

PROSPECTS FOR ORGANIC FARMING IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

This article aims to highlight the fact that agriculture is one of the most important economic sectors of the country and it was the field for which implementation of a common policy was provided from the early stages of European construction. One of the key elements of the Common Agricultural Policy, concerning rural development is to promote and develop organic farming.

Key words: agriculture, agricultural area, organic farming, rural development

INTRODUCTION

In today's society we live in, amid the excessive growth of the industry, organic life is a natural and necessary alternative. In Romania, organic farming has experienced an upward trend, both in the vegetal and in the livestock sectors.

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the well-being of soils, ecosystems and people. It is based on ecological systems, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions of life, instead of using chemicals with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for everyone involved. [3, 6, 8] According to IFOAM principles, agriculture is the main activity of mankind. The principles focus on how farmers care for soil, water, plants and animals to produce, process and market foods. IFOAM principles are considered sources of the ways organic agriculture grows and develops. They refer to the fact that organic agriculture has the potential to improve the agricultural situation globally.

Organic farming is based on certain principles [9]:

-Principle of Health: "Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible". This principle points out that the

health of individuals and communities cannot be separated from the health of ecosystems. This principle shows that the health of individuals and communities cannot be separated from the health of ecosystems. In this regard fertilizers, pesticides, drugs and food additives that may have adverse health effects should be avoided.

-Principle of Ecology: "Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them". This principle roots organic agriculture within living ecological systems. According to it, production is to be based on ecological processes, and recycling. Nourishment and well-being are achieved through the ecology of the specific production environment. For example, in the case of crops this is the living soil; for animals it is the farm ecosystem; for fish and marine organisms, the aquatic environment. It is necessary that all those who produce, process, sell or consume organic products to protect and help the environment.

-Principle of Fairness: "Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities". This principle emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties - farmers, workers, processors, distributors, traders and consumers. Organic agriculture should

provide everyone involved with a good quality of life, and contribute to food sovereignty and reduction of poverty. It aims to produce a sufficient supply of good quality food and other products.

-Principle of Care: "Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment". This principle stipulates that prudence and accountability are essential elements of strategies of management [2], development and technology choices in organic agriculture. This should prevent the emergence of major risks by adopting appropriate technologies and rejecting unpredictable ones, such as genetic engineering.

The objectives of organic farming [5] can be summarized as follows: avoid all forms of pollution, both in products and in the environment; maintain the natural fertility of soils, thereby being able to sustainably ensure food security in a planet; to allow farmers a decent standard of living; to produce in sufficient quantities and at an appropriate quality level food products which, to a large extent, consumer health depends on.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methods used in this research provides a wide range of answers to the complex issue of organic farming but making a bibliography to consult the establishment of assumptions from which we start to set up the first steps in choosing this theme. Exploiting the data was based on the wide range of statistical information provided by Eurostat database and the National Institute of Statistics.

The information was processed through analysis, evaluation, comparison or simply having a high coefficient of synthetic truth. The resulting data were systematized documentation done by the aim, having a clear applicative being processed so as to provide a clear message sent suggestibility.

The research used a variety of tables and charts that can lead to identification of conclusions, thus providing the necessary arguments and visualize correlations between

the concepts.

It has identified a causal relationship between variable called organic farming and the implications that it generates in the national economy but also in the EU economy.

We started from the idea of organic farming system purpose is to produce cleaner food, more suitable for human metabolism, in relation to environment development and conservation.

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages, benefices and obstacles of organic farming

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Does not pollute the soil and groundwater with pesticides; -Increased biological diversity in plant and animal kingdom; -Keep the soil structure and its balance of components at microorganism level; -Uses natural resources and local sources; -Uses inputs with low energy consumption and reduce external dependence of agriculture; -Product quality responds to consumer needs; -At the macroeconomic level, the beneficial effects of organic farming could translate into better employment of labor and, where there is, eliminating surplus [3]. -Less infected water, air, food products; -Safe working conditions for farmers; -Biodiversity; -Fertile and healthy soil; -Reducing loss of nutrients; -Efficient use of water; -Nutritional quality of organic products; -Environmental protection; -Less use of non-renewable resources; -Risk reduction for farmers; -Quality responds to consumer products; -Promotes a sustainable rural economy; -Rewards through payments to farmers and maintaining the natural landscape; -Competitive and comparative advantage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The lack of support and payment certification of organic products at their real price -During the conversion, the farmer cannot compensate for the loss of productivity, because organic products are produced in a relatively long time; -Organic farming involves higher production costs than conventional agriculture costs due mainly to using more labor force and low yields of crops; -The prices are higher in organic products; -Low yields; -Sale price of organic food is higher than that of traditional products; -The need to support organic farming -Organic products are often suspected of being toxic -Organoleptic characteristics are sometimes unbalanced for certain agricultural products -The existence of fake organic products on the market -The continuous monitoring and certification action are required to be improved -Lack of extension and research systems for organic farming
Benefices	Obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use of manure develops concentration of microorganisms in the earth; -By multi-annual turns, several main types of primary cultures fodder and vegetables are grown. -Growing indigenous varieties of species of animals and plants helps keeping the variety of natural growing areas; -The inclusion of natural enemies of weeds and pests, rather than using pesticides, supports increasing the life of animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of technical information and the relevant legislation; -Lack of money; -Lack of market outlets; -Subsidies; -Lack of agricultural equipment and machinery; -Lack of materials / organic seeds.

