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COUNTRY STUDY ALBANIA

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Albania is a small, very mountainous country covering an area of 28.748 square kilometers, with a population of about 3.1 million people. 699,000 ha is classified as agricultural land (24% of the total area), 1,041,000 ha as forest (36%) and 423,000 ha as pasture (15%). The remaining 25% is classified as other, which includes urban areas, about 135,000 ha of lakes and waterways, and unused rocky and mountain land. The average agricultural land per capita is very small at 0.2 ha, the smallest in Europe.

Table 1. Structure of land in (1000 ha)

Description	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total land	2875	2875	2875	2875	2875	2875
Agriculture land	699	699	699	699	699	699
Forestry	1026	1024	1041	1041	1041	1041
Pasture	445	440	441	422	423	423
Other land	703	712	692	713	712	712

Albania belongs to the subtropical Mediterranean climate and is characterized by mild winters with abundant precipitation and hot - dry summers. The annual mean air temperature has a wide variation over the territory. The mean annual precipitation total over the Albania is about 1,485 mm/year. The highest precipitation total (70%) is recorded during the cold months (October-March). The richest month in precipitation over the whole territory is November, while the poorest are July and August.

Albania can be divided in three major agro-ecological zones based on climate and topography:

- The lowlands (Southern, Central and Northern part of the coastal plain), with altitudes from see level to 200 m. In this area are grown almost all kind of arable crops like cereals, industrial crops, vegetables, early potatoes; dry beans, forages, grapes, olives as well as and citrus, mainly in the south.
- The hilly zone with altitudes ranges from 100 to 900 m. The Korca plain is the most agricultural area- more suitable for wheat, potatoes, tobacco, vegetables, fruit trees, grapes etc.
- The mountainous zone (most of the area is covered by forests and pastures; wheat, forage crops, vegetables, potatoes and fruit trees have extended in the past at the expense of pastures).

The area surrounding Albania has relatively abundant fresh water resources. Seven main rivers run from east to west. There are also about 600 small reservoirs for irrigation with a total storage capacity of 560 million m3. Groundwater is not commonly used for irrigation.

After the Second World War, large agricultural cooperatives and state farms were established through a process of total collectivization. Communist government made complete national self-sufficiency in agriculture a priority, allowing only some exports to other countries. This was achieved at great costs.

Major reforms started in 1991. Albania has come a long way since its transition to a market economy started. An overall sound macroeconomic framework as well as key policy and institutional reforms implemented during the transition period, have resulted in the growth of output and income.

In agriculture, a first priority has been land privatization. By August 1992, about 80 percent of agricultural cooperative land had been privatized and this process almost finished a few years later. The result of it was a rural sector characterized by thousands of small family farms.

Agriculture provides the income basis for most of the population and serves as an employment safety net. The rural population is estimated to comprise about 54 percent of the total population while about 60 percent of the labor force works in agriculture and related fields.

Though farms are extremely small and fragmented (overage number of parcels per farm is 3.9), they have nonetheless recorded an increase in output as new farm owners worked intensively to improve their productivity.

Agriculture has gradually diversified itself in recent years. From the total number of approximately 375,000 farm householders (2005), 110,000 ranges between 0.1- 0.5 ha of land under cultivation, 93,000 have 0.6-1 ha, 133,000 have 1-2 ha and 39,000 is bigger than 2 ha.

The total number of farms is gradually decreasing. So, in 2002 as compared to 1995, the number of farms decreased by 8 %. This mainly results from the migration of the rural population towards the urban zones. There also exists a decreasing trend on the number of minimal-size farms. During the above mention period, the number of farms below 1 ha decreased by about 13%. Also, the number of farms groups with size between 1 and 2 ha are increasing which suggests a trend towards the increase of the farms size which would be a very essential factor for the future agricultural development.

The agricultural household consist of about 4.8 persons. The rural population is still dominated by young people. About 26% is less than 15 years old, 67% is between 15 and 65 years old and only 8.6% is older than 65 years. About 52 percent of farm operators range between 25-54 years old.

About one third of population lives in the mountainous area.

The agricultural farm is main source of employment. 73% of the working force is employed in agriculture, 6% in non-agricultural businesses, 6% in agro-industrial activities and 3% in other jobs. Only 50% of the young people work on the farm, mainly because of the low income level offered.

Production is predominantly for family consumption, not for the market, and generally involves a mixture of annual crops, e.g. wheat, alfalfa, and vegetables, together with some cattle and poultry and perhaps a few fruit trees. Most farmers operate as individuals, and progress towards farm amalgamation or even inter-farm cooperation with joint buying and marketing, seems very slow.

Some entrepreneurial land-owners are developing businesses aimed at wholesale markets, especially in covered vegetable production, in establishing orchards and vineyard, and in a few cases dairy herds. Such market-oriented farms, whilst relatively few, are gradually increasing in number although still almost wholly in the range 3-5 ha.

Despite all the positive developments, poverty is persistent in the country and hits especially hard in the rural areas. Almost one out of three Albanians can be considered poor and four out of five poor people live in rural areas.

Albania has some advantages for the development of its agriculture. Among these are (a) a favorable geographic location relative to the European Union, (b) comparably low wage levels, (c) a relatively educated rural population, many of whom have worked in other European countries for some period of time, (d) creativeness among Albanian farmers in adapting rapidly to changing circumstances, and (e) fertile soils and favorable climate in some regions. Based on these advantages, the major opportunities for growth in the agriculture sector are in the production of higher value crops, livestock, processing, and some agricultural niche markets. (WB- Rural strategy-Albania, 2001).

There are still different constraints affecting the agricultural development. The most important are considered:

- uncertainties regarding land ownership;
- existence of very small farms with very fragmented and small pieces of land;
- incomplete rehabilitation of the irrigation system;
- high prices of inputs and disorganized and inefficient systems of production and delivery;

- low level of crediting activities in the agricultural and food sector;
- many small producers, not supported and not able to compete in the local and regional markets;
- poor transport infrastructure;
- shortages for agriculture machinery and its high cost;
- electricity and the other uncertain energy sources;
- underdeveloped marketing and market information;
- underdeveloped agro processing industry;
- research, extension and information services not very responsive to the farmers' needs, etc.

AGRICULTURE IN NATIONAL ECONOMY: SOCIAL AND STRUCTURAL ASPECTS

Historically, agriculture has had a considerable weight in the GDP structure. Since the privatizations of land started, agricultural production has risen every year. The rapid growth and recovery during the early stages of the transition resulted mostly from the ability of farmers to quickly adapt to the changes brought about through the privatization by modifying their production structures.

Agriculture is still the backbone of Albania's economy, nearly half of the working force is employed in agriculture and a considerable part of the GDP is generated in this sector. The national economy will continue to be dominated by agricultural activity for many years to come. Income increase from crop production, livestock, agro-industries, fishery and forestry sectors remains crucial for economic and social development of the country.

Table 2. Contribution of each sector in GDP (1992-2001) (INSTAT, 2001)

Description	1992	1996	1998	2001
Industry	32.1	16.9	13.8	11.7
Agriculture	42.5	54.6	31.2	28.1
Construction	6.6	11.4	4.3	6.1
Transport	3.3	3.5	7.6	9.9
Commerce, hotels&restor.			20.8	21.3
Services	15.6	19.9	25.9	26.7
Total	100	100	100	100

Anyhow, one should notice that the calculations of the macro-economic indicators before 1990 were based on the Albanian calculation methods according to the System of Material Production. The same method was applied even from 1990 till 1996.

The Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), supported by International Monetary Fund, calculated for the first time the GDP of 1996-2000 based on the methods of production and expenditures, using variable and constant prices based on the System of National Accounts of the United Nations, which totally differs from the previous method.

By this change and of the better performance of other branches, the agriculture's contribution in the GDP shows a sharp decline from 54.6 in 1994, 31.2 in 1998 and 28.1 in 2001. This level more or less is also kept even during the last years.

But, the decline in specific weight of agriculture in the GDP structure does not mean that the agricultural production declined, on the contrary, even in the period 1996 - 2005, production went up by 2 - 3% each year.

However, production has sometimes taken place at the expense of long term sustainability. Production continues to take place with limited use of improved seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs. Despite from the continuity of the growing rhythms, the agricultural production has not overcome its self-sufficient character yet. Though Albania is a typical agricultural country, its trade balance regarding agro-food products still remains very negative. The ratio between export and import is about 7-8:1.

LAND USE AND PRODUCTION

As it above mentioned, agriculture is now dominated by small farmers who produce both for self-consumption and for market serviced by private traders, input suppliers and agro-processors.

