

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN MEDITERRANEAN AREA

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The history, the experiences and the dynamics of evolution on the application of organic farming method between the Northern and Southern-Eastern countries shores are different from each other. The identification of sustainable forms of land use is therefore a primary goal to be pursued for the purpose of reducing the degradation of primary resources, the ruin of rural environment and of biodiversity. The soil management through the organic farming method can be a model responding to the sustainable development need. However, the application of this production method necessitates additional knowledge on the technical, agronomic, legislative and market issues, to be able to produce and sell on the market, in compliance with the rules imposed by the certification and inspection system. Lastly, the lack or sometimes the inadequacy of policies has further slowed down the application of this production method in the Southern Mediterranean countries.

During the first International Seminar on Organic Farming, held in Acireale (CT) in May 1997, it came out that it is necessary to envisage organic farming as a tool for the sustainable development of agriculture in the Southern Mediterranean region (De Castro, 1999). On the occasion of the last International Symposium on organic farming in the Mediterranean, held in Agadir (Morocco) in October 2001, it was stressed that the development of the sector needs to be supported by various actions including the introduction of specific rules for the control and certification in the Southern Mediterranean countries; the training of technicians; the extension service and the spread of information; the strengthening of research; the development of markets, in particular the local one. The Symposium also gave the opportunity to know the state of the art on the production, the problems and developments of the sector, so as to view organic farming as a method able to contribute to the safeguard of natural resources and, at the same time, as a production technique able to meet the current production requirements without jeopardising the possibility for future generations to equally meet their needs (Hanafi, 2001).

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Based on the data collected in the Mediterranean region by MOAN (Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network; web site: www.organicmedit.org), there are about 2 million hectares under organic farming. The farms that have adopted this new production method amount to more than 90,000.

Organic farming in the Mediterranean region (2001)

Countries	Farms (N°)	Surfaces (ettari)	Organic Farms/ Total Farms	Organic AA/ Total AA
Italy	51.552	1.069.339	1,91	7,21
Spain	13.724	388.031	1,20	1,60
France	10.400	420.000	1,60	1,50
Portugal	763	57.771	0,18	1,31
Greece	5.270	24.800	0,64	0,71
Total EU-Medit.	81.709	1.959.941		
Turkey	18.375	57.002	0,09	0,09
Tunisia	245	16.818	0,03	0,33
Morocco	555	11.956	0,01	0,14
Israel	n.d.	7.000	n.d.	n.d.
Slovenia	620	5.200	n.d.	0,66
Egypt	300	4.167	0,01	0,14
Lebanon	17	250	0,01	0,03
Cyprus	15	52	0,01	0,03
Albania	8	4	n.d.	n.d.
Total South Medit.	20.135	102.449		
Total Mediter.	101.844	2.062.390		

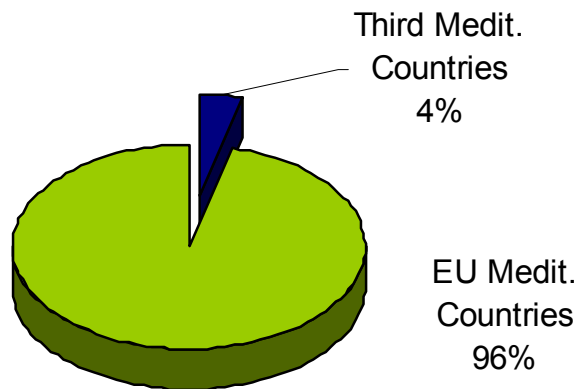
Source: IAMB-MOAN

Some major organic crops in the Mediterranean region

Countries	Major Crops
Albania	fresh herbs
Cyprus	vegetables, wine, citrus, apples, pears, plums, almonds, olives, carob
Egypt	cotton, ice, wheat, potatos, vegetables, fruits, medicinal herbs and ornamentals, wheat, onions, garlic, animal products
France	cereals, oleaginous, proteaginous and vegetables plants, fruits, vineyard, olive, aromatic plants
Greece	cereals, cotton, olive oil, vegetables, fruits, vineyard, olive, wine, tomato, pulses, citrus
Israel	greenhouse vegetables, citrus, fruit crops, vegetables, cereals, animal products
Italy	cereals ,vegetables, wine, citrus, vineyard, fruits, olives, animal products
Lebanon	cereals, legumes, watermelon, melon, grapevine, zucchini, tomato, other vegetables, olives, citrus, watermelon, legumes
Morocco	argan, citrus, olive, vegetables, medicinal and aromatic plants
Portugal	Olive oil, wine, dry fruits, vegetables, cereals, citrus
Spain	Olives, Cereals, Dried Fruits, Brache Vines, Fruit, Citrus Fruit, Horticulture
Tunisia	olive, palm dates, almonds, pistachio, vegetables, jojoba, aromatic plants, grapes, honey
Turkey	pistachio, pear, apple, almond, tomato, beans, cherry, prune, grape, wild apple

