics of national educational systems.

The map (Figure 15) shows the percentage of land under organic farming by country. It can be observed that some countries, such as Austria and Estonia, have a particularly high share of organic farmland, while others, like Bulgaria and Romania, have relatively low shares. At the same time, the analysis of educational systems, as presented above through the country profiles, reveals significant differences in the availability and structure of initial and continuous professional development in organic farming. While some countries with a high share of organic farmland have well-established and diverse educational systems, such as Italy or Spain, this is not the case for other countries. For example, the area under organic farming in Estonia is 23.4%, yet the training system, both initial and continuous professional development, is very underdeveloped in the country. No university degree is offered for organic farming. This means that university education does not have an impact on the growth of organic farming in Estonia. The same goes for Switzerland, which has no university training in organic farming, and yet has one of the highest share of organic farming areas in Europe.

Based on the current analysis, the hypothesis of a direct and systematic link between the development of the education system and the share of land under organic farming cannot be substantiated. The development of organic farming in each country is clearly multifactorial. Among the many factors that may influence this dynamic, are national and regional institutions, the involvement of agricultural advisory services, public policies, farm size, and crop types. Of course, initial training in organic farming and the availability of continuous professional development for farmers and advisors also play an important role, but they operate within this broader and complex context. These differences highlight that looking solely at the share of organic farmland can be misleading. It is important to consider historical context, farm structure, and institutional support when comparing organic farming development across countries.

These differences highlight that looking solely at the share of organic farmland can be misleading. It is important to consider historical context, farm structure, and institutional support when comparing organic farming development across countries.

