



REGIONE PUGLIA



CIHEAM
BARI

Organic Action Plan of Puglia Region 2018-2020

Elaborated by Puglia Region and CIHEAM Bari (Partners of SME ORGANICS Interreg Europe Project)

I. General information

Organic action plans set out a number of actions to support the development of the organic sector in a Country or Region. These plans include specific focus areas covering different themes to meet the needs of the organic sector. By using action plans to develop the organic sector, we can:

- Set common objectives, targets and actions to meet EU, National or Regional goals;
- Tailor policies to organic needs that support high quality food, jobs, the environment, animal welfare and the climate;
- Create a partnership approach between stakeholders and public institutions;
- Use public policy support to complement organic market growth;
- Focus on supply and demand issues relevant to the organic sector;
- Foster a positive environment to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of organic producers and SMEs.

Project	SME Organics: Enhancing SMEs competitiveness and sustainability in the organic sector
Partner organisation	Puglia Region – ERDF-ESF 2014-2020 managing authority, and CIHEAM Bari
Other partner organisations involved (if relevant)	-
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II. Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Investment for Growth and Jobs programme European Territorial Cooperation programme ■ Other regional development policy instruments
Name of the policy instrument addressed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Autonomous Budget of Puglia Region 2. Italian Strategic Plan for Organic Agriculture by the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies

Puglia region has been and continues to be one of the leading regions in the Italian organic sector in terms of cultivated area and number of operators. The trend of the organic area and number of operators in Puglia clearly shows the continuous evolution of the sector and the high growth recorded in the last years, from 171,000 ha and about 6,000 operators in 2012, to 273,500 ha and about 11,000 operators in 2016.

Organic agricultural production is prevalent in supply chain. Organic agriculture in Puglia region has been characterized since its beginning by the predominance of agricultural producers compared to other types of operators; with time, the presence of producers-processors has become significant though less important.

The Policy context to the development of organic sector is influenced by:

- i. Italian Strategic Plan for organic agriculture, funded by the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF),
- ii. Regional Operational Programme (ROP), co-funded by ERDF-ESF 2014-2020,
- iii. Rural Development Programme (RDP) of Puglia Region, co-funded by EAFRD 2014-2020,
- iv. Annual Regional Planning, funded by the Regional Autonomous Budget of Puglia Region.

On 23 March 2016, the State-Regions Conference approved the Italian Strategic Plan for organic agriculture. The plan is the result of an activity carried out by MiPAAF along with all the organic sector actors, and includes a set of 10 actions to promote the growth of the sector by 2020.

This is a long-term strategy that aims at providing clear lines of organic farming development, coordinating support policies and offering concrete responses to agricultural operators.

The Strategic Plan is established on the following four principles:

1. Coordination in development efforts;
2. Consumer protection;
3. Simplification;
4. Research.

The list of the most important actions is as follows:

1. Organic farming in rural development plan;
2. Supply chain policy;
3. "Made in Italy" organic products and institutional communication;
4. Organic and green public procurement;
5. Simplification of the organic legislation;
6. Education, information and transparency;
7. "Paperless" Computerisation;
8. Review of control rules;
9. Control on imports;
10. Plan for research and innovation in organic farming.

In 2018, only two public calls were published for Action 2 (Encouraging the use of organic products in hospital catering and in school canteens, applying organic agriculture methods also in the management of public green areas) and Action 10 (Drawing up a national plan for research and innovation in organic farming, establishing a permanent coordination committee for research in organic and biodynamic farming, involving the institutions supervised by MiPAAF, the Regions and representatives of the organic sector). These public calls can be interesting opportunities to develop the organic sector of Puglia region.

Several regional measures (Programmes, Projects, Actions, etc.) can support the development of the organic sector, following two main thematic issues:

1. Agriculture and rural development (RDP EAFRD 2014-2020 of Puglia Region, and Regional Annual Planning);
2. Economic development and sustainable agro-food industry (ROP ERDF-ESF 2014-2020 of Puglia Region).

ROP ERDF-ESF 2014-2020 of Puglia Region is the regional programming document, which contributes to Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. The programme is a multi-fund ROP based on the integration between ERDF and ESF. It arises in an institutional and programmatic context in rapid evolution and evolves in the paths traced by the strategy "Smart Puglia 2020" and by the "Digital Agenda Puglia 2020", whose resources were directed towards three areas of specialization: i) sustainable manufacturing; ii) human and environmental health; iii) digital, creative and inclusive communities.

