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TUNISIA

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1. Characteristics of organic agriculture

Organic agriculture is relatively new in Tunisia. The main productions are olive, date palm, almond, jojoba, vegetables, fruit trees, aromatic plants and honey. All the production is directed to the export market. Organic farms are mainly located in the centre and in the southern part of the country.

Many agricultural areas and crops can be easily converted to organics because of many factors: (i) unfavorable climatic conditions to pests and diseases; (ii) traditional techniques and practices and (iii) biodiversity. The main difficulties in converting to organic agriculture in some areas are related to the lack of: (i) products for fertilization and soil amendments; (ii) products for pest and disease control; (iii) unrestricted veterinary medicines and (iv) experience in marketing organic products.

2. General aspects

Organic agriculture started in Tunisia in the eighties with private initiatives. It had a slow evolution until the last three years which were characterized by a high increase in area and number of farms. In 1997, there were about 10 farms covering a surface of 300 ha. In 2000, they became about 137 farms over a surface of 15 035 ha. This increase is due to the development of some policies supporting this sector underlined in the national strategy:

- Aids: 30% of subsidies for all equipments used in organic agriculture and 70% for certification fees during the first five years of production with a maximum of US\$ 3500.
- Information: the "Centre Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique" (CTAB), the "Sous-Direction de l'Agriculture Biologique – Ministère de l'Agriculture" and the "Agence de Promotion des Investissements Agricoles" (APIA) offer technicians and farmers all the information related to various aspects of organic agriculture.
- Training: the CTAB in collaboration with the "Agence Nationale de Vulgarisation et de Formation Agricole" (AVFA), the "Institution de Recherche et d'Enseignement Supérieur Agricole" (IRESA) and the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (IAMB) organize many training activities (short sessions and courses) on various topics of

organic agriculture addressed to technicians and farmers. Some modules on organic agriculture are also offered at university level.

- Marketing: some subsidies are given by the Centre de Promotion des Exportations (CePEX) to facilitate the marketing of organic products.

3. Regulatory aspects

The reference legislation in Tunisia is the IFOAM Basic Guidelines, EEC and the Tunisian regulations. A national regulation (law no. 99-30) was issued in April 5, 1999 followed by decree no. 2000-409 in February 14, 2000.

A reference regulation on organic agriculture is available at national level only for plant production.

The complete national regulatory framework will be ready by the year 2001. The last version of the national technical standards on plant and animal production and processing is being prepared.

The competent authority is the Commission Nationale de l'Agriculture Biologique (CNAB). Its main tasks are: (i) to prepare proposals for organic agriculture promotion and support; (ii) to study all files and documents related to organic agriculture and (iii) to approve or withdraw certification bodies.

The inspection and certification system comply with the IFOAM standards, EEC regulation and the Tunisian legislation. The inspection and certification bodies are the following:

- Institut National de la Normalisation et de la Propriété Industrielle - INNORPI (Tunisian) in cooperation with BIOAGRICOOPI (Italian): the personnel (mainly inspectors) is Tunisian and Italian. They inspect 9% of the total organic area;
INNORPI, Rue Alain Savary, Cité El Khadra,
1003 Tunis Belvédère, Tunisie
Tel: +216 1 785 922 ; Fax: +216 1 781 563
E-mail: inorpi@email.ati.tn
- ECOCERT International: inspectors are mainly Tunisian. They inspect 90% of the total organic area;
ECOCERT International, Förster Str 87, D-37520 Osterode, Germany
Tel: +49 5522 651161; Fax: +49 5522 951164
E-mail: info@ecocert.de
ECOCERT Tunisie, 35A complexe Elmanar, rue Habib Thameur,
3000 Sfax, Tunisie. Tel: +216 4 225 458 ; Fax: +216 4 297 602
- LACON, BCS (German): inspectors are German and inspect 0.7% of the total organic area;
- AIAB (Italian): inspectors are Italian and cover 0.3% of the total organic area.

