

DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK ON ORGANIC FARMING

Vildan KARAARSLAN

Keywords: Organic Farming, Trainings, projects, supports

Curriculum Vitae of Vildan KARAARSLAN:

She was graduated from Aegean University, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Field Crop Breeding and Improvement in 1981. She completed her Master of Science degree at Ankara University, Faculty of Agriculture, and Department Of Agricultural Products Technology in 1986. She has English Language Course Program A Grade Certificate issued by the Directorate of Foreign Languages Teaching Center for Government Employees. At present, she is Head of Department of Good Agriculture Practices and Organic Farming at General Directorate of Plant Production at the Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock. Moreover, she is member of Organic Farming Committee and Organic Farming National Guidance Committee.

Summary:

In Turkey, organic farming activities are conducted under the auspices of Department of Good Agriculture Practices and Organic Farming of the General Directorate of Plant Production of the Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock. There are Organic Farming Committee and Organic Farming National Guidance Committee. Besides, there are Organic Farming Units in 81 Provincial Directorates. The Ministry has assigned its control and certification authority for organic farming to private bodies. Training, publication and project activities are pursued for the improvement and extension of organic farming. Within this framework, Organic Farming National Action Plan was prepared and activities have been carried out accordingly. In Turkey organic plant production and organic animal breeding are also supported.

Every passing day, because of the increasing environmental awareness and accession for secure food and with the intention of delivering a viable world to the future generations, environmental agricultural methods have been introduced. Below mentioned activities have been implemented by the Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock for the extension of organic farming which is foremost among aforementioned methods,

Training Activities

Organic Farming Units have been established within the organizational body of Provincial Directorates, functioning under the umbrella of Headquarter of the Ministry. Technical Staffs deployed for those units have been trained on organic farming periodically since 2003. Trained technical staffs also organize training activities for the farmers of their area of responsibility.

Organic Farming control and certification procedures are carried out private bodies authorized by the Ministry. Organic Farming Controller Training Program has been organized, with the collaboration of Turkish Standard Institution, so as to meet controller and certifier demands of those bodies. In addition to the training activities organized for the operators producing organic product, other training programs also performed for the improvement of consumer awareness.

Project Activities

"Extension and Control of Organic Farming Project" has been implemented in order to improve and extend organic farming nationwide. With the implementation of this project, The Ministry has aimed at the extension of organic farming and control of organic products by not polluting soil, water resources and air and by protecting plant, animal and human health to the utmost, by increasing quantity of organic product at the sufficient level for the availability of whole income group. The project has been on operation within 47 provinces and 18 Research Institute. Within the scope of the project, training, publication and demonstration activities have been pursued.

Extension Activities for Organic Farming in Sensitive Regions

A protocol was signed between our General Directorate and General Directorate of State Water Affair on 30th 12 2003 for the implementation of organic farming at the dam basins for drinking and utility water. In accordance with this protocol, activities have been performed in 18 dam basin in 18 provinces. Mostly training and office work has been carried out jointly with DSI staffs at those dam basins and training activities organized by the technical staffs of aforementioned unit constitute an important place for dam basins.

EU Funded "Development of Organic Farming and Compliance of National Legal Framework with EU Regulations Project"

The Project was implemented for 15 months and completed in 2007. The Project was financed jointly by EU Pre-accession Support Fund of 2004 and National funds. The Project activities were to get technical support and to procurement of hardware and relevant equipment.

In general, the Project aimed at sustainable improvement of organic farming and related sectors in Turkey in harmonization with EU Legal Acquis.

In special, the Project aimed at harmonization of national legal framework with EU Legal Acquis, improvement of inspection and control capacity of the Ministry, revision of certification system and bodies in conformity with EU regulations, collection of information in the field of organic farming, contribution of protection of environment and food quality by transposing those information to the farmers.

Project Activities

Within the scope of technical support in the field of legislative alignment and institutional capacity building, Training programs were organized for the Ministry on organic farming concepts, regulation and control, training of trainers, farmer field schools, remote training, farmer association and cooperatives and project development.

Training of 20 technical staffs to be given training from the headquarters, training of 40 technical staffs, in EU member states for one week, on inspection of control and certification bodies and setting the schedule, publication of guidebooks and leaflet and organization of project activities were completed by the Ministry.

Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Funded "Strengthening of Organic Farming in Turkey Project"

In 2005, it was brought up to the agenda to prepare a project on "Strengthening of Organic Farming in Turkey" during the Joint Meeting of ECO-FAO-IDB, hosted by Economic Cooperation Organization, held in Tehran. Special fund allocated by Islamic Development Bank during the Third Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture held in 2007 in Tehran.

Grant contract was signed in 2008 in relation with the project submitted to Islamic Development Bank. The project aimed primarily at definition of advantageous for the production of organic products comparatively, development of market, execution of market analyses, training of technical staffs for the selected topics for the improvement of the market. Within the scope of the project, activities were performed on maintenance of sustainability of organic farming in a comparative basis. Workshops were organized in the provinces of Çanakkale, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Erzurum. Aforementioned project activities were completed in 2011.

Organic Farming Activities within the Protection of Agricultural Lands for Environmental Purposes (ÇATAK) Programme

Within the Protection of Agricultural Lands for Environmental Purposes (ÇATAK) Programme, producers are being paid for 135 TL/da within the 3rd category of the program, for the application of environment friendly agricultural production technics and cultural implementation, for the purpose of protection of soil and water quality sustainability of renewable natural resources and implementation of required cultural measures for the decline of negative affect of intensive agricultural activities on soil and water quality. Producers, dealing with organic farming, operating in the program application regions are capable of benefiting from those payments.

Organic Farming Activities in Special Environmental Protection Areas

Organic farming has been added on 14 October 2010 as a revision to the protocol signed on 19th February 2008 between our Ministry and Presidency of Special Environmental Protection Agency of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. In this context, extension of organic farming activities in special environmental protection areas has been pursued.

Organic Farming Strategic Plan and Organic Farming National Action Plan

Legal responsibility for the preparation of strategic plan on the improvement and strengthening of organic farming was given to our Ministry in accordance with Government Program for 2010. Within this framework, Organic Farming Strategic Plan was prepared and taken into effect following the official approval of the General Directorate.

Organic Farming National Action Plan was prepared in accordance with Government Program for 2012 and taken into effect taken into effect following the official approval of the General Directorate.

Support Schemes

Organic farming activities are supported by the Ministry. Support for Organic farming on plant production was commenced in 25 and still operational. Plant production support is implemented with an area based model concept.

Support for organic farming on animal breeding was started in 2011.

Low interest rated credits are also usable for organic farming investments.

As a result of extension of organic farming activities and supports delivered for organic farming practices, a noteworthy increase has been observed for organic farming.

To conclude, our goal is to extend organic farming throughout the country by strengthening it. It was targeted to increase proportion of allocated areas for organic agriculture within total arable land from 1, 95% to 3% until 2015 and 5% until 2023, additionally, share of organic products within the exported agricultural goods was aimed at increase to 1%.