

ORGANIC FARMING IN ROMANIA AND EUROPEAN UNION.

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Abstract

Romania is one of the countries in which agriculture continues to be of considerable importance, soil fertility, generous agricultural area and labor force representing the premises for practicing a successful agricultural activity. Romania's accession to the European Union and the adoption of the principles of the Common Agricultural Policy have generated new and positive developments in this sector, which still remains marked by numerous difficulties.

Both globally and in the European Union, organic farming is enjoying real success. However, Romania is characterized by a certain reluctance of agricultural producers towards the ecological system, the growths being slow, oscillating and limited. This paper aims to analyze the state of the organic farming in our country, identifying existing problems and also possible opportunities.

Keywords: Agriculture, Organic Farming

JEL classification: Q1, Q19, Q5, Q59

1. Introduction

Organic farming is defined as a production process focused on ensuring the well-being of soils, ecosystems and people. According to IFOAM, the process combines traditional and innovative environmental practices, supporting equitable relations and seeking to increase the quality of life of all those involved: producers, suppliers, traders (IFOAM General Assembly, 2008).

The category of organic agricultural products includes: processed and unprocessed food, beverages, feed and seeds. The organic farming system

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consist of the profile producers, but also their suppliers, the processors and distributors of organic food products.

The functioning of the organic farms is strictly regulated, the organic certified producers being required to comply with strict principles related to agricultural production, animal welfare, food chain (European Commission). Among these principles we find:

- limiting the use of artificial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides;
- banning the use of genetically modified organisms;
- prohibition of the use of ionizing radiation;
- banning the use of hormones;
- restricting the use of antibiotics.

2. Sections

At the end of 2018, statistical data indicated the existence of a total of 71.5 million ha cultivated organically. Oceania ranks first (36.0 million ha), seconded by Europe (15.6 million ha) and Latin America (8 million ha). Of the 2.8 million certified producers, most are in India, followed by Uganda and Ethiopia. In turn, the market for organic products is characterized by a permanent expansion, the market leader being the USA, followed by Europe (FAO, 2020).

Adhering to a high-performance agriculture, which responds to both the quantitative needs of the population, but also to the requirements related to the environment, the European Union is one of the most important supporters and promoters of organic agriculture. This fact is demonstrated by the continuous growth of the sector, year by year, the certified organic areas occupying an increasingly consistent share in the total utilised agricultural areas. Thus, in 2018, organic agriculture comprised 13438168 ha, totalling 7.5% of the total utilised agricultural area in the European Union. The best represented states are: Spain (2246475 ha/16.7%), France (2034115 ha/ 15.1%) and Italy (1957937 ha/14.5%), followed at some distance by Germany (1221303 ha/ 9%). It should be noted that only these 4 countries together hold over 50% of the total ecological agricultural area of the EU, more precisely 55.4%. At the opposite pole are placed states such as: Malta (47 ha), Luxembourg (5782 ha/0.04%) and Cyprus (6022 ha/0.04%). Among the states with a modest representation in this respect, we also find: Slovenia, the

Netherlands, Belgium, Croatia and Ireland. Regarding Romania, it ranks 11th in the EU-28 (326260 ha / 2.4%).

Table 1. Organic area, EU-28

Countries	Organic area (ha)	% of total organic area
EU 28	13438168	100
Austria	639097	4,75
Belgium	89025	0,66
Bulgaria	128839	0,95
Croatia	103166	0,76
Cyprus	6022	0,04
Czechia	519910	3,86
Denmark	256711	1,91
Estonia	206590	1,53
Finland	297442	2,21
France	2034115	15,13
Germany	1221303	9,08
Greece	492627	3,66
Hungary	209382	1,55
Ireland	118699	0,88
Italy	1957937	14,56
Latvia	280383	2,08
Lithuania	239691	1,78
Luxembourg	5782	0,04
Malta	47	0,00
Netherlands	57904	0,43
Poland	484676	3,60
Portugal	213118	1,58
Romania	326260	2,42
Slovakia	188986	1,40
Slovenia	47848	0,35
Spain	2246475	16,71
Sweden	608754	4,53
United Kingdom	457378	3,40

Source: Eurostat

Related to the share of total organic area in total utilised agricultural area (UAA), the countries that have in their coverage the most extensively cultivated lands are: Austria (24.1%), Estonia (20.6%) and Sweden (20.3 %). Romania occupies the second last place in this ranking, with a representation

of 2.4%, followed only by Malta (0.4%) (Organic farming statistics. Statistics Explained, 2020).

As organic production, the arable land accounts for 45% of the EU total organic crop area (6 million ha), followed by pastures and meadows (43.9%), the permanent crops being represented by the smallest share (10.8%).

