

## An Evaluation of Consumers' Views on Organic Agricultural Products' Marketing in Sanliurfa, Turkey

Mustafa Hakki Aydogdu<sup>1</sup>, Fikret Kaya<sup>1</sup>, Mehmet Cancelik<sup>2</sup>,  
Mehmet Resit Sevinc<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>(Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, Harran University, Sanliurfa, Turkey)

<sup>2</sup>(Department of Social Science Vocational School, Harran University, Sanliurfa, Turkey)

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**Abstract:** While synthetic inputs used in agriculture have some negative effects on living health, people's concerns about this issue are increasing. This led consumers to organic agricultural products at the cost of paying more. The marketing methods of organic products can be done in various ways. The study aims to determine the view of consumers of organic agricultural products in Şanlıurfa on the marketing of these products. 382 organic product consumers were selected by a simple random sampling method and interviews were conducted through a questionnaire. According to the results, consumers buy organic agricultural products directly from the producers with a maximum of 31%. Consumers want to buy these products in places where there is public control with a maximum of 36%. Consumers choose the place of purchase depending on the store atmosphere and hygiene. This is followed by trust in the place of sale and the company. The least important reason for the choice was determined by the sales staff. Consumers in the field of research; As they prefer to buy, select and touch organic products in their social structure, they buy directly from producers, markets, and places where organic products are sold. Such areas should be expanded. It is believed that the establishment of organic public markets is effective in the control of local governments in the spread of organic agriculture. Besides, the establishment of organic public markets under the control of local governments will provide accessibility for consumers and producers will be able to deliver their products to consumers without intermediaries.

**Keywords:** Agricultural marketing, Consumer buying preferences, Organic agriculture, Şanlıurfa, Turkey.

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Date of Submission: 31-12-2019

Date of Acceptance: 15-01-2020

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### I. Introduction

The pressures, deteriorations, and problems on natural resources, environment, and ecological balance have been increased due to the rapidly increasing world population, industrialization, and urbanization [1-5]. Food demand is increasing due to the globally increasing population, while the agricultural land that needs production to meet these demands is decreasing [6, 7]. In order to increase production amounts, synthetic inputs used in agriculture cause some negative effects on living health depending on the time and consumer concerns are increasing [8-10]. As a result of all these, consumers' concerns have led people from conventional agricultural products to organic agricultural products at the cost of paying more money [11]. The use of organic products has been increasing every day, especially in households where young children, elderly, sick and pregnant women are living [12]. Nowadays, organic agriculture is accepted as a safe production method for all countries and an element to be used in social welfare and also takes part in climate change, drought and rural development programs [13, 14].

Marketing, in its simplest definition, is all the activities that are carried out to reach the products produced from the producer to the consumer. Marketing consists of many activities to meet the needs and desires of people [15]. While marketing simplifies change, these activities are conducted through people and organizations which require regular and organized supervision [16]. The main elements of marketing are products and customers. Except for those; needs, demands, supply, demand, price, thoughts about products, market, marketers and potential consumers are included in this chain [17]. Marketing starts with needs and ends with consumers having products. The marketing system for organic products requires a different method than traditional agricultural production. Because organic agricultural products are controlled and certified at every stage from production to consumption. Today, marketing methods of organic products can be made through organic public markets, organic product sales shops, shopping malls, the internet and so on. Selling organic products in markets is the method of marketing using certain marketing techniques from the producer to the end consumer [18]. On the other hand, as was done mostly in Turkey, organic products must not be sold together with other products. The sale of these products must either be sold in places that sell organic products only, or in

