

*Azerbaijan's National Program for Organic Production is  
Today's Basic Requirement.  
(2007, 11, səh.3)*

Organic production is a model for sustainable agriculture that opens new opportunities to address social, ecological and economic problems existing in our communities. Development in this area has been expanding in the world, especially in developed countries for the last 25-30 years.

Azerbaijan Republic bears the responsibility for the development of sustainable agriculture by its participation in many of the UN programs and International Conventions. It is gratifying to see the progress made in this area in the last 10 years. In Azerbaijan, according to statistics provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in 2006, 20.105 hectares were used for organic production which constituted 0,43% of the total agricultural land. Two-hundred hectares were used for grain crops, 206 hectares for vegetables, 755 hectares for perennial herbs, 10.744 hectares for pastures and hay, and 8.200 hectares for wild fruits and medicinal plants.

In the last few years interest in Organic Agriculture has evolved into a national movement in our country. There is general public awareness of this field as the result of the promotional activities among the different strata of society. In 2007 Organic Agriculture Management, a new field of study was established at Azerbaijan State Agrarian University (ASAU). This new course of study is supportive of new professions emphasizing the importance of education and training in the development and growth of this field. It is anticipated future managers in this profession will operate and manage with the scientific rigor.

We are pleased with the draft law, *Organic Agriculture* that was introduced to the Azerbaijani Parliament. Discussions associated with this draft law are in process and its adoption is an agenda item.

The development of a National Program for Organic Agriculture should be a primary goal of the government, as well as the community and experts in this field. The National Program is intended to achieve the following objectives:

**1. Ecological goals**

- Protect the environment;
- Increase and maintain soil fertility;
- High animal welfare standards;
- Protect local biodiversity and promote the effective utilization of natural resources.

**2. Economic goals**

- Meet the market requirements for organic products;
- Provide an alternative source for the villages' economic development;
- Minimize the negative impact on the environment by reducing agricultural production's dependency on external inputs as well as benefiting from the traditional methods for the national economic rehabilitation;

- Increase incomes by the effective use of land on small individual farms.

### **3. Social goals**

- Produce ecologically friendly products by using traditional methods and standards;
- Guarantee safety and quality of the proposed agricultural products.

The National Program, aimed to achieve these goals, creates an external market for ecologically friendly products produced in our country, as well as meets the demands of the internal market.

In addition to the above mentioned goals, the National Program is aimed at implementing the following objectives:

- Establishment of legal standards satisfying organic agriculture's international requirements;
- Organization of an organic agricultural system which includes a data base of information of this agricultural sub-sector (organic agriculture) – a model farm, raw materials, and basic requirements for organic agriculture;
- Foundation of an Organic Certification Body for organic agricultural products;
- Provision of supporting local extension services for both producers and customers;
- Support of research projects, as well as the projects dealing with plant and animal protection;
- Direct enterprises of infrastructure services (seed, fertilizers, treatment ways etc.) to organic agricultural requirements;
- Implementation of the price policy for stimulating organic agricultural production;
- An educational program with basic, on-going and advanced training courses for organic farmers;
- Provision of comprehensive information on organic agriculture to all interested parties;
- Public awareness through mass media about the importance of organic foods.

Additionally the National Program for organic agriculture should be based on the following principles:

- Maintenance and support of soil fertility, as well as the prevention of erosion;
- Cultivation of the soil by applying organic methods and facilitating natural plant development by increasing water retention capacity;
- The effective use of local organic fertilizers in accordance with organic agricultural standards;
- Institute preventive measures for plant and animal diseases by supporting the natural balance of fauna and flora;
- Provision of animals' healthy feed for their health and welfare benefit;

- Livestock keeping according to their natural behaviors and welfare;
- Mixed farming including both plant-growing and animal husbandry;
- Satisfaction of the organic requirements for more effective utilization of resources must include the whole enterprise or its whole structure;
- Quality assessment by segmentation and cooperation of products;
- Protection of beneficial organisms in the agricultural area by protective shelters according to the ecosystem balance;
- Protection of the domestic market and an increase in advertising and market development resulting in the improvement of interrelations between products and producers, as well as between products and consumers.

Processing of organic agricultural products is based on the following principles and should be reflected in the National Program as well:

- The utilization of new varieties and hybrids distinguished for their response to diseases, pests and various abiotic factors, supporting the development and application of the advanced technologies for organic agricultural products processing;
- The development and improvement of the new technologies, as well as the technological processes for organic agricultural products processing should satisfy the following requirements:
  - a) The utilization of food additives according to the European Union's standards;
  - b) The utilization of the organic substances authorized by the EU countries' medical units;
  - c) The improvement of technologies considered safe for the biosphere and avoidance of the genetically modified organisms;
  - d) Provision of high quality organic agricultural products;
- Improve the identification methods of pollutants and food adulteration;
- Provision of the technological processes with technical, normative and technological documents on organic agricultural products processing;
- Organization of agricultural production and the development of technical, normative and technological documents for quality control;
- Development and organization of an Inspection and Certification Body satisfying the international requirements and regulations for organic agricultural products.

Note: The development of the Commission for developing the National Program on Organic Agriculture was agreed upon with the participation of the Director of Azerbaijan Scientific Research Institute of Plant Protection, Academician S.Mammadova, and the Chairman of Ganja Agribusiness Association Board of Directors prof. A.Babayev, and the Substitute Rector of the Azerbaijan State Agrarian University Doctor of Agricultural Science R.Quliyev on the eve of the law adoption of "Organic Agricultural Production".