

# Business & Markets



Socio-economic analysis of agri-food markets and supply chains.

Photo: Kay Ransom

Sustainable food systems and markets are inherently linked. Practitioners of the food sector are more likely to adopt sustainable and innovative practices if they are financially viable and acceptable from a socio-economic perspective. Market dynamics are a key driver of the success and continued development of the organic sector.

ORC's research in this area is committed to identifying market opportunities for the organic food sector considering the needs and views of farmers and other market players, and to inform practitioners accordingly. We aim to lead collaboration between public and private actors to establish a comprehensive knowledge base to support market and policy decisions, in the short term, and to encourage sustainable consumption patterns in the long term.

The socio-economic team of ORC has been involved in a number of national and international projects, which can be grouped as follows:

- Projects on the collection of organic market data, funded by the UK government and the European Commission
- Evaluation studies for the DG AGRI of the European Commission, including on added value in organic food supply chains and on the EU Organic Regulation
- Research projects for the organic as well as non-organic sector, mainly funded by Defra and the European Commission.

## Some of our projects

### Bridging the Gap: Financial Modelling

Sustain's *Bridging the Gap* programme is exploring how people on low incomes can get better access to food that's good for both health and the planet. Right now, climate and nature-friendly food, like organic fruit and veg, is often more expensive than food produced in damaging ways. To change this, the programme is testing 10 pilot

projects across the UK, some looking at public sector food buying, others at new ways of selling food in shops.

ORC, along with the University of Portsmouth, is evaluating the economics of these pilots. This includes assessing the overall costs and benefits for the environment, the economy, and local communities.



## Marketing of Organics

ORC, supported by John Pain, recently completed a two-year research programme aimed at identifying growth opportunities in organic food supply chains and understanding consumer perceptions of organic products. The project also examined successful organic markets in countries with faster sector growth. Guided by ORC's values, the research was highly collaborative, ensuring practical insights for

those involved in promoting and selling organic goods. This included a co-designed survey of 2,000 respondents and 20 qualitative interviews. ORC partnered with UK ORGANIC to produce a Consumer Insights Report, valuable for retailers across 21 product categories. Additionally, ORC collaborated with Better Food Traders to create a retailer guide on marketing organic products.



More on our business research



## Our staff



Rowan Dumper-Pollard

## Defra Evidence Review

This is a desk-based Rapid Evidence Review of data held by Defra which seeks to understand:

- The strength of evidence that environmentally friendly farming contributes to environmental goals, including the 10 goals of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP).
- Whether the price premium for environmentally friendly farming adequately compensates farmers for lower yields / higher production costs.
- The size of the negative externalities of conventional production, such as carbon footprint, pesticide poisoning, wastage etc., and hidden costs of conventional farming.

## Organic Farm Management Handbook

The Organic Farm Management Handbook is one of the ORC's longest standing research outputs. The first edition was released in 1994 and has been an essential tool for understanding the economics of organic farming in the UK. It can help with business plans and budgets, provide a means of assessing the viability of specific crops and livestock and advise on conversion related innovations such as new marketing approaches. The 12th edition of the handbook was published in October 2023. One of the key barriers preventing more farmers moving into organic farming is the lack of current information on the costs and business performance of organic farms and related management issues.

The revised OFMH seeks to improve access to that information, utilising ORC's extensive back-catalogue of research on organic practices, and expert opinion.



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