4. Structural aspects

By 2000, there were 15 035 ha of organically farmed area and 137 farms of which 90 are certified (12 400 ha), 43 in conversion and 4 mixed (organic and conventional). Processing units were 15 distributed over a surface of 5 ha. Productions are reported in table 1.

Most of organic farms and processing units are located mostly in the centre and the south and few in the north of the country.

Table 1. Organic production in Tunisia in 2000

Type of product	Surface (ha)	Quantity (kg)	Farm price US\$*
Olive	14 000	15 000 000	0.4
Palm date	300	400 000	2.8
Almond	100	20 000	3.0
Pistachio	13	50 000	4.0
Vegetables	50	200 000	0.5 - 2
Jojoba	300	20 000	3.0
Aromatic plants (fresh)	50	20 000	1.0
Grape	12	100 000	0.5
Honey	185 hives	1 000	5.0
Processed products			
Olive oil		3 000 000	
Dried aromatic plants		3 000	
Wine		40 000 liters	

* approximate average price

Future prospects (2002-2006) :

- Area : 22 000 hectares
- Vegetable production : 135 000 tons
- Milk : 5000 liters
- Eggs : 4 000 000
- Meat : 100 tons

No organic farms are owned by foreign companies. Two farms (350 ha) are run by both Tunisian and foreigners.

4.1 Producers' associations

- Fédération Nationale des producteurs Biologiques
Union Tunisienne de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche
Rue Alain Savary, Cité El-Khadra 1003 Tunis, Tunisie.
Tel: +216 1 800 800 ; Fax: +216 1 798 598
Number of members : 137 organic farmers
Products: see table 1
Activities carried out: organization, information and support.
- Société Zayatine
Immeuble Abid, no 101 Avenue d'Algérie, 3000 Sfax, Tunisie.

Tel: +216 4 212 241; Fax: +216 4 221 755

Number of members : 23 from the 137 organic farmers

Products: olive oil (1 000 000 kg) and almond (15 000 kg)

Activities carried out : organization, information and marketing

- Other farmers' associations are being established.

4.2 Research

4.2.1 Structures

There are ten national research committees under the umbrella of IRESA dealing with various aspects of agricultural research: conventional and organic. They set up the priorities for research topics. Research is done by both research institutes and university.

4.2.2 Research topics

The major lines are: (i) variety testing (vegetables); (ii) compost quality; (iii) use of various organic matters (farm by-products and manure); (iv) cultural practices (grafting); (v) disease and pest control (olive, date palm and vegetables) and (vi) animal production techniques.

4.3 Training

Some modules on organic agriculture are given to agricultural technicians and engineers in different agronomic institutes.

CTAB in collaboration with AVFA organize training sessions of one day or more for technicians and farmers on different topics of organic agriculture.

5. Agronomic aspects

5.1 Soil fertility

In Tunisia soil is generally poor (low organic matter content, low biological activity and poor structure). The main problems of soil fertility improvement are related to (i) the introduction of green manure in rotation programmes; (ii) the training of farmers on compost management (of different organic matter origins) and (iii) the finding of authorized organic and mineral fertilizers (in sufficient quantity) in the country.

5.2 Pest and weed control

The control of some pests and diseases is not efficient because many authorized products cannot be found in the country or are not yet registered. In this respect, a preparation of a list of registered products is underway.

A rational crop rotation for a good weed control is not always followed by the farmers.

Working towards the biological equilibrium and bio-diversity restoration should be a must.

5.3 Technical means

There are some constraints to import technical means. These are the following:

- a complete list of recorded inputs authorized in organic agriculture is still lacking;
- the import of organic matter is still prohibited;
- equipments used in organic agriculture (i.e. compost and weed management) are not well known by the farmers.

5.4 Main authorized material for soil fertilization, protection and processing

- local organic matter;
- natural minerals allowed by EEC regulation;
- sulfur products;
- copper products;
- mineral oils;
- *Bacillus thuringiensis*;
- Pheromones in traps;
- methaldehyd in traps;
- local natural predators and enemies (i.e. beneficial insects);
- additives and processing aids allowed by EEC regulation.

