Chapter 9

Organic Production in Serbia: The Transition to Green Economy

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ABSTRACT
Faculty research is focused on the present state of organic agricultural production in the Republic of Serbia, with emphasis on existing legislation and activities planned in the next period, as well on the parallel between organic agriculture and basic principles of green economy, which represents great perspective of Serbia considering its natural potential. Having in mind that the green economy is recognized by leading world organizations for environmental protection as one of factors that could support realization of sustainable development concept through “greening” economy and opening of new “green” workplaces, the goal of this chapter is to indicate the potential and importance of the larger participation of farmers in organic production as one of the most realistic “green” chances of Serbia.

INTRODUCTION
In the process of accession to the European Union, Serbia has to reach very rigorous standards in the areas of environmental policy and sustainable development. Green economy represents the transformation of production processes, enabling more efficient use of natural resources and reducing adverse environmental impact. The essence of green economy is placed in the use of renewable sources of energy, its efficiency and organic agriculture aiming to eliminate the use of chemicals or at least reduce it to a minimum (Jacobs, 1991). The concept of a green economy has become the new buzz word in sustainability discourses, particularly in the sense of the Rio +20 Conference. Because of the current economic crisis and the perception that sustainability politics cannot be implemented efficiently, politicians have set their hopes on greening the economy. However, there are major problems with the aims and strategies linked to this concept. Specifically, if political, economical, and cultural constraints are not considered, green economy strategies will not

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be successful in their goals to end environmental
degradation and reducing poverty (Ulrich, 2012).
Green economy has identified organic farming as
a sector of special interest for supporting govern-
ment, economy, exports, and jobs.

Republic of Serbia has favorable natural con-
ditions for organic production, developed and
harmonized with EU legislation that deals with
this production (Paraušić et al., 2008). There is no
data to assess whether organic agriculture in Serbia
creates additional jobs compared to conventional
agriculture. On the other hand, research conducted
in developing countries indicate the potential to
create up to 30% more jobs dealing with organic
agriculture in developing countries and transition
countries in Africa and South Asia (Herren et al.,
2012). The agricultural establishment of most
countries has generally been resistant to organic
agriculture, and this has certainly been the case in
Western Europe and the USA. This is also exacer-
bated by the fact that companies by selling inputs
to farmers are increasingly financing research and
it is not in their interest to fund research that helps
farmers to use local resources more efficiently.
Research institutions have played a more positive
role in several countries in the Eastern part of
Europe, e.g. in Lithuania and Serbia (Källander
& Rundgren 2008). First priority should be given
to policies that compensate the production of a
public good and, as second priority, policies that
foster diversification in order to benefit from the
nature potential through rural tourism, organic
farming, collection of non-wood products, etc..

STATISTICAL DATA ON
AGRICULTURE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND THE
POTENTIAL FOR INTRODUCTION
OF ORGANIC FARMING

Republic of Serbia has a large, not enough valo-
rized, environmental, economic and social capac-
ity of agricultural production. Natural features of
land, availability of water resources and climate
provide a wider framework for structuring the
agriculture which on such grounds could be profit-
able and sustainable. Agricultural land, especially
arable land, is decreasing for the last few decades
due to numerous degradation factors. According
to the World Bank, at global level, there is a 0.21
ha of arable land per capita, while according to
data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of
Serbia that area in Serbia is twice large i.e. 0.45
ha per capita. Available agricultural land gives
Serbia a comparative advantage for agricultural
development in the direction of cleaner produc-
tion of sufficient quantities of very high quality
food. At the same time, it does not mean that a
reasonable and sustainable use of natural resources
should be a priority in any future strategic plan-
ing of the development of communities, both
rural and urban. Agricultural land, which accounts
for approximately 65% of the total territory, by
representation, solvency and way of use is very
heterogeneous in space (Popović et al, 2011).

The arable lands cover even 82.8% of agricul-
tural land of Serbia (Opštine i regioni u Republici
Srbiji, 2011). The structure of agricultural land use
is dominated by fields and gardens with 65.2%,
followed by meadows with 12.4%, orchards with
4.8%, vineyards with 1.1% and 16.5% of pastures.
The most common soil type is chernozem which is
characterized by high productivity. Regarding the
quality class, on the territory of Vojvodina the most
common is first-class land, and in Central Serbia
the sixth land capability class which largely deter-
mines the structure of production. In the structure
of sown areas of arable land and gardens, at the
level of the Republic of Serbia, wheat accounts
for 57.5%, industrial crops for 13.3%, vegetable
plants with 8.3% roughage with 14.0%.

Most of the farmland, about 85% is privately
owned and this ownership structure has a nega-
tive impact on the average size of farms. The
average total area of land used per farm is 2.46
ha. Serbia ranks among countries with a high
degree of fragmentation of holdings, i.e. lowest
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