

## **Availability, marketing and placement of organic meat in the Republic of Serbia**

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**ABSTRACT:** Organic food has become an increasingly important part of modern food systems due to growing concerns about human health, environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation and animal welfare. Consumers around the world are increasingly choosing organically produced food because it is perceived as safer, more environmentally friendly and produced according to higher ethical standards. Among organic food products, organic meat occupies a particularly important place because its production implies strict requirements for livestock management, animal nutrition, environmental protection and product traceability.

The importance of organic food extends beyond the health of the individual. Organic farming helps conserve soil, improves water quality, reduces pollution, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and preserves biodiversity. It also supports sustainable rural development by creating opportunities for small family farms and encouraging local food production.

Growing awareness of nutrition, food safety and sustainability has led to increased demand for certified organic products worldwide. As a result, organic farming has become a key component of strategies for sustainable agricultural development.

Organic meat is one of the most demanding sectors of organic farming due to the strict production standards applied throughout the process. This includes everything from food production to livestock management, as well as processing, transport and retail. Animals raised in organic systems receive certified organic food, have regular access to open areas

and pastures, are kept in appropriate housing conditions and receive health care that is primarily focused on preventive treatment, not routine treatment.

In the Republic of Serbia, the organic sector has experienced gradual growth over the last decade. Although organic livestock production is still relatively modest compared to crop production, the country has significant natural resources and favourable conditions for the expansion of organic meat production.

The Republic of Serbia has significant potential to expand its organic meat sector thanks to favourable natural conditions, the tradition of animal husbandry and the increasing interest of consumers in sustainable food production. Although challenges related to production capacities, certification, marketing and distribution remain present, continuous investments, political support, producer cooperation and consumer education can significantly strengthen the competitiveness of Serbian organic meat on the domestic and international markets. The future development of the sector will depend on the integration of sustainable production practices with effective marketing strategies and strong institutional support, ensuring that organic meat becomes an increasingly important component of Serbia's agricultural and food system.

**Keywords:** *marketing, distribution, environment, organic production, organic food, rural development*

## Introduction

As consumers become more aware of food quality, animal welfare and environmental sustainability, the demand for certified organic meat is constantly growing. A favourable climate, spacious pastures and a long-standing tradition of animal husbandry in Serbia create ideal conditions for the growth of organic meat production.

Organic meat is obtained from animals that are raised according to strict organic farming standards. Unlike conventional livestock production, organic agriculture prioritises the natural behaviour of animals, environmental protection and responsible management of natural resources. (Hermansen, 2001)

Animals raised for organic meat usually have the following characteristics:

- They eat certified organic food that does not contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
- They have regular access to outdoor grazing and pastures.
- They are grown without the routine use of antibiotics or synthetic growth hormones.
- They are managed in accordance with high animal welfare standards.
- They are produced under a certified inspection and monitoring system that follows the process from the farm to the consumer. (IFOAM, 2014)

#### Organic meat production in the Republic of Serbia

Serbia has great potential for organic livestock production due to its natural grassy areas, relatively low industrial pollution in many rural areas and a long tradition of cattle, sheep, pig and poultry farming.

Production of organic meat in the Republic of Serbia includes:

- Organic beef
- Organic lamb
- Organic pork
- Organic poultry
- Organic goat meat.

Many Serbian farms already use extensive grazing systems, which facilitates the transition to organic production compared to highly industrialised agricultural systems.

Mountainous regions such as Zlatibor, Stara Planina, Golija, the Pešter Plateau and parts of Vojvodina provide a suitable environment for organic livestock farming due to abundant natural pastures and relatively well-preserved ecosystems.

The production of organic meat in Serbia is regulated by national legislation related to organic agriculture. Producers must undergo regular inspections and receive certification before they can market their products as organic.

