UK Annual Non-Organic Seed Authorisation Report for 2019

UK authorisations to use seed and seed potatoes and vegetative propagating material not produced by the organic production method in organic farming

According to European Commission regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008, each member state should ensure that a database, in which seed, seed potatoes and vegetative propagating material produced by organic production methods and respecting the general criteria for production of seed and vegetative propagating material can be registered and made available to users.

Prepared by the Soil Association on behalf of Defra
March 2020

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Purpose of the report

The UK non-organic annual seed authorisation report provides information on the quantities and varieties of non-organic seed used by organic farmers and growers. This information is intended for use by the seed industry, producers, policy makers and organic control bodies (CBs) to increase use of organic seed and comply with EU regulatory requirements. The objective is to expand the diversity, quantity and quality of organic seed availability so that authorisations for the use of non-organic seed would only need to be given in extreme circumstances. The report also helps to make the sector transparent to buyers and suppliers of seed and consumers.

As a requirement of European Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008, every member state must produce an annual report publishing all authorisations (sometimes referred to as derogations) to use non-organic seed, non-organic seed potatoes and non-organic vegetative propagating material. For the UK, the report is compiled by the Soil Association on behalf of Defra. It is then sent to the European Commission and other member states, and also made publicly available via the *Organic X Seeds* website (https://www.organicxseeds.co.uk/).

Market context

Altogether, sales of organic products in the United Kingdom have experienced eight years of consecutive growth with organic now worth £2.45 billion (higher than before the 2008 crash).[1]

2019 saw overall sales of organic products grow by 4.5%, with home delivery up by 11.2%, with more than 35.4% of all organic sales now taking place through non-multiple retail outlets.

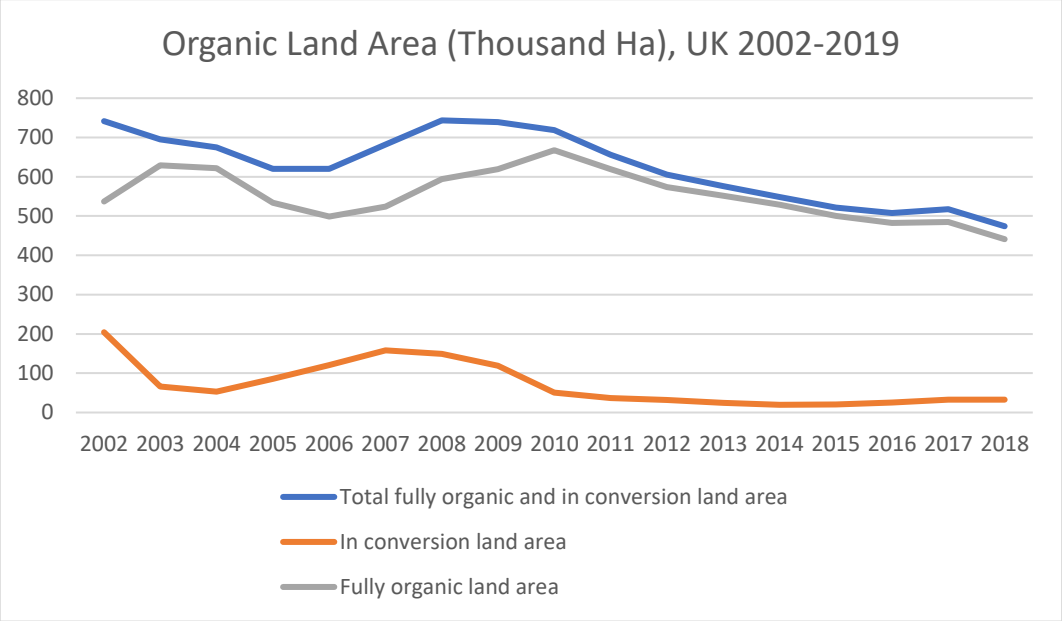
Supermarket sales of organic produce have also continued to increase, rising by 2.5% this year.

According to the most recent statistics released by Defra, the total area of organic and in-conversion land in the UK saw a small decrease (9%) between 2017 and 2018 – although the area in conversion has shown a slight rise (1%). The longer-term statistics for land area are shown in Graph 1 – there continues to be an upward trend for in-conversion land since 2014. Although the absolute area remains small, the percentage increase of in-conversion area since 2014 is 67%.

The number of organic producers rose slightly (2%) although the number of processors fell (14%). As processing can be less of a commitment than farming and growing, and hence more subject to transient fluctuation, this should not be a cause for great concern.

[1] Source: https://www.soilassociation.org/certification/market-research-and-data/download-the-organic-market-report/

Graph 1: Organic land area, 2002-2018



Wider context

The nature of the UK's future relationship with the EU remains, at the time of writing, not fully known. It is, however, the intention of Defra to continue recording organic data in broadly the same way as when under the EU aegis. The remarks made in last year's report therefore still apply and are re-iterated below.

Varietal choice of seed remains an ongoing concern. The ultimate aim must be to reach 100% organic-seed-for-organic-production while still maintaining the varietal choice available to growers; but how to reach this goal is unknown. Increased levels of non-organic seed use are undesirable within the organic sector as it challenges a key intention of the EU regulation. It also risks creating two-tiered seed costs for farmers and undermining public trust, despite the practical reasons that may be behind such an increase. Continued progress in organic seed, breeding production and usage is important to allow the organic sector to comply with regulatory requirements, protect public integrity and trust in organic food, and facilitate organic seed innovation. There are however some signs that innovation in organic variety testing in the UK is increasing – an example is the Innovative Farmers field lab in Oxfordshire which is testing a range of wheat varieties under organic growing conditions alongside a number of commercial variety trials.

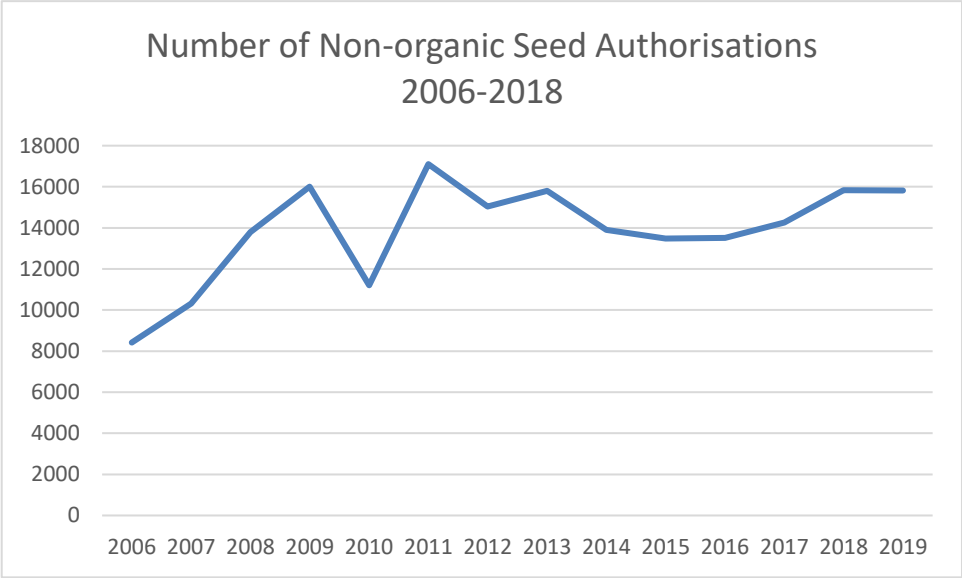
The authorisation report is analysed in six main sectors: Seed Potatoes, Arable / Cereal crops, Horticulture, Fruit, Grass, and Forage / Fodder crops.

