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# Organic Action Plan for Aargau 2021

Strategy to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises in the organic sector

## Foreword

### From Aargau - for Aargau - for Switzerland

Organic farming is booming - also in Aargau! Currently, more than 10 percent of our farms in Aargau are organic and there are more every year! Organic production is therefore an important part of agriculture in Aargau. The main reason for this is society's growing demand for organically produced food.

### Keeping added value in Aargau

I am pleased that the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Frick, together with the organic sector in Aargau, has recognised the signs of the times and, with the Aargau Action Plan, is strengthening organic farming along the entire value chain. Healthy and sustainably produced food is important to us. We want to know where the meat, vegetables or cereals come from and how they were produced. It is a matter of great concern that added value is created in Aargau, from production and processing to the trade and sale of agricultural products.



### Aargau in a pioneering role

With this action plan to strengthen the organic sector in Aargau, we are breaking new ground: in Switzerland, a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) country, Aargau is the first canton to launch an organic action plan focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). I am delighted and proud that we in Aargau are taking on this pioneering role. In the sense of "From Aargau - for Aargau - for Switzerland".

### Active support from the Canton

Promoting sustainable agriculture is our mission. That is why my department actively supports this development with the Aargau Department of Agriculture and the Liebegg Agricultural Centre. In addition, the government is supporting the expansion of the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Frick with a substantial contribution from the Swisslos Fund.

On behalf of the government, I thank the initiators of the Aargau Organic Action Plan for their valuable work in favour of our organic agriculture and wish them every success in their implementation.

State Councillor Dr. Markus Dieth

Head of the Department of Finance and Resources, Director of Agriculture

## Acknowledgement

The consumption of organic food is increasing worldwide and throughout Europe. More and more people have decided to support a cultivation method that focuses on a careful and responsible treatment of our environment, the soil, plants, animals, and the people.

All actors of the supply chain, including food processing, retail, and catering businesses and farms share this growth in demand for organic food. With this cantonal action plan, seven fields of action have been developed, in close cooperation with partners from the food sector, for the Aargau organic sector to take advantage of this opportunity at the regional level. Exchange with various regions of Europe has also played an important role. It turned out that there is still much untapped potential, especially regarding the linkage of "organic" and "regional". The aim of this action plan is to use innovative approaches to exploit this potential and create added value for the actors in the organic sector. The action plan was drawn up with the support of the following partners:

- Numerous small and medium-sized enterprises in the canton of Aargau that are active in the field of organic farming and the production, processing and trade of organic foodstuffs.
- Bio Aargau (Association of Aargau Organic Farmers)
- Federal Department of Economics, Education and Research WBF
- State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO (Regional and Regional Planning Policy Department)
- Department of Finance and Resources Aargau (Office for Agriculture)

## Imprint

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The action plan was developed in close cooperation with numerous players in the organic sector in Aargau.

March 2018

**FiBL**

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## Executive Summary

The organic sector and the demand for organic products continue to grow in Switzerland and worldwide. This growth provides opportunities for local and regional enterprises, so should be supported at cantonal as well as at the national level.

For some time now, individual countries and regions have been promoting organic farming with coordinated policy measures: so-called organic action plans. In recent years, the focus has increasingly been on the entire food value chain. In Switzerland, the canton of Jura and the canton of Fribourg have so far developed action plans to promote organic farming. The canton Aargau is the first canton in German-speaking Switzerland to support the entire organic sector with an action plan.

This proposed organic action plan for the canton of Aargau aims to promote entrepreneurship and support existing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the continuous improvement of performance and competitiveness. The aim is to promote the growth of the entire regional organic sector in regional, national and international markets. The focus on the canton of Aargau, which accounts for only about six percent of the agricultural area and eight percent of the population of Switzerland, is due to Switzerland's small-scale structures and a high level of federalism.

