THE EVOLUTION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *In recent years, conversion subsidies have made organic farming more attractive, which led to a significant increase in the certified area. Unfortunately, however, the sector organic remains export-oriented as farmers seek to take advantage of higher margins on export markets, but also due to the lack of local processing facilities. In this context the authors of the paper found that by increasing consumer demand and limited variety of domestic products incentivize imports, in particular for value-added products. The results of the analysis highlight that in large part the increase in consumer demand is due to a combinations of factors, such as Romania's growing economy, increasing emphasis retailers on organic products and consumer awareness.*

Key words: *Romania, the evolution of organic agriculture, CAP, measures.*

INTRODUCTION

Romania has small segments of organic production and processing. After several years of decline, the ecological area increased in 2020 from 182,706 hectares (HA) in 2010 to 468,887 HA for both land and certified land in the process of conversion. Better access to inputs and technical data information has led farmers to expand the number of organic hectares.

Table 1.

Organic farming operators and areas dynamics

Indicator	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of certified operators in organic farming	3155	9703	15544	15194	14470	12231	10562	8434	9008	9821	10.210
Total area used for organic farming (ha)	182706	229946	288261	301148	289251,79	245923,9	226,309	258470,927	326259,55	395227,97	468.887,05
Cereals (ha)	72297,8	79167	105149	109105	102531,47	81439,5	75198,3	84925,51	114427,4926	126842,95	134.170,21
Dried legumes and protein crops for the production of grains (including seeds and mixtures of cereals and legumes) (ha)	5560,22	3147,36	2764,04	2397,34	2314,43	1834,352	2203,78	4994,55	8751,13	7411,05	5.709,97
Total tuberous and root plants (ha)	504,36	1074,98	1124,92	740,75	626,99	667,554	707,026	665,54	505,66	515.63	387,30
Industrial crops (ha)	47815,1	47879,7	44788,7	51770,8	54145,17	52583,11	53396,9	72388,33	80193,08	78350.29	91.638,97
Green harvested plants (ha)	10325,4	4788,49	11082,9	13184,1	13493,53	13636,48	14280,5	20350,75	28253,75	37660.85	53.718,20
Other crops on arable land (ha)	579,61	851,44	27,77	263,95	29,87	356,22	258,47	88,25	112,79	2,07	0
Pulses (ha)	734,32	914,08	896,32	1067,67	1928,36	1210,08	1175,33	1458,78	983,10	804,29	847,79
Permanent crops (ha) vineyard, orchards, cultivated fruit shrubs	3093,04	4166,62	7781,33	9400,31	9438,53	11117,26	12019,8	13165,41	18569,27	22.143,43	22.219,42
Permanent crops (ha) pastures and hayfields	31579,1	78197,5	105836	103702	95684,78	75853,57	57611,7	50685,74	66890,44	115420.14	155.038, 18
Out of crop land (ha)	10216,8	9758,55	8810,73	9516,33	9058,66	7225,852	9457,2	9747,94	7572,80	6.077,27	5.157,18

Source: Data processed based on information MARD

Despite this growth, Romania's ecological zone remains one of the lowest among the EU Member States and is well below the EU.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methods used in this work provide a wide range of answers to the complex problem of organic farming. The exploitation of the data was based on the wide range of statistics, information provided by the Eurostat database and the National Institute of Statistics. The information was processed by analysis, evaluation, comparison having a high coefficient of synthetic truth.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The European Commission aims to reach a share of 25% of organic area by 2030. Austria already reached this benchmark in 2019 (more than 26.1 % of farmland was organic), and two other Member States are very close to it: Estonia (22.3 %) and Sweden (20.4 %). [14]

