

Academic study: 'We challenge the widespread appraisal that organic farming is the fundamental alternative to conventional farming for harnessing biodiversity in agricultural landscapes'

Biodiversity continues to decline rapidly, despite decades of repeated national and international policy efforts. Agricultural intensification is a major driver of biodiversity losses, while conversion to organic farming has been suggested as a key technique to halt or reverse this trend.

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We challenge the widespread appraisal that organic farming is the fundamental alternative to conventional farming for harnessing biodiversity in agricultural landscapes. Certification of organic production is largely restricted to banning synthetic agrochemicals, resulting in limited benefits for biodiversity but high yield losses despite ongoing intensification and specialisation.

In contrast, successful agricultural measures to enhance biodiversity include diversifying cropland and reducing field size, which can multiply biodiversity while sustaining high yields in both conventional and organic systems.

Achieving a landscape-level mosaic of natural habitat patches and fine-grained cropland diversification in both conventional and organic agriculture is key for promoting large-scale biodiversity. This needs to be urgently acknowledged by policy makers for an agricultural paradigm shift.

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