

THE ORGANIC PLANT PRODUCTION TRENDS IN NORTH-EASTERN CROATIA

TRENDOVI EKOLOŠKE BILJNE PROIZVODNJE U SJEVEROISTOČNOJ HRVATSKOJ

**B. Vrkljan, I. Miličević, S. Radić, D. Kupčinovac,
B. Stipešević, D. Šamota, D. Jug**

ABSTRACT

In spite of the state policy, plant producers in Croatia are still reluctant to convert their land into organic agriculture farming. The "Biopa" association activity in farms converting to organic farming is described.

Keywords: organic crop, forage, medicinal plants, fruits, vegetable.

SAŽETAK

Usprkos državne politike, proizvođači hrane u Hrvatskoj još uvijek nerado prihvaćaju ekološku poljoprivredu. Opisana je aktivnost udruge "Biopa" u prevođenju gospodarstava na ekološku poljoprivredu.

Ključne riječi: ekološki ratarski i krmni usjevi, ljekovito bilje, voće, povrće.

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the Croatia's organic production laws and subsidies, plant producers, both private farmers and enterprises, are still reluctant to convert their land into the organic agriculture, which is undermining state policy to reach 5% of arable land being within organic agriculture [Nacrt nacionalnog programa, 2002]. But, through organised education and producers associations [Stipetić, 2005], a steady growth of organic land can be achieved. The "Biopa" association, helped to convert more than a hundred of farms with more than 4000 ha of arable land in north-eastern Croatia to organic production through education, advisory service and other ways of assistance.

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MATERIAL AND METHODS

Records on "Biopa" arable land have been gathered by "Biopa" advisers and "Bioinspekt" inspectors for growth seasons 2001/02 through 2007/08. Four main categories of land use have been sorted according to the main land use purpose: field crops and forage, medicinal plants, fruit (includes orchards and garden fruits) and vegetables. The data have been statistically processed, and trends interpolated for the purpose of the projection of further growth of arable land under the organic agriculture.

RESULTS

Table 1. Arable land use in five north-eastern Croatian counties (ha)

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Field crops forage	272	367	1083	1800	2298	2644	3651
Medicinal plants	50	50	56	62	58	78	193
Fruits	6	10	30	50	73	182	253
Vegetables	20	27	29	32	22	22	30
TOTAL:	348	454	1199	1944	2451	2926	4127

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Field crops and forage have the strongest growth, mainly due to the fact that a few large enterprises dedicated certain areas to the organic production, and most family farmers are familiar with and equipped for such production. Fruits have lately recorded exponential growth, mainly due to the subsidies for raising orchards prior to Croatian accession to the EU. Stagnation of vegetables is mainly due to higher inputs needed for the production, and problems regarding market, similar to the conventional vegetable production.

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Authors Address – Adresa autora:
Vrkljan B. and D. Kupčinovac,
E-mail: vrkljan.berislav@os.htnet.hr
Bioinspekt d.o.o.
31000 Osijek, Croatia

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I. Miličević, S. Radić,
BIOPA - Association for organic-biological agriculture,
31000 Osijek, Croatia

B. Stipešević, D. Šamota, and D. Jug
Faculty of agriculture Osijek,
31000 Osijek, Croatia

