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SUPPORT POLICIES FOR ORGANIC FARMING IN TURKEY

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Abstract: Organic farming is a technique, which involves cultivation of plants and rearing of animals in natural ways. In other words, organic farming is a farming method that involves growing and nurturing crops without the use of synthetic based fertilizers and pesticides. Organic farming aims to protect the life-sustaining resources and natural life by maintaining the natural balance. Organic production in Turkey started in the 1980s in the Aegean region due to a demand for organic goods in Europe. Since then, organic production and export in Turkey have increased. Turkey, according to the latest (2016) statistics in 523 777 hectares, 67 878 farmer by 2 473 600 tons of organic product is obtained. In 2004, the Organic Agriculture Law in Turkey was put into practice to provide a legal framework for the organization and enhancement of the organic sector. The objective of the law is to lay down principles and procedures for relevant measures to be taken in relation to the production of organic products and inputs so as to provide high quality and safe organic products to consumers. This law is also important as a part of European Union (EU) harmonization.

In Turkey, using intensive inputs (especially agricultural chemicals and fertilizer) in the agriculture the balance of the nature gradually is disturbed. Although the unconscious use of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers has led to increase in crop production, it has resulted in products that are of poor quality and threaten human health in Turkey in recent years. Therefore, organic farming is important to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals and people. Organic farming is supported by government in Turkey. The subsidies for organic food are an important factor in the economic viability of organic farming and play an important role in sustaining the income of farmers. In 2017, organic agriculture support was given to producers for fruits and vegetables as 100 TL/decare and for field crops as 30 TL/ decare. When these ratios were compared with 2013, they have increased by 2 times in fruits and vegetables and increased 3 times in field crops. Despite the supports and efforts to promote organic production,

domestic consumption and awareness of organic products remain relatively limited. Organic products are often viewed by consumers as a luxury crop because they are expensive. Agricultural policies have an important role to play in facilitating organic agriculture. Turkey should provide production growth in organic agriculture products and develop effective trade policies by considering both the domestic market and international markets. In addition, the supports given by the state for organic farming should be increased every year and producers that passing to the organic farming should be encouraged.

In this research, the current situation and support policies for organic farming were evaluated and solutions were offered regarding these problems.

Keywords: organic farming, organic production, support policy, Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Organic farming is a way of producing food that respects natural life-cycles. It is an agricultural system that seeks to provide the consumers with fresh, tasty and authentic food while respecting natural life-cycle systems. It involves not to use pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones. Organic farming is done to release nutrients to the crops for increased sustainable production in an eco-friendly and pollution-free environment. It aims to produce crop with a high nutritional value. In organic farming, chemical and pesticides are not used in any stages such as cultivation, harvesting, classification, packing, labelling, storing and transporting. Thus, the health of farmers, their families and the society is protected.

Organic farming develops worldwide and has been practiced approximately in 179 countries, on 51 million hectare farmland. Australia is the country with the largest organic agricultural area (22.7 million hectares), followed by Argentina (3,1 million hectares), and the United States of America (2 million hectares). Forty-five percent of the global organic agricultural land is in Oceania (22,8 million hectares), followed by Europe (25%; 12,7 million hectares), and Latin America (13%; 6,7 million hectares). In 2015, 2,4 million organic producers were reported. India continues to be the country with the highest number of producers (585 200), followed by Ethiopia (203 602) and Mexico (200 039) (Anonymous, 2017b).

Turkey has also performed well in organic farming, by increasing the organic farming area from 6 800 to 524 000 hectares between 1996 and 2016. The number of organic farmers is 68 000 and 2 473 600 tons of organic product is obtained. The share of Turkey's agricultural land that is organic is 1,3%. However, this ratio is lower than another countries such as Liechtenstein (30,2%), Austria (21,3%), Sweden (16,95) and Belgium (5,2%) (Anonymous, 2017b). Organic farming is supported by government in Turkey. It was included in the scope of support programme in 2005. Area-based support in organic farming is an important financial means of support in Turkey, but in recent years, area-based supports have not increased. This is also affected the organic agriculture production and producers. Subsidies given for organic farming should be given increasingly every year and in a timely manner.

