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A Comparison of Organic Farming Support Policies in Turkey and the EU

Yener ATASEVEN[1]

Abstract

Organic farming has attracted an increasing attention over the last three decades, because it has been perceived as a solution to the problems currently besetting the agricultural sectors of industrialized countries. Consumers, farmers, environmentalists and policy-makers have been increasingly recognised organic farming for environmental, social and financial sustainability. Therefore, every country has ensured supports for organic farming. A wide range of support measures are now applied in the EU according to increasing consumers' awareness of food safety and environmental concerns. Same parallel developments occurred in Turkey in the mid 80s with the increasing demand from the consumers of the EU countries. In 1999, it was granted to Turkey the status of candidate country for membership of the EU. So, Turkey had to met some obligations. In Turkey and EU, agri-environment programs like organic farming have been recognized as eco-friendly ways to support income of the farmers. Financial supports for organic farming have been given with different rates for both Turkey and EU. It is therefore necessary to compare both Turkey's and EU's payment policies. This study is based on a literature review. The main method is to evaluate, synthesize and establish relationships among the researches from the relevant literature. The objective of this study is to describe fi-nancial support payments to producers of organic farming in Turkey and EU and to compare of policies of Turkey and the EU. According to the results of this research, there are different payment levels for organic farming in Turkey and the EU. Payments in Turkey are particu-larly area-based, on the other hand, there are financial payments according to area-based, quality standards, food crops, non-food crops in the EU.

Keywords: organic farming; financial supports; comparison; Turkey; European Union.

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Introduction

Consumers have got more conscious towards the end of 1970s because of increasing demand for more healthy food, protecting environment (Olhan, 2006). Due to environmental problems during the process of food production and increasing public awareness of food safety, nations would prefer to restructure their sustainable agricultural activities and policies (Zhengfei *et al*., 2005). Currently, in many countries, especially in EU countries, the United States of America and Japan, awareness of environmental protection and preferences in consuming more healthy food are gradually increasing (Demiryürek, 2004). Particularly in EU countries, in order to protect consumers, it is aimed to make organic food more reliable by requiring use of logo in organic products inspected by certified institutions. What is more, the demand for organic products and the increase in supply of them are aimed with the help of practices such as informing consumers about organic products, making the sale of these products available in big retail markets and striving to lower costs to encourage growers (Dolun, 2003).

Organic farming can be defined as an approach to agriculture where the aim is to create integrated, humane, environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural production systems, which maximize reliance on farm-derived renewable resources and the management of ecological and biological processes and interactions, so as to provide acceptable levels of crop, livestock and human nutrition, protection from pest and diseases, and an appropriate return to the human and other resources employed (Lampkin and Padel, 1994).

Agricultural policies in Turkey and EU have been providing financial support for organic farming via area payments or product quality etc. These payments are intended as incentives for farmers to comply with defined production standards. Such payments lead to better environmental performance, as compliance with organic production standards averts negative and provides positive external effects compared to conventional or integrated farming.

A literature review revealed many studies of the organic farming worldwide. However, studies on the comparisons of payments to producers for organic farming in Turkey and EU were not found. Also, Turkish organic products are exported to more than 30 countries, but the majority of exports go to Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Italy and France. In this respect, the main objective of the study is to investigate policies for organic farming and some comparisons between Turkey and EU and some important Member States in the context of financial supports. Within this scope, only support policies about plant production have been examined because of limited space available for this paper. The paper also examines the development of organic farming both Turkey and EU and intends to make contributions to the literature.

Methodology

As this study is based on a literature review, it includes the studies on the general sources of organic farming policies and payments in Turkey and EU carried out by several private and state institutions. Internet sources, books and articles published abroad on these topics have also been used. The research methodology consists of interpreting previous studies, evaluating and synthesizing sources, identifying organic farming supports in Turkey and EU and, as a result, to identify the position of Turkey in the field of organic farming policies. By this way, it has aimed to set forth the payment policies of Turkey in the area of organic farming policies. The main method adopted has to evaluate, synthesize and establish relationships among the works form the relevant literature.

Results

Development of Organic farming in Turkey

The organic farming method was first applied in western region of Turkey in 1984-85 with the increase in demand from the consumers of the EU countries interested in organically grown traditional crops such as raisins, dried figs and apricots and nuts (Redman and Hemmami, 2008). Later, it became widespread through the production of hazelnuts, leguminous seeds and cotton. In the first years of organic farming some European companies have formulated new organic farming projects such as importing from Turkish farmers that make customized production regarding the demand of the companies. All the inspection, certification and other important and legal procedures were performed by foreign experts and organizations. By the beginning of 1990s establishment of representative offices of foreign organizations and education of Turkish experts have started.

