



Organic - part of the solution!

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT: rediscovering rural livelihoods

56% of the EU's population lives in rural areas, so the rural economy matters enormously. EU policies for Rural Development aim at making agriculture more competitive, improving the environment and countryside, improving quality of life in rural areas, and diversifying the rural economy. Organic agriculture can fast-track attainment of each of these objectives.

### Clean, green and interesting careers

- Organic farms represent rural income: they employ a higher number of Full Time Equivalent units per hectare and per farm, more of which is non-family labour. This means more jobs over more of the year. Salaries on organic farms are comparable to those on non-organic, and evidence suggests enhanced job satisfaction.
- Organic holdings tend to diversify into value-added activities, with farmers branching out into on-site processing of agricultural products and direct marketing. Such diversification can boost skill levels and aid knowledge transfer into rural regions.
- Organic farming is attracting a new generation into the agricultural sector: organic farmers are on average younger and better educated than conventional ones, and many of them are first-time farmers.
- Agricultural skills can be rebuilt through organic farming, which is a knowledge-intensive system. Farmers are required to attend training courses to qualify for certification in many member states.
- Organic farming can make important contributions to rural tourism by enhancing landscapes, improving environmental quality and nurturing local cultural heritage.
- Organic farming is at present the only approach to sustainable food production with a Europe-wide certification system in place. This makes it easy to include organic farming in rural development schemes.

### European policy can harness organic farming for rural development

The European action plan on organic food and farming (COM (2004) 415) recommends in Action 6 that Member States should support organic farming within their rural development programmes. A 2009 study demonstrates that implementation is taking place, but to widely varying degrees across member states.

IFOAM EU calls for mainstreaming sustainability in the new CAP as a whole. All CAP measures should clearly target the sustainable development of rural areas and food production. Organic farming as well as traditional low-input farming in regions with low incomes but high cultural and biological diversity should play a major role in the new CAP.