

ORGANIC PRODUCTION: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FAMILY FARMERS AND SMALL PRODUCERS IN BULGARIA

P. YOVCHEVSKA

Agricultural Academy, Institute of Agricultural Economics, BG - 1113 Sofia, Bulgaria

Abstract

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The changes of the living environment caused by the more and more accelerated, even irreversible depletion of resources, the climatic changes leading to frequent harvest compromising have turned into existential problems of the world in process of globalization. The response of the scientific community is integrated in some policies, oriented to the ecologic production. Organic production has become a norm. It is recognized as a technological solution having friendly attitude to the environment. The society is ready to support agricultural producers. The demand of organic and local products continues to increase. UN declared 2014 as international year of the family farming.

This report target is to present the representative results from an empiric sociologic research, led in Bulgaria in 2010 and 2012, on regional and national level. The analysis of questions related to the new CAP greening, to the land resource and to the future intentions reveals a synergic sustainability between the farmers' intentions and the policies oriented to the environment protection and the climatic changes mitigation

Key words: organic farming, ecological culture of agricultural producer, empiric sociological survey, greening of CAP 2014+, synergic sustainability

Introduction

The changes of the environment caused by the ever accelerating, even irreversible depletion of resources and the climate change leading to frequent loss of crops in the 21-st century have turned into existential problems in a globalizing world. The answer of the scientific community to these problems has been integrated in different policies oriented towards the increased ecologic production. *The biological production becomes a norm.* It is recognized as a technological solution with friendly attitude to the environment. The society is ready to support the agricultural producers. *The UN declared 2014 as International Year of Family Farming. Bearing in mind the significance of sustainable development and climate changes, the European Commission declared 2015 as European Year for Development (EYD 2015). The declaring of 2015 for European Year for Development involves various projects, one which is EAThink2015 - "eat local, think global", aimed particularly at the young population. The goal of this project is to acquaint the young genera-*

tion with the sustainable food systems. In order to circumnavigate the negative impacts of the actual food system on the environment and health, it is critical to engage the young people in the understanding of the sustainable food systems and smallholder farming.

The aim of this report is to present, bearing in mind the world trends, the representative results of an empiric sociological survey, conducted in Bulgaria in 2010 and 2012, on a regional and national level. The analysis of matters related to the ecologization of CAP 2014+, to the land resource and to the future plans of the agricultural producers reveals a synergic sustainability between the farmers' intentions and the policies oriented to the protection of the environment and climate change mitigation.

Biological Production: A World and European Priority

The main priority of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) in 2014 was the support for small family farms. The

UN initiative „2014 International Year of family farms” has some symbolism, which could be found in the “green panel” of the new CAP programme and budget framework. The European agricultural policy and its declared priorities for the period 2014-2020 are the response of the increasing ecological sensitiveness of the old continent’s inhabitants. The policy of EU-28 for the unification of the producers’ processes of economic activity with the friendly attitude to the natural resources is a priority of the theory for sustainable production and consumption. The sustainable production and consumption use the “life cycle” as a tool for the increase of sustainable resources management and for their effective use in all stages of the added value chain. This way the transition to ecologically effective economy would be accelerated. The ecological and the social challenges would transform in economic opportunities for employment creation.



The expressed judgments have also been confirmed by the choice of symbols, which the European and world organizations and institutions incorporate in their distinctive signs as acknowledgment marks. These symbols are an emanation of the philosophy for the involvement of the human being, as a higher biological type, in the ecological systems of the nature and in the economic systems of the society. The agriculture especially, as a primary sector, is the sphere of material production, where the biological cycle of substances and the energy from eco-systems are in unbreakable link with the expedient economic human activity and the economic state of the society. This makes the agro-eco-systems a component of both ecological and economic systems. Seven decades ago the slogan „Fiat Panis“ (Let there be bread) is chosen for the FAO logo. In 2010 among 3500 projects Europe has chosen for a biological sign the project “European leaf”. The idea, which combined two clear messages: Europe and Nature, collected 63% of the votes of 130 000 inhabitants of EU-27. The main priority of FAO in 2014 was the support for small family farms. The initiative of the UN „2014 International Year of family farms” creates an opportunity for the realization of the small farmers and the family farms. Researchers from the international Institute of Environment and Development in London (Barbara Adolf and Marianne Griek – Gran, 2014) have analyzed the place of small producers in the framework of the millennium purposes. In 2015 the analysis of the achieved results has been conducted. In this relation some authors (Swiderska et al., 2013) have focused their analyses

on the significance of small farms for the provision of ecosystem services for the society, for their place in the food chain, for the friendly attitude to the natural resources, namely the land as an indispensable production factor in agriculture. All of the above gives us the reason *to define the organic production as an emanation of the family agriculture and of the small farms.*