Characteristic of organic farming organic production is mainly directed to the export market. Turkey has a strong and rapidly developing organic farming sector that supplies half the world's organic cotton as well as fruits, vegetables, herbs and many other organic foods. More than 85% of the organic produce in Turkey is exported with a value of € 50 million, equivalent to 0,8% of all Turkey's food exports (Redman and Hemmami, 2008).

The great majority of organic production is plant production. Because of insufficient standards, livestock production is not enough. Generally, organic production with certificate is exported to foreign countries like EU countries (Germany, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the U.K.), Australia, United States of America (Say*i*n and Mencet, 2003).

The organic farming model in Turkey takes the form of a farming contract between companies and organic producers. According to this contract, the farmers agree to implement the instructions of the project manager, promising not to use synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. The main responsibilities of the contracting companies are to buy at least some of the farmers' products as agreed, to pay a premium price for organic products, and to support the farmers. This contract requires producers to ensure that a specific quantity of products meet certain quality standards, and companies to guarantee a previously defined and agreed payment (Demiryürek *et al*., 2008).

In contrast to the developed countries, organic farming in Turkey did not start by demand from the consumer but, as in other developing countries, it started with the aim of increasing the exports of agricultural products and entering new markets, depending on the increasing demand in the developed countries (Tanr*ı*vermiș *et al*., 2004). There has been progressive development in the number of farmers in organic farming, the production area where organic farming is employed, and the number of organic products.

Before 2008 the number of organic farmers was limited and knew a little growth. Since 2005 there is a strong increase of organic farming in Turkey. As follows *Table 1*, organic farming developed rapidly in Turkey between 2008 and 2012. There are 54,635 producers have produced 204 different products on an area of 702,909 hectares 1,750,126 production amount in 2012 (including conversion period) (Anonymous, 2012). According to last statistics which was published by IFOAM EU Group, in 2009, the share of total organic farming area was 1,93% in Turkey (Anonymous, 2011).

Table 1. *Organic plant production data in Turkey (include conversion period)*

Years	Number of Products	Number of Farmers	Area Cultivated (ha)	Natural Collection Area (ha)	Total Production Area (ha)	Total Production (ton)
2004	174	12,751	108,598	100,975	209,573	377,616
2005	205	14,401	93,134	110,677	203,811	421,934
2006	203	14,256	100,275	92,514	192,789	458,095
2007	201	16,276	124,263	50,020	174,283	568,128
2008	247	14,926	109,387	57,496	166,883	530,224
2009	212	35,565	325,831	175,810	501,641	983,715
2010	216	42,097	383,782	126,251	510,033	1,343,737
2011	225	42,460	442,581	172,037	614,618	1,659,543
2012	204	54,635	523,627	179,282	702,909	1,750,126

Source: http://organik.tarim.gov.tr

Turkey is one of the few countries that has its own national organic regulation among developing countries, because it is an important exporter to the EU (Şayan and Polat, 2004). Turkey passed the first national regulation on production, processing, and the marketing of organic items on December 18, 1994. The first regulation was based upon the European Union's Regulation Number 2092/91. The current regulation in Turkey was published in 2010 and the name is "Regulation on Essentials and Implementation of Organic Farming (Official Journal Number: 27676)" and the current Law is "Organic Farming Law (Law No: 5262)" which was published in 2004. This Law regulates organic farming in a similar way to EU Regulation (EEC) 2092/91. Organic farming in Turkey has been directed by this Law. At this point, it is useful to say that official standards can be seen as means of codifying and protecting the values and goals of organic producers (Mansfield, 2004.).

Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MFAL) is responsible for overseeing the cultivation of organic crops. Private organizations can certify products as organic product, but they must be registered with MFAL and must have received a permit from there to conduct licensed activities in Turkey. As of December 2013, 27 firms were authorized by MFAL for controlling and certification of organic production in Turkey.

In order to produce licensed organic product, a producer must apply for certification from one of these agencies. Due to the high cost of getting certified, some processors and exporters make applications on behalf of a number of individual producers operating within a project organized by the processor/exporter. The certifying agencies assess the producer's compliance with the Turkish organic regulation and other related EU regulations. Soil, leaf and product samples are taken at least twice a year, along with random visits during the growing and production cycle (Nicely, 2001).