Summary of authorisations

The total number of non-organic seed authorisations issued to organic farmers in the United Kingdom decreased slightly from 15,828 in 2018 to 15,783 in 2019. The total of authorisations fluctuates from year to year, with the high point of the last ten years being 17,101 in 2011.

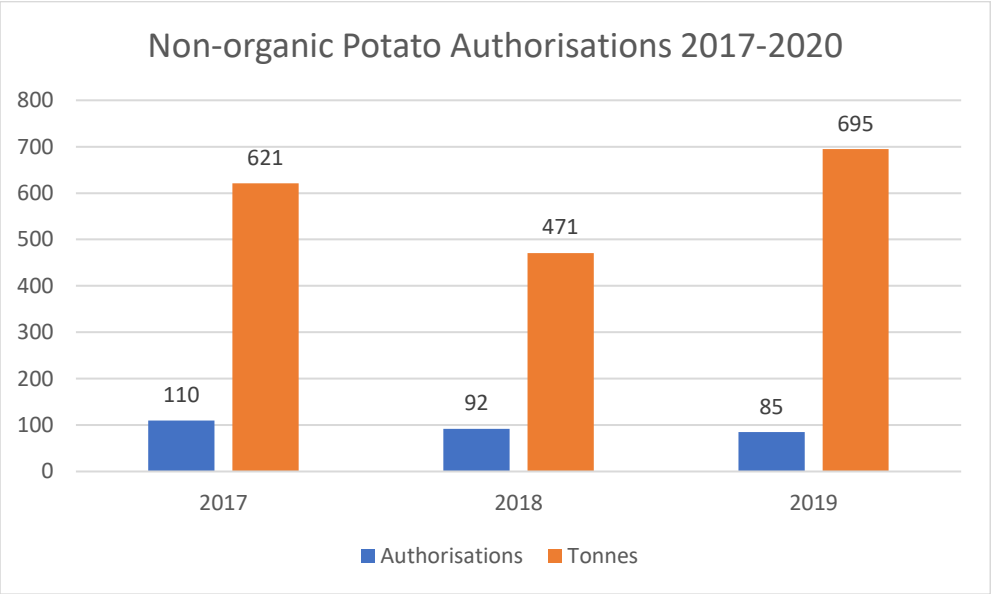
As noted earlier, the UK is aiming for a decline in number of authorisations. However, in the medium term, any increase can be a positive indicator of increasing consumer demand and/or increase in organic land area. Therefore it is difficult to give any compelling interpretation of the long term variations shown in Graph 2. In addition, a glance at the detailed data (on the spreadsheet which accompanies this report) will show that many authorisations, each of a small amount, are given for ornamentals. Careful analysis of this sector is beyond the brief of this report, but the general impression is of a healthy market which indicates increasing awareness among the public of the benefits of organic.

Graph 2: Non-organic seed authorisations, 2006-2018



Seed Potatoes

Graph 3: Non-organic seed potato authorisations, 2017-2019



We have seen a reduction in the number of authorisations (-6%) but a rise in the volume of authorisations (+48%) from 2018. After four years of decline in authorisation volume, this increase takes us back to a higher level than 2016. The reduction in numbers of authorisations is likely to reflect further consolidation amongst organic potato growers.

Within this overall increase in volumes of authorisations there are some standard varieties like Jersey Royal, Valor and Maris Peer but we are still seeing considerable switching between varieties. Varieties are often touted as the next best organic variety, and growers want to trial these before committing to long term production and investment in growing organic seed potatoes.

It is, as always, difficult to tie our information on authorisations to levels of area grown, both for organic potatoes as a whole and to areas of individual crop variety, so it is not always possible to say for certain whether a reduction in authorisations is due to more organic seed being available or lower demand for the variety.

Blight resistance continues to be the main driver for most organic growers, and with continuing issues on the availability and use of copper this will continue. Market acceptance of new blight resistant varieties and commitment from retailers to the long term would help to reduce the levels of authorisations and give seed producers a better ability to plan for the future.

Bambino - has seen a big decrease in volume, with only one authorisation for it in 2019. Despite reports from growers last year that this is now the preferred salad variety and generally outperforms Maris Peer we saw a huge increase in Maris Peer authorisation from just 66 kg in 2018 to 243 tonnes in 2019.

Valor – remains popular seeing just a small 7% decrease in volume of authorisations. This is seen as a reliable all-round white variety that can deliver yield, bakers, drought tolerance, some blight resistance and low bruising risk, and so is gaining popularity.

Rooster – there was a 24% decrease in authorisations for Rooster but there still seems to be some commitment to growing this variety for the organic consumer.

King Edward – remains popular with some consumers, particularly around Christmas, however it is very difficult to produce this seed organically.

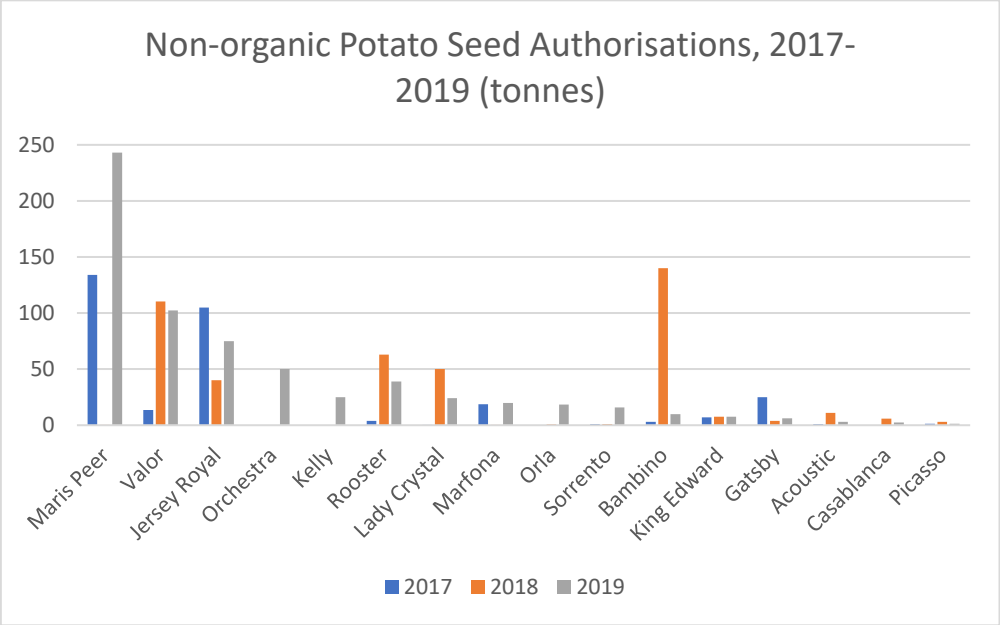
Lady Crystal – there has been a 26% decrease in Lady Crystal (which had been the second most authorised variety in 2018).

Orchestra and *Kelly* – these are two newer varieties seeing higher levels of authorisations. While Kelly is a good organic variety with later blight foliage resistance, Orchestra has low late blight resistance in both tuber and foliage, so it is more surprising to see this being grown for the organic market.