The activities of ROP ERDF-ESF Puglia allocate potential financial opportunities to improve processing and marketing processes, and also provide important resources to SMEs for research, promotion and training. Unfortunately, these activities do not give specific priority to the enterprises that process organic products.

Although the programme is not dedicated to the organic sector as a priority, it also supports investments in the agro-food sector, which could affect the development of organic businesses.

With reference to Axis 3 "Competitiveness of small and medium enterprises", organic companies may give special consideration to the activities for the relaunch and investment of the production system (3.1), which aim at reinforcing the industrial policy by supporting innovation (Smart Puglia 2020) and competitiveness of local productions.

Interesting political opportunities can be provided by the following actions:

- Integrated Incentives Packages for SMEs;
- Article II-Investment aid for SMEs;
- NESTS-New Initiatives of Enterprises;
- Access to microcredit;
- Training Programmes for Enterprises;
- Pass Enterprise;
- TechnoNETS.

The Government of Puglia Region published its regional RDP 2014-2020 in accordance with the objectives and strategic framework of Community rural development policy based on Reg. (EU) 1305/2013 for supporting rural development through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The priority of RDP "Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry" aims at contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas, with a strong spin-off on organic agriculture. Measure M11 "Organic farming" (article 29) plays a vital role in promoting sustainable development of rural areas by balancing the pressure resulting from agricultural activities and by interacting positively with environmental factors such as water, soil, air, biodiversity and landscape. Financial Support is granted to new organic operators for conversion to organic farming (a short and initial period corresponding to the period of conversion), and to organic operators for the maintenance of organic farming.

Other measures of RDP 2014-2020 are useful to develop and enhance the organic farming and products:

- M01 – “Knowledge transfer and information actions” (article 14);
- M02 – “Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services” (article 15);
- M03 – “Quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs” (article 16);
- M04 – “Investments in physical assets” (article 17);
- M06 - “Farm business and development” (article 19);
- M09 – “Setting-up of producer groups and organisations” (article 27);
- M11 – “Organic farming” (article 29);
- M16 – “Co-operation” (article 35).

In the previous years, Puglia Region, in the framework of its Autonomous Annual Budget, has also supported the organic sector through the Programme “The Apulian lifestyle: for a happy long life”, with the aim of disseminating and promoting a sustainable model of local nutrition (local high quality agro-food products and organic products) within the Mediterranean diet in terms of health, environment, economy, and social welfare.

Moreover, Puglia Region has co-financed with MiPAAF the establishment of the Regional Observatory for the Organic farming and its IT Platform BioBank Open Project to manage ordinarily the data collection on organic operators, submitted to the national organic system of control (SIB), in order to monitor their annual Plan of farming, and to check and authorize the payment to the Measure 11 “Organic farming” RDP EAFRD 2014-2020 (more than 200 million euros). Unfortunately, in the last years the public Administration did not provide financial support to the above activities of the Observatory.

Currently, the Programme “The Apulian Lifestyle” is looking for new financial resources; the Observatory has not performed its activities (i.e. statistical analysis, training, dissemination, promotion, networking, etc.) and there is a high risk to stop the important activities of BioBank Open Project to support organic sector in the framework of RDP.

Among the most important needs and policy gaps identified in the learning process of the SME Organics Project based on the regional diagnosis and exchange of experiences, attention is paid to the necessity to invest in business enterprises as follows:

- Foster the increase of local processors of organic products;
- Foster the development of conditions enabling the spread of organics in the retail system;
- Support the capacity of operators to compete on international markets for agricultural and also organic products.

The needs and aims of RAP stem from the regional diagnosis and SWOT analysis, which enabled to establish the following main investment priorities (strategic objectives):

- A. Improve the knowledge base of the operators and their advisors in the organic sector;
- B. Strengthen the links between agro-food production, research and innovation within the organic agro-food chains;
- C. Improve the competitiveness and profitability of organic operators increasing productivity, decreasing costs, increasing revenues, etc.;
- D. Increase local and international consumption of Apulian organic products;
- E. Foster the effective and efficient public support for the organic sector;

- F. Set up organic canteens (public and private) after the setting-up of regional standards for organic certification;
- G. Increase the local processors.