Source: European Commission, *Organic Farming* - http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/organic-farming_ro

The most important role of organic agriculture is to develop authentic and fresh agricultural food, through processes developed in order to appreciate nature and its systems.

Organic farming analysis shows a wide range of benefits of sustainable growth of this sector; but it is also overshadowed by the disadvantages and obstacles in the way of sustainable development at the national level (Table 1).

Currently, in Romania there are approx. 4,000 certified farmers and about 32 companies that produce and market organic products; There are 8 inspection and certification bodies for organic products accredited by MAPDR, of which one is Romanian ("ECOINSPECT" based in Cluj), and the rest are from Germany, France and Hungary; organic products market volume is amounted to approx. 400,000 Euro; There is only one shop for exclusive marketing of organic products, although organic products, such as vegetables, fruits (apples), milk, cheese, Schweitzer, butter, herbs are found in large chain stores.

Romanian organic food production is based on foreign investment. Romanian producers entering the system sign from the start contracts for the entire production is going to be exported, mainly to EU states. For this reason, so far in Romania, in terms of organic food production, we can say it is due primarily to NGOs and then to the authorities, who took the issue seriously only after signing Romania's accession to European Union.

Romanian productive potential of agriculture to obtain organic products can reach, after the estimates, up to 15-20% of the total land area of the country. Romania is a great outlet that has as main feature the easy adaptation to anything new [1].

Although agriculture contributes only 8% in achieving the country's GDP, incentives for young people to engage in agriculture are necessary. In support of these objectives, the EU encourages subsidizing this sector according to the needs of member countries, especially for the development of *Pillar II* of the CAP. Romania supports the training of farmers by developing rural education and agricultural academic profile as it seeks transition from a resource-based economy to a

knowledge-based economy.

Compared to EU-27, with an arable area of only 62% of total agricultural area available, we managed to maintain above average in most chapters of agricultural activity, ranking 7th in cereals production, and 5th for the potato, 6th overall for crops and ranked first for agricultural exploitations. Romania aims to become a competitive country in terms of agricultural sector production through its modernization and adaptation to EU standards and environmental quality.

Regarding organic agriculture, Romania has great potential for development. Though still in development, the domestic market has had an agricultural production from which a large proportion of organic products were exported to countries like Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands and Italy. As in these countries demand for such products is continuously growing, Romania could benefit by increasing domestic production and fulfillment of considerably higher orders. Although private consumption is based more on imported products, the development of this sector in our country could increase public confidence in domestic products.

The most obvious solution package for the revival of Romanian agriculture comprises of: land consolidation, construction of silos for improved collection of agricultural products, shifting to intensive farming by buying necessary machinery, agricultural modernization and the presence of strong support from the government for farmers [4].

Another innovative idea is the cultivation of medicinal plants. As promising as it sounds, it is less practiced. Although this type of agriculture does not enjoy much popularity, there are entrepreneurs who had the courage to cultivate such plants and have contracts with foreign companies producing drugs and cosmetics.

Regarding the EU, agriculture integration of central and east European countries shows a series of threats and risks: Central and Eastern European countries can produce cheaper and hence their products will dominate the market. A phenomenon of massive immigration to European Union countries in search of a job may happen. Integration of new members is

an additional expense of the European budget. There is a risk that recently integrated countries cannot cope with the competition and shortly become ineffective.