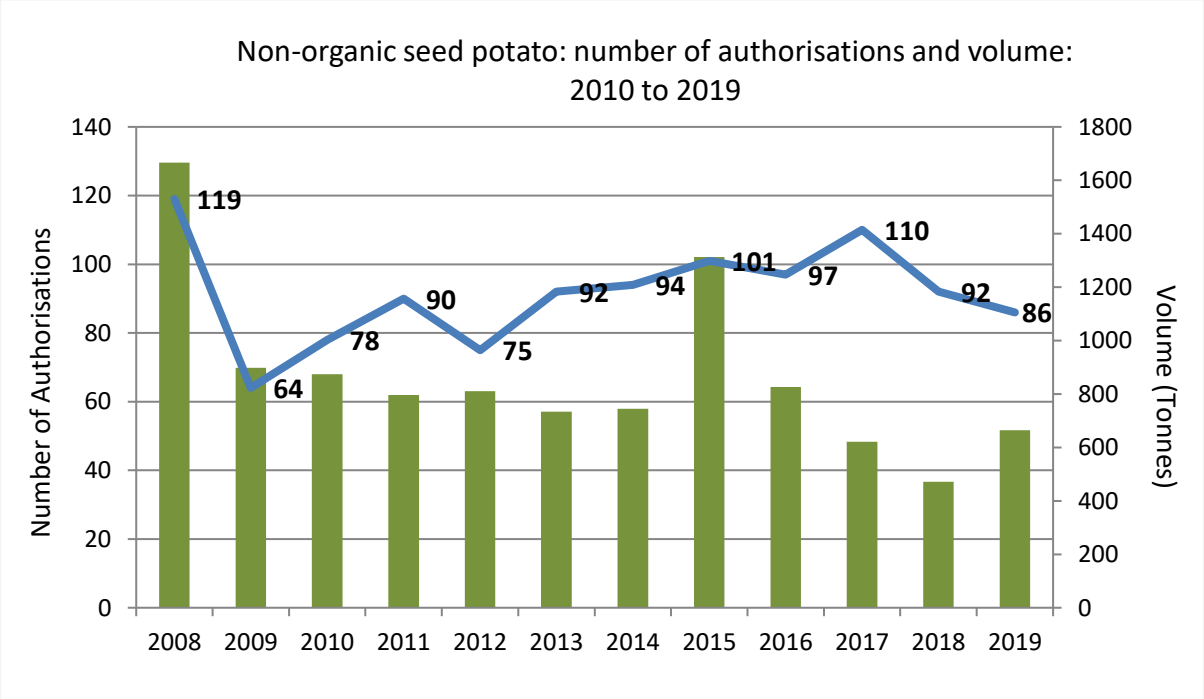
Table 1: Non-organic seed potato authorisations issued to UK organic farmers 2017-2019: Top 16 varieties (those over 1 tonne in volume)

Variety	2017		2018		2019	
	auths	tonnes	auths	tonnes	auths	tonnes
Maris Peer	4	134.00	1	0.07	4	243.00
Valor	3	13.70	11	110.23	7	102.35
Jersey Royal	3	105.00	1	40.00	1	75.00
Orchestra	-	-	-	-	1	50.00
Kelly	-	-	-	-	1	25.00
Rooster	1	4.00	2	63.00	2	39.00
Lady Crystal	1	0.02	1	50.00	2	24.00
Marfona	3	18.75	1	0.01	2	20.00
Orla	-	-	1	0.60	3	18.50
Sorrento	5	1.03	5	1.03	1	16.00
Bambino	1	3.00	2	140.00	1	10.00
King Edward	1	7.00	1	7.50	1	7.50
Gatsby	2	25.00	1	4.00	1	6.25
Acoustic	1	1.00	3	11.00	1	3.00
Casablanca	-	-	2	6.00	2	2.50
Picasso	1	1.25	1	3.00	1	1.25

Graph 4: Top varieties (by volume) of non-organic potato seed, 2017-2019



Graph 5: Number of non-organic seed potato authorisations and volume in the UK, longer term: 2010-2019



Arable and cereal crops

2019 saw a 15% drop in the number of non-organic arable and cereal seed authorisations, with a 5% fall in tonnages. Tonnage totalled 1,286, down from 1,346 in 2018, and authorisations were 709, down from 831 in 2018. This downward trend is not inconsistent with Defra organic farming statistics, which indicate a gradual decline in arable and cereal cropping in the UK since 2015. This relative stability allows the seed industry to be in a better position to balance supply of organic seed with demand, in contrast to periods of rapid expansion of organic land. There is, however, an increase in the area of land entering organic conversion in 2018, which points to future growth.

Spring arable crops in 2019 saw a significant fall in both tonnages and authorisations. The tonnage of non-organic spring oats fell from 230.7 tonnes down to just 65.7 tonnes, with a 58% decline in authorisations. Spring barley fell from 250 tonnes to 141 tonnes, with a 50% fall in authorisations. Spring wheat tonnages also declined by 20%. This reflects both the good planting conditions in autumn 2018 which meant that farmers were able to fulfill their planting plans, but also the switch by some farms to growing arable silage crops with legumes, in order to make up for a poor year for fodder in 2018. This is also reflected in the increased tonnage of spring triticale, showing a large increase of 50 tonnes over 2018.

This is the most probable explanation for the over 60% increase in tonnage of peas and beans in 2019. (Peas up to 397.2 tonnes from 256 tonnes; beans up to 185.8 tonnes from 105.3 tonnes). Peas are now by far the largest tonnage of non-organic seed supplied to organic farmers under derogation and presents an opportunity for organic pea seed production. The destination of the peas for arable silage means that farmers cannot farm save the seed.

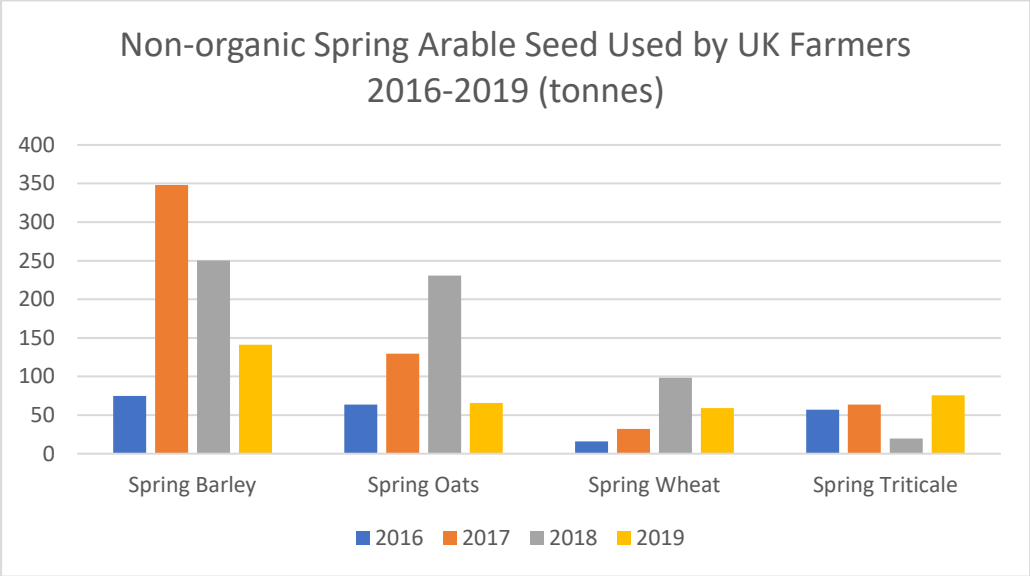
There was little overall change in tonnages supplied under derogation for autumn sown cereals in 2019, just 13 tonnes. However, that disguises some interesting underlying trends. Winter wheat tonnage fell from 142.9 tonnes to 107 tonnes, whilst authorisations increased from 69 to 90. Closer examination of the varieties selected by organic farmers, such as Lammas Red, Old Kent Hoary, show a trend towards heritage varieties for artisan baking (this also applies to spring wheat). Winter barley tonnage increased by 127%, albeit from a small base, and showed a small increase of 8 authorisations. This rise may be linked to the decline in the spring barley derogations or to the good prices achieved by barley in 2019. The tonnage of rye decreased by 40%, with a near halving of authorisations, perhaps reflecting a poor harvest in 2018 in comparison to oats and wheat. Interestingly, winter oats tonnage fell to only 17, with 13 authorisations; this can be counted as a success, in that oats are the most widely grown autumn cereal crop in the UK.

