

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

Over the last decades agriculture has changed character with the development of new knowledge, machinery and chemical industry. This agriculture enabled the world to produce food that kept in pace with population growth, but this was not achieved without side effects on the health of people.

Key words: agriculture, organic, farming, products

Organic farming is a form of agriculture that relies on techniques such as crop rotation, green manure, compost and biological pest control. Organic farming uses fertilizers and pesticides but excludes or strictly limits the use of manufactured (synthetic) fertilizers, pesticides (which include herbicides, insecticides and fungicides), plant growth regulators such as hormones, livestock antibiotics, food additives, genetically modified organisms. (1)

What is organic?

Organic refers to the way agricultural products - food and fiber - are grown and processed. Organic food production is based on a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility. Organic foods are minimally processed without artificial ingredients, preservatives, or irradiation to maintain the integrity of the food.

Fortunately however, there are also forward-looking farmers who developed agricultural methods and processes that were considered sound and sustainable. Such farming systems are based on the dynamic interaction between soil, plant and environment. This relies largely on locally available resources.

These farmers today called organic farmers have proven to the world that their farming system is distinguishable from other agricultural system, and above all, is competitive and able to provide agricultural products of good quality. Crop livestock diversity and integration in organic farming also served as a broad, based source of food and income. Organic agriculture can contribute to an ecologically sound future for humanity.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The paper was accomplished using information from specialized literature.

The analyses have been focused at national level and the period analyzed in this study is 2007-2012. The data are provided by National Institute of Statistic Romania and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and have been statistically processed and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISSCUTIONS

Marketing of organic products is performed by traders registered with Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), using various channels to market: sales of the company gate, wholesale sales in stores, sales in shops, online sales through stock organic products, sales by market seasonal.

Organic farming is a dynamic system in Romania with an average weighted annual growth of 23%. In 2007, the total area cultivated by organic production was 131 448 ha of which 46.865 84.585 surface area conversion and certified organic.

In the year 2012, the area cultivated organically is 450,000 ha, while the spontaneous flora cultures collected from an area of approx. 520,000 ha. In 2012, the areas in the ecological system increased by 45% since 2011 representing about. 3.38% of the total utilized agricultural area of Romania.

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Cultivated areas with major crops

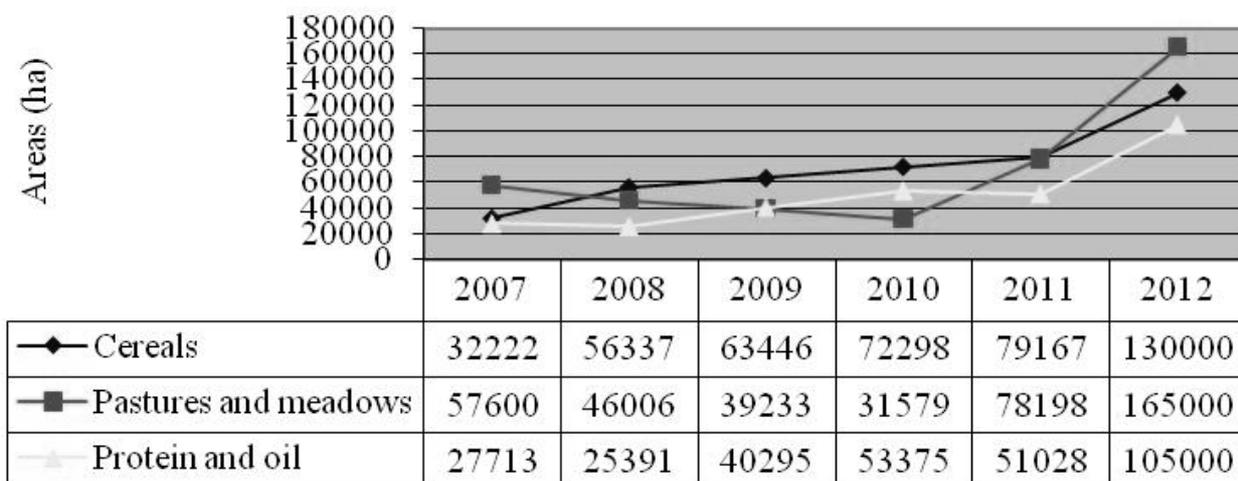


Figure 1 Total cultivated area by ecological production method

From the analysis of the main crops cultivated areas in 2007 shows that 32,222 ha are cultivated with cereals and approx. 27,713 ha of oil and protein. Pastures and meadows have an area of 57,600 ha. For 2012, the areas of pasture and forage have the largest share in total area - 44% (about 165,000 ha) followed by cereals - 29% (about 130,000 ha). The livestock sector in 2012 to boost livestock kept for organic production,

especially sheep and goats - 160,000 heads, 85,000 heads laying hens and 60,000 heads of dairy cows. With regard to the beekeeping sector in 2012 there were a total of 102,881 bee families. From the staff mentioned above, consist of livestock herds certified for the year 2011 and 130,015 sheep and goats, 19,487 and 58,203 dairy cows laying hens.

