



Ky projekt financohet
nga Bashkimi Evropian



**INSTITUTE FOR THE PROMOTION OF
SOCIAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**



REPUBLIKA E SHqipëRISE
MINISTRIA E FINANCËVE
DHE EKONOMISË

IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE FARMERS RELATED TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS

Report

March 2020

This report was produced by the **Institute for Sustainable Policies** and the **IPSED Institute for the Promotion of Social and Economic Development** in the framework of the project "**Improving knowledge of organic agriculture farmers related to European Integration process**". This project is co-funded by the European Union through IPA II European Union Integration Facility 2014 "Support to civil society organizations in implementing capacity building actions that will increase policy dialogue and awareness of EU integration", managed by the Ministry of Finance and Economics (CFCU) and implemented by IPSED in partnership with ISP.

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Published by:
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Tirana, March 2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

QTTB Vlora - Agricultural Technology Transfer Center

ECOFIN - Economic and Financial Affairs Council

FSC - Financial Services Committee

ECJ - European Court of Justice

SAA - Stabilization and Association Agreement

CAP - Common agricultural policy

FiBL - Institute of Organic Agriculture Research

IFOAM - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

MARD - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

DCM - Decision of the Council of Ministers

GMO - Genetically Modified Organisms

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Institute for the Promotion of Social and Economic Development - IPSED in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Policies - ISP, have jointly implemented the project "Improving knowledge of organic agriculture farmers related to European Integration process". This project is co-funded by the European Union through IPA II European Union Integration Facility 2014 "Support to civil society organizations in implementing capacity building actions that will increase policy dialogue and awareness of EU integration", managed by the Ministry of Finance and Economics (CFCU).

As Albania prepares to open negotiations, organic farmers are the main target group that will be directly affected by important legislative changes in the context of implementing the EU's Organic Farming Regulations. Implementation of these rules will require high knowledge of the entire legislative framework in order to apply it correctly.

Currently, organic farmers in Albania have very scarce information about Albania's EU integration process, the opening of negotiations or what the legal framework for organic production issues provides. Also, information on subsidy schemes or applications to European Union funds such as the IPARD scheme is complicated and difficult as a process. Referring to the above, **the main objective of the project** was to increase and improve the level of information and knowledge as well as awareness of EU integration, taking into account the challenges facing organic farming.

The project duration was 16 months starting from December 2018. The project activities took place in five regions of Albania (Tirana, Durrës, Lushnjë, Shkodër, Vlora). The target group were farmers of organic agriculture, farmers aiming to be certified for organic production, representatives of Regional Agencies of the Agricultural Extension, NGOs operating in the agricultural sector, etc. Participants were informed about Albania's EU integration process including information on the legal and institutional framework of the European Union, and the effects this process will have. The participants were also informed about the European Common Policy as well as the European Union Standards for Biological Agriculture, and more specifically we aimed to achieve the following **4 specific objectives**:

SO1: Analysis and information on the perception of the Integration process for Albania as well as the consequences for organic farming.

SO2: Capacity building for groups involved with organic farming represented by farmers, associations or AREB representatives.

SO3: Improving the quality of information and awareness of organic farming legislation to project beneficiaries by organizing information sessions on European Common Policies and Organic Agriculture Standards.

SO4: Initiative to stimulate discussions and roundtables by inviting all stakeholders: representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Regional Extension Agencies, organic farming businesses, academic world and other stakeholders.

II. ACTIVITIES

In the framework of the project "Improving knowledge of organic agriculture farmers related to European Integration process". in 5 regions of Albania: Tirana, Durres, Vlora, Shkodra and Lushnje, a series of 16 months was implemented activities described below:

1. Initially, experts were selected to engage in preparation of informational materials, such as presentations for information sessions, preparation of questionnaire format, processing of statistical data collected through the survey, preparation of the final report. The selected experts are experts in the field of expertise with strong academic background and doctoral degrees and associate professors at the Agricultural University of Tirana. Also 5 local coordinators were selected, one for each region. These coordinators had a great deal of field support and recognition of farmers and their problems in their respective regions of operation.
2. The project aimed at the following **to identify subjects** that would be invited to be part of meetings and information sessions. Lists and subjects were compiled by 5 regions: Tirana, Vlora, Durres, Lushnje and Shkodra. These lists were compiled in cooperation with each region's local coordinators and project experts. The selection addressed the main objective of achieving an important target group in 5 regions of Albania namely Vlora, Durres, Shkodra, Tirana and Lushnje.
3. During this phase in April-May 2019 **5 roundtables** were organized with the aim of establishing contact points with the stakeholders involved in this project, such as Regional Extension Agencies (AREB), Organic Farmers and in the process of certification, etc. These activities were attended by about 180 representatives coming from Rural Extension Agencies (Tirana, Lushnje, Fier), representatives from Albinspekt and the Institute of Biological Agriculture, representatives of the Albanian Agribusiness Council, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Auleda, Sector agricultural extension Fier, QTTB Vlora as well as farmers (olive growers and olive oil producers and exporters), organic farmers and in the process of certification of the aforementioned regions, agronomists, agro-lecturers, beekeepers, oil producers, olive growers, growers, specialists of agricultural extension.
4. **Data collection and processing.** A structured questionnaire for the farm was used to collect the necessary primary data. Interviews were conducted in the following areas: Tirana, Durres, Malesia e Madhe, Lushnje and Vlora during June-September 2019. The survey included both types of farmers, those who applied organic production methods on their farm and those who didn't ever applied such methods.

All information collected from the questionnaires carried out in the project focus areas was processed and presented in the form of an analytical report. The farm questionnaire was designed in four sections. The first section included questions on the social and demographic characteristics of farmers. The second section included questions on the profile of the farm or its main activities. Meanwhile, the third part of the questionnaire included basic survey questions that generally relate to information on sustainable agricultural policies and practices. The last section of the questionnaire consisted of questions about farmers' perceptions of the benefits and costs of EU membership. The result of the survey was elaborated in a statistical report and presented at the Project Final Conference.

5. **Information sessions:** 10 informative sessions were organized for farmers in the 5 project regions in the period November 2019-January 2020. About 290 participants of the target group including farmers in biological and transitional agriculture, different organizations, staff of Vlora Agricultural Technology Transfer Center, Regional Extension Agencies AREB.

During the briefing sessions, information was provided on the European Union's approach to Organic Farming, on organic production rules, general concepts for organic farming certification standards, and policies supporting organic farming in the EU. The participants were also introduced to basic concepts about the legal and institutional functioning of the European Union and the stages of the negotiation process. The responsible EU regulatory institutions and their impact on the production and marketing of biological products in Albania were discussed. Also discussed were the challenges and needs of biological agriculture related to the process of integration and opening of Albania's negotiations with the European Union.

6. **Awareness campaigns:** 3 awareness campaigns were held in Vlora, Shkoder, Tirana. The purpose of these campaigns was to raise awareness of sustainable organic production under EU rules and to bring organic farming to a sustainable sector that has economic, health and ecological benefits.

7. **Final Report:** A comprehensive report of project activities and materials was designed to share information on integration issues focusing on organic farming. This report is intended to be shared to relevant institutions such as the European Delegation in Albania, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Regional Extension Agencies. This report will also be published on the organizations' websites and social media.

8. **The final conference** is the closing event of the project where stakeholders will be invited as well as the media and the academic world. The event discussed the challenges of organic farming in Albania related to the European integration process.

III. METHODOLOGY

Project methodology is based on project management best practices based on donor requirements related to finance management, procurement, expert selection or product production such as leaflets or final report. The selection of experts ensured an optimization of resources in order to provide a qualified and professional experience. The same principle was followed for data collection and processing. The engagement of local coordinators, who had in-depth knowledge of the target group and the problems of agriculture in Albania, created a qualitative survey process. The data were processed by statistical experts and the findings were finalized by experienced experts in research and conducting surveys.

Financial management, project coordination and its management was carried out by a staff with considerable project experience.

IV. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE PROCESS OF ALBANIA'S INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Legal Expert - Andi Nano¹

4.1. What is the European Union?

Europe until the second half of the 20th century was characterized by linguistic, religious and cultural differences. Its states had economic and political systems differences. Relations between European states were based on rivalry and mistrust, and the tensions stemming from such relations triggered both world wars. The consequences of World War II on almost all of Europe's continent were of enormous magnitude - a devastated economy, dilapidated settlements, and millions of deaths.

The European Union was created:

- To improve the conditions for the development of trade between European countries and other countries;
- To provide a better protection against natural hazards and wars for the member states;
- To improve the working and living conditions of its population by ensuring sustainable economic and social development.

The European Union (EU) is a union of the 27 member states established by the Treaty of the European Union (the Maastricht Treaty), in 1993, the EU was more than just economic integration. The concept that the Maastricht Treaty, and subsequently that of Amsterdam and Nice gave to the Community, can be described using the following 3-pillar structure.

So the European Union we know today is a combination of some of the Communities set up earlier such are :

- The European Coal and Steel Community, founded in 1951;
- European Economic Community (renamed the European Community in 1993) established in 1957;
- The European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), established in 1957.

Often referred to simply as "the Community" or "Communities", but already after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty the designation used is the European Union.

4.2. Development of the EU through the Treaties

The EU project has been developed through many legal initiatives and instruments. Treaties are the foundations of the EU. They also set out the rules and procedures that EU institutions must follow. The treaties create a new constitutional order, on which institutions are based for their

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functioning. The treaties are approved by the presidents and prime ministers of all EU countries and then ratified by their parliaments. It is the European Commission that proposes the new legislation, but the Council and Parliament adopts the laws. In some cases, the Council may act alone.

4.3. European Institutions

EU institutions are not organized according to the traditional governing division: legislative, executive, judicial and administrative. Instead, the various functions are coordinated. EU institutions, such as the European Commission, the EU Council and the European Parliament, jointly draft and adopt policies and laws applicable across the EU. Thus, only the Commission has the right to propose new laws, while Parliament and Council adopt them. The powers and responsibilities of these institutions are set out in the relevant treaties.

4.3.1. The European Commission

The main body of the Commission is the College of Commissioners, consisting of 28 members. Each Member State shall elect a Commissioner for a period of five years. The Commission is an independent body against the governments of the member states and represents and protects the interests of the Union as a whole. The Commission is the protector of the Treaties and may take action against Member States in order to fulfill the interests of the Community.

The European Commission is the EU's executive arm and initiator of legislative proposals aimed at supporting the Union's interest as a whole. The Commission is an institution politically independent of state governments. The European Commission has four main roles:

1. To propose laws to Parliament and the Council;
2. To manage and implement EU policies and budgets;
3. Apply European law (together with the Court of Justice);
4. Represent the European Union on the international stage, for example by negotiating agreements between the EU and other countries.

In this context, the main tasks of the Commission are:

- The right to initiate legislation: any legal decision taken by the Council must be based on a Commission proposal. The Commission also prepares the legislative plan annually;
- Protector of Treaties: The Commission is responsible for monitoring the process of implementation of the provisions of the Treaties and legislation and may therefore appeal to the European Court of Justice when various violations are identified;
- Executive authority for the implementation of Community policies: This includes the administration of finance as well as the implementation of EU policies.

4.3.2. The European Parliament

The European Parliament is a multinational institution made up of deputies from every member state. The elections are held every five years and every EU citizen registered as a voter has the right to vote. Parliament expresses the democratic will of EU citizens and represents their interests

vis-à-vis other EU institutions. Members of the European Parliament are divided into 7 European political groups. This division is not based on nationality.

The main tasks of Parliament are:

- reviews and adopts European legislation and monitors EU institutions. (according to the co-decision procedure, Parliament shares this power equally with the EU Council);
- approves the EU budget;
- exercises democratic control over other EU institutions by setting up inquiry committees;
- Adopts important international agreements such as EU membership and trade and association agreements between the EU and other countries.

4.3.3. The EU Council

Together with the European Parliament, the Council is the body responsible for adopting the laws proposed by the Commission. It shall consist of one member for each Member State. One Minister from each Member State. Decisions are adopted on the basis of the number of votes cast. He is obliged to:

1. To adopt European laws. In many areas it does this together with the European Parliament.
2. To coordinate the economic and social policies of the Member States.
3. Implement international agreements between the EU and one or more states or international organizations.
4. Approve the EU budget, together with the European Parliament.
5. To develop the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy
6. Coordinate co-operation between national courts and police forces on crime issues.

The Presidency of the Council is changed every six months so that a single Member State does not have much influence over the Community policy selection process. Meetings of the Council shall be arranged on the basis of issues to be discussed, during which the relevant Ministers of the Member States shall be convened. Also attending these meetings is the member of the European Commission responsible for the issues to be discussed in the Council. The Council also has a number of sub-committees and working groups. The Council shall decide by unanimity, qualified majority or simple majority on the matter under discussion

4.3.4. Economic and Financial Affairs Council

The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) is composed of the Ministers of Economy and Finance of the Member States (if budgetary issues are discussed, then the Ministers responsible for the budget are also called). ECOFIN addresses many issues including: economic policy coordination, economic oversight, monitoring of budget policies pursued by Member States and public finances, the euro currency (legal, practical and international aspects), financial markets and capital movements as well as economic relations with third countries. It is decided mainly by qualified majority except for fiscal matters which are decided unanimously.

4.3.5. European Economic and Social Committee

This Committee represents the economic and social players in organized civil society, such as employers and employees, trade unions and consumer organizations. It has 344 members.

The number of each EU country represents more or less the size of its population.

It has three roles:

- to advise the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission; either at their request or on the Committee's own initiative;
- encourage civil society to become more involved in the EU decision-making process;
- support and promote the role of civil society in non-EU member states and help to form advisory structures.

4.3.6. Financial Services Committee

The Financial Services Committee (FSC) was established on 18 February 2003 by the ECOFIN Council with the mandate to perform the following tasks:

- presents cross-strategic analysis independently of the legislative process;
- helps determine the long-term and mid-term strategy for financial services issues;
- addresses sensitive short-term issues;
- assesses progress and implementation;
- Provides policy advice and monitoring for both internal affairs (for example, the common market, including implementation of the Financial Services Plan) and external ones (for example, the World Trade Organization - WTO).

4.3.7. The European Central Bank

The European Central Bank (ECB) is the central bank for the single European currency, the euro. The ECB's main task is to maintain the purchasing power of the euro and, consequently, price stability in the euro area.

European Investment Bank

The European Investment Bank provides finance investments in economic development projects inside and outside the EU, and assists small businesses through the European Investment Fund;

Its EU priorities are to support:

- cohesion and convergence,
- small and medium enterprises,
- environmental sustainability,
- innovation,
- the development of trans-European transport networks, and sustainable, competitive and secure energy.

Outside the EU, the EIB supports EU development and cooperation policies in candidate and potential candidate countries, the Mediterranean countries and Eastern Europe (including Russia). Borrowing in these countries focuses on:

- private sector development,
- infrastructure development,
- ensuring power supply, and
- environmental sustainability.