The agricultural land fund has remained almost flat for the last 10-15 years (699.000 ha or 24% of the total area). According to the agricultural statistics, the area destined for agriculture has not changed in comparison with 1990, but in reality there is a considerable area not used for agriculture any longer. So, about 60% of this area represents a real and stable fund for the agricultural development whilst the other part, situated higher than 300 m above sea level, is in generally very fragmented, with stones, with little possibilities for irrigation, salted, eroded etc.

The land used for agriculture is often quite sloping, with only about 44% of the agricultural land having a slope of less than 5%.

More than 30% of the land is situated on the hill slopes: these are mainly pastures converted in new lands during 1970 - 1985. More than 47% of the land is located higher than 600 m above sea level and with some small exceptions as the Korca - Devolli-Erseka valley, these areas are poor and infertile.

The surface of agricultural land is about 2.200 m2 / habitant. But, based on the fact that only 450,000 ha land can really be cultivated, the ratio even becomes worse.

The whole land surface is not exploited. The planted surface with arable crops seems to be stabilized at the level of 400,000 ha. This seems to represent the most fertile and profitable area. Other important reasons for this difference are the high emigration degree of the working force in South-East part of the county (Saranda, Gjirokaster, etc) and migration of rural population to the urban areas as well.

Only 7% of the lands are classified as highly productive, 45% as average and the remainder (about 45%) as poor. The risk of the degradation of the non-productive lands is clearly evident because of the lack of reforestation and the owners' denial to get hold of them.

The dominant systems in the farm production structures are:

- corns - forages - livestock - vegetables;
- vegetables - forages- livestock;
- fruits - vineyards;
- vegetables (greenhouses);
- vegetables - potatoes;
- forages - livestock;
- fruits - olives;
- vegetables - vineyards.

The farmers mainly cultivate those crops that better utilize the family labor force, are easy to transport and trade and that can be stored and processed at the farm conditions. Livestock production represents the second largest activity of the family farms. Also the fruit production (fruits, grapes, olives, etc) is becoming another important component of the farm activities.

Structure of agriculture has had important changes during transition period. Initially after reform, production took place with limited use of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other inputs provided by private dealers. Later on, the shortage of such input was not the case, but the cost of these inputs for the farmers remain relatively high.

The surface of what cultivation has been decreased more than 50% compared with 1990. The overage yields are relatively low (2.5-3 tons per hectare) with some exceptions in some traditional zones.

The area under maize cultivation is now stabilized at the level of around 50,000 hectares with a average yield not extended 5 tons/ha.

The production of industrial crops like sugar beet, sunflowers, cotton, tobacco, soybeans etc has drastically decreased mainly due to collapse of the state processing industry. Also small farm size does not allow the mechanization, which can lead to a lower production cost.

The following tables present the figures on structure of field crops plantings, yield and production during the last five years:

Table 3. Structure of field crop plantings in 1.000 ha

N	Description	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Cereals	165,8	157,7	153,3	143,9	147,7
	-wheat	100,0	93,4	90,8	81,4	82,4
	-maize	52,0	50,0	48,3	46,8	48,4
	-rye	1,9	1,5	1,6	1,5	1,5
	-barley	1,2	0,8	1,6	1,5	1,5
	-oats	10,7	11,9	11,1	12,7	13,9
2	Vegetables-melon	33,5	33,6	32,4	32,0	32,5
3	Potatoes	11,2	10,6	10,5	10,7	10,1
4	Beans	18,5	17,4	17,4	17,2	16,1
5	Tobacco	4,1	2,3	1,6	1,9	1,5
6	Sunflower	1,8	1,7	1,4	2,8	1,1
7	Soybean	0,4	0,2	0,4	0,3	0,4
8	Forage	164	171	182	176	191
	Area planted	400,6	395,4	399,3	385,2	400,5

Table 4. Field crop production in 1.000 tons

N	Description	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Cereals	565,8	502,5	518,9	488,5	498,8	511,2
	-wheat	341,1	282,2	295,3	259,9	253,4	260,0
	-maize	205,7	198,3	197,3	206,9	216,2	219,9
	-rye	1,5	3,7	2,7	2,4	2,4	3,0
	-barley	1,8	3,0	3,8	2,9	3,7	4,1
	-oats	15,7	15,3	19,7	16,4	23,1	24,2
2	Vegetable	620,0	651,0	668,5	675,0	677,4	684,9
3	Potatoes	161,0	163,7	163,1	158,2	160,0	169,3
4	White beans	25,2	22,1	24,5	17,8	22,4	23,6
5	Tobacco	6,2	4,1	2,6	1,4	2,1	1,9
6	Sunflower	2,9	2,7	2,6	1,3	2,2	2,0
7	Soybean	0,6	0,8	0,4	0,5	0,4	0,7
8	Forage	4730	4750	4716	4986	5094	5197

Table 5. Field crop yield, quintals/ha

N	Description	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Cereals	31,8	30,3	32,9	32,9	34,6	34,6
	-wheat	30,5	28,2	32,9	28,6	31,1	31,6
	-maize	35,8	35,9	39,5	38,9	46,2	45,4
	-rye	12,3	19,9	17,6	14,9	16,7	19,7
	-barley	15,2	24,8	27,6	18,8	24,1	27,0
	-oats	14,6	14,3	16,3	14,8	18,1	17,4
2	Vegetable	188,7	194,1	198,8	208,7	211,3	210,5
3	Potatoes	140,1	145,7	152,2	147,0	149,6	167,1
4	White beans	9,4	10,7	12,2	8,2	11,0	14,7
5	Tobacco	10,9	9,8	11,6	8,6	11,0	12,7
6	Sunflower	15,0	14,9	15,0	9,2	7,8	17,7
7	Soybean	13,1	17,8	17,8	12,4	13,2	16,1
8	Forage	286,6	289,1	276,0	273,0	288,9	251,0

Very positive developments are observed in expanding fruit trees (especially apple), grape and olives. Farmers are eager to cope with new techniques, whilst a better field management is giving higher yields. The table below provides detailed information about trees' number/ surface, yield and production:

Table 6. Number, yield and production of fruit trees

N	Description	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
I	Fruit trees						
	Total (000 trees)	5573	5726	6029	6530	6785	7120
	In production (000 trees)	4179	4292	4524	4875	5067	5370
	Yield (kg/tree)	15,5	14,8	16,8	15,9	23,1	17,2
	Production (000 ton)	64,9	63,8	75,8	77,4	85,3	90,0
II	Olive trees						
	Total (000 trees)	3611	3667	3809	3940	4092	4264
	In production(000 trees)	3256	3246	3290	3359	3429	3488
	Yield (kg/tree)	11,1	12,2	8,3	8,3	30,2	8,6
	Production (000 ton)	36,2	39,6	27,3	27,9	58,7	30,2
III	Citrus trees						
	Total (000 trees)	391	422	453	489	521	550
	In production(000 trees)	305	302	322	363	394	421
	Yield (kg/tree)	8,8	9,3	10,7	12,0	12,6	12,3
	Production (000 ton)	2,6	2,8	3,4	4,4	4,9	5,2
IV	Pergola						
	Total (000 trees)	4638	4793	4806	5022	5224	5364
	In production (000 trees)	3856	3945	4060	4259	4404	4536
	Yield (kg/tree)	11,9	11,3	10,3	12,6	10,6	12,3
V	Vineyard						
	Total (ha)	5824	6275	6800	7180	7605	7994
	In production (ha)	4613	4878	5202	5741	6364	6637
	Yield (kv/ha)	70,5	83,0	79,4	90,0	79,5	90,1
	Grape total (000 ton)	79,3	85,1	83,1	105,5	97,1	115,1

The planted surface and production of forage crops, dominated by alfalfa, is increased all over the country. The same applied for the number of livestock, although cows and sheep figures have shown a slight decrease during last years. Livestock production now contributes about 50% of the total value coming from agriculture. Livestock production fits well into the small holder farming system and farmers mainly produce for their own consumption and sell the surplus in the local market.