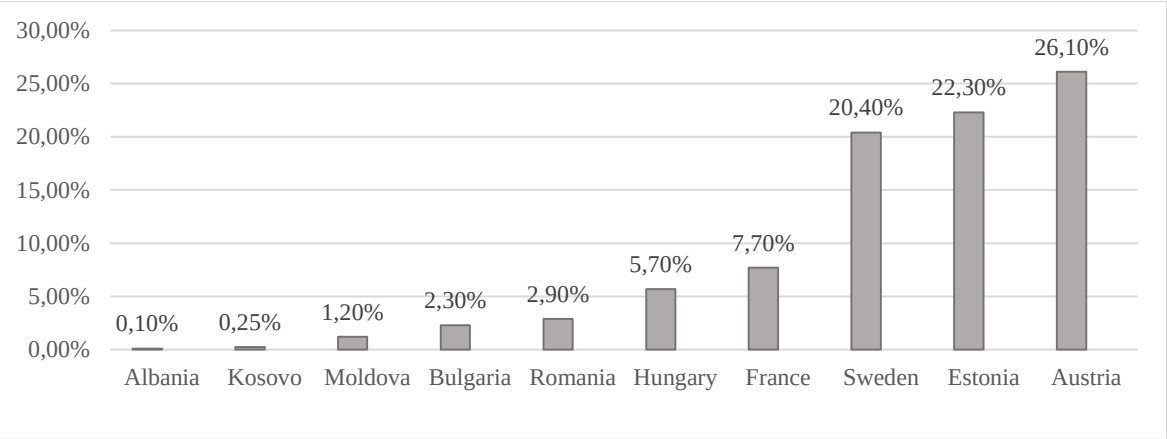

Figure 1. Share of organic farming by country
Source: Data processed based on information FIBL 2021

In 2019, the green market grew faster than the ecological area. [1] Statistical data show that the European organic food market has risen to more than EUR 41 billion and by 8%, respectively, while organically grown agricultural land has only increased by 6%. The organic agricultural area needs to be further increased in order to reach the 25% target of the organic area share, which has been set by the European Commission (2020). [13]

Table 2.

Evolution of certified organic livestock

Indicator	U.M	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bovine animals (total)	heads	5.358	6.894	7.044	20.113	33.782	29.313	20.093	19.939	16890	19.358	19.870
Bovine animals for slaughter	heads	0	314	745	1.101	244	491	478	481	701	426	690
Dairy cows	heads	3.026	3.599	2.643	10.088	23.906	21.667	15.171	12.472	10.694	13.882	12.837
Other bovine animals	heads	2.332	2.981	3.656	8.924	9.632	7.155	4.444	6.386	5.495	5.050	6.343
Total pigs	heads	320	414	344	258	126	86	20	20	9	9	14
Pigs for fattening	heads	0	201	212	125	18	43	13	17	0	0	0
Breeding sows	heads	30	89	42	77	33	14	7	3	0	0	0
Other pigs	heads	290	124	90	56	75	29	0	0	9	9	14
Total sheep	heads	18.883	27.389	51.722	72.193	114.843	85.419	66.401	55.483	32.579	19.367	13.189
Breeding sheep, females	heads	11.285	21.945	0	47.472	96.737	0	0	0	0	14.832	11.509
Other sheep	heads	7.598	5.444	0	24.721	18.106	0	0	0	0	4.535	1.680
Goats (total)	heads	1.093	801	1.212	3.032	6.440	5.816	2.618	1.653	1.360	8.161	830
Goats, breeding females	heads	966	596	0	0	5.637	0	0	0	0	8.112	808

Other goats	heads	127	205	0	0	803	0	0	0	0	49	22
Total poultry	heads	21.580	46.506	60.121	74.220	57.797	107.639	63.254	78.681	83.859	128.596	171.391
Broiles chickens	heads	0	150	37	0	0	0	0	285	0	0	27.045
Hens	heads	21.580	46.356	60.064	0	57.797	0	60.220	77.096	0	127.136	143.198
Breeding poultry	heads	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkeys	heads	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.460	1.148
Ducks	heads	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Geese	heads	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Equine	heads	284	282	142	200	626	485	0	202	0	297	506
Bees	families	64.836	77.994	85.225	81.772	81.583	0	86.195	108.632	138.557	175.959	170.789

Source: Data processed based on information MARD

In Romania in terms of the total number of organically certified cattle, Table 2 shows a significant evolution from 5,358 in 2010 and 19,870 in 2020.

In Romania, the area under organic cultivation is still small.[3,7] In 2019, only 2.43% (395.5 thousand ha) of the utilised agricultural area was cultivated organically, compared to approx. 7% in the EU28. Of the total cultivated area, the largest share is held by cereals - 32.07% followed by permanent pastures and meadows - 24.33% and industrial crops.