4.3.8. European Court of Justice

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has a role similar to that of the existing courts in the Member States. It is responsible for resolving legal conflicts: between Member States; between the EU and the Member States; between EU institutions and relevant authorities, as well as conflicts between citizens and the European Union. In addition, judges in Member States may turn to the European Court of Justice for questions concerning the interpretation of Community legislation. The Court of First Instance was established in 1988 following an amendment to the Single European Act with the aim of examining part

4.4. What is Acquis Communautaire

The Acquis is the set of objectives of the European Union, its policies and the rules governing these policies. The Acquis is all EU legislation which is constantly evolving as it evolves the European Union. All member states are obliged to comply with the Acquis Communautaire because EU law takes precedence over national law. Candidate countries must accept the acquis and integrate it into their legal system before they can join the European Union.

The Acquis Communautaire (acquis) is divided into three types: primary legislation; secondary legislation; and jurisprudence. Together, they form EU legislation, which must be adopted by the candidate countries (amending their respective legislation) before they become EU members.

The Acquis is an evolving structure and consists mainly of:

- the principles and political objectives of the Treaties on which the EU is based;
- the legislation and decisions adopted in accordance with the Treaties, and the jurisdiction of the ECJ;
- other legal acts, legally binding or not, adopted within the European Union, such as inter-institutional agreements, resolutions, declarations, recommendations, guidelines;
- joint actions, joint positions, statements, conclusions and other acts in the framework of foreign and security policy;
- joint actions, joint positions, signed conventions, resolutions, declarations and other acts signed within the framework of domestic affairs and justice policy;
- international agreements signed by the Communities, between the Communities and the Member States, the European Union, and those signed by the Member States between them concerning the activities of the European Union.

4.5. Primary Legislation

"Primary legislation" consists of the various Treaties which have been negotiated and ratified by the Member States. The Treaties set out the EU constitutional framework and the relevant functions of the institutions / bodies involved in the decision-making process as well as the procedures for drafting and implementing EU legislation.

4.6. Secondary legislation

Secondary legislation consists of:

Regulations: Regulations are directly applicable and binding throughout the EU. They should not be transposed into national legislation, just like national laws;

Directives: The Directive is binding on the Member States in terms of the objectives to be achieved, but gives the Member States the freedom to choose how legislative measures will be implemented in national legislation. The directives have legal force and effect after the transposition period ends (the time allowed for Member States to apply the legal measures). Consequently, after this time, national legislation must be interpreted and applied in accordance with the Directive. When a Member State does not implement a Directive within a specified period, the European Commission may initiate proceedings against it in the ECJ;

Decisions: Decisions are wholly binding and directly applicable to those States to which they refer. For this reason, no national transposition is required. The decision may require the taking of an action or not and recognize certain rights or impose obligations

Opinions and Recommendations: The recommendation is a suggestion for a particular action to be taken by the State to which it is addressed. Whereas the Opinion includes the vision of EU institutions on a particular issue. These measures are not binding and have only a compelling nature;

Resolutions and Declarations: The resolutions highlight the common visions / goals of the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the EU Council. The resolutions set out the political direction of the Council's future action. The statements are of two types, namely those related to EU development and those that describe in more detail the visions of Council members on the interpretation of Council decisions; **Legal Issues:** Legal issues include court rulings by the European Court of Justice and the First European Court of Appeal.

4.7. Expansion Process

Any country that meets the requirements for enlargement can submit an application for EU membership. The Treaty on European Union sets out the conditions (Article 6, Article 49) to be fulfilled. A country wishing to join the EU must submit an application for membership to the Council, which then asks the Commission to assess the applicant's ability to fulfill the conditions of membership. If the Commission submits a positive opinion, and the Council unanimously approves a negotiating mandate, then negotiations between the candidate country and the Member States are officially opened.

Applying for membership is the starting point of a long and rigorous process - though at the same time based on an existing close relationship with the EU. Upon application, EU evaluation procedures are initiated, which may result in membership invitation for the country concerned. The speed of each country towards membership depends on its progress towards meeting common objectives.

The applicant country must meet certain criteria before starting negotiations which are:

- have established sustainable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minority rights;
- have a functioning market economy, able to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the EU (economic criteria);
- have the capacity to fulfill the obligations arising from membership, including the objectives of political, economic and monetary union.

In addition, the EU must be able to integrate new members and must ensure that its institutions and decision-making processes are effective and accountable; must be able, as it expands, to continue to develop and implement common policies in all areas; and it also needs to continue to fund its policies in a sustainable way.

4.8. Pre-accession strategy

The pre-accession strategy is designed to prepare the candidate country for membership. It includes the following mechanisms and instruments:

- European Agreement / Association Agreement / Stabilization and Association Agreement
- European Partnership
- Pre-accession assistance
- Co-financing with International Financing Institutions
- Participation in EU Programs, Agencies and Committees
- National Acquis Adoption Program
- Performance Reports
- Political Dialogue

4.9. The Stabilization and Association Process

The Stabilization and Association Process is a regulatory framework for EU negotiations with the Western Balkan countries, given their possible accession. It has three objectives:

- stabilizing countries and encouraging a "smooth" transition to a market economy;
- promoting regional cooperation;
- possible EU membership.

This process helps the countries involved to strengthen their capacity to adopt and implement EU legislation and European and international standards. It is based on a closer partnership, making the EU offer:

- trade concessions (autonomous trade measures);
- economic and financial assistance;
- assistance for reconstruction, development and stabilization;
- Stabilization and Association Agreements, which constitute a long-term contractual relationship with the EU, including mutual rights and obligations.

Each country is moving closer to the EU as it fulfills its commitments from the Stabilization and Association process.

4.10. Screening Process

The Screening process is jointly carried out by the European Commission and the Member State signing the Agreement. This process monitors the approximation of national legislation with that of the EU and adopts a detailed follow-up plan for its approximation. Each chapter of the treaty is negotiated separately and the specific compatibility of the legislation is evidenced.

The agreement chapters (currently 35) represent the basis of negotiations for each candidate country. Each chapter of the agreement corresponds to a separate branch of European law that needs reform to achieve the conditions for membership by candidate countries. Special chapters are reviewed and evaluated separately until the chapter is closed.

Candidate countries are required to adopt their administrative and institutional infrastructure and bring their legislation in line with that of the EU on the basis of a concrete plan.

The EU is currently discussing a new approach to countries seeking to join the EU. This process can affect both the Screening process and the entire membership negotiation procedure and structure.

4.11. The European Union and Albania

Following the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003, Albania became a potential candidate country for EU membership. On 18 February 2008, the Council adopted a new European partnership with Albania. The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was signed on 12 June 2006 and entered into force on 1 April 2009. The EU-Albania Visa Facilitation Agreement entered into force in January 2008, while the readmission agreement entered into force in 2006. Albania submitted the application for EU membership on 28 April 2009. Following the entry into force of the SAA, several joint EU-Albania structures (Stabilization and Association Council and its Subcommittees) were set up to monitor the process of implementation and fulfillment of the SAA. obligations arising from the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

One of the most important EU-Albania joint structures of this process is the Stabilization and Association Council. It monitors the implementation and fulfillment of the SAA as well as examines any issues related to the SAA and any other bilateral or international issues of common interest. The Stabilization and Association Council is composed of members of the Council of the

European Union and members of the Commission of the European Communities on the one hand and members of the Government of Albania on the other.

The Stabilization and Association Committee is composed of representatives of the Council of the European Union, representatives of the Commission of the European Communities and representatives of the Government of Albania. The tasks of this Committee shall be determined by the Stabilization and Association Council. The Stabilization and Association Committee generally guarantees the continuity of the association and the implementation of the SAA. The Committee reviews any issues addressed by the Stabilization and Association Council, as well as issues related to the implementation of the SAA.

The Stabilization and Association Committee sets up the necessary subcommittees for the proper implementation of the SAA. The subcommittees are composed of members of the European Commission and members of the Albanian Government. Member States are informed and invited to attend subcommittee meetings. The subcommittees discuss issues related to the implementation of the SAA, along with the progress made in implementing the European Partnership and the progress made in approximation of legislation.

4.12. EU negotiation structures

Within the framework of state negotiation structures, it was established by the Council of Ministers Decision no. 749, dated 19.12.2018 "On the establishment, organization and functioning of the state structure responsible for the conduct of negotiations and the conclusion of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Albania to the European Union". This Decision created the state structure responsible for the conduct of negotiations and the conclusion of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Albania to the European Union. This Decision provides:

The structure responsible for the negotiations consists of:

- a) State Committee for European Integration;
- b) State Delegation;
- c) the negotiating team;
- d) Albania's mission to the European Union;
- e) Secretariat of European Integration;
- f) inter-institutional working groups;
- g) European Integration Partnership Platform.

This decision among others defines - "European Integration Partnership Platform (IX)". The decision at this point states that:

- ▶ 1. Information, consultation, communication and involvement of civil society, stakeholders, trade unions, the academic world and the bodies of local self-government units in the EU accession negotiation process as well as in the Stabilization and Association process European Integration Partnership.
- ▶ 2. Participation of civil society, interest groups, business, trade unions, the academic world and bodies of local self-government units in the European Union accession negotiation process to monitor public policies during the negotiation process through the European

Integration Partnership Platform and the provision of expertise in various areas of the European Union acquis is open to them according to their respective area of competence.

- ▶ 3. The forms of participation, functioning and institutional structure of the Partnership Platform for European Integration are approved by order of the Prime Minister.

4.13. EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Albanian Organic Agriculture Legislation (Overview).

European legislation on agriculture

In the European Union Treaty agriculture is described in its chapters 11 and 12, namely "Agriculture and Rural Development" and "Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policies".

Chapter 11: Agriculture and Rural Development contains a large number of mandatory rules, many of which are directly applicable. All these rules are detailed in separate regulations and directives. CAP policies require the establishment of management and quality systems such as the payment agency, the integrated payment control system (IPCS), and the capacity to implement rural development measures. Member States should be able to implement EU legislation on direct farm support schemes and to implement legislative provisions on the common organization of the market for different agricultural products.

Chapter 12: Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy stipulates that food safety policies are implemented at all stages of food production, processing and distribution in accordance with the principle from farm to fork / stall to table.

These principles include:

- the precautionary principle required to ensure the protection of health in the Community and
- the principle of transparency to ensure that consumers, other parties and trading partners have confidence in the decision-making processes intended to strengthen food legislation, its scientific basis and the structures and independence of institutions protecting health and other interests.

This chapter also includes detailed rules in the field of veterinary, which are essential for the maintenance of animal health and welfare, the safety of food of animal origin in the internal market.

In the field of phytosanitary, European Union rules include seed quality issues, plant protection materials, harmful organisms and nutrition.

4.14. EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Referring to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (26.10.2012 Official Journal of the European Union C 326/47) in Article 38 it states:

1. The Union shall establish and implement a common agricultural and fisheries policy.

The internal market will extend to agriculture, fishing and trade in agricultural products. "Agricultural products" means land, animal (farm) and fishery products and first-stage processing products directly related to such products. References to the common agricultural policy or to agriculture and the use of the term "agricultural" shall be understood as reference also to fisheries, having regard to the specific characteristics of the sector.

The Treaty sets out, inter alia, the basic principles of the functioning of the European single market. These principles are at the heart of the EU's common agricultural policy. These principles consist of:

- “The common market for agricultural products must be accompanied by the creation of a common agricultural policy between the Member States.
- The elimination of customs duties and fiscal duties having the same effect as customs duties within the community.
- Elimination of quantitative restrictions and measures of equal effect and nature.
- (A quantitative restriction is a national measure which determines the volume and / or quantity of imports / exports of products not by raising customs duties of any nature but by setting limits on their import / export.)
- Eliminate discriminatory measures from the national tax system.
- The right of non-Community origin goods to move freely within the community after fulfilling their import duties in a Member State.

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) consists of the following main objectives :

- Increasing efficiency in agriculture (labor productivity)
- Increasing the standard of living of the farmers (standard of living)
- Stabilization of agricultural markets (production surpluses do not harm the market)
- Providing the necessary supply (it is about having enough food within the community even in times of crisis.)
- Reasonable prices for consumers (EU prices are higher than world prices (except 1973 and 1995)) unless the EU consistently intervened by subsidizing production surplus and becoming a net importer. are different from those on the world market The EU through export subsidies has contributed to lower world prices.

Through the achievement of these objectives EU agricultural and rural development policies aim to:

- Increasing incomes for the rural population, increasing their well-being, by improving working and living conditions and creating equal opportunities for men and women.
- Increase production by fostering competition and technical progress and ensuring optimum use of production factors and in particular labor.
- Market stability, ensuring sustainability in agricultural production.
- Food quality and safety by ensuring that the food chain is of sustainable quality and does not cause harmful effects on human health.
- Protecting and preserving the environment by ensuring that agriculture preserves natural resources.

- Reducing poverty, reducing inequality between levels of development in different regions, as well as backwardness in less favored rural areas with the aim of slowing the population out of the countryside as well as empowering small and medium-sized businesses.

In the future, the EU's common agricultural policy seeks greater investment in rural areas to prevent the depopulation of these areas as well as more effective environmental protection policies. In this context, CAP aims to:

- A "green" payment for maintaining long-term productivity and ecosystems.
- Complementary investment in research and innovation.
- A more competitive and balanced food chain.
- Increasing rural employment and entrepreneurship.
- A smoother and more efficient CAP.

4.15. Anachronisms

When talking about the European Union and its agricultural policies it is important to understand its relevant terminology. Below is a handful of terminology used in European CAP (acquis) law.

Organic farming: Organic farming is a general farm management and food production system that combines best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, conservation of natural resources, application of high animal welfare standards and a production method according to the preferences of certain consumers for products manufactured using natural substances and processes.

Active farmer: To avoid providing financial assistance to individuals and companies whose agricultural activity is marginal, direct payments and payments to farmers are given only to active farmers and those who prove that agriculture is not a marginal activity in its economy.

Agricultural activity: The 2013 Common Agricultural Policy Reform stipulates that, in order to receive direct payments, farmers must have an agricultural activity which implies:

1. The production, feeding or breeding of agricultural or livestock products, including harvesting, milk extraction, animal husbandry and the keeping of animals for agricultural purposes; or
2. the maintenance of agricultural holdings in an area which makes it suitable for grazing or cultivation without any special investment or preparatory condition exceeding the usual farming methods and machinery, based on criteria set by the Member States on the basis of a legal framework created by the Commission; or
3. the performance of a minimum activity to be established by the Member States in naturally maintained agricultural areas in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation.

Agricultural product quality policy: To enable farmers to communicate and present the qualities, characteristics and attributes of their products and to provide consumers with relevant information, the European Union has developed several quality systems that farmers and producers can use. use for their products ensuring that the products and / or production methods meet a set of specifications.

The legal definitions of these systems, together with the procedures for registering specific names and controlling their use, are set out in Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural and food products.

1. Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). This is a name that identifies a product originating in a country, region or, in exceptional cases, a state whose quality or characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural factors and human and which is produced, processed and prepared in that designated geographical area. Examples include Jamón de Teruel from Spain and Comte cheese from France. A specific label has been developed to show products with a PDO.

2. Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). This is a name which identifies a product originating in a particular country, region or country whose quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geography; and at least one of the steps of its production taking place in the designated geographical area. Examples include Mortadella Bologna from Italy. A specific label has been developed to market products with a PGI.