The strategy is based on increased cooperation between the players in the entire value chain, which will enable successful development of the local and regional market for organic products. These also include actors who do not yet, or only partly, produce or trade organic products, but who are interested in entering the organic market. The action plan thus contributes to the promotion of organic farming and increased added value with organic food in the canton of Aargau. The actors involved work in accordance with the principles of the Bio Suisse association and comply with the requirements of its bud label (the so called *Knospe* label). By producing, processing and trading organic food, they create added value for the region, while considering all areas of sustainability, and are committed to fair prices.

The action plan was coordinated and drawn up by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and the Liebegg Agricultural Centre in close collaboration with interested actors from the organic sector in Aargau and in cooperation with the Office for Agriculture of the canton of Aargau. The preparatory work carried out as part of the European SME Organics project was financially supported by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO.

The following strategic fields of action for the organic sector in Aargau were defined in exchange with various actors in the sector:

1. Increasing organically managed agricultural areas;
2. Improving efficiency of logistics;
3. Improving knowledge about production and trade of organic products through education;
4. Improving competences in organic food processing;
5. Raising awareness among consumers about organic agriculture and regional origins of food;
6. Strengthening the network and market value of the regional organic sector;
7. Implementing the action plan with an office.

The action plan was drawn up for a period of four years from 2017 to 2021. The Liebegg Agricultural Centre and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) are responsible for implementing the action plan.

More information can be found on the website [www.biokmuaargau.ch](http://www.biokmuaargau.ch)



## Background

This organic action plan for the canton of Aargau was developed in the context of the European "SME Organics" project. As part of this project, FiBL in cooperation with the Liebegg Agricultural Centre, prepared and coordinated a cantonal action plan to promote the organic sector. The background of the project is the continuously increasing demand for organically produced food in Europe as well as in Switzerland.

### **SME Organics**

SME Organics is a European project to promote the organic sector at regional level. It is managed by various institutions from eight European regions including Finland; Italy (Puglia and Lombardy); northern Spain (Navarra); western France (Aquitaine); Switzerland (Aargau); Romania (Transylvania) and central Poland (Lodzkie). The aim of the project is to promote the competitiveness and added value of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the organic sector: from production and processing to the trade and catering of organic products. In this way, the existing market potential can be exploited, and new regional and national sales channels can be opened.

### **Aargau: Organic action plan focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises**

The canton of Aargau is the first canton to develop an action plan for SMEs in organic farming and the organic food industry. The promotion of innovations, structures and know-how for the production, processing, trade, and catering of organically produced foods is intended to respond to the increasing demand for organic products. This is a unique opportunity for the SMEs involved. The project is financially supported by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, and receives further support from the canton Aargau's Office for Agriculture.

The action plan is based on the cantonal constitutional objectives, which call for efficient, sustainably producing agriculture aimed at securing supply, and on the priorities that Aargau's Office for Agriculture pursues in this context:

- Preservation of the production bases;
- Ensuring sustainable production methods and product quality;
- Start-up aid for innovative regional products and connection of regional food production to environmental values;
- Providing information along the entire value chain.

The action plan is not only intended for businesses that are already active within the organic sector, but also focuses on networking and involving non-organic actors in the food industry with the aim of increasing the number of businesses that produce and trade organic products.

### **Working with stakeholders**

The close cooperation with various actors along the entire organic value chain in the canton of Aargau was key to the development of the plan. These included producers, processors, traders, retailers, caterers, farmers' and industrial associations, actors from the tourism sector, as well as cantonal offices such as the Office for Agriculture and the Office for Regional Development. It mainly included actors who produce or trade organic products, but also actors from outside the organic sector. Knowledge and experiences about the production, processing and trade of organic products was gathered and exchanged by conducting interviews and organizing workshops. In the context of such workshops, the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and risks of different branches (production, processing, trade/retail, catering) and in different value chains (e.g. dairy, vegetable, cereals, meat, etc.) were jointly identified. This cooperation resulted in a tailor-made action plan for the canton of Aargau, including a package of measures to support SMEs that are active or otherwise interested in the development of the organic sector