Source:IAMB-MOAN

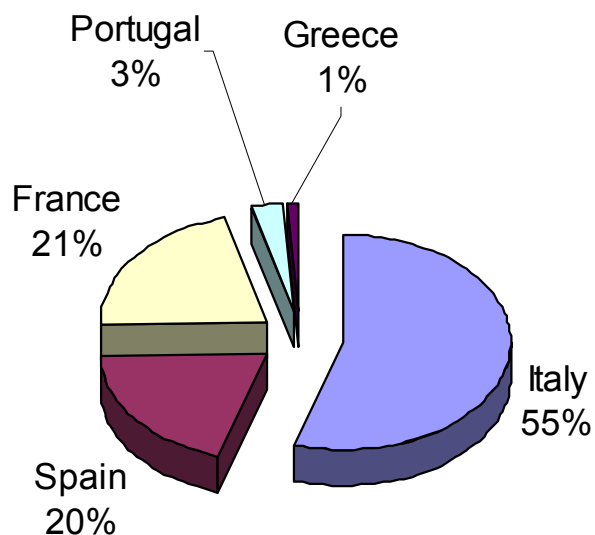
Organically grown area in the Mediterranean



Source: IAMB-MOAN

Over half of organic farms and surface areas is in Italy, which is the country that has given the most positive response to the introduction of this new production method.

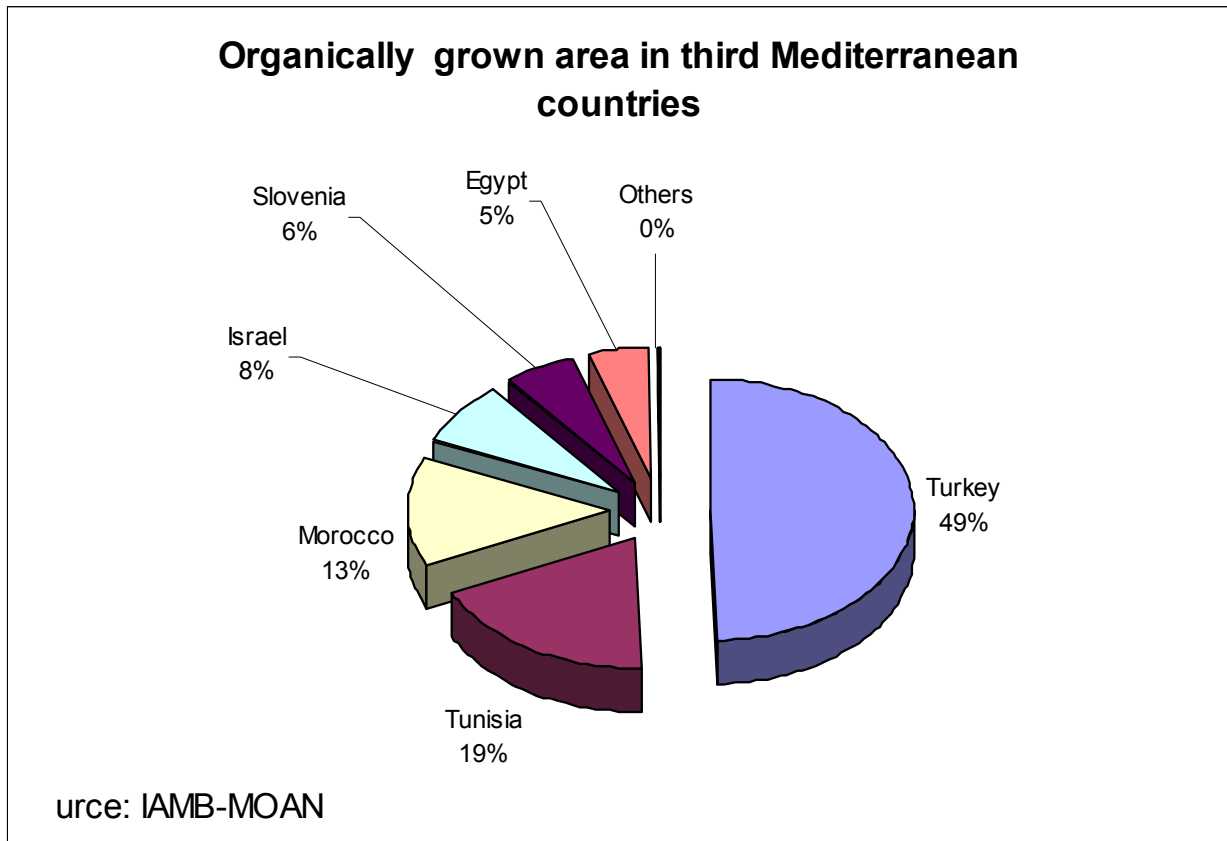
Organically grown area in the EU Mediterranean countries



Source: IAMB-MOAN

The Southern Mediterranean countries, that have recently started up the organic production, have been stimulated by two factors: i) the progressive interest of the European marketing farms that have moved more and more to the South to meet the

growing demand for products of the North-European consumers; ii) the interest in new and interesting commercial opportunities identified by local producers.



Actually, over the last few years organic farming in the South has been very vital, as shown by the strong growing trend of surface areas, originated undoubtedly by market phenomena but also by the evolution of the local agricultural policies, increasingly sensitive to environmental sustainability and production upgrading. In particular, the country with the highest organically grown area is Turkey, followed by Tunisia and Morocco.

The relative weight of the Southern Mediterranean countries with respect to the whole Mediterranean region is still low, but the growth rates experienced, over the last few years, by some of these countries suggest a fast and considerable development of the sector.