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Prospects of using international grants to develop organic farming in Ukraine

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to analyse the possibilities of attracting international grant funding to support and develop organic farming in Ukraine. The study proposed a classification of international grants according to various criteria, such as sources of funding and programme objectives. The study considered the grants provided by government agencies, international organisations, and private foundations, such as the European Union's programmes, including the Common Agricultural Policy,

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and Horizon Europe, as well as initiatives of the United States and the United Nations. Methodologically, the study included an analysis of secondary data, a survey of 100 farmers from Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions of Ukraine, and 10 in-depth interviews with representatives of agricultural enterprises that received grants. The findings showed that international grants have significantly influenced the development of organic agriculture in Ukraine, especially in the southern regions. 60% of the farmers surveyed used international grant programmes, with 25% of them reporting reduced costs and increased production due to the funds received. However, despite the positive outcomes, farmers faced a series of challenges, including bureaucratic obstacles, lack of information, and difficulties related to the war. The study offered recommendations for improving the efficiency of international grants, including the establishment of advisory centres for farmers, increasing financial literacy, and supporting agricultural cooperatives that can streamline application processes and reduce preparation costs. The conclusions of the study pointed to the significance of a comprehensive approach to attracting and using international grants in the Ukrainian agricultural sector, with a focus on developing educational programmes, improving cooperation, and using digital tools to simplify the application process

Keywords: agricultural sector; innovative technologies; farmer cooperatives; financial support; European initiatives

INTRODUCTION

In the face of global challenges related to climate change, soil depletion, and growing demand for environmentally friendly products, organic farming is gaining in value. This type of agriculture helps to preserve natural resources, improve soil fertility, and produce safe food. Ukraine has a great capacity to develop organic agriculture and could become one of the leading suppliers of organic products to the global market. However, the effective development of this sector is hampered by a series of challenges, including insufficient funding, lack of proper infrastructure, and limited knowledge and skills of farmers. One of the most promising ways to overcome these challenges is to attract international grants, which can be a valuable source of financial support for organic producers. Grant funding allows not only covering the costs of certification and modernisation of production, but also promotes the introduction of innovative technologies, training programmes, and the creation of cooperative associations. A prominent advantage of such programmes is their focus on the long-term development of the industry and its competitiveness.

International organisations such as the European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and others actively support environmental initiatives in Ukraine (Konovalyuk *et al.*, 2023). They provide funding to develop sustainable agriculture, which includes support for small and medium-sized farms, educational programmes, and the development of export potential for organic products. However, the process of obtaining grants is often associated with stringent requirements for projects, complexity of documentation, and the need for co-financing from recipients. Thus, the significance of the study lies in identifying the key opportunities for using international grants to stimulate the development of organic farming in Ukraine. The successful use of international grants will contribute not only to the

economic growth of the agricultural sector, but also to the development of sustainable environmental approaches in Ukrainian agriculture.

The impact of international grants on the development of organic farming has been investigated by many researchers who explored various aspects of this issue. L.C. Stringer *et al.* (2020) analysed the financial mechanisms for supporting farms and concluded that international grants contributed not only to production growth but also to improving its quality. G. Pe'er *et al.* (2020) studied the effectiveness of grant funding in European countries and determined that the successful implementation of grant programmes requires clear coordination between the state, donors, and producers. L. Pronko *et al.* (2020) analysed the principal challenges faced by Ukrainian farmers in obtaining grant aid and stressed the need to simplify application procedures.

R. Sapbamrer and A. Thammachai (2021) placed an emphasis on the educational component, finding that international grants contributed to improving farmers' knowledge of organic production. The researchers stressed that grant-funded training programmes contributed to the introduction of the latest agricultural technologies and increased yields without harming the environment. J. McCormick (2023) investigated the role of international organisations in financing environmental initiatives and found that the most effective projects were those that involved a comprehensive approach, from training farmers to implementing technological solutions. A detailed analysis of the effects of grant funding on sustainable agriculture was conducted by V. Piñeiro *et al.* (2020), who found that international support has considerably reduced economic risks for smallholders. J.F. Parr *et al.* (2020) investigated the long-term effects of grant programmes and concluded that they contribute not only to short-term modernisation of production but also to the development of sustainable environmental practices.

F. Rexhaj *et al.* (2023) examined the cooperation between Ukrainian farmers and international donors. The researchers found that the most successful initiatives were those that involved cooperation between small producers, which enabled them to use financial aid more efficiently and strengthen their market position. A. Gamage *et al.* (2023) also concluded that combining grant funding with national organic farming development programmes increases resource efficiency and promotes greater farmer engagement in environmental initiatives. Overall, the research findings confirmed that international grants are a valuable tool for the development of organic farming, but their effective use depends on the availability of information, competent management, and favourable governmental conditions. Despite a considerable amount of research, the effectiveness of the use of international grants in various regions of Ukraine continues to be understudied, specifically in terms of their economic and environmental effects. Mechanisms for increasing the availability of grant funding for small farms and cooperatives also lack sufficient coverage. The issue of integrating grant programmes with the national policy of organic farming development continue to be significant.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the effectiveness of international grants in the development of organic farming in Ukraine to develop recommendations for optimising the use of grant funds. The objectives of this study were to analyse existing international grant programmes and their effects on the development of organic farming in Ukraine; to identify the key problems and constraints that prevent Ukrainian farmers from effectively attracting grant funding; and to develop recommendations for improving access to international grants and increasing the efficiency of their use.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of the effectiveness of attracting international grants for the development of organic agriculture in the Southern region of Ukraine employed a comprehensive methodology that combined secondary data analysis and sociological methods of data collection. The primary sources of information included official documents of the EU (Common Agricultural Policy, n.d.; Horizon Europe, n.d.), and the United Nations (UN) (specifically, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (n.d.) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (n.d.). Special attention was paid to the analysis of reports of Ukrainian authorities on the attraction and distribution of international aid in the agricultural sector, as well as statistics on the area of organic land, the number of certified operators, and the level of financing available to Ukrainian farmers (Organicinfo, n.d.).