In 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has published an overview of the plant sector about the changes in the value of agricultural production (which accounts for producer prices, plus subsidies on products and decrease taxes on product) (Table 2)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2. Agricultural sector production

	2007			2008			2009			2010			2011			2012			2013			2014		
	Lei	Mil.	%	Lei	Mil.	%	Lei	Mil.	%	Lei	Mil.	%	Lei	Mil.	%	Lei	Mil.	%	Lei	Mil.	%	Lei	Mil.	%
Plants	28,723.4		60.2	45,742.2		68.3	35,735.5		59.6	43,488.5		67.5	54,179.8		70.8	40,169.1		62.5	53,843.8		68.6	49,058.3		65.8
Livestock	18,271.6		38.3	20,535.7		30.6	23,441.6		39.1	20,406.8		31.6	21,784.1		28.5	23,555.2		36.7	23,876.5		30.4	24,481.6		32.9
Agricultural services	684.8		1.5	716.0		1.1	751.3		1.3	557.3		0.9	544.8		0.7	535.1		0.8	744		1	984.5		1.3
TOTAL	47,699.9		100	66,993.9		100	59,928.4		100	64,452.6		100	76,508.7		100	64,259.4		100	78,464.4		100	74,524.4		100

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 2013-2014, tab. 14.82014 NIS, Press release of October 15, 2015 no.263 - final data

Table 3. Organic farming operators and areas dynamics

Indicator	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of certified organic agriculture operators	3,155	9,703	15,544	15,194	14,470
Total area used for organic farming (ha)	182,705.7	229,945.67	288,260.83	301,148.1	289,251.79
Cereala (ha)	72,297.78	79,166.95	105,148.5	109,105.3	102,531.47
Dried pulses and protein crops for the production of grain (including seeds and mixtures of cereals and pulses) (ha)	5,560.22	3,147.36	2,764.04	2,397.34	2,314.43
Total tuberous and root plants (ha)	504.36	1,074.981	1,124.915	740.75	626.99
Industrial crops (ha)	47,815.07	47,879.68	44,788.73	51,770.78	54,145.17
Green harvested plants (ha)	10,325.4	4,788.49	11,082.93	13,184.14	13,493.53
Other crops on arable land (ha)	579.61	851.44	27.77	263.95	29.87
Pulses (ha)	734.32	914.08	896.32	1,067.67	1,928.36
Permanent crops (ha) orchards and vineyards	3,093.04	4,166.62	7,781.33	9,400.31	9,438.53
Permanent crops (ha) pastures and hayfields	31,579.11	78,197.51	105,835.57	103,701.5	95,684.78
Out of crop land (ha)	10,216.78	9,758.554	8,810.734	9,516.33	9,058.66
Collection from spontaneous flora (ha) * not included in the total organic farming area	77,294.35	338,051	1,082,138	944,546.2	1,787,548.25

Source: Communications from inspection and certification bodies, <http://www.madr.ro/agricultura-ecologica/dinamica-operatorilor-si-a-suprafetelor-in-agricultura-ecologica.html>/Clasificare Eurostat

In 2013 and 2014, grain had the largest share in the value of crop production (37% and 34.9%), followed by vegetables and watermelons (15.1% and 17.2%) and potatoes (10.6% and 10.5% respectively), while milk products obtained from the processing of farm livestock had the largest share in livestock (27.7% and 28%), followed by cattle (24.6% and 25.2%) and poultry (20.3% and 20.7% respectively). [10]

Organic sector in Romania has developed dynamically in recent years. In 2013, the total area where organic production is grown was 301,148.1 hectares, which accounts for an increase of 61% compared to 2010 (Table 3). For 2014 acreage by mode of organic production was 289,251.79 ha, observing a slight setback compared to 2013 (Fig. 1).

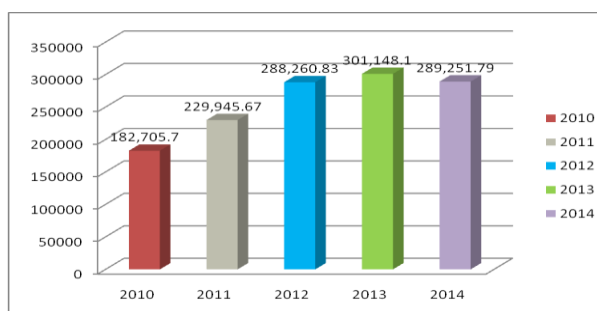


Fig. 1. Total area used for organic farming
 Source: Data processed based on information MARD, 2015

The dynamics of this sector has evolved quite sustained in the last period. It is noted in 2010 that the collection from spontaneous flora (ha) where organic production was 77,294.3 hectares and for 2014 was 1,787,548.25 ha

(Fig. 2).