Autumn 2019 has proven to be very challenging for cereal planting, and following a wet winter, spring planting is likely to be scaled back. This will present a challenge for the organic seed industry. A further complication could arise in relation to exiting the EU, which could impact on movement of seed across borders after 2020.

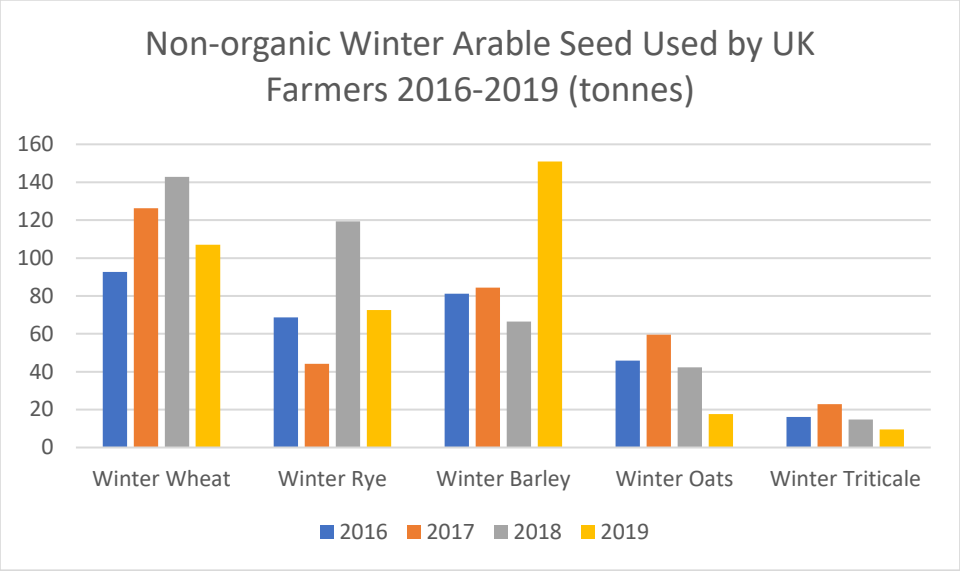
Table 2: Non-organic arable seed used by organic farmers: 2017 to 2019

Crop	2017		2018		2019		% change 2018-19	
	auths	tonnes	auths	tonnes	auths	tonnes	auths	tonnes
Field Pea	215	196.9	275	256.2	**260**	**397.2**	-5	55
Spring Barley	160	348.3	166	250.3	**81**	**141.1**	-51	-44
Spring Oats	46	129.7	99	230.7	**42**	**65.7**	-58	-72
Winter Wheat	80	126.3	69	142.9	**90**	**107.0**	30	-25
Winter Rye	40	44.2	65	119.3	**34**	**72.5**	-48	-39
Field Bean	20	84.0	20	105.3	**63**	**185.8**	215	77
Spring Wheat	11	32.2	23	98.4	**20**	**59.1**	-13	-40
Winter Barley	39	84.4	26	66.5	**34**	**151.0**	31	127
Winter Oats	29	59.5	18	42.3	**17**	**17.6**	-6	-58
Spring Triticale	67	63.6	47	19.8	**56**	**75.8**	19	283
Winter Triticale	17	22.9	23	14.7	**9**	**9.6**	-61	-35
Spelt	4	0.03	-	-	**3**	**3.2**	**-**	**-**

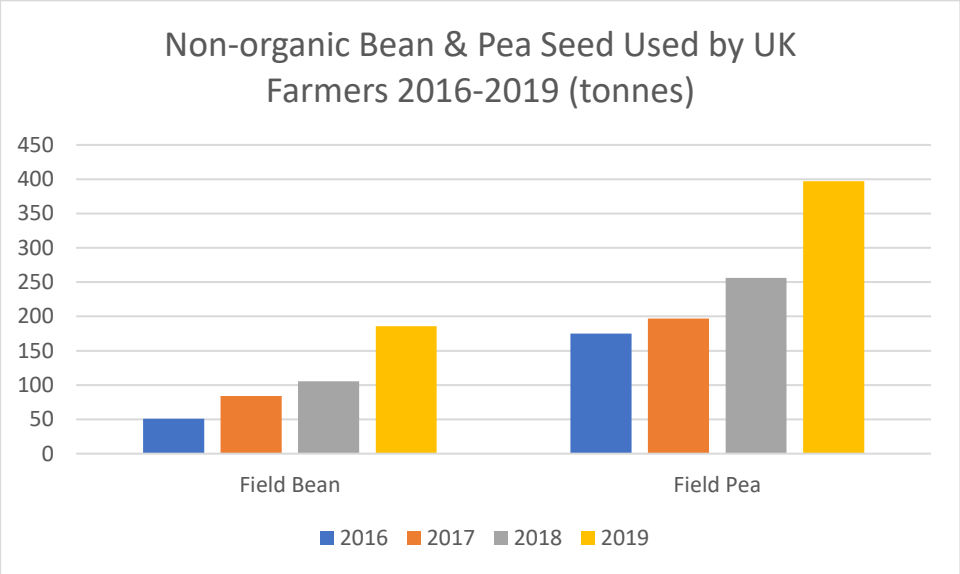
Graph 6: Comparison of non-organic spring arable seed authorisations



Graph 7: Comparison of non-organic winter arable seed authorisations



Graph 8: Comparison of non-organic field bean/pea seed authorisations



Horticulture

The total number of authorisations for non-organic seed for all species in the horticultural sector increased from 2,996 in 2018 to 3,114 in 2019 (+4%). Due to the time lag in the release of land area statistics, it is not possible to directly relate this to overall organic horticultural production. The area of organic horticultural land dropped in 2018 (9,600 hectares in 2017 to 9,300 hectares in 2018)[2]. Despite overall growth in the organic market there was a 2.4% decrease by value in Organic Fresh Produce from 2018 to 2019[3].

It remains almost impossible to show a simple comparison and analysis of authorisations for the horticultural sector due to the huge range of different crops and varieties, which are sold and recorded using different units of measurement (by weight, number of seeds/plants). Table 3 and Graph 9 below show comparisons for some of the major vegetable crops.

Here are a few of the significant changes from 2018

Cabbage – grouping the different cabbages together there has been an increase of 13% from 155 to 175 authorisations, though within this category some cabbage types have seen an increase and others a decrease.

Kale – although there has been a decrease in the number of authorisations, but a significant increase of 224% in weight of seed sold, seed measure by number remains similar.