The study focused on countries such as Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Italy, and Austria, as they have the most developed support systems for

organic farming in Europe. The choice of these countries was based on several factors: leadership in financing the organic sector, developed farmer support policies, innovative approaches to organic production, high share of organic land, and successful experience in attracting international grants. The empirical stage of the study employed a sociological survey method to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on the level of involvement of farmers in the Southern region of Ukraine in international grant programmes. An online questionnaire survey was conducted among 100 farmers operating in three regions: Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson. The sample was formed by random selection among the owners and managers of farms engaged in organic farming or in the organic certification process. Dichotomous questions (yes/no) and multiple choice were used. The questionnaire contained 25 questions divided into four thematic blocks: general information about the respondent (farm size, specialisation, organic certification, experience in agriculture); level of awareness of international grants (whether they are familiar with the concept of grant funding, sources of information, whether they have sought advice from relevant organisations); experience of participation in grant programmes (number of applications submitted, success in obtaining funding, which programmes were used, amount of funds received); the key challenges in attracting grant funds (what barriers were encountered in preparing the application, whether third-party help was needed, problems with project implementation after receiving funding). The authors adhered to the principles of the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethic (1997).

The quantitative research was complemented by 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives of farms that have successfully received international grants and implemented development projects. The respondents were selected using a purposive method: farmers who had received funding from organisations such as USAID, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), EBRD, and UNDP were selected. The interview was conducted online. The following aspects were discussed:

- motives for applying for a grant; the documentation preparation procedure (key challenges, need for external help, consulting services);
- timeframe for reviewing the application and receiving funding; practical use of grant funds (what the investment was for: equipment, staff training, marketing, production expansion, etc.);
- results obtained after the implementation of the grant project (impact on production volumes, product quality, profitability of the enterprise);
- further plans for participation in grant programmes.

Comparative analysis methods were employed to assess the effectiveness of various grant programmes, as well as factor analysis methods to identify the key

factors that influence the success of obtaining and using international grants.

RESULTS

In the context of agricultural development, international grants play a key role in supporting sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Organic farming, which is based on the principles of natural balance, the elimination of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and the preservation of soil fertility, requires extensive financial investment. However, not all farmers, especially in developing countries, have access to the necessary resources to switch to organic production (Norton & Alwang, 2020). It is in this context that international grants are becoming a vital tool to stimulate the development of the organic sector, enabling farmers to finance modernisation of production, certification, training, and infrastructure development.

International grants for organic farming can be classified according to several criteria. One of the key approaches to their distribution is by funding source. They can be divided into grants from government agencies, international organisations, and private foundations. For example, the EU actively supports the development of organic agriculture through programmes such as Horizon Europe and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which are aimed at the environmental modernisation of the agricultural sector. The UN and its agencies, including the FAO, are implementing global initiatives aimed at developing sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, numerous private foundations, such as the Rockefeller Foundation or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, invest in projects that promote sustainable agriculture in different countries (Dhiman, 2020).

Another approach to classifying grants is based on their purpose. There are several major categories. Research and innovation grants are aimed at developing and implementing the latest organic production technologies, e.g., funding projects related to the development of biological fertilisers or the efficiency of permaculture systems. Grants for certification and standardisation allow farmers to cover the costs of obtaining certificates of compliance with organic standards, which is a crucial step in entering the international market. Grants for infrastructure and equipment finance the purchase of modern machinery, the construction of environmentally friendly farms and the creation of supply chains for organic products. Grants for education and training are aimed at educating farmers, agronomists, and agricultural specialists in organic farming methods. A separate group includes grants to support cooperatives and farmers' associations, which help small organic producers to form cooperatives to share resources and access markets (Custer & Akaeze, 2021).

Grants aimed at supporting small and medium-sized agribusinesses are especially significant for Ukraine, as this sector faces the greatest financial

challenges in the transition to organic production. The use of international grants allows not only to expand the organic market, but also to contribute to the overall improvement of the environmental situation, biodiversity conservation, and the quality of life of the population (Jovanović & Zubović, 2019). The EU is one of the world leaders in the development of organic farming, and the effective use of grant funding plays a great role in this. EU countries are actively implementing policies aimed at supporting farmers switching to organic production and funding numerous initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture. One of the key grant programmes in the EU is CAP, which is funded jointly by the European Commission and national governments. This policy includes subsidies for farmers who practice organic production, as well as special grant initiatives to help farmers adapt to new requirements. For example, Germany has a state programme to support organic farming, which compensates farmers for part of the costs of certification and environmental modernisation of their farms (Hamm *et al.*, 2017).