## The Organic Market of Aargau and Switzerland

The number of farms in Switzerland fell by more than 26 percent between 2000 and 2015. While the number of conventional farms fell by 30 percent, the proportion of organic farms increased by 29 percent, bringing the number of organic farms to around 6,000 in 2016, which is around 12 percent of Swiss farms. In the canton of Aargau, their share is significantly lower at around 7 percent. However, the number of organic farms in Aargau also increased from 183 in 2000 to 241 in 2016, which is a growth of 32 percent. During this period, the number of conventional farms fell by 24 percent. In the canton of Aargau, the reduction in the total agricultural area since 2000 can be explained by the decline in agricultural area under conventional cultivation, while the area under organic farming has increased significantly during this period.

### Variety of agricultural production in Aargau

Animal production is practised on 48 percent of all farms in the canton of Aargau, with grazing livestock being the most important activity, accounting for 90 percent of animal production operations and 43 percent of all farms. Farms that both cultivate crops and hold livestock account for 30 percent of all farms in Aargau. Arable farming is practised on 13 percent of farms. The structure of the farm types shows the diversity of agricultural production in the canton of Aargau. Comparable structures can be found in the cantons of Zurich and Thurgau, both of which are direct neighbours of the canton of Aargau.

In organic farming, meadows account for the highest share of agricultural land, accounting for about 68 percent, followed by arable land (17%), vegetables (6.7%), maize (3.5%) and permanent crops (2%). Comparing the allocation of agricultural land to different agricultural activities between organic and conventional production shows that organic production has a higher proportion of meadows, vegetables and grain legumes, and a lower proportion of arable crops, potatoes, sugar beets, maize and oilseeds.

## Organic Food Market

In Switzerland, total sales of organic food increased by CHF 673 million between 2012 and 2016, rising from CHF 1,832 million to CHF 2,505 million. The two large Swiss retail chains, Coop and Migros, had a share of 44.6 percent and 32.3 percent of the organic food market in 2016. The market share of organic shops was 10.9 percent. The market shares between the different market participants have hardly changed over time.

Overall, organic products accounted for 8.4 percent of the total Swiss food market in 2016. Organic products account for 10.8 percent of fresh products and 6.0 percent of convenience products. The demand for convenience products has increased more than for fresh products in recent years.

## Export of Organic Products

Some Swiss organic products certified with the Knospe label are exported to neighbouring countries. Demand for exports exists mainly for milk and dairy products. Other fresh organic products are hardly exported, with only a limited quantity supplied in border regions. Bio Suisse supports the promotion of Knospe products with foreign trade partners. Currently, these activities are concentrated on dairy products, but Bio Suisse would like to expand these activities and support interested Knospe businesses in increasing their exports. In Aargau, most SMEs in the agri-food sector do not export local organic products to other countries due to the high product prices.

## Import of Organic Products

Natural factors limit agricultural production and domestic food supply in Switzerland. Due to the high demand for organic products, more and more organic food is imported into Switzerland, with the import share varying according to product group. Bio Suisse has strict requirements that imported products have to comply with in order to be certified with the Knospe label. The label fundamentally differentiates from products certified with the EU organic label. The core differences are:

- The entire farm must be organically managed.
- Products are rejected if there is a sufficient domestic supply.
- Air transport is prohibited.
- Products that have been completely processed abroad are excluded.

Despite restrictions, imports of organically produced food and beverages into Switzerland have continued to rise due to the strong surge in demand and insufficient domestic production. However, it can be observed that the share of Knospe-certified products in imports has fallen and the share of imports certified with the EU organic label has increased.

This trend is expected to continue in the coming years. The increased demand for organic meat and eggs has, at times, also increased the demand for feed grain from abroad. Meanwhile, the domestic supply of feed grain has increased significantly thanks to additional farms and arable land, and according to Bio Suisse estimates, the domestic share of feed grain already reached 77 percent in 2017.