The integration of the economic activity in the agriculture sector, defined as primary sector of the national economy, and the natural resources protection gives priority to the topic of organic farming. Biological production is a way of restricting the process of natural resources exhaustion, caused by the human economic activity. The resources depletion is an obstructive factor for the economic growth and contradicts the philosophy of the 21-st century for the sustainable development. In CAP 2014-2020 the implementation of resource saving and non-harming production technologies is underlined as an imperative requirement. The so-called “green payments” have been introduced. One-third of the financial funds, allocated for agricultural production support within the first CAP pillar, have been provided for ecological practices implementation. The organic farming is an incontestable priority. For the unfavourable process restriction on agro-systems, the environment friendly production has been separated in a specific Measure 1: Organic production. In agriculture the biological circle of substances, the use of live organisms in the production process and the results from the producers’ economic activity are in bilateral correlation. This is the sector where economic and biological laws are interdependent and determined. Through the organic farming in agricultural sector the activity of the economically active person is involved in the naturally organized biosphere.

Organic Farming in Bulgarian Agriculture and CAP

Bulgaria has started the implementation of European legislation in the organic farming area in 2009. Within the implementation of the first budget and programme CAP framework in the history of Bulgarian agriculture, the organic farming was incorporated as a sub-measure to Measure 214: Agroecological payments. The results from the implementation of the sub-measure register a significant interest among the producers, part of who are family farmers. For a five-year period, in 2013, the number of operators in the control system has increased over 6 times. The society appreciates the application of technological solutions and practices, which save natural resources and the environment, as a factor with increasing significance for the realization of the priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy. In this regard, the producers’ eco-

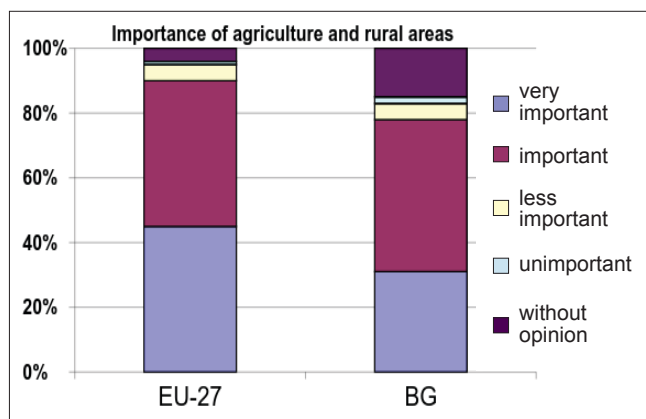


Fig. 1. Importance of agriculture and rural areas

Source: Research of Euro-Barometer, 2011, author's calculations

conomic activity in the agricultural sector acquires more essential importance (Figure 1).

With regard to the implementation of the new CAP 2014-2020, the most expensive, the oldest and most dynamically changing community policy, for its latest reform needs to probe the public opinion of the EU-27 citizens. For this purpose in 2011 Euro barometer conducted a survey among the citizens of EU-27. The significance of the agriculture and of the rural areas is evaluated as “very important” by two out of five citizens of the Union. In Bulgaria this opinion has been shared by every fifth respondent. Almost every fourth citizen of EU-27 and of Bulgaria defines the importance of agriculture and the rural areas as “significant”. These results support the generally accepted perception that our country has agricultural orientation with good conditions for the development of agricultural production. We must stress that this is not only due to the natural-climatic conditions, but also to the availability of social capital, whose importance would be analyzed later. In 2011, the group of respondents in Bulgaria, who declared that they do not have an opinion, is wider represented than the EU-27 average. This share is expected to change with the more complete implementation of the Common policy. The results of CAP (if they are satisfactory or not) will influence the assessment of the Bulgarian citizens (Mantarova, 2014). A number of practises play, implemented by smallholder farms and their positive role for the CAP implementation and the gaining of benefits for the society has been subject to analyses in the studies of a number of scientists (Wrzochalska et al., 2014; Nikolov, 2014; Kaneva, 2015).

Family Farming and Organic Production: Parts of One System

In 2010 and 2012 the empirical sociological survey (ESS) „Ecological culture of agricultural producers” has been carried out. The first stage has been realized in Blagoevgrad region. The results are typical for the small-size production, characteristic mostly for the family farms. The national stage of the survey has been performed in 2012. The results are representative for the registered farmers. Data analyses for the two survey stages outline some problem areas for the utilization of the European funds in Bulgarian agriculture. One of them is the registered deficiency of awareness for EU CAP (Figure 2). CAP implementation is a complex bureaucratic procedure, combining requirements and competences from heterogeneous administrative structures, at a dynamic changing regime.