a separate department in a shop or directly from the production area [19]. Organic agricultural production activities are mainly due to demand from EU countries in Turkey, it began to produce for foreign markets, 80-90% of production is exported, while the amount of products that are considered to be used in the domestic market varies between 5-10% [19]. The organic production projects, export and marketing of the products are made in different ways in Turkey. The first of these is organic products are produced by the resident company in Turkey and then the products are processed and exported by this local company. In the other method, the productions are carried out by the foreign organization, the products are processed by the local processing company on a contract basis and exported by the contracted local processor or export company to the project owner [20]. In the domestic market, manufacturers can contact the control and certification body and offer their products directly to the domestic market in Turkey, too. There are problems in the marketing of organic products in Turkey. Almost no of domestic brands could be able to occur, except a few, in organic farming projects due to the demands of foreign firms for production under their names in Turkey. A majority of Turkish organic products are exported without Turkey's brand. The biggest problem in marketing organic products in Turkey, exporting agricultural products made by the manufacturer without a brand is sold under the brand name of the foreign company. For example, organic olive oil produced in Turkey is being marketed under the name of Italian brands all over the world, therefore, the Turkish organic olive oil producers are suffering the loss of income for not being branding [20]. The inability to create a brand in the marketing of organic products is a major problem for Turkey. Packaging makes a great contribution to product branding and sales. As in general marketing theory, marketing components in organic agricultural products marketing consist of four main elements. These; marketing mix consisting of product, price, distribution and promotion [21].

In EU countries, a significant portion of consumers buys organic products from organic product stores. This rate is 39% in Italy, 38% in Germany and 28% in France. On the other hand, business owners often complain that because of the high rents, the lack of product diversity and the lack of promotional campaigns, they take more risks because the shelf life of the products is shorter than that of conventional products [22]. Many stages of organic products from the producer to the end consumer are the factors that are reflected in the price of the product. There are various cost factors that affect the price of organic production [23]. Although organic agricultural production is a form of production that uses less input than conventional production, labor costs are higher due to the need for human labor by various cultural processes. Due to the lack of chemicals in organic products, the low quantity of products per unit area causes prices to rise. In addition, high costs of control and certification lead to higher organic product prices, too.

## **II. The Materials And Methods**

The main material of this research is the data obtained from face-to-face interviews with organic agricultural products consumers in Sanliurfa, Turkey. The consumers of organic farming were selected by a simple random sampling method and interviews were conducted with the questionnaire. The sample volume was chosen with a 95% confidence limit and a 5% error margin based on sample size and tolerable sampling error table [24]. In this context, 382 consumers were interviewed and the data were analyzed in 2016 by SPSS. Frequency distributions were used in the analyzes and importance order was used in the optional questions.

## **III. Results And Discussions**

31% of the respondents were female and 69% were male. Their average age was 45 years old. The average number of households was calculated as 3.2 and 4.2 together with the survey participant. The number of households in these families is lower compared to the general population of Sanliurfa since organic product consumers are more educated and have more income. In a study which was conducted in Sakarya-Turkey, it was found that the number of the household of the consumers of organic products was from 2 to 4, and its 81.2% of total consumers [25]. 89.6% of the organic product consumers surveyed are graduates of higher education. 46% of the respondents were the private sector and 32% were public employees. The average income of the survey participants for 2016 was calculated as 3,460 Turkish Liras (TL) where 1 USD was equal to 3.02 TL [26]. 52% of the participants' shop together as a family and 35% purchase organic agricultural products when needed. The participants consumed the most organic fresh vegetables and fruits. While 74.1% of the respondents stated that they frequently consume fresh fruits and vegetables, 17.3% of those consuming fair rate and 8.6% of those consuming little or no. Another product with high consumption was milk and dairy products and its consumption rate was 56%. Fair rate organic milk consumers were around 20.4% and those who do not consume were around 23.6%.