## **Research and Development in the Organic Food Market**

The importance of the agricultural and food sector in Switzerland and the canton of Aargau is very low in terms of its economic contribution. Even though 44 percent of the area consists of agricultural land, only 8 percent of Aargau's companies belong to the primary sector and 2 percent of the working population is employed in the primary sector. According to the Office for Regional Development, Aargau is promoted as a high-tech canton due to the numerous high-tech industries already located there, such as medical technology, metal and plastics, energy, ICT, and life science (pharmaceutical and chemical industry).

Research and development is also important in Aargau: twice as many employees work in research and development as the Swiss average. This is because numerous research institutes are in Aargau, such as the Paul Scherrer Institute, research centres of international companies, the University of Applied Sciences North-western Switzerland with a focus on engineering, the High-Tech Centre Aargau, the Technopark Aargau, FiBL and others. Apart from the research conducted at FiBL, research in the field of agriculture and food industry is mainly focused on technical innovation and high-tech industries.

## **Development Potential of the Organic Sector in Aargau**

In cooperation with market participants, political and other interest groups, a SWOT analysis (analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) was prepared for the organic sector in Aargau. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool and it played a central role in the analysis of the regional organic sector. The knowledge and experience of the various actors was gathered with the help of interviews, surveys and workshops. The analysis was prepared for four different branches of the organic food sector:

- Agricultural production,
- Organic food processing,
- Retail and trade of organic products, and
- Catering of organic food.

The analysis has shown that the increasing demand for organic products represents an important opportunity for the industry. Another opportunity is the development of a joint marketing platform in order to reach the large number of potential consumers in the area. This also includes the numerous public catering establishments, which are regarded as important potential buyers of regional organic products. On the other hand, the challenge is that the keyword „regional" may have a more important marketing value than the term „organic". This means that consumers tend to prefer products from the region rather than organic products. The organic food sector wants to confront this challenge by emphasizing the need for combining regional and organic and marketing food as "regional organic". The weaknesses of the organic sector in Aargau are often linked to the small size of companies: smaller companies often have higher production costs, have a higher expenditure of time, or struggle with the difficulty of finding successors. An important strength, however, is that Aargau's organic food sector is characterised by high innovative power, high-quality products and a strong identification with the organic philosophy.



## Mission Statement and Targets

The mission statement for the organic sector in Aargau was developed in close cooperation with interested actors from various areas, including the agricultural production and the food industry. It lays the foundation of the action plan and serves as a guideline for its strategic orientation and the objectives and measures derived from it.

### A Mission Statement for the Organic Sector in Aargau

The organic sector in Aargau comprises companies based in the canton of Aargau that are active in different branches of the value chain, including production, processing, trade, retail and catering of organic products.

#### Our Principles

The organic sector in Aargau is based on the principle of ecological, social and economic sustainability. We want the subsequent generations to find an intact environment and to be restricted as little as possible by today's production and consumption patterns. We advocate for an open, objective and responsible collaboration.

#### Our Objectives

We successfully supply organic products to the local, regional and national markets by intensifying the collaboration among actors of the organic sector. We contribute to the promotion of organic farming and the organic food industry in the canton of Aargau. We work according to the principles of the Bio Suisse association and contribute to a higher level of sustainability through producing, processing, trading and catering organic products at regional level. We are committed to ensure fair prices for all actors involved.

#### Our Way of Working

We establish contacts and cultivate the exchange among actors of the organic sector as well as with consumers. As an independent organization, we collaborate with any actors committed to our objectives.