Apart from the CAP, EU countries actively use the Horizon Europe programme, which finances research and implementation of innovative organic farming methods. For instance, in France, this programme is implementing projects to develop biological plant protection methods that reduce the use of pesticides (Robert *et al.*, 2020). In Spain and Italy, a considerable portion of grant funding is directed to the development of agroecological practices, including crop rotation, biofertilisers, and integrated farming systems (Locola *et al.*, 2023). Particular attention is paid to the organic sector in the Nordic countries, specifically Sweden and Denmark. Denmark, for example, has one of the most developed support systems for organic agriculture in the world. Grants provided by the government and European funds are aimed not only at direct financial support for farmers, but also at expanding the market for organic products, raising consumer awareness, and developing cooperative sales systems. A positive example is also set by Austria, where more than 25% of agricultural land is used for organic production, which is the highest in Europe (Connor, 2022). Thanks to a competent support policy, including transition subsidies, compensation for certification costs, and grants for the modernisation of organic farms, Austrian farmers have managed to create an effective export-oriented model of organic production.

Thus, the experience of EU countries shows that successful implementation of grant programmes to support organic farming requires a comprehensive approach. It includes financial aid to farmers, promotion of scientific research, and creation of favourable conditions for certification and marketing of products. Ukraine can use this experience to develop its mechanisms for integrating international grants into national agricultural policy and stimulating the transition to

organic agriculture. In Ukraine, the state policy on attracting international grants to agriculture is in active development and improvement. As organic farming is becoming increasingly in demand both on domestic and foreign markets, the Ukrainian government is developing strategies and programmes aimed at supporting sustainable agriculture, including through attracting international funding. One of the key initiatives is the National Economic Strategy 2030 (n.d.), which stipulates the development of environmentally friendly production and an increase in the share of organic products in the overall structure of the agricultural sector. This strategy focuses on attracting international grants to support small and medium-sized farms, as well as developing the export potential of organic products.

Ukraine is actively cooperating with the EU under the Association Agreement, which facilitates access of Ukrainian farmers to European grant programmes such as Horizon Europe and EU4Business (Ukraine. Membership status, n.d.). These initiatives enable Ukrainian farmers to take part in research projects, improve their production processes, and integrate into European supply chains. The role of the United States Agency for International Development's (n.d.) Agriculture and Rural Development Support Programme, which provides grants and technical advice to Ukrainian farmers to introduce modern agricultural technologies and increase the productivity of organic production, should be noted separately. With USAID's support, a series of successful projects have been implemented that have helped to increase the competitiveness of Ukrainian organic products on international markets. Another major initiative is the cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (n.d.), which, through projects such as Strengthening Business Associations of Small and Medium Enterprises, helps Ukrainian organic producers to create cooperatives, unite to share resources, and ensure access to international markets.

However, despite Ukraine's active involvement in international programmes, there are also significant challenges. These include bureaucratic obstacles in the grant application process, lack of awareness among farmers of available funding opportunities, and limited access to information in rural areas. Solving these problems requires not only simplification of administrative procedures, but also active outreach by governmental and non-governmental organisations. Attempts are also being made at the state level to create favourable conditions for attracting international grants by adopting legislative initiatives. An analysis of the grant programmes available to Ukrainian farmers shows that there are ample opportunities to attract international funding for agriculture, particularly for the development of organic farming. These programmes are implemented by both foreign governments and international organisations, funds, and banks. They are all aimed at supporting farmers in the transition to sustainable,

environmentally friendly farming practices, the introduction of innovative technologies, and increasing the productivity and export potential of organic products.

Ukrainian farmers have access to a variety of grant programmes aimed at supporting organic farming. These programmes are funded by international organisations such as the EU, EBRD, and the US government through the US Agency for International Development. The EU4Business programme, initiated by the EU, aims to support small and medium-sized businesses in Ukraine, including the agricultural sector. It provides financial and technical advice to businesses seeking to improve their competitiveness and meet EU standards. According to the EU4Business official website, as of 2022, 42 projects have been implemented in Ukraine, supporting more than 25,000 SMEs (EU4Business, n.d.). A joint initiative of the EU and the EBRD, the EU4Business-EBRD Credit Line, enables Ukrainian enterprises to obtain financing for equipment modernisation and the implementation of European standards. The programme offers three financing approaches: for simple equipment upgrades up to EUR 300,000, for investments up to EUR 3 million, and a simplified approach for food safety. Furthermore, compensation of up to 15% of the investment amount is provided upon successful project implementation (EU4Business-EBRD Credit Line, n.d.).

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is implementing the Agriculture and Rural Development Support Programme in Ukraine, which aims to support agricultural producers, including organic farms. The programme provides grants for the introduction of modern technologies, increasing production efficiency and access to international markets. According to information published in *El País*, during the three years of the war, Ukraine received over EUR 34 billion in US aid, much of which was channelled through USAID to support the agricultural sector (Segura, 2025). These programmes provide Ukrainian farmers with opportunities to develop organic farming, improve product quality, and integrate into European and global markets. The use of available grant resources contributes to the sustainable development of Ukrainian agriculture and the strengthening of its economy. Figure 1 presents the indicators of organic production in Ukraine.

