

Organic dairy farming in Norway in relation to the “conventionalisation” debate

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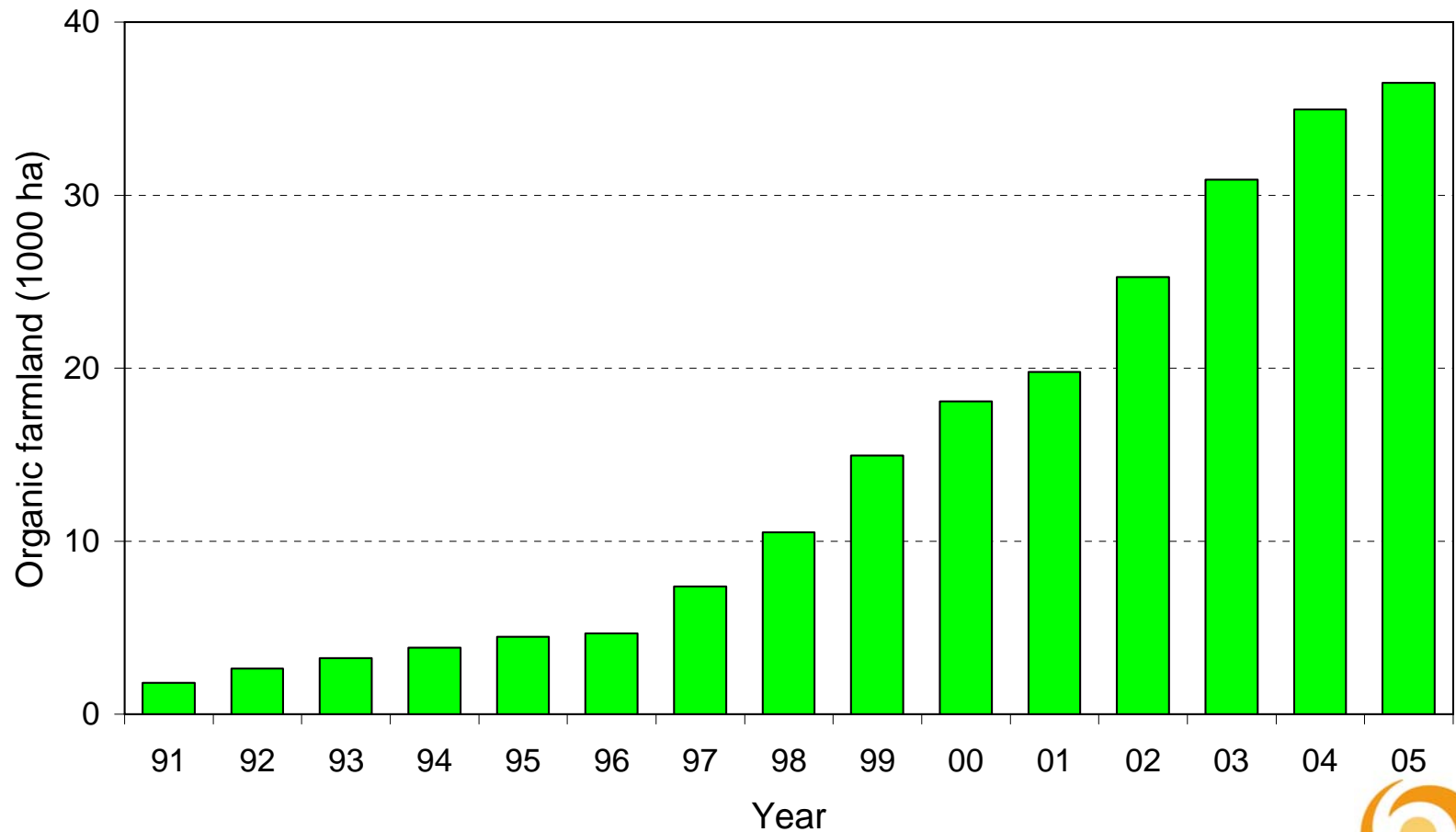


Outline

- Organic farming in Norway
- Background and aims
- Materials and methods
- Results
 - Farm and farmer characteristics
 - Production practices
 - Farmers' goals and motives for conversion
- Conclusions and implications