The organic agriculture production and agricultural policies applied for organic farming was studied in some studies. Semos (2002) studied the organic production, organic food and the role of agricultural policy. It is emphasized in article that, agricultural policy reform needs to be complemented with well-targeted measures to reflect the site specificity of agri-environmental conditions, and to take account of the environmental and social dimensions of organic agriculture in the signals and information facing farmers. Nieberg and Kuhnert (2007) examined the support policy for organic farming in Germany. In the study it is revealed that, despite a significant expansion in the spectrum of policy measures, area-based organic payments remain the dominant means of financial support. Muller et al. (2017)

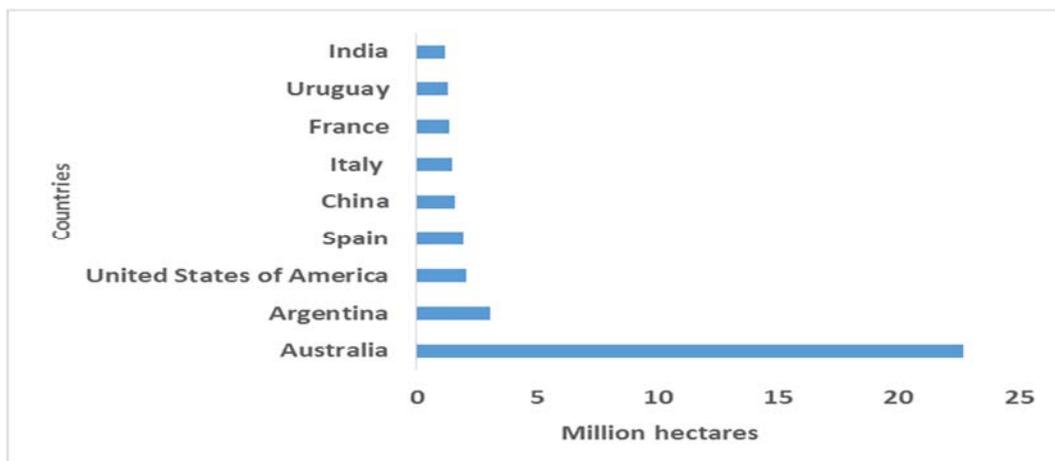
studied about a food systems model that addresses agronomic characteristics of organic agriculture to analyze the role that organic agriculture could play in sustainable food systems. They emphasized that organic agriculture can contribute to providing sufficient food and improving environmental impacts, only if adequately high proportions of legumes are produced and with significant reductions of food-competing feed use, livestock product quantities, and food wastage.

In Turkey, few studies carried out agricultural policies for organic farming. Kızılaslan and Olgun (2012) examined the support given to organic agriculture and organic farming. In addition, the regional distribution of organic farming, development in the number of product producers' crop and livestock, trade of organic products were investigated. It is emphasized at the result that Turkey cannot use its potential about organic agriculture sufficiently. İpek and Çil (2010) studied organic agriculture and state subsidies in the dimension of international trade. They revealed the importance of organic agriculture in the world trade and supports that given by the government. Kenanoğlu and Karahan (2012) analyzed the legal and institutional infrastructure of organic agriculture in Turkey and the progress of the production and the marketing of organic agricultural products. The policies implemented for the improvement of the sector have been evaluated. It is determined that, there is a lack of an effective support system, like support prices, encouragement activities, or subsidies for organic production.

This study aimed to review the current situation and support policies of organic farming and to provide solutions regarding these problems.

ORGANIC FARMING IN THE WORLD

Organic farming began in the early part of the twentieth century, primarily in Europe, but also in the United States. The pioneers of the early organic movement were motivated by a desire to reverse the perennial problems of agriculture – erosion, soil depletion, decline of crop varieties, low quality food and livestock feed, and rural poverty. Organic farming has grown rapidly throughout the world in recent years.