Analysis of organic production indicators in Ukraine showed its active development until 2021 and a sharp decline in 2022-2023 caused by the war. The area of land with organic status was growing until 2020, reaching 410.6 thsd ha, but in 2023 it fell to a critical 71.7 thsd ha. The total area of agricultural land decreased almost fivefold compared to 2021 due to the occupation, mining, and destruction of farms. The number of organic operators has also changed: it grew until 2019, but began to decline in 2020-2021, and in 2023 it fell to 152 operators, which is four times less than in 2019. These trends demonstrated that organic farming

suffered a serious setback, and its recovery requires international financial support, government incentive programmes, and adaptation of farmers to the new reality. Figure 2 presents the organic map of Ukraine.

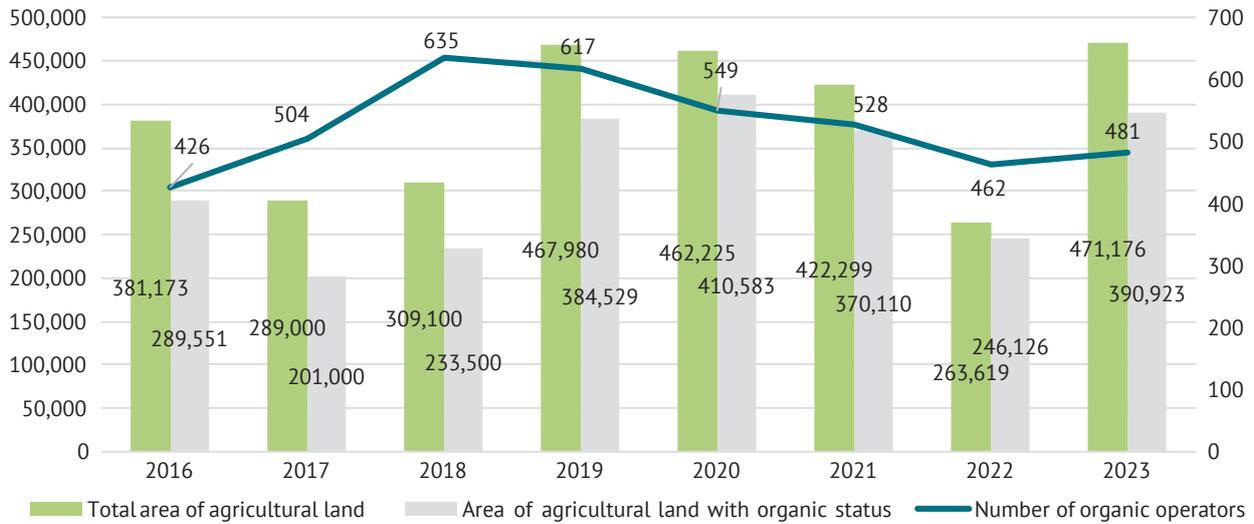


Figure 1. Indicators of organic production in Ukraine in 2016-2023

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on Organicinfo (n.d.)

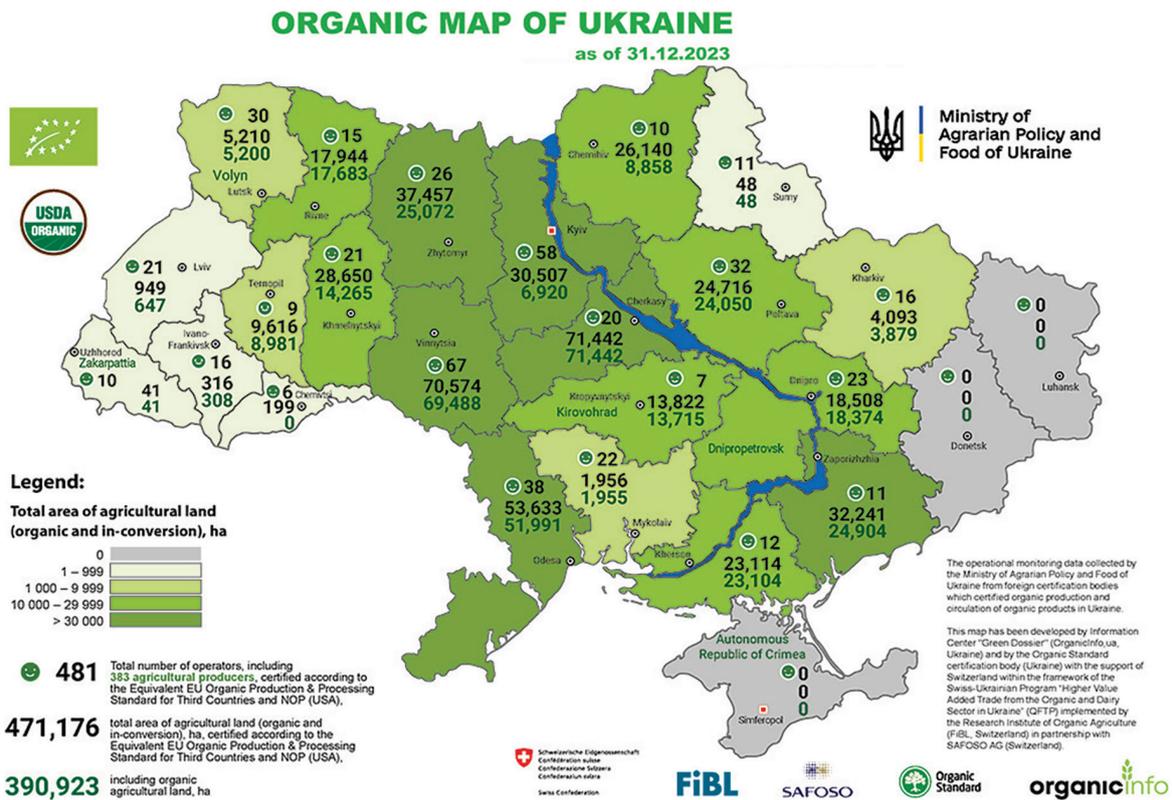


Figure 2. Organic map of Ukraine as of 2023

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on Organicinfo (n.d.)