Table 7. Number of livestock in 1.000

N	Description	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Cattle	728	708	690	684	654	655
	-cows	448	441	435	443	435	430
2	Sheep / goats	3045	2933	2773	2919	2738	2701
2a	-sheep	1939	1906	1844	1903	1794	1760
	-milked sheep	1448	1440	1414	1441	1348	1312
2b	-goats	1104	1027	929	1015	944	941
	-milked goats	800	782	698	761	702	701
3	Pigs	103	106	114	132	143	147
	-sow	10	10	11	12	13	13
4	Equidae	204	194	181	170	156	149
	-horses	63	67	65	63	58	53
5	Poultry	5291	5422	5826	6104	6275	6432
	-chicken	4087	4285	4446	4756	4517	4671
6	Beehives	76	82	92	111	132	157

Table 8. Livestock production (000 tons)

N	Description	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Milk from:	948	984	1010	1060	1064	1076
	Cows *	807	840	878	904	917	930
	Sheep	70	72	69	74	75	75
	Goats	71	72	63	81	72	71
2	Eggs (in mill.)	530	608	660	720	780	738
3	Sheep wool	3,4	3,3	3,3	3,1	3,3	3,4
4	Honey (in tons)	1076	1183	1232	1235	1990	1816
5	Live weight	112	114	118	123	129	133
	Cattle	63	62	64	65	66	68
	Sheep & goat	35	37	38	38	42	41
	Pig	10	10	11	12	13	15
	Poultry	4	4	6	8	9	9

* It is included the milking milk dragged by calves.

AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND THE STRATEGIES FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture and Food Sector, as one of the basic components of the integrated rural development has passed through a long way, since the beginning of the transition period towards market economy. Although the situation in Albania was not appropriate to face the drastic and very quick changes, the substantial reforms, which include among others, privatization, land distribution and liberalization of market and prices, helped increasing the agro-industrial production. Important investments accomplished so far on the rehabilitation of infrastructure (particularly in irrigation and drainage) and other support services, have had an impact on the acceleration of this development.

The situation changed quickly due to the rigid implementation of reforms, which brought about important macroeconomic changes. The rural sector, not feasible and dominated by big state owned enterprises and agricultural cooperatives, was transformed into a fragmented rural sector characterized by thousands of small family farms. Even though the farms were so small and fragmented, they registered an increase in production due to intensive efforts done by the new owners. But, despite from those positive developments and the steady increase in the agricultural production during these last 10-15 years, the poverty is still evident especially in the remote rural areas. There is a big inequity in income distribution level, and poverty is higher in the families with a low level of education and with many children. Many families, especially in the rural areas, have a limited access to basic infrastructure and services, including basic education and primary health services.

Facing such situation and challenges, Ministry of Agriculture and Food during the last fifteen years, supported by international donors, has developed a number of policy and strategy documents to facilitate changes in this complex environment.

The first mid term strategy paper (An Agricultural Strategy, 1992) was formulated for the period from 1992 up to 1996. At the request of the Albanian Government, a joint team of experts from the World Bank and the European Community worked with Albanian specialists and prepared short and medium term action programs for the development of agriculture. They developed a number of recommendations on actions required to achieve objectives of restoring food security, providing income and employment for the rural population, contributing to rapid economic recovery and managing the transition from a highly centralized command economy to a market economy in agriculture. Among others this strategy paper served as a sound base to better address public investments of state budget and donor organizations as well.

Another document, so called “Green Strategy”, was formulated for the period 1998-2001. By this, some mid - term priorities for the development of agriculture sector were identified.

Also the collaborative efforts of the WB experts assisted by local experts resulted in compiling a very comprehensive document called "Rural Strategy Albania - Underpinning Growth and Sustainable Development" (2001). It stressed that strategy for rural development should go beyond improving the agricultural productivity.

According to this document, Albania must have as its core objectives the following elements: (a) continued growth in incomes; (b) a reduction of rural poverty; and (c) sustainable management of natural resources, including forests, pastures and water.

Eight key areas that would form the nucleus of such a strategy were suggested:

- Continue to support policy reforms to create a policy environment that is conducive to growth in rural areas.
- Increase focus on capacity building during and after the decentralization process (a) at the local level to strengthen the newly emerged official structures and (b) at the national level to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry.
- Continue to emphasize land registration and the development of land markets.
- Increase engagement in community based rural infrastructure initiatives including irrigation, water supply, rangeland management, and roads.
- Continue to strengthen rural support services with a focus on agricultural support services and food safety, but not excluding activities geared towards non-agricultural activities.
- Continue to build on successes in the rural finance sector; expand services as well as outreach of existing micro-credit initiatives and foster expansion of the banking network into rural areas.
- Elaborate on options to support non-farm rural development to create opportunities for employment and income generation in rural areas and to enable people to be better equipped to support themselves elsewhere.
- Strengthen natural resource management at the policy level and directly through targeted project activities.

Later on (2003), Ministry of Agriculture and Food prepared the Strategy of agriculture and food as integrated part of the National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development (NSSED).

The basic agriculture and food sector development objectives in the framework of an integrated rural development were defined as following:

Poverty reduction through a sustainable increase of agricultural, livestock, agro-industry and fishery production;

Improvement of food safety and quality;

Marketing Improvement of agricultural products and foodstuff;

Sustainable management of natural resources such as land, water and bio-diversity.

NSSED document emphasized that poverty is higher in the rural areas, and that the chaotic and high migration towards urban areas, have given birth to new problems, which should be dealt with both in rural and urban development programs. Not only the production, but also marketing of agricultural products, is conditioned by the under developed rural infrastructure, and by lack of markets and information.

Main key elements, issues and intervention areas addressed by NSSED include:

- Agricultural Land Administration,
- Land irrigation and drainage,
- Mechanization and agricultural inputs,
- Crop production,
- Livestock production,
- Veterinary Services,
- Agricultural Research,
- Extension Services,
- Improvement of access to credit and financial services,
- Development of the mountainous areas,
- Improvement of products processing and their marketing,
- Food safety and consumer protection,
- Sustainable management of natural resources, and
- Forestry and Pastures.

Related with crop production, it was foreseen as the main objective "to meet market demand for fresh vegetables, forage and olives, increasing fruit trees and grapes production and the continuity of investments in citrus plants". Meanwhile the main policies included the design of the strategy for crop cultivation and production; the creation of technical set of documentation for the areas, which cultivate fruit trees according to their regional placement; the establishment and support of the structure for the

production of quantities, qualities and various kinds of saplings. Supporting policies to increase the efficiency of vegetable production in green houses and in open field, cereals and forage crops will continue. The initiatives for organic and sustainable agriculture will be promoted and supported".

For the livestock production the main objectives was "the consolidation of the achievements reached so far and implementing new livestock breeding programs; increasing the production of combined animal feed, a better control of quality and marketing of those combined animal feed; developing livestock farms and industrial centers of livestock production; storing the livestock local genetic resources; designing and implementing livestock oriented development projects; adhering in international livestock organizations. An increase in livestock production of 5-7 %, was expected. The principal policies and their instruments included:

Improvement of legal framework related with pure breed reproducers and livestock breed flocks; protection and provision of the minimum conditions for pet breeding; animal nutrition, certification of animals with breed values for the market; the financial support of the livestock breeding programs and for the protection of the animal genetic resources etc.

Priority steps would be focused on:

rehabilitation of the zoo technical services within the framework of the establishment of the regional agriculture directorates;

promotion and support for the establishment of sustainable livestock production units through specialized farms, farms for organic production and through industrial establishments for meat and egg production;

the expansion of the industrial insemination on specialized cattle breeds for meat at 50% of the population inseminated artificially;

promotion of the private operators to produce and partially import animals of high breed values;

promotion of animal feeding technology.

In the program of the new government elected last year are clearly defined as priorities the development of fruit trees, vegetable (especially in greenhouses), vineyard, olive and livestock production.

The development of agriculture and agro-processing industry will be based in some basic supportive policies and reforms for the sector. Public investment and donor support will be significantly increased.

A new food safety and quality control system will be established and strengthened in order to protect local consumers and to achieve also European standards for export.

The access for credit will be increased by extending micro-credit schemes and a number of fiscal policies will be applied in order to stimulate technological support, farm mechanization, usage of inputs etc.

Recently, a very comprehensive national action plan for the rehabilitation of the irrigation and drainage system is approved by government, and its implementation for a 2-3 years period is expected to bring about substantial improvements for extending especially some cash crops.

Special attention will also have the construction of agricultural markets and slaughterhouses in different regions of the country.

The fast market globalization for agro-food production, as well as the process of regional and European integration, requires the adoption of the Albanian agriculture with the new conditions. The use of new technologies, which increase both production and income while respecting the environment, becomes imperative.

It is time that agricultural practices applied both at remote areas and at the lowlands, be substituted gradually by principles of the sustainable agriculture, as the best alternative of the future, for safe food and clean environment.

The Albanian agriculture is at a stage when growing and qualitative changes are occurring, but it needs to be oriented and supported in harmony with the whole social and economic development process.