## Targets of the Organic Action Plan for Aargau 2021

### Development of the organic sector

- Strengthening the supply of organic products from the canton of Aargau
- Strengthening the demand for organic products in the canton of Aargau
- Improving competitiveness and promoting innovation (production efficiency, logistics, horizontal and vertical cooperation, marketing)
- Strengthening the network within the Aargau organic sector, as well as with non-organic actors in the regional food industry
- Strengthening product and market development and promoting innovation through application-oriented research and educational opportunities in the areas of production, processing, trade/retail, and catering

### Contribution to food, agriculture and rural development policies

- Promotion of regional market development (Cantonal level)
- Becoming the organic model canton for other cantons in Switzerland

### Contribution to health, environmental and other public policies

- Education and research policy (National and cantonal level)
- Environmental policy (National and cantonal level)
- Agricultural policy (National and cantonal level)
- Food policy (National level)

### Other targets

- Environmental objectives for Swiss agriculture (National level)
- Biodiversity Action Plan (National level): Promotion of biodiversity on organic farms by means of a biodiversity check (Bio Suisse)
- Plant Protection Action Plan (National level): Ban on synthetic chemical plant protection products in organic farming
- Energy Strategy 2050 (National level)
- Antibiotic Resistance Strategy (National level)



## Strategic Fields of Action and Objectives

The action plan comprises seven strategic fields of action that set the direction for how the organic sector in Aargau is to be strengthened. The fields of action have been developed in cooperation with various actors of the regional organic sector. These include aspects of strengthening supply, market and demand development, education and information, administration, and research.

The seven fields of action were the starting point for the definition of concrete strategic objectives. These objectives are the basis against which the measures of the action plan are aligned and against which the success of the action plan will be measured. The objectives refer to the year 2021 with the reference year being 2017. The strategic fields of action and objectives are presented on page 17.

At the heart of the action plan are the measures planned to strengthen the organic sector in Aargau, which are described in detail in from page 18 and are structured according to the seven fields of action.

Strategic Fields of Action	Strategic Objectives (until 2021)
1. Increasing organically managed agricultural areas	Increased to 14 % (2016: 9 %)
2. Improving efficiency of logistics	Strengthened logistical cooperation between stakeholders
3. Improving knowledge about production and trade of organic products through education	Organic farming and the organic food industry are included in the education plans of elementary school as well as of schools specialized in professions related to the food sector
4. Improving competences in organic food processing	10 additional farms with processing 10 additional SMEs processing organic food
5. Raising awareness among consumers about organic agriculture and the origins of food	The preference of regional organic products in the region is increased
6. Strengthening the network and market value of the regional organic sector	10 % more sales of organic products
6.1. Developing and testing new concepts for farmers markets	1-2 pilot projects per year
6.2. Increasing sales of regional organic products in the catering trade	10 additional restaurants cook with Knospe products 10 additional public catering restaurants cook with Knospe products
6.3. Improving the network of organic supply chain actors in the canton of Aargau (production, processing, trade/retail and catering) and developing a marketing platform	50% of actors in the organic food sectors say that the project has led to a better network Marketing platform established
7. Implementing the action plan with an office.	Long-term implementation of the action plan is assured

## **1. Increasing organically managed agricultural areas**

Farms that convert to organic farming, as well as existing organic farms, depend on professional support and advice. Experience and knowledge about farm specific characteristics plays an important role in organic farming. Accordingly, agricultural advice and the exchange with other farmers are of great importance. Support for training and further education, as well as advice to organic farms, must continue to be guaranteed so that the target of 14 percent of organically farmed areas in the canton of Aargau can be achieved by 2021. This support is provided by the advisory services of the Liebegg Agricultural Centre and by FiBL with specific advice and the supervision of field trials.

### **Planned measures:**

- Further training and advisory services for converting farms
- Continued training and advisory services for existing organic farms
- Implementation of field trials on organic farms
- Advisory on alternative funding options for farm development projects (e.g. PRE, NRP)
- Promotion of exchange between organic and non-organic farms

## **2. Improving efficiency of logistics**

The analysis of the organic sector in the canton of Aargau and the discussions in the workshops showed that there is potential for optimizing logistics in the organic food sector. Within the framework of the action plan, opportunities for cooperation between different companies are being sought and tested.

