ORGANIC FARMING IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

AGRICULTURA ECOLOGICĂ ÎN CONTEXTUL POLITICII AGRICOLE COMUNE

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Abstract:*Organic farming is the form of agriculture that relies on techniques such as crop rotation, green manure, compost and biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and control pests on a farm. Organic farming excludes or strictly limits the use of manufactured fertilizers, pesticides (which include herbicides, insecticides and fungicides), plant growth regulators such as hormones, livestock antibiotics, food additives, and genetically modified organisms. Organic agricultural methods are internationally regulated and legally enforced by many nations, based in large part on the standards set by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), an international umbrella organization for organic farming organizations established in 1972.*

Key words: *organic farming, common policy, methods, opportunities, crisis;*

INTRODUCTION

IFOAM defines the overarching goal of organic farming as: "Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved."

Since 1990, the market for organic products has grown from nothing, reaching $55 billion in 2009 according to Organic Monitor (www.organicmonitor.com). This demand has driven a similar increase in organically managed farmland. Approximately 37,000,000 hectares (91,000,000 acres) worldwide are now farmed organically, representing approximately 0.9 percent of total world farmland (2009).

Put simply, organic farming is an agricultural system that seeks to provide you, the consumer, with fresh, tasty and authentic food while respecting natural life-cycle systems.

To achieve this, organic farming relies on a number of objectives and principles, as well as common practices designed to minimize the human impact on the environment, while ensuring the agricultural system operates as naturally as possible.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research was accomplished from a triple perspective, in which the conceptual methodological approach is correlated to the empirical study and to a variety of references to practical actions aiming at analysis of the organic farming in Europe and in Romania in the context of the common agricultural policy.

The conclusions expressed in this paper were the result of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the characteristics and the evolution of the organic farming.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organic farming is an important tool in the strategy of environmental integration and sustainable development which are key principles of the common agricultural policy (CAP).

Organic farmers are currently eligible to receive support from the first pillar of the CAP through direct payments and price support measures. More importantly, organic farming is fully integrated in the rural development policy, the second pillar of the CAP, and plays an important role in delivering environmental benefits.

The 2003 CAP reform emphasized the long-term economic and social viability of the agricultural sector, providing safe, high quality products by methods offering a high degree of consideration for the environment. The CAP reform can therefore be expected to provide a positive framework for the future development of organic farming in Europe, as follows:

- The introduction of the single farm payment: being decoupled from production, the single farm payment will allow organic farmers to grow the crops that they consider to be more suitable for their organic

rotation and to rear their livestock more extensively, without having to forsake the direct payments previously associated with particular crops and livestock.

- The familiarity and expertise acquired by organic farmers in the meeting of precise standards will allow them to adapt more quickly and efficiently to the new demands of cross-compliance, in particular in relation to environmental and animal welfare standards.
- Increased funding for rural development programs.
- The importance of animal welfare and food quality standards in organic production methods also puts organic farmers in a good position to meet the new standards.

Member States have different options regarding implementation, and the effects on organic farming will depend on how Member States implement the reform. For example the degree of decoupling and the use of national envelopes will have an impact on organic farming and Member States who wish to support organic farming should therefore consider the effect on organic farming when implementing the new rules.

In the same way, the Commission, when it prepares extended impact assessments for modifications to market organization regulations, takes into account the interest of different groups of stakeholders, including the effect of the proposal on organic farming.

Within the first pillar, the fruit and vegetables Common Market Organization provides for specific support to producer organizations, including those covering organic farmers.

The Commission ensures that all farm support complies with WTO rules on notification and classification. In general, support linked to production ('coupled support') is notified in the 'amber' or 'blue' boxes and is subject to reduction commitments. Decoupled support and payments under environmental programs that meet WTO conditions are clarified under the 'green' box and are exempt from reduction commitments.

CONCLUSIONS

In designing a global policy concept for organic farming the dual societal role of organic farming should be recognized:

- organic farming is a method for producing food products, which created a specific market for organic food products and consumers willing

to buy those products, usually at a higher price. From this point of view, organic farming is financed by the consumers who reap the benefit of it, i.e. the food products of their choice. From this angle, the development of organic farming is governed by market rules.

- organic farming is known to deliver public goods, primarily environmental benefits, but also public health, social and rural development and animal welfare. The emphasis here is rather on the land management carried out by organic farmers. The public goods so delivered can be financed by public means. Seen from this angle, the development of organic farming is a policy choice, mainly on environmental policy grounds.

Both roles of organic farming contribute to the income for farmers, while the economic opportunities for operators further in the food chain stem mainly from market mechanisms.

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