3. Traditional Guaranteed Specialty (TSG). This is a name that describes a specific product or foodstuff that derives from the manner of production, processing or composition that corresponds to the traditional practice for that product or food, or that is produced from raw materials or ingredients that are traditionally used. Examples include specialized Belgian beers, such as Gueuze and Kriek, and Kalakukko, a Finnish bread with fish and roast meat inside. As is the case for PDOs and PGIs, a specific label has been developed for TSG products.

4. Optional quality conditions (OGT). In addition to the three schemes above, there is another category which is optional. These are terms that refer to a characteristic of one or more product categories, or a particular agricultural or processing characteristic, which applies to particular areas whose use adds value to the product as compared to the product of a similar type and having a European dimension. These terms are designed to facilitate the communication within the internal market of the value added features or qualities of agricultural products from their producers. An example is the term 'mountain product'.

Basic Payment Scheme (BPS): Under the rules of the Common Agricultural Policy 2007-2013, farmers received direct payments either through the Single Payment Scheme or the New Zone Payment Scheme. The 2013 Common Agricultural Policy reform replaced the Single Payment Scheme with the Basic Payment Scheme which came into force in 2015. The Basic Payment Scheme is operated on the basis of payment entitlements allocated to farmers in the previous year first application of the scheme and is activated annually by farmers.

Qualification for the Basic Payment Scheme or, as the case may be, a Single Zone Payment Scheme is a prerequisite for farmers to receive other direct payments such as green direct payments, redistribution payments, payments for areas with natural or other specific constraints, as well as payments to young farmers.

Young Farmer: A person who is 40 years of age or less at the time of submitting an application for assistance, possessing suitable professional skills and running a farm unit for the first time.

Exceptions to blocking (State aid): In the context of state aid, the European Commission has defined certain categories of aid (see Regulation (EU) No 702/2014). Member States may provide

State aid in these categories without having to submit a notification to the Commission. If such assistance complies with the detailed conditions laid down in this Regulation, Member States should inform the Commission only of their purpose and the Commission will then publish the measure so that beneficiaries are informed and have legal certainty about the legality of assistance

Civil Dialogue Groups: These are groups of representatives of civil society organizations at European level. Organizations include professional associations and other non-governmental organizations that are involved in agriculture, rural economy, food production and processing, agricultural trade, environment, consumer protection and other related issues. They meet with the Commission services several times a year.

There are 13 such groups. They play an advisory role and are not involved in the drafting or adoption of legislation.

Cross-compliance: In order to receive direct payments and some other forms of support, farmers are required to comply with certain rules. This requirement is known as cross compliance. These rules concern food safety, animal health, plant health, climate, environment, water resources protection, animal welfare and the condition in which agricultural land is maintained. There are two components to these rules: legal requirements for administration and good agricultural and environmental conditions. If a farmer is found not to comply with these rules, his direct payment may be reduced.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs): These include the following European Union funds: the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

Export Credits: Within the context of the World Trade Organization, these are special incentives such as direct financing, refinancing, interest rate support, export credit insurance and guarantees, deferred billing and any other form of inclusion, direct or indirect, offered by the government to encourage exports.

Direct Green Pay: The Common Agricultural Policy Reform for 2013 introduced a direct green pay which is paid to farmers on condition that they take advantage of climate and environment friendly practices. Member States must exempt 30% of direct payments for direct universal payments.

Tax: In the context of the Common Agricultural Policy, the term tax can be used in three ways:

1. A payment by farmers to a fund for a specific activity such as promoting the sale of agricultural products within and outside the European Union,
2. A payment by farmers to the government in exchange for receiving special services, such as animal disease control.
3. A payment by farmers or processors if their production exceeds a certain production limit. This type of tax currently only applies to the sugar sector. Sugar beet processors who place on the domestic market a quantity of sugar in excess of their production quota are required to pay a tax.

4.16. Albanian legislation on organic farming

Law no. 106/2016 "On the geological production, labeling of biological products and their control", aims to establish the basis for the sustainable development of biological production, ensure the efficient functioning of the market and guarantee fair competition, confidence and the protection of the interests of customers.

This law, among other things, has regulated the main elements and defined the objectives and principles for biological production in Albania. Among other things he has set the rules for:

- Prohibition of GMOs on biological production and ionizing radiation;
- For agricultural production to be implemented by agricultural holdings and the requirements it must apply for biological and livestock production;
- Production rules for aquaculture species;
- Products and substances used in biological farming and the criteria for their use;
- For the production of processed foods for the production of processed foods humans and animals;
- Mandatory labeling indicators and organic production logos;
- Control system and control bodies;
- Operator certification and rules for reporting activity;
- Rules for the import of biological products and offenses, etc.

The law has been partially aligned with Council Regulation (EC) no. 834/2007, dated 28 June 2007, "On the biological production and labeling of biological products and repealing Regulation (EEC) 2092/91", as amended. CELEX Number: 32007R0834, Official Journal of the European Union, Series L Nr. 189, dt. 20.7.2007, pages 1-23.

It is noteworthy that this law applies to any operator of production, preparation, transportation and distribution of the products specified in point 1 of this article, with the exception of catering operators.

V. ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN ALBANIA

Prof. Assoc. Edvin Zhllima²

5.1. Introduction

In recent years, organic farming has developed rapidly. According to the FiBL and IFOAM worldwide organic farming survey, data for this sector is available from 178 countries, with nearly 58 million hectares of land certified as organic agricultural land (Willer et al., 2018). So at the global level 1.2 percent of agricultural land is organic. In 2016 there was a 15% increase in the area of organic agricultural land and the number of producers reached 2.7 million and all products had an increase in their cultivation. The development of organic farming in recent years in the world and in Europe, in addition to the advantages of environmental protection and human health, has also been fueled by consumer awareness and concerns about the safety and nutritional quality of the products they consume.

The organic sector in Albania but also in the region is still in the early stages of development and can be considered as a small niche market. With the exception of some large-scale wild-type agricultural areas (in the mountainous part of Albania), which generally grow wild Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAP) (not cultivated) and nuts, most other organic products focus on products like fruits and vegetables. Since farms are usually small and split into several parcels, farmers need to look for other opportunities to grow value-added crops, a group of which organic products are part themselves.

In the context of Albania, the surface of agricultural land certified as organic has had an increasing trend but in recent years this trend has not been positive. The level of information, education and training among women on organic farming is low. In this context, extension service (or advisory service) is important for both modernizing the sector and enhancing farm performance (eg yields). Also the agricultural advisory service is of great importance in reducing fragmentation problems, weak stakeholder links in the respective seedlings and irregular application of agrochemicals.

Despite these supply-side problems, there has been an increasing preference for consumers of organic products from the demand side (Imami et al., 2016; Kullaj, 2007; Skreli et al., 2017). Demand growth is certainly coming from high-income consumers favoring organic production for a variety of reasons, including perceived health and environmental benefits, perceived improvement in food quality and taste, access to fresh produce and support local producers / farmers, communities and small markets.

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Indeed the efforts of the Albanian Government and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) through their development programs have alleviated the difficulties faced by organic and conventional (~~conventional agriculture~~) farmers in Albania, but there is still a pressing need to increase efforts, especially with regard to information, information exchange and awareness raising of farmers on good and sustainable agricultural practices.

To understand better the steps needed for policies, strategies, programs and models to promote organic farming, we need to understand the factors associated with the transition / transition of conventional (small or not)farmers to organic agriculture or other good and sustainable agricultural practices. This transition is becoming increasingly essential under the lens of Albania's European Union (EU) integration process. Familiarity with the challenges that organic and conventional producers themselves will face and the direct effects facing the EU integration process.

Taking into consideration the importance of the sector, the overall objective of this analysis is to understand the challenges, issues, and barriers that farmers (organic and conventional) face when transitioning to organic farming by EU standards, and to identify limiting factors / barriers that determine compliance with the standards, rules and requirements of organic farming for these farmers.

This analysis will be useful in understanding the needs of farmers and other seedling players so that they can easily access information and knowledge about national and international markets (in the EU but not only). The study assumes that compliance and adapting standards will increase the capacity of farmers towards commercialization and competition in the potential EU market.

This report consists of several sections. The following section shows the context of the sector including a SWOT analysis. The third section presents a summary of budget support and support policies for organic farming in Albania. The following section presents a review of the EU approach to organic farming. Section 5 provides farm survey information (primary data collection), while section 6 presents their results categorized by respective chapters. The last section shows the main findings and relevant interpretations. The list of bibliographies with the sources used in the study is presented in the last section.

5.2.Sector Background - Organic Agriculture in Albania

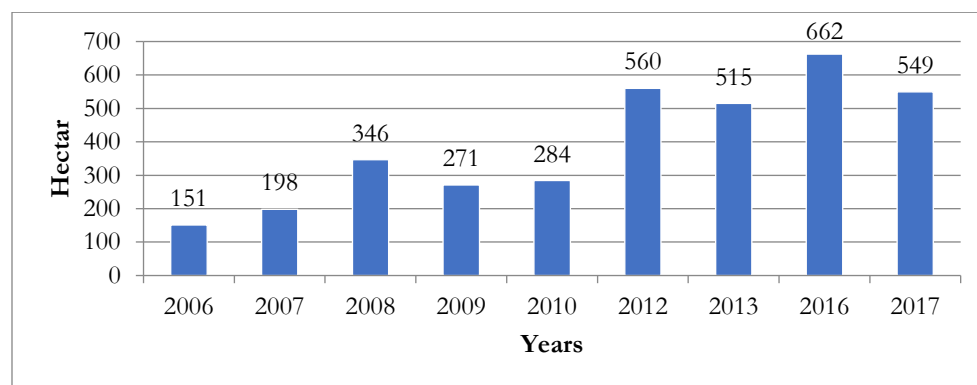
5.2.1. Structure of the sector

The MARD considers organic farming a priority sector, thereby encouraging the integration of the Albanian organic farming sector into the international organic farming community and fostering national and international networking (ISARD 2014-2020 and the Organic Farming Action Plan). But organic farming in Albania is still in its initial stages of development.

The trade of organic products cultivated in Albania first started in the mid-1990s due to the demand from European and American markets for medicinal and aromatic wild plants (harvesting in mountainous areas). In 2007 there were 11 ha of vegetables, 22 ha of olive groves, 15 ha of vineyards and 8 ha of certified organic fruits. In 2011, 6 ha of vegetables, 70 ha of olive groves, 20 ha of vineyards and 113 ha of fruit trees were converted to organic farming. Despite this

increase in converted land, organic farming statistics are far from EU countries' trends. For a summary of the size of organic farmland in total by year, refer to Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Size of agricultural land certified as organic (in Ha)



Source: *Albinspekt (before 2010) and the FiBL and IFOAM Survey on Organic Agriculture in the World (in Willer et al., 2018) (for the years after 2012)*

Manufacturers are the largest category of operators in all Mediterranean countries, around 89% (Willer et al., 2018). The same situation is recorded in Albania where most operators are producers, for example a figure of 131 producers is reported (see Table 1 below), a figure which is much larger compared to other categories of operators. Also from Table 1 we can see that the number of operators has increased over the years.

Table 1. Number of certified organic operators in Albania by category and years

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2014	2018*
Producers	30	40	43	31	110	61	131
Processor	3	3	4	5	25	53	98
Importer	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Exporttr	2	2	4	7	18	25	54
Total	34	45	49	38	137	143	140

Source: *List of Albinspekt Certified Operators (2018) Note: An operator may belong to more than one category. * unofficial*

If we compare the Mediterranean countries, according to data from Willer et al. (2018), Montenegro is the country with the largest share of agricultural land certified as organic versus the total area of agricultural land at the national level with a share of 1.5%, while organic agricultural land in Albania accounts for 0.05% of the total land area. agricultural land in the country (see Table 2).

Table 2. General statistics on organic farming in Albania and the EU

Indicator	Albania	EU
Organic Farmland (ha) (2017)	549	12.8 million
Share of organic farmland to total (2017)	0.05 %	7.2 %
Growth in organic farmland 2016-2017 (ha)	-113 ha	+ 0.8 million
Relative growth 2016-2017	-17.1%	6.4 %
Nr. producers	61(2014)	305'394 (2017)
Nr. processors	53 (2014)	68'164 (2017)
Nr. importers	4 (2014)	4'585 (2017)
Nr. exporters	25(2014)	2'235(2017)

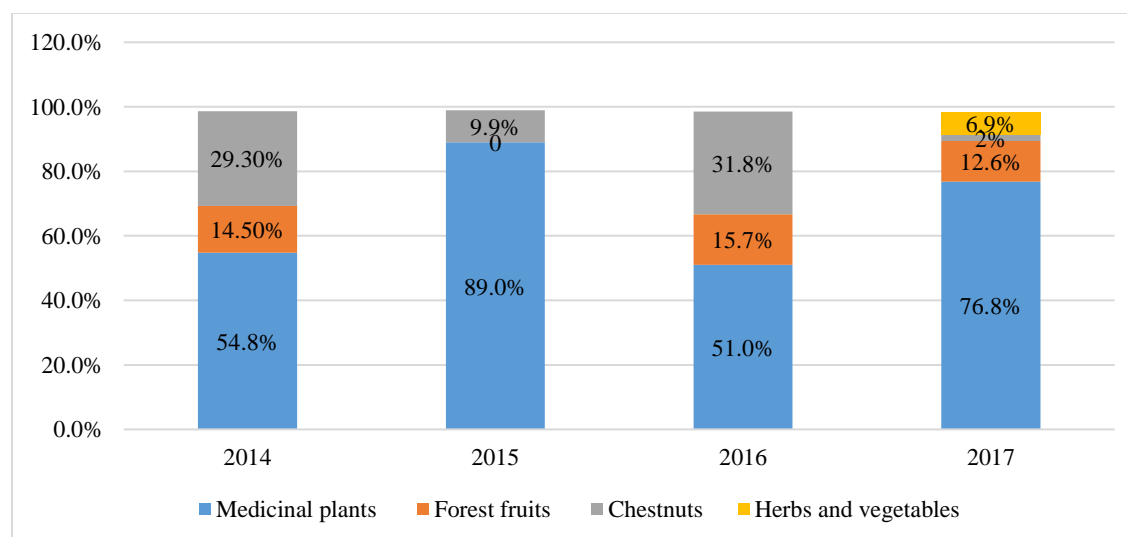
Source: FiBL and IFOAM Survey (Willer et al., 2018)

5.2.2. Organic farming production in Albania

Information on the production and export (in tonnes) of the three main organic products is given in Figure 2, 3 and Figure 4 below.

The structure of organic production continues to be the same, with medicinal and aromatic organic plants (organic MAP) accounting for 93% of the total, especially wild plants (harvested and non-cultivated), while other organic products such as forest fruits, chestnuts, spices continue to be produced in small quantities (figure 2).