Carrot – there has been an increase across the board in carrot authorisations with 26% increase in number of authorisations, 384% increase in weight of seed and 37% increase by number.

Beetroot – there has been an increase in number of authorisations (+29%), seed by weight (+16%) and seed by number (+30%).

Cauliflower – although the number of authorisations dropped by more than 30% the number of seeds increased significantly (+66%)

Lettuce – grouping the different lettuces together there was a decrease of 15% in lettuce authorisations. However, there was an increase in number of seed authorised of more than 200%.

Sweetcorn – there has been a significant decrease in number of authorisations (-40%) and in weight of seed (-99%) but a small increase in number of seed authorised (+18%).

[2] Defra Land statistics https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/organic-farming-statistics-2018
[3] Soil Association Organic Market Report: https://www.soilassociation.org/certification/market-research-and-data/download-the-organic-market-report/

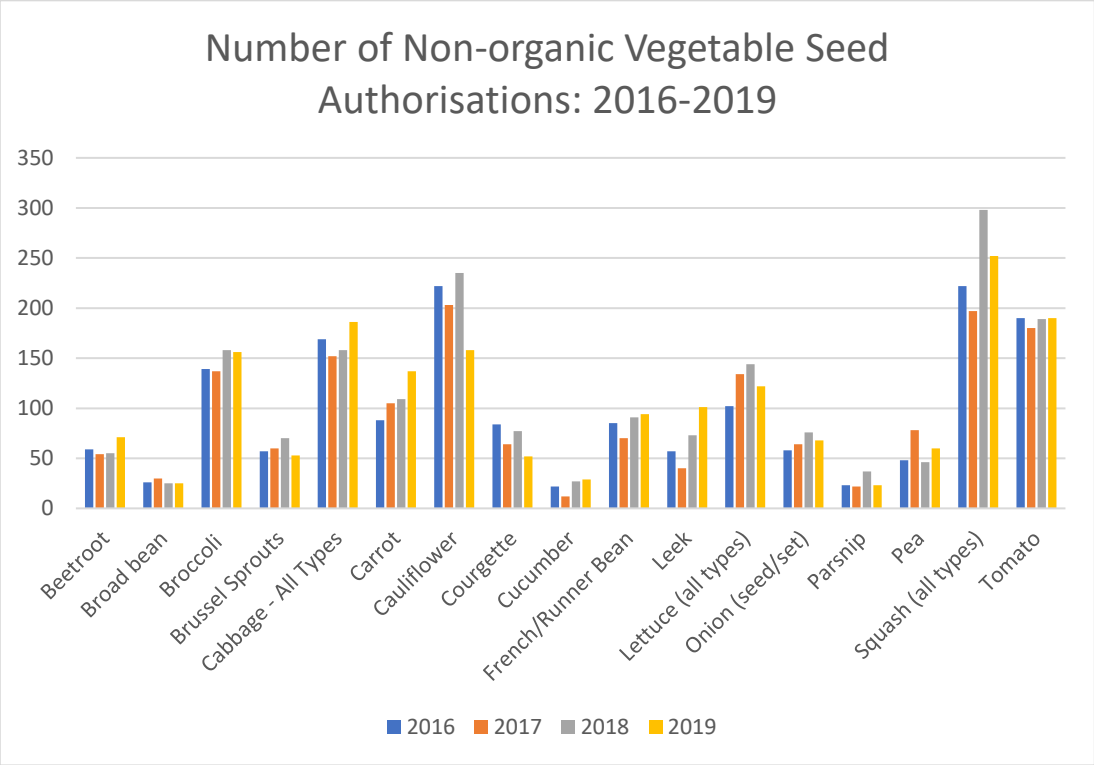
Onion – we have seen a decrease in authorisations for onion seed of 29% but an 84% increase in the number of seeds authorised.

Pea – there has been a decrease of 15% in the number of authorisations for peas, a decrease of 90% in weight of seed authorised, but a 15% rise in number of seeds authorised.

Table 3: Summary data for the top 20 horticultural crop species in 2019 (by number of authorisations) compared with the same crops 2017-2018

Crop	2017			2018			2019		
	auths	kg	seeds	auths	kg	seeds	auths	kg	seeds
Squash	197	1.05	448,597	298	10.11	1,026,727	**232**	**116.65**	**634,091**
Tomato	180	0.07	99,650	189	0.40	767,989	**190**	**0.89**	**365,159**
Cabbage, all types	147	11.30	1,720,430	155	1.34	2,009,104	**175**	**1.38**	**5,620,822**
Cauliflower	203	0.00	2,532,720	235	0.01	2,757,570	**158**	**5.00**	**4,582,417**
Broccoli	137	1.95	12,109,416	158	296.55	9,504,135	**156**	**188.04**	**16,546,197**
Carrot	105	5.23	480,488,750	109	3.17	594,104,350	**137**	**15.33**	**813,994,656**
Lettuce, all types	133	0.68	32,093,998	144	0.20	87,922,357	**122**	**7.71**	**24,447,708**
Kale	109	76.50	5,157,965	138	54.92	1,549,300	**106**	**177.88**	**1,529,284**
Leek	40	-	4,886,628	73	0.02	12,922,430	**101**	**0.65**	**23,121,175**
Quinoa	88	1,687.03	100	72	753.46	-	**85**	**1,114.23**	**200**
Beetroot	54	30.30	94,131,470	55	12.22	48,344,650	**71**	**14.23**	**62,747,370**
Spinach	45	0.86	1,365,868,300	66	0.52	1,249,400,620	**70**	**0.95**	**825,867,110**
Sweetcorn	89	355,250.00	32,113,584	113	237.34	2,393,019	**68**	**2.10**	**2,835,383**
Chilli Pepper	72	0.06	60,554	93	-	27,373	**67**	-	**5,218**
Asia Greens	49	102.97	135,462	50	220.68	875,495	**63**	**57.66**	**26,937,760**
Brussels Sprouts	60	2.36	460,380	70	0.10	277,340	**53**	**25.00**	**462,124**
Courgette	64	50.18	659,744	77	50.04	1,028,648	**52**	-	**810,212**
Pak Choi	27	0.91	181,885	54	120.21	305,044	**48**	**10.24**	**3,529,663**
Chard	34	21.70	2,134,300	50	42.80	975,258	**46**	**14.43**	**9,417,065**
Pea	69	4,099.27	91,855	46	7,963.68	1,207,230	**39**	**800.50**	**1,390,940**

Graph 9: Non-organic vegetable seed authorisations comparison (selected crops)



Fruit

The total number of authorisations in the fruit sector decreased from 238 in 2018 to 201 in 2019 (a decrease of 15.5%). There is again significant variation from crop to crop; however, the small scale of the sector is such that one or two significant plantings of a particular species can have a large impact on the overall picture. For instance, the number of authorisations for gooseberries doubled from 3 to 6 but the actual number of plants fell from 15,000 to just 1,094.

The biggest increases in numbers of plants were seen for apples (+1,799%), with a small increase of grapes planted (850 in 2019, up from 534 in 2018).

The largest decreases in quantity of plants authorised were Cherry (- 97%), gooseberries (-93%), pear (-99 %), plum (-82%) and Strawberries (-68%)

Chuckleberries saw another single planting of 5,000 plants following a similar one in 2018.

We continue to have insufficient evidence to match the authorisations to overall hectares of each fruit, so we are as yet unable to tell whether an increase in area represents an overall improvement in any one crop.