Development of organic farmland in Norway 1991-2005





Background

- Along with organic farming's popularity
 - May the organic movement be in danger of losing its identity?
 - Agribusiness involvement and abandoning of the more sustainable agronomic and marketing practices originally associated with organic agriculture? (“conventionalisation”)
- Studies have pointed out that motives for conversion have changed
 - But little research about the goals of organic farmers
- Few comparisons of earlier and later adopters in terms of farm and personal characteristics





Aims of the study

- Provide empirical information about Norwegian organic dairy farmers':
 - Personal and farm characteristic
 - Farming goals
 - Motives for conversion
 - Grouped by year of conversion





Materials

- Postal survey, spring 2003
- 161 out of 245 organic dairy farmers responded (66%)
- Questions
 - Characteristics of the farm and farmer
 - Animal disease management strategies
 - Farming goals and motives for conversion
- Merged with data from the Norwegian Agricultural Authority and the Norwegian Herd Recording System/Cattle Health Services





Methods

- Farmer classification
 - Early converters: Organic from 1995 or earlier ($n = 45$)
 - Mid converters: 1996-1999 ($n = 68$)
 - Late converters: 2000 or later ($n = 48$)
- Simple descriptive analysis, contingency tables for categorical data
- Pair wise group comparisons
 - Metric data: *t*-tests
 - Categorical data: chi-square tests