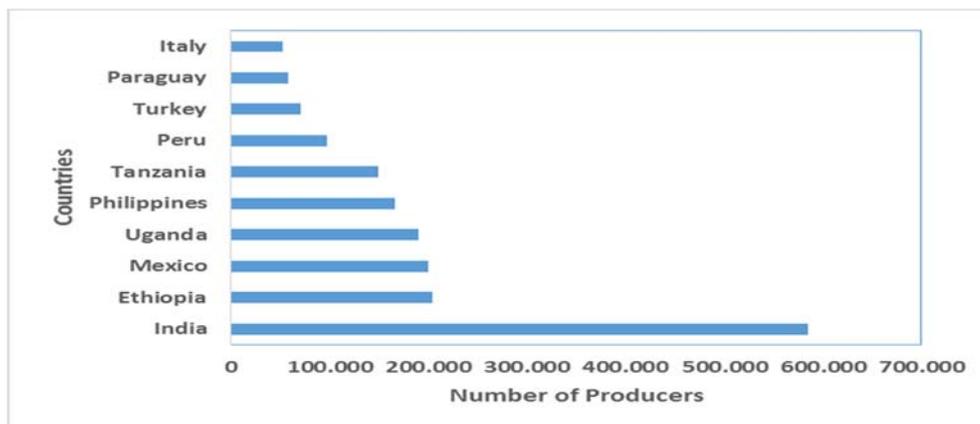


Graphic 1. Countries with the Largest Areas of Organic Agricultural Land

Source: Anonymous, 2017b

Organic farming is currently practised in about 179 countries throughout the world and the area under organic management is continually increasing. According to global organic farming statistics, 50,9 million hectares of land worldwide are managed organically. The countries with the greatest organic areas are Australia (22,7 million ha), Argentina (3,1 million ha) and United States of America (2,0 million ha). However, the area of organic land is low and it is 1,1% of the total agricultural land of the world. In Liechtenstein, 30,2%

of agricultural land area is managed organically, which is the highest percentage of organic area in the world. In 2015, there were almost 2,4 million producers. 35% of the world's organic producers are in Asia, followed by Africa (30%) and Latin America (19%). The countries with the most producers are in India, Ethiopia and Mexico. Turkey is also in the largest group of organic producers (Anonymous, 2017b).



Graphic 2. Countries with the Largest Number of Organic Producers

Source: Anonymous, 2017

ORGANIC FARMING IN TURKEY

Organic production in Turkey started in the 1980s in the Aegean region due to a demand for organic goods in Europe. Since then, organic production and export in Turkey have increased. The first organic products produced in Turkey were Sultana grapes. Today there are more than 200 kinds of agricultural products produced organically in Turkey. Dried fruits, edible nuts, spices and herbs, fresh/processed fruits and vegetables, pulses, cereals, industrial crops, oil seeds, and other raw/processed products make up most of the organic production in Turkey. Turkey, according to the latest (2016) statistics in 523 777 hectares, 67 878 farmer by 2,5 million tons of organic product is obtained. Number of products, number of producers, acreage and production have increased in 2016 compared to 2010 (Table 1). In 2016 total 16,819 tons production and export revenues were 78 million \$.

Table 1. Organic production, number of farmers, number of products and acreage in Turkey

Years	Number of products	Number of producers	Acreage (ha)	Production (tons)
2010	216	42 097	510 033	1 343 737
2011	225	42 460	614 618	1 659 543
2012	204	54 635	702 909	1 750 127
2013	213	60 797	769 014	1 620 387
2014	208	71 472	842 216	1 642 235
2015	197	69 967	515 268	1 829 291
2016	238	67 878	523 777	2 473 600

Source: Anonymous, 2016

Although, in the early stages the export of organic agricultural products in Turkey was limited to sultanas, dried figs and apricots, since 2000 the sector and production variety have developed. In 2016, hazelnut, figs and dried grape are the most highly exported products

(Table 2). Turkey exports organic food to 68 countries. EU countries like Germany, United States and France are the largest organic food importers.