At the time of writing this report, Defra are in the process of tightening and clarifying the interpretation of the rules on how authorisations for propagating material are given through the Certifying bodies. It is likely therefore that we will see significant changes to this report for the 2020 data.

Graph 10: Comparison of the non-organic fruit authorisations issued to UK organic farmers and growers between 2013 and 2019 (all fruit crops)

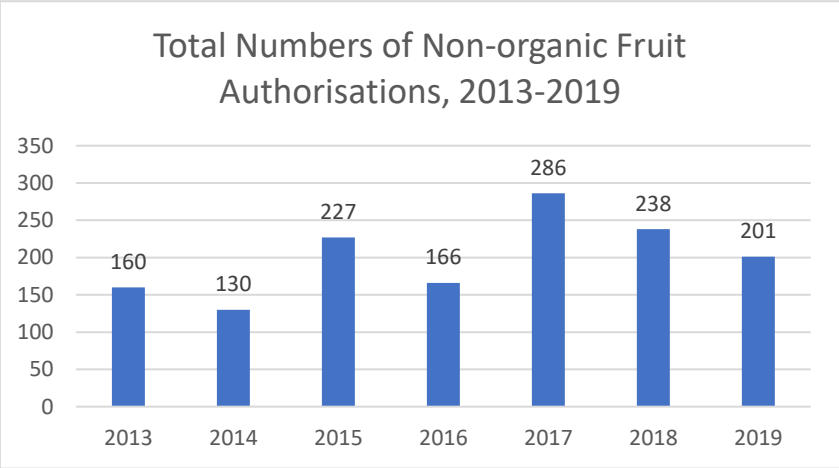


Table 4: Summary of non-organic fruit authorisations – selected crops

Crop	2017		2018		2019		Change 2018-19	
	Auths	Quantity (plants)	Auths	Quantity (plants)	Auths	Quantity (plants)	Auths	Quantity
Apple	137	1,603	62	318	**95**	**6,039**	**33**	**5,721**
Apricots	2	4	-	-	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Blackberry	1	12	-	-	**5**	**71**	**-**	**-**
Blackcurrant	7	6,725	7	30,001	**7**	**30,012**	**0**	**11**
Blueberry	10	646	5	304	**7**	**20**	**2**	**-284**
Cherry	15	2,296	13	2,400	**3**	**76**	**-10**	**-2,324**
Chuckleberry	1	seed	1	5,000	**1**	**5,000**	**0**	**0**
Gooseberry	9	511	3	15,000	**6**	**1,094**	**3**	**-13,906**
Grape	4	200	9	534	**2**	**850**	**-7**	**316**
Melon	9	162	8	4,324	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Mulberry	1	seed	1	1	**8**	**38**	**7**	**37**
Pear	24	89	9	4,051	**17**	**48**	**8**	**-4,003**
Plum	27	72	16	1,933	**3**	**350**	**-13**	**-1,583**
Raspberry	26	503,461	14	690	**8**	**666**	**-6**	**-24**
Red Currant	2	4,850	3	10,020	**5**	**10,058**	**2**	**38**
Strawberry	16	118,580	54	29,360	**17**	**9,210**	**-37**	**-20,150**
White Currant	1	300	1	5,000	**2**	**5,005**	**1**	**5**

Grass Seed

There was very little change in the number of authorisations in 2019 and these involved a similar tonnage to 2018.

Sainfoin proved to have the steepest increase in 2019, with a near four-fold increase in the volume of authorisations. For farmers with lighter land and above average pH this is a crop that is highly suited to organic farming: high protein, highly digestible and nitrogen fixing. Following publicity from farm-based events together with good supporting evidence, this crop may regain some of its former popularity.

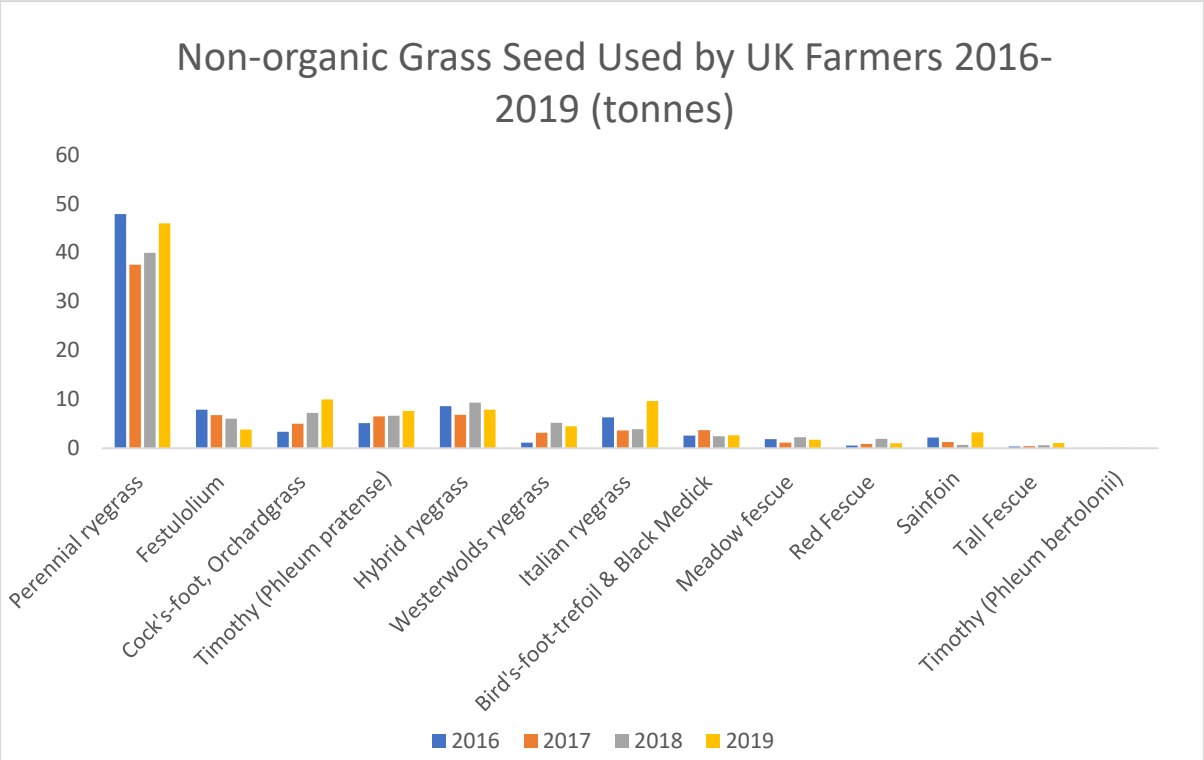
The move to high-quality home-grown forage to displace purchased feed, as well as reduce the cost, perhaps also explains the increase in reliance on Italian ryegrass.

Tall fescue is being more widely recognised as an ingredient for herb-rich grass mixes. The demand for meadow fescue, timothy and red fescue would also be expected to rise, though fewer authorisations were issued for all but Timothy. It is possible that adequate levels of these seeds were available as organic seed.