BASIC INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING TRAINING IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of institutions and agencies providing training in agriculture and rural development in Albania. Among them, more important are the following:

- Agricultural University of Tirana
- Research Institutes under the MAFCP, and
- Agricultural Extension Services
- NGO-s supported by foreign donors

Agricultural University of Tirana, at present has three faculties (Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary) and one Inter-Faculties Department. By support of the TEMPUS project (UN-JEP 17083-2002) a National Agricultural Training Centre is already established.

Research Institutes

At the moment, there are nine Institutes and four Experimental Stations. Although this seems a large number of research centers for a small country, these organizations are fairly small; institutes mostly employ 6-15 graduate research staff, 3-6 administrative staff, and 10-20 support staff (excluding staff engaged in production of goods or services), and Experimental Stations employ fewer persons. During last years more active institutes providing training courses for agricultural specialists have been:

Fruit-trees Institute,
Vegetable Institute;
Arable Crops Institute;
Livestock Institute;
Plant Protection Institute, and
Maize Institute.

Recently, a reorganization process has started and the idea is to develop a network of five Technology Transfer Centers, each covering a major agricultural region (Fushe-Kruja, Lushnja, Vlora, Korca and Shkodra. Each centre should take national responsibility for applied research in certain commodities or topics, as appropriate, and contain a limited number of qualified researchers plus support staff. It should also be required to do agro-zonal testing work requested by other Centers, to initiate research (technology transfer) of local importance, and to give technical support to the extension service, including involvement in on-farm research projects, in order to benefit agricultural production and profitability of the particular region.

Another important task of them will be training of agricultural experts and advanced farmers.

Agricultural Extension Services

Agricultural Extension is a new phenomenon in Albania. It did not exist before 1990 as in the centrally planed agricultural system, agricultural specialist simply ordered working brigades the implementation of specified technical activities developed by research institutes.

After this period one can notice that rapid and huge changes have taken place in the agricultural sector. There have been a number of programs supporting the development of public extension services over the years. In 1993 EU-Phare program started to support the restructuring of agricultural support services in Albania. Fist as a pilot project on input supply, credit provision and extension in 6 districts. In 1994 this project continued as the Albanian National Extension Project (ANEP) which was financed until 1997 by EU-Phare and from 1997 onwards from Dutch Government. Also other donors like IFAD and small local projects (Agrinas, FAP and Swiss projects) have supported the development of public extension in certain parts of the country.

During 1993-1997, ANEP concentrated on the provision of inputs for demonstrations, training of extension agents in extension methodology, production of extension materials, establishment of an extension unit in Ministry level, and establishment of a monitoring system. ANEP started first in the high potential zones and was later expanded to mountain areas.

From the experiences gained by pilot project on extension in 16 districts the Ministry concluded to put priority on the development of a national agricultural extension system. The objective of the

midterm policy developed in 1995 was: "To set up nation-vide a cost effective public extension service delivering free of charge services to small and medium farmers, responding to their technical and economical needs in the process of their integration in the market economy. This service will be supported by a limited research network for technology development and integrated in a Agriculture Knowledge and Information System". This does not meant that extension service should be remained public forever. Gradually Ministry started looking into cost-recovery for certain activities.

After 1997, main project objective was to expand and strengthen the national agricultural extension service through strong link with private sector. The project has continued to support the extension service through training, technical assistance, provision of transportation and some operational support for demonstrations and other activities. An extension methodology involving participatory planning and working through farmer interest groups and has been successfully applied. Also implementation of many On-Farm Research projects has improved linkages between Research Institutes, Extension Service and farmers.

At the middle of 1998, the Albanian Government approved the policy document "Restructuring Platform of the Extension Service" and later on also the financial support from the Government side for setting up (private) advisory services. Since the year 2000,a public-private Foundation has been established that governs 2 Regional Agricultural Advisory Centers (RAAC) in areas with high agricultural potential (Fier and Durres). Big farmers are the clients of this extension service and they pay a part of the advisory costs. The RAAC-Foundation will develop into an independent association over the years after the government support stops. The Centers aim to become gradually self-financing within 5-7 years. Each Centre has been provided with 10 staff, office space, equipment including computers, copiers, telephones, moto-bikes and a vehicle. The government contribution is used mainly for basic salary of the staff and some operational costs as ANEP paid the investment, temporally salary support, some operational costs etc. Public money support was gradually decreasing as market revenues were getting higher. The cost-recovery objective for 2005 was more than 50%. But, in fact, these expectations were not meet, mainly because of management reasons and the future of this approach remains unclear.

Other private extension activities are carry out by trade and producer organizations like Albanian Fertilizers and Agri-business Dealer Associations (AFADA), Albanian National Seed Potato Association (ANSPA), Horticulture Association (HABA), Edible Oils Association (AOA) etc. Also a wide network of private veterinarians and AI technicians provide to farmers paid services and advice.

Public Extension Structure

Since 1996 Extension Service was placed under Ministry's Directorate of Science, that changed into Directorate of Science and Extension, and since then the Extension Section is responsible for the strategy, the management and the organization of this service at the country scale. The section presently has one Head of Extension and two Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) covering the fields of farm economics/marketing and mass media. In addition there are three Regional Extension Coordinators who are part of Ministry's Extension Section structure. The Regional Co-ordinators are responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the district level extension plans, training programs and on-farm research activities within their regions.

Each of the 12 Regional Departments of Agriculture & Food (DAF) has Extension Section, which consist of Chief of Section, who reports administratively to the DAF Director, and four SMSs (vegetable, fruit trees and livestock specialists and a farm economics). Other extension officers are located at the district and commune (field) level.

Staff fluctuations have happened over the years. There is now a total number of 260 extension workers at regional and field level. 100 of them are based in Information Centres, scattered in more potential agricultural areas.

Main extension activities

- Extension staff training (training-of-trainers' approach). A big number of training activities have been organized and implemented mainly at national, regional and district level including extension methodology, extension skills but also many economical and technical topics)

- Farmer training
- Group and individual meetings
- Demonstrations
- Field days
- On farm trials
- Leaflets
- Exhibitions
- Radio and TV programs

Following participatory planning approach, which means involvement of farmers and other stakeholders, the regions develop the year extension plans. These plans include objectives aimed at addressing specific problems identified by farmers, results and the respective activities for each of them. The activities are drown up on a monthly schedule. The plans are reviewed by Regional Extension Co-ordinators.

More than 20 On-farm research project are implemented every year. Following a clear procedure a Research Extension Committee attached to the Ministry is responsible for the assessment and approval of proposals done by research institutes and other different applicants. Implementation of these projects at farm level is done by a very close cooperation of researchers, extension workers and farmers. Results of these projects are distributed to other farms by organizing many demonstrations, field days, distribution of leaflets etc.

Speaking generally the extension service is operation nationwide with reasonable success.

Long term future Extension Policy (2001-2010)

In 2000, Ministry felt the need to review the policy for extension, as changing situation required a long-term view for the role of extension in the agricultural development of Albania.

According to this policy, the Ministry of Agriculture will support the development of the agriculture through facilitating the development of the new knowledge and the dissemination of available knowledge to different categories of farmers in different ways. The future focus of the Ministry in extension will be on facilitation while the implementation is to be done by most efficient providers (public as well as private). In order to realize such a diversified strategy, Ministry will focus on the realization of the following objectives:

- Support to the private (paid) extension for high end users;
- Information Centers developed throughout the country;
- Specific extension services on contract basis provided for medium farmers, initially free of charge;
- Rural development services on contract basis provided for farmers in mountain areas through Mountain Area Development Agency;
- On-farm research provided on contract for the development of new technologies and for solving farmer's problems;
- Training provided for agricultural specialists by Research Institutes and Agricultural Universities;
- Training provided for farmers.

The main *strategic elements* can be identified:

- Extension and advisory services offered in many different ways and for different prices
- Information Centers offering farmers access to information sources
- More use of mass media and publications (information packages)
- The Ministry contract services out to service providers
- On-farm research open for other organizations than research institutes
- Training sessions open for interested service providers.

Training for the agricultural specialists and farmers:

Training, open to all specialists in Albania is another area of strong support by MAFCP for the development of agriculture. When we admit that private specialists play an important role in the support of agricultural development, then they have to get opportunities for upgrading their knowledge as well.

From 2003 onwards, specific training courses in technical, economical and marketing subjects have been offered for all specialists.

Trainers are recruited from the research institutes, universities and from specialist advisors mainly from NGOs.