The European Union is also an important market for organic food, in 2016 ranking second in the world (30.7 billion euros), ahead only by the US (38.9 billion euros). The largest European market for organic products is Germany (9.5 billion euros). In terms of the share of organic products in the total food sales, the first place in the EU is occupied by Denmark (9.7%), followed by Luxembourg (8.6%), Switzerland (8.4%) and Germany (5%). The highest per capita expenditures for organic food are employed by Switzerland (274 euros), Denmark (227 euros), Sweden (197 euros) and Germany (116 euros) (Source: euractiv.ro).

According to MADR statistics, organic agriculture has registered an oscillating evolution in Romania, both in terms of the number of certified operators and in terms of the total of organic lands.

The years 2010-2012 mark a sharp increase in the number of operators, more precisely from 3155 operators reaching 15554. However, the growth is not a sustained one, the next interval, between 2013-2017, being characterized by a steep decrease. A certain return occurs in 2018, a trend maintained in 2019, when the number of operators recorded in statistics is 9821.

A similar dynamic is specific to ecologically cultivated areas. These lands expand from 182,706 ha in 2010 (1.4% of the cultivated agricultural area) to 395,227.97 ha in 2019 (the highest in the last 9 years). This is the moment of stalemate in 2016, when the organically cultivated lands were drastically reduced to 226 ha (0.0018% of the total cultivated agricultural area).

Table 2. Organic farming areas / Number of profile operators. Romania 2010-2018

No. crt.	Year	Certified producers (no.)	Organic lands (ha)
1.	2010	3155	182706
2.	2011	9703	229946
3.	2012	15544	288261
4.	2013	15194	301148
5.	2014	14470	289251
6.	2015	12231	245923
7.	2016	10562	226
8.	2017	8434	258470
9.	2018	9008	326259
10	2019	9821	395227

Source: MADR

Regarding the main crops practiced in the system of organic agriculture, on the first place are placed cereal crops, followed by industrial crops, green harvested plants and permanent crops represented by orchards and vineyards.

Also interesting is the dynamics of the areas embodying these crops, the largest expansion being reported in the period 2010-2019 in the case of orchards and vineyards (increase of 715%), followed by land with green harvested plants (increase of 364%), the surfaces destined for cereals (increase of 175%), respectively those occupied with industrial plants (163%).

In the case of vegetables, the growth is much more sensitive. After a maximum reached in 2014, the statistics record successive decreases, the return from 2017 having an episodic character. At present, the lands cultivated with organic vegetables are numbered at 804 ha, which means an increase of only approx. 1% compared to the reference year 2010.

In turn, the pastures and meadows organized in the ecological system are characterized by wavering evolutions, their surface increasing from 31579 (2010) to 115420 in 2019 (increase of 365%).

Table 3 Organic Agriculture Crops. Romania 2010-2018

No. crt.	Year	Cereals	Industrial crops	Green harvested plants	Permanent crops (orchards/vineyards)	Vegetables
1.	2010	72297	47815	10325	3093	743
2.	2011	79167	47879	4788	4166	914

3.	2012	105149	44788	11082	7781	896
4.	2013	109105	51770	13184	9400	1067
5.	2014	102531	54145	13493	9438	1928
6.	2015	81439	52583	13636	11117	1210
7.	2016	75198	53396	14280	12019	1175
8.	2017	84925	72388	20350	13165	1458
9.	2018	114427	80193	28253	18569	983
10	2019	126842	78350	37660	22143	804

Source: MADR

Despite the fact that the Romanian producers are encouraged to switch to organic farming, benefiting from various subsidies and direct payments, many still prefer conventional agriculture. The main reasons invoked by them are related to the fact that a conversion to the new system implies the decrease of agricultural production, at least in a first phase, but also that processors and traders are not willing to pay higher prices for organic products than for those derived from traditional agriculture. Moreover, the domestic market is a limited one, most Romanian consumers lacking a certain culture regarding organic products.

3. Conclusions

The dynamics of the organic farming system indicates constant and consistent growth, its development potential being vast. This trend is registered both globally and within the member states of the European Union, organic farming being considered a challenge but also an opportunity for the future.

Romania's agricultural resources are indisputable, in terms of area, population and fertile soil qualities, our country benefiting from favourable premises for the sector's expansion. Although the conditions allow it, the development of organic farming in Romania is a slow process, of moderate intensity and often inconsistency.

Many Romanian farmers are still reluctant to convert to the organic farming system, their biggest concern being related to production decrease. Despite the reservations, organic agriculture is gaining more and more ground in our country, responding to the need to diversify the Romanian agriculture, to make it more efficient, in other words presenting itself as a long-term opportunity.

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