

# Opportunities and limitations of organic farming in contributing to more sustainability in agriculture

Verena Seufert, Swedish R&D Days, October 14, 2020

Agriculture is a major source of environmental degradation, contributing to climate change, depleting freshwater resources, threatening biodiversity, degrading soil fertility and polluting the environment through fertilizer and pesticide use. Organic agriculture is often suggested as a more environmentally friendly farming practice that reduces some of these negative environmental externalities. But what exactly does organic agriculture mean today? How are environmental best practices regulated in organic agriculture? And what evidence do we have about the environmental performance of organic agriculture? In this talk I will first conduct a comparison of organic regulatory texts across the world to assess how environmental principles are represented in organic regulations today. Second, I will systematically examine the environmental performance of organic agriculture across multiple dimensions. I will outline our current knowledge on where organic agriculture performs well, where it is facing issues, and I will highlight important knowledge gaps. The talk will conclude with a discussion of how changes in organic regulations could improve the environmental sustainability of organic farming, and why and how organic agriculture still matters for helping us transition to more sustainable food production.