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Syria

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INTRODUCTION

In view of the agricultural status in Syria, we notice the presence of many agricultural commodities organic or nearly organic. This requires a definition of principles and measurements related to this agriculture, and the granting of certifications for these products. Some of these products are: wheat, barley, lentils, cotton, chickpea, figs, nuts, pomegranate, pistachios, medicinal and aromatic plants, rain-fed fruit trees, especially olive, almonds etc., in addition to sheep raised in the Syrian Steppe.

Particularly, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform implements integrated control programs on citrus and olive to limit the use of pesticides by spreading of natural and biological enemies and distribution of pheromones and nutritional traps in all areas.

The General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research (GCSAR) implements many researches related to Organic Agriculture, such as the use of organic fertilizers and biological enemies on some vegetables and fruit trees .

The Organic Agriculture committee was established on 26/7/2003 to prepare a National action plan.

A project is under way to support Organic Agriculture in Syria, with the assistance of the Italian Government to train Syrian technicians.

STRUCTURAL ASPECTS

Number of Farms

Organic farms: 2

Farms In conversion: none

Mixed farms: none

Total area: 260 ha (table 1)

Products: olive, olive oil

Table 1. Surface area and production of main crops

Product	Area (ha)	Quantity (kg)	Farm price (USD)
Olive	250	100 000	No data (the farm is still in fructification stage. Sales have yet not begun and the first production is distributed free)
Grape	10	-	Established this year (2004)

Olive is milled in one mill after ensuring it is free from any non-organic olive residues. Oil is filled directly in separate tanks prepared for this purpose under supervision of inspection committees (the first production is not ready for sale).

Areas of wild product collection: Farmers collect some wild plants (medicinal and aromatic) from their homes and sell them in local markets. There is no enumeration of these people and there are some collection units where these products are gathered and refilled before being sold in wholesale markets (all of which are conventional).

In Syria there are no organic markets in view of the fact that Syria, thus, far does not have legal principles to grant these certificates. This requires establishment of suitable infrastructure. Syrian organic products, if any, are licensed and inspected by foreign companies.

REGULATORY ASPECTS

There is no special law related to Organic Agriculture in Syria. There are no local inspection boards. Inspection is carried out under supervision of foreign companies (ECOCERT).

The Syrian Organization for Standardization is lobbying for the use of quality systems and legislations, and the National Committee of Quality in Syria is seeking to apply and spread quality measurements.

RESEARCH, TRAINING AND ENLARGEMENT

GCSAR implements some researches (farming without mineral fertilization or chemical pest and disease control for some crops such as: cucumber, tomato, strawberry), as well as some researches about organic fertilizers, and growing of some varieties which are disease resistance.

Five specialist researchers were commissioned to Italy for training and obtaining of scientific certificates on Organic Agriculture according to European principles adopted in conformity with the European law of Organic Agriculture.

A seminar was held on the production of organic foods and the perspective of development at Aleppo university in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform during 10-12/3/2003.

Through the agricultural status in Syria, we find several conventional agricultural commodities which need only the identification of international principles and measurements, and the obtaining of certificates. Some of these commodities are:

Wheat: cultivated areas in second and third settlement zones which are about 446 000 ha produce about 800 000 tons. Chemical fertilizers are used at very small rates.

Barley: cultivated areas in second and third settlement zones which are about 594 000 ha produce about 729 000 tons. Chemical fertilizers or pesticides are not used.

Lentil: cultivated areas in second settlement zones which are about 70 000 ha produce about 100 000 tons. Chemical fertilizers or pesticides are not used.

Chick-pea: cultivated areas in second settlement zones which are about 40 000 ha produce about 52 000 tons. Chemical fertilizers or pesticides are not used.

Figs: cultivated areas are about 11 000 ha. produce about 40 000 tons. Chemical fertilizers or pesticides are not used.

Apple: cultivated areas in Al-Arab and Al-Haramoun mountains are about 11 000 ha produce about 26 000 tons which may increase to 78 000 tons. Chemical fertilizers or pesticides are used in very small amounts.

Olive: This type of farming doesn't use pesticides or chemical fertilizers where 80% of it may change to Organic Agriculture. The cultivated areas are about 516 000 ha. An integrated control program using pheromones and nutritional traps is applied.

Citrus: In Syria pesticides are not applied on this type of agriculture and all that we need to do is to replace mineral fertilization with organic fertilization to change it as a whole to Organic Agriculture.

Wild medical and aromatic plants: These occur naturally and need only to be granted licenses and certifications.

Sheep in Syrian Steppe and marginal zones: they are raised in folds and are not fed with concentrated fodders. Their meat and products are considered organic and need only to be licensed.

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