A complete list of authorized material is being prepared.

5.5 Propagating material

Seeds, seedlings and other propagating material used in organic agriculture are both local and foreign, either organically certified or just not chemically treated. Olive and date palm were planted long time ago.

5.6 Local companies

Producing technical means are rare. There is only one company producing compost. Production of local predators is done by an experimental station.

New projects are underway.

6. Market aspects

There is not yet a local market for organic products in Tunisia. Some organic products are sold as conventional. A strategy is being prepared to encourage local consumption and marketing. Most of the production is directed to the export market and sold as typical Tunisian products. Types and quantity of exported organic products are given in “structural aspects”.

The main foreign markets and the relative products are:

- Italy and Spain: Olive oil;
- France and Germany: Dates;
- France and Great Britain: Vegetables;
- Switzerland: Jojoba;
- France: Aromatic plants and Wine.

Most of the farmers are producers and exporters and they export their production by themselves. A farmers' association, the “Zayatine”, groups 23 farmers and exports their production. Few farmers have contracts with exporters.

The marketing of some organic products (i.e. olive oil) is still difficult. The main export constraints are based on the lack of (i) market assessment and a marketing plan (evaluation of opportunities, future demands and prices of organic products) and (ii) efficient regional and national marketing networks of organic products.

The promotion of organic production is done through the participation at national and international fairs.

The main barriers to have access to international markets are:

- authorization from European authorities;
- lack of information;
- European labels (like AB in France);
- small quantities of organic products.

At the moment, there aren't organizations dealing with the marketing of organic products but the efforts made to organize the marketing of organic oil, led to the establishment of Organic Olive Oil, a new oil marketing society.

7. Development of Mediterranean organic agriculture

The major needs for the development of Mediterranean organic agriculture are the following:

- specific and appropriate Mediterranean regulations;
- training for technicians and farmers;
- establishment of farmers' associations;
- establishment of marketing organization;
- supply of organic fertilizers and authorized products to be used in plant and animal protection.

Annex 1 Source of collection of data and information

Information sources	Contact person	Type of the information source		
		Technical agronomic	Market - statistics	Legislative
Ministry of Agriculture CTAB	Mr. H. Mars Mr. A. Daloul Mr. M Ben Khedher			National Regulation
		Varieties and cultural practices :		
INRAT	Mr. N. Hamza	Vegetables		
IRESA	Mr. A. Mougou	Vegetables		
CTAB	Mr. M Ben Khedher	Vegetables		
Institut de l'olivier	Mr. B. Ben Rouina	Olive trees		
INRAT-CRP	Mr. Rhouma	Date palm trees		
Institut de l'olivier	Mr. B. Ben Rouina	compost		
ESHE-CM	Mr. S. Kamoun	compost		
ESHE-CM	Mr. Y. Msadek	compost		
Institut de l'Olivier	Mr. T. Jardak	pests control		
ESHE-CM	Mr. B. Chemiti	pests control		
ESHE-CM	Mme. M .Ben Halima	pests control		
ESHE-CM	Mr. M. Ben Hamouda	pests control		
	Mr. H. Ben Salah			
INRAT	Mr. Dhoubi	pests control		
INRT	Mr. Khoualdia	pests control		
INRAT-CRP	Mr. M. Mahjoub	pests control		
ESHE-CM	Mr. M. Bchir	Disease control		
INAT		Nematode		
INAT	Mr. R.Bergaoui	Animal production		
CPRA	Mr. A.Bessadok			
ESHE-CM	Mr. K. Kraiem			
ECOCERT	Mr. M. Reynaud		Statistics : area, farmers, production	
INNORPI	Mr. M. Cherif Mme. S. Maamar			
DGPA	Belkheria			
CTAB	Mr. M.Ben Khedher			
APIA	Mr. S. Mibaa		Promotion	
FNAB	Mr. A. Ibala		Market	
Zayatine	Mr. M. Elleuch			
Zayatine	Mr. A. Ben Gaied			