



Press Release

Luxembourg, 22 February 2018

EU Auditors to examine organic-food control system

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) is conducting an audit of organic-food checks in the EU. The auditors will examine the control system governing the production, processing, distribution and import of organic products. They will seek to assess whether consumers can now have greater confidence that products are truly organic than they could at the time of the ECA's last audit of the sector in 2012. The auditors have also published a Background Paper on the EU organic-food control system for those interested in the subject.

Organic production is a way of producing food and other products that respects natural life cycles. The organic nature of products is verified on the basis of a certification system laid down in EU law and overseen by the European Commission. The system is implemented by the Member States and inspections are made by both public and private bodies.

Retail sales in the EU organic market grew by 54% between 2010 and 2015. The total area under organic farming in the EU increased by 21% over the same period. Imports of organic produce grew by 32% between 2012 and 2015. Although the price of organic products is higher than that of conventionally produced products, the market struggles to meet demand and the premium that consumers are willing to pay has the potential to encourage fraudulent organic sales.

"The challenge faced by the organic sector is to ensure a steady growth of supply and demand, while maintaining consumers' trust", said Nikolaos Milionis, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the audit.

Under the Common Agricultural Policy, certified organic farmers receive a "greening" payment. Organic farmers can also receive support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development for both conversion to and maintenance of organic farming practices. This Fund's total contribution to organic-farming payments for 2014–2020 amounts to €6.5 billion.

The audit report is due to be published in early 2019. It will form part of a series of ECA reports on various aspects of the food chain that includes Food Waste (published in January 2017), Animal Welfare (underway) and Food Safety (underway).

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' Background Paper. The full paper is available at www.eca.europa.eu.

ECA Press

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Notes to Editors

EU Regulation 834/2007 provides the basis for the sustainable development of organic production while ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market, guaranteeing fair competition, ensuring consumer confidence, and protecting consumer interests. Farmers and other operators can obtain EU funds for organic food production under Pillars 1 and 2 of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The EU Auditors' last report on this subject was [Special Report No 09/2012](#), "Audit of the control system governing the production, processing, distribution and imports of organic products".