Perception of organic livestock farmers about the organic farming situation in Europe

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An online survey to gather information about organic livestock production was conducted (Nov 2018- Feb 2019) among organic livestock farmers in 13 European countries. A total of 426 responses were analysed, of which 59% were French and Spanish farmers. Characteristics of the participants and farms were representatives of the European organic livestock sector. Farmers express their difficulty to obtain information on alternatives to antiparasitics (4.4/7) and antibiotics (4.3/7) compared to bedding (3.1/7). Feeding/nutrition (6.6/7), animal health (6.5/7) and welfare (6.5/7) were the most relevant issues in their farms. Yet, for farmers transitioning to organic farming systems, production costs (5.5/7), access to organic market (5.1/7) and animal health (5.1/7) were important factors. Although farmers report that the use of alternative therapies depends on the health issue and the usage of conventional treatments when necessary, in the last year, 64% of the organic farmers did not treat ≥90% of their animals. The three main source of information on alternative treatments were veterinarians (51%), other farmers (46%) and the internet (38%). In conclusion, organic farmers indicated more difficulty in retrieving information on alternative treatments than on bedding. Although production costs were decisive to become an organic farmer, animal health and welfare were the most relevant issues for those already farming organically. Despite rising popularity of phytotherapy, conventional treatment is still the predominant form of therapy. Funded by EU H2020 No 774340 – Organic-PLUS.