

INTEGRATING ORGANIC FARMING INTO THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY: CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53486/dri2026.16>
UDC: 631.147:338.43.02(478)

Diana COȘALÎC

Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova
Chisinau, Republic of Moldova
0000-0002-3303-2119

Abstract: *Agriculture represents an essential sector of the economy, contributing to income generation, food security, and job creation for a considerable portion of the population. Against the backdrop of climate change and rising global temperatures, the growing pressures of climate change have brought the long-term viability of agricultural systems into sharper focus, highlighting the urgent need for production approaches that safeguard the environment and preserve natural resources. In this context, organic farming stands out as a key pillar of sustainable agriculture, supporting the prudent management of natural assets and the preservation of ecological balance, in line with the principles set out in Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and the labelling of organic products [10].*

Through the reduction of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers and applying agricultural practices based on natural processes, organic farming contributes to the conservation of soil fertility, biodiversity protection, and the reduction of negative environmental impacts. Simultaneously, this farming approach contributes to the provision of safe, high-quality food for consumers.

At the level of the European Union, the advancement of sustainable and organic agriculture is considered a strategic priority. Through the Common Agricultural Policy, a range of support mechanisms is implemented to encourage farmers to adopt environmentally friendly practices and to increase the area under organic cultivation. These actions are consistent with the goals set out in the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, which aim to reshape European food systems into more sustainable and resilient models [5].

Within this framework, organic agriculture is viewed as a production model grounded in the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social, and environmental - thereby supporting the achievement of European Union objectives related to environmental protection, the conservation of natural resources, and the mitigation of climate change.

Key words: *organic agriculture; sustainable agriculture; Common Agricultural Policy; climate change; biodiversity protection; European Union.*

JEL: O13, Q18. Q28, Q57

Introduction

Organic farming in the Republic of Moldova is a developing sector with considerable potential for expansion, playing an important role in maintaining the health of agroecosystems, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. By reducing the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers and applying practices based on natural processes, this production system supports soil fertility, environmental protection, and the supply of safe and high-quality food. Currently, the country has dozens of certified operators and an increasing area of organically cultivated land.

The National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030" and the National Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy 2023–2030 explicitly include measures to promote sustainable agriculture, integrate green economy principles, and reduce environmental pressure. Policies provide incentives for adopting organic practices, aligning with European standards, and expanding organically cultivated areas. These objectives are consistent with European Union directives and strategic instruments such as the Common Agricultural Policy, the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the European Green Deal, which aim to transform food systems into sustainable and resilient models [4, 5].

The Republic of Moldova has likewise pledged to implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which establishes objectives related to food security, environmental protection, sustainable rural development, and adaptation to climate change. International projects and partnerships, including those supported by UNDP and GEF, have contributed to building the capacities of organic producers, promoting certified products, and informing consumers through tools such as the Atlas of Organic Producers [11].

In this sense, organic farming in the Republic of Moldova is consistent with national strategies as well as international sustainable development objectives, serving as an important tool for enhancing food security, protecting the environment, and supporting the sustainable economic growth of the agricultural sector.

Organic Farming within the Common Agricultural Policy.

Organic farming is a key component of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), functioning as an important tool for reaching the European Union's goals in environmental protection, sustainability, and rural development. In the context of the CAP reform for 2023 - 2027, this sector is closely connected to the priorities of the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, which are designed to support the shift towards more sustainable and resilient food systems (European Commission, 2021) [4].

A defining feature of organic farming within the CAP is its recognition as a high environmental value farming practice. Farmers applying organic methods comply with strict standards regarding the use of natural resources, the prohibition of synthetic chemical inputs, and the preservation of biodiversity. In this regard, organic farming directly contributes to the European Union's climate and environmental objectives (European Commission, 2023) [5].