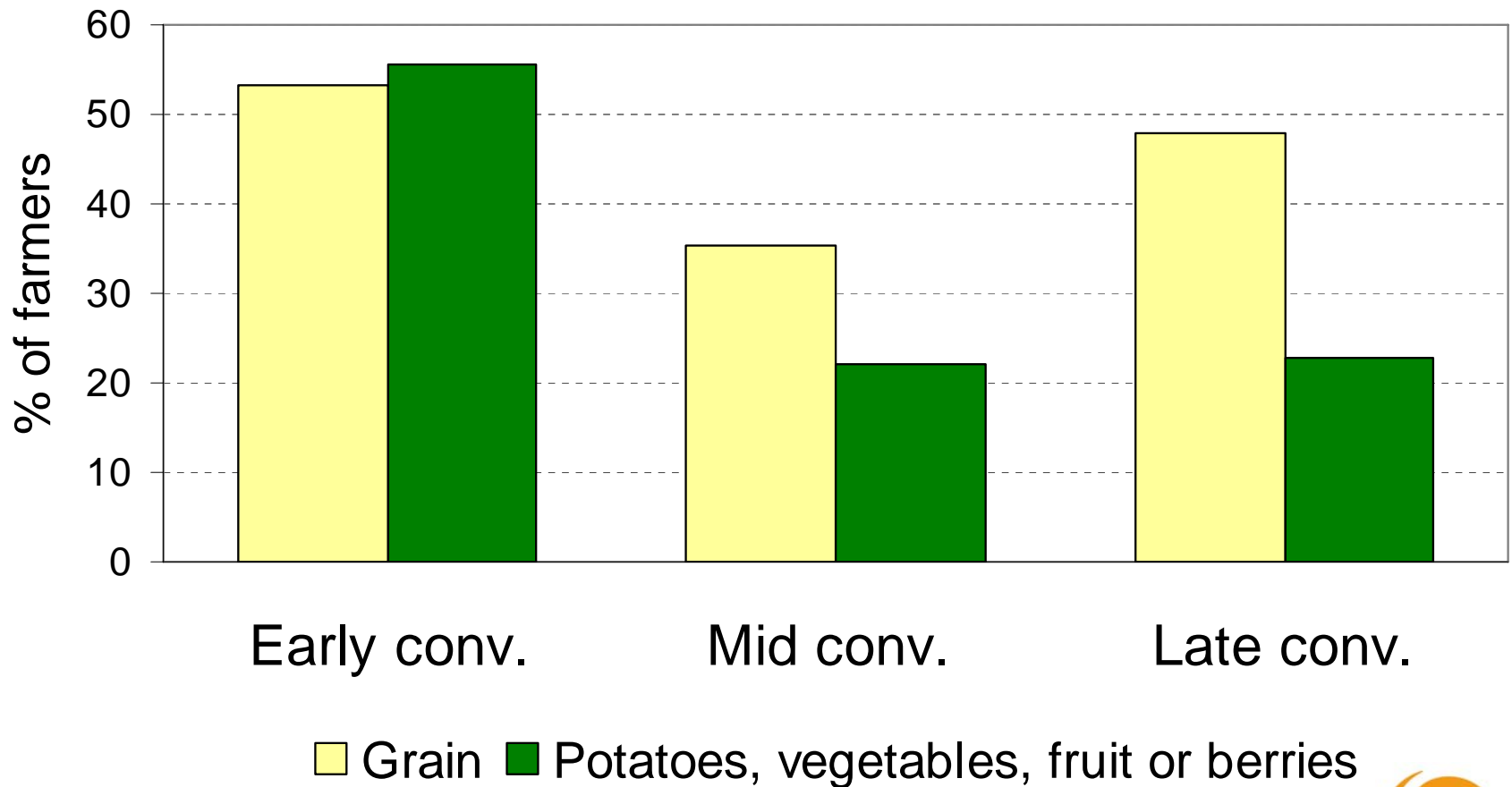


Key farmer and farm characteristics

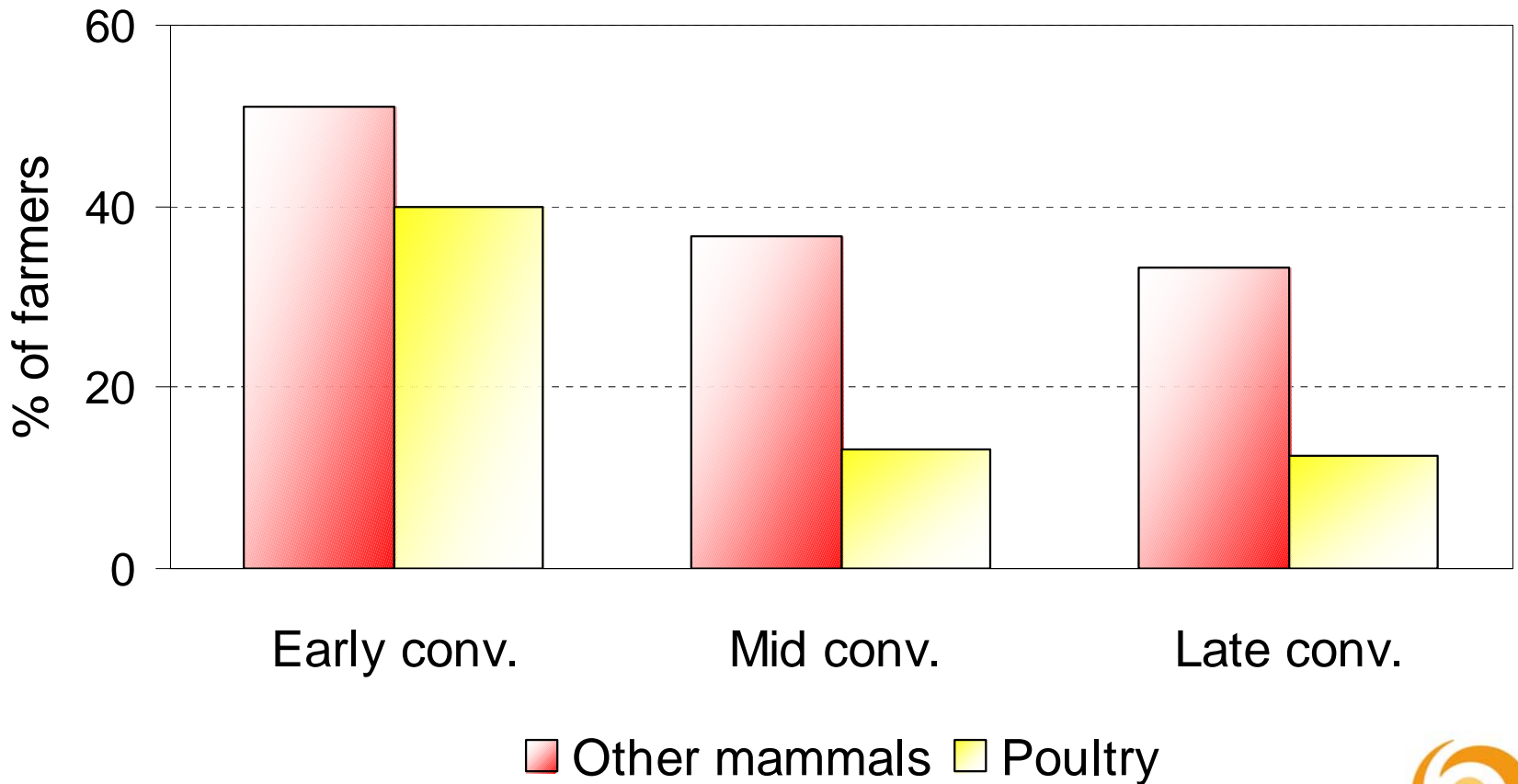
Characteristic	Early conv.	Mid conv.	Late conv.
Age of farmer (years)	51	48	43
Farming experience (years)	23	25	19
Univ./college education (% of farmers)	54	38	31
Agricultural education (% of farmers)	83	78	68
Farmland (ha)	29	29	33
Number of dairy cows	17	16	17