Table 2. Export statistics for organic products of Turkey

2016		
Products	Quantity (tons)	Value (1000\$)
Hazelnut and its products	2 466	24 976
Figs and its products	3 676	18 666
Dried grape	3 393	12 456
Apricot and its products	1 845	10 996
Fruit and its products	1 758	6 223
Spices	91	766,00
Soybeans	1 600	680,00
Vegetable and its products	246	587,00
Pistachio	22	493,00
Cotton and its products	46	357,00
Lentil and its products	134	311,00
Sesame	52	230,00
Wheat and its products	610	187,00
Chickpea	61	144,00
Other products	818	760,00
Total	16 819	77 831

Source: Anonymous, 2016

Turkey is one of the few countries that has its own national organic regulation among developing countries, because it is an important exporter to the EU (Şayan and Polat, 2004). Turkey passed the first national regulation on production, processing, and the marketing of organic items on December 18, 1994. The first regulation was based upon the European Union's Regulation Number 2092/91. The current regulation in Turkey was published in 2010 and the name is "Regulation on Essentials and Implementation of Organic Farming (Official Journal Number: 27676)" and the current Law is "Organic Farming Law (Law No: 5262)" which was published in 2004. This Law regulates organic farming in a similar way to EU Regulation (EEC) 2092/91. Organic farming in Turkey has been directed by this Law. At this point, it is useful to say that official standards can be seen as means of codifying and protecting the values and goals of organic producers (Mansfield, 2004.).

Organic farming is regulated by the Department of Good Agricultural Practices and Organic Farming within the General Directorate Plant Production in the Turkish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MinFAL). Made up of officials from several different government ministries, universities, the private sector, professional organizations, and NGOs, the National Directing Committee meets at least twice a year to implement organic agricultural projects, raise awareness among consumers, identify problems in the certification process, and develop priorities for projects and research. The Organic Farming Committee regulates and monitors organic production, authorizes agencies to conduct organic certifying inspections, and receives the recommendations from the National Directing Committee (Anonymous, 2016).

The private institutions working on organic sector are processing companies, trade and certification institutions, associations, foundations and producers organizations in Turkey. In

1992, Ecological Agricultural Organization Association (ETO) was established in Izmir by producers, processors, researchers, certification institutions and consumers. With a close cooperation with the MinFAL, ETO tried to increase the awareness in organic production methods among farmers and related organizations. The second private institution which is Organic Food Producers and Industrialists Association (ORGÜDER) was founded in 2004 with

the aim to increase the cooperation, establish an information exchange network between the organic producers and processors, both in Turkey and in foreign countries, contribute to the general awareness of organic farming in the civil society and participate in promotional organizations. ORGÜDER currently has 33 members. Third one is the Environment, Education, Health and Social Cooperation Foundation (ÇESAV) which was established in 1989. ÇESAV administered an organic farming project which has the aim of increasing the general knowledge on organic agriculture with various seminars and panels and the publication of informational resources and books. Another private institution is the Buğday Ecological Life Association which was the name of a little pioneer restaurant opened in Bodrum district located at the Aegean coast. Buğday is a member of International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, Centre for Alternative Technology and publishes the newsletter of Global Ecovillage Network in Turkish (Tanrıvermiş, 2006).

SUPPORT POLICIES FOR ORGANIC FARMING

Agricultural policy concern about the environment has led to increased demands for environmentally beneficial agricultural production methods, such as integrated production, traditional low-input farming and organic farming (Semos, 2002). Today, environmental goals are the primary aim of government support. In addition, the contribution of organic agriculture to rural development, consumer satisfaction and the exploitation of market opportunities are also seen as relevant and worthy of financial support (Nieberg and Kuhnert, 2007).

Supporting is all of the measures taken to promote of sustaining, encourage of agricultural activities and to protect of agriculture. Agricultural supports are very important for reducing the social and financial barriers in order to conversion of organic farming.