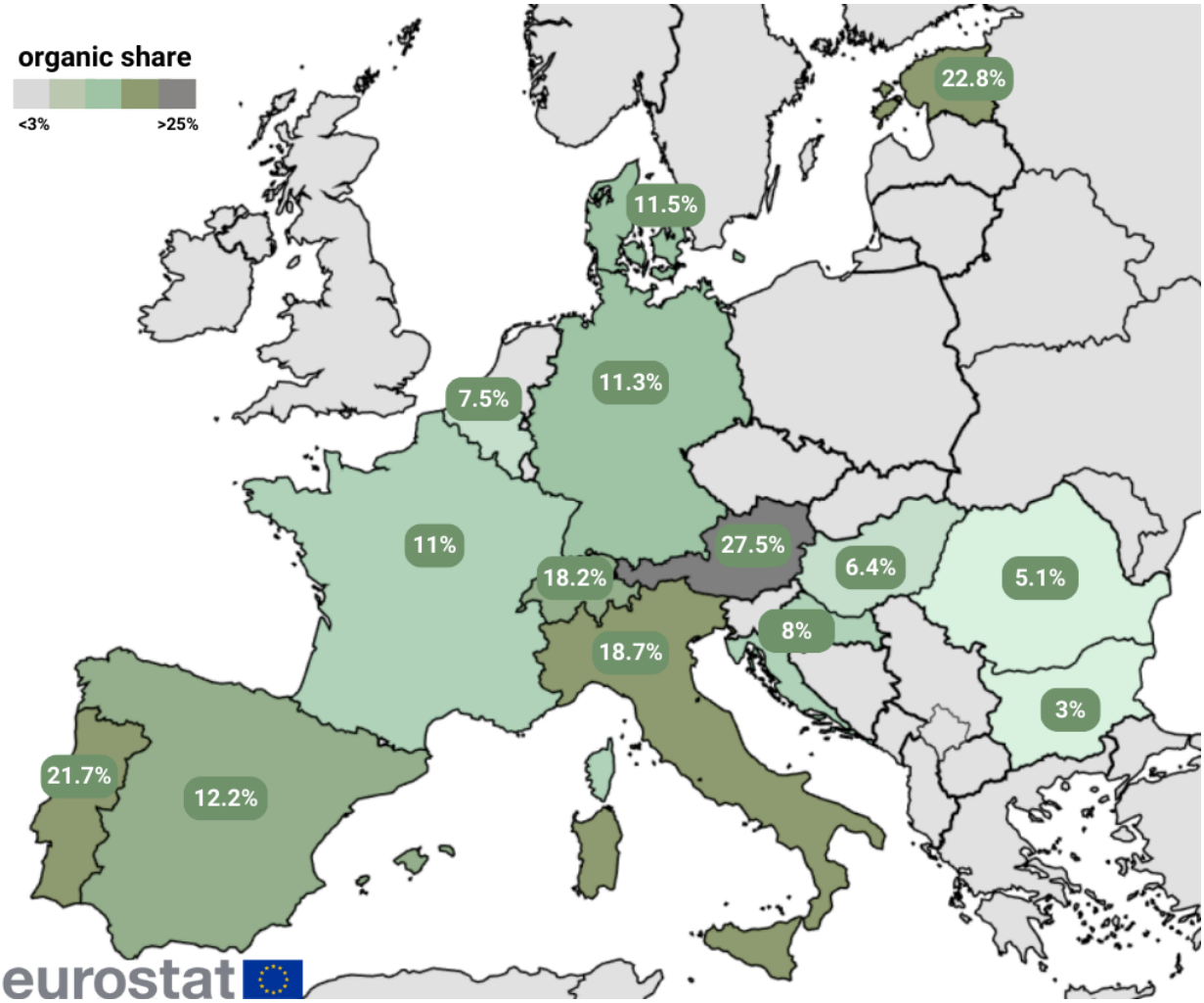

Figure 15 Organic share of UAA in % in 2023, Source: Eurostat[13]

Table 55 provides an overview of structural differences between countries and their possible links with organic farming.

Table 55 Overview of the development of the organic share of UAA, average farm size and organic holdings.

Country	Organic share (%)			Av. Farm size (ha)	Number of holdings	
	2000	2023	Evolution		All	In organic
EU	2.1	10.2	+8	70	9 000 000	430 000

[13] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/org_cropar/default/map?lang=fr

AT	13.7	27.3	+14	23	101 040	25 530
BE	1.5	7.5	+6	38.7	36 000	2 639
BG	0	3	+3	70	107 630	4 436
HR	0	8	+8	11	146 840	6 274
DK	6	11.5	+5	83	37090	4 095
EE	1	22.8	+22	91	10 700	1 968
FR	1.2	10	+9	70	360 419	61 167
DE	3.2	11.3	+8	64	255 010	36 486
HU	1	6.4	+5	25.6	189 180	5 983
IT	8	18.8	+10	11	1 130 000	84 191
PT	1.2	22	+21	15	261 500	16 028
RO	0.1	5.1	+5	3.7	2 800 000	13 413
ES	1.4	12.2	+10	26.4	802 480	57 799
CH	7.7	18.2	+10	21	49 360 (2020)	7 896

Source: Eurostat[14] & FiBL statistics[15],

4.1.2 Differences in initial educational pathways

Becoming an organic farming advisor in Europe is not a linear or uniform process. Formal qualifications alone do not fully define an advisor's profile, and there are many different routes into the profession. Practical experience, lifelong learning, and personal motivation are just as important as academic credentials.

The pathway of initial education is fundamental for the future career of an advisor in organic. The earlier students are made aware of the specific opportunities and challenges in organic farming, the more likely they are to successfully support farms in their transition to organic practices. In most of the 14 countries studied, becoming an agricultural advisor usually requires a minimum qualification in agriculture. While it is relatively easy to find conventional agricultural education that leads to advisory roles in conventional farming, dedicated education in organic farming remains much rarer. As a result, students wishing to work specifically in the organic sector are often limited to just a few specialized modules on organic agriculture within broader general agriculture curricula. [16] Table 56 provides a selection of good examples of programs designed to train future advisors in organic farming, including the ABCD Bachelor in France, the Organic Farming and Food Trainee Program in Germany, and the European Master in Organic Farming

The availability and quality of organic education and training vary significantly from country to country. For instance, some countries offer specialized organic tracks as early as high school: in Spain, Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in agroecology exist, while in Switzerland students can pursue a federal capacity certificate or VET specialized in organic agriculture. In France,

[14] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/org_cropar/default/table?lang=en, accessed in Sept 2025
[15] https://statistics.fibl.org/europe/key-indicators.html Accessed in Septr 2025
[16] For an overview of teachers engaging with organic and agroecology see also the European Network of Organic Agriculture Teachers ENOAT https://enoat.chil.me/members

more than two-thirds of the experimental farms used by agricultural high schools are already managed under organic practices, giving students direct exposure to organic farming.

