



CHAPTER IV:
**DETERMINING THE RIGHT
MIX OF SUPPORT MEASURES:
NATIONAL/REGIONAL ACTION
PLANS AND GUIDELINES**



This chapter provides recommendations concerning the clustering of pro-organic policies and actions into comprehensive plans such as organic action plans and other documents serving similar purposes. It is worth putting organic support in a broader context, showing that organic development is not the goal in itself but a tool to reach broader policy goals.

Approaching the issue of organic policies through an organic action plan will require the engagement of various stakeholders, commitment across several ministries, suitable budget allocations and ensuring coherence with other national policies and action plans that concern the agricultural sector and/or rural development more broadly.

Many governments have developed approaches to supporting organic agriculture, which are variously called policies, strategies and plans/action plans. Except for certain political declarations, these approaches are the result of a planning process. In these guidelines, the term **policy** is used flexibly, but mainly with reference to the general pathways in which governments translate their visions and broad goals into legislations, programs, and budget allocation. Some governments have issued broadly stated organic agriculture policies, leaving the planning of concrete actions for subsequent policy processes. It is a matter of governance style and tradition if the policies themselves will include detailed actions or if the policy is more general and concrete actions are formulated in an action plan, policy decrees or other instruments. It also relates to the decision-making processes involved. If the policies are set in parliament, it is generally better to have the action plan separate and approved by the relevant Ministry or the Government.

In these guidelines “**strategic plan**” refers to a comprehensive document describing the aims (goals) and related policies, and the strategic actions for going from the present situation towards achieving the aims and implementing the policies, often over a specific time period. The hallmark of the strategic plan is the plan for specific actions that will be taken to effect the desired change.

1. Why a national/regional organic action plan?

As shown in subsequent chapters of this document, there is a large array of policy measures and other forms of public support, which can be used at various levels of administration (e.g. inter-governmental, national, regional, municipal). There is a high interdependency among single policy measures addressing the organic sector. Policy packages are more relevant than the sum of individual policy measures and appear to be more effective if they are embedded in the general policy environment, contain strategic goals and consider directly the needs of the sector, in other words, if policy measures are packaged into an organic action plan. Choosing the right mix of appropriate, cost-effective measures in a given context requires a strategic planning exercise, of which the organic action plan is the outcome.

Organic action plans provide a framework for integrating policies and measures in order to encourage organic sector development. Thus action plans serve as a strategic instrument for governments to achieve policy goals, particularly when multiple policy

areas (such as agriculture, environment, trade) and different levels of policy formulation are to be integrated. Action plans can avoid contradictory policies while also ensuring that the different measures are complementary.

Organic Action Plans often include targets for adoption, as well as a combination of specific measures. The more detailed plans contain evaluations of the current situation and specific recommendations to address issues identified, including measures to reduce conflicts between different policy measures. Any Organic Action Plan is a political compromise reflecting tensions and diverging interests of government and various stakeholders.

Action plans are usually done at the national or regional level. For example, in 2004, the EU published its first European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming (EOAP). In 2014, the EU Commission adopted the second EOAP. In the EU alone, a total of 17 national and 10 regional action plans or similar support schemes were implemented between 2007 and 2011⁴⁵. In 2015, out of 31 countries in Europe, 12⁴⁶ had national (or several regional) organic action plans for the period⁴⁷. In India⁴⁸, many states have developed national organic action plans and policies. Other countries (or group of countries) that have developed an organic action plan/strategy/program include the African Union, Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Canada, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, The Philippines, or Turkey. Some of these are comprehensive plans and others are focused on one or a few aspects of support (such as Canada's organic brand development process).

Developing a comprehensive national/regional organic action plan takes time (several months to a couple of years) and some resources. However, it is a worthwhile exercise because:

- It creates and catalyzes a positive local dynamic around organic agriculture development.
- It encourages an analytical starting point, looking at the current situation of the domestic organic sector, and therefore addressing the local situation rather than trying to replicate policy blueprints of other countries, which may not be appropriate.
- It encourages policy makers and other actors of the sector to adopt a more comprehensive and strategic, and therefore more effective approach to organic support, than leaving single policy measures to be discussed and adopted in isolation.
- It provides the framework for a constructive public-private cooperation and organized stakeholder involvement in policy formulation.
- It constitutes a clear government-supported statement of the major societal

⁴⁵ Sanders et al, 2011, Use and efficiency of public support measures addressing organic farming.

⁴⁶ Those are Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, and Slovenia.

⁴⁷ The list, together with links to the various national plans, is available in annex of the 2015 IFOAM EU report "[Organic Action Plans – A Guide for Stakeholders](#)".

