

# Why are lentils (*Lens culinaris*) a success story in Germany?

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Case Study No. 13

## Background

- Traditional crop
- Grown in mixed cropping with companion crops in Germany to avoid lodging
- Not cultivated anymore since the 1950s
- Revival driven by a single farmer
- Organic producer group (approx. 90 farmers)
- Organic and conventional production

## Challenges

- Low and unstable yields
- Lodging
- Inhomogeneous ripening
- Weeds



## Lentil mixed cropping with oats, lentil pods; traditional lentil dish in south-west Germany

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## What are the reasons for the success story?

### Aims of the case study:

- Determination of the status quo of lentil cultivation in south west Germany
- Identification of agronomic factors which contribute to the success of lentil cultivation in south west Germany
  - Identification of farmers' motivation and constraints regarding cultivation and marketing
  - Documentation of new approaches which can help to stabilize, optimize and expand the lentil cultivation in central Europe

## Methods

- Data collection: agronomical data (rotation, companion crops, yields, soil and more)
- Questionnaires
- Interviews with farmers

## First results

- A total of 26 lentil farmers were interviewed, 22 of them organic farmers, and four conventional.
- Most of the organic farmers are members of a producer group for processing and marketing.
- Companion crops were approx. 50% oats (*Avena sativa*); other companion crops were spring barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) and false flax (*Camelina sativa*).
- The lentil yield (cleaned and dried) ranged among the organically managed fields from 0.45 – 1.1 t ha<sup>-1</sup> (mean: 0.67 t ha<sup>-1</sup>), and on the four conventional farms from 0.6 – 0.8 ha<sup>-1</sup> (mean: 0.74 ha<sup>-1</sup>). Much more data is available, and data evaluation is not yet completed.



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