Supports for Organic farming in Turkey

Support for organic farming is strategically very important, both economically and also for the environment. There are many different reasons for supports in organic farming. Supports are very import for reducing the social and financial barriers in order to conversion of organic farming. For example, supporting the international trend, the perception that organic production delivers environmental and health benefits, has seen organic production grow in New Zealand (Wallace, 2004). If it is examined supports for organic farming in Turkey it can be said that it has given limited supports for organic producers. This support is not enough both production and marketing. In fact, it is necessary to encourage and support organic farmers.

The financial aid is a very important instrument of the support given to organic farming. However in Turkey, it can be said that level of the financial supports for organic farming are insufficient. Up until 2004, no support payments were provided for organic farming. The first support for organic farming was provided in 2004. Organic plant production supports is area based but organic animals are supported as beekeeping (bee hive), livestock (head) and fish (kg). The enterprisers producing organic farming produces and inputs are granted the opportunity of using investment credit for maximum 7 years and business credit for 2 years with a current interest rate that is a discount of 50% from current interests for agricultural credits for certified organic farmers who require finance for running costs or investment in 2012. Furthermore, the growers of organic products have been paid per 250 €/ha for fruits and vegetables; for arable crops 35 €/ha in 2013. It is chanced supporting payment between 17-535 € for beekeeping (bee hive) and livestock (head). The financial support for organic farming is very limited; therefore, the producers dealing with organic farming cannot benefit much from these supports.

There is no specific support for farmers during the conversion period (as exists in EU Member States) (Redman and Hemmami, 2008). So far, no financial support is provided to help farmers, confronted with high certification costs (Lehner, 2009).

Despite these facts, there is still a lack of an effective support system for organic farming in Turkey. The current policy applications and approaches reflect the need to improve the strategies for organic farming in Turkey (Kenanoglu and Karahan, 2002). Even though the Turkish government has made great advances in terms of support for organic farming, the level of state recognition and financial support, compared to European standards, is insufficient (Lehner, 2009).

Development of Organic farming in EU

Since the early 1980s, the organic farming sector has developed considerably in Europe. In most countries this process is supported by national or EU support, by certification schemes etc. In most countries the organic land use is on the increase and the market continues to grow. This positive development is also due to several policy support measures; such as funding under rural development programmes, legal protection of the terms used to indicate organic products, action plans as well as support for research (Anonymous, 2011). The development of organic farming was a consequence of increasing consumers' awareness of food safety and environmental concerns. Because of the increasing demand for organic products, the extent of the area utilized for organic farming kept growing in past years in the EU (Hitzgerova, 2007).

The legal framework for organic farming in the EU is defined by Council Regulation 2092/91 and amendments. This was the first regulation on organic farming. In this framework, organic farming is differentiated from other approaches to agricultural production by the application of regulated standards (production rules), certification procedures (compulsory inspection schemes) and a specific labeling scheme, resulting in the existence of a specific market, partially isolated from non-organic foods. On July 20 2007, the new organic regulation was published, "Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91", which came into force on January 1, 2009. The goal of this new legal framework is to set a new course for the continued development of organic farming.

As seen below *Table 2*, there are 236,774 producers have produced on an area of 9,518,230 hectares in 2011. Since 2000, there is a strong increase of organic farming in EU. The area under organic agriculture has increased significantly in the last years.

Table 2. Organic farming land and number of organic producers in EU-27

Years	Number of Producer	Organic Farming Land (ha)
1985*	6,318	94,430
1990*	14,824	290,905
2000*	138,919	3,944,953
2008	196,568	7,633,644
2009	208,663	8,288,502
2010	219,290	9,016,097
2011	236,774	9,518,230

*Source: http://www.organic-world.net *Sayın & Mencet 2003*

According to last statistics which was published by IFOAM EU Group in the EU in 2009, it was constituted 4,7% of the European whole agricultural land (Anonymous, 2011). The size of the organic area differs considerably from one Member State to another. When examined *Table 3*, it has understood that five countries together accounted for 56,3% in 2010: Spain (16,1%), Italy (12,3%), Germany (10,9%), France (9,3%) and the United Kingdom (7,7%). Therefore, these five Member States were chosen to compare to Turkey.