⁴⁸ Including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Mizoram, Karnataka, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh

benefits of organic farming and contributes to the expression and visibility of medium and long-term government commitment to organic support, which is a crucial signal for the private sector to invest.

It is often not too difficult for developing countries to secure resources to conduct such a planning process. Several developing countries (e.g. Serbia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, the African Union, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Tanzania, Uganda) financed the development of their national organic action plans in the context of a development cooperation project. It is important that there is solid political support for this process. If the process is externally funded, the risk increases that the plan will sit on the shelf (as has already happened in several countries).

Example 1: Organic Action Planning in Denmark: Working Together for More Organics

Denmark has a long history of developing and implementing organic action plans, which have become more comprehensive and strategic over time through an increasingly collaborative process. The initial seed of policy support for organic farming was recognition that organic production methods offered solutions to environmental problems linked to agriculture, in particular the problem of nitrate contamination of waterways. The government furthermore recognized that in order for organic agriculture to provide its solution, it needed to grow and be available in the market.

Early Action Plans

Action plans were established from 1995 to 1999 (Action Plan for Promoting Organic Food Production) and from 1999 to 2003 (Organics in Development). Both plans were ordered by the Danish Minister of Food, at the request of Organic Denmark, and guided by the Danish Organic Agricultural Council, which was an advisory board of the main stakeholders in the organic sector. The first plan included 65 action points focused mainly on increasing primary production. Of these, all but 5 were implemented. The second plan included 84 action points and broadened support to include both production and other points in the organic value chain, including an aggressive market development strategy. Almost all were implemented. After the period of the second action plan there was a seven-year gap until a new action plan emerged in 2011. However, a report produced by the organic research center ICROFS in 2008, in collaboration with the organic sector, included a wide range of recommendations regarding development of the organic market and organic farm practices.

Current Action Plan

The current action plan, “Working Together for More Organics,” originally covered the period 2011 -2020, but was revised in 2015 to a plan which retains the original goal of doubling the land area of organic production by 2020 (against a baseline of 2007) but with revised action points and specific budgets over the period 2015-2018. This plan was initiated by the Ministry for Agriculture and developed with the assistance of an external consultant. This plan is a strategic approach based on strong year-long consultation and collaboration with the organic sector. The plan is well integrated with numerous policy frameworks at EU and national levels and supported with budgets and monitoring.

- Strategic approach: The situation analysis conducted for the plan led to the conclusion that there is a need for emphasis to be placed on certain areas. This included more innovation within the sector, more organic products in public kitchens, a leveling out of price differences between conventional and organic products in the market place partially through reform of EU

agricultural policy, better cooperation between ministries (including a joint task force to review general policy impacts on organic farming), sufficient access to land and nutrients, a greater attention to organic farming interests in formation of general rules in agriculture, more research and development and an increase in the level of knowledge of organic production.

- **Consultation:** Preparation was based on a comprehensive process involving more than 200 stakeholders who participated in three large workshops. The 'Organic Food Council', a government-led forum of relevant interest groups, was involved in prioritizing the initiatives recommended as a result of three workshops and from 35 interviews with key actors in the organic sector.
- **Collaboration:** The Action Plan points are frequently implemented in a public-private partnership wherein the government provides funding and overall guidance and private sector/civil society entities implement the projects. These include public procurement, consumer awareness campaigns, and mobile organic product development teams.
- **Budget:** The Danish OAP (2013-2018) has a clearly specified budget, which makes use of Danish RDP as well as other funds. It provided 390m kr. (€52.3m) in 2015, and will provide about 300m kr. per year (€30.2m per year) for 2016, 2017 and 2018.
- **Policy frameworks:** The plan was developed in reference to overarching policy frameworks including the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), EU environmental legislation (e.g. Water framework), Danish agricultural, environmental and food policies, and national green growth policies.
- **Monitoring:** Monitoring is taken up in specific projects and reported. For example, the impact of the public procurement project has been assessed and published in a publicly available journal.

Content:

The plan addresses the following main themes:

- Increasing exports (7 action points)
- Promoting organic and increasing demand (8 action points)
- Collaborative efforts among government institutions (23 action points)
- Investment and expertise support (8 action points)
- Increase number of organic producers (7 action points)
- Support for organic inputs and for special sub-sector development (14 action points)

Results

Denmark has the highest market share for organic food among all countries, 8.4% in 2015. Its consumers spend the highest amount spent on organic food, (EUR 162 per capita annually). Approximately 8% of agricultural land is used for organic farming. Organic exports have grown at a rate of more than 10% annually.