Table 56 Selection of good examples of programs to become an advisor in organic

The ABCD Bachelor in France
One year specialization to become organic farming advisor in France: this degree called "Agriculture Biologique Conseil et Développement" (Organic Agriculture, Advice & Development)
This one-year course is available only to agronomy students who have already completed two years of graduate studies (EQF 5). This program is available in 5 different campuses around France.
It provides both theorical knowledge and practical skills directly targeted to advisory work in the organic sector.
The Organic Farming and Food Trainee program in Germany
The German Trainee program (https://traineeprogramm-oekolandbau.de/) is a one-year, part-time training program for future specialists and managers in the organic sector. The program wants to contribute to taking the organic sector forward. If offers professionally supported career entry in various sectors including advice, provides insights into all areas of the industry and beyond, as well as first-class networking and genuine enthusiasm. The Organic Farming and Food Trainee Program is part of the Federal Organic Farming Program(BÖL) initiated and financed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Home Affairs (BMLEH).
The European Master in Organic Farming
The EUR Organic (https://www.eur-organic.eu/en) Master Program is a unique study program in Europe offered by four renowned universities in Austria, Germany, France and Poland with some collaboration on agroecology with the Netherlands. It combines high-ranking research environments with state-of-the-art knowledge from industry leaders in organic food production and allows students to gain experience in another country.

4.1.3 Differences in continuous professional development pathways opportunities

Organic courses in initial education (at school or university) do not have always a direct impact on the accessibility or quality of specialized training in organic farming for advisors whereas continuing professional development appears to be a much more decisive factor. What emerges from these country profiles is not only the possibility for advisors to access continuous professional development in organic farming, but also the institutional structures that enable such a transition, with some countries having very well-developed systems.

Continuous professional development and education in organic farming is very developed in Switzerland, Germany, France and Austria.

Some countries require advisors working in certain public structures to follow a minimum number of hours of continuous training (generally 25 hours per year), but these training courses are not necessarily oriented towards organic farming. The advisors are more or less free to choose the training they want to follow, depending on the supply and availability and accessibility.

Substantial disparities exist between countries regarding the availability and quality of continuous training for advisors in organic. While some countries benefit from well-established and comprehensive programs supported by national policy (France, Austria, Switzerland, Germany), others face fragmentation, limited public initiatives, and heavy reliance on private sector actors (including organic associations) and informal networks to fill gaps in advisor expertise and capacity.

4.1.4 Comparison of the strengths and weaknesses

The interview framework encouraged participants in the countries to assess their national training systems for advisors in organic farming. It is important to approach these findings with caution, because this section draws on each personal perceptions of the national advisor training structure, rather than an in-depth analysis of each system (see Table 57 and Table 58). Nevertheless, several key trends emerge.

- The opportunities in initial education in organic agriculture remain limited or even non-existent in many countries. General agricultural education can incorporate topics related to organic farming, but coverage and quality are often still insufficient, and several countries do not have any educational programs in organic. They rely on general agricultural credentials with add-on organic content. Examples of specific courses no longer being available or changes in content moving away from organic are also reported.
- There is no clear distinction between conventional and organic agricultural students in terms of pathways to becoming specialized advisors in organic. The routes leading to this profession are highly diverse, which can result in significant variations in the skills and expertise available to farmers.
- Countries highlight the importance of advisor networks, knowledge sharing, and robust organizational structures in supporting the development of advisors in organic services.
- Continuous professional development in organic farming and advisory services is often not well developed.
- Most countries observe a growing commitment from public authorities to initiate new training efforts for advisors in organic.

The tables below (57 and 58) list the strengths and weaknesses of each country, according to what they have been able to put forward, but also according to the interpretation that can be drawn from the country profiles.

Table 57 Comparative table of the strengths of the education and training systems

Strengths	Description	Countries mentioning
Initial education		
Degree specialized in organic farming and advisory	Existence of university or technical degrees focused exclusively on organic farming practices and advisory work.	AT, HR, DE, FR, PT,
Continuous professional development		
Nationally harmonized training system	Existence of a standardized, regulated framework for advisor training and certification across the country.	AT, DE, FR, HU
Strong advisor and AKIS networking	Well-established national/regional networks for peer learning, resource exchange, and continuous knowledge flow.	CH, DE, DK, ES FR
Public or employer-funded CPD	Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for advisors is free or subsidized by chambers or public agencies.	AT, DE, ES, FR, HU, PT
Mandatory training for advisors	Advisors must regularly undergo training or obtain mandatory certification to operate officially (for general advice)	BE (Flanders), EE, HU, IT
Dynamic farmer organization involvement	Producer organizations, farmer associations, or coops directly offer technical training and coordinate advice.	AT, CH DE, ES, FR
Flexibility and plurality of providers	Diverse, complementary public/private/NGO actors offer a wide choice of training programs and approaches.	DE, ES, FR, IT
Strong territorial adaptation	Regional or federal systems allow training programs to address local specificities and needs effectively.	CH, DE, FR, ES
Policy-driven national support	Regular public strategies and resources support organic farming training and advisory, ensuring system stability.	AT, DE, ES, FR