The distribution of the place where consumers buy organic products is given in Table 1. Accordingly, it is most preferred to purchase directly from the producer at a rate of about 31%. This is followed by markets and shopping malls. Information on where the interviewed participants want where organic products could be sold is given in Table 2. When consumer behavior and research area are taken into consideration, accessibility and trust come to the forefront in the preferences of the consumers. Prior to the research, consumers are expected to

request the sale of organic products in the district or organic public markets due to the accessibility factor. The trust factor, on the other hand, is preferred by consumers in terms of hygiene and health, where it is sold in places with public control. In this sense, the information that generally the interviewees want where organic agricultural products could be sold is meaningful and consistent.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the places where consumers buy organic agricultural products

Purchase locations	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Markets/Shopping Malls	115	30,1
Organic Shops	62	16,2
District or Organic Product Markets	80	20,9
From Internet	8	2,1
From the producer	117	30,6
Total	382	100,0

**Table 2.** Distribution of participants' want where organic agricultural products could be sold

Where organic products could be sold	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Markets/Shopping Malls	93	24,3
Organic Shops	43	11,3
District or Organic Product Markets	108	28,3
Where Public Control is available	138	36,1
Total	382	100,0

As expected before the survey, those who want to be sold within places with public control by 36.1% were the highest and followed by 28.3% in the district or organic product market. The preference rate for markets and shopping malls is 24.3%. The least preferred ones are organic sales shops with 11.3%. This result is significant and it is lower than the expectations due to the fact that there are not only shops selling organic products in Sanliurfa. In order to determine the factors affecting the preferences of the participants where they bought organic products, the question was asked with options. Depending on the degree of participation in each option, they were asked to rank, provided that 6 was given to the most important option. The distribution and proportion of the answers received are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Factors affecting the choice of the place where participants buy organic products

Choice	1		2		3		4		5		6		Index (100)	R
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
A	66	17,3	41	10,7	47	12,3	55	14,4	62	16,2	111	29,1	14,85	1
B	47	12,3	68	17,8	55	14,4	69	18,1	81	21,2	62	16,2	14,01	2
C	35	9,2	84	22,0	100	26,2	83	21,7	55	14,4	25	6,5	12,60	5
D	133	34,8	66	17,3	37	9,7	43	11,3	44	11,5	59	15,4	11,22	6
E	51	13,4	58	15,2	74	19,4	65	17,0	81	21,2	53	13,9	13,70	4
F	50	13,1	67	17,5	70	18,3	68	17,8	55	14,4	72	18,8	13,73	3

Factors: A: Sales Place, Store Atmosphere and Hygiene, B: Reliability of Company Name, C: Product Variety, D: Sales Personnel, E: Price, F: Accessibility, R: Ranking of the results based on rating

According to these results: consumers prefer the most depending on the place of sale, store atmosphere and hygiene. This option both ranked first by taking the highest participation score of 6 from the preference ranking and index-based rating which was evaluated together with other factors. This is an expected result before the survey. Because organic product consumers are a group that gives great importance to hygiene and health. In a study conducted in Istanbul-Turkey, it was found that most of the organic product consumers prefer these products because they are healthy and they prefer to buy these products from reliable and hygienic places. Continuous audits of these products, which pass through various audits and certification processes from the production to the final consumer, and the place of sale have a positive impact on consumers' preferences [27]. Cleaning and hygiene are the most important factors affecting the preferences of organic product consumers when purchasing products [28]. The option where confidence is measured is the reliability of the company name, which is third in the preference ranking and second in the index-based rating. This is an expected result, too. In general, consumers prefer to shop from places they trust. In terms of accessibility preference, it ranked second and index-based ratings ranked third. In general, accessibility for consumers is those that are readily available and easily accessible. They are important both in terms of meeting the need and reducing shopping time. One of the remarkable results among these factors is the price option. Price, both preference and also index-based ratings ranked fourth. This is one of the expected results, too. Because organic food consumers are

generally conscious and care about health. These are mainly consumers with good income. Organic agricultural products are more expensive than conventional agricultural products. For example, while the organic raisin in 2015 was 7 TL per kilogram, the price of registration of conventional raisin was between 2.90 TL and 3.90 TL [29]. Organic product diversity ranked last in the ranking of preference and ranking fifth in the index rating. This is an unforeseen conclusion. Because of the variety of products shortens the time spent by consumers for shopping. However, since organic consumption is not widespread in Sanliurfa, consumers consider the availability of certain food products sufficient, in this sense the result being consistent and meaningful. Salespeople ranked fourth in the ranking of preferences and ranked last in index-based ratings. This result is consistent with the fact that consumers of organic products do not need to be informed by salespersons during their choice because they are conscious.