The development of training programs is one of the main tasks of the Regional Extension Coordinators in close cooperation with Chiefs of Extension and SMSs. The training needs identified at regional level generally reflect their specific features. In these programs are also included other topics based on foreseen agricultural and rural development. Anyhow the training is considered firs of all as an important activity to support extension staff in preparing and implementing their planed extension activities. The frequent changes in the extension staff and the recruitment of staff members without any experience in extension have made necessary to re-include in training programs a few topics conducted in previous phases of the extension project.

In the first stages, attention was focused on getting extension staff familiar with extension concepts and methods (like Rural Extension - delivered as a general course, Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge System, Participatory Extension Planning, gender issues, etc.).

Later on technical aspects like vegetable production in greenhouse, Integrated Pest Management, livestock feeding and forage production, artificial insemination techniques, new techniques of fruit trees production, and economic topics like farm economics and farm accounting, marketing of agricultural and livestock products, as well as specific topics like mass media, on farm research, computer knowledge, private farmer association forming received more attention.

As a general rule training activities mostly take place at district and commune level and include national training issues in the regional training programs. After training program was discussed and approved, the Extension Section in MAFCM is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the training program, while the Regional Coordinators implement and coordinate training program for their regions. Chiefs of extension and SMSs play the same role for their respective staff.

The involvement of the researchers from Research Institutes as trainers, from an organizational point of view, has been very easy for the fact that both extension and research are branches of the same department. Sometimes, mixed groups of trainers with people from research institutes and the agricultural university are formed. In this way, their diverse knowledge, skills and experiences complement each other. The local sources and expertise are well combined with international trainers provided mainly by various donor projects.

A considerable part of information and findings of research work is transmitted to the extension workers through technical and economic training. Their professional level in generally has improved making them more competent and capable to help the farmers to solve the problems. The development of the specific action plans by extension workers after having participated in training sessions, the preparation of leaflets and implementation of farmers' training, are all clearly showing the value and effectiveness of the training.

Very often, the training courses for specialists are conducted at national level followed by the delivery at regional level and multiplied for small farmers groups later on. For every training activity, the regional coordinators present to the Ministry's Extension Section technical reports, which include the training objective, program, participants, results, evaluation, budget spent, remarks and proposal etc.

During the last years, the number of the training days per year is about 130 for agricultural specialists and 600 for farmers.

In order to ensure a flow of new extension workers in the field of agriculture with the required technical and communication skills, MAFCP aims to further strengthen the collaboration with the agricultural universities.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

The organic Agriculture concepts started to be introduced in Albania about ten years ago. Intellectuals from Agricultural University of Tirana, research institutions and agricultural specialists of

different fields who had enough information on the overall situation of agriculture in the world, environmental problems of intensive production methods, new tendencies and opportunities for the farmers founded the Organic Agriculture Association (OAA) in 1997.

During the first years several meeting with foreign experts brought information on Organic Agriculture, general principles, the aim and scope of this alternative method of farming, organic method of production, the European regulations, market aspects, etc. meanwhile, some small projects with the financial support of different donors were implemented.

In this time started the first pilot farms, for the demonstration of organic practices and techniques of farm management, facilitation for farmers to reach the market, information campaigns, and publication of the first leaflets, brochures and videos. On 1998 OAA become a member of IFOAM.

Organic agriculture received more support after the year 2000, when OAA started the implementation in Albania a join project with the Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL) financed by Swiss government. This project is still lasting working together with three local partners. It is focused on three main components: marketing and labeling issues (OAA); research and extension (BioAdria) and inspection of organic products (Albinspekt) (see Annex 1).

INTEREG programs have given a great contribution for training of Albanian specialists and updating their knowledge on sustainable agriculture principles and rural development. PAB (INTEREG IIIA) is another project supporting the development of organic agriculture. It provides assistance for testing organic production methods, strengthening extension services and developing legal framework and local control bodies.

Actually, the organic agriculture has gained more attention in Albania. This trend is especially stimulated by some factors, among others one can mention:

- Implementation of several projects in organic and sustainable agriculture by different NGO-s and public sector;
- Creation of local NGO-s aiming the sustainable agriculture and organic production;
- Consumer's interest for fresh local products is gradually increased, with preferences on special local and indigenous varieties.
- Most small-scale farms in mountainous area are considered natural, this because of limited access for external production inputs, mainly for economical reasons, and their transformation into organic is relatively easier.
- Policy documents developed by Ministry of Agriculture and Food define as one of the key objectives “sustainable management of natural resources” and “food safety and consumer's protection”;
- Legal framework on organic production is already in place;
- The great tourism potential and its development, among others, is increasing the need and demand for typical, good quality food;
- Exports of organic products are a good opportunity for farmers.

Organic farms in Albania are relatively small. The average surface is 2.3 ha, but is quite bigger than the average surface of other farms in the country that is 1.2 ha. They are too diversified, and only in few cases are specialized in certain products. In general, the mixed farms are dealing both with crop and livestock production, have a close cycle and use very low off-farm inputs. Therefore, the main inputs for fertilization of plants come from the farm itself. Pest management is done mainly by using resistant or tolerant local varieties, by increasing the biodiversity into the farm and using allowed pesticides as copper and sulfur formulation for diseases, and *Bacillus thuringiensis* and plant extracts for pests. In many areas, there are not observed serious problems caused by pests, mainly because of extensive and very diversified production. Rotation in vegetables and intercropping in fruit trees production are very used methods for preventing pests' outbreaks.

DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN FIGURES

Organic products have been firstly introduced in Albania by HIPP, the German producer of organic baby food. It has been promoting and selling organic food in Albania since 1995. Since that period, consumption of organic products is increasing and some specialized stores for organic products are already opened in Tirana and Vlora.

The following Figure and Table show the development of organic farms, main organic products and location in Albania for the period 2002 2006. Number of organic farms is increasing with a good intensity. The first farm in Albania that got organic certification was Islami farm in Gjokaj, near Tirana (in 1999). It produces fresh herbs and exports the major part of the production. Some small quantities go in restaurants and local supermarkets. In the year 2000, the number of organic farms was 12, scattered mainly near the capital. This number becomes 45 in 2004, and 65 at the beginning of year 2006.

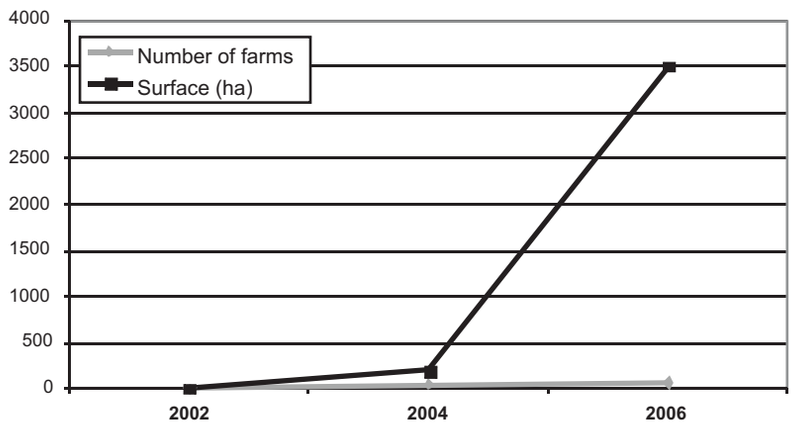

Fig. 1. Number of organic farms and organic land area (ha) in Albania.

Related to organic surface, from about 4 ha in 1997, in 2006 it is reported about 1900 ha. However, surface of cultivated area is much less, and the total figure includes the certified area of spontaneous products as wild mushrooms, medicinal plant and also the mountainous Caraburuni area, which is mainly pastures for sheep and goats. Organic farms produce vegetables, fruits, fresh herbs, olive oil, wine, and livestock products like milk, cheese, meat and honey. About 20% of the organic products is exported to the European Countries.

Table 9. Figures of organic agriculture in Albania

Production	Number of farms	Surface (ha)	Location
Olives groves	14	92,5	Tiranë, Vlorë, Krujë
Vineyards	8	12	Tiranë, Durrës, Fier, Pogradec, Skrapar, Lushnjë
Fruit trees	15	13	Tiranë, Durrës, Pogradec, Skrapar, Kavajë, Lushnjë
Vegetables	19	21	Tiranë, Durrës, Korçë, Pogradec, Krujë, Lushnjë
Herbs	2	5	Tiranë, Krujë
Milk	25	1000	Vlorë (Karaburun, Dukat)
Meat	1	2	Fier
Egg	2	4	Durrës
Cheese	2	10	Vlorë (Dukat)
Olive oil	2	5	Tiranë, Vlorë
Wine	2	3,3	Durrës
Honey	1	2	Tiranë
Hazelnuts	1	1600	Tropojë
Mushrooms	1	700	Tiranë, Elbasan

The development area of organic farming now reaches many districts in Albania, and it is concentrated mostly near Tirana and Durrës area (central part of the country). This is because of market closeness and organic associations are more active in this area. Several other areas present a good opportunity for development because of their natural environment and low level of pollution. In North-Eastern part of Albania the landscape is very beautiful and also give new spaces for growth and ecotourism.