Table 3. The number of organic farms and organic land area (including conversion)

Years	Organic land area (ha)					Organic Producers				
	Spain	Italy	Germany	France	United Kingdom	Spain	Italy	Germany	France	United Kingdom
2005	622,762	1,069,462	807,406	550,488	612,996	15,693	44,860	17,020	11,402	4,263
2006	736,939	1,148,162	825,539	552,824	605,706	17,214	45,115	17,557	11,640	4,639
2007	804,884	1,150,253	865,336	557,133	682,196	18,226	45,221	18,703	11,978	5,506
2008	1,129,844	1,002,414	907,786	583,799	737,631	21,291	44,371	19,813	13,298	5,383
2009	1,330,774	1,106,684	947,115	677,513	721,726	25,291	42,925	21,047	16,446	5,156
2010	1,456,672	1,113,742	990,702	845,442	699,638	27,877	41,807	21,942	20,604	4,949
2011	1,621,898	1,096,889	1,015,626	975,141	638,528	32,195	42,041	22,506	23,135	4,650

Source: http://www.organic-world.net

Supports for Organic farming in EU

In this section, it has been reviewed the most important kinds of support which are provided at the EU level to the organic sector. Financial aid applicable to organic farming was introduced within the agri-environmental programmes in the 1990s (Council Regulation No. 2078/92) in most EU countries. Organic farming is supported in all EU as an environmentally friendly approach to agriculture. While some support is given to market-related initiatives, the majority of financial support is still in the form of agri-environmental area payments to encourage conversion to and continuation with organic production. Payment levels differentiate between seven main land use categories (grassland, arable land, annual vegetables/herbs, perennials/orchards/fruits, greenhouse crops, vineyards and olive trees). Support for organic farming in the EU includes support under the EU's rural development program, the introduction of the EU regulation on organic farming since 1992 and the launch of the European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming in June 2004.

Organic farming payments are foreseen under the agri-environmental measures, previously Council Regulation (EEC) No: 2078/92 and today Council Regulation (EEC) No: 1257/99. According to this regulation it is possible to support organic farming with subsidies in various ways: Agri-environment programmes, investment aid, marketing aid, and regional development and demonstration farms. A number of European governments actively encourage conversion to organic farming by offering financial and other support for organic producers. The motivation for this support varies between countries and can include issues related to the environment and water quality, over production and food surplus, export opportunities and food safety or quality (Eraslan, 2004). For example, it has paid for conversion 202 Euro/ha in England for the first two years of a five year agreement.

Organic farmers are currently entitled to receive support from the first pillar of the CAP through direct payments and price support measures. More importantly, organic farming is fully integrated in the rural development policy in the second pillar of the CAP and has a prominent place in the agri-environment measures. The European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming sets out 21 initiatives to achieve the objectives of developing the market for organic food and improving standards by increasing efficacy, transparency and consumer confidence. The plan aims to achieve measures such as improving information about organic farming, streamlining public support via rural development, improving production standards or strengthening research. Action Plan concentrates on allowing Member States to top-up with aids the EU support devoted to producer organizations in the fruit and vegetable sector involved in organic production (Anonymous, 2004).

Organic farming stands for a sustainable farming system and the CAP therefore encourages the conversion to organic farming through EU rural development programs (Hitzgerova, 2007). In addition to rural development programmes, EU Member States can implement organic support measures under CAP Pillar 1 financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fun (EAGF). Two relevant support measures are described in this section: (1) Aid schemes based on Article 68 of Council Regulation 73/2009 and (2) Contribution to producer organizations under the Common Market Organization (CMO) for fruit and vegetables.

Member States is allowed to retain up to 10% of their national financial ceilings for supporting specific types of farming and quality. Under Article 68 of Council Regulation 73/2009, additional objectives were included which can be used for granting specific support. Support to farmers may be given for (Sanders *et al*,. 2011):

Specific types of farming which are important for the protection or enhancement of the environment: (1) Improving the quality of agricultural products; (2) Improving the marketing of agricultural products; (3) Practising enhanced animal welfare standards; (4) Specific agricultural activities entailing additional agri-environmental benefits.

Most of the Member States provide some form of financial support to farmers to cover parts of the certification and inspection cost, but different approaches are used (separate certification support payment, food quality schemes etc.) (Schwarz *et al*., 2010).

Subsidies within the national organic farming program of EU Member States support not only the production of organic products, but also farmers' marketing activities. However, only producers who affiliate with marketing organizations may benefit from these subsidies. The subsidies help develop the organic marketing concept and encourage food processing (Sayin *et al*., 2005).

According to Regulations, implementation of supporting programs is the responsibility of Member States, while financing is the responsibility of both the EU and Member States. As a result, there is significant variation in the level of funding and the requirements to qualify for support. With the Council Regulation 1257/99, the upper limits of premiums are €600/ha for annual crops, € 900/ha for permanent crops, € 450/ha for other uses of land. These ceilings can be exceeded in exceptional circumstances justified in the rural development programmes, particularly if the payments are related to the new challenges (e.g. climate change, biodiversity, etc.) as identified in the Health Check (Anonymous, 2010).