Table 5: Comparison of non-organic grass seed authorisations (major crops)

Name of Crop Species	2017		2018		2019		% Change 2018-19	
	Auths	Amount (tonnes)	Auths	Amount (tonnes)	Auths	Amount (tonnes)	Auths	Amount (tonnes)
Perennial ryegrass	1,064	37.54	1,158	39.94	**1,196**	**45.99**	3	15
Festulolium	91	6.77	115	6.07	**71**	**3.86**	-38	-37
Cock's-foot, Orchardgrass	151	5.03	204	7.21	**202**	**9.98**	-1	39
Timothy (*Phleum pratense*)	334	6.53	356	6.66	**363**	**7.64**	2	15
Hybrid ryegrass	189	6.82	262	9.32	**150**	**7.87**	-43	-16
Westerwolds ryegrass	41	3.17	58	5.23	**42**	**4.50**	-28	-14
Italian ryegrass	86	3.66	85	3.93	**106**	**9.68**	25	146
Bird's-foot-trefoil & Black Medick	264	3.69	89	2.44	**165**	**2.68**	85	10
Meadow fescue	55	1.13	81	2.29	**68**	**1.72**	-16	-25
Red Fescue	53	0.86	62	1.91	**55**	**1.05**	-11	-45
Sainfoin	38	1.30	21	0.68	**73**	**3.26**	248	380
Tall Fescue	35	0.44	43	0.64	**39**	**1.08**	-9	67
Timothy (*Phleum bertolonii*)	32	0.10	26	0.09	**30**	**0.06**	15	-38

Graph 11: Tonnage of non-organic grass seed authorisations (selected crops)



Forage / Fodder Crops

White and red clover remain the principle source of authorisations, though both are down on the previous two years.

Forage Rape, Vetch, Flax and Stubble Turnip are also authorised in significant quantities. Authorisations increased by 12 tones to 142 tonnes from a similar number of requests in 2018.

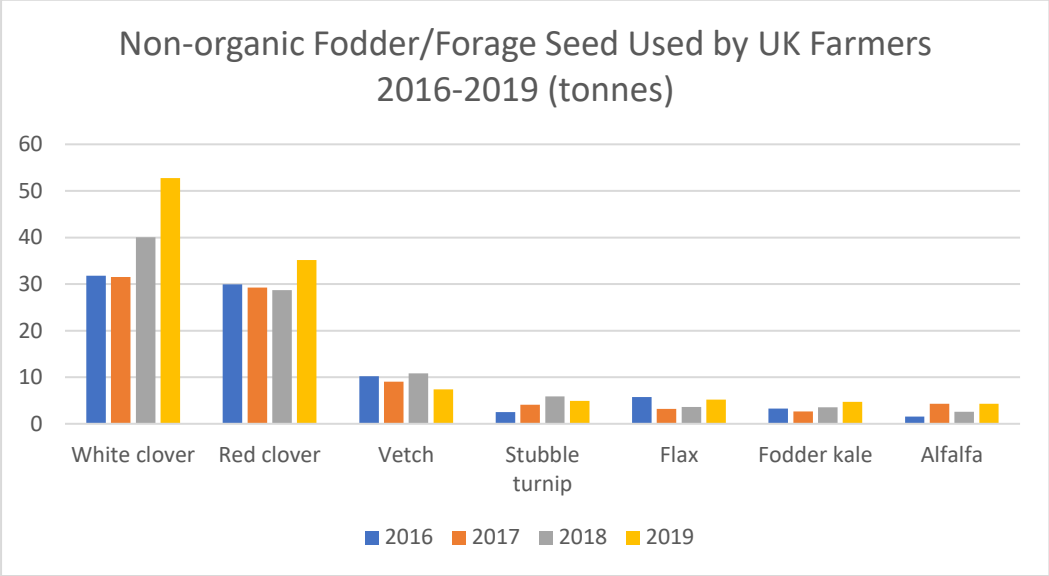
White Mustard and Fodder Radish both had significant increases in authorisation. Both are used as a cover-crop or green manure to protect and improve soils, they grow rapidly, competing with weeds and are deep rooting, they can also be grazed. Lucerne returned to the level of authorisation seen in 2017, probably due to better establishment conditions in the spring.

Authorisations and the number of kilogrammes issued are generally similar to or below those of 2018

Table 6: Summary comparison of authorisations issued for non-organic forage/fodder seed (major crops) : 2017–2019, by volume

Crop	2017		2018		2019		% Change 2018-19	
	Auths	Amount (tonnes)	Auths	Amount (tonnes)	Auths	Amount (tonnes)	Auths	Amount (tonnes)
White clover	2,647	31.51	2,848	40.01	**2,687**	**52.76**	-6	32
Red clover	833	29.26	891	28.69	**872**	**35.15**	-2	23
Forage rape	218	7.61	357	21.50	**336**	**14.64**	-6	-32
Vetch	63	9.04	84	10.84	**53**	**7.36**	-37	-32
Flax	54	3.18	49	3.59	**64**	**5.22**	31	45
Stubble turnip	115	4.05	186	5.88	**155**	**4.92**	-17	-16
Fodder kale	166	2.64	198	3.55	**180**	**4.71**	-9	33
Lucerne/Alfalfa	40	4.27	39	2.58	**54**	**4.33**	38	68
Alsike clover	141	1.82	155	1.99	**139**	**2.71**	-10	37
White mustard	37	0.38	31	2.31	**65**	**2.68**	110	16
Fodder radish	81	2.91	83	1.64	**115**	**2.14**	39	30
Forage chicory	209	2.31	246	3.96	**236**	**1.90**	-4	-52
Plantain	182	0.86	216	2.39	**236**	**1.78**	9	-26
Crimson clover	45	0.77	55	1.38	**72**	**1.73**	31	26

Graph 12: Volumes of non-organic forage/fodder seed used



Organic seed working groups

The seed working group meetings have been held for a number of years. Chaired by the Soil Association, they bring together seed suppliers, control bodies, organic farmers, and representatives from Defra to discuss past authorisations - as well as assessing the current volume and diversity of organic seed available to farmers and growers.

2019 saw meetings for the arable seed working group in May, and the grass/fodder-forage group in September. Topics discussed in both meetings included details of the previous year's non-organic seed authorisations, the state of the organic market (including land area statistics), trade summary / future availability, the possible consequences of the atypical weather experienced lately and the implications of Brexit.

Face to face meetings of the horticulture and potato seed working groups were not held during 2019. The Soil Association continues to work with the sector and organic seed producers to promote their products to organic growers, and to highlight the risk to consumer trust of continued high levels of non-organic seed use.

Working groups have agreed to ensure that relevant information is gathered and disseminated as quickly as possible, with regular meetings/group discussions to help ensure that there is the best possible supply of suitable organic seeds to farmers and growers.

