



## **Interprovinciaal Proefcentrum voor de Biologische Teelt (P.C.B.T.) vzw**

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# **Research Centre Organic Farming - PCBT (Interprovinciaal Proefcentrum voor de Biologische Teelt vzw)**

## **General introduction**

PCBT is the main research centre on organic farming in Flanders. It was founded in 1998 and its aim is to develop and improve organic farming techniques and to advance knowledge on organic production systems. PCBT is recognised by the Flemish government and is supported by the Flemish government, the provinces of West- and East-Flanders and some farming organisations. Next to an own research program the PCBT also applies research and demonstration projects financed by regional or national authorities or by European funding programs. The company seat is at the Provincial Research and Advisory Centre for Agriculture and Horticulture at Beitem (Roeselare).

The research plan of the PCBT is based on three main pillars:

- 1) Initiation and coordination of practical research on organic farming in Flanders.
- 2) Implementation of practically oriented research, mainly on crop production (vegetables, arable crops, fodder crops) and a small proportion on animal production (topic 100 % organic feeding). The most important research themes are: mechanical weed control, variety-testing, pest management and soil fertility. As we carry out farmer participatory research, we also focus on the organic system approach. For some topics, there is collaboration with other research centres or universities to get a real scientific approach.
- 3) Communication and dissemination of information and research findings to organic and conventional farmers and policy makers

In 2001, the province of West-Flanders put available to PCBT a farm of 12 ha to support organic farming research. After the 2-years conversion period, the farm was fully organic. The soil type is sand-loam. The fields were split up in smaller parcels of 0,7 till 1 ha. This permits a semi-professional approach (e.g. mechanical weeding) which is recognizable by Flemish farmers. As cornerstone of the organic production a six-year during rotation is established, consisting of cereals, cabbage, potatoes, grass-clover, leek and carrots. Since there is no cattle, the grass-clover is exchanged for manure with an organic dairy farm. In this way we realise a more or less organic nutrient cycle. To optimise ecological conditions, some hedges, an orchard, field borders and flowering counterfoils were established.

In this context we can at first create relevant and good conditions for our applied research program. The more, the farming practice with its opportunities and constraints permits us a real system approach. Finally, this accommodation gives us some opportunities for more scientific research projects such as a long during experiment on organic fertilising, assessing the impact of field edges on antagonistic fauna in the field and optimising mechanical weed control.

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