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Part II
COUNTRY REPORTS

ALBANIA

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ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENT BEGINNINGS

The organic agriculture movement started in Albania as recently as 1997, the period when the Organic Agriculture Association (OAA) was founded.

Some intellectuals from the University of Agriculture, different scientific research institutions and specialists of different fields, who had enough information on the actual concepts of sustainable agriculture development, created this association.

This association organized from the beginning, activities that aimed to disseminate the information on Organic Agriculture and its economic, environmental and health advantages among the interested persons.

During various open meetings, foreign experts brought different information on Organic Agriculture, and also started the publication of the magazine "Agrobiomediterranea". Some small projects were implemented with the financial support of different donors.

Organic Agriculture became more defined after the year 2000 when OAA won a big project financed by the Swiss Government, whose partner was the Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL).

Parallel to this project, OAA had another project with the Dutch Foundation "AVALON".

Since OAA is the only institution, either governmental or private, which is dealing with the development of the Organic Agriculture movement, we list some of its main activities which in a way reflect the initial achievements of Organic Agriculture in Albania:

- the creation of the first organic pilot farms, where the organic practices and techniques are demonstrated;
- the set up of two retail and one wholesale points (with cooling room);
- the organization of different training activities in collaboration with foreign trainees with the aim of qualifying specialists in Organic Agriculture. Agriculture specialists from Kosovo have also participated in these training sessions;
- the organization of seminars with farmers in order to make them aware of Organic Agriculture practices and principles;
- the performance of 'on farm' researches in Organic Agriculture;
- the facilitation of the relationships between farmers and market;
- the organization of campaigns to inform the consumers about the advantages of Organic Agriculture;
- the publication, every 3 months, of approximately 2000 copies of the magazine "Agriculture & Ecology";
- the preparation and publication of Organic Agriculture technologies (leaflets, brochures and videos) and their dissemination to organic farmers or other interested persons;
- the help to farmers by giving them free consultancy and inputs such as: pheromones, plant extracts, local resistant seeds, inputs about composting, etc;
- the setup of the first certification body for organic products with the aim of having a private independent body in the future;
- the creation of the standards on Organic Agriculture production and trade;
- the collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Ministry in framing the organic agriculture policies.

Besides, OAA is a member of IFOAM since 1998, and has recruited for its project implementation more than 30 experts from different scientific institutions, as well as many local experts.

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PRACTICES IN ALBANIA

Organic agriculture practices have already started to be implemented in the “in conversion” and in the “organic” farms, and this agriculture system, nowadays, has started to be differentiated as a system on its own with its own specifics.

Soil management

Priority is given to anti-erosion measures. The biodiversity around the plots is enriched. Crop rotation is considered a very important process.

Intensive working of the land is avoided and green strips are applied normally, especially in fruit trees and vineyards. Assistance is being given to organic farmers to encourage the use of more green fertilizers such as the comfrey plant (*Symphytum xuplanddicum*), which now grows also in Albania, and organic manure, especially in olive trees and vineyards. The use of classic chemical fertilizers has been reduced by 90%.

Plant protection

The strategy of plant protection from parasites is oriented towards the principle that “preventing parasites is better than directly controlling them”. Therefore, efforts are being made to integrate more of the elements of technology such as: sanitation of the agricultural environment, and of the land, equilibrated fertilization, enrichment of the biodiversity inside and outside the plots, observation and signaling for treatments of plant protection in the right time and according to needs, use of products harmless to the environment, use of bio-technical methods for the protection from insects, avoidance of unnecessary treatments, crop rotation, selection of varieties resistant or tolerant to parasites, solarization, etc. These are some of the measures that are being applied in the Albanian organic farms.

Some of the plant protection products used already in the organic farms are: Neem, *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *Krustaki*, *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *tenebrionis*, Audience (spinosad), soaps, products with copper base (three formulations are being used), products with sulfur base (three formulations are being used), confusion pheromones for controlling the grape moth, and apple-codding moth, plant extracts (garlic), food dissolutions for controlling olive fly and grape bumblebee.