Example 2: The Philippines National Organic Program: from legislation to local implementation

Legislation

A piece of legislation known as the Organic Agricultural Act of 2010 (Republic Act 10068) laid the foundation for a strategic national plan for organic agriculture for the period 2012-2016. The Act established a structural framework and financial appropriation for comprehensive support for building the organic sector, which includes but is not focused on standards and regulation. It also set some directions for the types of support that must be offered: tax incentives, production support, research etc. The Act also set some requirements for the process of sector support, especially implementation at the provincial and local levels. Significantly, the Act called for a multi-agency, multi-stakeholder National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB), attached to the Department of Agriculture and comprised of representatives of eight government departments/bureaus and representatives from the NGOs, academic institutions and private sector. The NOAB was empowered to develop and oversee the Implementing Rules for the Act.

NOAB: an Implementing Mechanism

The structure and mandate of the NOAB facilitated collaboration across member agencies including Agriculture, Interior and Local Government, Environment and Natural Resources, Agrarian Reform, Health, Science and Technology, Education, and Trade and Industry. It also ensured transparency and consultation as the NOAB worked through several steps toward establishing and implementing a strategic action plan. The initial mandate of the NOAB was to prepare the Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Agricultural Act, which was approved as an administrative order in early 2011. The order established the National Organic Agricultural Program and called upon government units at all levels and organizations in the organic sector to submit their own sector development plans to the NOAB to foster the development of a “bottom up, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectorial participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation system.” The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards was designated to provide the Board’s Secretariat and implement a consultative process for preparing an action plan, to include provisions for localized consultation and implementation.

Drafting and Consulting the Action Plan

The aim of the Action Plan was to translate the legislative format of rules to a planning format amenable to monitoring and evaluation. The aim was a holistic and comprehensive five-year program. The NOAB established a Technical Working Group to conduct consultations on the main islands of the Philippines, including provincial and local governments, farmers and other sector actors. A progress report on the draft was presented at the Philippines Organic Agriculture Congress in 2011.

The action plan, called the National Organic Agricultural Program, was finalized in January 2012. The unit by the same name, [National Organic Agricultural Program](#), within the Department of Agriculture administers and monitors program implementation including at provincial and local levels, and publishes periodic implementation reports and assessments.

Program Characteristics

The following public goals are given for developing the organic sector:

- Better farm incomes and sustainable livelihoods
- Improved health of the people
- Environmental protection

- Disaster risk reduction and resilience to climate change
- Social justice.

The goal for the National Organic Program was to have 5% of agricultural land under organic cultivation by 2016.

Guiding concepts for its formulation include the following:

- Multistakeholder processes
- Public-private partnerships for implementation
- Cost-sharing with beneficiaries
- Integration/convergence with other development policies
- Systems approach to plan design.

Program Concept and Components

The program's main components are:

- Institutional development
- Research and development
- Production and technology support
- Extension and capacity building
- Promotion/advocacy/education
- Market development

Results and Impacts

By 2015, the Philippines had 343,387 hectares of organic agriculture area and 116,558 farmers. This compares to a baseline in 2006 (the earlier year for which data is available) of 14,140 Ha under organic management (0.12% of agricultural land) and 35,000 organic farmers. The target of 5% agriculture land by the end of 2016 was for 483,540 Ha.

To see an example of results at the local level, click [here](#).

2. How to develop an organic action plan?

The impetus to develop an organic action plan may either come from the government (top-down) or from the sector (bottom-up). Often but not always the first initiative to develop an organic action plan comes from government. Examples of countries that have developed organic action plans on the basis of top-down initiatives are: Denmark (1998), Germany (2001), Czech Republic (2002), Slovenia (2004), Tunisia (2004), The Philippines (2012), Sikkim (2013), and Hungary (2014).

There are also cases where the national organic movement or the private sector, when sufficiently organized (e.g. within a national umbrella organization), is the one initiating the organic action plan process. For example, in the EU, some Action Plans were developed on the basis of bottom-up initiatives (e.g. Andalusia 2001, Italy 2001, Netherlands 2004); i.e. the sector itself demanding political action designed by the sector itself to help solve sector problems. Sometimes, in developing countries, strategic planning can be organized by national associations with support from foreign donors.

Regardless of who initiates the process, the development and implementation of organic

action plans should be seen as a partnership between policymakers, the organic sector, and other concerned stakeholders (e.g. interested businesses, consumers, sector organizations). It seeks to respond to the needs of organic food and farming in a specific country and region while contributing to wider policy objectives.

The process of developing a national organic action plan may follow the traditional policy development cycle. This “policy cycle” involves a series of linked phases or stages including policy design, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Preparing an Organic Action Plan will generally take 12-18 months. The duration of the implementation period varies considerably, from one to up to eight years.

The development of organic action plans is a complex exercise. It should contain at least the following steps:

1. Analyzing the current situation of the organic sector and its development needs.
2. Establishing the aims/goals and objectives of the action plan
3. Identifying appropriate policy measures to address the aims and objectives.
4. Deciding on the measures and allocating budgets.