The total area of certified organic agricultural land in Ukraine is 471.2 thsd ha, of which 390.9 thsd ha have organic status. There are 481 certified producers in the country that operate under standards equivalent to the EU organic legislation and NOP (USA). The distribution

of organic land by region shows the dominance of the central, western, and southern regions. The largest areas of organic land are recorded in Cherkasy (71.4 thsd ha), Odesa (52 thsd ha) and Vinnytsia (69.5 thsd ha) regions. Zhytomyr (25.1 thsd ha), Poltava (24.1 thsd ha) and

Zaporizhzhia (24.9 thsd ha) regions also demonstrate significant indicators. At the same time, the situation in the eastern regions continues to be challenging. Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Crimea have no registered organic land. Kharkiv region has only 3.9 ha of organic land, which is significantly less than the leaders in this area.

The growth of organic land in Ukraine is driven by increasing demand for organic products, stronger government support, and international cooperation. The development of this sector is actively supported by the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine, as well as international partners such as FiBL, SAFOSO and the Swiss Cooperation Office (Results of 2024..., 2024). Despite the positive trends, organic farming faces challenges, including military action, the need for financial support for producers, certification, and expanding markets. Of particular interest is the export of organic products to the EU and the US, which could help attract investment in the sector. International grants play a key role in the development of organic farming in the southern region of Ukraine, contributing to the modernisation of farms, product certification, and market expansion. To evaluate the effectiveness of their use, a study was conducted, which included an analysis of secondary data, a survey of 100 farmers from Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions, as well as 10 in-depth interviews with representatives of the companies that received grants.

The survey results showed that 60% of the farmers surveyed had experience of receiving international grants, which indicated a relatively strong level of involvement of agricultural producers in financing programmes. At the same time, 40% of respondents had never applied for grants, of which 15% explained this by a lack of information about such options, 10% explained it by the complexity of the application process and the need to collect a voluminous package of documents, while another 8% reported that their farms did not meet the requirements of donor organisations. Among those who received grant funding, 25% of respondents reported a considerable reduction in production costs and a simultaneous increase in production volumes. This was achieved through the modernisation of equipment, the introduction of modern agricultural technologies, and the purchase of high-quality sowing material and fertilisers. Another 18% of farmers noted an improvement in product quality, as the grant funds enabled them to introduce certified organic production methods. However, 12% of respondents faced obstacles in implementing grant projects, with the most prevalent being delays in receiving funds, difficulty in reporting to donors, and mismatching of expected outcomes with initial forecasts. Some farmers noted that due to the demanding reporting requirements, they were forced to hire more staff or engage external consultants to prepare documents. In terms of the overall assessment of the effectiveness of grant funding, 47% of farmers

described it as a key tool for developing their farms, which enabled them not only to obtain the necessary resources but also to establish links with international partners and learn how to work according to modern business models. At the same time, 30% of respondents believed that the availability of such programmes was still limited due to complex requirements and competition among participants.

In-depth interviews with representatives of agricultural enterprises confirmed the significant positive effect of grants. One of the most influential programmes was USAID's "Support for Agricultural and Rural Development", which financed the modernisation of farms. For instance, Eco-Pivden farm (Odesa region) received a USD 50,000 grant to purchase new machinery and certified seeds, which enabled it to increase its organic land area by 16% and enter the European market. Another key programme was EU4Business, which supports the certification of organic products according to European standards. Thanks to this initiative, 25 farms in Odesa and Mykolaiv regions managed to obtain the necessary certificates to export their products. Specifically, Bio-Fresh used the grant funds to certify and improve its logistics infrastructure, which helped reduce transportation costs. A separate area of grant support was the financing of processing plants. Under the EBRD programme, Eco-Resource (Kherson region) received a EUR 30,000 grant to upgrade its organic vegetable processing equipment. This helped to increase production by 20% and expand export opportunities to Poland and Romania. The Vidrodzhennia farm (Mykolaiv region) received USD 40,000 to upgrade machinery, which reduced equipment rental costs by 15% and increased yields by 10%. Another successful use of grant funds was demonstrated by Omega Farm (Odesa region), which used financial support to expand its organic land area. This allowed the farm to boost its productivity and establish regular deliveries to European markets, which increased its exports by 20%.

Despite the positive outcomes, farmers face a series of challenges. Bureaucratic obstacles continue to be the primary barrier to receiving grant aid. 25% of the surveyed farmers reported problems when applying for grants, particularly due to the requirement to provide a vast number of documents and confirmations. Another problem was the impact of the war. 20% of farmers from Odesa and Kherson regions reported severe hardships caused by the hostilities. Logistical problems, disruption of transport routes, and security threats led to increased transportation costs and reduced access to markets. Furthermore, about 35% of respondents reported a lack of awareness of grant opportunities, which limited their participation in funding programmes. Many farmers did not have access to relevant advisory centres that could help them with application and compliance.