III. Details of the action envisaged

ACTION 1: Redesign and development of the Regional Observatory for Organic Agriculture - BioBank Open Project - of Puglia Region

<p>1. Background</p>	<p>An important role in the high growth of organic farming in Puglia has been played by the Regional Observatory for Organic Farming -BioBank Open Project- which was set up to simplify the coordination among the players in the organic sector, including farmers, the Puglia Region, certification bodies and consumers.</p> <p>The Regional Observatory for the Development of Organic Agriculture in Puglia Region was set up in 2007. At that time, this region had difficulties in managing the documentation of about 5,000 farmers, and consequently the administrative activities were delayed. In the previous years, the Observatory activities were financed first in the framework of the Project BIOLMED, funded by INTERREG MED Programme, and then supported in the framework of the Regional Action Programme for Organic Agriculture 2012-2014 within the Project BIOLOGICOPUGLIA, in accordance with the previous Italian Organic Action Plan funded by MiPAAF. The last Project BIOLOGICOPUGLIA was managed by Puglia Region to develop the regional Rural Policies in collaboration with CIHEAM Bari.</p> <p>At present, the Observatory pursues the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Data entry by organic enterprises; ii) Monitor the regional organic sector; iii) Data management and statistics through the Biobank Open Project; iv) Connect the National Organic Informatics System and Control System; v) Establish guidelines for organic production; vi) Provide an information desk; vii) Support RDP 2014-2020 Regional Managing Authority to process the application forms by beneficiaries of measure 11 "Organic farming". <p>Biobank Open Project is a database on information about the organic operators – it contains the farm profile, areas, macro-crops, advisor contact, control bodies, etc. Biobank was designed to allow the online management of notifications related to activities in organic sector, the various communications and documentation related to organic farming. This paperless project reached its objectives providing the necessary real-time information to the actors of the organic sector, and for being synchronized with SIB system of the MiPAAF and with national certification bodies.</p> <p>The main stakeholders have been about 11,000 regional organic operators, the inspectors of Puglia region, 2,000 technicians/advisors of farmers, 16 certification bodies, and the consumers.</p> <p>The main problem/obstacle is the unsettled annual budget for the management and development of the Observatory; over the last years financial resources were not enough to ensure the overall activities and the future developments that could be solved by setting the new regional planning.</p>
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In particular, interesting good practices and success stories in the field visits in the framework of SME-Organics Project were as follows:

- “BioRegione” (Lombardia region – Italy): Project of research to study the relationship between local production and mass catering within Local Agro-food Systems;
- EkoCentria Steps to Organic (South Ostrobothnia – Finland): voluntary programme for all professional kitchens to coach kitchens into a more sustainable development by gradually increasing the use of organic ingredients in their daily recipes;
- REKO (South Ostrobothnia – Finland): fair circular consumption, retail and distribution model offers customers a way of ordering products directly from the producer, without the need for middlemen;
- On-line Platform Târgul Agro (Transylvania - Romania): on-line commercialization model;
- AgroTransilvania Cluster (Transylvania – Romania): joint commercialization model;
- Public Catering Cluster for Collective Catering (Nouvelle-Aquitaine): supporting the public catering restaurants and improving the local and value chains, in order to develop a suitable food supply and promote the organic and local products;
- Organic Vinegar Course (Switzerland): organization of seminars/workshops to improve the knowledge of farmers and SMEs on protocols with short training.

The exchange between the partners of the SME-Organics project on the needs and policy gaps highlighted the necessity to keep supporting and developing the Observatory of Puglia region as follows:

- Promote the domestic consumption of local organic products (Puglia mainly exports its organic products; domestic consumption is low);
- Support the investments in dissemination, information, promotion, national communication of Bio Puglia image that could be beneficial to the entire organic chain (lack of coordination at the regional level);
- Organize and coordinate the plurality of information sources (lack of collection and coordination at the regional level);
- Improve the training and advice facilities and services for operators / consultants (poor integrated education system);
- Promote appropriate knowledge on the organic sector in the education system (recognizing education needs);
- Strengthen the activities to control frauds and scams (inefficient traceability system);
- Encourage the development of organic catering or public distribution systems, including the setting-up of regional standards for organic certification (low number of organic meals in the collective canteens).