Support for the organic sector under the CAP is structured around two main pillars. The first pillar includes direct payments and eco-schemes, which reward farmers for adopting environmentally friendly practices. Organic farming is considered "green by definition", which facilitates access to these payments and reduces administrative complexity [5]. The second pillar, dedicated to rural development, provides specific measures for conversion to organic farming, maintenance of organic practices, as well as investments in farms and value chains (European Court of Auditors, 2024) [6].

An important role is also played by the EU Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production, which sets the objective of reaching 25% of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030. This plan includes measures aimed at stimulating demand, strengthening consumer trust, and improving certification systems (European Commission, 2021) [4].

Furthermore, the CAP promotes innovation and knowledge transfer through the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), facilitating farmers' access to research, advisory services, and best practices. This is essential for enhancing competitiveness and adapting organic farming to climate-related challenges [6].

However, the implementation of organic farming within the CAP faces several challenges, including disparities between Member States, difficulties in assessing environmental impact, and high conversion costs for farmers. Additionally, market volatility and insufficiently developed demand may limit the expansion of this sector (European Court of Auditors, 2021) [6].

In summary, organic farming occupies a strategic role within the Common Agricultural Policy, supporting the development of a more sustainable and resilient agricultural system. Through its financial and regulatory mechanisms, the CAP promotes both the expansion of the organic sector and the wider transformation of the European Union agri-food system [4, 5, 10].

The State of Organic Farming in the Republic of Moldova.

In the Republic of Moldova, organic farming has been encouraged as a strategic priority focused not only on enhancing agricultural production, but also on changing the practices and attitudes of farmers and agricultural producers [1]. The implementation of this model is supported by a relatively well-developed legal framework, partially aligned with European standards. However, the volume of

organic agri-food production remains modest, with the main constraint being the insufficient availability of technological, financial, and research resources necessary for sector development.

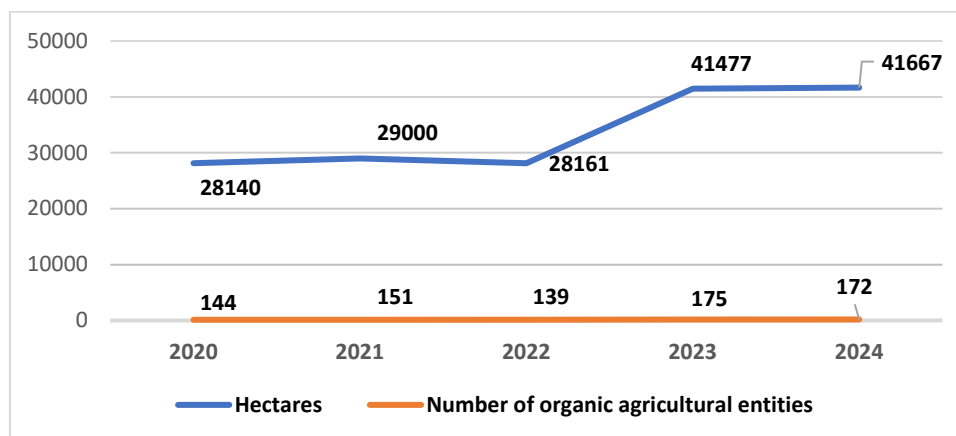
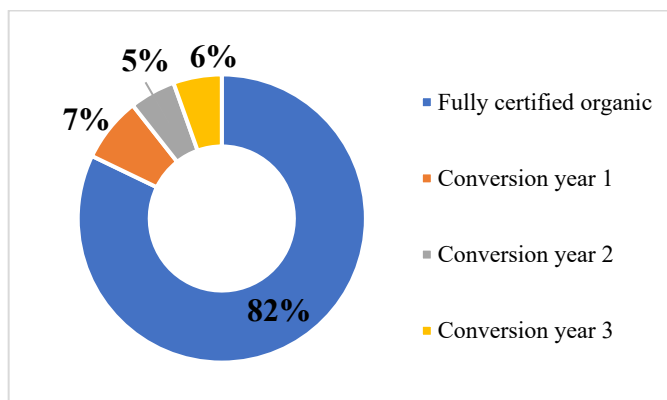


Figure 1. Area of agricultural land under the organic farming system and the number of registered organic operators

Source: www.maia.gov.md

An analysis of the sector's evolution indicates a significant increase in organically cultivated areas. During the period 2020 -2024, these expanded from 28,140 hectares to approximately 41,667 hectares, reflecting a strong upward trend. In 2024, the total area of agricultural land managed under the organic system (including land under conversion) accounts for about 1.4% of the country's total agricultural land. Compared to 2020, this area increased by approximately 42.6%, confirming the ongoing expansion of organic farming.