From the beginning of planned period to the beginning of 2000s, agricultural supports in Turkey were implemented as area-based supports, input supports, and low-interest agricultural credits. From the year 2000, serious reforms were implemented with Agricultural Reforms Implementation Project (ARIP) and since then area-based supports and rural development policies have been brought to agenda (Tan et al., 2016). In Turkey, there are Area Based Agricultural Supports, Premium Supports, Agriculture Insurance Supports, Irrigation Supports and Other Agricultural Supports. Supports such as fuel and fertilizer support per decare, certified seed use, soil analysis, support for organic and good agricultural practices, support for drought and frost disaster are included in area-based agricultural support. Area-based support in organic farming is an important financial means of support for organic farming production and producers in Turkey. In 2017, organic plant production supports are area based but organic animals are supported as beekeeping (bee hive). Supports for plant production have separated into 4 categories by government. First category includes fruit and vegetable, second category includes medical and herbal plants, third category includes field crops having economic value and fourth category includes field crops and forest products not having economic value. The supports for organic farming in Turkey are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Supports for organic farming

	2013	2016	2017
<i>Supports for organic farming</i>	<i>(TL/da)</i>	<i>(TL/da)</i>	<i>(TL/da)</i>
1.Category (Fruit-Vegetable)	50	100	100
2.Category (Medical and Herbal plants)	-	70	70
3.Category (Field crops having economic value)	10	30	30
4. Category (Field crops and forest products not having economic value)	-	10	10
<i>Supports for organic livestock</i>	<i>(TL/bee hive)</i>	<i>(TL/bee hive)</i>	<i>(TL/bee hive)</i>
Beekeeping	5	10	10

Source: Anonymous, 2017a

One of the subsidies in the organic agricultural production is awarded to support the producers opting for “The Environmentally Based Agricultural Land Protection Programme-ÇATAK”. Accordingly, organic agricultural practices that fall into Category 3 in “ÇATAK” and that are environmentally friendly are paid 135 TL/per decare/per year.

Another subsidy is given to exporters. The subsidy program that the exporters exporting organic agricultural products can benefit from has been determined with the notice (Notice: 97/5) called “Subsidies for Environmental Costs” issued by the Board of Subsidies and Coordination of Ministry of Economy. To be able to benefit from this subsidy, exporters have to be a member of Export Associations (Ataseven and Sumelius, 2014).

Organic farming is supported by government but there is a lack of an effective support system for organic farming in Turkey. The supports are insufficient for producers. For the last 2 years, area-based supports have not changed. Despite the efforts to promote organic production, supports for organic farming remain relatively low. Subsidies given for organic farming should be given increasingly every year and in a timely manner. The current policy applications and approaches reflect the need to improve the strategies for organic farming in Turkey.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Turkey is an agriculture-based country and organic farming is one of the fastest-growing trends in the food industry.

Agricultural policies have an important role to play in facilitating organic agriculture. In 2004, the Organic Agriculture Law in Turkey was put into practice to provide a legal framework for the organization and enhancement of the organic sector. This law is also important as a part of European Union (EU) harmonization.

Demand for organic food is very sensitive to consumer income level. Consumers have a high propensity to purchase organic foods but organic foods are expensive for producers. Turkish state should fulfil the conditions necessary to decrease the high retail prices of organic products. As consumer demand for organic food rises, more farmers will pass to organic production.

Turkey should provide production growth in organic agriculture products and develop effective trade policies by considering both the domestic market and international markets. In addition, the supports given by the state for organic farming should be increased every year and producers that passing to the organic farming should be encouraged.

Supports for organic farming have strategic importance in terms of development of the sector and sustainability of organic production in Turkey. There is a need to promote more

effective policies in order to contribute of the foreign trade positively and increase of the share taken from organic product markets of Turkey.

As a result, agricultural policies applied in organic agriculture should be determined taking these factors into consideration.

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