The factors that affect the participants' choice of organic products are those who say color, appearance and packaging are very effective and effective in an organic product with 71.5% with 273 people, while those who stated fair were at a rate of 19.6% with 75 people and those who said low and ineffective were 8.9% with 34 people. Smell, taste and flavor of those who say very effective and effective, 92.7% with 354 people, fair people say 5.2% with 20 people, while those who say the less effective and ineffective rate is 2.1% with 8 people. The label, certificate and reliability of the product are very effective and effective 83.8% with 330 people, while those who say normal are 12% with 46 people and those who say less effective and ineffective are 4.2% with 16 people. Due to the lack of chemicals in organic products, color, appearance and packaging cannot be said to be very good. The importance of the label and the certificate remains in the background as most consumers buy directly from the producers. Due to the lack of chemicals in organic products, the smell, taste and flavor are good with high nutritional value and hormone-free. Consequently, the results obtained from the research are meaningful and consistent.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Planning agricultural production only with the aim of exporting from abroad can create problems for the future of that branch of production [19]. Because, despite the contraction in the market and demand that may occur in foreign markets due to various reasons, the domestic market must make that production branch and sector sustainable. When the trend of organic agricultural products is evaluated globally, it is noteworthy that developed countries are both producers, importers, and exporters, while developing countries are exporters [29]. Consumers in the field of research; Since they prefer to buy, select and touch organic products coming by in their social structure, they buy organic products directly from the producers, markets and shopping centers and organic products markets. Such areas should be expanded. This situation will revive the internal market. On the other hand, due to take consumers' willingness to buy organic agricultural products from the public market and directly from the producers in Turkey, control and supervision are becoming difficult and not widespread. By creating Turkish brands related to organic products, product diversity should be ensured by considering consumer needs in domestic and international markets. It is believed that the sale of products is effective in the spread of organic agriculture under the control of the public. The consumer's sense of trust comes to the forefront. A sense of trust, which is one of the important factors in the spread of organic products, will be ensured by selling under the supervision of the public.

In order to develop the domestic market, consumers need to be directed to purchase organic products, but due to the high prices, it is not possible for consumers in all income groups to buy organic products [30]. It is believed that the establishment of organic public markets is effective in the control of local governments in the spread of organic agriculture. In this case, since the producer and the consumer will come together directly, the share paid for intermediaries' services will be eliminated and the situation will have a positive effect on prices. In such a case, it will be easier for consumers in other income groups to buy. This will naturally increase the amount of consumption, demand, and consequently, production and supply will increase. This will contribute to the expansion and diversification of organic agriculture. In addition, the establishment of organic public markets under the control of local governments will provide accessibility for consumers and producers will be able to deliver their products to consumers without intermediaries. Another problem for the producers is the low level of knowledge of the producers, not keeping the records of every stage of organic products among the habits of the producers, high control and certification fees, and the fact that the producers are generally small and scattered in Turkey. Facilitating and guiding arrangements should be made by the public. This research offers policy-makers and decision-makers useful information both in Turkey and in countries with similar socio-economic characteristics,

#### **Acknowledgements**

This research has been produced from the master thesis titled Marketing of Organic Products and Determination of Consumer Behavior Against Organic Products and Factors Affecting These Behaviors (Sample of Şanlıurfa Province) completed by the second author under the supervision of responsible who is the first author.

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Mustafa Hakki Aydogdu,et.al. " An Evaluation of Consumers' Views on Organic Agricultural Products' Marketing in Sanliurfa, Turkey." *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 22(1), 2020, pp. 10-14.