

RESEARCH REGARDING THE ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE IN THE EU

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Abstract

Organic farming in the European Union registered a constant annual evolution due to the fact that it gives consumers solutions for a healthy food and it is also a solution for environmental protection.

Key words: agriculture, organic, development

INTRODUCTION

Organic farming began to develop after the Second World War due to the fact that the main objective of European agriculture in that era was immediate food needs. Between the late 60s and early next decade they numerous associations and organizations promoting organic agriculture were founded and developed. At the same time though there were movements against this type of agriculture caused by the different commercial interests of that era (Morna A., 2013).

During the 80s, organic farming has spread outside the European space, especially in the US. The number of manufacturers began to manifest a number of concerns in the processing and marketing. This is the answer to an increasingly larger demand expressed by consumers (Morna A., 2011). At the same time, the first legislative initiatives in this area began to appear (in countries such as Austria, France, Denmark) and also the first subsidies to organic products (Man Cornel, 2015).

Recognition of this mode of production in Europe was done through Regulation no. 2092/1991, which defined and standardized the working methods of the various European member countries of the Community. In these conditions, the consumer can be more confident in the products consumed, with their breeding, processing and marketing (Reglementarile Consiliului nr.2092/91 si 1804/1999).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In European Union countries, organic farming held in 1997 about 2 million hectares (compared to only 120,000 hectares in 1986) and the number of enterprises that have shaped the organic production increased in the same period from 7,000 to 73,000. In 2011 agricultural areas were 9.6 million hectares, or 5.4 of the total area of agricultural land in the EU and which represents the economic market of 19.7 billion Euros(EU, Organic Monitor, September 2014).

The annual growth rate of the European market of organic products is 20-40%. This increase is the natural consequence of increasing consumer concern for their health and safety. Most requested organic foods are those that can be eaten fresh, especially fruits, dairy, but also processed products derived from cereals (SAPARD /2004).

The results of various market studies coincide: European consumers are interested in organic food consumption because they are convinced of their superior quality compared to conventional products. Even if organic products sector still holds a low market share in all marketed food products, studies and forecasts agree with an important growth of this sector in the medium and long term.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to recent studies in the field conducted by Ecology and Agriculture Foundation of Germany (SÖEL, 2014), organic agriculture is practiced in over 120 countries worldwide and ecologically cultivated areas are increasing. At EU level, 500,000 ha of agricultural land are converted annually for organic agriculture.

The EU countries with the largest organic agricultural areas are: Spain, Italy, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Together, areas in these countries represent 57% of the entire area for organic farming in the EU.

Table no 1

No. crt	Country	Million ha
1.	Spain	1.8
2.	Italy	1.1
3.	Germany	1

4.	France	0.97
5.	United Kingdom	0.63

Source: *SOEL-Survey, 2014*

If we analyze the situation of organic agricultural areas in total agricultural land within each State, at EU level the situation is changing, so Austria ranks first, followed by Sweden and Estonia(SÖEL, 2014).

Table no 2

Countries with the largest share of organic agricultural area in total agricultural land

No crt	Country	%
1.	Austria	19
2.	Sweden	15.7
3.	Estonia	14
4.	Czech Republic	13
5.	Latvia	10

Source: *SOEL-Survey, 2014*

The share of permanent organic crops practiced in the EU is as showed in the table below (SÖEL, 2014).

Table no 3

Share of permanent organic crops

No crt	Product	%
1.	Olives	31
2.	Grapes	17
3.	Nuts	13
4.	Other fruits	21
5.	Other permanent crops	16

Sursa: *SOEL-Survey, 2014*

CONCLUSIONS

In the European Union there is a significant and permanent increase in organic acreage, which is 500.000 hectares per year, which means that about 8 percent of agricultural land is converted annually for organic

agriculture. This is done because organic agriculture is a possible solution to these two problems: on the one hand the demand for natural products obtained by methods which do not use chemicals, on the other hand diversification of agriculture in the general context of environment protection.

Based on these facts, manufacturers and distributors are seeking various solutions to manage the expansion of this market, among which the following stand out:

- Exposure of these products in major retail distribution networks; constant supply;
- competitive prices;
- informing consumers about the consumption benefits of these products;
- an efficient promotion of these products which does not create confusion among consumers, on the contrary: helps them make the right choices.

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