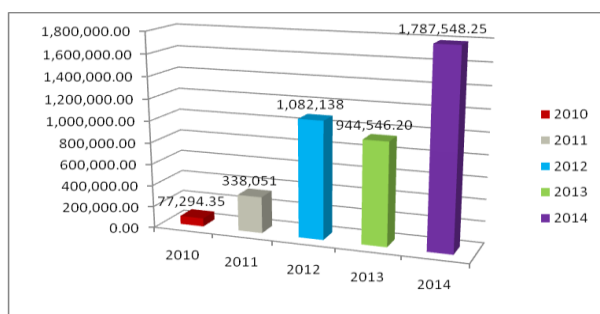


Fig. 2. Collection from spontaneous flora (ha)
 Source: Data processed based on information MARD, 2015

Producers of organic food products in Romania must register their activity with the National Authority of Organic Products (N.A.O.P.) - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and submit to the control of an accredited inspection and certification body. The number of operators registered in the MARD organic farming system in 2010 was 3,155 and 14,470 in 2014 (Fig. 3).

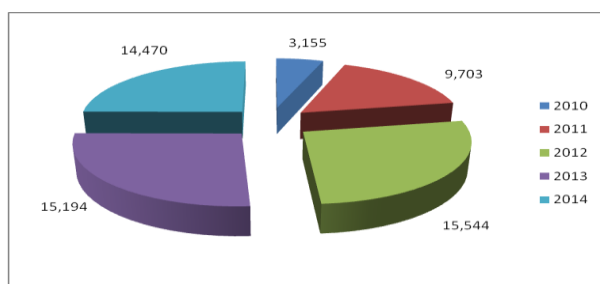


Fig. 3. Number of certified organic farming operators
 Source: Data processed based on information MARD, 2015

For Romania organic food production and marketing is a real chance to enter the European market, this market being oversaturated with products from conventional farming while organic products are lacking. Thus, supporting the promotion and development of organic agriculture is a fundamental issue. (Fig.4).

This implies a rural development policy designed to encourage rural initiatives, helping simultaneously farmers to restructure their farms and to diversify the range of products [6] as well as penetrating different markets for the marketing of organic products. In recent years interest of economic agents in the country to organic food production has

grown, confirmed by the fact that production volume and surfaces have increased [7].

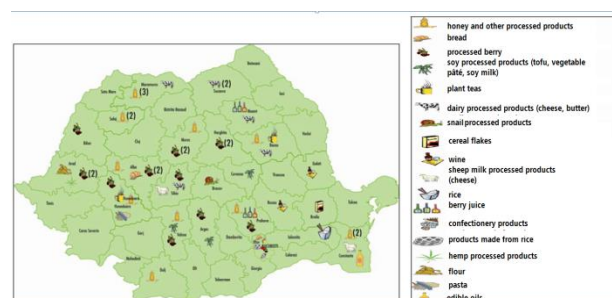


Fig. 4. The distribution of organic food products in Romania
 Source: MARD, 2010

The main weakness of the organic food industry is, currently, the processing, packaging and marketing. This problem that organic industry faces is driven mainly by high prices of industrial and packaging equipment that conform to the standards of organic farming. Increasingly higher demand and lack of domestic processors determines the gross organic product to follow external routes, while only a small part of this type of food found its place in the internal market. The only way to solve this problem is by locating processing and distribution facilities as close to the sources of food, where small farmers can sell more easily. This is also extremely important to ensure a range of jobs for rural areas, in order to build a sustainable economy.

CONCLUSIONS

We conclude by saying that I believe that the future of agriculture in Romania is extremely bright. Peasants in rural areas are the cornerstone of Romania's past and will be the cornerstone of the future of Romania.

Romania is a rich country with great potential for agriculture and with the help of a fair policy it can become a prosperous country, one of the pillars of the European Union. I believe that the leaders of Romania should develop policies in support of this idea, managing to make our country a sustainable place with safe food. In this regard they will need to start by supporting the peasants of Romania in their cultivation of healthy local

food. The future depends on it. We are an optimistic country, firm in our faith that the peasants can show direction not only in Romania but also in the EU. The peasants of Romania, today at a crossroads, can give way to a bright future tomorrow.

Organic Agriculture is a complex issue, and opinions about the chances of creating a competitive market for Romanian organic products are quite different. To create this market it is necessary to lay the foundations of competitive ecological agriculture. For example, low levels of chemical pollution, considered a positive factor, are equivalent to subsistence farming of the land subject to other disadvantages.

Solutions for market expansion can include: presence of organic products in large networks of retail distribution, consistency of supply, competitive prices, informing consumers about the benefits of eating these products, an effective promotion of products that does not create confusion among consumers but on the contrary, helps them choose products.

As a result, a conclusion for the present times shows the necessity and possibility of coexistence of the two systems of agriculture: on the one hand the system of conventional agriculture which would provide necessary affordable crops sufficient to cover needs for food of human communities; on the other hand, the organic farming system, currently under expansion, which promotes agricultural production technologies with reduced environmental impact, focused on biological technology links can provide food and agricultural products with lower production costs and high biological quality.

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