

EU ORGANIC AWARDS

General introduction

Increases in organic production contribute significantly to reducing the use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and antimicrobials and have positive effects on our climate, the environment, biodiversity and animal welfare. That is why organic production has been identified as playing a key role in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork strategy and the Biodiversity strategy. For this reason, the Commission has defined a target of 25% of EU agricultural land under organic farming by 2030 and a significant increase in organic aquaculture.

In support of that target, the Commission has adopted the Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production¹ in March 2021. This Action Plan takes the approach that, to stimulate organic production, consumer demand for organic products should grow. This requires, amongst other things, increased public awareness of the characteristics and benefits of organic production. For this purpose, the Action Plan includes the organisation of annual awards recognising excellence in the organic value chain. These awards will be awarded for the third time in 2024.

Click [here](#) to watch of the winners of the 2023 organic awards.

Seven categories of awards comprising eight individual awards are planned:

- Category 1: Best organic farmer (female) and Best organic farmer (male)²
- Category 2: Best organic region
- Category 3: Best organic city
- Category 4: Best organic bio-district
- Category 5: Best organic food processing SME³
- Category 6: Best organic food retailer
- Category 7: Best organic restaurant/food service⁴

These awards are non-financial and will be awarded on 23 September 2024, which is EU Organic Day.

Call-specific introduction

- **Category 1:** The objective of the award for **'Best organic farmer'** is to reward a farmer (**one female and one male**) who developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project producing real added value for organic production and consumption.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0141>

² Including both land-based farming and aquaculture

³ Including those processing organic aquaculture products

⁴ Restaurant (standalone restaurant or restaurant of a hotel) and/or food service (caterer or canteen)

- **Category 2:** The objective of the award for ‘**Best organic region**’ is to reward a region that developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project producing real added value for organic production and consumption.
- **Category 3:** The objective of the award for ‘**Best organic city**’ is to reward a city that developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project producing real added value for organic production and consumption.
- **Category 4:** The objective of the award for ‘**Best organic ‘bio district’’** is to reward a ‘*bio district*’ that developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project producing real added value for organic production and consumption.
- **Category 5:** The objective of the award for ‘**Best organic food processing SME**’ is to reward a Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) processing organic products that developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project producing real added value for organic production and consumption.
- **Category 6:** The objective of the award for ‘**Best organic food retailer**’ is to reward an SME food retailer selling organic products that developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project producing real added value for organic production and consumption.
- **Category 7:** The objective of the award for ‘**Best organic restaurant/food service**’ is to reward an SME restaurant (standalone or part of a hotel) and/or food service (caterer or canteen)- proposing organic certified references in their menu that developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project producing real added value for organic production and consumption.

Eligibility and award Criteria

1. Applications for the EU Organic Awards shall meet the following eligibility criteria:

a) The starting point for an application for one of the awards will be the following website:

https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organic-action-plan/eu-organic-awards_en

This website will link to the online application forms for each of the awards. Any application should be submitted **by 12 May 2024, 23:59:59 CEST** at the latest.

b) Applications must be in one of the official EU languages.

c) Applicants must be legal or natural persons established or resident in one of the 27 Member States of the EU.

d) The project submitted must be EU-based and refer clearly to **one** of the seven award categories/eight awards. The same project cannot be submitted for several award categories/awards. Each applicant can only apply for **one single award**. The maximum number of applications per award is one.

e) The winners of the previous editions cannot re-apply for the 2024 edition. The non-winning finalists of the previous editions can re-apply for the 2024 edition.

f) The project should either have been fully implemented already or should be in a sufficiently mature state so as to enable the jury to assess it (i.e. physical implementation should be advanced enough to demonstrate the achievement of the objectives).

g) Specific eligibility criteria for each award category:

- **Best organic farmer (female) and Best organic farmer (male):** Certified according to Regulation (EU) No 2018/848⁵;
- **Best organic region:** No specific eligibility criteria.
- **Best organic city:** No specific eligibility criteria; in case the city operates one or more organic farms or stores, proof of their organic certification should be provided. This proof should be a valid certificate at the moment of submission;
- **Best organic 'bio district':** A 'bio district' is defined as a geographical area where farmers, the public, tourist operators, associations and public authorities enter into an agreement for the sustainable management of local resources, based on organic principles and practices;
- **Best organic food processing SME:** Enterprise certified according to Regulation (EU) No 2018/848 and having 100% organic production and complying with the SME definition⁶ (an enterprise that employs fewer than 250 persons and has an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million). Cooperatives can be understood as enterprises. Processing is understood as defined by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.⁷
- **Best organic food retailer:** Enterprise certified according to Regulation (EU) No 2018/848 and having 100% organic certified references on sale (excluding non-food products or food products for which there is no organic availability) and complying with the SME definition⁸ (an enterprise that employs fewer than 250 persons and has an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million). Cooperatives can be understood as enterprises;
- **Best organic restaurant/food service:** An enterprise having 100% organic certified references in their menu, where possible and complying with the SME definition⁹ (an enterprise that employs fewer than 250 persons and has an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million). Cooperatives can be understood as enterprises.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018R0848>)

⁶ Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361&from=EN>)

⁷ Article (2) (m), (n) and (o) "definitions" of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs stipulates :

• (m) "processing" means any action that substantially alters the initial product, including heating, smoking, curing, maturing, drying, marinating, extraction, extrusion or a combination of those processes;

• (n) "unprocessed products" means foodstuffs that have not undergone processing, and includes products that have been divided, parted, severed, sliced, boned, minced, skinned, ground, cut, cleaned, trimmed, husked, milled, chilled, frozen, deep-frozen or thawed;

• (o) "processed products" means foodstuffs resulting from the processing of unprocessed products. These products may contain ingredients that are necessary for their manufacture or to give them specific characteristics.

⁸ Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361&from=EN>)

⁹ Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361&from=EN>)

2. All eligible applications will be assessed by the EU Organic Awards jury against the following horizontal award criteria:

- **Excellence:** The awardee must have developed an excellent initiative producing real added value for organic production. This means good results and impact of the project in relation to its initial objectives. Projects shall demonstrate their impact on the area and territory concerned and show their results against the initially set targets and objectives.
- **Innovative character of the project in the selected award category:** Projects shall not be "business as usual" but should demonstrate new approaches, new organisational methods, or the development of new (or significantly) improved results for organics. The criteria for measuring the innovative character for each category are better detailed in the dedicated section of the category.
- **Sustainability pillars (environmental, social and economic) of the project:** Projects shall demonstrate their sustainability and their future as a self-standing initiative or project detailing how their project meets each pillar of sustainability in 3 different sub-sections
- **Transferability and possibility to replicate the project elsewhere in the EU:** The project shall demonstrate that it represents good practice in a wider (EU) context and that it inspires or could inspire other places. The project should also show good ways of communicating its goals and results.

The applicants will be asked guiding questions, developed in relation to the four principles of organic agriculture and the sustainability pillars, as well as a project summary. These questions will help the applicants to better structure their answers and the jury to obtain more data about the applicants.