### **Planned measures:**

- Establishment of a working group with actors in the organic sector who are interested in setting up a logistics platform based on existing structures
- Identification of existing logistical structures
- Needs analysis in production, processing, trade/retail, and catering about organization of logistics
- Cost calculation for logistics platform

### **3. Improving knowledge about production and trade of organic products through education**

Particularly in the case of young generations, knowledge about the relationship between food production and the environment should be promoted. Therefore, organic farming and the organic food industry should be included in the education plans of elementary school as well as of schools specialized in professions related to the food sector. This is to lay the foundation for a sustainable food industry, ranging from the production of food through to its consumption. Young people should get in touch and learn about jobs in the organic food sector and learn about their opportunities for development.

#### **Planned measures:**

- Strengthening competences of elementary school teachers about sustainable nutrition and food production
- Promotion of jobs in the organic food sector by organizing „open days" to businesses in different branches of the organic food value chain

### **4. Improving competences in organic food processing**

Many companies lack knowledge about the requirements for organic food processing. On one hand, this concerns knowledge about the availability and the procurement of raw materials and components in organic quality. On the other hand, there is a need for training about processing methods, as well as additives and inputs which are approved in organic certification. This field of action focuses on improving this knowledge with the help of the expansion of courses and advisory services. In addition, the existing educational offer in the field of organic food processing is to be made better known.

#### **Planned measures:**

- Information for companies interested in entering or expanding the processing of organic food (including information on potential funding options)
- Individual advisory services for the processing of organic food
- Strengthening education and training in organic food processing

## **5. Raising awareness among consumers about organic agriculture and the origins of food**

This field of action focuses on the dissemination of knowledge and sensitization of the advantages of organic farming and the consumption of regional organic products. The aim is that consumers understand why regional products cannot necessarily be equated with sustainably produced products and why organic products from the region meet these requirements. In addition, the population should learn about how food is produced and what it needs to produce food with organic cultivation methods. This includes a closer exchange between consumers and producers which will also allow producers to better follow new demand trends.

### **Planned measures:**

- Development of a communication strategy
- Campaign on the topic of "Regional Organic Farming"
- Development of a labelling system for regional organic products from Aargau
- Ensuring direct exchange between farms and consumers

## **6. Strengthening the network and market value of the regional organic sector**

### **6.1. Developing and testing new concepts for farmer's markets**

There are already several farmer's markets where organic producers sell their products, and which are popular with consumers. However, the potential seems to be not yet exhausted. Existing and new market concepts are to be expanded through increased cooperation between organic farms and Aargau Tourism. These include the better use of the Bio Marché in Zofingen: a large yearly fair of organic products, or the development of marketing concepts that meet the changed shopping habits (e.g. organic evening market in a well-frequented location). Finally, there is an unused potential to develop projects of community supported agriculture, which brings producers and consumers closer together, in the canton of Aargau.

### **Planned measures:**

- Analysis of the potential of regional farmer's markets for organic products
- Bio Marché Zofingen

## **6.2. Increasing sales of regional organic products in catering**

The introduction of organic products in catering has great development potential in Switzerland. Innovative approaches such as those implemented in Denmark, France and Germany can increase the proportion of organic products in professional catering; particularly in public catering. Innovative labeling approaches for organic food in catering, which allow for a gradual introduction of organic food, are to be developed. Moreover, the procurement and logistics have to be better organized. This also includes the potential for buying organic food directly from the farm. Different projects concerning public catering are running at the regional level. A strong collaboration is indispensable in order to make best use of potential synergies.

### **Planned measures:**

- Increasing sales of organic products in (public) catering with the help of innovative concepts such as "farm to table"
- Increasing sales of organic products in (public) catering by offering support in procurement and improvement of logistics
- Development and implementation of a labelling and communication concept for organic products in catering
- Collaboration with existing projects fostering sustainable food in catering

## **6.3. Improving the network of organic supply chain actors in the canton of Aargau (production, processing, trade/retail and catering) and developing a marketing platform**

The exchange with the actors in the organic sector showed that they know each other too little and that they are often not aware of the others' businesses and product range. The action plan therefore puts a strong focus on the establishment of a close network among the actors of the regional organic sector. This includes the opportunity for direct exchange, as well as the establishment of an online platform that shows, with just a few clicks, who offers what in canton Aargau. In addition, the marketing capacities should be strengthened by making better use of the potential of digitisation.