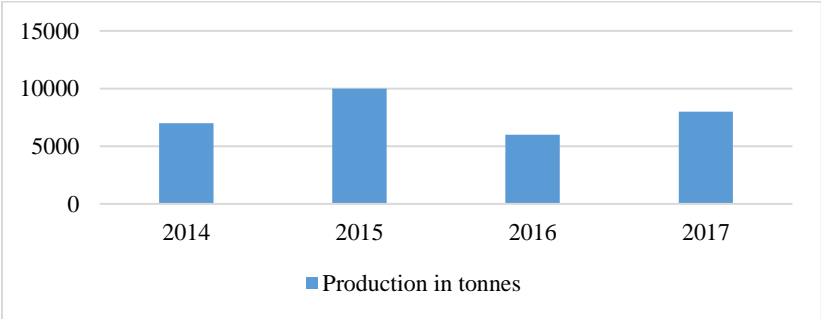
Figure 2: Organic production by years and products (share of total organic production)



Source: MARD (2018)

According to Figure 3 the highest level of organic production was recorded in 2015 where we had approximately 10,000 tons of organic production in the country. According to MARD (2018), organic production in 2017 increased by 41.2% compared to 2016, mainly due to increased production of MAPs. This increase is justified as a result of the increase in the number of organic operators by 37%, namely the subsidiary operators of MAPs.

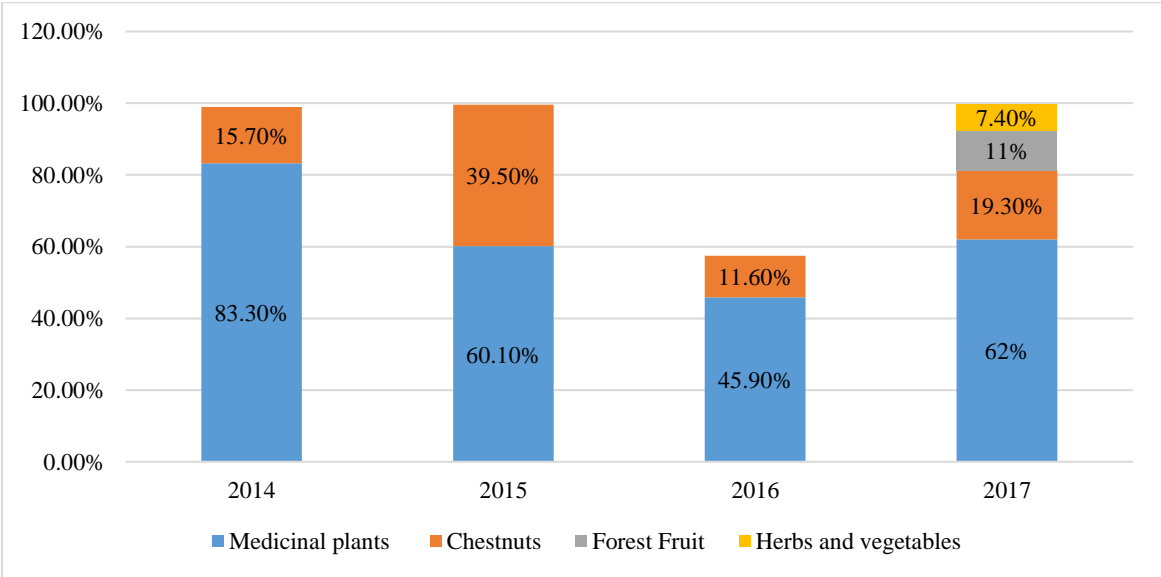
Figure 3: Organic production by years (tonnes)



Source: MARD (2018)

In terms of exports, mainly MAPs exports continue to increase, while other products are exported in small quantities (Figure 4). These organic products, for example MAPs in the USA but also in EU countries (Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Poland, etc.) and Switzerland; whereas chestnuts and fruits are mainly exported to Italy (MAFRD, 2018).

Figure 4: Export of main organic products by years (share of total exported organic products)

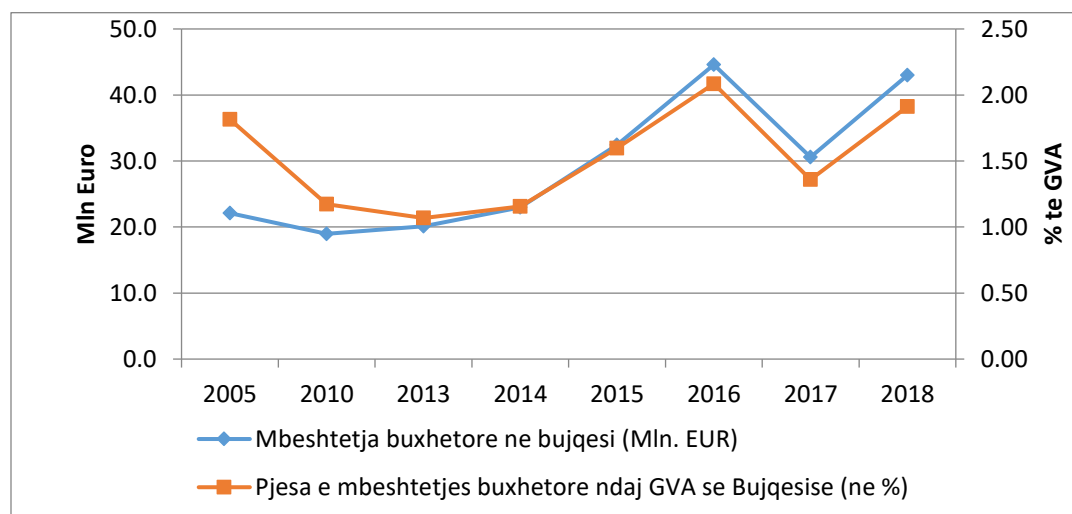


Source: MARD (2018)

5.3. Budget support for agriculture and support policies for organic farming in Albania

During the period 2005-2018, budgetary support for agriculture has been fluctuating, however with an upward trend, reaching a maximum in 2016. Over a decade, the average value of support has reached EUR 25 million or 1.4% of GVA (english: Gross Value Added (GVA)). In 2018, total budget support amounted to Euro 43 million (Figure 5). Support is very low, in terms of farm financing (EUR 120 per farm) or UAA ha (approx EUR 43 per ha), when compared to the EU (446 EUR / ha excluding state aid). Budget figures are modest when compared to agricultural GVA / GVA (less than 2% of gross agricultural value added) and do not meet the access requirement (which should be at approximately 10% of GVA). / GVA).

Figure 5: Budget support in value and as part of the GVA for agriculture in the period 2005-2018



Source: APM Database for Albania (2019); Albania Statistical Database of Agriculture (2019)

5.4. SWOT analysis

The development of the organic farming sector is possible thanks to many factors. In terms of production growth, Albania has favourable climate conditions for the production of organic products during the early and winter seasons. Current agricultural and livestock systems are largely based on low input levels (non-intensive systems). In terms of trade, Albania's strategic geographical position is an advantage, while increasing consumer income in Albania represents an opportunity for the internal market.

However, the sector faces some challenges. Despite progress on organic farming legislation, there are still gaps in terms of compliance with EU legislation on organic farming (or the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)). Government support policies for the sector should be increased and diversified (under different schemes / measures). Extension service capacities (agricultural

advisory service) are insufficient to meet the implementation of standards for organic production (ISARD 2014-2020). Lack of co-operation between operators in substrates prevents Albanian producers in trading organic products in Albania.

Table 3. SWOT Analysis

INTERNAL FACTORS			
STRENGTH		WEAKNESSES (-)	
1	Albania has favorable conditions for intensive work in the sector of: vegetables, AMPs, fruits etc.	1	There is limited awareness and support for the use of organic inputs, which are necessary for the development of the organic sector.
2	As salaries are lower than in other European countries, the country is well placed to play a more dominant role in the delivery of organic, raw material products (eg inputs). or as processed food (ie branded products).	2	Structural deficiencies in the agricultural sector (small farm size, parceling (small parcels), lack of co-operation (horizontal and vertical), small-scale production, poor economic and social infrastructure, land ownership conflicts and problems etc.).
3	An additional part Albanian agricultural products, including ehre olives and nuts, are essentially <i>de facto</i> organic.	3	Support policies are at a low level - there are no direct support measures for organic farming in 2019 and no premium prices / price supplements for organic products (see next section).
4	The Albanian consumer has increased the preference to buy local and good quality products.	4	Organic initiatives depend heavily on foreign projects and funding.
5	Relative proximity to the EU market, especially Italy thanks to ports.	5	Farmers have limited access to organic inputs.
6	Existence of shared experiences and valuable human resources for the development of the sector.	6	There are different opinions on the role of public and private structures in the development of the sector (inspection and advisory services).
7	Strong political will to support sector development.	7	There is insufficient capacity of local extension service offices to cope with advising on the implementation of standards for organic production.

EXTERNAL FACTORS			
OPPORTUNITIES (+)		THREATS (-)	
1	Albania's strategic geographical position against potential European markets is an advantage, while increasing the income of domestic consumers in Albania represents an opportunity for the domestic market.	1	Production structures are further fragmented and production facilities are inadequate.
2	Albania's natural wealth and location are favorable for producing high quality products.	2	Lack of sufficient human resources in rural and mountainous areas needed to be allocated for organic sector development - migration / migration.
3	The preferences and behaviors of Albanian consumers are oriented towards typical traditional products and safe and quality food products. Most consumers are willing to pay more for organic products.	3	Incomplete (fully) legal, institutional and administrative framework for organic products (according to EU rules).
4	Ongoing road system upgrades in rural areas reduce transport costs - infrastructure upgrades further drive new investment.	4	The gap of adapting standards to the production / marketing / processing / labeling of organic products. (Local / national standards vs. EU / international standards).
5	Promising links between organic and typical products.	5	Lack of co-operation between institutional links in the sector.
6	Opportunities for the development of the internal market related to the development of rural tourism.	6	Poor consumer education and awareness of food quality issues.
7	Increasing the interest of international donors in sustainable agricultural initiatives in Albania.	7	
8	Opportunities for harmonization with rural development policies and programs.		
9	Increasing the exposure of the Albanian organic community to the experiences of EU countries.		
10	Increasing the capacity of Albanian agri-food enterprises in line with international (EU) standards.		

Source: Author's own elaboration

5.5.Support for organic farming under national schemes

Since 2008, MAFRD has provided support for the certification of cultivated agricultural products, mainly intended for the domestic market but still the number of beneficiaries among farmers remains very low. Also, some donors such as USAID, GIZ, the Swiss Agency for Development have provided support projects aimed at the development of organic farming in the country.

Albinspect is the only certification body in the country approved by MARD for certification of organic farmers in Albania. While the foreign certification bodies are seven: ICEA, BCS, Oko-Garantie GmbH, BioInspecta AG, CERES GmbH, Control Union Certifications B.V., IMO CH, IMC srl.

From table 4 we see that there has been an increase in the value of subsidies under direct schemes - in 2016 the scheme offered 80,000 ALL for certified farm while after 2017 support is made for 200,000 ALL for certified farm. In 2016, two operators applied, one of which became a beneficiary, while six (out of eight) became beneficiaries in 2017 with a total support value of EUR 9,600 (MAFRD, 2018). Olive growers have also indirectly benefited from the support scheme to protect olives from the olive fly.

Table 4: Subsidy provided in years by national support schemes

Year	Subsidy amount	Description
2008	6,000-70,000	50% of certification cost but not more than 6000 ALL for products sold in Albanian market and 7000 ALL for export
2009	20,000-70,000	50% of certification cost but not more than 20,000 ALL for Albanian market and 70,000 ALL for export
2010	50,000	Fixed amount for all farms
2011	70,000	Fixed amount for all farms
2012	70,000	Fixed amount for all farms
2013	70,000	ALL / Farm
2014	80,000	Certified ALL / farm
2016	80,000	Certified ALL / farm
2017	200,000	Certified ALL / farm
2018	200,000	Organic farms, for the first year, in the amount of 100,000 ALL, in the second year 150,000 ALL and 200,000 ALL, for certified farm.
2019	No measure supporting the organic production	

Source: Author's own elaboration based on VKM CMD of subsidies on agriculture for each year

For 2018, support measures for farms using organic production methods, unlike other years, also included farms at conversion stage (see 2018 description of the measure in table 3). The number of beneficiaries under this scheme was 22 and the total amount was 23,237 Euro (MARD, 2018). In 2018, due to not limiting the period of conversion of farms to organic farming we can argue that the number of beneficiaries of the support scheme has been even higher than in previous years but this higher number of beneficiaries is also an indicator increasing the number of farmers willing to produce under conditions of organic farming.

Despite the increase in the value of subsidies in direct schemes, from 600 euros per farm certified in 2016 to 1500 euros in 2017 (80,000 ALL / certified farm in 2016 and 200,000 ALL / certified farm in 2017), the number of beneficiaries continues to be low compared to potential. Support to organic farming was exempted in year 2019. The failure of some of the Albanian government's efforts to integrate farmers into the organic farming economy has increased the need for a better scientific knowledge base and a fuller understanding of the challenges these farmers will face during the transition (always below the spectrum). EU standards for organic farming).

5.6.Support for organic farming according IPARD II

In IPARD II program support for organic farming is included in measure 7: Measure 7: Farm diversification and business development. This measure consists of sub-measures which are specific to organic farming: A) Measure 7.1 - Provision and production of medicinal and aromatic plants, fungi, honey, snails and materials for the production of essential oils; and B) Measure 7.3 - Processing and marketing of wild or cultivated medicinal and aromatic plants, fungi, olive oil, honey, fish and fish products, production and marketing of essential oils. The total budget of Measure 7 is € 8.30 million, with a minimum of € 10,000, and a maximum of € 400,000. The percentage of support with public funds is 65% of the total eligible investment costs.

Expenditure categories eligible for Measure 7.1 - Production of medicinal and aromatic herbs, mushrooms, honey, ornamental plants, snails, by categories are:

- MAPs and ornamental plants;
 - production facilities, greenhouses (glazed and / or plastic tunnels with a minimum of 5 years warranty), including ventilation facilities and equipment, air conditioning and heating, alarm systems with electric generators, water tanks and irrigation systems;
 - specialized equipment for horticultural production and nursery farms, including tractors up to 70 hp;
 - post-harvest facilities and equipment for collection / ventilation, drying and storage.
-
- Honey
 - hives, protective equipment, fumigants and other honey production equipment; beekeeping equipment;
 - shelter (facilities) and equipment for extraction and storage of honey, beekeeping products and equipment for production;

- laboratory equipment;
 - equipment for the production and preparation of supplementary bee feed;
 - raising the siege around the bee farm / hive.
- Snail farms
 - specialized facilities and equipment for breeding, breeding, maintenance and conservation;
 - Cultivation of fungi
 - facilities and equipment, air conditioning systems (for temperature, ventilation, lighting, humidity, etc.) for production, storage and cooling;
 - composting facilities and equipment.