Table 58 Comparative table of the weaknesses of the education and training systems

Description		Countries
Initial education		
Lack of programs focused on organic farming in higher education	0 organic degree	BE, EE, CH
	1 organic degrees	AT, BG, DK, RO
	≥2 organic degrees	DE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, PT
Limited practical training/ too theoretical	Overemphasis on theoretical knowledge in university curricula; inadequate integration of farm internships, mentoring, and peer learning.	CH, DK, HU
Continuous professional development		
Territorial disparities for the access to education and training	Regional disparities limited practical modules, and variable funding for CPD create unequal advisor skills and expertise.	AT, BE, HR, BG, RO

Absence of official accreditation systems	Most countries lack national standards or certification schemes for advisors in organic, leading to inconsistent knowledge/skills.	All countries except HU
Advisors often operate within national silos, reducing opportunities for cross-border exchange and innovation.	Weak international expert networks	AT,

5 Conclusion

This report provides an overview of education and training systems dedicated to or closely related to organic farming in 14 countries across Europe and highlights the main differences. The national profiles are based on the knowledge of the OrganicAdviceNetwork's national partners and additional experts. Differences between the studied countries concern training structures, education pathways, available funding, regulatory requirements for becoming a certified advisor, and the development of advisor training. They directly influence the accessibility and effectiveness of programs, as well as the opportunities available to advisors wishing to specialize in organic farming.

Becoming an organic farming advisor in Europe is not a linear or uniform process: formal qualifications alone do not fully define an advisor's profile. Practical experience, lifelong learning, and personal motivation are important factors as well. Besides, continuous professional development appears central and often more decisive than initial education. Countries with strong networks and institutional structures, such as Austria, France, Germany and Switzerland offer well-organized training opportunities, regular workshops, farm visits, and peer exchanges. In contrast, other countries face fragmentation, limited public initiatives, and reliance on private actors or informal networks, making it harder for advisors interested in organics to access continuous learning, share knowledge, and stay updated on sector developments. Strong, connected networks support better advice for farmers and faster development of organic farming across the country.

As a next step in the OrganicAdviceNetwork project, the results from this study, together with key findings from Task 1.1: Mapping the diversity of advisors in organic systems and Task 3.1: Assess CAP strategic plans and support measures for advisors in organic services, will be further evaluated in national workshops. These workshops will broaden perspectives, consolidate results, and deepen understanding of educational systems and advisory services. The outcomes of these workshops will then be summarized and used later in the project in WP4 to draft concrete actions for stakeholders and targeted policy recommendations. These drafts will in turn be reevaluated in another round of national workshops, finally culminating in an Action Plan for strengthening advisors in organic services at the end of the project in 2028.

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7 Appendix: Interview Grid

Name of your University / Organization / Advisory Service	
Country	

- **Axis 1: Educational systems before becoming an advisors in organic (educational background)**

Objective of Axis 1: Identify the various education pathways followed to become an organic farming advisor:

- Across different levels of education (school, high school)
- By differentiating between primary and complementary training:
  - **Primary training programs**: They provide a broad knowledge base in agriculture, environment, rural economy, and agronomic sciences. They allow access to various professions, including that of an agricultural advisor.
  - **Complementary training programs**: These programs focus more on developing specific skills for the job of an agricultural advisor. They include internships in companies and real-life practical situations.

Question 1.1. What education paths related to organic farming do you know in your country (degrees, in-school education etc.)?

The idea is to have a comprehensive overview of the educational path followed by advisors in organic farming in your countries. In countries with a federal system, training programs may vary depending on the regions, states, or provinces, as each federal entity may have its own regulations and educational systems.

Question 1.2. What types of institutions (public and private) train organic farming advisors?

Question 1.3. Does the training system offer:

- Specialized academic programs (degrees) in organic farming (e.g.; Master, Bachelor)?
- Or specific courses on organic farming integrated into agricultural academic program?

Question 1.4. What is the trend in the number of training programs that include organic farming in your country? Is it increasing or decreasing, are there any statistics?

Question 1.5. If there are specialized academic programs (degrees) in organic farming, and whether they are affordable for everyone? Consider admission fees, scholarships etc.