Stakeholder involvement is a crucial condition to the development of a good organic action plan. Stakeholder involvement is more likely to become successful if it uses several methods and runs throughout the policy cycle of an Organic Action Plan (design, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation). Methods for stakeholder involvement include: electronic consultations, creation of committees and expert groups, workshops, surveys, etc. Case examples of stakeholder involvement and public-private collaboration on organic policy are presented in a 2014 [UNFSS Discussion paper](#).

It is important to ensure that the process is inclusive and represents a balance of interests. Special attention is needed to ensure participation of (smallholder) farmers, women farmers, indigenous people or other possibly marginalized groups. Some measures to achieve such balance and inclusiveness include:

- Relying on identified interested stakeholders to identify and reach out to other groups that may not have been originally considered.
- If necessary, ensuring targeted financial support for key civil society stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, cooperatives, SMEs, farmer associations) to enable their active participation (this could be in the form of a project, or similar).
- If necessary, organizing some capacity building activities for stakeholders (and government representatives) on organic issues prior to commencing the policy formulation process, so that they are empowered to make a meaningful contribution.

The various steps in the development of an organic action plans are presented in more detail below.

a. Analyzing the current situation of the organic sector and development needs

Accurate data and deep understanding of the current situation of the organic sector and its context, is essential before engaging in a strategic planning process. An in-depth analysis of the following elements is recommended:

- The status of organic production, markets and other aspects relevant to the sector.
- The various stakeholders.
- The relevant bottlenecks for further development in a region or country (both on the side of production and on the side of demand).
- The specific economic, environmental and societal potentials of organic farming,
- The interplay of existing different organic support policies.
- An analysis of current national policies in relevant sectors (agriculture, rural development, environment, public health, trade, etc.), the goals they define, and how organic agriculture support can be strategically positioned as contributing to these goals.
- The extent of prior policy initiatives in support of organic food and farming (if any) - including the outcome of completed evaluations (especially evaluation of previous organic action plans if any).
- The potential impact of other policy measures or policy strategies (agricultural policy and other policy areas) on the organic sector – see Chapter VI.

Experts can be hired to prepare a study of the sector's situation and its potential. This can consist, for example, of a local study with data collection and key informant interviews to determine the sector's situation and its industry competitiveness potential. Value chain analysis by qualified experts may also provide the basis for developing realistic elements of an industry competitiveness strategy. In complex policy environments, expert analysis will also be required to identify and summarize the main policies having a significant impact on the organic sector, and the policy objectives that are relevant to the organic sector.

Once the situation analysis has been prepared, a workshop or similar event involving stakeholders can be conducted to discuss and build upon the study's results. A facilitation process can be used to collectively investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the organic sector and the opportunities and threats that impact on the current state and future development of the sector – i.e. to conduct a SWOT analysis. Strengths (and weaknesses) are those features of the organic sector that distinguish it positively (or negatively) from other sectors in the economy (such as conventional agriculture) or from organic sectors in other countries. Weak points are the bottlenecks to the further development of organic agriculture (what are the most limiting factors for the sector). Opportunities (and threats) are developments outside the influence of those seeking to develop the organic sector but are likely to influence organic farming. Opportunities can be utilized (or missed) and threats can be avoided or mitigated by taking appropriate action.

For an example of a SWOT analysis of a national organic sector (Macedonia), click [here](#).

To see how the SWOT analysis informed the development of the 2007 Macedonia Action plan, click [here](#).

b. Establishing aims/goals and objectives

When the needs and potential for developing the organic sector have been defined, the aims of the Action Plan can be established.

Aims (goals) identify broad ends that the government and the sector want to achieve. From a policy-maker's perspective, the development of the organic sector is more a means to an end in pursuit of societal level objectives, not an end in itself, whereas organic sector stakeholders are more likely (but not exclusively) to see the development of the organic sector as an end in itself. Thus, reconciling the interests of different stakeholder groups is central to the development of Organic Action Plans. Two sets of aims may be included in the action plan: 1) Overview of broader policy goals to which growth and improvement of the organic sector will make a positive contribution and 2) Aims for the development (growth and improvement) of the organic sector, which usually includes quantitative targets (such as number of producers, organic land area, export values, and domestic market size and share).

Objectives describe what should change in order to achieve the aims for the organic sector. A reasonable criterion for selecting objectives is that they should respond to the needs – as defined by weaknesses (internal to the sector) and the threats (external to the sector). They should also attempt to exploit the potentials – as defined by the strengths (internal to the sector) and the opportunities (external to the sector). Examples include increasing capacity of farmers in organic farming practices, reducing the risks of converting to organic farming, increasing consumer awareness of organic agriculture and products, or increasing uptake of organic products in the hospitality sector. Aims and objectives should be measurable, to provide a basis for the evaluation of the plan's implementation.

