



€18 Million EU research confirms organic claims



QLIF projects shows benefits but more work is needed




The largest and most ambitious EU-funded research programme on organic farming and the quality of organic and low-input food (QLIF, [www.qlif.org](http://www qlif.org)) has come to an end after five years with a final conference in Turkey (www.tubitak-food2009.org) and the publication of a series of research summaries drawing together the key results. Summaries of the key results can be accessed through the links below.

The programme, which involved more than 30 partner organisations, has generated a significant number of scientific publications and some important new insights into the factors influencing the quality of organic milk and vegetables and consumer perceptions of organic food. Other projects within the programme have focused on improvements in production methods to promote food quality and safety. At the same time, the sheer scale and complexity of the project have led some to question the value of some of the outputs or the desirability of very large scale programmes which might not be well focused on current priorities and stakeholder needs. Although the QLIF project is regarded as a successful example of the very large scale integrated projects, the EU has already responded to these concerns by reducing the scale of projects currently being funded.

In general the programme has confirmed earlier research showing significant differences between some organic and conventional food and the environmental impacts of the two farming systems. Important new findings have been made throughout the programme; for example, linking hormone levels and immune status in trial animals with aspects of the farming system but the projects fall short of providing definitive research evidence for those who need it of the health benefits of organic food. The work does however deal a major blow those who have raised queries about the safety of organic products. The quality of organic foods is found to meet consumer expectations but the growth of processed organic foods is likely to be challenging.

Significantly, the programme identifies productivity as the major weakness of the organic system. However, there are plenty of valuable insights as to how that can be improved with more education, training, research and development. On this occasion and despite the money spent on the programme, it is credible to repeat the statutory researcher conclusion – more research is needed.

	Synthesis	Overview of major QLIF results
	Subproject 1	Consumer expectations and attitudes
	Subproject 2	Effects of production methods
	Subproject 3	Crop production systems
	Subproject 4	Livestock production systems

	Subproject 5	Design of processing strategies
	Subproject 6	Transport, trading and retailing
	Subproject 7	Horizontal project activities

The full archive of [QLIF publications](#) is available on Organic Eprints (www.orgprints.org).