Comparison of Support Payments for Organic Farming in Turkey and EU Countries

Before making comparison between Turkey and EU, it is useful to state that regulations concerning organic farming in Turkey and EU are compatible. But, it is quite difficult to compare financial support payments to producers between Turkey and EU. Because, there are 27 countries in the EU. This is seen particularly in the case of organic farming. These payments depend largely on the national design of agri-environmental payments. Another source of differences in support between Member States is to be found in the mix of agricultural production, as the level of support varies considerably between commodities. So, there are different policies for supporting organic farming according to Member States, and within countries where regional variations exist. Even so, some comparisons can give important information by way of this study.

It has been supported organic farming in the context of regulation in Turkey. It is same structure in EU, but Member States regulate their national policies. Therefore, there are different support policies between Member States. Also, there are some structural differences between Turkey and EU. One of them is related to support of conversion period. There is no specific support for farmers in Turkey during the conversion period while there is in EU. One another different payment is concerning financial support for certification and inspections. So far, no financial support is provided for certification and inspections in Turkey. But, producers in EU receive financial support towards their certification and inspections fees. Policy supports for marketing and processing, advice and training activities are another different subject between Turkey and EU. EU support for marketing and processing activities in the organic sector, but there is no these kinds of supports in Turkey. Besides all these, there is one similarity about research at organic farming. There is support implementation for research both Turkey and EU.

Tables 4 provides an overview of the direction of changes maintenance payment levels between in 2009 for fruits, vegetables, arable crops and vineyards across the different Member States in EU. Also, financial payments in Turkey have been shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4. *Comparison of support payments for organic farming (€/ha)*

Turkey (2012)	Spain (2009)	Italy (2009)	Germany (2009)	France (2009)	United Kingdom (2009)
Fruits and vegetables: 250 Arable crops: 35	Fruits: 85-890 Vegetables: 258-540 Arable crops: 71-259 Vineyards: 191-765	Fruits: 256-900 Vegetables: 248-600 Arable crops: 101-490 Vineyards: 256-900	Fruit: 420-864 Vegetables: 230-550 Arable crops: 116-210 Vineyards: 420-864	Fruit: 590-900 Vegetables: 150-600 Arable crops: 100-151 Vineyards: 150-600	Fruit: 0-66 Vegetables: 33-220 Arable crops: 33-66 Vineyards: 66

*Source: Schwarz et al., 2010; *2009*

Organic farming has been implemented in almost all countries in EU, but five of these countries (Spain, Italy, Germany, France and United Kingdom) account for about 56,3% of total organic farming area (http://www.organic-world.net). Also, there are different financial support policies for organic farming in the EU according to Member States. Sometimes, support payments can differ from region to region in Member States. Also, payment levels differ from crop to crop.

Support payment levels can be varied according to country to country. For example; support payments in France are 590-900 €/ha for fruits; 150-600 €/ha for vegetables; 100-151 €/ha for annual crops.

Conclusions

All countries have government programs supporting organic farming. Payment levels and conditions vary significantly between countries. While most countries support both conversion to and continuation of organic farming, in some countries only conversion is supported. For example, in Turkey, there is no support for farmers for conversion period.

Many agricultural areas in Turkey can be managed without the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Due to its favourable climate and geographical position, there is a great chance for Turkish organic production on the European market but also on the Turkish domestic market. Financial supports are widely seen as a very important factor influencing the development of organic farming.

Before financial supports both Turkey and EU it is useful to say there are parallel implementations at the level of legislation. So, there is no problem at this stage between Turkey and EU. When examined, financial supports it is seen some differences between Turkey and EU. The financial support for organic farming in Turkey is also limited when compared EU. There is one payment level-for example 250 €/ha for fruits and vegetables-this kind of payment varies in the same country in the EU. Also, it can be said this payment in Turkey is lower than EU members. Supports in Turkey are only similar levels with United Kingdom. Besides, supports for organic farming in Turkey are relatively new implementation. Therefore, it can be evaluated this difference is normal when compared EU. Domestic consumption level for organic food in Turkey is low because of income level. It can be said that this level is obstacle for developing organic food market. EU gives financial supports at conversion period for organic produces. Therefore, Turkey must support organic farming by giving financial credits not only to the existing organic farms for enterprise and investment, but also to the farms that convert to organic farming. On the contrary EU, Turkey has not supports for certification and inspections levels in organic farming. In this connection, Turkey can also provide financial aid for certification and inspections in organic farming. One similar point between Turkey and EU is research for organic sector. In Turkey, there are some projects in this subject. This subject can be evaluated positive both Turkey and EU.

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