This certification ensures that every stage of production, from feed and breeding to slaughter, processing, packaging and labelling, complies with established organic standards. Only certified producers are allowed to use the national organic mark of Serbia and the certification code issued by the authorised control organisation. (Milojevic, 2025)

### **Benefit of organic meat**

The benefits of producing and consuming real organic meat are numerous. Some of them are:

#### **Greater animal welfare**

Organic farming strongly emphasises animal welfare by providing livestock with sufficient space, access to the outdoors, natural nutrition and conditions that allow them to exhibit normal behaviour. (Hermansen, 2001)

#### **Preservation of the environment**

Organic farming has several advantages, including:

- Reduction of soil degradation
- Improving biodiversity
- Reduction of chemical pollution
- Improvement of water quality
- Promoting sustainable pasture management (Van Wagenberg, 2017)

#### **Consumer confidence**

Certified organic labels guarantee consumers that the meat has been produced in accordance with verified organic standards and has undergone independent inspection throughout the production process. (IFOAM, 2014)

## **Rural development**

Organic farming provides opportunities for small family farms, supports rural employment and can increase the value of agricultural products through premium prices and export opportunities. (Lampkin, 1994)

## **Challenges faced by organic meat production in the Republic of Serbia**

Although it has potential, the production of organic meat in the Republic of Serbia faces several challenges:

- Increased production costs
- Lengthy certification processes
- Limited awareness of the domestic market
- Smaller volume of production
- Higher labor requirements
- Lack of certified organic food. (Milojevic, 2025)

Improving consumer education and providing continuous institutional support could help remove these barriers and motivate more farmers to get involved in the organic sector.

## **Market possibilities and availability of organic meat in the Republic of Serbia**

The demand for organic meat is growing in Europe and around the world. Serbian producers have the opportunity to supply both local consumers and export markets, where certified organic products are often sold at higher prices. (IFOAM, 2014)

Restaurants, specialised food stores, markets and health-conscious consumers are increasingly looking for locally produced organic meat, which creates new opportunities for livestock producers in Serbia.

The availability of organic meat in the Republic of Serbia has improved over the last decade, although the market is still relatively small compared to many European Union countries. Organic meat can be found in specialist organic food stores, selected

supermarkets, online stores, markets and directly from certified organic farms. However, the variety of products and their availability throughout the year remain limited due to the relatively low volume of production and seasonal supply. (Milojevic, 2025)

Organic poultry is currently the most widespread type of organic meat in Serbia. Consumers can also find certified organic beef, lamb, pork and processed meat products, although these are usually available in smaller quantities and may occasionally sell out due to the limited number of certified livestock. Organic grocers often offer a variety of fresh and frozen organic meat products, including chicken fillets, whole chickens, beef cuts, lamb, and processed products such as sausages and cured meats.

Most organic meat is sold in specialised organic food stores located in larger urban centres, especially in Belgrade and Novi Sad. In addition, several certified producers offer their products directly to consumers through farm stores, online ordering platforms and home delivery services. This direct marketing approach allows producers to maintain product traceability while giving consumers access to fresh, certified organic meat.

Despite the increasing availability of organic meat, it still makes up only a small part of the total meat market in Serbia. Factors such as higher production costs, a limited number of certified livestock farms and premium retail prices hinder wider market penetration. As a result, organic meat is primarily purchased by consumers who value food quality, environmental sustainability and high animal welfare standards more than price. (Milojevic, 2025)

Demand for organic meat is constantly growing due to growing consumer awareness of healthy eating, food safety and sustainable farming practices. As more and more producers receive organic certificates and distribution networks expand, it is expected that the availability of organic meat will further improve throughout Serbia. Continued government support, cooperation among producers, and consumer education will be necessary to strengthen both supply and demand for certified organic meat products.

### **Marketing and placement of organic meat in the Republic of Serbia**

Marketing and distribution of organic meat in the Republic of Serbia is developing in parallel with the gradual growth of the organic food sector in the country. Although the

market for organic meat is still relatively small, growing consumer awareness of health, food safety, environmental protection and animal welfare has created new opportunities for producers and retailers.