Guidelines to respond to question 1.1: To facilitate the analysis phase of the education systems in different European countries, use the reference framework titled "European Qualifications Framework" (EQF). The EQF is a useful tool that allows for the comparison of qualification levels across Europe. It defines eight levels of competencies, thereby facilitating the comparison of diplomas.

Here is a link to the EU's website that describes how the European Qualifications Framework works :https://europass.europa.eu/en/europass-digital-tools/european-qualifications-framework.

- **Axis 2: Continuous professional training**

Objective of Axis 2:

Identify the continuous professional development g education available to enhance the professional development of agricultural advisors willing to or giving organic advice.

Continuous professional development g education can take several forms, such as:

- **Courses and Workshops**: Structured sessions on specific skills offered by educational institutions or professional organizations.
- **In-Company Training**: Development programs provided by employers.
- **Distance Learning**: Online courses that allow for flexible learning.
- **Professional Certifications**: Diplomas or certificates recognized in a specific field.

Question 2.1. What continuous professional training do you know of in your country, offered by educational institutions or professional organizations? Specify what educational institutions and/ or organizations (public / private) offer such continuous professional development?

Question 2.2. Are these professional training programs, offered by public or private organizations, affordable and accessible?

Question 2.3. Which additional education of training beyond those directly concerned with organic agriculture do advisors have (for examples soft skills)?

- **Axis 3: Requirements to be recognized as an advisor for organic farming**

Objective of Axis 3:

- Identify whether a certain educational qualification is required to become a recognized organic agriculture advisor

If not, identify the level of qualification required by professional organizations to become an organic agriculture advisor. Although the requirements may vary among different professional organizations, please provide some examples, if possible, from key players employing organic farming advisors.

Question 3.1. Is there minimum educational requirement to become an advisor / an advisors in organic in your country? And, Is there a specific status or accreditation for advisors / advisors in organic?

Question 3.2. Or is there minimum educational requirement to become an advisor / an advisors in organic, in specific advisory organisations, such as agricultural chambers? Provide some examples, if possible, from the key players (public and private) employing organic agriculture advisors.

3.3. What is a typical educational background/level?

- **Axis 4: General information – knowledge in organic farming and organic education system**

Objective of Axis 4:

- Better understand and evaluate the various educational and professional training systems in organic agriculture / for organic agriculture advisors

- Evaluate existing research; have these educational systems been studied and if so how? Find out if regional or National Action plans include measures concerning these training systems.

Question 4.1. Do you know of any research on education and training for organic farming?

Question 4.2. Is organic education or training mentioned in National/ Regional Organic Action Plans? If yes, which ones, and what do they say?

➢ **Axis 5: Assessment of education and training**

Objective of Axis 5:

- Identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the educational and professional training systems for organic farming advisors

Question 5.1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the educational and training systems for organic farming advisors?

Guidelines to respond to question 5.1.: Below is a list of categories with questions to base the identification of strengths and weaknesses of training systems on:

- **Training Structure**: Are the programs mainly theoretical? Are they coupled with practical training and/or professional experience in companies?
- **Duration and Format of Training**: Are the courses long enough? Do they offer specific modules related to organic agriculture?
- **Quality of Training**: Is there a clear accreditation system for organic agriculture training that ensures a certain level of competence and professional recognition? How does this affect the quality of the training programs offered?
- **Quality of Training Content**: In which fields do we lack knowledge and skills in organic farming (such as technical aspects, soft skills, research and innovation, business management, etc.)?

Information on Interviewed Experts

ID	Axes	Professional Status	Professional Organization	Area of Expertise

Bibliography used to complete the Interview Grid

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Guidelines for compiling the bibliography:

To cite references in the body of your responses to the questionnaire, please indicate the author's name and the publication date in parentheses (e.g., Dupont, 2022).

After answering the questionnaire, indicate below all the references you used in a bibliography using APA style **(American Psychological Association).**

Below is the way to use APA style for citing your references in the bibliography:

Book: Last Name, First Initial. (Year). *Title of the book.* Publisher.
Article: Last Name, First Initial. (Year). Title of the article. *Title of the Journal in italics,* volume(issue), pages.
Chapter in an Edited Book: Last Name, First Initial. (Year). Title of the chapter. In First Initial Last Name (Ed.), *Title of the book in italics* (pp. pages). Publisher.
Website: Last Name, First Initial. (Year). Title of the page. *Website Name.* URL

ORGANIC ADVICE NETWORK

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