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## In France, organic is growing fast

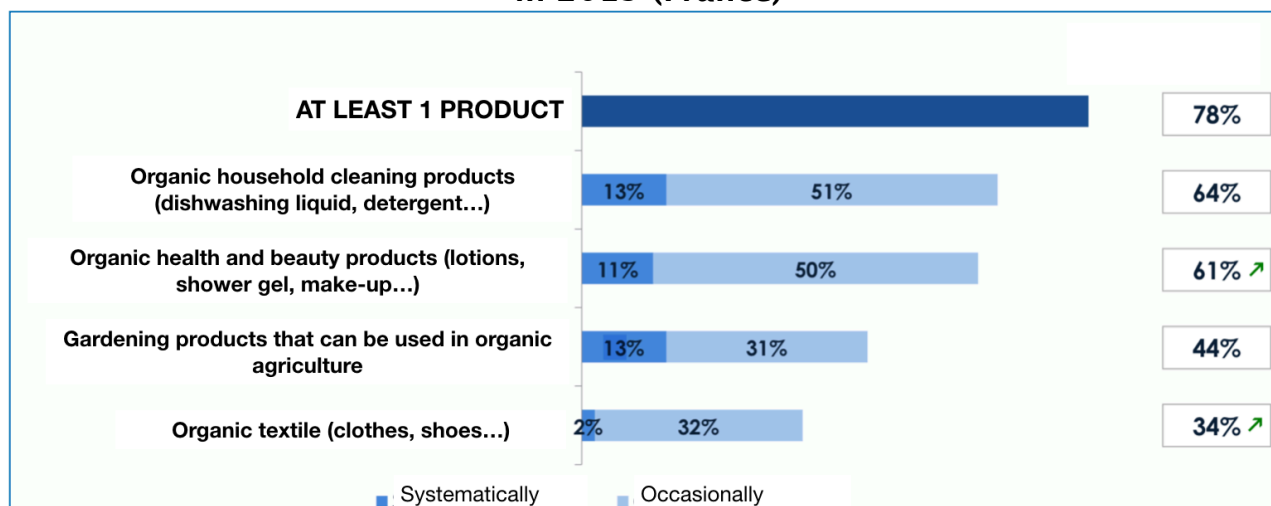
Three years ago, we were happy to have some reasons to hope for the French food system, mainly because of a very rapid growth of organic agriculture and an explosion of organic food products (+20% in 2016) [\[read\]](#).

In the 2020 edition of its report ([Baromètre de consommation et de perception des produits biologiques en France](#) – in French) published last January, the French Agency for the Development of Organic Agriculture ([Agence Française pour le Développement et la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique](#)) confirms a trend that even accelerated since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis [\[read in French\]](#). In 2018, it is estimated that the sales revenue from organic products reached 9.7 billion euros (+15% in one year) in France. The growth potential of this consumption remains enormous, as organic products only represent 4.8% of total food and agricultural products, according to the French statistical office (INSEE).

Based on a survey of a panel of 2000 members stratified by gender, by socioeconomic categories, age groups, regions and sizes of area of residence, the Agency found that:

- More than 70% of the French consumed organic products at least once in a month (a roughly stable proportion since 2016);
- 14% of the French population consumed organic products every day and 33% at least once a week;
- The most frequent buyers of organic products were the young and wealthiest households;
- Only 11% of the French never consumed organic products;
- The consumption of organic products is growing rapidly and is a proof of the people's environmental concerns as, in addition to food, the French have also acquired goods such as cleaning products, cosmetics, gardening products and textiles (see diagramme),

## Proportion of people who purchased organic products other than food in 2019 (France)



Source: Agence Bio, 2020.

The survey also made several other interesting findings.

For example, there were some important changes in food habits:

- A greater concern for limiting waste;
- More purchases of fresh and seasonal food while giving priority to local products and short supply chains (more than 50% of the sample);
- People interviewed claimed to do more cooking, to reduce their use of plastic and packaging and to buy more organic products (more than 40%).

In terms of budget, 40% of the surveyed people declared they have increased their budget for organic products, 54% that it remained stable and only 6% that it decreased.

57% of the panel members stated that they did not understand why organic products were more expensive than the conventional, while 35% were of the opposite view.

The study also shows that there is a strong wish to have an increasingly exclusive organic consumption. 19% of the sample claimed that more than 75% of their food consumption was organic, compared to only 12% a year earlier.

The great majority of members of the panel believed that organic farming has a role for protecting the environment (87%), that organic products are more natural (82%) and that they are better for health (82%). They were also convinced that local (from France) organic products were better controlled than those that were imported.

The worrying result is that trust in information provided on organic products seems to be decreasing substantially (43% in 2019 against 50% in 2018), which

suggests that there is a need to better inform consumers to avoid a possible disregard towards organic products in the future.

The purchase of organic products yet overwhelmingly took place in medium and large supermarkets (66% of people against 70% in 2018).

Reasons for consuming organic products were still mostly protection of health (59%), quality and taste of products (51%) and preservation of the environment (45%). Fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk and dairy products, poultry and fruit juices were the items that were consumed organic in greater share.



Compared to consumption, production remains insufficient, although it is growing fast. In 2018, more than 30% of organic products were imported (more than 60% for groceries and non-alcoholic beverages and 57% for fruits) [\[read in French\]](#). In France, there were slightly more than 1.7 billion hectares and almost 37,000 farms producing organic food (compared to a total of around 450,000 farms and 28 million hectares overall). This puts France in second position in Europe, just behind Spain [\[read\]](#).

Given difficulties and the time it takes to change from conventional agriculture to organic farming – from a few weeks for certain types of animal husbandry activities to up to 2 to 3 years for crops – and the need for certification, it is essential to provide producers wanting to go into organic farming with support, if the fast-growing demand is to be met locally. Administration will also have to handle this issue more seriously [\[read in French\]](#).

This support is one of the key factors for a successful transition towards a more sustainable agriculture and safer food.

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To know more:

- Confinement : Les produits biologiques ont conquis 8% de nouveaux acheteurs, Agence Bio, 2020 (in French).
- Edition 2020 du baromètre de consommation et de perception des produits biologiques en France, Agence Bio, 2020 (in French).
- Organic farming and the market in the European Union, Agence Bio, 2019.

In the UK:

- Organic Produce is in Demand, Soil Association, UK, 2018.

In the US:

- Organic Market Overview, Organic trade association, US, 2020.

Selection of past articles on [hungerexplained.org](https://hungerexplained.org) related to the topic:

- Eating organic food helps to reduce risks of cancer, 2018.
- Is organic agriculture, under pressure from consumers, turning into the central element of the transition from a conventional “chemical” agriculture towards a more sustainable agriculture? 2018.
- Policies for a transition towards more sustainable and climate friendly food systems, 2018.
- Is France world champion of food sustainability? 2018.
- Our food system: some reasons for hope... 2017.
- Researchers show that organic agriculture generates more economic value than conventional agriculture, 2015.
- Are existing food and agricultural policies supportive to local sustainable food systems? 2015.