In order to improve the visibility and availability of organic meat products, effective marketing strategies and well-organised distribution channels are necessary. Successful promotion of organic products depend on clear branding, informative packaging, consumer education and effective communication about the benefits of certified organic production.

Serbia uses numerous distribution channels to promote organic meat. Markets, online sellers, supermarkets and hypermarkets with special departments for organic food, specialised organic food stores and direct sales from certified producers are the most represented. Direct marketing has gained in importance because it allows manufacturers to build consumer trust, guarantee product traceability and increase profit margins by eliminating middlemen. According to consumer research, buying organic food directly from producers is one of the most popular ways to do this in Serbia. This is followed by specialised stores, markets, supermarkets and hypermarkets. (Jelocnik, 2023)

Product placement significantly influences purchasing decisions. Organic meat products are usually found in separate refrigerated sections or on clearly marked organic shelves, distinguishing them from conventionally produced meats. Proper labelling, including certification marks and organic logos, helps consumers easily identify certified products and increases their confidence in the authenticity of those products. However, studies show that recognition of the national mark of organic products in Serbia by consumers is still limited, which indicates the need for stronger promotional activities and improved visibility in stores. (Andjelkovic, 2023)

Marketing efforts primarily emphasise the unique qualities of organic meat, which include high animal welfare standards, environmentally sustainable production methods, and the absence of routine use of antibiotics and synthetic growth stimulants. Producers and industry organisations are increasingly using digital marketing, social media, educational campaigns, food fairs and promotional events to inform consumers about the benefits of organic meat. In addition, promotional catalogues, manufacturer databases and awareness

campaigns were introduced to increase domestic demand and improve market transparency.

However, in the Republic of Serbia there are still many challenges that affect the marketing and availability of organic meat in Serbia. Limited production volume, inconsistent product offerings, higher retail prices, and relatively low consumer awareness hinder market growth. Large retail chains often require a constant supply of products, which many domestic producers of organic livestock find difficult to provide consistently. As a result, imported organic meat can fill the gap in the domestic market when local production fails.

The future development of organic meat marketing in Serbia relies on the improvement of cooperation between producers, processors, distributors and retailers. Key strategies to improve market access and consumer confidence include expanding online sales, improving cold chain logistics and distribution, increasing promotional activities, and educating consumers about organic certification and product quality. With continued government support and growing demand for sustainably produced food, the marketing and distribution of organic meat is expected to become more efficient, contributing to the long-term growth of the organic livestock sector in Serbia. (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management in the Republic of Serbia)

### **Recommended marketing strategies for organic meat in the Republic of Serbia**

The continuous growth of the organic meat sector in the Republic of Serbia requires the adoption of effective marketing strategies. These strategies should aim at increasing consumer awareness, increasing market demand and improving the competitiveness of domestic producers. Considering the relatively small size of the organic food market and limited consumer understanding of organic certification, marketing efforts should emphasise education, product differentiation, and establishing effective distribution channels. (Kotler and Keller, 2022)

### **Education and consumer awareness**

A key marketing strategy is increasing public awareness of the benefits of organic meat. Educational campaigns should clarify the differences between organic and conventionally produced meat, highlighting certified production methods, animal welfare, environmental

sustainability, food safety and product traceability. Information can be shared through a variety of channels, including television, radio, social media, educational workshops, agricultural fairs, and partnerships with universities, schools, and health care providers. When consumers are well informed, they are more likely to appreciate the added value of organic products and justify their higher prices. (Aertsens et al., 2009)

### **Strengthening brand identity**

Domestic producers should invest in the development of recognisable brands that convey quality, authenticity and trust. Attractive packaging, consistent visual identity and prominent display of official organic certification marks can improve product recognition and increase consumer confidence. Branding strategies that emphasise local origin, traditional animal husbandry practices and environmentally responsible production can effectively differentiate Serbian organic meat from imported products. (Kotler and Keller, 2022)