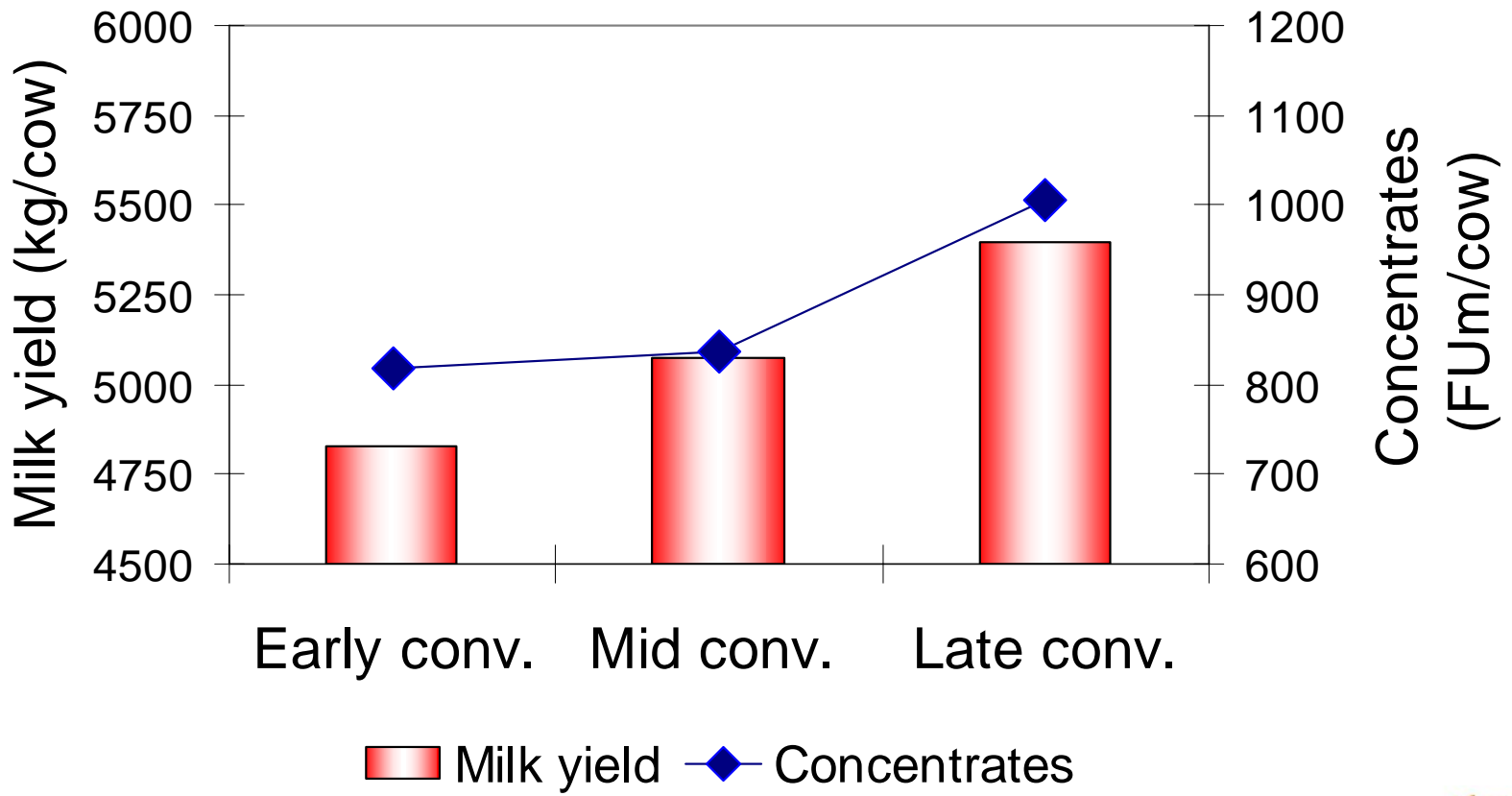
Crop diversification



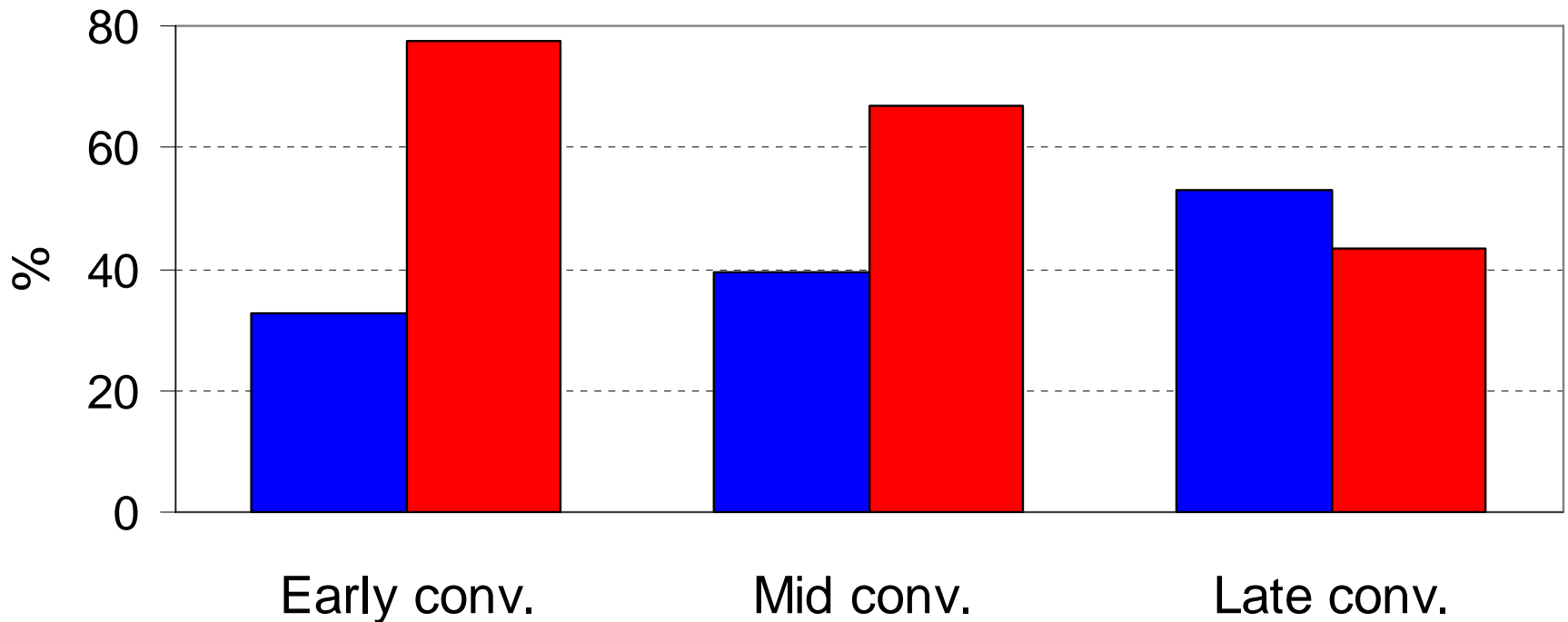
Livestock diversification



Dairy herd management



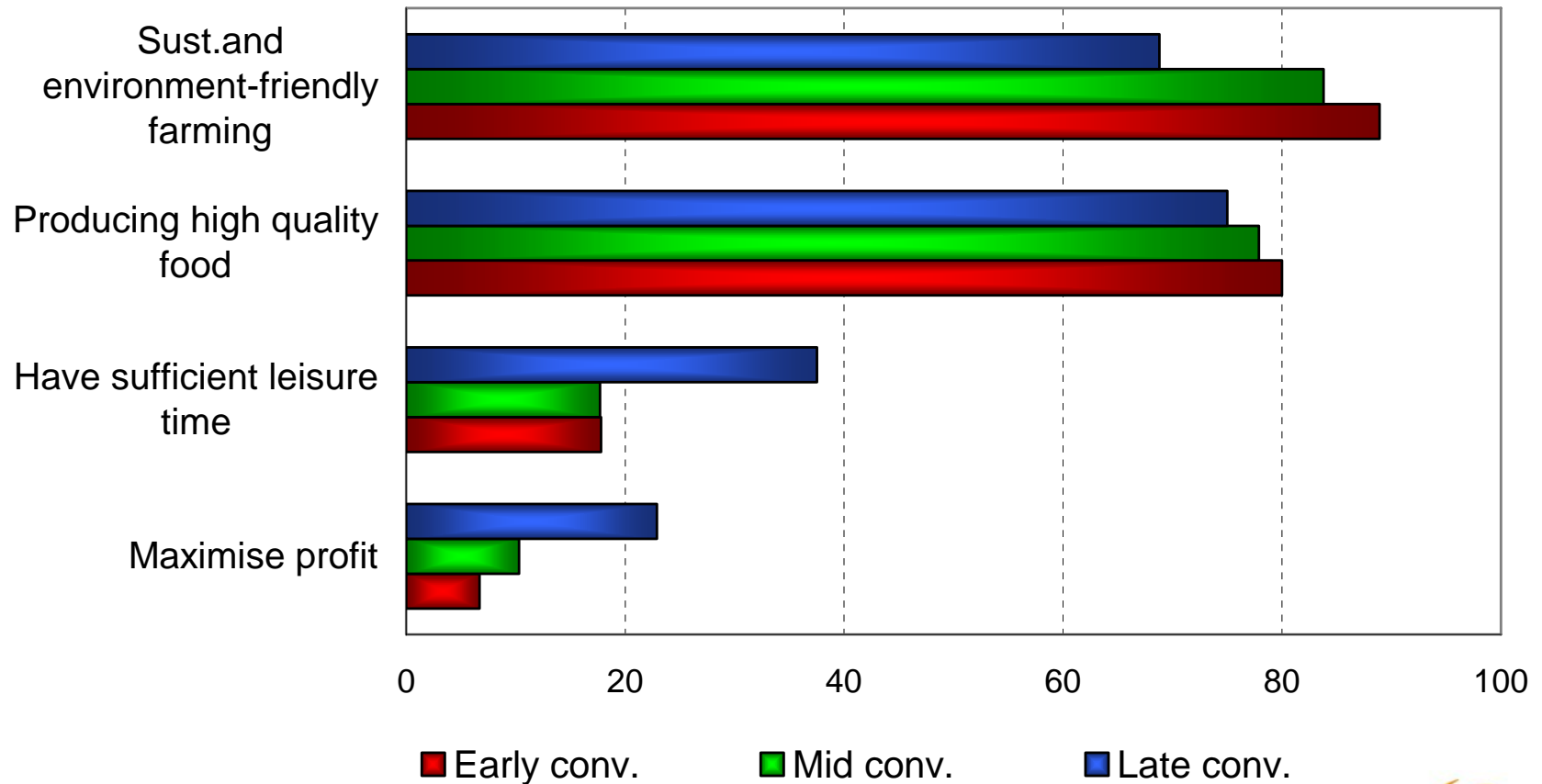
Animal disease management



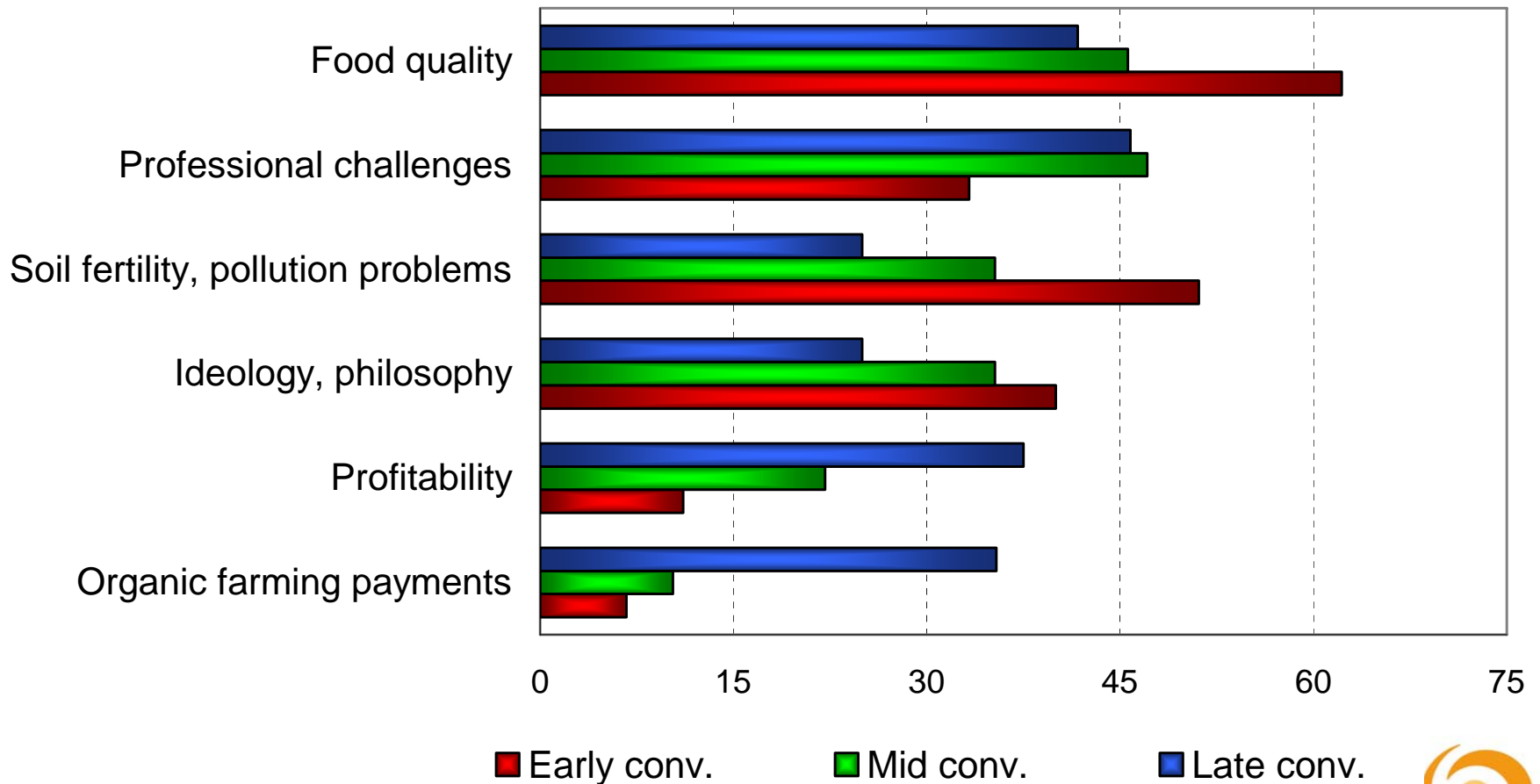
- No. of reg. disease treatments/100 cows
- Using alternative medicine (% of farmers)



Farmers' goals (% in top five ranking)



Farmers' motives for conversion (% in top three ranking)





Conclusions I

- Trends towards more pragmatic and business oriented approaches among the new organic dairy producers:
 - Farming practices
 - Goals of profit and leisure time have increased in popularity
 - Profitability and organic farming payments have become more important motives for conversion





Conclusions II

- But still a majority of fairly committed organic dairy farmers in Norway:
 - The greater part of the herds had a moderate or even low milk production per cow
 - Environmental, food quality, and philosophical concerns are still widely present as goals and motives among the newcomers



Implications for the future of organic dairy farming in Norway

- Tensions among organic farmers in views on sound ways of practice farming and marketing?
 - Producers going far beyond the minimum standards may prefer separate, stricter regulation schemes
- Pragmatic and committed organic producers may react differently to changes in prices, farm policies and organic regulations
 - Harder economic terms – those who go organic just for the money are more likely to return to conventional farming?

