

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE – STATUS AND PROSPECTS IN CROATIA

EKOLOŠKA POLJOPRIVREDA U HRVATSKOJ – STANJE I PREDVIĐANJA

Kisić I.

It is often heard that organic agriculture is only agriculture without “chemistry”, which is quite wrong. Adequate crop rotation, fertilization with organic fertilizers, agricultural management practices, humus management, liming are practices that have to be applied in both conventional and ecological agriculture. Good quality sowing/planting material is one of the main prerequisites of any agriculture. But most farmers in Croatia are almost without any knowledge. According to the data of the Ministry of Agriculture, 7% of Croatian farmers have finished up to three grades of elementary school, 44% to seven grades and 34% have completed elementary school. 13% of Croatian farmers have finished secondary school, and only 2% have higher or high education. Rural population of Croatia aged between 20 and 60 accounts for 51% of the said population, 24% are over 60 while the remaining 25% are younger than 19. Croatian agriculture in the future, regardless of whether sustainable or organic, will need better knowledge than the average farmer possesses today. Unfortunately, the described educational structure shows that this requirement will be hard to meet. Production of agricultural crops in the ecologically acceptable way, and their popularization through tourism, would certainly contribute to the overall development of the Republic of Croatia. Ecological approach to plant production could revive numerous traditional activities of our villages, old customs, which would extend the range of services offered through health, agro- and eco-tourism.

Faculty of Agriculture in Zagreb recognizes all these problems in organic agriculture. Therefore a new BSc study programme on organic agriculture

Round table 2, Higher education in organic agriculture, at 2nd Mediterranean Conference on Organic Agriculture – *Contribution to Sustainable Ecosystem*, Dubrovnik, April 2-4, 2008,

(according to Bologna process) started in 2005/06. Msc programme is named Organic agriculture with ecotourism.

The current status of Croatian agriculture does not allow optimistic forecasts for the development of organic agriculture. Another major problem is also that experienced top-grade agronomists left their profession when the former agricultural and industrial plants collapsed. No incentives can compensate for their experience and know-how. In my opinion, there can be no development of organic agriculture without development of conventional (sustainable) agriculture. Once Croatia has developed conventional agriculture based on the principles of sustainable agriculture, ecological agriculture will develop as well. I think that in organic agriculture only small steps can lead to great results.

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