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Open archive for organic research

By [Hugo Fjelsted Alrøe](#), DARCOF

In the fall of 2002, the Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF) established an electronic, open access archive called Organic Eprints. The archive receives papers, reports, theses, and other documents that are related to research in organic agriculture.

The documents are stored as "eprints" - full electronic versions together with publishing information, abstract, peer review status, etc. On the internet (at <http://orgprints.org>), one can browse the archive by subject area as well as by country, organization and project. There are also extensive search facilities. All can register as users in the archive and thereby deposit papers and subscribe to email alerts on new deposits in selected subject areas, from certain countries, etc.

The archive has been established as a tool to further develop research in organic agriculture. The main objectives are to document the research effort, to facilitate the communication of research papers and proposals, and to improve the dissemination and impact of research findings. In accordance with these objectives, DARCOF has decided to make all its research products available in the archive. Moreover, Organic Eprints is offered as a free community service by DARCOF – it is an open archive that everyone can use. Researchers, students, and others from all countries can deposit their documents by way of the internet.

The archive is based on GNU Eprints archive-creating software, Linux, Apache, and other open source software. Open source software is freely available and it can be modified and adapted to meet the needs of the archive. The Eprints software is under continuous development and it is being used in a growing number of academic archives. Among the planned developments are full text search and support for journal overlays.

As an open access archive, Organic Eprints is part of a larger movement that seeks to make research papers available in open archives. Physics is the leading discipline in this respect. More than half of all physics papers are deposited in a large eprint archive at <http://arXiv.org>. Here, scientific papers are typically deposited as preprints that receive comments from interested peers. Then they are submitted to a journal for peer review and finally the published version is also deposited in the archive. Organic Eprints differs from the physics archive in accepting not only scientific papers, but also articles that are directed at farmers, decision makers, consumers, etc.

Open access has several purposes. The efficiency and impact of the research can be improved by making the research products more visible and earlier and easier available. And research quality can be ensured and improved by way of better communication between researchers, nationally and internationally, and between researcher and other actors in the organic movement. The clear intention is to give open access to all the documents in Organic Eprints. But for the time being, some scientific papers will have access restrictions due to copyright concerns – usually because the authors have transferred all their copyrights to the publisher. Generally, authors have the copyrights to their own original work unless they have given up those rights, and therefore they can normally give open access to preprints. Registered users have access to some of the restricted papers, and there is always a freely available summary page of each eprint with abstract, publishing information, etc. Together with the rest of the open access movement, the archive staff is working on establishing an overview of publishers copyright policies and on changing those policies to allow more open access.

As indicated above, Organic Eprints is offered as a free community service that is open to everyone related to research in organic agriculture. The organic archive has been designed to facilitate international use and cooperation, with the aspiration to develop into a comprehensive international archive. DARCOF invites other organic research

institutes and organizations to join us in using, managing and developing this service, so that it can serve as a vehicle for more and better international collaboration.

There are different possibilities for getting involved in the Organic Eprints archive. As a first important step, organic organizations can make some kind of commitment towards making their research production available in the archive. This can be facilitated by including a list of relevant projects in the browse view and by selecting one or more "editors". Editors check the deposits by way of the internet, to ensure their relevance and data quality, and communicate with the depositors.

Furthermore, more dedicated use of the archive can be facilitated by tailoring new language interfaces in addition to the present English language interface. A partnership agreement has recently been made with the Scientific Module of the new German organic internet portal, and it has been decided to make a German language interface. Another future possibility is to establish mirror sites based in other organizations, which will add a new level of security to the archive.

Organic Eprints is located at
<http://www.orgprints.org>