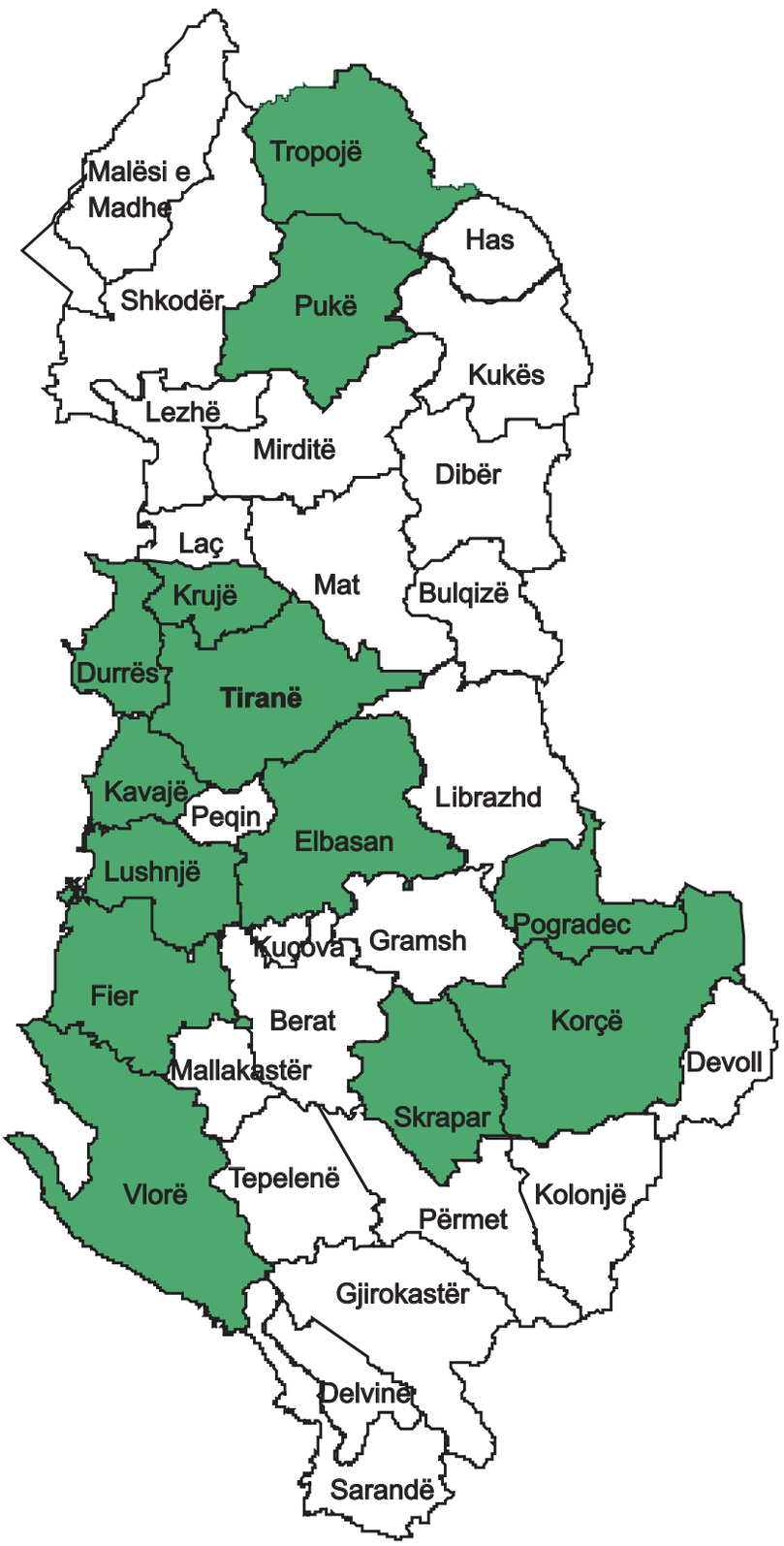

Fig. 2. Districts where organic farming takes place in Albania.

In addition, the tourism industry is growing fast in the south costal area and organic farming there will need more attention from the public sector and NGO's in the near future.

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATIONS

In the Annex 2, a list of the main operators dealing with organic agriculture is given. The Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture in the MAFCP is trying to play a coordination role for all stakeholders involved in this field.

Organic Agriculture Association (***OAA)*** is the first organic association created in Albania. They started in 1997, working with some first pilot farms, providing advice on production methods, and support on marketing issues. This association has about 120 members, including researchers, teachers, farmers, students, etc. OAA is the first and unique local control body that operates in the country. They developed their own standards in 2003. Recently, after the creation of the competent authority in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer's Protection (MAFCP), OAA is applying to be recognized as a control body. They are not yet accredited by any international accreditation body.

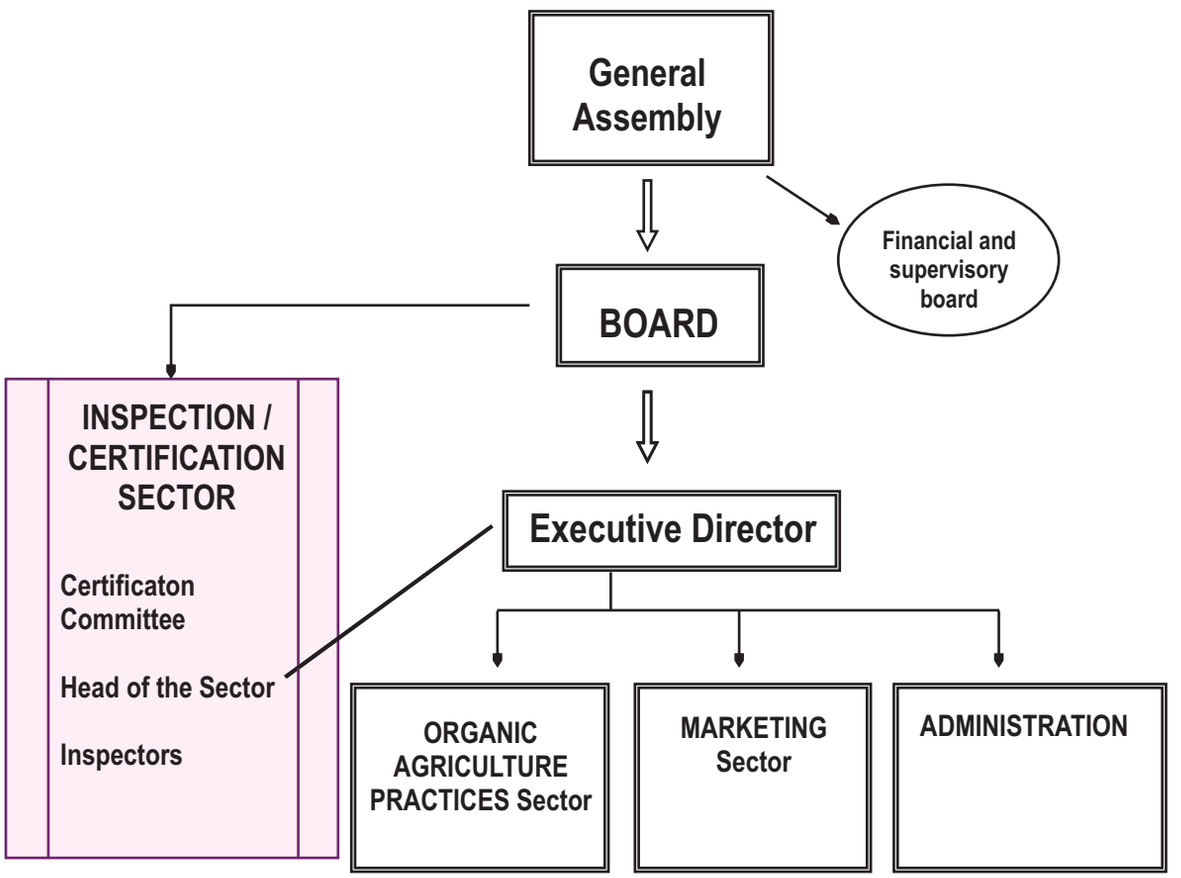

Fig. 3. OAA Flowchart

Marketing is another important issue of OAA. The market of organic products is further enlivened more with the operating of a new retail market stall. Now there are three retail market stalls of organic products for selling fruits and vegetables of the season, canned products, beverages, etc. In addition to these retail market stalls, a new wholesale market for organic products begun to function in July 2003, and is situated in the food market area in Tirana.