Example of aims/goals and objectives in an organic action plan (hypothetical)

Aims/goals of support to the organic action plan:

1. Contribute to the environmental protection and sustainability in agriculture on the national territory by increasing agricultural land under organic management by 25% during the period of the plan).
2. Develop market opportunities for the nation's farmers and businesses by increasing organic exports by 20% and the domestic market share by 15% during the period of the plan.
3. Improve the nutrition and health of the nation's people by increasing the national market share of organic food sales by 15% during the period of the plan.

Objectives (Based on SWOT outcomes, these could also be expressed as quantitative targets):

1. All farmers can receive advice on organic agriculture systems and practices from the national agricultural extension service.

2. Farmers have financial incentives for converting to organic agriculture.
3. Crop insurance programs are equitable for organic farmers.
4. Research on organic agriculture is equitably supported.
5. Tax policies provide disincentives for the use of conventional pesticides and fertilizers.
6. Special support is given to organic businesses for export marketing.
7. Regulation of the organic sector is suitable for establishing equivalence discussions with trade partners.
8. Consumer awareness about organic food and agriculture is increased.
9. Children can access organic food in the school meal system.
10. Data on organic agriculture and markets is available.

It is important to ensure that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) issues are addressed appropriately from the outset and that resources are allocated for them. Indeed, M&E will be an essential element to steer implementation and will serve as an input in the next action plan design phase. Responsibility for monitoring should be clarified in the plan and preferably rest with one coordinating body. Setting targets in the action plan is not only useful for the M&E, but also to express the level of government ambition regarding the organic sector development, which would also send an important message to private investors. Such targets should be clearly measurable and provide a good basis for evaluating whether or not the actions specified will be effective.

Examples of targets in European organic action plans:

- Organic farming area increase: e.g. The Czech Republic action plan 2011-2015 set a target of 15% increase in organic farming land area.
- Organic production increase: e.g. the Estonian Organic Action Plan sets a target of a 50% increase, for the period 2014-2020, in the proportion of organic farming production over the total agricultural production.
- Level of self-sufficiency in organic products: e.g. in 2002, England, in its Organic Action Plan, set the target of sourcing 70% of products for the English organic market from the UK. At the time, the UK was around 40% self-sufficient in organic products - the target helped increase the level of self-sufficiency to more than 60% in 2006.
- Share of organic food in public catering: the French program Ambition Bio 2017 has set a target of achieving a 20% share of organic produce in the public procurement market.
- Increase in consumption of organic products: e.g. the 2011-2015 Czech organic action plan sets a target of 20% annual increase in organic food consumption, and reaching a market share of 3% for organic products by the end of the period.

For targets, it is necessary to have a baseline figure, in order to measure the rate of progress.

c. Identifying appropriate policy measures to address the objectives

Specific measures (actions) can then be proposed under each of the objectives/strategies. However, identifying measures for individual objectives may

leave out possible synergies and systemic effects. An alternative is to develop result chains/networks, or a system map in which key levers are identified. The solution to achieve a mix of policy objectives may then be a combination of single-target policy measures and multi-target policy measures.

In reviewing and considering possible support measures, participants in the exercise should have the subsequent chapters of this document (details of various possible measures) at hand.

d. Deciding on the measures and allocating budgets

The challenge, at this stage is that a very long ‘shopping list’ of possible actions may have been prepared. A “pruning” exercise will likely be necessary in order to match intended actions with available means. This step therefore consists of selecting and prioritizing relevant measures. Decisions required concern alignment with objectives, resource availability and prioritization, implementation requirements (processes and organization), desired outcomes and methods of evaluation. Effective decision-making requires planning, participation and transparency (openness).

After agreement has been found on the various measures to be implemented, **budget allocation** might need to be done, which may involve splitting a given overall amount into various objectives and measures, or estimating what each measure would require, to calculate the total budget needed. The availability of financial resources is always a critical point. Stakeholder groups should realize that not all desired measures can be implemented. Estimating the resource needs for each policy and weighing those needs as part of the policy prioritization and budget allocation is helpful and creates greater transparency between policy makers and stakeholders. Budget allocation should be based on an assessment of effectiveness and efficiency and priority should be given to high efficiency, i.e. highly effective measures that involve low costs.

In many cases, organic action plans do not directly involve financial means, but are an instrument for governments to make the strategic role of organic farming in the general organic farming policy transparent, and the budget to support the various activities in the plan will come from more general agricultural policies budget lines.