In summary, international grants significantly contribute to the development of organic farming in the

Southern region of Ukraine, enabling farmers to modernise their farms, increase the competitiveness of their products, and enter international markets. However, to further improve the effectiveness of grant programmes, it is necessary to simplify application procedures, improve information for farmers, and develop special support programmes for farmers in the areas affected by the conflict. One of the key tools that enable small farmers to overcome the obstacles they face in accessing international grant funding is farmers' cooperatives and producer associations. Cooperatives enable farmers to pool resources, share grant funding opportunities, reduce costs, and mitigate risks. In the context of limited financial resources for individual farmers, the association allows for a much larger scale of production, which makes such projects more attractive to international donors and funds (Candemir *et al.*, 2021).

The submission of collective grant applications is one of the major advantages of cooperatives, as it allows farmers' associations to demonstrate greater potential for the efficient use of financial resources. Cooperatives can combine multiple activities and diverse agricultural enterprises, which creates more diversified projects (Luo *et al.*, 2022). This increases the chances of obtaining funding, as donors tend to focus on large, complex projects that can generate large-scale results and have greater potential for development. A striking example of such a cooperative project is the Association of Organic Producers "Organic Ukraine" (n.d.), which takes an active part in international funding programmes, receiving grants to improve organic production in Ukraine. With the funds it receives, the association organises training for its members and promotes certification of organic products, which is a prerequisite for entering international markets. The farms that are members of the organisation managed to get certified according to international standards, which enabled them not only to expand production but also to enter new markets. This became possible through a cooperative approach, which ensured efficient use of grant funds for training, certification, and development.

Cooperation can also have a major positive impact on reducing farmers' costs for advisory services and administrative expenses. Working together in a cooperative allows for the pooling of financial resources to hire experts to prepare grant applications and other necessary documents (Sharata *et al.*, 2023). This can greatly reduce the costs for each individual member of the cooperative, as they can use professional services at a much lower price than in the case of individual cooperation with consultants. Collaborative activities also lead to better outcomes in terms of export opportunities, increased market competitiveness, improved marketing and product branding, which ultimately increases the chances of obtaining funding from international donor organisations. Considering all these factors, cooperation

is not only a crucial element for the effective use of grants, but also a strategic tool for the sustainable development of organic agriculture in Ukraine.

International grant programmes can become a valuable tool to support Ukrainian organic producers in times of war and economic instability (Sirenko *et al.*, 2024). Practical recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of attracting and using international grants is a crucial aspect for the development of organic farming in Ukraine, particularly in the Southern region. One of the primary barriers faced by farmers is the lack of skills in preparing grant applications. To increase the efficiency of using international funding, it is essential to invest in training and establish advisory centres for farmers. Regular trainings, seminars, and webinars with agribusiness experts can improve farmers' knowledge of the requirements for grant applications and the requirements of international organisations. It is especially significant to train farmers on how to properly prepare documents, considering the specific features of each programme, which will minimise the number of rejections. Establishing partnerships with consultants and specialists with experience in obtaining international grants can help reduce the cost of preparing applications.

As previously mentioned, farmers' cooperatives are one of the crucial tools for attracting funding. The association of farmers not only increases the chances of receiving grants but also optimises the costs of preparing and submitting applications. By pooling resources, several small farms can submit a collective application, which increases the probability of success and reduces individual costs. Additionally, cooperatives can receive grants for standardisation and certification of organic products, which opens new markets for producers. Joint projects to expand market opportunities and invest in agricultural infrastructure are also significant. To be successful in obtaining international grants, it is necessary to have a well-structured application strategy. Optimising the project preparation process includes clearly defining the purpose, objectives, and results, as well as implementing practical measures to achieve these results. It is vital to consider the specific requirements of donors, which often set strict standards for compliance with sustainable development goals. Farmers should create a clear business plan that demonstrates profitability and self-financing beyond the grant period. Specifically, the potential environmental and social impacts of the grant project should also be considered.

In the modern environment, large international organisations often use online platforms to submit grant applications. It is essential to provide access to digital tools that enable agricultural producers to apply for grants without physical limitations, saving time and resources. Platforms such as the EU Funding and Tenders Portal allow Ukrainian farmers to stay up-to-date on current grant opportunities in real time. Furthermore,

the use of analytical tools to monitor grant opportunities and access to finance allows agricultural producers to react promptly to changes in international donor policies and funding programmes. The availability of experienced partners for project implementation is a significant aspect, as international donors often require applicants to have experience in implementing such projects. Partnerships with international organisations, institutes, research institutions, and other businesses allow submitting competitive applications, particularly due to additional knowledge and experience. It is also vital to create partnerships with foreign companies and universities to train farmers and develop innovative approaches to organic production.