### **Planned measures:**

- Networking of stakeholders and their involvement in the implementation of the Action Plan
- Creation of an online platform that gives producers and traders of organic products the opportunity to present themselves and their products
- Marketing support

## 7. Implementing the action plan with an office

The implementation of the organic action plan for Aargau and the coordination of the various measures is carried out by setting up an office. Its tasks are based on the fields of action and strategic objectives listed above. The activities of the office are supported by cantonal administration, by the Liebegg Agricultural Centre, FiBL and the organic sector in the canton. The active involvement of the entire organic sector, including businesses from different branches, and non-organic businesses, as well as consumers, plays a central role.

It is financed by both public and private sources. The activities of the office are funded by start-up support from the canton, as well as from the Bio Suisse and the regional organisation Bio Aargau. Participating companies in the areas of production, processing, trade/retail and catering make their own contributions and participate financially according to their possibilities. To achieve the strategic objectives for the organic sector in Aargau in the long term, additional funds will be needed and will be applied for in the context of the 2019 budget planning.

### **Planned measures:**

- Creation of an office responsible for implementation
- Coordination of measures
- Coordination with other projects in the region
- Ensuring long term funding



## Impact

The numerous individual measures listed in the previous section refer to different strategic objectives. Certain measures have stronger economic effects such as increased value creation through new sales opportunities. Others serve the fulfilment of overarching social policy objectives, such as the maintenance of clean drinking water or biodiversity.

## Synergies and Conflicts

The combination and coordination of the various measures of the action plan can create synergies. Increasing knowledge about the advantages of organic products at all levels of the food value chain, combined with raising awareness among consumers, increases the chances of better value creation in the regional organic sector. However, a joint effort is also needed by producers (both agricultural production and food processing) to further strengthen the organic value chain in the areas of quality and innovation.

Conflicts can arise when regional organic products compete with other labelled products. This makes it even more important to inform market players and consumers better about production methods, origin and supply chain structures. At the same time, cooperation with existing quality and regional labels can also be sought. There is also the potential to use sales channels of big retail companies, with the condition, however, that they focus on the promotion of regional organic products and offer fair conditions for collaboration. One challenge is to keep the development of the regional organic supply in line with the regional and national demand for organic products, so that oversupply does not cause prices to fall. The action plan aims to meet this challenge through innovative approaches and flexible adaptation of the measures planned.



## Evaluation and Monitoring

To assess the successful implementation of the organic action plan, data collection (monitoring) and periodic evaluation of the measures are necessary. The evaluation of the action plan takes place every two years. The approach developed in the EU project ORGAP is recommended as a methodology for evaluating the action plan.

The evaluation should answer the following questions:

- Have the overarching and strategic objectives of increasing the value added of the organic sector in the canton of Aargau been achieved effectively and efficiently?
- Were the measures positively received by the actors and did they meet their expectations? Did they feel sufficiently involved?
- Could conflicts arising from the action plan be resolved?
- What short and long-term effects on the sector and society have been, or can be, achieved through the organic action plan?
- What adjustments need to be made to the current action plan.

To be able to answer these questions, FiBL in cooperation with the Liebegg Agricultural Centre and Bio Suisse will organize the collection and analysis of data

## **Organic Action Plan for Aargau 2021**

Aargau is the first canton in German-speaking Switzerland to promote the organic food sector with the help of an action plan. The aim is to promote entrepreneurship and support existing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the continuous improvement of their performance and competitiveness. The aim is to promote the growth of the entire regional organic sector in regional, national and international markets.

The following strategic action fields were defined for the organic sector in Aargau in exchange with various actors:

1. Increasing organically managed agricultural areas;
2. Improving efficiency of logistics;
3. Improving knowledge about production and trade of organic products through education;
4. Improving competences organic food processing;
5. Raising awareness among consumers about organic agriculture and the origins of food;
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