The structure of these areas highlights the dominance of crop production. Approximately 43% of the land is used for cereals and grain legumes, 48% for industrial crops, 8% for perennial plantations, and about 1% for other crops. In 2024, the distribution of land by certification status shows that 82% is fully certified organic, while the remaining area is under conversion (7% in the first year, 5% in the second year, and 6% in the third year).



Organic farming indicators in the Republic of Moldova for 2024 highlight the following distribution of areas:

- 41,667 hectares were fully certified as organic;
- 3,677.9 hectares were in the first year of conversion;
- 2,618.1 hectares were in the second year of conversion;
- 2,763.0 hectares were in the third year of conversion.

Figure 2. Areas registered in 2024 in organic farming

Source: Data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry and the Agency for Intervention and Payments in Agriculture

The sector comprises around 172 certified economic entities, either under national or international certification schemes. More than two-thirds hold certificates issued by international control bodies, enabling access to export markets, while less than one-third operate exclusively on the domestic market. The dominant activity is agricultural production (113 entities), primarily in the crop sector,

alongside a smaller number engaged in beekeeping. Other activities include organic processing (30 entities), export (19 entities), import and trade (5 entities), and the harvesting of wild flora (5 entities).

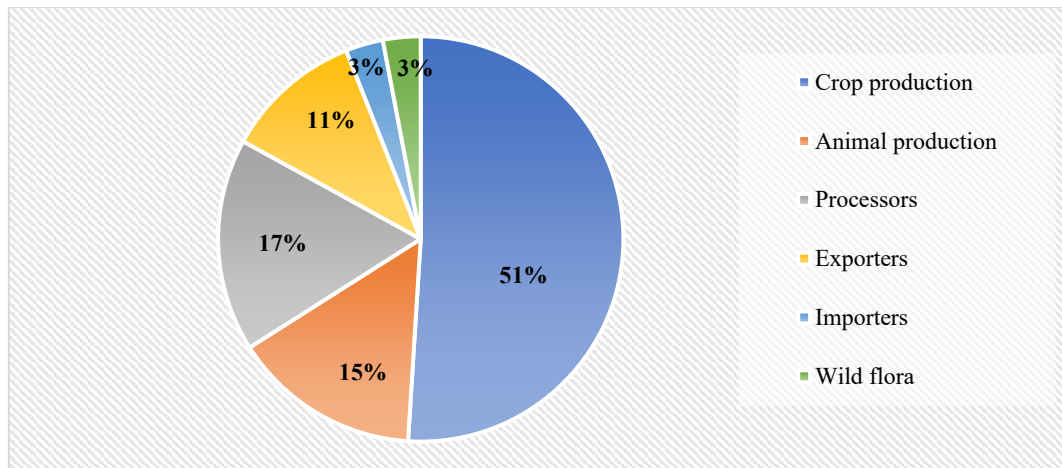


Figure 3. Types of activities in organic farming in 2024

Source: Developed by the author based on data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry.

A key feature of the organic sector in the Republic of Moldova is its pronounced focus on exports. More than 90% of organic production is sold on foreign markets, especially within the European Union. In this regard, Moldova is positioned 17th among exporters of organic products to the EU and is one of the main suppliers in Eastern Europe, ranking just behind Ukraine [2].