### **Digital marketing and electronic commerce**

The increasing use of digital technologies offers significant opportunities for the promotion of organic meat products. Manufacturers should create professional websites and maintain active social media profiles to communicate directly with consumers. Digital marketing strategies can include educational content, farm presentations, customer testimonials, cooking demonstrations and information on production practices. Implementing online ordering systems and home delivery services can improve product availability, especially for consumers living in urban areas. (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2022)

### **Direct marketing and short supply chains**

Direct sales from producers to consumers is an effective strategy for increasing profitability while strengthening consumer confidence. Options such as markets, farm stores, community-supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives, subscription-based meat packages, and direct online sales minimise middlemen and improve product traceability. Short supply chains allow producers to receive a larger share of the final retail price while providing consumers with fresh produce. (Marsden, Banks and Bristow, 2000)

### **Cooperation among producers**

Small organic livestock farms can realise advantages by forming producer cooperatives or marketing associations. By collaborating in marketing efforts, manufacturers can combine their production volumes, standardise product quality, reduce marketing costs, and negotiate more effectively with processors and retail chains. In addition, joint promotional campaigns and shared distribution networks can improve market visibility and increase the availability of organic meat throughout Serbia.

### **Expansion of distribution channels**

In order to increase the availability of organic meat, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with supermarkets, specialised organic food stores, restaurants, hotels and public institutions. Establishing special organic departments in retail stores, providing refrigerated display cases with clear product labelling and improving logistics can make certified organic meat more accessible to consumers. Additionally, partnering with restaurants that promote local and sustainable cuisine can improve product visibility and generate greater consumer interest. (Jelocnik, 2023)

### **Promotional activities**

Participating in agricultural shows, food festivals, organic fairs, tastings and cooking demonstrations can significantly increase consumer awareness. Offering promotional discounts, loyalty programs, recipe booklets and product samples encourages first-time purchases and helps consumers become familiar with organic meat products. Additionally, collaborations with chefs, nutritionists and food influencers can further enhance promotional efforts. (Kotler and Keller, 2022)

### **Market segmentation**

Marketing strategies should focus on certain groups of consumers who are more inclined to buy organic meat. These groups include health-conscious consumers, families with young children, environmentally conscious individuals, athletes and those with higher disposable incomes. By tailoring promotional messages to the needs and values of this audience, businesses can improve marketing effectiveness and increase sales. (Kotler and Keller, 2022)

## **Government and institutional support**

Government institutions play a key role in market development by supporting promotional campaigns, offering financial incentives for certification and marketing, and facilitating participation in domestic and international fairs. National programmes that promote organic farming and encourage public procurement of certified organic food for schools, hospitals and other public institutions can significantly increase the demand for organic meat.

A comprehensive marketing strategy for organic meat in the Republic of Serbia should focus on several key components: consumer education, strong branding, digital promotion, direct marketing, cooperative business models and expanded distribution networks. These strategies can increase consumer confidence, improve market access for producers and support the long-term growth of the organic livestock sector. As consumer demand for safe, sustainable and high-quality food continues to grow, effective marketing will play a key role in strengthening the competitiveness of Serbian organic meat on the domestic and international markets.

## **Conclusion**

The future of organic meat production in Serbia can be successful with continuous investment in farmer education, certification systems, rural infrastructure and sustainable agricultural practices, which can improve the competitiveness of the sector.

Government support, collaboration among producers, and increasing consumer awareness are expected to fuel organic livestock growth in the coming years. Serbia's natural resources and agricultural heritage position the country well to become a recognised producer of high-quality organic meat on the European market.

Organic meat production represents a significant opportunity for Serbian agriculture to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility and high animal welfare standards. By using its natural advantages and following internationally recognised organic production standards, Serbia can further develop its organic livestock sector while meeting the growing demand for safe, sustainable and high-quality food. With continued

investment and consumer support, organic meat could play a valuable role in the future of agriculture in Serbia.

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