Example of budget allocation: Denmark OAP 2013-2018

The Danish OAP (2013-2018) has a clearly specified budget, which makes use of the Danish Rural Development Plan (RDP) as well as other funds. It provided 390m kr. (€52.3m) in 2015, and will provide about 300m kr. per year (€30.2m per year) for 2016, 2017 and 2018. The 2016 budget includes about 240m kr. (€32.2m) of Danish RDP funds for area payments.

e. Policy Implementation and Policy Evaluation

Implementation and evaluation details are not in the scope of these guidelines. However, two aspects can be mentioned:

- 1) Effective communication of the launch of the action plan is important for its future success and to motivate stakeholders to become active in implementation. It also sends a strong positive policy signal to the organic market and investors. The launch of the action plan can be the occasion of an official speech from a high-level policy person, which can be an effective way to raise the profile of organic agriculture.
- 2) Importance should be given to the institutional framework accompanying the implementation of the organic action plan. In particular, establishing a National Organic Council with representatives from stakeholders and relevant public ministries and institutions, has proven valuable in many countries. Such councils can have an advisory role to the (government) body in charge of implementing the organic action plan, and can also be used, later on, for advice on future policy formulation. Similarly, the existence of a coordinating organization such as Agence Bio in France (see more details in V, measure 4.c) is a great asset for action plan implementation.

For more detailed recommendations, examples and tools, with a particular focus on Action Plan evaluation, consult the 2008 Manual [*“Organic Action Plans Development, implementation and evaluation - A resource manual for the organic food and farming sector”*](#) and in the online toolbox at <http://orgapet.orgap.org/>. A [French version](#) of the manual is also available. Both resources were developed for the EU but many of the recommendations are transferable to other regions.

3. Other policy documents relevant for organic sector development

There can be many other types of policy documents which are not national organic action plans but which can nevertheless provide a useful general framework for guiding and encouraging public support to organic agriculture, in ways that can be more or less detailed and strategic.

One scenario is where the country develops a strategic plan that is not specifically organic but that encompasses many pro-organic ideas. One example is [Sri Lanka’s Toxin Free Nation Program](#) which is a 3-year plan adopted in 2016 by the Ministry of Agriculture and President’s Office that lays down a ten point program to phase out toxic chemicals from Sri Lankan agriculture.

Many countries (including all EU countries) have a national action plan to reduce risks and the impacts of pesticide use. Supporting organic agriculture can and should be an important part of such plans.

There can also be national organic agriculture promotion laws, which may be the result of a national organic action plan exercise but not always. Sometimes, promotion laws are integrated into one document together with the organic regulation, so they become an “Organic Law” that has two components: regulation and promotion. For example, in **Mexico** the organic law of 2006 is essentially an organic regulation but contains one chapter (Chapter 6) on promotion and public support. Also, in the **Philippines**, the

[Republic Act 10068](#), also known as the Organic Agriculture Act (OAA) of 2010 contains both regulatory aspects and promotion aspects, and was accompanied by an institutional budget allocation of at least 2% of the annual budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to implement organic agricultural programs.

In other cases, promotion and regulations are addressed in two different laws. For example, in **Costa Rica**, the law 8591 of 2007 and the Decree 35242 of 2009 address promotion aspects, while the decree 29782 of 2000 is the organic regulation.

There can also be decrees at a more local level (regional or municipal), which can provide a conducive framework for public support to organic, again various degrees of strategies and detail. In **Mexico** for example, several states (e.g. Zacatecas, Chiapas, Oaxaca, and the federal district of Mexico City) have local laws establishing programs to promote organic agriculture.

Aside from laws and decrees, there can also be policy notification of a more inspiring (rather than constraining) nature, which can nevertheless lead to positive outcomes. One example is the **USA**, which does not have a national organic action plan, but where in 2013 the national Secretary of Agriculture issued policy guidance on Organic Agriculture. The [Guidance on Organic Agriculture, Marketing and Industry](#) directs all USDA agencies to support organic agriculture and markets, stating “*(Organic) production and commerce is a bright spot in the American marketplace of innovation and entrepreneurship, and particularly can contribute to USDA’s goals for rural economic development. In recognition of this potential, the 2010 USDA Strategic Plan called for an increase of 25 percent in certified U.S. organic businesses by 2015*”. The guidance requests the agencies to identify ways to serve the needs of the organic sector and remove obstacles to it.

Public measures supporting organic agriculture may also be packaged in the form of time-limited programs or projects implemented or supported by the government. Such projects are often easier to get approved in the sense that they do not require the same level of broad domestic political support (especially if they are supported through development cooperation foreign aid). For example, in **Armenia** the government-assisted project “Organic Agriculture Support Initiative” started in 2015 at the request of the Armenian government. It is funded by the EU and co-funded and implemented by the Austrian Development Agency, and combines a range of support measures (watch the project launch video of the Armenian Organic Agriculture Support Initiative [here](#)). This enables the Armenian government to implement concrete activities in order to deliver on the objective of having an efficient organic agricultural policy (an objective mentioned in the government’s “Sustainable Agriculture Development Strategy”).