The low number of organic processing units (191 in 2019), given the increasing demand of consumers, requires the stimulation of investments in order to obtain quality products that allow a healthy lifestyle. [2]

On the other hand, support for organic farming will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with studies demonstrating a reduction in the carbon footprint/tonne of food produced from organic farming compared to conventional agriculture due to the abandonment of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. [6,8,9] While organic farming helps to protect the environment, it also produces food of greater value in terms of ensuring the health of consumers. [10,12] In the context of the European Green Deal, organic farming is an important component of the implementation of the provisions of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

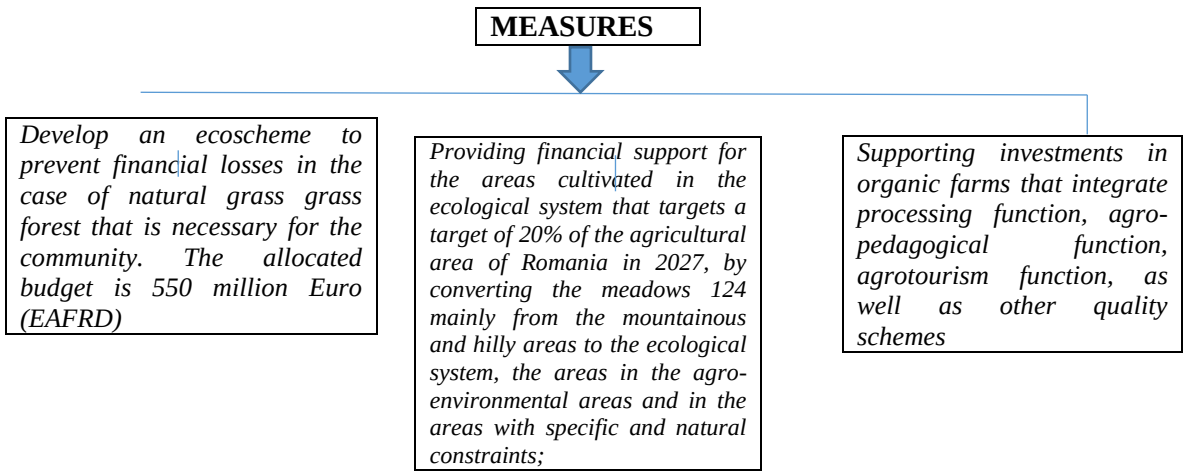

Figure 2. Measures to support organic farming

Source: Data processed based on information MARD 2021

The year 2020 with the COVID-19 crisis was a special year for the green sector. While the consolidated data for 2019 shows a continuous growth trend for both organic production and the market, in 2020 the market has grown considerably faster than in previous years, with consumers entering the ranks of health and wellness products and paying more attention to disease prevention. [5]

Both the studies to which we had access and the profile sources have indicated that the market of certified organic products in Romania, although still at an early stage compared to those in Western countries, is connected to european trends in the sense that it will have a significant growth potential in the coming years. The CAP budget that Romania will benefit from in the next programming period will be 21.678 billion euro. [4,11,15]

CONCLUSIONS

Romanian agriculture must consolidate its performances and become competitive in the long term, without dependencies or vulnerabilities generated by: difficult access to finance, land fragmentation, lack of labor force or the vagaries of the weathe. As long as small farms operate at subsistence level and many land remains fallow, agriculture cannot become a sustainable source of economic growth.

The creation of short food chains and the development of local markets is a necessary objective from the perspective of opening up market opportunities for farmers by promoting and selling products close to the source of production, either individually or through an associative form, so that it is also in line with the objectives of the "Farm to Fork" strategy. The development of short supply chains and local markets through cooperation between different actors can be achieved especially in the small/family farm sector and opens up the premise for community-level cooperation. Support is needed to facilitate the access of farmers and groups of farmers to the market and to enter and operate in these markets to the required standards, including in matters of food safety. supporting cooperation between producers and local actors with a view to developing local markets and directly marketing production to local partners, so as to facilitate the creation of sales chains.

The results of the analysis highlight that in large part the increase in consumer demand is due to a combination of factors, such as romania's growing economy, increased retailers' focus on organic products and consumer awareness.

Supporting organic farming will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thereby reducing the carbon footprint/tonne of food produced from organic farming compared to conventional agriculture due to the abandonment of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

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