During the first two years of the Project (Phase I), international and regional events took place: i) On 29 November 2016, the 1st dissemination event was held at the seat of the Government of Puglia Region, titled "Initiatives and opportunities of regional funding for the organic sector: from the Rural Development Program (EAFRD) to the ERDF-ESF Operational Programme of Puglia Region in the 2014-2020 programming cycle"; ii) From 6 to 8 February, during the 3rd Field visit of the Project held in Puglia region, the main regional good practices were illustrated, including the Observatory; iii) On 16 March 2018, the 2nd regional dissemination event, titled "The Action Plan for Organic Sector in Puglia Region 2018-2020" was held at the seat of the

	<p>Government of Puglia Region, to present the RAP to operators, consultants, researchers, policy makers involved in the organic sector; iv) On 22 March 2018, the SIDE EVENT “Good practices of Puglia Region (Italy) for the development of organic sector”, was held at Puglia Region Office for Institutional Relations with European Union at Brussels, and organized in collaboration with IFOAM EU Group that invited the European stakeholders; v) On 27 March 2018, the dissemination event in Bordeaux was organized by INTERBIO (French project partner) where an expert of CIHEAM Bari presented the Regional Observatory. Many above stakeholders appreciated the aims and activities of the observatory, and therefore they expressed their willingness to replicate this good practice in their own countries.</p> <p>The aforementioned initiatives, together with the lessons learned from the exchange of experiences among partners, members of the stakeholder groups and actors of the good practices (presented and/or viewed during the field visits), besides the internal exchange and similarity within the Apulian stakeholder group, have highlighted the need for the continuous development of the organic sector, and they have given visibility to virtuous and interesting initiatives and productive cases for supporting the organic sector. The above initiatives and the analysis of these good practices have encouraged discussion within the stakeholder workshops, where the researchers of CIHEAM Bari, the Regional managers and officials succeeded in finding solutions to the regional structural, programmatic and political gaps and in better finalizing the RAP, together with the aforementioned stakeholders.</p> <p>For instance, the Observatory of Puglia Region, recognized as a good practice, was highly appreciated by several project partners who requested in-depth analyses and on-site visits to the Observatory in order to replicate the experience in other regions. This has endorsed and increased the political belief in the Puglia Region to re-finance and re-launch the Observatory, since in the last years its activities were about to stop due to the lack of dedicated funds. Moreover, the Regional policy-makers decided to improve and increase the Observatory's activities in such a way to be included among the actions of the RAP; therefore, the ordinary management and new activities will be co-financed starting from 2019 by the Puglia Region and CIHEAM Bari as agreed. New financial and human resources will be available for the development of this key structure.</p>
<p>2. Action description</p>	<p>The coordinator in charge of the action is the director of the Section “Competitiveness of agro-food supply chains”, within the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment of Puglia Region. It is member of the Stakeholder Group.</p> <p>This action aims to achieve the following macro-objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Create job through the organic production, processing, and commercialization; ➤ Improve competitiveness of SMEs through organic farming and products; ➤ Increase the investments in dissemination, information, promotion, communication (marketing) for Bio Puglia image that could be beneficial for the entire organic chain; ➤ Improve the training and advice services for operators/consultants; ➤ Foster the organization of the plurality of information sources in a coordinated and coherent system; ➤ Develop the organic catering or public distribution systems. <p>Particularly, this action addresses the following five specific objectives that can be considered as investment priorities of the Regional Organic Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. A. Improve the knowledge base of the operators and their advisors in the organic sector;



- ii. C. Improve the competitiveness and profitability of the organic operators by reducing bureaucratization, increasing productivity, decreasing costs, increasing revenues, etc.;
- iii. D. Increase the local consumption of Apulian organic products;
- iv. E. Foster the effective and efficient public support for the organic sector through the dissemination and promotion of the current calls of the Regional Programmes (ROP, RDP, etc.);
- v. G. Start up the organic canteens (public and private) after the setting-up of regional standards for organic certification.

In 2018, Puglia Region carried out the “Innovation plan for the development and management of the Regional Observatory for Organic Agriculture and of Integrated BioBank Open Project”, responding to the needs defined by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment of Puglia Region. It defines the human and financial resources for the ordinary management of the BioBank Open Project, guaranteeing its continuity over time; moreover, in the period 2019-2020, Puglia Region will finance the following specific activities (Actions) to fulfil the new broad mission of the Regional Observatory:

1. Development and ordinary management of BioBank Open Project):
 - Improve the administrative simplification (anti bureaucratization-dematerialization-paperless);
 - Develop the direct link with Agricultural Advisory Centres (CAA) and Professional firms (e.g. agronomists);
 - Improve the interface with Payment Agency (AGEA) for organic subsidies and payments;
 - Define the interface with the Regional Information System (INNOVAPUGLIA);
 - Know the details of production at farm level (crops and varieties) by annual production/processing plans of organic operators, crossing the national and regional data banks;
 - Implement farm management software to collect and check details of farming activities, to foster the real-time traceability of the supply chain, which can encourage the implementation of a blockchain system encouraged by the National Government;
 - Update the software system in accordance with new technical and legislative protocols;
 - Create a help desk for the users of BioBank Open Project.
2. Statistical analyses on the current context of the regional organic sector:
 - Half-yearly and annual reports;
 - Elaborate dashboard;
 - Create maps linked to the Territorial Information System of Puglia Region.
3. Support to the future planning:
 - Context analysis (SWOT analysis, Needs);
 - Development strategies;
 - Impact simulations.
4. Training to improve the knowledge of organic producers, officers, consultants (production, protocol, certification, managing data);
5. Communication and information:
 - Improve the visibility of the website in accordance with new WEB Utility;
 - Draft brochures on new regulations, protocols and technical tools, published on the website, in particular to encourage the entrepreneurs to invest in organic sector using the financial opportunities that are made available by the measures of the ROP

	<p>ERFD-ESF, and RDP EAFRD of Puglia Region; Puglia Sviluppo S.p.A. supports the continuous updates, in particular about ROP and other Regional Programmes.</p> <p>6. Development of the organic catering or public distribution systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve menu in school canteens by increasing the local organic raw materials in organic meals; ○ Educational events.
<p>3. Players involved</p>	<p>The action concerns focus areas such as information, training/education, advice, market development, consumer promotion/information, certification/inspection, administration, capacity building, and the target groups as producers, processors, consumers, advisers, policy implementers (micro, small and medium enterprises).</p> <p>The organisations involved in the development and implementation of the action for the improvement of the organic sector are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Agriculture, Rural Policies and Environment of Puglia Region (Planning, management and monitoring of regional rural and environmental policies) – Responsible structure of the Observatory, and member of the Stakeholder Group; • CIHEAM Bari (International centre for post-graduate training, applied scientific research and design of in loco partnership actions within the framework of international research and cooperation programmes), which supported Puglia Region in the setting up and in the ordinary management of the Observatory in the previous years. In the future months, CIHEAM Bari will continue to support the Observatory and BioBank Open Project as Managing Body of this action; • Puglia Sviluppo S.p.A. (management of part of the regional incentive tools for companies, as an intermediate body of Puglia Region or a direct manager of financial instruments; promotion of local policy instruments; supporting beneficiaries of calls) - Member of Stakeholder Group; • INNOVAPUGLIA S.p.A. (subsidiary company by Puglia Region engaged in supporting activities of Digital Innovation within the regional strategic planning); • Education Department of Puglia Region to develop the organic food consumption in schools; • Other members of the SME Organics stakeholder group that will follow the current activities and suggest the review of the innovative plan (particularly, University of Bari-Faculty of Agriculture, Professional Association of Agronomists, ICEA-Certification Body) <p>The direct beneficiary of this action is CIHEAM Bari as Managing Body; however, the Innovative Plan will engage and involve more than 11,000 organic operators, 16 certification bodies, operators' advisors and consumers.</p>
<p>4. Timeframe</p>	<p>2019-2020</p>
<p>5. Costs (if relevant)</p>	<p>Activities from Point 1. to Point 5.: 311,000 euros: 238,000 euros (76.5%), funded by Autonomous Budget of Puglia Region, plus 73,000 euros (23.5%), by the budget of CIHEAM Bari;</p> <p>Activity Point 6.: 647,000 euros (funded by the Italian Strategic Plan for organic agriculture of MiPAAF)</p> <p>Total cost: 1,031,000 euros</p>

6. Funding sources (if relevant):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Puglia Region (Regional Autonomous Budget) ➤ MiPAAF ➤ CIHEAM Bari
7. Monitoring	<p>With reference to the investment priorities, the monitoring key indicators are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A. Improve the knowledge base of the operators and their advisors in the organic sector: n° of operators/consultants/officers trained (at least 100); ➤ C. Improve the competitiveness and profitability of the organic operators by reducing bureaucratization, increasing productivity, decreasing costs, increasing revenues, etc. (qualitative survey); ➤ D. Increase the local and international consumption of Apulian organic food products: one ITC tool for the actors of organic supply chain and consumers; ➤ E. Foster the effective and efficient public support for the organic sector: more public budget finalized to the organic sector than in the previous year (2017), n° of involved employers (increasing value); ➤ G. Start up the organic canteens (public and private) after the setting-up of the regional standards for organic certification (at least 20 canteens).

Date	06.12.2018
Signature	<p>Biagio Di Terlizzi (CIHEAM Bari) </p> <p>Pasquale Orlando (Regione Puglia) </p>
Stamp of the organisation (if available)	