Another example is **India**, where one government program packages several types of support measures to organic agriculture into one scheme supporting organic uptake: the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana launched in 2015 with a budget of around EUR 41 million. The scheme is a pro-active initiative of the Indian federal government and a component of the Soil Health Management scheme, which is part of the major project National Mission of Sustainable Agriculture.

Finally, organic agriculture may be mainstreamed into general agricultural policies, rather than being subject to specific policies and action plans. For example, in Switzerland, there is no government-endorsed national organic action plan, but organic agriculture development is mentioned and addressed in the general agricultural policy⁴⁹.

4. Supply and demand, and other overall policy considerations

The long-term efficacy of policy measures does not only depend on the relevance of each measure taken in isolation. The right mix of measures, the reliability of and trust in government support, can have an even bigger impact on the sector development than the amount of resources invested.

Achieving and raising the supply and demand equilibrium

Public policies are ineffective and inefficient when the concept is not economically viable. Thus, organic farming policies should be guided by a business minded approach focusing on developing the organic sector as a well-functioning competitive industry. In cases of strong demand-supply imbalance, public intervention will be most efficient when it addresses the side that is underdeveloped. However, in many cases, supply-demand imbalances are not so dramatic, and the aim is to take the sector to a higher level of supply-demand equilibrium, therefore boosting both supply and demand at the same time.

Raising the supply-demand equilibrium is a bit of a chicken and egg problem, there may be a justification for a temporary stage of imbalance before supply can pull its own demand or demand pull its own supply back into equilibrium. This can be planned over a multi-year period (typically an organic action plan length period) and temporary imbalances can be covered through specific measures such as area payments that give enough incentives for farmers to stay organic even if organic markets are not yet in place. Such a growth in supply can then provide the volumes needed for processors and retailers to enter the organic sector and then for consumer awareness campaigns to be implemented (as those require that products be available in stores). A temporary situation of supply-demand imbalance is therefore not necessarily bad and can, if combined with other measures to support organic processing and marketing, help move into a next-level supply-demand equilibrium for the organic sector.

In today's globalized economy, one must also consider the fact that supply-demand is no longer a purely national problem. A number of countries have a well developed, profitable and sustainable organic sector that is essentially export oriented (e.g. Tunisia or India), while a number of countries rely on a high level of organic imports and are bound to continue to do so, due to their climate conditions (e.g. Sweden, or Saudi

⁴⁹ Bio Suisse, the national organic association, however calls for the Swiss government to work on a national organic action plan in order to provide a more proactive approach and clear political signal in favor of organic development.

Arabia). Export markets are part of the possible demand for domestic products, and foreign producers part of the possible supply. Many countries are exporters and importers at the same time and even those countries that are mainly exporters rarely manage to find an export market for all the crops in their traditional crop rotation, so a domestic market can be very valuable even if export is the main focus.

In view of environmental considerations and consumers' increasing desire to reconnect with their local producers, it can also make sense that policy action prioritizes improving the domestic supply-demand balance. One viewpoint is that, in countries that are large exporters of organic products, domestic consumers should also be able to consume the healthy products that distant markets are so eager to buy. Similarly, in countries that are big importers of organic food, consumers that invest in purchasing so much organic food should reap environmental benefits for their own surroundings.

Reliability and market actors' trust

Policies may be less effective when market actors (farmers, processors, retailers) do not trust the reliability and continuity of governmental support. Investing in organic businesses (farms as well as companies involved in processing and retailing) requires a reliable perspective to reduce risk. Action plans can be an instrument to document government's commitment and reliability towards organic farming. But more importantly it is the action itself that governments take, rather than the action plan documents, which express reliability and commitment. Governments should express what role organic farming plays in their agricultural policy concept and show that they are reliable partners for the farmers, processors and retailers.

Public-private collaboration acts in the same way as reliable policies. The entire organic sector development benefits from stable and reliable framework conditions and from good collaboration between the organic sector and government.

Continuity of policy support and policy anticipation

Continuity of policy support measures can be key to their success. Some measures are intended to be transitory (e.g. to kick-start certain processes) would be designed as such. For other measures however, which are designed as more permanent incentives (e.g. typically subsidies for organic area maintenance), a key aspect will be their continuity, and the anticipation of the effects of their possible changes by policy makers. Disruption of support schemes are often difficult to avoid due to the time cycle of political mandates and related public programs, and they will certainly have some impacts on the organic sector, which policy makers should anticipate.