„Green measures“, which will be implemented from 2015, require not only high degree of awareness of producers, but also availability of specific knowledge for financial funds absorption, for the support and the prosperity of producers in the sector. The representative results for the country (Figure 2) reveal some “narrow places” in the work of administering bodies of CAP. At the same time, they are indicative for the significance of the administrative capacity level for this specific knowledge attainment to the local producers. The responsibilities of the authorized with this activity structures are more important, having in mind the declared from these producers need of supplementary information (Figure 3).

The results from ESS show an essential problem in this regard. Nine of ten respondents from the small-scale production declare need of higher awareness. These are mostly

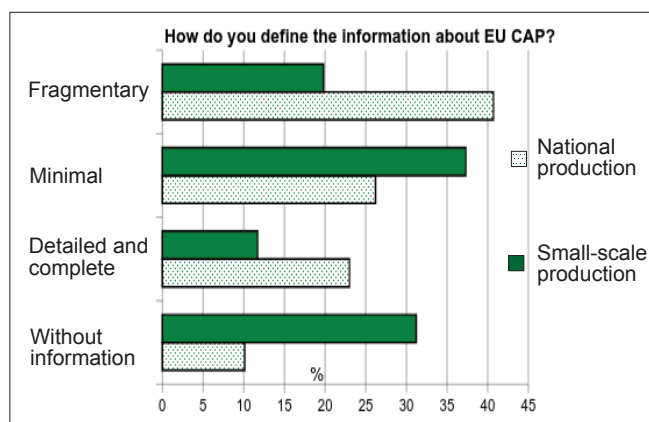


Fig. 2. How do you define the information about EU CAP?

Source: Empiric sociological survey 2010 and 2012

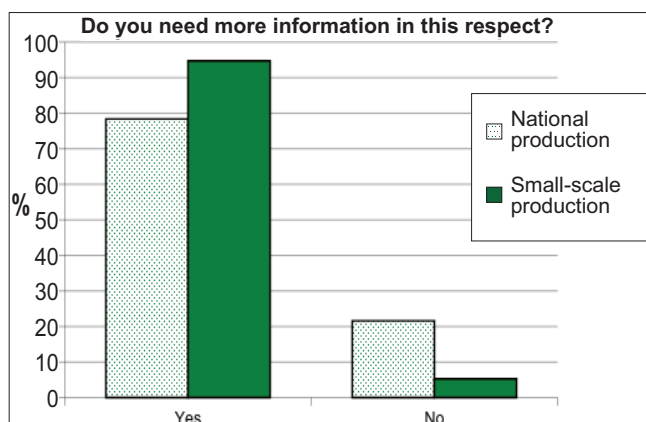


Fig. 3.

Source: Empiric sociological survey 2010 and 2012

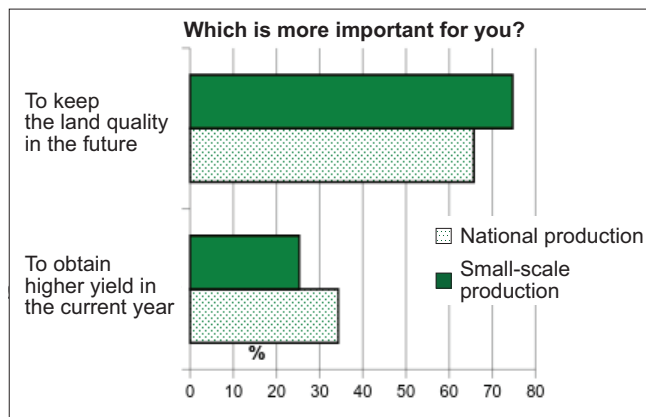


Fig. 4.

Source: Empiric sociological survey 2010 and 2012

family farms, which within CAP 2014+ were included in the group of small farms stated for priority support and applying organic production. This characteristic makes the family farms important element of European agricultural system (Figure 4).

Moreover, some cognitive skills of these respondents give reason to define the family farms as an emanation of organic farming in the agriculture. Certain knowledge in the area of cognitive science, which studies the acquirement and the use of knowledge, allows us to make the conclusion that organic farming is a paradigm of family agriculture (Figure 4). The ESS results are the reason for this statement, indicating that over 60% of the small-scale producers prefer the keeping of the land quality in the future before the receiving of bigger yield in the current year. This behaviour preference is a sign

for high cognitive skills and extremely good cognition level for the significance of the natural factor in the agricultural production. At the same time, the results of this representative survey in 2010 and 2012 is a sign of strong synergic opportunities for successful implementation of green practices and friendly attitude to the natural resources from the producers at the implementation of the green CAP 2014+ and especially of the new Measure 1 Organic farming.