Meanwhile for measure 7.3 (processing and marketing of wild or cultivated MPA, fungi, olive oil, honey, fish or fishery products, production and marketing of essential oils) the eligible expenditure categories are:

1. (7-3.1) Construction and / or reconstruction of facilities and processing equipment:
 - Collection centers and facilities for raw materials;
 - facilities and equipment (including specialized computer equipment and software) for the processing of final products and / or products, including the setting of specific microclimatic conditions and / or temperature for production needs;
 - internal laboratories for product quality, hygiene and food safety analysis;
 - facilities and equipment for storing products, including the creation of special microclimatic and / or temperature conditions;
 - facilities and equipment for the storage of by-products of animal and non-human origin;
 - Machinery and equipment for handling and transporting products and / or products;
 - equipment and machinery for waste and wastewater treatment;
 - sanitary facilities for staff and the environment for the maintenance of cleaning, washing and disinfecting agents.
2. (7-3.2) Construction and / or reconstruction and purchase of equipment for points of sale in production facilities and for direct marketing of products:
 - facilities and equipment for packaging and filling, and labeling;
 - sales premises, including exhibition premises, with all necessary equipment, including specialized computer software and equipment and furniture.

5.6.1. Evaluation Criteria (IPARD II)

IPARD II applies several rating criteria, which are applied with points and for certified organic applicants' farms are offered as a 15-point bonus point for a given measure (see Table 5).

Table 5: Evaluation criteria according to IPARD II

Criteria	Scoring
Investment was made in the mountain areas (designated)	15 points
Investment in renewable energy production	10 points
The applicant (agricultural holding) is certified for organic production in accordance with the applicable law on organic farming	15 points
The applicant is female or a company that has at least 30% female employees	15 points
The applicant is a young farmer (no more than 40 years old at the time of application submission)	15 points
Based on the business plan, the project envisages the creation of new jobs	30 points

5.7. Approach to Organic Farming according to the European Union

5.7.1. Introduction with the rules of organic production

Producing organic products means respect to the principles, rules and requirements of organic farming. Anyone who wants to become an organic farmer must make sure that he / she knows the necessary legislation in order to be fully aware of his or her responsibilities. Before starting the activity in the organic sector, the competent authority in the country (eg Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) should be contacted. This institution provides information on available support measures and more general advice.

5.7.2. Certification

All manufacturers, processors or traders wishing to market their products as organic must register with a certification agency / certification and control body. This agency is responsible for verifying that the operator complies with organic production rules. The on-going process involves annual inspection and a series of checks to ensure compliance with the rules on organic production.

5.7.3. Certification bodies

Each country in the EU nominates a 'competent authority' responsible for ensuring that the rules of the EU organic operators are followed. Usually these are either an agriculture department or a public health department. This competent authority may delegate its role to one or more private control bodies, to one or more public control authorities, a system mixed with the private control bodies and public control authorities. Regardless of the system selected, the competent authority

is responsible for auditing the inspection system within its area of responsibility. Once a year, EU countries report to the European Commission on the results of checks carried out on organic operators and on measures taken in the event of non-compliance.

5.7.4. Controls in practice

Farmers, processors or traders must be checked by a control authority before they can sell their products as organic. Farmers must respect a set of elements of sectoral legislation that protects public health, animal and plant health, the environment and animal welfare. All farmers receiving assistance are required to comply with the legal requirements for management (SMR) under compliance legislation - which reflects their compliance with EU food and environmental law. All food producers must abide by the general food law which includes labeling legislation. Specific products may have additional rules, such as the requirement for more detailed labeling.

5.7.5. Transition Period (conversion)

Every farm that wants to produce organically has to undergo a process known as the 'transitional period'. During this period, organic production methods should be used, but the resulting product cannot be sold as organic. The length of this transition period depends on the type of organic product being produced, which should specifically:

- 3 years for orchards and vineyards
- 12 months for grazing lands for pigs and poultry (chickens)
- 2 years for small grazing lands

The transition period can be a difficult period for organic farms, because organic methods often result in lower yields, while at the same time products produced during the conversion period may not benefit the same premium price. To grow crops during the transitional period, the seeds must be organic. For this reason, EU countries offer various support measures to help farmers transition to organic farming.

5.8.Support policies for organic farmers in the EU

EU financial support is provided both for the transition period and afterwards (to stay in the status of organic production). The EU also helps farmers set up production organizations that help protect against unfair trade practices and also provides support during market fluctuations to these farmers. In the EU organic farmers can also benefit from tips on best practices or how to apply new and innovative methods. Organic farmers can also apply for other forms of support under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

5.8.1. EU support policies for organic farms under CAP

Support policies towards organic farms in the EU under the CAP are:

- 1 - Support for conversion and
- 2 - Support for certification

3 - Agri-environmental Payment

Conversion payment rates depend on the type of crop planted. For example 1 (one) ha of arable land has a conversion fee of 77-600 euros. Whereas 1 (one) ha of vineyards has a conversion fee of 350-1080 Euros. Some of the criteria / requirements to qualify for this payment are: i) keeping records of the farm, ii) ongoing training, iii) reducing nitrogen fertilizer use, iv) stopping parallel cultivation, v) stopping conversion from permanent pasture to arable land etc.

Regarding support policies for organic certification, they vary by country / country. Some countries support a part / some parts of certification and inspection while some other countries have fixed fees such as direct payments to the farm, per hectare or as a percentage / share of the certification and inspection costs.

Organic farmers automatically qualify for agri-environmental payments. These payments were created to encourage farmers to make decisions that have a positive impact on the environment. These payments also reflect the many benefits that organic farming has to the environment.

In addition to the schemes mentioned above there are also combinations: e.g. water, soil protection measures, preservation of landscape features, traditional types of crops, encouragement of tourism activities etc.

5.8.2. The Common Agricultural Policy after 2020

5.8.2.1.Future CAP objectives

The nine main objectives will be the basis on which future CAP strategic plans are built and will be the cornerstone of a more results-oriented policy. The objectives are (see Figure 6 for a schematic representation):

- Ensure fair distribution of income to farmers
- Increase competition
- Power recovery in the agri-food chain
- Addressing climate change impacts
- Environmental Protection
- Conservation of landscapes and biodiversity
- Supporting young farmers
- Revitalizing rural areas
- Protecting the health and quality of food

Based on 9 objectives, the future CAP will continue to provide access to high quality food and strong support for the unique European model of agriculture.

Figure 6: Schematic overview of the 9 future CAP targets



Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap/key-policy-objectives-future-cap_en

5.8.2.2. Priorities of future CAP

In order to ensure sustainability and predictability, income support will continue to be an important part of GDP after 2020. So new GDP gives priority to young farmers (small and medium) where priority is:

- Increase the level of support per hectare for small and medium-sized farms
- Reduction of the share of direct payments received over € 60,000 and € 100,000 per farm, in order to ensure a fairer distribution of payments.
- Facilitating the livelihood of certified farmers by increasing clarity on legal rules and allowing further harmonization and simplification of production rules.
- Increase consumer confidence by strengthening the control system.

In the context of the future CAP, the new regulation will reduce the administrative burden on operators and inspection and inspection bodies. Organic production rules have been expanded to cover a wider list of products (eg, salt, beeswax, vine leaves, etc.) and additional production rules (e.g. deer, rabbits and chickens). Support for smallholder farmers by introducing a new group certification system has also been introduced. This will make it easier for small farmers to switch to organic farming by reducing inspection and certification costs and the associated administrative burden. The regulation also provides a more uniform approach to pesticides. So the new regulation harmonizes precautions by increasing legal certainty.

5.8.2.3. Impact on the environment and climate change

Farmers play a key role in addressing climate change, protecting the environment and preserving landscapes and biodiversity. Some of the EU requirements in this regard are: i) preservation of

carbon-rich soils through pasture protection to improve water quality, reduce ammonia oxide levels, etc.) crop circulation instead of diversification, etc.

EU countries will develop voluntary ecological schemes to support and stimulate farmers to apply climate-friendly agricultural practices. Farmers will also be able to contribute further and be rewarded for exceeding mandatory requirements.

5.8.2.4. Farmers at the center of European society

Farmers are in the center of Europe's rural communities, providing vital public goods. Future CAP proposes to promote the development of rural areas through:

- Helping younger generations of farmers join the profession, though mentoring younger farmers from more experienced ones, improving knowledge transfer from one generation to the next, or developing success plans
- Encouraging EU countries to do more at the national level, for example through more flexible tax and inheritance policy rules, to improve access to (ownership of) land for young farmers
- Imposing stricter food safety and quality requirements for farmers, providing financial support only when, for example, rules on reducing the use of pesticides or antibiotics are applied.

5.9. Farm survey

5.9.1. Methodological approach

To collect the necessary primary data for the farm was used a structured questionnaire. Interviews were conducted in the following areas: Tirana, Durres, Malesia e Madhe, Lushnje and Vlora during June and July 2019. Both types of farmers were included in the survey, those who applied organic production methods on their farm and those who did not have ever applied this kind of methods.

Interviewers in the study areas were trained to conduct interviews with farmers. The selection was made using a purposive sample, where those farmers who had previously attempted to follow organic farming procedures were first asked, and through a *snow ball* reference, other farmers were also identified to be interviewed.

5.9.2. Questionnaire structure

The structured farm questionnaire was designed to collect the data needed to analyze the level and need of informing and raising awareness of these farmers on EU requirements for agricultural production / products. This questionnaire is part of an assessment of the needs of farmers regarding the information they need regarding the practices and legislation of Organic Farming and the EU membership process.

The farm questionnaire was designed in four sections. The first section included questions on the social and demographic characteristics of farmers. The second section included questions on the profile of the farm or otherwise stated data on the size of the farm or its main activities. Meanwhile, the third part of the questionnaire included basic survey questions that generally relate to information on sustainable agricultural policies and practices and expectations for Albania's future and EU membership. The final section of the questionnaire consisted of questions on income data collection that respondents benefit from agricultural activities in general and organic farming in particular.

5.9.3. Characteristics of the study sample

The following table (Table 6) shows a summary of the socio-demographic data of the farmers included in the study sample. As we can see from the table, most of the interviewed farmers have secondary agricultural education (37%). Half of the sample are in the category “Self-employed in the agricultural sector” (61%).

Table 6: Socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewed farmers

Age	Gender		Education		Employment						
	nr	%	nr	%	nr	%					
<30	2	2%	M	120	97%	Elementary / 8 years	25	18%	Employed in the public sector	18	15%
30-40	6	5%	F	4	3%	Agricultural high- school	52	37%	Employed in the private sector	12	10%
40-50	19	17%	Totali	124	100%	Other high - school	42	30%	Self-employed in the non-agricultural sector	7	6%
50-60	39	35%				University	21	15%	Self-employed in the agricultural sector	76	61%
60<	47	42%				Total	14	100%	Other	11	9%
Total	113	100%					0		Total	124	100%

Source: Author elaboration based on survey results

RESULTS

5.10. Farm profile and orientation towards organic farming

Farm profile

Due to the small size of farms and the long process of converting farms from conventional to organic in Albania, the expectations on the size of certified farms are similar, and therefore fragmented. For the surveyed farmers the minimum area of agricultural land converted to organic or in the process of conversion is 1.88 dynm and the maximum is 73 dynm, excluding farms with a large area, because they created a deviation from the average of other farms (see table 7). The average area for farms that started to produce under organic farming is 14.5 dynm for our sample. Most of the organic area is certified by AlbInspekt, and in a few cases by international certification bodies.

Table 7: Data on farm land area

Surface of agricultural land (dynym)	N	Min	Max	Average	Std. Dev.
Surface of agricultural land owned	110	2	73	19,2	15,7
Area of agricultural land in use (total)	113	2	73	20,6	16,7
Surface of agricultural land initiated for BO	79	1,88	70	14,5	13,3

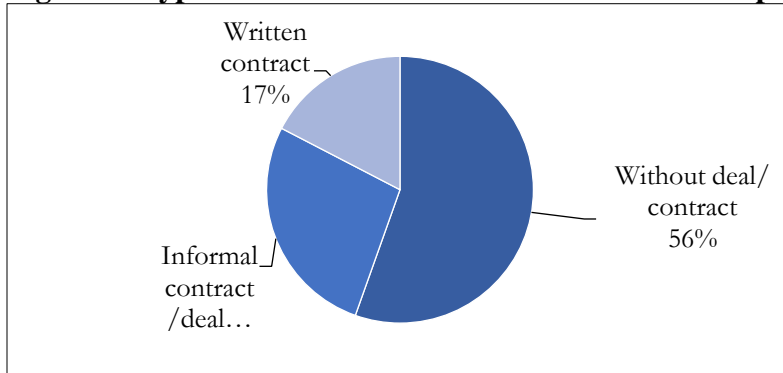
Source: Data provided by field survey

Regarding the type of agreements between farmers and buyers, our study as well as previous studies conducted in Albania (Imami et al., 2013) show that written contracts (formal agreements) are not common in Albania, while informal agreements (verbal) are widely used. Informal

agreements can serve as an entry point for promoting farm contracting since it is far more promising to start with existing links than to try to develop from scratch.

The data collected show that 17% of the farmers surveyed use formal contracts and 27% use informal agreements while 56% of the surveyed farmers do not use any contracts (Figure 7), thus selling their produce directly (Figure 7). in shop). It should be noted that the probability that this category is made up of non-organic farmers is high.

Figure 7. Type of contract farmers use to market their products



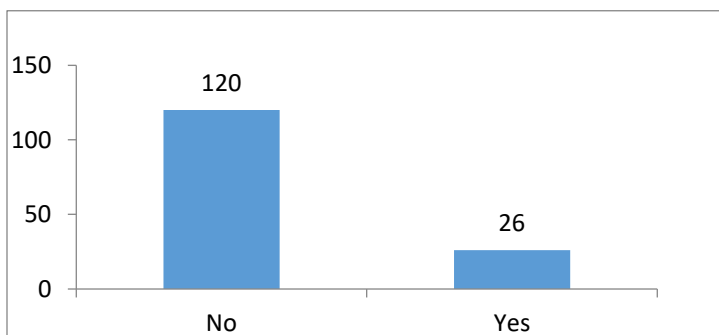
Source: Field survey data (Note: unanswered observations are excluded from the total)

On average farmers interviewed have 3 main buyers with whom they have adapted a business relationship for the sale of their produce with an average 9-month exchange time.

5.10.1. Orientation towards organic farming

Farmers were asked if they were ever certified as organic farms, and the answers categorized in two options are given in Figure 8. 82% of the interviewed farmers were never certified as organic farms, while only 18% of them were previously certified.

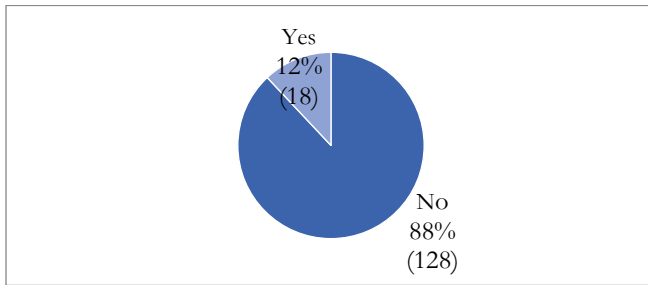
Figure 8. Certification on organic farms (Question "Have you ever been certified?")



Source: Data provided by field survey

The farmers were then asked if they are currently certified as an organic farm. The answers to the question are found in Figure 9 below. Only 12% of the interviewers are certified at the time the survey was conducted.

