

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC FARMING IN BULGARIA**

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### **Introduction**

Organic farming is a major policy priority for agriculture in Bulgaria and one of the highlights of the Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2014-2020. Encouraging farmers to switch to or maintain organic farming contributes to both: **preservation of the environment** - strengthens agroecosystems; keeps biodiversity and provides an opportunity for future generations to enjoy the unspoiled nature, **production of healthy foods** - this form of farming meets the needs of the growing number of users because it uses safe and transparent methods of production; **social effect** - it creates employment in rural areas and more jobs than conventional farming. Organic farming leads to stabilization of the income of farmers through introduction of new, emerging markets of health food products.

### **Ligislative base of organic production in Bulgaria.**

Ministry of Agriculture and Food implements the state policy related to the supervision and control in organic production and ensure compliance with the requirements of Regulation ( EC ) № 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labeling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC ) № 2092/91 and its implementing regulations, which form the legal framework for organic farming at EU level.

At the national level organic production rules are governed by the Law for the implementation of the common organization of agricultural markets of the European Union (LICOAMEU) and Ordinance № 1 of 7 February 2013 applying rules of organic production of crops, livestock and aquaculture, plant, animal products, aquaculture and food and its labeling and control of production and labeling.: In 2012, control of compliance with the rules of organic production of agricultural products and foodstuffs and their designation as required by Regulation (EC) № 834/2007 and national legislation have done 11 control organs.

### **Number of operators (producers, processors, traders) in the control system**

In recent years, organic agriculture is one of the sectors developed rapidly in conditions of a crisis. Areas under organic conditions and the number of operators involved in the control system is continuously growing. The reasons are related to: - very good conditions for the development of organic farming in Bulgaria (Ivanova-Peneva, 2004 ) - saved from an environmental point of view areas; -support for organic farmers under the Programme for the Development of Rural Areas (PDRA); - recognition of the benefits for the environment and rural areas; - awareness and willingness of consumers to eat healthy foods (Vassileva and Ivanova, 2008). At the end of 2012 the total number of registered of Ministry of Agriculture and Food, organic producers, processors and traders was 2016 (this figure does not include the number of subcontractors), almost doubling the previous 2011. Growth was observed in the number of subcontractors in the control system in 2012 (867), where the increase was around 40% compared to 2011(612). Compared to 2009, the year of application of the new legislation in the field of organic farming, in 2012, the number of operators in the control system has grown more than four times.Compared with 2006, the year before the membership of Bulgaria in the EU, the increase of the operators in control system is about ten times.

## **Organic plant breeding**

In 2012, there was a significant increase in the area of organic production, reaching 40 378.77 ha. Certified eco-friendly areas, collected wild plants - mushrooms, herbs and berries, are not included in this figure. In comparison with 2009, the increase was more than three times, compared to 2006 is almost seven times. Permanent grassland in 2012 are with 3 466 hectares more than in 2011. In comparison to 2006, there were no permanent meadows and pastures in the control system. In comparison to 2009, the increase was more than four times. For the period 2006-2012, the area of free land (fallow) in the control system ranged from 1200 to 2300 ha.

From organic plants most preferred by farmers are perennials, technical crops and cereals. In 2012, areas planted with cereals, have been increased by around 1,000 hectares over the previous year, reaching 7532 ha. Mainly wheat, maize, barley, rye, oats and triticale have been raised. Wheat grown organically, has been decreased slightly to about 200 ha in 2012 compared with the previous year. Significant increase was observed in areas with rye, corn for grain, especially oats, more than threefold compared to 2011.

In 2012, there was a significant increase in the areas with root crops grown organically, due to the areas with potatoes, including early potatoes and seed potatoes. The figures show that the areas with potatoes in 2012 were about 90 ha in comparison to 0.6 ha in 2011.

Areas with technical crops in 2012 are 7,909 ha (including areas with rose oil, aromatic plants, medicinal plants and spices), which are about 2,000 ha more than in 2011. The increase is due to the areas occupied by sunflower, where growth in 2012 is about 37% more compared to 2011, rape seed - about 43% more. In areas with flax growth in 2012 is 2.5 times more than in the previous year.

Areas with rose oil have been increased by about 300 ha in 2012, or 1 144 ha in comparison to 845 ha in 2011. Areas with aromatic plants, medicinal plants and spices are about 1,000 ha more in 2012 or 3378 ha compared to 2011 when they were 2,348 hectares.

In 2012 areas the group of fresh vegetables, melons, strawberries and mushrooms, has been increased substantially compared to the previous year. This is mainly due to the increase in areas with tomatoes and cucumbers grown organically. Increase in 2012 was observed in onions, carrots, lettuce, cauliflower and broccoli, melons. Areas with artichoke in 2012 compared to 2011 were increased to 334 ha from 292 ha. Areas with organically grown strawberries are with 27 ha more and reached 111 ha in 2012. Slight increase in 2012 is reported for cultivated mushrooms from 2011.

Areas with permanent crops grown organically in 2012 were 10 959 ha, which is about 4 500 ha more than in the previous year and the increase was around twice. The growth is mainly due to the increased area of stone fruits, pome fruits, nuts and vines.