BioAdria comes from the further specialization of research and extension sector of OAA. Association is strongly supported by SASA project, financed by SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) (see Annex 1). BioAdria has a membership of about 70 specialists of the field. They constitute also BAREN, the BioAdria Research and Extension Network.

The main directions of BioAdria are:
- offering extension for organic farmers and supporting them in the technology transfer;
- conducting on-farm research for improving farm income and sustainability;
- selecting resistant and tolerant autochthon varieties;
- conducting trainings for organic agriculture production methods;
- other activities related to the awareness of people for organic agriculture;
- facilitating the contacts of organic farmers with other operators (traders, processors, control bodies, etc).

***Albinspekt* Ltd**. is the first local specialized agency for the inspection of organic products in Albania. This company aims to provide a complete service in:
- Inspection of organic products and food quality systems according to private, national, and European regulations;
- Information/consultancy regarding procedures for inspection and certification of Organic farms/products;
- Information regarding export regulations of other countries.

In a long run, the agency intends to incorporate the certification for national standard of organic products as part of service. In mean time, OAA certification committee will provide the Certification service according to its private standards.

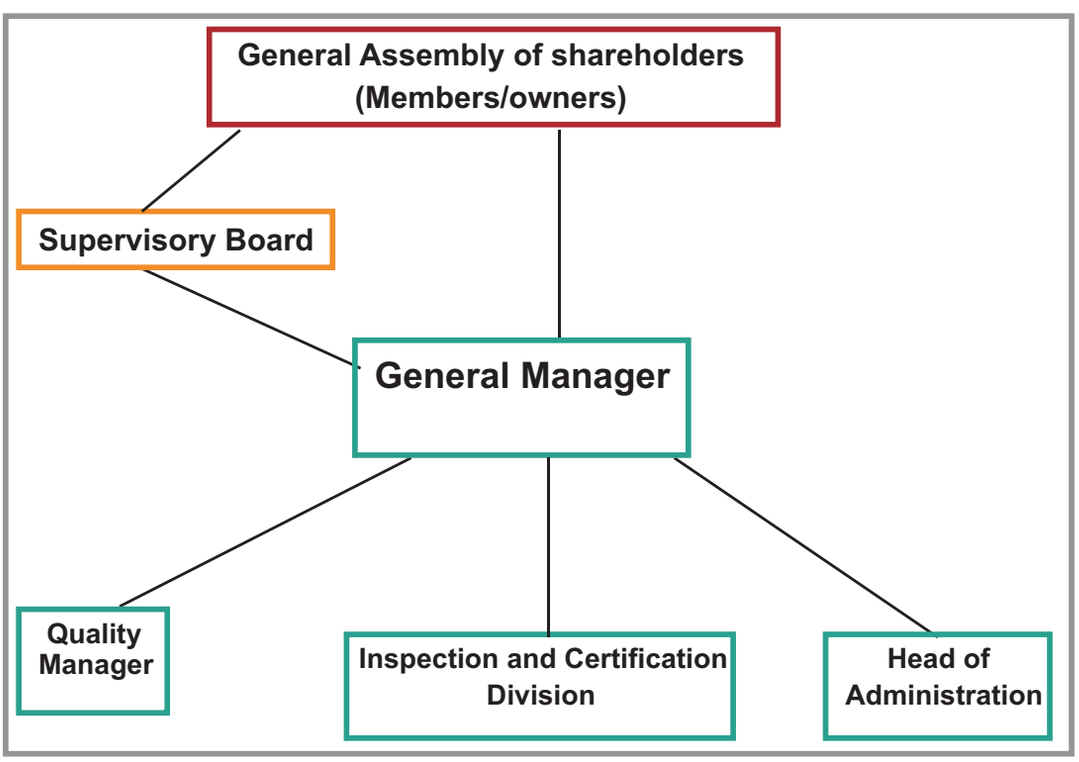

Fig. 4. The organizational structure of the agency

On the contract base, Albinspekt will carry out local inspection service for some foreign control body.

Another association, ***Bioplant Albania***, is created in February 2006. The main purpose of this association is to support organic horticulture production. Until now, no data and publications are available.

STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION, STATE REGULATIONS

The Albanian Organic Agriculture Law No. 9199 “For the production, processing, certification and marketing of BIO- products” was approved by Parliament in 1994 (Official Newspaper No 20, 2004). It

is prepared based on and reflects in some extent the requirements of the EU Regulation 2092/91, IFOAM standards, and organic laws of some other countries.

The purpose of this law is:
- to stimulate the organic production in the country,
- to establish the necessary legal frame,
- to define the conditions of production, processing, transport, certification and control for bio-products.

Based on this law, in May 2005, a State Commission of Organic Production (SCOP) was established (Decision of Government No. 388, date 31.05.2005). It is composed by nine members, including representatives from MAFCP, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Management, Agricultural University and NGO sector.

SCOP is responsible for policy making and overall management of organic agriculture. Its main specific tasks & responsibilities include:
- Accreditation of certification bodies,
- Supervise the import/export procedures of bio-products,
- Supervise the functioning of whole organic production scheme
- Propose relevant measures to be taken.

A technical secretary is in charge for the daily operations.

For the time being, seven control bodies are operating in Albania. One of them (OAA) is local and the others (ICEA, Bioinspecta, IMO, Codex and BCS) are foreign. OAA has the higher number of certified farmers that is around 60. ICEA have certified two producers of olive, and one factory for olive oil production. Bioinspecta has 12 farmers, mainly fresh vegetables producers; most of them sell their products in Switzerland. BCS works with three farms that collect medicinal plants.

Table 10. Foreign Inspection and Certification bodies operating in Albania

Name of the Agency	Country	Inspected/certified products
BioInspecta	Switzerland	Olives, Olive oil, wild mushrooms, fresh herbs
IMO (Institute for Marketecology)	Switzerland	Medicinal plants
ICEA (Institute for Ethical and Environmental Certification)	Italy	Olive, olive oil
BCS	Germany	Medicinal plants
OAA (yet no accreditation for international regulations)	Albania	Organic Farms and Products
ECOCERT	France	Cultivated medicinal plants
CODEX	Italy	Wild medicinal plants

STATE SUPPORT, POLICY INITIATIVES

They are no governmental subsidies for the moment in Albania. Government has not yet developed a clear strategy in supporting organic farmers. For the moment, MAFCP is working in completing the legislation of organic agriculture. A competent authority is created at the Ministry for the administration and monitoring of organic system. This authority recognizes the control bodies, control their activity, monitor the documentation and the farms, insert and cancel organic farms in national register, etc.

Meanwhile, PAB project is supporting MAFCP to develop a mid term action plan with policy objectives and appropriate instruments and measures to implement it.

TRAINING (INSTITUTIONS PROVIDING TRAINING IN ORGANIC FARMING, LEVEL OF COURSES, TYPE OF COURSES, CURRICULA)

MAFCP had conducted several training courses in collaboration with PAB project in the field of organic production methods and inspection/certification procedures. A number of 40 agricultural specialists of public/private sector have followed training courses on:

- Introduction in organic farming;
- Organic viticulture and olive production;
- Organic management of vegetables;
- EU regulations;
- Inspection/Certification procedures, etc.

Demonstrative days have been organized so far both for experts, students and farmers showing some of results of trails done at farm level.

Several manuals are also published and distributed to extension service operators of public and private sector. Those include:
- Manual of organic viticulture;
- Manuals of Composting in organic farming;
- Manuals of organic olive production;
- Manual of organic vegetable production.

ADVISORY SERVICE

BioAdria Association is one of the key actors providing specialized advice in organic farming methods in Albania. This association has developed a clear strategy for support of organic farmers. Four full time specialists work in advisory service for organic farmers.

The extension workers of the public sector under MAFCP trained by PAB project contribute to provide short training courses for other agricultural specialists and farmers following "trainer of trainers approach".

The information centers have received a lot of information on organic farming and disseminate it to the interested farmers and other operators. Anyhow, the contacts between organic farmers and this service are still limited.