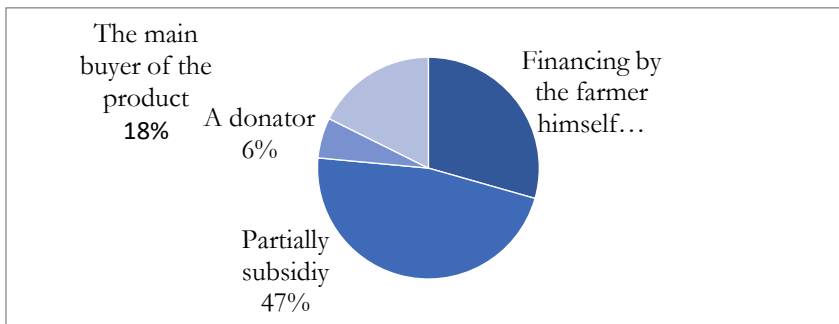
Figure 9. Certified organic farm currently



Source: Data provided by field survey

Out of 17 certified farmers (given that one farmer did not answer this question), 8 of them (47%) financed the farm certification partly from the subsidy, 5 of them or 29% covered it with financing of their own (Figure 10).

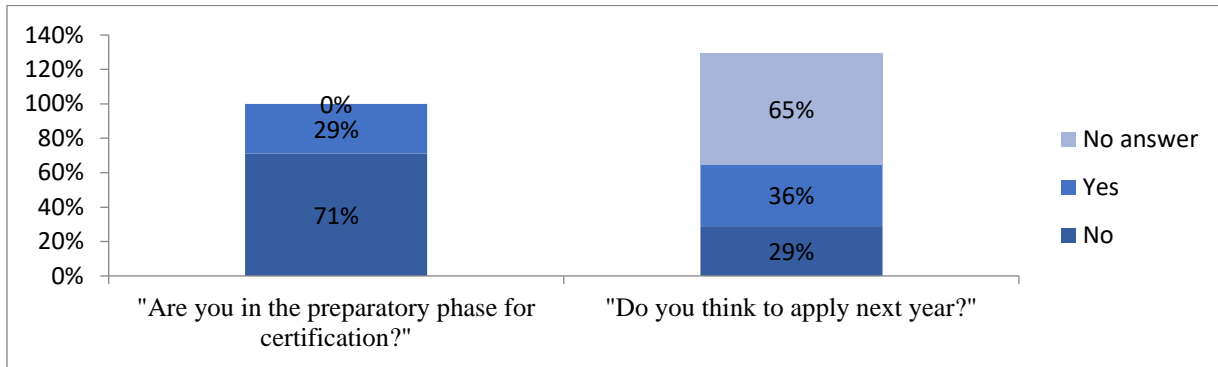
Figure 10. Coverage of certification costs (only farmers who are certified)



Source: Data provided by field survey

Whereas regarding the group of farmers that are not currently (this is the period when the field farmers were interviewed) certified in organic farming, they were asked if they are in the preparatory phase for certification, and if so, are they thinking of apply for subsidy next year. The results of these questions are shown in Figure 11 where it appears that only 29% of non-certified farmers are in the preparatory phase for certification. Meanwhile, only 36% of this category of farmers are considering applying for certification next year.

Figure 11: Farmers' willingness for potential certification



Source: Data provided by field survey

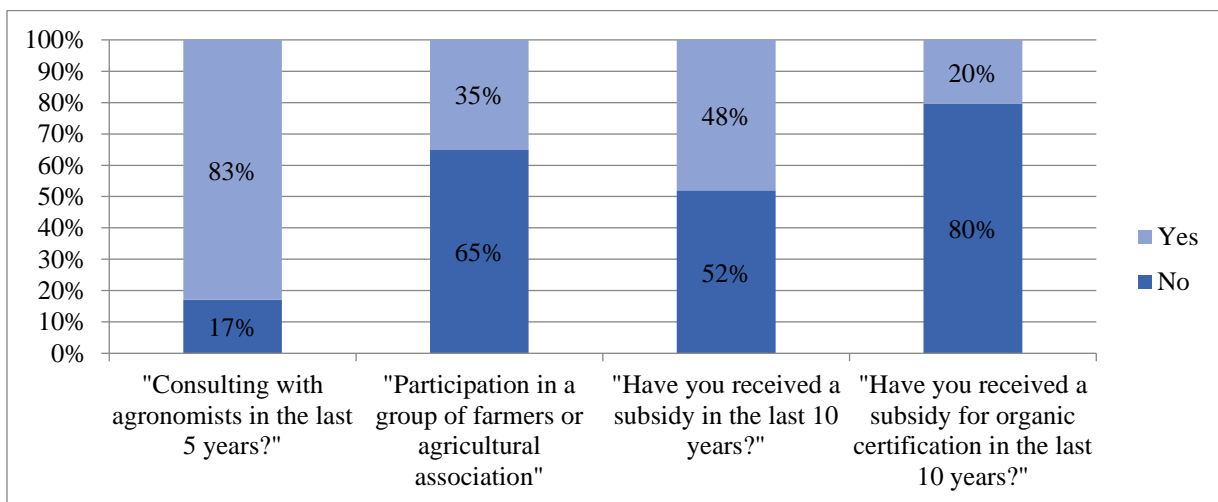
5.11. Level of information and its provision

5.11.1. Information sources, priority topics and behaviors

In this section we will present the results of questions on information sources and priority topics for organic farming.

Surveyed farmers were also asked about consulting with agronomists, whether they formally cooperate with each other and whether they have received subsidies in recent years. The results are presented graphically in Figure 12. As we can see from the figure, 17% of the farmers interviewed do not consult agronomists, while 35% of the farmers formally cooperate with each other. As for subsidies, 48% of them have been subsidized, while only 20% have received subsidies for organic farm certification in the last 10 years.

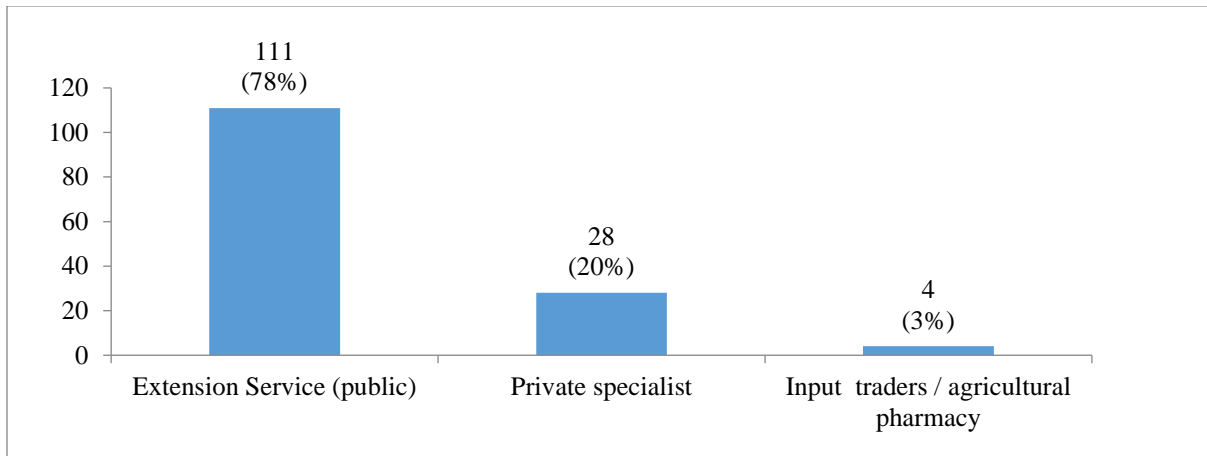
Figure 12. Counseling, co-operation and subsidy opportunities for surveyed farmers



Source: Data provided by field survey

Figure 13 shows that 78% of farmers interviewed stated that the main information source for organic farming is the public advisory service which is a service provided by extension specialists in each administrative unit in Albania. The second most important source of information according to farmers is the information that private specialists provide in the field of organic farming (20%), while the third most important source appears to be information provided by input traders or agricultural pharmacies (3%).

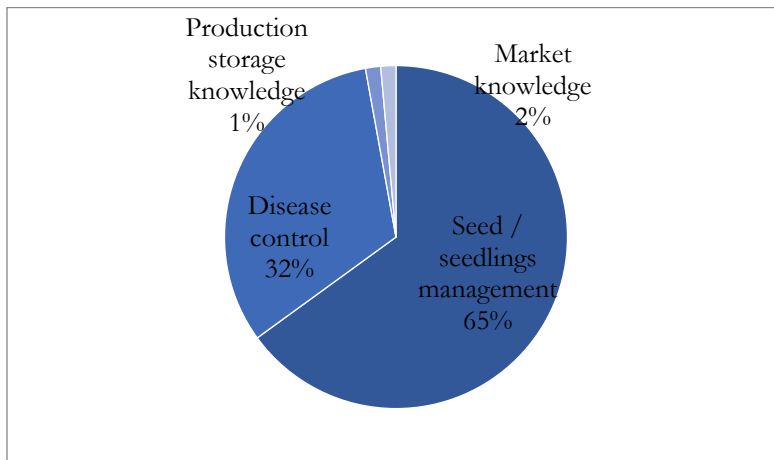
Figure 13. The most important information source for organic farming



Source: Data provided by field survey

The farmers were then asked which themes are a priority for organic farming according to them. The answers are shown in Figure 14. As we can see from the figure, 65% of farmers prioritize seed / seed management information, while 32% prioritize disease control information.

Figure 14. Top priority informative topics for organic farming

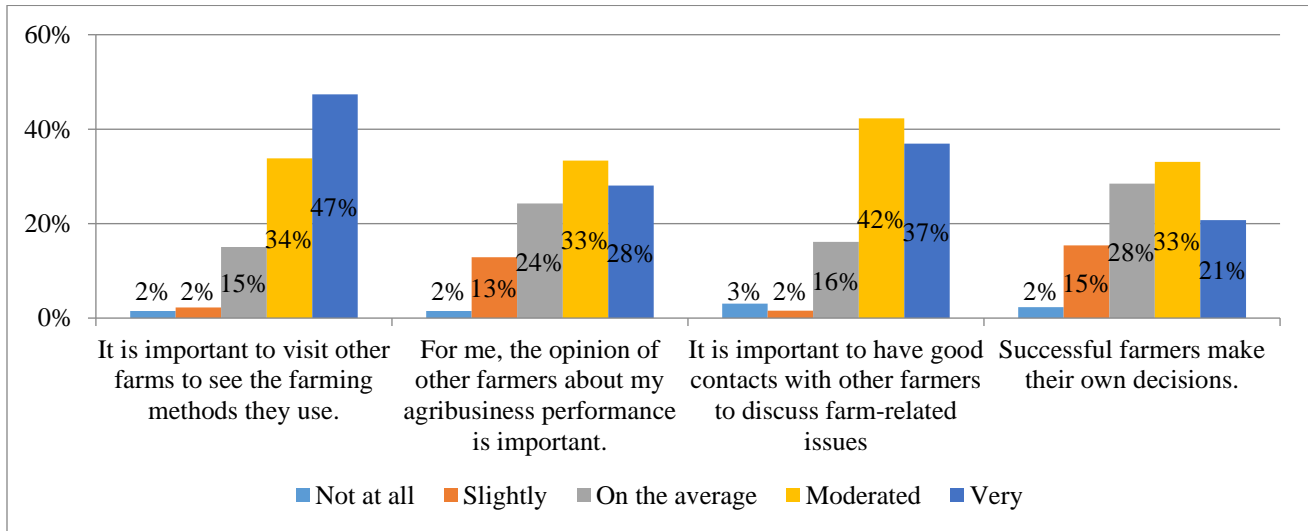


Source: Data provided by field survey

Farmers were also specifically asked about their behavior towards information through various methods such as visits to other certified farms, for example. Figure 15 below informs us of the results, where we can clearly see that most farmers are positive about this issue - 47% consider it important to visit other farms to get acquainted with the use of organic farming methods. Also,

33% of respondents consider the opinion of other farmers but also say that they are sufficiently in agreement with the statement "Successful farmers make their own decisions". Another indicator of the possibility of cooperation between farmers of the two categories certified or not is the positive result - approximately 80% of respondents said that they are sufficient and very much in agreement - on the statement "it is important to maintain good contact with other farmers to discuss farm-related issues."

Figure 15. Behavior towards available information



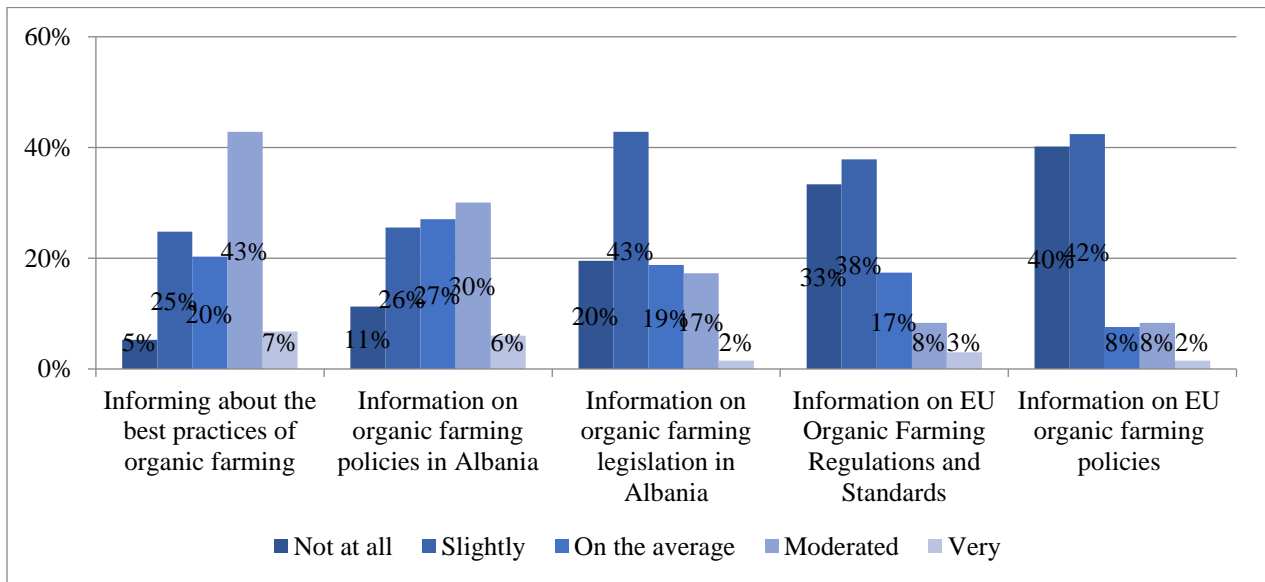
Source: Data provided by field survey

5.12. Information on the European Union, policies, legislation and good agricultural practices

5.12.1. Level of information of farmers

What was observed from the responses of the farmers surveyed during fieldwork was that the information or *information* available to farmers about EU policies, standards, regulations, legislation or requirements is inexistent. From the graph below, we note that for the last two statements in the graph, the highest percentage of farmers has low information on organic farming issues under EU conditions in general (Figure 16). Meanwhile, regarding the same requirements but this time according to Albanian legislation, farmers are on average a little more informed.