In all species of the group of pome and stone fruit, an increase in 2012 compared to 2011, the largest growth is in areas with cherries - about 300 ha and have reached 615 ha in 2012. The interest to the group of nuts - walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds and chestnuts, continues to grow in 2012 - about 3 000 ha compared to 2011 and in 2012 there were 5981 ha compared to 3034 ha in 2011, i.e. increase was nearly twice.

In 2012 compared to 2011 plantations with vines grown organically, have been increased by around 600 ha, respectively, from 1455 ha in 2011 to 2058 ha in 2012. Constantly increasing interest among organic producers in this type of production is seen, and a growth in table

grapes is mentioned as well, as grapes are typically raised in Bulgaria.

The main factor for the development of organic viticulture, and in particular for organic wine grape, is the entry into force in 2012 of the Implementing Regulation (EU) № 203/2012 of 8 March 2012 amending Regulation (EC) № 889/2008 laying down detailed rules for implementing Regulation (EC) № 834/2007 as regards the detailed rules on organic wine. The new regulation has been introduced for the 2012 harvest, as producers of wine made from organic grapes are allowed to use the term “organic wine” on their labels. The advantages of the new rules for the production of organic wine are associated with a clear distinction between the practices used in the production of organic wine made from organic grapes and provide guarantees to the consumer. In 2012, 489 tons organic wine have been produced. In 2012, the areas with fodder crops on arable land (green crops, including alfalfa) have been increased considerably - by about 1 000 ha more than in the previous year, to 2 044 ha in 2012. There was an extraordinary increase in areas with permanent grassland - about 3 400 ha more than in 2011 - 7 957 ha in 2012. Growth was almost twice that is associated with an increase in the number of animals in the control system in 2012.

Certified organic areas with collected wild fruits, herbs and mushrooms are 472 700 ha in 2012, and have been decreased, compared to 543,655 ha in 2011, or a decrease of about 13% is seen.

Organically grown non-traditional to our country cultures as artichokes, olives, kiwi, although in small areas, show the efforts of organic producers to respond to market demand and contribute to the diversify in the types of crops.

### **Organic livestock farming**

In 2012, development of organic livestock breeding continues to be a positive trend in Bulgaria. The number of cattle reared organically, has been increased over the previous year and reached 1 173 animals from 976 animals in 2011. Registered in the control system in 2011, 200 bisons have been increased their number and by the end of 2012 they were already 260 animals.

Growth in 2012 was observed in sheep well. The number in 2012 has been increased by about 2 500 animals, reaching 9 175 animals, compared to 2011 when registered were 6 658.

The number of bee families has been increased from nearly 59 000 in 2011 to about 85 000 in 2012, which is about 45% increase as compared to 2011. Prerequisite for this increase is welcoming of organically produced honey in Bulgaria by European and world market. The increase of almost double in the amount of organically produced honey in 2012 is as a result of the increase in the number of bee families in 2012 - from 1 263 tons in 2011 to 2 448 tons in 2012. Bulgaria is a traditional producer of different types of certified organic honey with excellent quality indicators and the majority of production is exported to the world market.

### **Financial support for organic production in Bulgaria.**

The organic market in the Community and worldwide evolves dynamically, as in the condition of a crisis has been increased constantly. CAP reforms for the 2014-2020 programming period provides 30% of national ceilings for direct payments to be separated for so "Green payments" that organic farmers will receive directly (unconditionally). Financial support for organic production in the country is carried out mainly at the expense of some of

the measures from the Programme for The Development of Rural Areas (PDRA) 2007-2013, which is an incentive for the development of the sector, but still not enough in comparison to other EU countries.

Most of Bulgarian organic producers in transition and passed the transition period have received their aid under **measure 214 "Agri-environmental payments"** submeasure "Organic Farming" directions "Organic plant breeding" and "Organic Beekeeping".

According to Ordinance № 11 of 06.04.2009 in support of organic agriculture and beekeeping are provided the following funds, with 82% of them come from the EU and 18% - from Republican budget:

- Field crops: in transition - 181 euros/ha; undergone transition period – 155 euro/ha;
- Perennials, vines, rose oil: in transition - 505 euro/ha; passed transition period - 418 euros/ha;
- Vegetable crops, incl. mushroom: transition - 483 euros/ha transitioned period, undergone transition - 357 euro / ha;
- Aromatic and medicinal plants: in transition - 340 euros ha; passed transition period - 267 euro/ha;
- Meadows and pastures, passed transition period - 82 euros/ha;
- Bee families: transition or completed interim period - 11,5 euro/ha

According to the press material, the first year of membership direct payments per area in Bulgaria were 25% of the amount in the old countries - members of the EU, in 2008 - 30%, and in 2009 - 35%. Bulgarian farmers will receive the full amount of the aid in near future 2016. New higher levels of compensation payments to organic producers have been just recently adopted with the officially approved sixth amendment of the PDRA, which will be an additional incentive to increase organically grown products.

### **Conclusions:**

- After 2009, in Bulgaria an increase in the number of organic operators and the amount of area in the system of control more than four times has been outlined.
- A considerable increased diversity of organically grown crops and livestock has been observed.
- Bulgaria has favorable opportunities for the development of organic farming and taking a well-deserved place in the still unfilled niche market of organic products in the EU and worldwide.

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