For weed control different agro-technical measures are being used, including mulching and small machinery pulled by domestic animals or hand cultivators.

ACTUAL SITUATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Currently, the production of the individual private farms predominates. Olive oil and cheese producers have joined in groups. There are five groups of olive oil producers and one group of sheep and goat cheese producers in the Karaburuni area. The olive oil producers own 15 ha of olive trees and in 2004 produced and exported 2 tons of olive oil. The Karaburuni stockbreeders in Vlore own 13 500 sheep and goats with an annual production of more than 30 tons of cheese. There are also some groups of herb collectors.

Figures on production, processing and marketing of organic products

| | |
|---|----|
| • Total number of organic farms | 60 |
| • number of farms in conversion | 50 |
| • number of organic farms | 10 |
| • Olive oil factories certificated by foreign certification bodies (Both situated near Tirana) | 2 |
| • Wine factory certified by OAA situated in Sukth near Durres | 1 |

Details on organic farms surface area, location and crops are given in table 1.

Table 1. Figures on the organic farms in Albania

| Organically managed Plants and Animals | Surface (ha) | Location | Notes |
|---|--------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Vegetables | 9 | Tirane, Durres, Vlore | 0.6 ha in glasshouses Asparagus (0.2 ha) was first planted only 2 years ago |
| Fruit trees | 5 | | 0.2 ha apples Confusing pheromones are used against worm |
| Citrus | 0.5 | Vlore, Skrapar | Lemon and mandarins |
| Olive trees | 15 | Tirane, Kruje, Vlore | In 2004 2 tons of olive oil was exported |
| Vineyard | 4 | Tirane, Durres, Skrapar | 3 ha treated with confusing pheromones. In 2004 3 tons of wine were produced in conversion to BIO |
| Alfalfa and fodder | 6 | In different areas | Part of it was produced together with grain. |
| Cereals | 5 | | |
| Fresh kitchen herbs cultivated in glasshouses | 2.6 | | |
| Potatoes | 7 | Durres, Tirane, Fier, Shkoder | |
| Arable land | 44.1 | | |
| Forests | 10 | | |
| Pastures | 15 | | |
| Certificated land | 69.1 | | |
| Livestock breeding | | | |
| Cows | 110 | | |
| Sheep in sheds | 400 | | |
| Sheep and goat | 13 500 | | "Karaburuni" association |
| Poultry in houses | 2 000 | | 200 of them are turkeys |
| Poultry in stall | 300 | Durres | In production |
| Perissodactyls | 10 | | |
| Bee hives | 300 | Vlore (Llogora) | |

The surface and quantity of collected herbs is not included.

FIRST EFFORTS OF BIO PRODUCTS MARKETING

Currently, there are two points of retail and a warehouse 50-60 m² with a cooling room with a capacity to hold 1.5 tons of products. Organic products have been sold since 4 years ago in a retail shop named Natural & Organic BIO, at a small individual stall trading in fruit and vegetables and in a collective stall where organic farmers sell their products. The warehouse is always at the disposal of the organic producers who store their products that they cannot sell within the day.

The rent of the warehouse and of the stalls and the salary of the warehouse manager are paid by the OAA project.

OAA also pays the persons in charge of marketing, labeling and publicity in the written and electronic media.

LEGISLATIVE ASPECTS

In 2004, the Albanian Parliament approved the Organic Agriculture Law. The basis for the preparation of this law was the EU Regulation 2092/91, IFOAM Standards and organic laws in different countries such as: Hungary, Czech Republic and also the standards of some European private certification bodies. There are some clauses in the law which are difficult to be implemented in Albania. It is, however, a good beginning for the development of Organic Agriculture in our country.

The law requires the creation of the so-called "Competent Authority", which has not yet been fulfilled and without which a certification body cannot be licensed. According to OAA the "Competent

Authority” is an indispensable institution, but it would be better during the initial years of the existence of Organic Agriculture to work under a regulation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MoAF), including every detail related to production, processing, certification and marketing.