In general, organic farming in the Republic of Moldova can be regarded as undergoing a phase of accelerated development, characterized by the expansion of cultivated areas and an increasing number of operators. However, the sector remains heavily export-oriented and faces structural challenges, highlighting the need to strengthen public policies, market infrastructure, and institutional capacities in order to fully capitalize on its potential [12].

Challenges in the Integration of the Republic of Moldova into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The alignment of the Republic of Moldova with the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union is a strategic process involving the structural transformation of the agri-food sector, with important implications for its institutional, regulatory, and economic systems. This process is complex and involves a set of interdependent challenges that influence both the pace and quality of alignment with EU standards [5].

Firstly, a key constraint is the limited administrative and institutional capacity. The implementation of CAP mechanisms requires efficient administrative structures, qualified human resources, and operational procedures aligned with EU requirements. In the Republic of Moldova, institutions responsible for agricultural policy implementation still face constraints related to inter-institutional coordination, digitalization of processes, and experience in managing EU-type financial instruments. These shortcomings may result in implementation delays and reduced policy effectiveness [5].

Another major issue is the insufficient harmonization of the national legal framework with the EU acquis. Although progress has been made in regulatory alignment, the transposition and, more importantly, the effective enforcement of EU regulations in areas such as food safety, environmental protection, animal welfare, and rural development remain incomplete. This creates discrepancies between CAP requirements and national institutional realities, affecting systemic compatibility.

At the same time, the limited absorption capacity of external funds represents a significant structural bottleneck. The lack of extensive experience in managing complex financial instruments, combined with insufficiently standardized administrative procedures, reduces the efficiency of external resource utilization. Consequently, the potential for agricultural modernization is only partially realized.

A further challenge is the structural fragmentation of agricultural holdings. The prevalence of small-scale farms limits investment capacity, market competitiveness, and compliance with EU standards regarding quality, traceability, and food safety. Within the CAP framework, such fragmentation may hinder effective access to financial support and the implementation of advanced agricultural practices. In addition, compliance with CAP environmental and climate requirements requires substantial adjustments to traditional farming practices. EU policies promote a transition toward sustainable agriculture with reduced environmental impact, which implies investments in modern technologies, efficient natural resource management, and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices. For Moldovan farmers, these adjustments may generate significant adaptation costs [4, 5].

Finally, limited access to advisory services and knowledge transfer mechanisms reduces the ability of agricultural stakeholders to quickly adapt to CAP requirements. The absence of effective agricultural extension systems contributes to low awareness of both opportunities and obligations associated with European integration.

In conclusion, the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the Common Agricultural Policy depends on addressing a range of complex structural challenges that affect the institutional, economic, and social aspects of the agricultural sector. Addressing these challenges requires coherent reforms, investments in administrative capacity, and the strengthening of agricultural governance mechanisms to ensure genuine convergence with the European Union's agricultural policy framework.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that organic farming is a key component of the Common Agricultural Policy, reflecting the strategic direction of the European Union toward sustainable agricultural development, environmental conservation, and climate change mitigation. Within this framework, organic agriculture is positioned as a key instrument for promoting resource efficiency and reducing the environmental footprint of agricultural production systems.

In the Republic of Moldova, organic farming has demonstrated a gradual development trajectory, evidenced by the expansion of certified organic land and the increasing integration of producers into export-oriented value chains. Nevertheless, the sector remains relatively underdeveloped and structurally constrained, with limited domestic market demand, insufficient processing infrastructure, and a high degree of dependence on external markets.

The present situation of organic agriculture in the Republic of Moldova reveals a twofold reality: on the one hand, significant development potential driven by favorable natural conditions and increasing international demand; on the other hand, persistent institutional, economic, and structural limitations that restrict its sustainable expansion.

The integration of organic farming into the CAP framework requires comprehensive alignment with the *acquis communautaire*, particularly in relation to certification systems, traceability mechanisms, environmental standards, and farm management requirements. This process entails substantial adjustments for national producers, many of whom face constraints in meeting the rigorous standards imposed by EU regulations.

