

Organic Farming in Cyprus

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1 Agriculture in Cyprus

General information on Cyprus as one of the EU accession countries can be found in a report on the enlargement of the EU (http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/cyprus/rep_10_99/ab.htm).

1.1 Position of Agriculture in the Economy

Agriculture has always been an important sector of the Cypriot economy.

Following the Turkish invasion of 1974 and the occupation of 38 percent of the country's territory, including Cyprus' most valuable land and water resources, an accelerated declining trend set in, which is still continuing today. Also, due to the rapid growth of other sectors of the economy, agriculture today contributes less than five percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) and about ten percent to gainful employment.

Nevertheless, agriculture (<http://www.pio.gov.cy/cyprus/economy/agricult/index.htm>) continues to be significant for the Cypriot economy (<http://www.pio.gov.cy/cyprus/economy/index.htm>). It helps to maintain the environment and a good proportion of the population in rural areas; it contributes to food security and supplies the local market, including the country's sizeable tourist industry, with good quality fresh produce, and continues to earn an important amount of foreign currency through exports, which still account for over 20 percent of all domestic exports.

In 1996 the total agricultural output was CY£ 346 million (597 EUR), of which crop production represented CY£ 176 million (303 EUR), livestock production CY£ 144 million (248 EUR) and forestry, fisheries and other production CY£ 26 million (45 EUR).

1.2 Summary of Land Use Patterns

The total agricultural area under the control of the legal government of Cyprus (map (<http://sunsite.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/Maps/europe/Cyprus.GIF>) is around 200,000 hectares, of which arable crops and fallow land account for about 86,000 hectares (table 1). The country's most important crop is the potato, which is cultivated on an area of around 9,000 hectares at a value (in 1996) of CY£ 31 million (53 EUR) or 18 percent of all crop production.

Table 1: Land Use in Cyprus in 1999

Crop	Hectares
Arable crops	80,000
Fallow land	6,000
Vegetables	13,000
Wine	20,000
Citrus fruit	7,000
Deciduous fruit (apples pears, prunes)	4,000
Trees grown on arid soil (almonds, olives, carob)	12,000
Total agricultural area	200,000



Source: Agricultural Research Institute (<http://www.ari.gov.cy/>), 2000

Agricultural land is privately owned, and the great majority of farms are small family holdings with an average size of 3.5 hectares, made up of several small plots with a mean size of 0.78 hectares each.

The scarcity of water and the precariousness of rainfall constitute the major single problem of Cyprus' agriculture. This is particularly true in the case of cereals, which depend entirely on rainfall. In an average year, cereals represent 20 percent of the crop output, while in a drought year their contribution can be much lower.

2 History and Development of Organic Agriculture in Cyprus

Organic agriculture has only recently been introduced to Cyprus. It started 12 years ago (1988) with two farmers involved in the production of several kinds of vegetables, including potatoes, cereals and livestock products (dairy products, meat). The farm size was approximately 3 hectares, and only a small part of the land was irrigated. In general, the whole production, processing, packaging and labelling systems used were in line with IFOAM's (<http://www.ifoam.org>) basic standards. Their production was sold locally. Distribution and marketing problems were faced.

During the 1990s, the area of land under organic management as well as the number of farmers increased, although at slow a rate. New products have been added to the list of organic products, such as dessert grapes, carob, wine, herbs, pulses and others. From 1993 onward, the production, processing, inspection and certification systems used have been in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91.

3 Development of Organic Agriculture in Figures

In 1999, there were 13 hectares and 15 farms under organic management. With the exception of one dessert grape farm and one vineyard, each of the other farms are less than 0.5 hectares in size.

Organic agriculture is expected to grow substantially in a few years.

4 Land Use and Production

Up to 2000, there have been only certified organic farms with special crops (table 2).



Table 2: Land Use and Organic Production in Cyprus in 1999

	Hectares		Tons of Organic Produce (Estimate)
	Under Organic Management	In Conversion	
Wine grapes	7	2	10,000 litres
Dessert grapes	-	7	13
Olive trees	5	2	15
Vegetables	1	-	n.a.
Aromatic herbs	-	6	n.a.
Total	13	17	-

Source: Agricultural Research Institute, 2000

5 Organic Agriculture Organisations

Apart from the Cyprus Organic Producers Association, which was founded early 2000, there are no organic agriculture organisations so far, and no country logos are used for organic produce at present.

The only company currently engaged in exporting organic products is Gelerio S/M LTD, in Pissouri, Limassol.

6 Standards and Certification, State Regulations

EU-authorized certification bodies or their joint ventures with Cypriot companies certify the organic farms in Cyprus at present. These are: Lacon (<http://www.lacon-institut.com/frameeng.htm>) (Germany), Dio (Greece) and Skal (<http://www.skal.de>) (the Netherlands). Therefore, the standards and certification applied are identical to those required by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 (http://europa.eu.int/eurlex/en/lif/dat/1991/en_391R2092.html). There is no state law or regulation on organic farming yet.

7 Implementation of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91

The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment (MANRE) has drafted an organic farming law that is in full compliance with Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 and has forwarded it to the Law Office for legal vetting. The full implementation of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 will take place by January 1, 2002.

8 State Support, Policy Initiatives

An aid scheme to support all aspects of organic farming has been initiated. Details on the scheme and the time of its operation will be provided in due course.



9 Implementation of Agenda 2000

The government of Cyprus recognises that the successful diversification of the rural economy requires the adoption of an integrated and multi-sector approach. In formulating the country's rural development policy, the following issues have been taken into consideration: encouraging diversification and improving infrastructure; maintaining viable communities while preserving their culture and traditions; and increasing the quality of life by preserving the environment.

Agri-environmental development plans in compliance with Agenda 2000 will be prepared before Cyprus joins the EU. Organic farming constitutes an important component of the plan and will be given a high priority.

10 Training

A lot of work has to be done both by the private and the public sector.

11 Advisory Service

In general, a great deal has yet to be done towards disseminating information on organic farming to producers, traders and consumers. Seminars have been organised on the subject by the Department of Agriculture, and relevant information has been provided to interested people through public discussions and articles in magazines and newspapers.

12 Research Situation

Research on aspects of organic farming is carried out by the Agricultural Research Institute (ARI) (<http://www.ari.gov.cy/>). Studies on biological pest control, the use of alternatives to chemicals in controlling pathogens and on legume rotations have been carried out for a long time. Complete organic systems were initiated in 1998 and 1999 to study grape and potato production. Future studies on organic production will include crops such as olives, aromatic herbs, vegetables and citrus fruit, which are of major interest for Cyprus' agriculture. Since 1995, ARI and other departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment have been engaged in conforming the regulations for organic production and in informing farmers and the public about how the organic system operates and its advantages.

13 Challenges and Outlook

The government of Cyprus places a high priority on organic farming for several reasons: human health and food security, conserving and protecting the environment, exploiting favourable climatic conditions, the preponderance of small farms, the availability of family labour, etc.



During accession negotiations (http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/cyprus/rep10_99/ab.htm) between the government of Cyprus and EU, the Cypriot authorities affirmed that they are able to accept the EU Acquis (Acquis communautaire is the entire body of European Community legislation) in the agricultural sector totally and can implement it by January 1, 2002. Until then, Cyprus expects to have the necessary conformed legislation as well as an appropriate aid scheme for developing organic farming. As regards the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) 1804/99 on organic animal production, these have been reviewed and Cyprus can affirm that it is in a position to adopt and implement them fully by the same date.

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