

Chapter 45

The Temporal and Spatial Development of Organic Agriculture in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The world's population is increasing rapidly and the food need for the increasing population has been growing also. In the 21st century, efforts for the sustainable use of the natural resources have been raised all around the world. Agriculture has always been on the center of discussions and developments as an activity carried out depending on the nature. Therefore, the sustainable agricultural systems have gained a considerable importance in recent years. This chapter will examine the temporal and spatial development of the organic agriculture in Turkey. The current situation of the agricultural sector in Turkey will be reviewed and the need for a sustainable agricultural system in Turkey be analyzed. The temporal and spatial change of the organic agricultural areas, numbers of producers and products, and organic production amounts in Turkey will be put forward. Also, the organic agricultural potential of Turkey will be evaluated and the reasons for not exploiting this potential will be investigated.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a highly prominent strategic sector for almost all countries as it enables them to produce their basic foodstuff, provides raw materials to other industries, is an area of employment and brings about a foreign currency inflow to the country's economy through exporting activities. In the direction of the world's changing needs and circumstances, in the course of time, some important changes have been seen at the methods and policies applied for the agriculture. As a result of wars bursting out in the last century, and associated food supply problems, application of the technological innovations into agriculture and the rapid increase in the world's population have changed notably the expectations in the agricultural activities. Rapidly increasing population of the world has brought along many necessities, and the need for agricultural products has risen to meet increasing populations. At this stage, the main objective of the agricultural policies has become to raise the productivity and increase the production

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quantities (Grigg, 1995). Particularly with the policies applied in the 1960-1970s, high effectiveness and productivity have been reached. On the other hand, in obtaining high productivity, the fact that agriculture-related natural resources are limited has been ignored (Badgley & Perfecto, 2007). Agriculture itself has been managed for many years with the understanding that the natural resources are limitless. As a result of these policies, high productivity has been reached and agricultural economic development has been built, but it has been realized that such development is not sustainable any more (Park & Seaton, 1996).

Agriculture is an economic activity dependent on some fundamental natural resources such as soil, water and air. At the end of the 20th century, it was agreed that natural resources, the base of all agricultural production, are restricted and it was realized how important it is to use these natural resources sustainably (Pretty, 1995). At this stage, people have started searching for sustainable agricultural options without damaging the natural resources. Agricultural systems that promote sustainable production without damaging the natural resources as well as policies which support such systems have been brought to the forefront of the world's agenda.

Thanks to the understanding of sustainable agriculture, natural resources are protected and their productivity is guaranteed for a long term. The concept of sustainable agriculture implies a balanced economic, social and ecologic agricultural system. For people's access to sufficient and safe food, the raising of healthy future generations, enhancing rural development, economic improvement and a liveable environment, agricultural areas should be used in a sustainable manner. Today, the concept of sustainable agriculture has great importance. It is so important to create a society that could meet its necessities by not destroying the natural resources and by sustainable use of the existing natural resources especially in light of increasing populations (Grigg, 1995). For this reason, in order to reach a sustainable life and a sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture is gaining importance as an alternative agricultural method around the world.

Organic agriculture is one of several sustainable agricultural systems and it could be generally defined as a production method that is controlled and certified in all of its stages, aiming for protection of the natural resources, having a human and natural friendly understanding and free of synthetic chemical inputs including fertilizers. It is highly possible to protect the natural resources with organic agriculture at one side while to benefit from these resources to the utmost with a sustainable understanding of agriculture (Lotter, 2003). As compared to the conventional agricultural areas, the world's organic agricultural areas are still too small. However, it has been accepted that the world's need for food is increasing rapidly and that the developments happening on the agricultural fields threaten the future of human beings. Because of the awareness, sustainable use of agricultural areas has been raised across the world. Therefore, in the next years, organic agricultural applications will undoubtedly increase.

Turkey is one of the countries where the organic agriculture has gained importance in recent years all around the world. Turkey is an important agriculture country at the present time (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2014). In reference to the 2014 data, Turkey has the 7th largest agricultural economy of the world. This figure reveals clearly how the agricultural sector is important in Turkey's economic and social structure. Having a sustainable agriculture in Turkey is so important especially in light of the rapidly increasing population. The concept of organic agriculture started to come into the view in Turkey after 1984 and it has improved gradually within the period of time following 2000. Also, the European Union membership process has made a great contribution to the wide spreading organic agriculture in Turkey. Today, Turkey is one of the top ranked countries in the world with regards to organic agriculture areas, number of producers and products, and organic production amounts (Pugliese, Bteich, & Al-Bitar, 2014). Turkey's prominence in the world organic food market scales up day by day.

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