

STUDY ON ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT: *Romania's potential to produce organic food is rising to the potential of Germany (the second biggest producer in Europe). Nevertheless, it remains untapped because of the too low demand from the population. So producers feel compelled to export raw materials from Western countries for processing and on the shelves of stores in Romania, products arrive at oversized prices. We wish that through this work to identify as accurately as possible the level of the supply and demand of organic food products in order to make proposals to improve the current situation, but in particular to improve the quality of life of the population of Romania, through its guidance to a healthier lifestyle.*

KEY WORDS: *organic food; the quality of the food industry; promoting the concept of organic farming*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *I12, L66, M31*

1. INTRODUCTION

Whatever their nature, plant, animal or mixed, the food is essential for humans, since it provides energy and basic nutrients necessary to the good development of metabolic processes, growth and development of the individual. Today it manifests on the domestic and international market a phenomenon of extreme diversification of the categories of food packed more complex and colorful so that they attract more consumers. However we must say that food have a complex composition, sometimes indiscernible by consumers and that associated with improper diet, low in nutrients required for the body, as well as combining "dangerous" food, leads to increased risk of disease through ingested food amid stressful factors to which man is subjected daily. All this brings into focus the need to revise the conception of human nutrition

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and its emphasizing character as preventive health factor, but also the great importance of food safety in the context of food production and of an extremely dynamic and complex trade. Increasingly the emphasis is put on the nutritional value of sold products and it increases the responsibility of those who produce and market food as it regards their innocuity status.

2. GENERAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE QUALITY OF AGRIFOOD PRODUCTS

In the current market economy, characterized by a range of goods, including food, very complex, there is intense competition among producers and traders with regard to meeting the highest level of consumer requirements, which are constantly changing, but without which the achievement of economic efficiency and, ultimately, profit is unlikely. Therefore, on a this large competitive market, consumers not only follow the general and particular characteristics of the existing product mix, but also the possibilities they have in relation to choice of quality food and goods that are safe for consumption. In other words, they are concerned in an increasing measure of the problems of quality assurance and the insurance of the safety of their purchased goods and the responsibilities of those operators that are guilty of producing and marketing products that may harm their health or their immediate and long term economic interests (Micu & Petanec, 2008).

It should be recognized that economic agents do not always respect the code of ethics and do not call at all times to the most honest practices, issues that call for intervention of state bodies - through various regulations (laws, rules, standards, etc.). In terms of imposing specific requirements throughout the feed chain to give consumers confidence that the goods they purchase will not affect the safety, health and their legitimate interests. International and Romanian law on food industry provides for all units involved in the whole food chain from primary producers to the sale of food (production, transport, storage and food trade), the principles of a food safety management system based on risk assessment and prevention, so of a HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) system. The quality of the food industry is not only about the finished product but also means the hygiene of the processes (not limited to the technological flow). In this context, the quality is and will always be an important competitive factor, if not most important. HACCP principles are a means to guide the organization to comply with all rules related to the deliverance of quality products and the continual improvement of performance (Micu & Petanec, 2008).

3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS ON THE PRODUCTION OF ORGANIC FOOD

Any operator of organic food products, as required by law, must record the activity at ANPE (National Authority of Organic Products) and be subject to inspection and control of an accredited certification body. On the products that have been subject to inspection and certification may appear the words "Organic farming ECOROM - RO control system. Also, to get organic / certified organic products on the European

market, Romanian farmers must comply with the principles contained in Council Regulation 2092/1991/CEE (<http://www.fermierul.ro/>). To export, however, is needed that the products obtained in Romania must be recognized on the European market. Recognition requires the receiving by farmers of the organic certificate for their products that such products can be sold on the domestic market and exported without any problem as organic.

Environmental Compliance Certificate is granted by the specialized bodies after a rigorous monitoring conducted during production processes. In Romania there are three Romanian certification bodies and nine foreign certification bodies for organic food products. According to Government Emergency Ordinance 34/2000 on organic food producer is called the operator of any natural or legal person who produces, prepares, imports, exports and / or sells organic food products. To join the list of certified operators must follow certain steps. Registration of organic producers is required each year and is made by filling in the registration forms in organic farming available at the Departments of Agriculture and District Rural Development, in which perimeter the producer operates. MAPDR approved sheet records are returned to the manufacturer and to the DADR and may be eligible documentation for the support of organic farming and the request of the logo "ae". Each year the Ministry of Agriculture develops the ecological agriculture operators list that is available to those interested.