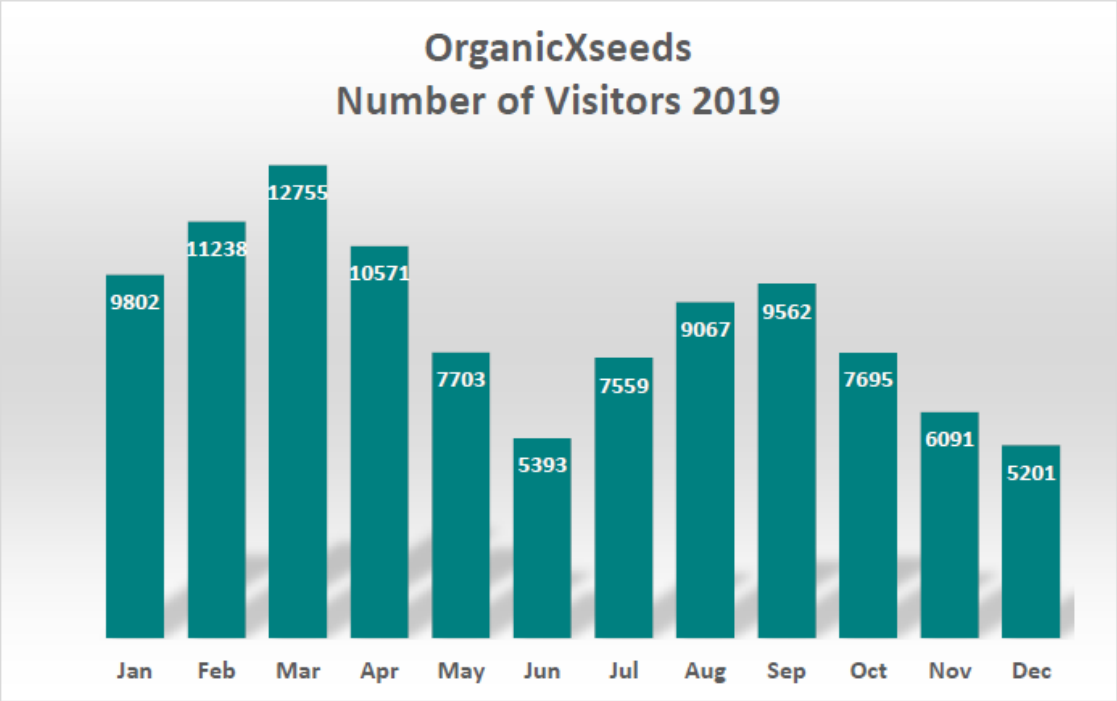
The UK database: www.organicxseeds.co.uk

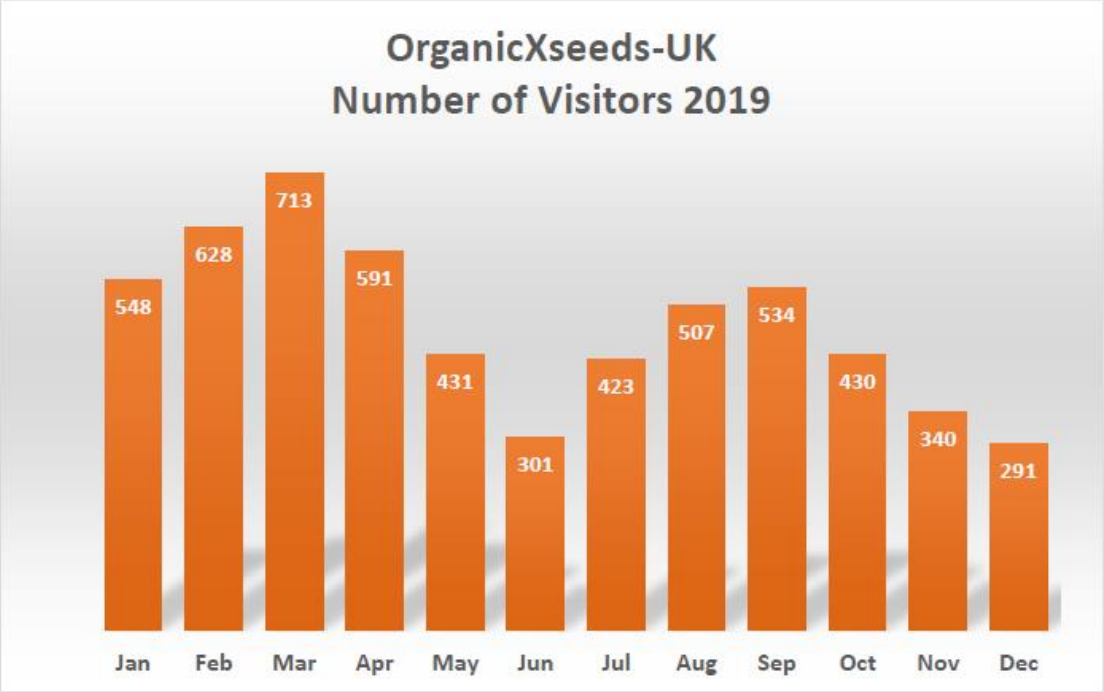
This database is a requirement of EU Regulation (EC) No. 1452/2003 which regulates the use of seeds and seed potatoes in organic farming.

There are currently 31 seed companies registered in the database who are able to supply organic seed and/or organic seed potatoes to organic farmers and growers in the UK. Seed suppliers can register species of organic seed and/or organic seed potatoes by variety via a login and password. They are regulated by a signed contract with the Soil Association requiring them to update their seed listings in accordance with current availability.

Organic producers are legally obliged to use organic seed that is registered in the database. UK control bodies are legally obliged to check the database for organic seed availability before issuing authorisations to use non-organic seed.

Statistics provided by FiBL relating to the Organic X Seeds website (which operates across several EU member states) can be viewed below:





Online availability of the database during 2019: 99.5%

Explanation of authorisation data

In accordance with Article 12 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1452/2003 the report shall contain, for each species concerned by an authorisation according to Article 5(1), the following information:

- The scientific name of the species and the variety denomination
- The English or common name of the species and the variety denomination
- The justification for the authorisation indicated by a reference to Article 5(1)
- The total number of authorisations
- The total quantity of seed or seed potatoes involved
- The chemical treatment for phytosanitary purposes as referred to in Article 3(a)

Authorisation according to Article 5(1) for seed (agricultural crop)

Column 1
Scientific name of the species

Column 2
English or common name of the species

Column 3
Variety name

Column 4
Justification / Reason for authorisation

The justification for the authorisation is indicated by a reference to Article 5(1) (a), (b), (c) or (d) (**NB:** In the UK it has been agreed by Defra to modify Article 5(1) and use the following justifications).

(a) If no variety of the species, which the user wants to obtain is registered in the database provided for in article 6;

(b) If no supplier is able to deliver the seed or seed potatoes before sowing or planting in situations where the user has ordered the seed or seed potatoes in reasonable time;

(c) If the variety which the user wants to obtain is not registered in the database, and the user is able to demonstrate that none of the registered alternatives of the same species are appropriate and that the authorisation therefore is significant for his production;

(d1) It is justified for use in research;

(d2) To test in small-scale field trials;

(d3) For variety conservation purposes, agreed by the competent authority of the member state;

(e) The seed is part of a grass or forage mix containing at least 70% organic seeds.

Column 5
The chemical treatment for phytosanitary purposes
There are currently no chemical treatments allowed for phytosanitary purposes in the UK.
[This column is informally used for seed-for-seed production]

Column 6
The total number of authorisations for each variety

Column 7
The total number of authorisations for each species

Column 8
The total quantity of seed, plants or seed potatoes (by variety)

For each variety it is stated, how many units of seed or vegetative propagating material have been authorised. Where two or more authorisations have been granted, the amounts have been added.

Column 9
The total quantity of seed or seed potatoes (by species)

Seed authorisation data

The accompanying document - "UK Non-Organic Seed Authorisation Report 2018 Data" - summarises the authorisations granted in 2018 by all of the UK organic control bodies.

There are some anomalies in the way that the data is collected by the control bodies. For example, the same variety of a particular crop may have some entries recorded by the number of seeds or plants and others by the weight of the seed. Where this has occurred the entries have been added to give a total by each unit of measurement. Although the control bodies are aware of this they often receive the request for authorisations in various units from the producer, who in turn records the information as provided by the seed company.

Acknowledgements

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