Another institution that can be more active in this field is the Agricultural University of Tirana. Until now, they are limited mainly in some publications and few bachelor student thesis made in organic farms.

RESEARCH (OVERVIEW OF MAIN INSTITUTIONS CARRYING OUT RESEARCH, LIST OF MAIN PUBLICATIONS)

In the first years, *OAA* carried out some research activities in organic field. They have made several tests in organic farms, including the organic management methods in different crops. Therefore, 30 grape varieties are tested for their resistance against pest and diseases in Skrapari district. Other field test is developed for 24 apple varieties in Pogradeci area. In collaboration with researchers of Vegetable Institute some vegetable seeds by autochthon varieties have been produced.

Nowadays, the new association BioAdria much is directly oriented in research and extension activities. They have constituted a network (BAREN - BioAdria Research and Extension Network) with 60 members from public research institutions, Agricultural University of Tirana, etc. They give support to the farmers for the implementation of organic methods. BioAdria publishes the magazine Ecological Agriculture, where they present all activities and results of research.

An important role in the field is playing the INTERREG IIIA- PAB -An integrated project for the diffusion and technical support in the implementation of organic production methods. Several field tests are developed in about 10 farms, involved in organic production (olive, grape, vegetable). In the third year of the project (2006), an overall management of organic farm is implemented, considering both phytosanitary problems and soil fertility management. Local researchers involved are form research institutes, agricultural university and NGO sectors.

Still, in this project, a virtual campus of all the institutions providing technical support is created and results of the tests are made known. This Campus gives possibility of interconnection among researchers from Albanian and Italian institutions. More information on it can be taken in project website http://pab.iamb.it.

Table 11. List with some studies and publications in organic agriculture

Period	Research title	Institutions	Researcher
’02-‘03	Use of beer as trap for massive control of cochlea	OAA	E. Isufi
’03-‘04	Field tests for protection of potatoes from Colorado beetle (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*) using *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *tenebrionis*	OAA	E. Isufi, Xh. Boriçi, F. Salaci
’03-‘05	Use of fish in water dissolution as trap for massive control of olive fly (*Bactrocera oleae*)	OAA	V. Selami
’03-‘05	Use of Diamon Phosphate diluted in water as trap for massive control of olive fly (*Bactrocera oleae*)	OAA	V. Selami
’03-‘05	Seed production from 4 autochthon vegetable varieties	OAA, VPI	E. Isufi, S. Jani
’04-‘05	Management of grape moth population (*Lobesia botrana*) with *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki*	OAA	E. Isufi
’04-‘05	Study on natural parasites in conventional and organic production systems of grapes	OAA, AUT, PPI	E. Isufi, N. Duraj, E. Çota
‘04-‘06	First field test for codling moth (*Cydia pomonella*) management with mating disruption technique.	BioAdria	E. Isufi
’05-‘07	The status of *Lobesia botrana* (*Lepidoptera: Tortricidae*) in Albania and its management with *Bacillus thuringiensis* var*. kurstaki* & *aizawai*.	Laknas Experimental Farm (LEF)	S. Dano, R. Uka, F. Kazani
’05-‘07	The status of *Palpita (Margaronia) unionalis* (*Lepidoptera: Tortricidae*) in Albania and its management with *Bacillus thuringiensis* var*. kurstaki* & *aizawai*	LEF	S. Dano, R. Uka, F. Kazani, A. Zeqiri
’04-‘09	Test of several fruit trees cultivars for their resistance to pest and diseases	BioAdria	E. Isufi, V. Selami
’04-‘09	Test of several grape cultivars for their resistance to pest and diseases	BioAdria	E. Isufi, V. Selami

CHALLENGES AND OUTLOOK

Organic movement in Albania is still in the beginning of its development. Organic farms are located mainly near the biggest cities and markets. Several areas present very good opportunities for organic production and development. Natural meadows and pastures, areas with low pollution, national parklands, and isolated zones can be considered as protected areas and oriented exclusively for organic and natural production and management. Even though there are some indicators showing a positive tendency of organic products growth, still the organic agriculture is facing with difficulties related especially with marketing aspects.

Some of main concerns and challenges are:

- The lack of a support system for stimulation of the organic farms;
- Lack of a proper market and marketing strategies for organic products;
- Lack of information regarding potentials of the organic market in the country;
- There is not a strong net between local NGOs and public sector to organize activities like awareness campaigns for the organic products;
- People are not well informed about values and benefits of organic products, as result buyers are not convinced to pay extra for organic;
- Capacity building of the local operators and institutions;
- Limited possibilities of the state budget to provide direct support for organic farmers, etc

FOREIGN TRADE OF AGRICULTURAL AND ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Around 20% of the farmers export their product to European countries, as Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. From 1999, one fresh herb producer “Aris-Frucht” certified by Bioinspecta exports fresh herbs to Switzerland. He owns a farm of four ha, and produces around 40 tons per year in greenhouses. In the period 1999 2005, this farm has exported 245 tons of fresh herbs.

Table 12. Export of Organic products

Exporter	Year	Product	Quantity
Shpresa Shkalla	2004	Olive oil – Extra virgin – Organic in conversion	2.268 ton
	2005	Olive oil – Extra virgin – Organic in conversion	1 ton
	2006	Olive oil – Extra virgin – Organic	1 ton
Arben Islami	1999 - 2005	Fresh herbs	245 ton
Rami Dautllari	2002	Medicinal Plants	2 ton (dry)
	2003		0.5 ton (dry)
Jahaj	2006	Hazelnuts	25 ton

In Tirana and Vlora area, two processors of olive oil are certified respectively by Bioinspecta and ICEA and produce more than five tons of extra-virgin organic olive oil. Shkalla farm in the last two years has taken “Biol” premium that ICEA organize for the olive oil quality.

Moreover, several collectors of spontaneous mushrooms and medicinal plants are exporting their products to Germany. There are no available data published on medicinal plant exports.

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ANNEX 1

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF TWO ON-GOING PROJECTS PROMOTING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN ALBANIA

- **INTERREG IIIa Italia - Albania 2003 - 2006**

Integrated Project for the Diffusion and Technical Assistance in the implementation of methodology for organic products (PAB)

Project leader: CIHEAM - IAM-B
General objective of the project is the improvement of competitiveness and ecocompatibility of Albanian and Italian organic farms through the development and consolidation of organic farming system in Albania and Italy. Further development of organic farming in Albania will be guaranteed through continuing the activities started before, taking into consideration the main Albanian production systems. A special deal will have the staff qualification and extension service.

Specific objectives
- Strengthening the scientific collaboration between Italy and Albania in organic farming with the goal improvement of knowledge and the introduction of scientific information in organic agriculture field
- Improvement of services and technical structures in support of the development of organic agriculture
- Qualification of the operators of public/private sector in the management of organic agriculture
- Institutional building of institutions and public/private structures for the development of organic agriculture

Local Partners:
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer's Protection;
- Agricultural University of Tirana;
- Fruit-trees Institute
- Plant Protection Institute
- Vegetable Research Institute
- Organic Agriculture Associations

- **SASA (Sustainable Agriculture Support in Albania) Project**

The overall goal of the project is to improve the economic situation of the rural population through a sustainable use of natural resources in selected areas of Albania. A significant, but limited number of producers directly benefits from the project in terms of better income. However, a greater number of the population benefits as consumers and indirectly through the sustainable way of agriculture, which means better life for all and protection of environment. The core of the project is providing a functioning market of organic production, which leads to holistic performance from farm to consumer level.

Main Activities
- The focus is on three main sectors (sub-projects) of agriculture likely to accelerate the whole process of organic and low external input agriculture in the country:
- Fruits and vegetables (oriented to local market): Producers are offered production and marketing consultancy in order to develop a domestic market for organic fruits and vegetables. The SASA project is facilitating new market channels in the whole sale and retail market in Tirana.
- Olive oil (orientated to foreign and local market): The local extensionists consult olive farmers and facilitate organic inspection and certification. The olives are processed near Tirana to high quality oil and part of it is exported to Switzerland, while the rest is sold on the local market.
- Meat and cheese of sheep and goat (orientated as regional products to the local market): Sheep and goat shepherds living in the region of Vlora created the Karaburuni association, which shall market their pro-ducts with a regional label and assure a good quality control system. In the set-up of the civil structures and rules as well as in its marketing concepts, the association is supported by the SASA project.

ANNNEX 2

Addresses of mAin operators of organic sector

OAA Organic Agriculture Association
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