Figure 16. Level of information of farmers

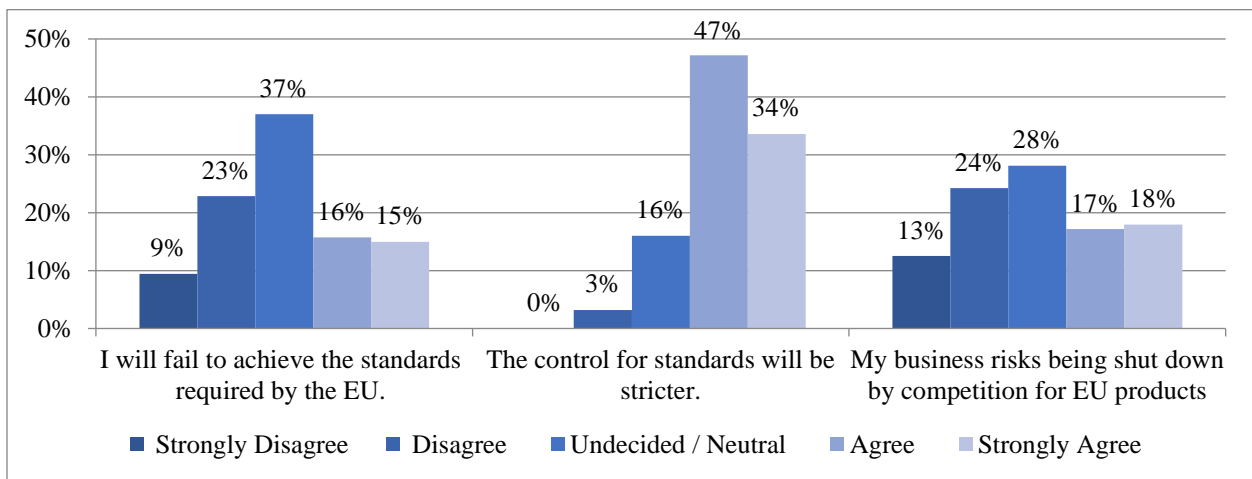


Source: Data provided by field survey

5.12.2. Expectations for the future and the European Union

This third part of the farm survey results will address farmers' perception of the benefits and costs of EU membership. Farmers were asked how much they agreed with statements addressing the same issue. Figure 17 below presents the negative statements that the farmer will fail to meet the standards or go bankrupt after accession.

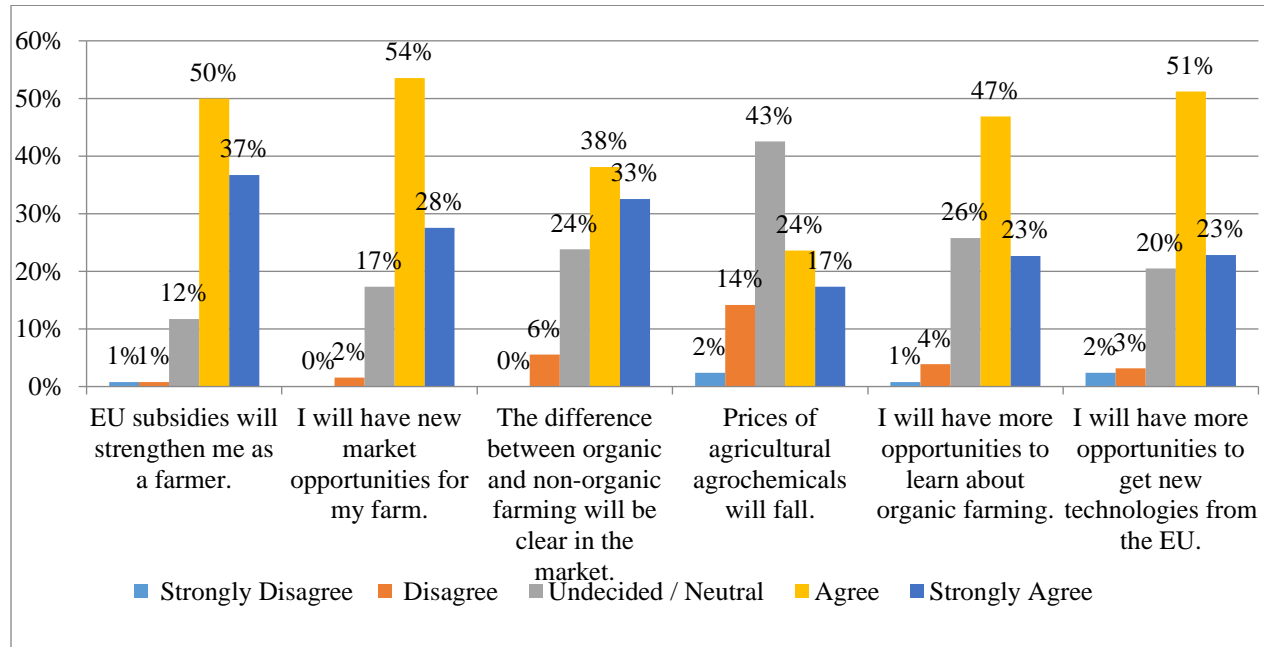
Figure 17. Concordance with negative statements on farmers' perceptions of EU membership



Source: Data provided by field survey

Figure 18 below presents positive statements where 87% of farmers say EU subsidies will strengthen them as farmers, while 82% perceive that they will have new market opportunities for their products after accession. On the other hand, about 70% of them perceive that they will have more opportunities to acquire new technologies and knowledge of organic farming.

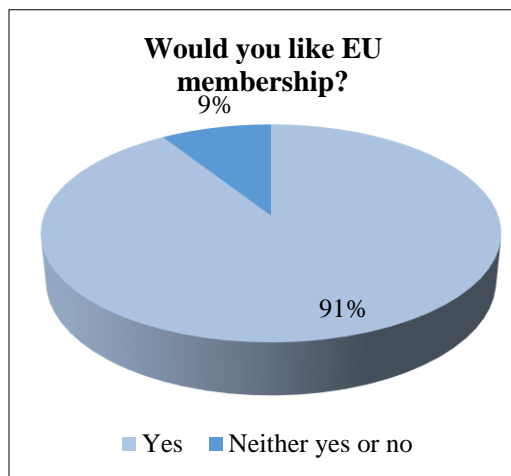
Figure 18. Consent with positive statements on farmers' perceptions of EU membership



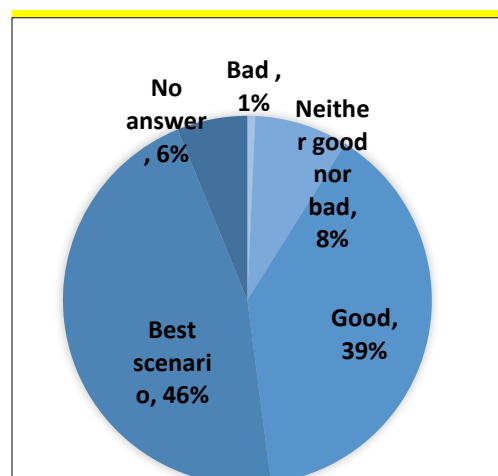
Source: Data provided by field survey

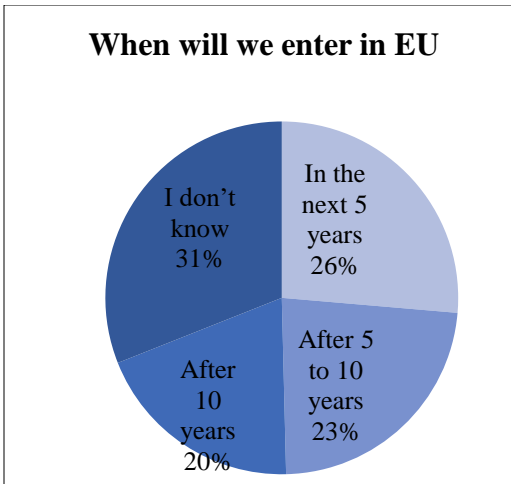
In group the last set of questionnaire questions, farmers were specifically asked whether they were in favor or against Albania's EU membership, how they generally conceive membership and when they think it will be possible. Figure 19 gives the results, with 91% of respondents stating that Albania will join the EU and most of them perceive membership positively meanwhile the period is unclear.

Figure 19. EU Membership



What is membership in EU for you ?





Source: Data provided by field survey

5.13. Conclusions (farm survey).

The MARD considers organic farming a priority sector, thereby encouraging the integration of the Albanian organic farming sector into the international organic farming community and fostering national and international networking (ISARD 2014-2020 and the Organic Farming Action Plan). In Albania there are favorable climate conditions for the production of organic products during the early and winter seasons. Current agricultural and livestock systems are largely based on low input levels (non-intensive systems). In terms of trade, Albania's strategic geographical position is an advantage, while increasing consumer income in Albania represents an opportunity for the internal market.

Organic farming in Albania is still in its early stages of development. The sector faces several challenges. Despite progress on organic farming legislation, there are still gaps in terms of compliance with EU legislation on organic farming (or the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)). Government support policies for the sector should be increased and diversified (under different schemes / measures). Extension service capacities (agricultural advisory service) are insufficient to meet the implementation of standards for organic production (ISARD 2014-2020). Lack of co-operation between operators in substrates hinders Albanian producers in trading organic products in Albania

Also, budget support has been more consistent with other budget support items. Since 2008, MARD has provided support for the certification of cultivated agricultural products, mainly intended for the domestic market but still the number of beneficiaries among farmers remains very low. Despite the increase in the value of subsidies in direct schemes, from 600 euros per farm certified in 2016 to 1500 euros in 2017 (80,000 ALL / certified farm in 2016 and 200,000 ALL / certified farm in 2017), the number of beneficiaries continues to be low compared to potential. In IPARD II program support for organic farming is included in measure 7: Measure 7: Farm diversification and business development. Also, some donors such as USAID, GIZ, the Swiss

Agency for Development have provided support projects aimed at the development of organic farming in the country.

The survey showed that the farms involved in organic farming have similar dimensions. However the average size indicates a noticeable rental activity. Given the small size of farms and the long process of converting farms from conventional to organic in Albania, also the expectations on the size of certified farms are similar, so fragmented.

It seems that some of these farms are more involved in the market. Regarding the type of agreements between farmers (organic or non-organic) and buyers, only 17% of farmers surveyed use formal written contracts and 27% use informal agreements while 56% do not use any type of contracts / agreement. On average contracted farmers (formally or not) have 3 main buyers with whom they have tailored a business relationship for the sale of their produce and with an average exchange time of 9 months.

Access to counseling is better than the overall situation of farms in the country. Only 17% of farmers surveyed do not consult agronomists, while only 35% of them formally cooperate with each other. As for subsidies, 48% of them have been subsidized, while only 20% have received subsidies for organic farm certification in the last 10 years.

Only 12% of respondents are certified at the time the survey was conducted. Out of 17 certified farmers, 8 of them (47%) financed the farm certification partially from the subsidy, 5 of them or 29% covered it with their own funding / funds. Meanwhile, only 29% of non-certified farmers are in the preparatory phase for certification. Moreover, only 36% of this category of farmers are considering applying for certification next year.

About 78% of farmers interviewed stated that the main source of information on organic farming is the public advisory service which is a service provided by extension specialists in each administrative unit in Albania. The second most important source of information according to farmers is the information that private specialists provide in the field of organic farming (20%), while the third most important source seems to be information provided by input traders or agricultural pharmacies (3%).

As far as information needs are concerned, it seems that most farmers are still oriented on their demand to improve cultivation. About 65% of farmers prioritize seed / seed management information, while 32% prioritize disease control information.

Demonstrations are the most demanding ways of acquiring new knowledge. About 47% of surveyed farmers consider visiting other farms important. Also, 33% of respondents consider the opinion of other farmers but also say that they are sufficiently in agreement with the statement "successful farmers make their own decisions".

Gaining knowledge through exchange seems to be a preferred way. An indicator of the likelihood of cooperation or cooperation between farmers in both certified and non-certified categories is the positive result - approximately 80% of respondents said they are sufficient and very much in agreement - on the statement that "it is important to maintain good contact with other farmers to discuss farm-related issues. " This brings about the need to carry out activities that make farmers stay together.

The survey results show that the information available to farmers about EU policies, standards, regulations, legislation or requirements is limited. The majority of the sample responded negatively to statements on organic farming issues under EU rules/regulations/legislation.

Meanwhile, regarding Albanian legislation, farmers are on average a little more informed. This makes clear the need to prioritize, as highlighted in the original project proposal, information / exchange and dissemination of information on this topic.

In terms of farmers' perceptions of the benefits of agriculture after Albania's EU membership, 87% of them say EU subsidies will strengthen them as farmers, while 82% perceive that they will have new market opportunities for their products after membership. On the other hand, about 70% of them perceive that they will have more opportunities to acquire new technologies and knowledge of organic farming. Finally, 91% of the respondents said that Albania will join the EU and most of them positively perceive the membership as unclear about the period when it may occur.

We need to consider that there are some limits to understand these perceptions. Poor integration of farmers into the organic farming economy has increased the need for a better scientific knowledge base and a fuller understanding of the challenges these farmers will face during the transition (always below the EU standards spectrum of organic farming). Most of the future objectives of the CAP are strongly linked to organic farming. In the context of the future CAP, the new regulation will reduce the administrative burden on operators and control and inspection bodies. Organic production rules have been expanded to cover a wider list of products (eg, salt, beeswax, vine leaves, etc.) and additional production rules (e.g. deer, rabbits and chickens). Support for smallholder farmers by introducing a new group certification system has also been introduced. This will make it easier for small farmers to switch to organic farming by reducing inspection and certification costs and the associated administrative burden. The regulation also provides a more uniform approach to pesticides. So the new regulation harmonizes precautions by increasing legal certainty. The Albanian Government should take these developments into account as it formulates and implements the national policy for supporting organic farming.

VI. EU Standard for Organic Agriculture

Prof. Endrit Kullaj³

6.1. Introduction

According to Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), “*Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity by the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs*”. European Union defines organic production as “*an overall system of farm management and food production that combines best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of high animal welfare standards and a production method in line with the preference of certain consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes*”. For the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), organic agriculture is “*Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved*”.

6.2. Organic pioneers

Producers that want to practice organic system should be inspired by the organic pioneers like Albert Howard (UK, 1940), Eve Balfour (UK, Soil Association, 1946), Rudolf Steiner (Germany, Biodynamic, 1924), Jerome Rodale (SHBA, organic farming, 1940), Andre Voisin (France, grass for cattle, 1950’s), Fukuoka (Japan, natural farming, 1970’s).

From 1940 there was an increase in agricultural production as a result of nitrogen fertiliser, hybrid seeds, mechanization and pesticides. During 1940, 50, 60 organic methods were not widely adopted.