4. THE PRICES OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Regarding the prices of organic products there can be specified the following: *in most cases*, prices of organic products are higher than prices of the products obtained by classical, industrial methods. Even in these conditions, the products have a guaranteed market because there are groups of consumers willing to pay higher prices; *in some cases*, the widespread use of products or products produced by farmers in their farms, contribute to the formation of advantageous prices for buyers; *even if at first sight* an organic products price is higher than a similar regular product, that expense can be addressed as an investment in human health and the environment. In table 1 we present a comparison between prices of organic products and nonorganics for a better picture of the above statements. Can be seen from the above data that organic products have higher prices compared with non bio, this primarily being due to the productivity of obtaining such products much lower than in the other case and given the rarity of these products that enable manufacturers maintain high prices.

5. PACKAGING AND LABELING OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Packaging is particularly important in the distribution of organic products. In the speciality literature, and not only, was commonly spoken lately about so-called eco-size of the package. Among the many reasons behind such an approach we could only remember that packaging pollutes the environment (and only addressing the issue in quantitative terms). European labelling requirements from organic farming products are very precise. On the label affixed to the organic products the following entries specific to the farming system are required: the reference to organic production, logo,

name and the code of the inspection and certification body which carried out the inspection and issued the organic product and since 2006, the abbreviation "ae" (www.immromania.ro/noutati/noutate.php?id).

Table 1. Comparison between bio and non bio product prices

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Product	Bio	Non-bio
Bread	3	1,8
10 eggs	12	5-7
Milk 3.5%	7-8	4
600g cheese	20	10
Oil 1l	35	6
Flour	10	2
500g sugar	14	3,5
Miere polifloră Honey polyfloral	35	8
Organic Feta Cheese 200g	21,5	5
Organic salami 200g	31	5-9
Canned green	10-40	2,5-110
Organic cocoa	24	8
Palm sugar 1 kg	40	- -
A pack of organic biscuits	14	2,5-4
Organic corn	12	5
Organic ground coffee 200g	39	11

Source: www.capital.ro and own observations

The abbreviation "ae" ensures that the product, as labelled, comes from organic farming and is certified by a certified control body, allowing consumers an easy identification of these products on the market. The rules for using the logo "ae" are contained in Annex 1 to the Joint Order amending and supplementing the Annex to the Order of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development no. 317/2006 and of the president of the National Authority for Consumer Protection nr.190/2006 for approving the specific labelling rules of organic products (www.apdrp.ro). The right to use the logo "ae" on products, labels and packaging of organic products will have the producers, processors and importers registered with the Ministry of Agriculture and which are holding a contract with an inspection and certification body approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and in order to obtain the right to use the logo "EA", the certification and "ae" communication, applicants will complete the application requests (www.immromania.ro/noutati/noutate.php?id). Since 1992 when we started Eco-label, the number of companies that have requested and received labelling increased each year. Early in 2009, more than 750 companies had an eco-label for their products and services and at the end of this year were recorded 839 operators. The largest increase is observed from 2007-2008 (<http://www.chimiamediuului.ro/2010/01/10/ecolabel/>).

Organic products must be transported in packages preventing any possible substitution of contents. These packages usually contain indications of name and address of the manufacturer or processor, the product name and instructions on how organic production took place. The marketing of organic products from import will be subject to very strict rules and controls. The examinations to be made concern mainly on the production requirements and provisions on surveillance. Imported consignments

will be accompanied by a certificate of inspection issued by the regulatory body of the country of origin, the certificate will guarantee compliance with all environmental standards. The transport of organic products will be imported from a closed package, containing particulars of the importer and the particulars of the product under the inspection certificate accompanying the consignment (Stoian, 2005).

