

BOOK REVIEW

Willer, Helga and Kilcher, Lukas (editors) (2011) The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2011. FiBL-IFOAM Report. IFOAM, Bonn and FiBL, Frick

Did you know that, by the end of 2009, there were 1.8 million organic producers in the world with 37.2 million hectares under organic management and a value of US\$54.9 billion for organic food and drink sales? And that the largest organic markets are in the USA, France and Germany, with the highest per capita expenditure on organic products in Denmark, Switzerland and Austria?

You can read it all, and much more, in 'The World of Organic Agriculture - Statistics & Emerging Trends 2011'. It is an authoritative piece of work, which takes the utmost care to report accurate and up-to-date data every year. In the world of organic agriculture, this is not always easy, as many countries don't have any official data, and any information available is gathered by volunteers. One of the delightful characteristics of this report is that the authors/editors are keen to let you know where problems with the data are most likely to occur by pointing out inconsistencies or gaps and by highlighting priorities for future data collection.

This report is part of an annual series that started in 2000. The data are based on country reports, written by experts in the area of organic agriculture in each country – almost doubling from 81 contributors in the first year to 160 in the present report, 75 per cent of the total number of countries in the world. Figures in the reports are then compiled into tables of all shapes and forms, some of which global – 47 in total, with an additional 38 figures and 7 maps - getting the most out of the available data for who-ever is interested. Usefully, the country reports of most continents are summarised in an overview of that continent.

The data mainly report the number of farmers and the land area under organic production and, for some countries, the area under different crops and forms of management. Estimates of the domestic market value, imports and exports are included where available. For those who are afraid of figures, it should be said that the book is still very readable. Each country report is set out in approximately the same sections, which include the size of the organic industry, organic standards and certification, the organic market (export and/or domestic), policy issues relating to organics, and research and extension in organic agriculture.

But then, there is enough flexibility to include topics that some authors have found important to discuss, such as organic action plans in Europe, and key actors in China. Although the series was originally published to provide statistics about, and show trends in, organic agriculture for as many countries in the world as possible, the book also includes other topics. This year, there are sections on "Standards and Regulations" and "Organic Beekeeping". In other years, topics have included "Organic Wild Collection", "How Organic Agriculture Contributes to Sustainable Development" and "Organic Aquaculture". The book concludes with an article by the Chief Executive Officer of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements about achievements made by the organic movement and the challenges ahead. This article points out that, perhaps, it is time for the organic industry to start focussing less on certification than it has in the past, and more on policy making.

The book makes a great deal of effort to be of maximum use to the reader. For example, at the back of each article, a list of links relevant to the article is included, together with suggestions for further reading material of relevance to the topic. At the end of the book there is a list of all contributors to the data collection, allowing readers to easily identify organic experts around the globe.

For whom is the book written? In the first place it is a mine of information for those who need data on organic agriculture. Not only for those who teach or study organic agriculture, but perhaps in particular for those who do business in this area. It is an invaluable source of information for those who trade organic products, to see where developments are taking place or are likely to take place in the future. And it is certainly a must for policy advisors and policy makers, as the book brims not only with data about the growth in the industry, but also provides insights into the most promising areas of growth and the bottlenecks in growth.

The website <http://www.organic-world.net/yearbook-2011.html> provides considerably more detail about the different topics, so that it will be easy to decide if this book is for you. It can be obtained for Euro 50 via <https://www.fibl-shop.org/english/shop/show.php?sprache=EN&art=1546>.

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