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“Utilisation of diversity in land use systems:
Sustainable and organic approaches to meet human needs”

Economic and Environmental Assessment of Organic Farming in Turkey

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Abstract

Organic farming is a new production technique, which abstain from or largely excludes the use of farm chemicals, concentrated feeds and additives. Organic farming has been adopted in farms since the mid 1980s by the supports of trade firms in the Western part of Turkey and organic crop and livestock farming has rapidly diversified so far today. Dried sultanas, apricots, figs and hazelnuts were the first crops to be produced organically and today, 110 different crops and livestock products are produced organically. Organic farming planted areas reached to 170,000 ha, which corresponds to 0.70 % of the total farmland and the organic production was approximately 220,000 tons in 2006.

Organic production is organised based on the standards and certification systems of the importing countries, which are mainly the EU countries. In order to provide a legal framework for the organisation and enhancement of the organic farming sector, an organic farming law numbered 5262 was drafted and made effective on December 1, 2004. The organic industry brings direct benefits to producers in terms of improved agricultural techniques, reduced costs of external inputs, improved environmental value and food quality.

The hypothesis of this study aims to pursue the question whether organic farming can contribute to the welfare of producers and environmental preservation in agriculture. The results of the research carried out on farm level indicate that average yields of organic crops are generally low, prices received by farmers, labour requirements and the net profit per hectare of planted area is higher than conventional farming in Turkey. Organic farming has a positive contribution to producer welfare, and producers are inclined to maintain and expand the organic farming in general. In this paper, evaluation of organic farming is reviewed in the light of the recent research results on the farm level as well as recent developments in national level in terms of production, export volume, domestic consumption, legal and institutional framework in Turkey. Also, the problems of organic producers are discussed and policy proposals in organic industry is proposed in relation with the accession to the EU.

Keywords: Organic farming, Turkey