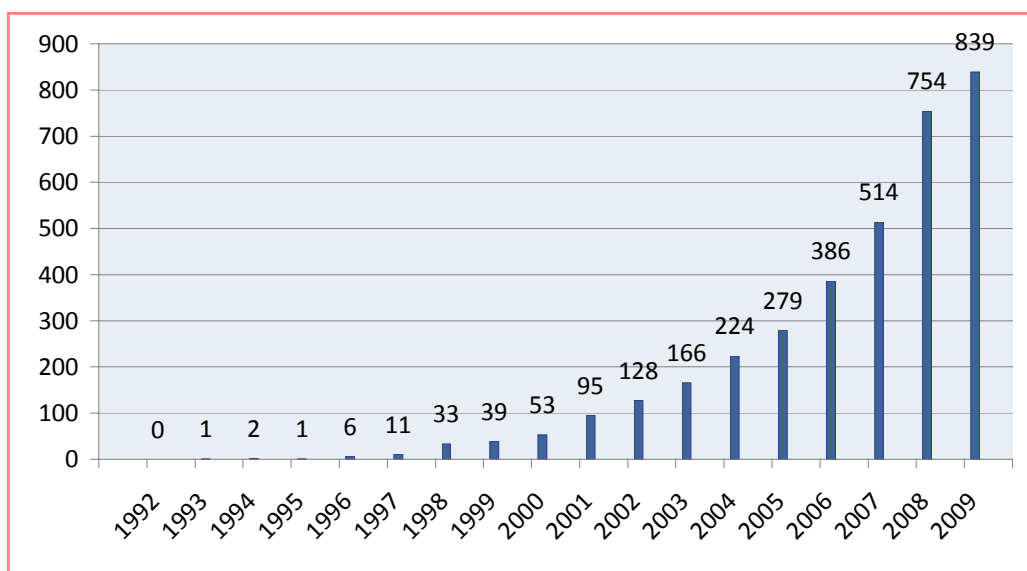


Figure. 1 Evolution of environmental licenses in Romania during 1992-2009

6. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS ON AND ECOLOGICAL FOOD PRODUCTS SITUATION IN ROMANIA

From the statistical point of view we can say according to data from the Ministry of Agriculture that Romanian exports of agricultural products increased after the first nine months of 2009 with 11.6% to 1.64 billion euro, from 1.47 billion in same period in 2008, while imports decreased by 8.3%, from three billion to 2.75 billion euro (www.apdrp.ro). Thus, according to data of Ministry of Agriculture, during January-September 2009, Romania exported agricultural products worth about 1.25 billion euro in EU countries, compared to 998.4 million in same period of 2008. Regarding exports outside EU, they stood after the first nine months of the year 2009 to 393.3 million euros, compared to 470.7 million euro in the corresponding period a year earlier. Also, according to MARD, the first nine months of last year, Romania imported food products from EU countries worth about 2.22 billion euro, compared to 2.37 billion euro in same period of 2008. As regarding the imports from outside the European Union, during January-September 2009, Romania imported agricultural products worth 535 million euro, compared to 632 million euro in the corresponding period of 2008 (www.apdrp.ro).

The European Union is the main partner of Romania in agricultural trade, as in the first nine months of 2009, shipments of agricultural products to the EU had a share value of 76% and purchases of EU Member States have held a share of 80%. The total food exports in the first nine months of 2009 was 1.64 billion euro.

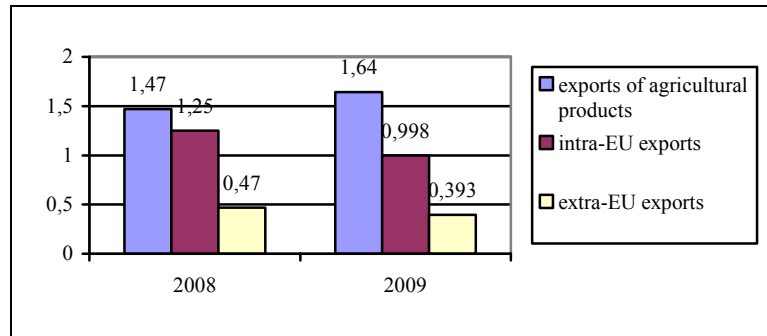


Figure 2. The evolution of Romania's exports of agricultural products in 2008 and 2009 (billion Euros)

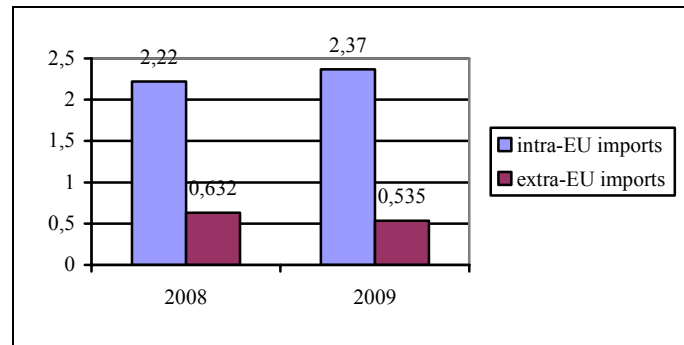


Figure 3. The evolution of Romania's imports of agricultural products in 2008 and 2009 (billion Euros)