Active engagement in international forums, exhibitions, seminars, and conferences is also necessary, where farmers can establish connections with international donors and organisations that fund organic farming projects. Through personal contacts, farmers can receive further support and advice that will help them take part in competitions for grant funds more effectively. It is key to improve financial literacy among farmers, as international grants often require clear financial planning and reporting. Agricultural producers should understand how to properly spend grant funds, how to keep accounting and reporting to avoid mistakes in the use of grant funds and not to lose the opportunity to receive funding in the future. Effective attraction and use of international grants require a comprehensive approach that includes training farmers, establishing cooperatives, optimising project preparation, actively using digital platforms, and engaging experienced partners to implement grant programmes. With proper support and development of these instruments, Ukraine can greatly improve its position on the organic market and attract more international financing for agriculture.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of international grants for organic farming revealed both major potential and challenges faced by countries seeking to attract such funding. International financial support plays a key role in the development of organic farming, and various international organisations, including government agencies, private foundations, and multinational institutions, are increasingly promoting sustainable agricultural development. For Ukraine, the integration of international grants into the national agricultural policy could be a crucial step for the recovery of the organic sector, especially after the military actions. E. Kirylyuk-Dryjska *et al.* (2020) noted that grants, as the primary source of funding for organic farmers, are most effective for large enterprises that can organise large-scale projects. According to the researchers, most small farmers lack sufficient experience to apply for grants effectively. W. Łuczka *et al.* (2021) emphasised that despite the considerable potential of international grants, their accessibility to small farmers continues

to be limited due to underestimated administrative requirements and complexity of procedures. These findings are generally in line with present findings on the challenges faced by small farmers due to complex application procedures. However, the present study additionally emphasised the role of farmer cooperatives, which can act as intermediaries in the grant process.

One of the principal conclusions was the diversity of international grants available for organic farming, which could be classified by funding source, purpose, and geographical focus. Government agencies and international organisations such as the EU are actively funding organic farming projects worldwide (Nakonechna & Samsonova, 2021). In the EU, initiatives such as the Common Agricultural Policy and Horizon Europe have been extremely effective in supporting organic farmers, providing not only direct subsidies but also promoting research, infrastructure, and market access. These programmes are a reliable model for integrating international funding into national agricultural policies. J. Wesseler (2022) found that financial support for organic farming in many countries is provided through national and international programmes. The researcher also addressed programmes that actively support innovation and research in the agricultural sector and argued that organic farmers often have access to financial instruments aimed at modernisation and adaptation to climate change, but the lack of effective support for small farmers' development reduces the overall impact of these programmes. This highlighted the difference from the present findings, which focused more on social aspects and access to grants for small farmers, while J. Wesseler focused on technological and innovation aspects.

The experience of Ukraine highlighted both the potential and the challenges faced by Ukrainian farmers in accessing international grants. Despite the strong demand for organic products on both domestic and foreign markets, Ukrainian farmers face numerous challenges, including bureaucratic barriers, limited access to information, and the effects of the war (Tanchyk *et al.*, 2024). The war had a devastating impact on agricultural infrastructure, leading to a drastic reduction in the area of organic land and the number of certified organic operators (Mamenko *et al.*, 2024). This decline underscores the need for continued international support to restore and develop organic farming in Ukraine. The study also found that while international grant programmes have positively influenced some Ukrainian farmers, particularly for equipment upgrades and certification, access to these funds was still unequal. Simplifying administrative procedures and raising awareness of available grants among farmers are critical steps to increase their participation and improve the efficiency of their use of funding.

The hostilities have made the transition to sustainable development much more challenging, but a

circular economy can contribute to a faster economic recovery through the efficient use of resources and reduced dependence on imported raw materials (Dovgal *et al.*, 2024). I. Prokopa *et al.* (2024) analysed the effects of war and political crises on organic farming in Ukraine. The researchers noted that under conditions of political instability, the amount of grant funds available to organic farmers decreases, as international donors often shift funding to more stable regions. The present findings in this case also coincided with the researchers' findings, as it was also noted that war and political challenges greatly affect the ability of farmers to attract grants. X. Fernández-i-Marín *et al.* (2024) also investigated the impact of bureaucratic barriers on the efficiency of international grants in developed countries. The researchers noted that bureaucratic difficulties, such as complex application processes, lack of transparent procedures, and complexity of reporting, greatly reduce the efficiency of grant use even in large farms. These findings were in line with the present findings on the need to simplify administrative procedures and provide another argument in favour of improving the support system. However, the present study focused more on social aspects, such as the lack of awareness of farmers about available grants.

A valuable finding of the present study was the role of farmer cooperatives in overcoming these obstacles. Cooperatives enable small farmers to pool resources, share costs, and jointly apply for international grants (Oliynyk *et al.*, 2020). Through their combined efforts, cooperatives can submit larger, more diverse projects that are more attractive to international donors. Experience shows the potential of cooperation to maximise the use of grant funds. R. Ajates (2020) studied the role of farmers' cooperatives in countries as a mechanism to improve access to international grants. According to the researcher's findings, the association of farmers in cooperatives significantly increases the probability of receiving funding, as large projects submitted by cooperatives look more promising to donor organisations. S. Kalogiannidis (2020) emphasised the significance of not only financial but also advisory support for cooperatives, which helps them to apply for grants more effectively. This is directly in line with the current findings, which also highlighted those cooperatives can be a powerful tool for small farmers to access international grants, enabling them to consolidate resources and reduce administrative barriers.

N. Thakur *et al.* (2022) investigated the role of globalisation and climate change in the development of organic farming. The researchers argued that organic farmers who use sustainable farming methods become less vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as droughts and crop failures. G.T. Patle *et al.* (2020) also noted that international grants to support climate change adaptation are an important tool, but that they were still limited and need to be expanded.

Although the current findings did not focus on climate change-related issues, the researchers provided valuable perspectives for future research that could focus on how climate change affects organic farming, and which grant programmes could be effective in supporting farmers in these circumstances.