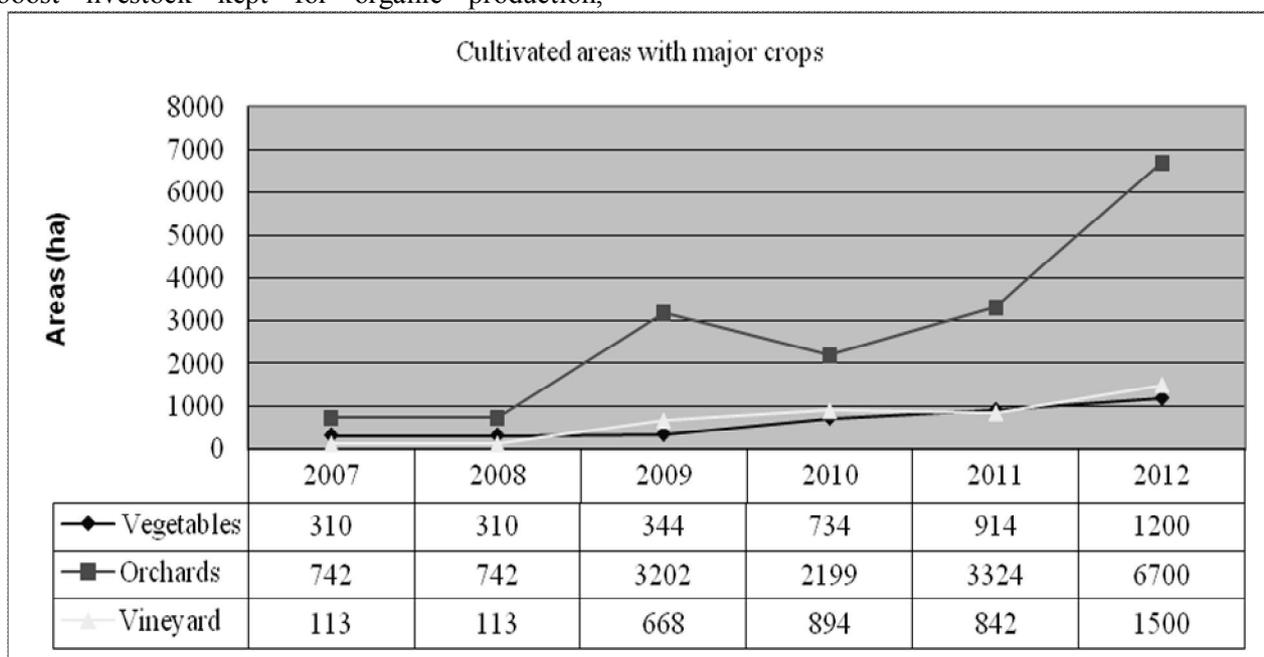


Figure 2 Total cultivated area by ecological production method

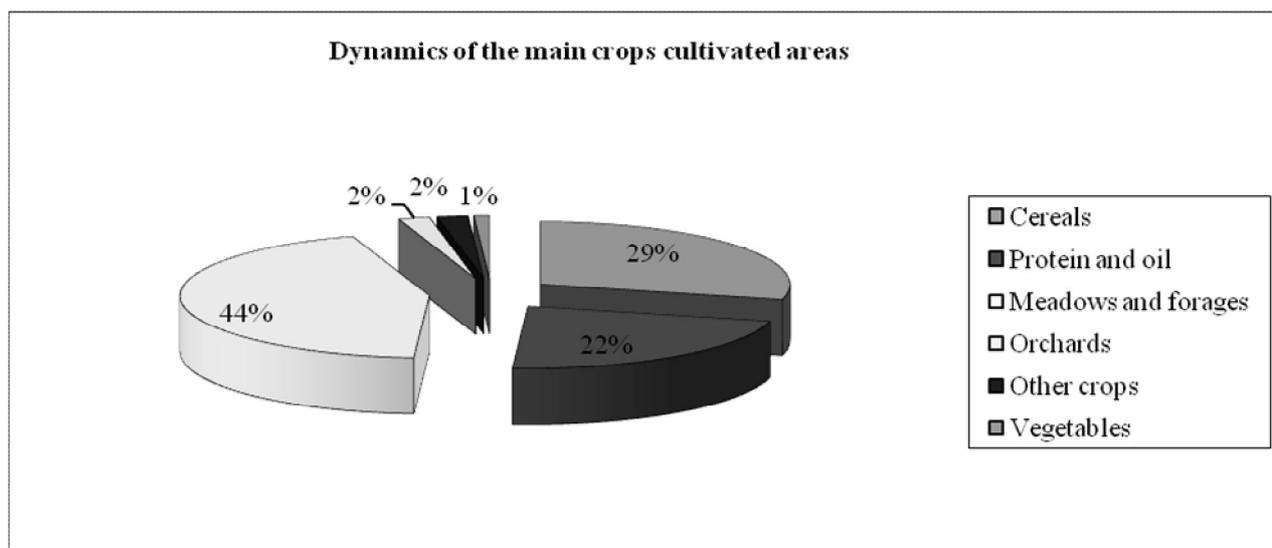


Figure 3 Dynamics of the main crops cultivated areas

Number of operators (producers, processors and traders, importers and exporters) registered in organic farming system to MARD in 2012 is 26,736. Since 2010, the number of operators increased annually by about three times the year. This was mainly due to the existing support measures for the period conversion provided under art. 68 of Regulation (EC) laying nr.73/2009.