According to data presented, increasing organic market in Romania is a constant, given that last year there were 86 registered processors of organic products, almost double that of 2007 when it was recorded a total of 48. Of the total reported, 60 were processing plant, 9 animal production and 17 in beekeeping (www.capital.ro). Romanian market value of organic food products was in 2008, 20 million euro, and if we think that the number of processors has doubled from 48 in 2007 to 86, in 2008, we can say that we are dealing with steady growth of this field in Romania.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Romania has at present, an area of 14.8 million ha of farmland. Registered operators in the organic sector, have their number estimated in 2009 to 4194, increased by 1.9% compared to 2007. Moreover, official data shows that most operators were in the year 2007, in livestock production, namely 2986. And in beekeeping there were a considerable number of operators, ie 467. Nationally, Suceava county has the most numerous operators of organic food

producers (over 700), followed by Mures (between 200 and 700) and in third ranks Bacau, Tulcea and Ialomita (between 100 and 199). There are 12 counties in which are recorded a number of fewer than 20 operators, and this means that we are dealing with small businesses, even at the family level. As for exports of organic food products we can say that they stood in 2008 to 100 million euros, equivalent to around 130,000 tones, of which only 1% was processed products and 0.94% honey. An overview of the situation of organic agriculture in Romania is shown below.

Table 3. Evolution of organic production in Romania

Specification	UM MU	2006	2007	2008
Total quantity plant	To	131898	166573	169312
Cereal	To	55000	48441	65127
Oil and protein	To	45600	73082	52982
Vegetables	To	7200	8707	3410
Fruits	To	1000	340	1255
Spontaneous flora collection	To	16 748	24 962	35 236
Other crops	To	6350	11 041	11 302
Livestock production				
Cow's milk	To	100 000	122 000	85 031
Ewes	To	13 500	15 500	13 273
Eggs	Thousand pieces	1820	1075	1321
The main processed products				
Sheep cheese	To	480	520	510
Swiss	To	268	576	580
Pressed cheese	To	330	642	640
Canned vegetables and fruits	To	50	42	40
Honey	To	610	1242	1950

Table 4. Evolution of organic farming in Romania

Indicator	2006	2007	2008
Surfaces grown by organic production method	143 194	190 129	221 411
Certified organic surfaces	78 083	143 179	152 881
Conversion plots	65111	46949	68530
Share of organic production in the total agricultural area	1%	1,4%	1,6%

Source: Romanian http://www.financiarul.com/articol_35166/schimburile-comerciale-cu-produse-ecologice-is-only-062-of-market-profile-full-of-the-union-europene.html

Destinations in which were achieved the most important exports were: Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Italy and Britain. The official drafted a profile of the Romanian consumer of organic products, based on a survey conducted by the ministry of resort. The profile of the Romanian consumer of organic products is represented by qualified customers, age between 30 and 50 years, but with an income above average. The most requested items by this are: cheese, dairy, honey or bread. One may say that trade has a niche in the clean wholesomeness and food quality is represented by its premium organic products, which because of the difficult economic situation, consumers are less willing to spend money on since their prices are higher. In the EU, meat without chemicals has double price compared with conventional meat. In the EU, meat without chemicals is double the price of conventional meat. Because of this

difference, people either do not eat meat or choose the conventional version, but also the dairy and organic vegetables tend to have prices 20% -30% higher than their conventional counterparts (www.capital.ro). Even if quality products are guaranteed safe by their organic composition itself, a defining imprint on the development of trade in such products, and not only, has the purchasing power of end users.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Organic products market is growing rapidly in most developed countries and developing countries as well, but the latter extends at a slower pace. The still modest share of organic products in international trade in food and drink is ample evidence of the development potential of these products in the long term. The insurance of long-term food security by reducing the effect of the factors that have led to the food crisis must consider: sustained increase of food availability through increased production and quality from small farmers, extending coverage and effectiveness of social protection systems, improving food risk management, improving access to international markets for food, obtaining a broader international consensus on biofuels policies and practices to avoid damage that threatens global food security. In these circumstances, issues related to ensuring the safety throughout the food supplies food chain, acquires a special importance. Romania is a country with huge potential in this sector, but consumption of organic products is at an extremely low due to lack of information on the benefits of consuming green products, but also because prices much higher than those of conventional products.

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