In this direction are also the answers' results of the question about the appraisal of ecological *practices* (Yovchevska, 2012). For almost 54% of respondents *they are opportunity for the environment protection*. The next per its importance answer is *the opportunity for supplementary incomes* – almost 21% give this answer. The interest is induced also by the profile of respondents, answered that *ecological practices give opportunity for discovery of new market niches* – over 16%. Barely one of 10 respondents defines ecological practices as a restriction in production activity. These results confirm the above-mentioned statement, which is formulated as a conclusion that organic production can be a paradigm of family agriculture. The high level of ecological culture and of the cognitive skills of Bulgarian agricultural producer has been revealed in the analysis of results answering the question whether he complies with the qualities of the processed land. "Completely" is the response of over 66%, over 30% of respondents gave the answer "more like yes". Almost 72% answer that they comply with the land qualities at the crop rotation, over 63% comply with the land resource qualities at the technology of growing of the different crops (Yovchevska, 2012).

The representative character of results from the led ESS give reason to suppose that the new CAP 2014+ implementation will be more successful and will contribute to mitigation of some disproportions and structural changes in Bulgarian agriculture, registered at the implementation of CAP 2007-2013, which are not subject to the present analysis.

Essential information for the outlook of family agriculture and for the organic production development is shown in Figure 5. Answering the question: "Do you consider being occupied with agriculture in the future" every fifth respondent declares intention to enlarge the production. Almost 45% will keep their current levels and production amounts. Thus, seven from ten producers, representing the small-scale production, will continue their occupation and will maintain the sustainable production. Only one of ten declares a refusal. These results are indicative for the sustainability of this kind of small family agriculture, which is a main factor for the rural areas conservation and for organic farming realizing; protecting the environment and the natural resources; favouring the ecosystems conservation and restricting the biodiversity

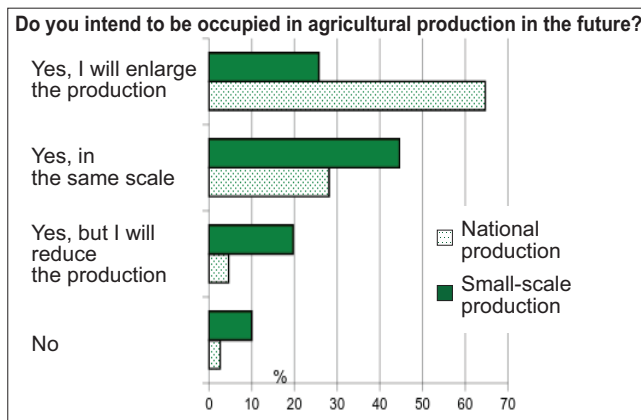


Fig. 5

Source: Empiric sociological survey 2010 and 2012

loss; protecting the landscape; providing several so called eco-system services of public interest, for which the producers receive support within European funds.

Because of their significance, the small family farms and the organic farming are in the focus of the target support of CAP 2014+. The coupled support for the small economic units in agriculture, for the most labour consuming production – the organic one – is an example for the rediscovery of some values received a chance for renaissance, thanks to the economic crisis that can be compared by scale and range to the Big Depression from 1929. Searching for new economic solutions and facing increasingly serious apprehensions about irreversible damages of environment as problems of global character, the world and European community looks for and finds working solutions in the organic farming and in the products from this production. This is a good business model and example for the implementation of sustainable production methods, result from the policy and the market stimulation, including the “green growth”. These methods could bring also economic growths, through the creation of added value. The environment for this synchrony maintaining is available; its support through convenient policies adds the sustainable character. The effectiveness is a stimulating factor for the renovation and the maintenance of the business model in working state.

The new incomes opportunities, using the competitive advantage of natural-climatic conditions in our country and the support of European agricultural funds, could result in economic advantages for the producers. This is a factor for the

stopping of the depopulation process of rural areas. Taking in consideration the increased interest of consumers to the organic products, to the products from a proven region of origin and other organic foods, the family farms and the small farmers have the opportunity to maintain their reproduction in sustainable limits, insuring the good economic results of rural producers. The keeping and the enlargement of business opportunities are an essential motive for the negative demographic trends overcoming in these areas. The society expects the providing and the maintenance of ecosystem services, for which there are allocated financial tools.

From the made analysis we can conclude that there is a favourable synergic relation and interdependence, ensuring a real opportunity for increase of the life quality of individual producer, of family farm and of society as a whole. For the new CAP 2014+ implementation the organic farming, as an emanation of family agriculture and of small economic units in agriculture, has a significant place for the realization of this successful business model with high ecological and economic importance.

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