Common rules for direct support schemes for farmers under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers. In 2012, out of 26,736 producers 103 is processing segment, 211 marketing segment and 26,390 are farmers.

Regarding the processed product in 2012 was an increase in the number of processors (from 48 units in 2007 to 103 in 2012) and wide assortment of organic products was more diverse including: products processed cow and sheep milk (cheese, swaitzer, butter, cream, etc..) produced processed soy (milk, tofu pate, croquettes), sunflower oil, a wide range bakery products (bread, pasta, cookies) processed rice products, musli, herbal tea, berry juices, processed products hemp seeds, bee products (wax, propolis, pollen), processed products pork (sausage, ham) and organic wine.

The surface of a farm organic farming crop production ranges from about 100 square meters for growing vegetables in greenhouses, up to approx. 2000 ha for cultivation field crops. The average area of farms in 2011 was about 20 to 22 ha.

Demand for certified organic products is constantly increasing.

At present, the domestic market for organic products is expanding. Organic products marketed directly from the farm gate or through specialized stores and through network supermarkets. In the

domestic market in 2011 were sold: fresh fruits and vegetables products, processed fruits and vegetables, herbal teas, bread, pasta, flour products processed cow and sheep milk (butter, feta cheese) eggs, oil, wine from grapes certified organic, processed soy products, honey etc.

Organic agricultural methods are internationally regulated and legally enforced by many nations, based in large part on the standards set by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), an international umbrella organization for organic farming organizations established in 1972. [2] IFOAM defines the overarching goal of organic farming as:

"Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved..." [3]

Basic to our understanding of Organic Agriculture and processing is to accept the fact that these are based on the number of principles, and ideas, which are all equally important. These are:

- To produce food of high nutritional quality in sufficient quantity;
- To interact in a constructive and life-enhancing way with natural system and cycles;
- To encourage and enhance biological cycles within the farming, system, involving micro-organisms, soil flora and soil fauna, plants and animals;
- To promote the healthy use and proper care of water, water resources, and all life therein.

The image of Organic that is most often communicated is small and local farms. Actually, the bulk of organic produce now comes from very large farming operations most of the time. Organic produce in stores today comes from operations normally call “factory farms”. In fact these are progressive, efficient, highly professional farms for both their “organic” and “conventional” output. “Factory Farm” is an emotive term, but it does not reflect anything accurate about the safety, quality or responsibility of the producer for either organic or non-organic food

The inspection and certification of organic products is carried out private inspection and certification bodies approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in accordance with community and national law environmental, economic, and food safety concerns are among the many reasons why some farmers choose organic production. Likewise, organic producers differ in the methods they use to achieve the ideal system. Some organic farmers completely shun external inputs, and these farmers enhance the native biological insect control on their farms by conserving beneficial insects’ food and nesting sites instead of importing natural pesticides. Compost is created on the farm for their fertilization needs. Other organic farmers do not make a distinction in inputs, and they rely on imported inputs for soil fertility and pest management. This philosophy of “input substitution” is discredited by many long-time advocates of organic agriculture who believe that a truly sustainable method of organic farming would seek to eliminate, as much as possible, reliance on external inputs. Organic certification, however, is based on the use of allowable substances, regardless of their origin.

CONCLUSIONS

The elements found within the organically grown produce far surpassed the elemental minerals and vitamins within the commercially-grown produce. For the consumer interested in the elemental concentrations, a significant difference between organic and commercial foods. Additionally, the studies concluded that while the weight, color, texture appeared similar, there are significant nutritional differences. Organically-

grown foods were richer in minerals than the look alike commercially – grown products. In fact, by comparison, there were 87% less minerals and trace elements in today’s commercially grown ones.

Along with traditional products and products with designation of origin, organic products are produced with a high level of valuation. Organic products are produced with advantage competitive.

In Romania, the competitiveness of organic products is determined by the following factors:

- Number of operators in the sector is increasing and stands and processors increase. Area under organic farming record growth year on year.
- The organic market is characterized by expansion and diversification products on the market from year to year.
- Increasingly more consumers are aware that with the quality and value organic products for health, organic farming is a major contributor to sustainable development. Awareness by the public of the importance of practicing organic agriculture in rural areas, can be a solution to revitalize the countryside.

Organic production, based on the non-use of chemical synthesis and compliance with animal welfare is a sustainable solution. Given the competitiveness of organic products, agricultural potential and demand organic products in increasingly higher in Romania, an important factor is the continue to support the financial sector in the direction of support directed to while supporting organic production and processing sector.

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