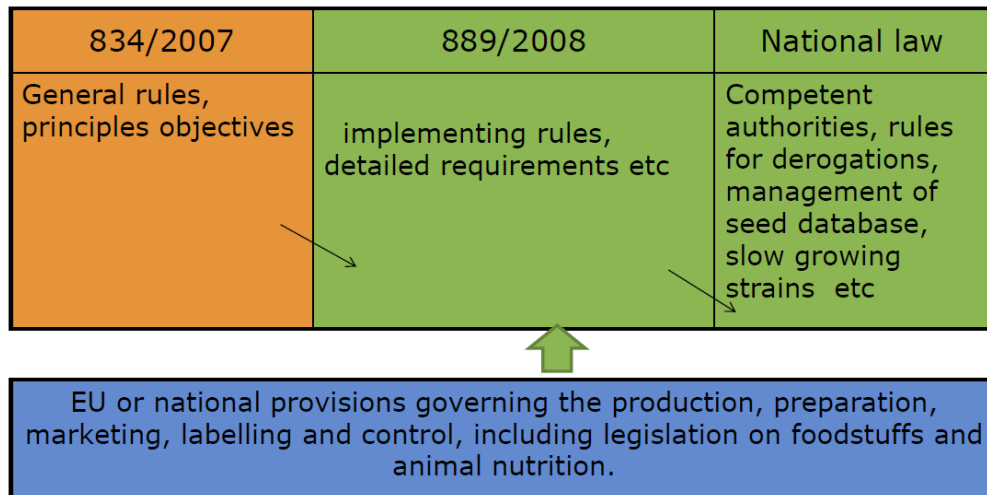
³ Prof. Assoc. Dr. Endrit Kullaj is an experienced lecturer and consultant in sustainable horticultural development, including the medicinal and aromatic herbs sector. Intensive research activity as the author of over 100 publications and coordination / participation in approximately 25 international research projects, including organic farming, biological control and policies for the development of organic farming. Endrit Kullaj has served as a consultant on many sustainable development projects for GIZ, ADA, WB, USAID, UNDP, SNV and has provided his expertise to ERM, EON, European Consultants, etc. Specifically, he has worked with GIZ, ADA and UNDP on establishing cooperatives of medicinal and aromatic herb collectors in the deepest mountainous areas of the country, implementing good practices and the organic system. His commitment for many years as an organic certification inspector for two large German troops has enabled him to closely monitor the quality system of major exporters of aromatic and medicinal plants in Albania and Kosovo. In the last 10 years he has managed a business in the export of organic aromatic plants.

6.3. Organic standard

In the past, there were private associations and their labels to define what was organic and what not, while nowadays it is more and more regulated by statutory laws, regulations and laws in most of the countries. Among the various systems of sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture is the only regulated by law. Legal regulation and organic certification became necessary due to the rapid increase of surface under organic production in EU: 0.2 million Ha (1980), 3.0m Ha (1990), 8.0m Ha (2000), 9.6m Ha (2011), 11,5m Ha (2015) and continues to increase. Currently it makes 5.4% of EU agricultural area and 2% of value of the food and drink industry. The largest organic markets are Germany, France and UK.

One of the earliest private standards is Soil Association (1967) standard. The private certification started in 1973. The first EU Regulation was 2092/91 only for plants while the first regulation for livestock dates back in 1999.

The European Organic Standard is defined by the EU Regulation 834/2007 “*On organic production and labelling of organic products*”. Council Regulation EC 834/2007 has 40 recitals, 42 articles and 1 annex. Other complementary commission regulations are EU Regulation 889/2008 “*On organic production and labelling or organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control*” and EU Regulation 1235/2008 “*On rules related to import of organic products from third countries*”.



6.4.Scope of Reg. 834/2007 and 889/2008

The scope of Reg. 834/2007 and 889/2008 is to establish a sustainable agriculture management system that (a) sustains and enhances health of the soil, water, plants and animals; (b) sustains and enhances health of the soil, water, plants and animals; (c) contributes to a high level of biological diversity; (d) encourages responsible use of energy and water, soil, organic matter and air; (e) respects high animal welfare standards and (f) responds to consumer demands for use of processes which do not harm the environment, human and plant health, or animal health/welfare.

Agricultural products that are subject to Regulation 834/2007 and 889/2008 are defined in Annex I of EU Treaty. Plant products (including mushroom and seaweed) and wild collection. Animals products include bovine (+ bubals and bison), equine, ovine, caprine, porcine, fattening poultry (broilers, guinea fowl, geese, ducks, turkey), laying hens, bees, aquaculture animals (fishes and shrimps of REC 889/08, mollusks, echinoderms).

Since the organic certification for producers and processors is separated, the regulation clearly defines unprocessed and processed products. Agricultural products can be unprocessed (Art 2n REC 852/04) which means foodstuffs that have not undergone processing, and includes products that have been divided, parted, severed, sliced, boned, minced, skinned, ground, cut, cleaned, trimmed, husked, milled, chilled, frozen, deep-frozen or thawed. Processed agricultural products for use as food (Art 2m REC 852/04) means any action that substantially alters the initial product, including heating, smoking, curing, maturing, drying, marinating, extraction, extrusion or a combination of those processes.

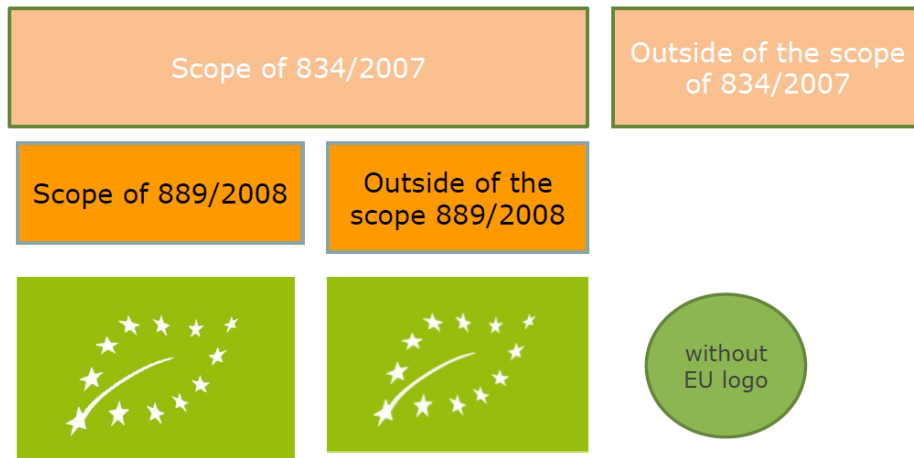
Scope of Regulation 834/2007 and 889/2008 are feed (raw or processed agricultural product and nutritional supplements for livestock or aquaculture animals), vegetative propagating material and seeds for cultivation as well as yeasts used as food or feed.

Regulation 834/2007 does not apply to processed agricultural products not for use as food (e.g: hemp as building material, textile, cosmetics, detergent, cigarettes, non-edible oils or essential oils...), products of hunting and fishing of wild animals, *Foie gras* production (force feeding is prohibited), traditional bull-calves breeding (total confinement, purchase of young non-organic bovines for fattening and resale), pet food or feed for fur animals and breeding of livestock species not listed: pigeon, deer, quail..: this list is not exhaustive.

6.5. Organic operators

Regulations 834/2007 and 889/2008 specify as operators:

- Producers, Distributors and handlers: every operator having an activity at a stage of production, preparation (transformation, packaging, labelling), storage or distribution of organic products.
- Importers: operators who import organic products from third countries in EU are also subject to control (rules of import in EU are detailed in REC 1235/2008).
- Subcontracting: activities contracted out by an operator are also subject to the control system.



Operators exempted from the compulsory control are retailers of pre-packaged products if storage at the point of sale.

Meanwhile, on 30 May 2018 the EU Regulation 2018/848 “*On organic production and labelling of organic products*” has been approved. This regulation will enter into force in 2021 in order to The new regulation is designed to ensure fair competition for farmers whilst preventing fraud and maintaining consumer trust through the following:

- production rules will be simplified through the phasing out of a number of exceptions and opt outs
- the control system will be strengthened thanks to tighter precautionary measures and robust checks along the entire supply chain
- producers in third countries will have to comply with the same set of rules as those producing in the EU
- organic rules will cover a wider list of products (e.g. salt, cork, beeswax, maté, vine leaves, palm hearts) and will have additional production rules (e.g. deer, rabbits and poultry)
- certification will be easier for small farmers thanks to a new system of group certification
- there will be a more uniform approach to reducing the risk of accidental contamination from pesticides

The Albanian standard of organic agriculture is based on law 106/2016, which is partly aligned with Council Regulation (CE) no. 834/2007 “On organic production and labelling of organic products”. The previous law, law no. 9199, was referring to EU Regulation 2092/91 of 14 June 1991 and was adapted to Albania on 26.02.2004, therefore, 10 years after publication. A year later, the Council of Ministers approved the Decision no. 388, dated 31.05.2005, “State Commission on Organic Production”, which enabled the implementation of the approved law.

Compared to the previous law, the current law:

- defines more clearly the objectives, principles and rules of organic production, in order to ensure consumer transparency trust;
- defines products and substances that are allowed in organic production;
- defines the methods that should be used in organic agriculture and in processing organic food;
- prohibits the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in organic agriculture;
- defines the rules for labelling of organic products;

- defines the control system for organic production and determines the competent authorities for controlling each step of organic production;
- defines rules for import of organic products from other countries.

Many consumers do not feel fully guaranteed with the certification based on the state standard but require also a private standard, like that of associations (p.sh. Demeter, Soil Association, etc.). In this case, beside legal requirements, association guidelines should be inspected. Inspection of associations is made in combination with certification based on law and regulations. Association standards are complementary (additional) to legal standards so cannot replace them. In this level of voluntary legislation, association standards are partly more rigid than legal standards. In general, producers should pay an additional tariff for using the association's logo.

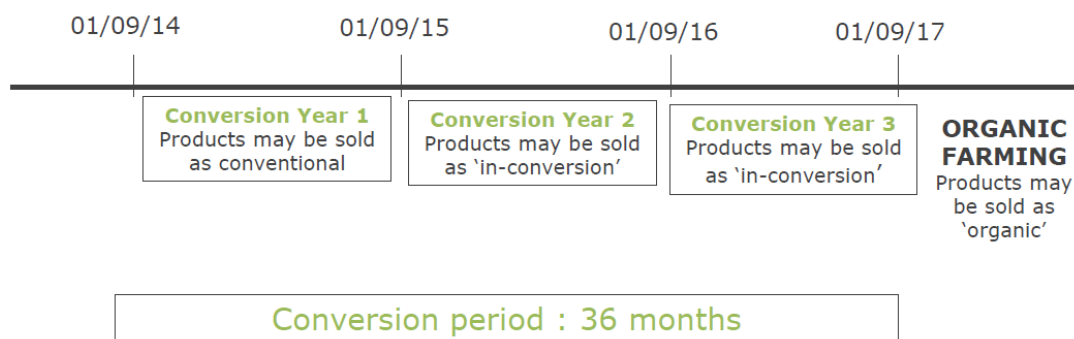
6.6. Plant production rules

6.6.1. Rules for organic conversion

For plants and plant products to be considered organic, the EU organic production rules must have been applied on the parcels during a conversion period.

Type of crops	Conversion period	Products may be sold 'in-conversion'	Product may be sold as 'organic'
Annual and semi-perennial	24 months	If harvest take place 12 months after conversion start date	If sowing falls 24 months after conversion start date
Perennial	36 months	If harvest fall 12 months after conversion start date	If harvest falls 36 months after conversion start

Thus, it is recommended for perennial crops to start conversion before harvesting.



There are 2 cases for organic conversion; if one has not started the process of conversion yet, the date of the beginning of parcels' conversion is at the earliest the date of the commitment (contract signing) of the producer and of its notification of organic activity to the competent authority. If one has already started the process of conversion (e.g. purchase or renting of a new plot of land), then at the earliest the date of statement by the operator of putting in conversion to Control body.

The conversion period can be shortened in the case of natural or agricultural areas not treated with products not authorized for organic production at least for 3 years. Another case included are also land being part of programs for protection of the environment or traditionally farmed crops for at least 3 years. Examples include natural meadows, technical fallows, non-cultivated land, fallow, woods and moor.



Natural or agricultural areas not treated with products not authorised for organic production at least for 3 years



Land being part of programs for protection of the environment or traditionally farmed crops for at least 3 years

6.7. Seeds and seedling

Only organically produced seed and propagating material must be used. In case of commercial unavailability in organic form, it may be possible to replace them with seeds or vegetative propagating material produced through conventional farming provided specific requirements and with prerequisite authorization granted by the Competent Authority in the country.

Non organic vegetative propagating material may be used but organic unavailability have to be proved. For seeds (annual and perennial) and seed potatoes, there is the possibility to use non organic seeds and seed potatoes provided that they are not treated with plant protection products other than those listed in Annex II unless chemical treatment is prescribed for phytosanitary purpose by the Competent Authority in the country.

Annual transplants (e.g.: vegetable seedlings) shall be necessarily organic, no derogation is possible for their use in a non-organic form.

6.8. Fertility

Organic plant production shall use tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or increase soil organic matter, enhance soil stability and soil biodiversity and prevent soil compaction and erosion. Hydroponics is prohibited. Plants that are cultivated in pot their whole life (sold adults for

direct consumption) cannot be certified, except aromatic plants. Transplants in pot for cultivation may be certified. Fidanët ne vazo për kultivim mund të certifikohen.

Soil fertility must be maintained according to the EU requirements. Following EU regulation, the producer should maintain soil fertility through multiannual crop rotation, legumes and green manure crops, livestock manure or organic material. If the nutritional needs of plants cannot be met by these measures, only fertilizers and soil conditioners referred to in Annex I of the EU regulation may be used.

6.9. Plant protection

In organic farming, prevention of damages caused by pests, diseases and weeds has an important role. Protection relies on natural enemies (hedges, beetles, ...). Other strategies are choice of species and varieties (resistant to pests and disease), crop rotation, cultivation techniques and mechanical and thermal processes.

Where plants cannot be protected from pests and diseases by these measures, only plant protection products referred to in Annex II of the EU regulation may be used.

Mixed organic-conventional farming

The entire agricultural holding shall be managed in compliance with the organic requirements. However, a holding may be split into clearly separated units which are not all managed under organic production provided that for annual plants, the varieties shall be different and easily differentiated and a clear separation must be done (land, products used and produced) and proved. E.g.: non-organic livestock and organic market gardening allowed and non-organic cereals and organic orchard allowed.

The Regulation contains exceptional production rules. Thus, in the case of parallel production, a producer may run organic (or under conversion) and non-organic parcels with different varieties but not easily differentiated, in the following cases.

Perennial crops. Conversion plan within 5 years approved each year by the Competent Authority in the country. Permanent separation of organic and non-organic products. Notification to certification body at least 48 H before harvest. Information of the exact quantities harvested.

Agricultural research/ formal education or production of seed, vegetative propagating material and transplants. In this case, a permanent separation of organic and non-organic products is required. Notification to certification body at least 48 H before harvest. Information of the exact quantities harvested.

Grassland exclusively used for grazing (but not for hay production). In that case organic and non-organic varieties may be identical, units must be clearly separated.

GMO

Use of GMOs and products produced from or by GMOs as plant protection products, fertilizers and soil conditioners, seeds, vegetative propagating material and micro-organisms is prohibited in organic farming.

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