Actually, OAA inspection/certification body does the certification of the organic products. A certification commission, a certification committee and a person responsible for certificate issuing compose this body. The association created and approved the Standards of Organic Agriculture during its Assembly meeting, as well as the documentation required for the certification procedure. Foreign experts paid by OAA have contributed to the preparation of these documents.

HUMAN AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

The number of Organic Agriculture experts is still small. Some of them have been trained by IAM Bari, while others have attended short courses for inspection/certification problems. OAA has also trained some of them. More than 15 specialists have participated in different Organic Agriculture activities organized in the USA or European countries. There is a lack of informative materials related to Organic Agriculture practices. A real need is the publication of the entire philosophy and practices of Organic Agriculture as a production system and of its marketing procedures.

RESEARCH

There has been no authentic Organic Agriculture research, but only research on farms by OAA staff in cooperation with some experts from different scientific institutions. The most important are listed in table 2.

Table 2. list of research activities and institutions in Albania

| No. | Research title | Institution and specialists | Year |
|-----|--|---|-----------|
| 1 | Grape protection against bumblebee (<i>Vespa vulgaris</i>) with the use of sweet drinks | OAA (Enver Isufi) PPI (Llambi themeli) | 2001-2004 |
| 2 | protection from the grape moth (<i>Lobesia botrana</i>) by using confusing pheromones | OAA (Enver Isufi) | 2002-2004 |
| 3 | Apple protection from the codling moth (<i>Laspeyresia pomonella</i>) by using confusing pheromones | OAA, (Enver Isufi) | 2004-2006 |
| 4 | Test fields with Audience (spinosad) against the bumblebee in plum and pear | OAA (Enver Isufi) PPI (Llambi Themeli) | 2003-2004 |
| 5 | Test fields with Audience (spinosad) against the olive fly (<i>Bractocera oleae</i>) | OAA (Veiz Selami) | 2004-2005 |
| 6 | Test fields against the grape moth (<i>Lobesia botrana</i>) using (<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i>) var, krustaci | OAA (Enver Isufi) | 2004-2005 |
| 7 | Field tests for protection of potatoes from potatoe beetle (<i>Leptinotarsa decemlineata</i>) using <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> var. tenebrionis | OAA (Enver Isufi) Potatoes Association (Xhavit Borici e Fadil Salaci) | 2003-2004 |
| 8 | Seed production from 4 autochthon vegetable varieties | OAA (Enver Isufi) VPI (Sokrat Jani) | 2003-2005 |
| 9 | Field tests for 30 grape varieties and 24 apple varieties for level of resistance to parasites | OAA (Enver Isufi dhe Veiz Selami) PPI (Robert Naçi) | 2004-2009 |
| 10 | Field tests for mulching advantages in olive trees | OAA,(Enver Isufi) Idriz Haxhiu, biologist | 2003-2005 |
| 11 | Use of Diamon Phosphate diluted with water as trap for massive control of olive flies (<i>Bractocera olea</i>) | OAA (Veiz Selami) | 2003-2005 |
| 12 | Use of fish in water dissolution as trap for massive control of olive flies (<i>Bractocera olea</i>) | OAA (Veiz Selami) | 2003-2005 |
| 13 | Use of beer as trap for massive control of cochlea | OAA (Enver Isufi) | 2002-2003 |
| 14 | Natural parasites in the conventional and organic production system of grapes | OAA (Enver Isufi) AU (Natasha Duraj) PPI (Ejup Cota) | 2004-2005 |

SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN ALBANIA

1. Creation of “Competent Authority” near MoAF
2. Responsible person at MoAF for Organic Agriculture
3. Studies on zones and products that must be on the top list of priorities for the development of Organic Agriculture in Albania.
4. Subvention by the government for organic farmers
5. National sensitization activities for Organic Agriculture development
6. Education of specialists with adequate knowledge on Organic Agriculture
7. Introduction of Organic Agriculture practices in the education programs of schools and universities
8. Introduction of Organic Agriculture objectives in the research work-frame of the University of Agriculture and other scientific research institutions
9. Creation of a national body of inspection/certification and approval of the National Logo for Organic Agriculture.