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Greece

Organic Agriculture in Greece

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Report Highlights:

Greece's production of organic foods continues to grow with EU support, and farmers' desire to add value to production.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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General Summary

In July 2007, the GOG Ministry of Agriculture published official statistics for organic farming in Greece. The figures show an impressive increase in the number of organic farms, excluding livestock. Yet at present, Greece has the lowest percentage of organically cultivated land in the EU (approximately at 2 percent). The 1992 CAP reforms and EU agri-environmental measures have been instrumental in persuading small farmers, who had not previously felt they could afford to take the risk, to convert to organic farming.

Commercial organic farming in Greece began in 1982 in response to a Dutch firm's demand for organic currants. According to estimates, this early enterprise involved about 150 producers cultivating a total area of 200 hectares. EU-Regulation 2092/91 was first applied in 1993 and EU Regulation 2078/92A introducing hectare subsidies began to be applied in 1996. These were the principle stimuli for producers' conversion to organic farming. Since then the annual growth rates of organic agriculture have ranged between 50% and 120% (albeit from a very small base). In 1999, the organically cultivated area reached 21,280 ha (accounting for 0.6% of the total cultivated land). Some 5,000 certified operators (producers and processors) were involved at that time. By the end of 2000 an additional 100 organic animal husbandry operations were registered (the EU Reg. 1804/99 for organic animal husbandry began to be implemented in Greece in the autumn of 2000). By 2006, the officially registered and operating livestock organic farms exceeded 300 (mostly sheep, goat, poultry and swine meat producers).

In a period of 6 years (from 2000 to 2006) the organically cultivated area in Greece exceeded 302,000 hectares, including organic pasture lands (about 131,000 ha of the total), and land certified or in the pre-certification period. For the year 2006, the GOG Ministry of Agriculture reports that a total of 23,618 organic farmers are registered (an increase of over 50 percent from the previous year). A significant increase in the number of processors of organic produce is also reported for the same period, reaching some 750 in total, an increase of 5.13 % from a year earlier. More than 280 organic farmers both produce and process. There are only nine importers of organic products registered.

Excluding pasture lands, 2006 organic cultivation is estimated at about 155,500 hectares, with cereals accounting for most of this area, followed by olive orchards and forage plants. Reportedly, for the year 2007, this area is expected to exceed 170,000 Ha. The grand total acreage including organic pasturelands is estimated at over 302,000 Ha. Detailed statistics per crop and acreage are given in the statistical section below.

It is anticipated that as a result of procedures started in 2006 and expected to intensify in 2008 with the new horticultural CAP reform, a significant amount of land resources will become available for numerous alternative crops and organic cultivation.

Statistical Section

Organic Crops in Greece

TOTAL CULTIVATED AREA in 2006

CROPS	Pre-Certification Stage (In Ha)	Certified Organic (In Ha)	Total (In Ha)
Soft wheat	2,536	465	3,001
Durum wheat	22,386	4,649	27,035
Barley	3,283	1,765	5,048
Corn (for grain)	2,060	2,177	4,237
Rye	1,509	113	1,622
Oats	3,627	2,447	6,074
Triticale	826	429	1,255
Other cereals	423	74	497
Rice	105	98	203
Potatoes	61	42	103
Sugar beets (not for seed production)	67	0.25	67
Sunflower	1,010	187	1,197
Soybeans	10	2	12
Rapeseed	6		6
Other oilseeds	17	9	26
Tobacco	29		29
Cotton	1,944	158	2,102
Other Industrial crops	12	6	18
Aromatic, Medicinal plants & herbs	544	278	822
Melons & strawberries	628	733	1,361
Peas	279	121	400
Beans	19	5	24
Other pulses	216	300	516
Other vegetables	100	295	395
Annual forage plants	5,872	1,266	7,138
Perennial forage plants	18,173	4,334	22,507
Apples	91	102	193
Pears	63	90	153
Peaches	28	27	55
Apricots	57	30	87
Cherries	2	5	7
Prunes	13	9	22
Other stone fruit	36	19	55
Tree nuts	827	784	1,611
Other fruit (olives, grapes and citrus excluded)	206	256	462
Berries	1	2	3
Oranges	807	1,212	2,019
Lemons	46	166	212
Grape fruit	3	12	15
Other citrus	78	246	324
Table grapes	377	339	716
Wine grapes	1,936	1,951	3,887
Table olives	10,258	1,986	12,244
Oil Olives	29,012	18,745	47,757
Total crop area	109,583	45,934	155,517
Total pasture land	9,998	136,741	146,739
Total area in Organic agriculture including pasture lands	119,581	182,675	302,256

(Source: GOG Ministry of Rural Development and Food)

Organic activity in the Livestock Sector

The organic animal husbandry in Greece is dominated by the goat sector (over 305,000 head) followed by sheep (almost 260,000 head), swine (215,000 head), poultry (134,000) and cattle (22,300 head). There are also almost 8,500 bee hives registered as organic.

Consumption of Organic Food Products in Greece

It is noted that the most frequently consumed organic products are some basic components of the Greek diet like olives, olive oil, pasta, cereals, giant beans, Greek lentils, spoon desserts, herbs, certain fresh fruits and vegetables, organically farmed sheep and goat meats, Greek Style natural yogurt made using pasteurized fresh milk from organic farms, etc.

According to recent survey studies, the value of organic food consumed in Greece has increased by 30 percent from 2005 (retail price basis). Specialty Organic Food stores supply 50 percent of the consumed amounts, followed by the Supermarket chains with 45 percent and 5 percent by open markets. The number of organic food businesses in Greece is reported at 15,500 in 2005 (with 10,000 in 2004). Some 65 percent (value basis) of organic products consumed Greece were imported. Many Greek organic products are produced for the export market.

Post Comment: It is interesting that the US market for organic products is larger than that of the EU, not withstanding the absence of farmer supports comparable to those available in Europe.

Indicative current Prices for certain Greek Organic Products:

Products	Pack	Price (in Euros)
Kalamata organic extra virgin oil (from handpicked olives)	500 ml bottle	4.50 – 15.00
Non Organic	3 L Tin	24.00
Black organic olives	345 gram jar	2.80 – 3.00
Not organic	2 lb jar	8.50 – 9.00
Organic pasta	400 gram bag	1.80 – 2.00
Non organic	500 gram bag	2.00 – 2.50
Organic spoon desserts (Fig, pistachio, other)	380 gram jar	4.50 - 5.00
Giant beans organic	1 lb	3.70 – 4.00
Giant beans (no organic)	500 gram bag	2.00 – 2.50
Honey	250 gram jar	7.00 – 7.50
Honey not organic	8 oz jar	6.00 – 6.50

(Source: Information collected by AgAthens)