For example, experience in the EU countries has shown that when the application process for organic farming support schemes such as subsidies are closed either for review or due to financial constraints, a backlog of interest can build up which may result in very large numbers of producers converting at the same time when the scheme reopens. Such administrative disruptions of organic farming schemes may lead to a rapidly rising increase in organic supply resulting in a supply and demand imbalance.

It is therefore important to plan for long-term stable and continuous support, even though this is challenging in the context of short political mandates.

Choosing policy measures that are suitable to the local/national context

Not all measures are suitable in all contexts. In the following chapter (Chapter V “Array of possible support measures”), we present 26 categories of support measures aimed at boosting supply and/or demand of organic products. Most of the time, national/local organic action plans or strategies, even when they are very integrated and comprehensive, will not use all of the measures presented. Priorities will be set and choices will have to be made. In order to help policy makers and stakeholders participating in strategic organic planning, the [Global Policy Toolkit on Public Support to Organic Agriculture](#) includes a [Decision-helping framework](#) that presents the suitability of each measure in relation to the various contextual scenarios in which a country/region can find itself. This decision-helping framework is based on four factors, and under each factor, three or four possible scenarios. These are the following⁵⁰:

Factor 1: The stage of development of organic agriculture

- Scenario a): Organic agriculture is at an embryonic stage of development, i.e. there is a small number of organic producers in the country, organic exports are not well developed, and the domestic market is very small or non-existent. (Country example: Georgia)
- Scenario b): The country is essentially an exporting country, i.e. exports of organic products are well developed, but the domestic market is very small or non-existent. (Country example: Uganda)
- Scenario c): The country is essentially an importing country, i.e. the domestic organic market is well developed, but not domestic organic production, which means that the organic market is essentially supplied with imports. (Country example: Saudi Arabia)
- Scenario d): The country has well-developed organic production and consumption patterns – even though there may still be some supply-demand imbalances in either direction. (Country example: Germany).

Factor 2: The organic regulatory context

- Scenario a): The country has no organic regulation, and no officially referenced organic guarantee system. (Country example: Senegal)
- Scenario b): The country has no organic regulation, but has an officially referenced organic guarantee system that defines what is considered organic in terms of acceptable organic standard(s) and control system(s). (Country example: East-African Community countries)
- Scenario c): The country has an organic regulation but it applies only for exports, and there is no officially referenced guarantee system for the domestic market (Country example: India)
- Scenario d): The country has a fully regulated organic market (both for the domestic market and for trade). (Country example: USA).

⁵⁰ The country examples are based on their situation in 2016.

Factor 3: The culture of government intervention in the agricultural sector

- Scenario a): The country follows a free market approach, but with a significant level of government intervention in the agricultural markets, e.g. through tax and subsidy instruments to correct market deficiencies and support the agricultural sector. (Country example: the EU countries).
- Scenario b): The government has significant control over the agricultural market, but focuses on regulations, own programs, and development cooperation projects, rather than on permanent policy incentives. (Country example: Lao)
- Scenario c): The government prefers to let market forces drive the agricultural sector and market development. There is a very low level of market interventionism in the agricultural sector. (Country example: Australia).

Factor 4: The logic of policy intervention: what are the main objectives behind the support to organic agriculture

- Scenario a): The purpose is to build the organic agriculture export sector as a strategy for earning foreign currency and contributing to poverty alleviation.
- Scenario b): The purpose is to encourage the production of positive externalities (environmental and societal benefits of organic agriculture) and to avoid negative externalities (hidden costs of conventional agriculture for the society).
- Scenario c): The purpose is to increase self-sufficiency in the organic sector in order to respond to high consumer demand and reduce the share of organic imports.
- Scenario d): The purpose is to increase access to healthy food products for all citizens (popularize organic consumption).

Each country will display a specific combination of scenarios from the four factors above. For the first three factors, the scenarios are exclusive: the country can fall in only one of the scenarios proposed under each factor. For Factor Four (the policy objectives), there can be several objectives that are recognized as legitimate policy objectives by policy makers (for example, legitimate objectives are listed in the introduction of the national organic action plan endorsed by the government). For example, a country may have the following combination of scenarios: 1.a – 2.d – 3.b – 4.a.d.

The [Decision-helping framework](#) is a tool whereby the user can select the combination of scenarios that apply to a country's situation, and the tool will show the measures that are considered most suitable and suitable to that particular combination of scenarios. It will filter out the measures that are generally considered unsuitable to either of the scenarios or irrelevant to the policy objectives selected.

Chapter V explains, in narrative form, the suitable contexts in which each measure is mostly appropriate, in reference to the four factors and scenarios. This does not mean that measures are completely unfeasible in other scenarios, but there may be some major challenges to implementing them and it may be wise to consider other priorities first.