Specialised advisory services that help farmers navigate the grant application process play a major role in supporting them (Nifatova & Danko, 2024). As noted in the study, there is an urgent need to establish training centres and workshops to improve grant writing skills. These services can help farmers to adapt their projects to donor requirements and minimise the risk of funding rejection. Partnerships with international organisations and research institutions can also provide Ukrainian farmers with the necessary technical support to make their projects more competitive on the international level. G. Prain *et al.* (2020) analysed the effects of advisory and educational programmes on farmers' success in attracting international grants. The researchers noted that farmers who had received specialised training or support from advisory centres had a greater chance of successfully obtaining grants compared to those who applied independently. These findings are in line with present findings on the significance of supporting small farmers in obtaining funding. The lack of awareness and skills in preparing grant applications was also highlighted as a major barrier for farmers.

Overall, while international grants are a valuable tool for the development of organic farming, their effectiveness depends on addressing key issues. The experience of Ukraine highlighted the necessity of simplifying application processes, improving awareness and access to information for farmers. The successful integration of international finance into national policy and practice will be a crucial component of Ukraine's long-term strategy for agricultural development and economic recovery.

CONCLUSIONS

The study analysed international grant programmes aimed at supporting organic agriculture. It was found that international grants can be classified according to several criteria, including the source of funding and their purpose. The major donors are government agencies, international organisations, and private foundations. Programmes such as Horizon Europe and CAP EU, UN initiatives, and foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation play a great role in the development of organic farming. The analysis helped to identify the key areas of grant use. Grants for research and innovation support the development of innovative technologies in organic production. Funding for certification and standardisation helps producers obtain the necessary documents to enter international markets. Grants for infrastructure and equipment are aimed at modernising farms, while support for

education and training helps to improve farmers' skills. Support for cooperatives was also considered, which allows small producers to use resources more efficiently.

EU experience showed that a comprehensive approach to grant support ensures the sustainable development of the organic sector. Successful examples include financing the transition period for organic farmers, supporting research initiatives and promoting environmental practices. Specifically, Denmark and Austria achieved prominent levels of organic farming development through a combination of government support and grant funding. In Ukraine, the policy of attracting international grants is at the stage of active development. Thanks to cooperation with the EU, USAID, and the UN, Ukrainian farmers have access to programmes that finance farm modernisation, product certification, and training. However, there are considerable challenges, including bureaucratic barriers, lack of awareness of funding opportunities among farmers, and limited access to information. The empirical part of the study confirmed the effectiveness of grant support in the Southern region of Ukraine. The study showed that 60% of farmers had experience of receiving grants, of which 25% reported reduced costs and increased production, and 18% reported improved product quality. At the same time, 40% of respondents had never applied for grants, including 15% due to lack of information, 10%

due to complexity of the application process, and 8% due to ineligibility. While 47% of farmers considered grant funding to be a key development tool, 12% had faced challenges such as delays in funds and complex reporting. Nevertheless, grant programmes contributed to market expansion and increased the efficiency of agricultural enterprises.

To further improve the effectiveness of international grants in Ukraine, it is necessary to simplify application procedures, increase information support for farmers, develop cooperatives, and create educational programmes to improve grant application skills. Considering international practices will help integrate Ukraine into the global organic farming system and increase the competitiveness of its products on international markets. A limitation of this study was its focus on a sample of farms in a few regions, which may not fully reflect the situation in other regions. Further research could cover a wider geography, as well as analyse the long-term effects of grant funding on the sustainability of agricultural enterprises.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Перспективи використання міжнародних грантів для розвитку органічного землеробства в Україні

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Анотація. Робота була направлена на аналіз можливостей залучення міжнародного грантового фінансування для підтримки та розвитку органічного землеробства в Україні. В рамках роботи запропоновано класифікацію міжнародних грантів за різними критеріями, такими як джерела фінансування та цілі програм. Розглянуто гранти, що надаються державними органами, міжнародними організаціями та приватними фондами, такі як програми Європейського Союзу, включаючи Загальну сільськогосподарську політику та Horizon Europe, а також ініціативи США та Організації Об'єднаних Націй. Методологічно дослідження включало аналіз вторинних даних, опитування 100 фермерів з Одеської, Миколаївської та Херсонської областей України та 10 глибоких інтерв'ю з представниками сільськогосподарських підприємств, які отримали гранти. Результати свідчать, що міжнародні гранти мають значний вплив на розвиток органічного сільського господарства в Україні, особливо у південних регіонах. 60 % опитаних фермерів використали міжнародні грантові програми, при цьому 25 % з них відзначили скорочення витрат та збільшення обсягів виробництва завдяки отриманим коштам. Однак, незважаючи на позитивні результати, фермери стикаються з низкою проблем, включаючи бюрократичні перешкоди, брак інформації та труднощі, пов'язані з війною. У роботі запропоновано рекомендації щодо покращення ефективності використання міжнародних грантів, включаючи створення консультативних центрів для фермерів, підвищення фінансової грамотності та підтримку сільськогосподарських кооперативів, які можуть оптимізувати процеси подання заявок та зменшити витрати на підготовку. Висновок роботи вказує на важливість комплексного підходу до залучення та використання міжнародних грантів в аграрному секторі України, з акцентом на розвиток освітніх програм, покращення кооперації та використання цифрових інструментів для спрощення процесу подання заявок

Ключові слова: агросектор; інноваційні технології; кооперації фермерів; фінансова підтримка; європейські ініціативи