The process of aligning the Republic of Moldova with the Common Agricultural Policy is marked by a series of structural difficulties, such as restricted administrative and institutional capacities, partial alignment of the regulatory framework, and a comparatively low absorption rate of external financial support. These issues are further intensified by weak agricultural advisory services and limited mechanisms for knowledge transfer.

Moreover, the highly fragmented nature of agricultural holdings in Moldova constitutes a major obstacle to competitiveness, reducing farmers' ability to meet CAP standards and to effectively access and utilize EU support measures.

Furthermore, compliance with CAP environmental and climate objectives necessitates profound transformations in production practices, requiring increased investment in modern technologies,

sustainable resource management, and the strengthening of innovation and education systems within the agricultural sector.

In essence, the successful integration of organic farming into the Common Agricultural Policy framework in the Republic of Moldova relies on the implementation of coherent institutional reforms, the strengthening of administrative capacities, and sustained investment in human capital and agricultural infrastructure. These measures are essential for ensuring long-term convergence with European standards and for enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of the national agricultural sector.

References

1. Cimpoeș, L., Coșalić, D., 2022. *Development of organic farming in Moldova: Tendencies and challenges*. Scientific Papers, Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development, 2022, vol. 22, nr. 3, pp. 131–136. Available at: [https://managementjournal.usamv.ro/pdf/vol.22_3/Art14.pdf]. [Accessed: 20 March 2026].
2. Cimpoeș, L., Coșalić, D., 2023. *Organic farming support policy in Moldova*. Scientific Papers, Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development, 2023, vol. 23, nr. 2, pp. 159–164. Available at: [https://managementjournal.usamv.ro/pdf/vol.23_2/Art17.pdf]. [Accessed: 21 March 2026].
3. Crowder, D. W., Reganold, J. P. *Financial competitiveness of organic agriculture on a global scale*. 2015. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 112(24), 7611–7616 Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277600138_Financial_competitiveness_of_organic_agriculture_on_a_global_scale]. [Accessed: 2 April 2026].
4. European Commission, 2021. *An Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production*. Adopted in March 2021, Brussels. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021IR1968]. [Accessed: 7 April 2026].
5. European Commission, 2023. *Common Agricultural Policy 2023–2027*. Brussels Available at: [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cap-glance_eng]. [Accessed: 7 April 2026].
6. European Court of Auditors, 2024. *Organic farming in the EU. Gaps and inconsistencies hamper the success of the policy: progress and challenges*. Luxembourg. Available at: [https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2024-19/SR-2024-19_EN.pdf]. [Accessed: 8 April 2026].
7. Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2023. *National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Moldova (2023-2030)*, Government Decision No. 56/2023, [online] Chișinău. Available at: [https://aipa.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Strategia-nationala-de-dezvoltare-agricola-si-rurala-pentru-anii-2023-2030.pdf]. [Accessed: 26 March 2026].
8. Ignat, G., Ignat A. *Analysis of the ecological agriculture sector in the Republic of Moldova*. Articol publicat în cadrul ICEADR International Symposium 2022. Available at: [https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/301724/1/ICEADR-2022-p190.pdf]. [Accessed: 28 March 2026].
8. Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 2022. *National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030"*, Law No. 315/2022, [online] Chișinău. Available at: [https://old.cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/l_315_2022_snd_moldova_europeana_2030_adoptat_publicata.pdf]. [Accessed: 28 March 2026].
10. Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, [online]. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 150/1, 14.06.2018. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/848/]. [Accessed: 27 January 2026].
11. United Nations, *Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Moldova 2024*, [online] Chișinău. Available at: [https://gov.md/sites/default/files/Filepdf/Raport%20ODD%202024.pdf]. [Accessed: 22 March 2026].
12. Value Chain Alliance in Organic Agriculture of Moldova, *Yearbook on Organic Agriculture in the Republic of Moldova for the Years 2021–2022*. 3rd edition. Chișinău: MOVCA, 2023. Available at: https://movca.md/ro/organic-agriculture/publications/ [Accessed: 24 October 2025].